

(Lutheran Standard, November 1, 1872, page 163ff)

Throughout this paper, I have inserted marks showing pagination in the translation made by Professor Kurt Marquart in 1982, CTS Press, Fort Wayne, Indiana. These marks appear for example as [KM1]. The 2 translations are not exact and so pagination is approximate and is included only for reference between the documents.

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[KM1]

Seven of its sessions were occupied by an active discussion of a series of Theses concerning

The Doctrine of Justification,

With particular reference to a controversy waged by the Norwegian and Augustana Synods.

Thesis 1. The doctrine of Justification is the prime article of the Christian faith, the true knowledge and pure proclamation of which is of incomparable importance and absolute necessity for individual salvation and the welfare of the whole Church.

Thesis 2. By the mercy of God, the Reformation of the Church through the instrumentality of Dr. Luther took its rise in a renewed knowledge of the pure doctrine of Justification, and in the consequent incorrupt proclamation of this article of faith.

Thesis 3. The pure doctrine of Justification, as again conspicuously set forth by our Lutheran Church from the Word of God, involves three leading points: 1. The doctrine of the universal and perfect redemption of the world by Christ; 2. The doctrine of the power and efficacy of the means of grace; and 3. The doctrine of faith.

These three Theses are chiefly of an introductory nature and are calculated to give prominence to the fact that the article concerning Justification is the gist of all doctrine, - the source and centre of them all. Our whole salvation depends upon this article, and therefore it is absolutely necessary for each and every Christian. A correct knowledge of all other doctrines, e.g., the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Person of Christ, etc., would be of no avail, if this be not known and believed. A mistake in any other would not be attended by such soul-destroying consequences as an

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error in this. The same is true in regard to the whole Church. This doctrine is indispensable, if she is expected to introduce souls into the kingdom of Christ. When we speak of Justification, we speak of the Christian religion, for the doctrine of Christianity is none other than the revelation of God concerning the manner in which men are justified and saved through the redemption of Christ. All other religions point out a different way to heaven. The one demands the performance of good works to merit heaven; another the exercise of great virtue, etc.; but the Christian religion alone exhibits a different way by the doctrine of Justification, and thus discloses what never entered the mind of man - thoughts which lay hid in the heart of God before the foundation of the world. Therefore all other doctrines lose their significance when the doctrine of Justification is not correctly entertained. It could be a matter of indifference to us whether God subsists in three [KM2] or six persons, as long as we were obliged to dread Him as an angry God. But the doctrine of Justification, which reveals the several functions of the Trinity in the work of man's salvation, constitutes that doctrine one that is full of consolation and salvation. Whoever therefore attacks this doctrine, attacks the whole Christian system, the whole body of doctrine. As long as this doctrine is perfectly pure, no error can be effective in our minds; for, as Luther repeatedly declares, "This doctrine suffers no error." It is the sun in the firmament of the Church, dispelling all shades by its kindling rays. Therefore the Apology declares:

"This controversy concerns the principle and most important article of the whole Christian doctrine; and much indeed depends upon this article, which contributes especially to a clear, correct apprehension of all the Holy Scriptures, and which alone shows the way to the unspeakable treasure and knowledge of Christ; yea, which is the only key to the whole Bible, and without which the poor conscience can have no true, invariable, fixed hope, nor conceive the riches of the grace of Christ. As our adversaries do not understand or know, what is meant in the Scriptures by remission of sin, by faith, grace, and righteousness, they have miserably defiled this noble, indispensable, and leading article, without which no one can know Christ; they have entirely suppressed the invaluable treasure of the knowledge of Christ, of His kingdom, and of His grace; and robbed poor consciences of this noble and great treasure and of this eternal comfort, so valuable and important to them."

We are obliged to repeat these words in our age. Not only the Papists, but all the sects have horribly defiled this spring of salvation. This is, indeed, frequently denied. But we must steadfastly encounter the Unionism of our age, which leads people to believe that in the doctrine of Justification we are of one accord with Methodists, Presbyterians, etc., though not in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper and the Person of Christ. We are obliged to repeat that not a shadow of the pure doctrine of Justification is found in their peculiar systems. They indeed use our language, but then divulge such opinions in regard to penitence, sanctification, etc., as plainly show that they wish to save man by his own exertions. But he that does this, deprives us of the only light we have. Therefore "whatever may happen, though heaven and earth should fall, nothing in this article can be yielded or rescinded. 'For there is none other Name

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whereby we must be saved; and with His stripes we are healed.' Upon this article depends all that we teach and do against the pope, the devil, and all the world. We must, therefore, be entirely certain of this, and not doubt it, otherwise all will be lost, and the pope and the devil, and our opponents, will prevail and obtain the victory." (Smalcald Articles, part II.) [KM3] We ought to know these words by heart. On account of this article the pope calls us heretics, and the sects denounce us a people who obstruct conversion and teach carnal security. They prevail against us if we yield herein. The Formula of Concord declares in the article concerning Justification:

"This article concerning Justification by faith is, as the Apology declares, the leading article of the whole Christian doctrine; without which a disturbed conscience can have no sure consolation, or rightly conceive the riches of the grace of Christ; as Doctor Luther has written: *'If this single article remains pure, Christendom will also remain pure and harmonious, and without any factions; but if it remain not pure, it is impossible to resist any error or fanatical spirit.'* And with respect to this article in particular, Paul says: *'A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.'* For that reason he enforces in this article, with so much earnestness and zeal, the *particulae exclusivae*, - namely, the words, 'without law,' 'without works,' 'by grace,' by which the works of man are excluded, - for the purpose of showing how highly necessary it is, in this article, not only to unfold the true doctrine, but also to set forth the contrary doctrines, that they may be discriminated, exposed, and rejected."

Controversy against false doctrine only becomes of practical value to a Christian, when he realizes that when other points are corrupted, this cannot possibly remain pure. Luther beautifully traces out how, for instance, in case of Nestorian-Zwinglian doctrine of the Person of Christ, the doctrine of Justification could not remain unimpaired. He shows that the doctrine of Justification is indeed destroyed by the ungodly Reformed doctrine that the mere man Christ Jesus, and not God, died on the cross. This doctrine robs a poor sinner of all consolation in the hour of death. Only this [KM4] proves consolatory, that for us the blood of *God* was shed, a drop of which is of infinitely greater value than heaven and earth. The same is true of all other articles. The doctrine of Justification has also been termed the "*articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*" (the article of a standing and falling Church); and such it is in truth. Dr. Luther speaks of it thus:

"This article is the prime article of our faith. When the same is taken away, as do the Jews, or when it is falsified, as the papists do, neither the Church can remain, nor God retain His honor. Which honor is this, that He is gracious and merciful, and will forgive us our sins for the sake of His Son."

Again: "As long as the Church confessed this article, she remained in the faith; and the faith was clearer at one time, and darker at another. Without this article the Church does not stand. Mahomet indeed devastated the Church, and the pope obscured the doctrine of faith, but where this article remained, there God maintained His Church."

Again: "The Papists are determined not to suffer this article; therefore we know of no remedy. *For where this article is gone, the Church is gone, and no error can be resisted*, because apart from this article the Holy Ghost

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neither will nor can abide with us, for His office is to glorify Christ. On account of this article the world has often suffered by flood, tempests, inundations, wars, and other plagues. On account of this article Abel and all the saints were slain and all Christians also must die on its account. Nevertheless it has remained and must remain and the world must ever perish on its account. Thus it shall also suffer now and be cast down on account of this article; and if it should go mad, it shall let this article stand, and shall fall into the pit of hell on its account. Amen."

Again: "Therefore the article of Justification, which at this time we alone teach, shall be diligently studied and kept. *For if we have lost this, we shall not be able to resist any heresy, any false doctrine, be it never so foolish and vain*; as it happened under the papacy, when we believed things of which we are now ashamed and sorry. On the other hand, if we abide by this article, we are secure against heresy and keep the remission of sins, which overlooks our infirmity in conversation and faith."

Again: "This point is the chief and corner stone, which alone brings forth, strengthens, edifies, maintains, and defends the Church of God; and without this point the Church of God cannot exist for an hour."

That this article is indeed that of the standing and falling Church, is very plain to those who have the pure doctrine of the Church. For what else is the Church but the totality of Christian believers? Hence the Church exists where Christ rules and reigns in grace; but He rules in the heart. Therefore wherever Christ has conquered a heart, there is His kingdom; and therefore where regenerate and living Christians exist, there is His Church. Every other doctrine may indeed make great Pharisees, but no Christians. A man only becomes a Christian by the Holy Ghost illuminating his heart and showing him that he is redeemed, has the remission of sins, righteousness, etc., wherefore he can cheerfully depart [KM5] in peace. Everything else which does not lead to this assurance, begets hypocrisy and godlessness. Therefore superlative skill in human wisdom is not necessary in order to show people the way to heaven, but by all means the faithful adherence to this article. If only the minister keeps this article pure, and if only his whole sermon is governed by the thought - salvation alone through Christ; then, even if he occasionally fails in the form or even in expression, it would do no injury; whereas another who does not live and move in this article, may indeed preach logically correct, but nevertheless fails to lead his congregation to true consolation. He may

perhaps wonder himself, and his congregation with him, why this fruit will not follow; but the fault surely lies in the sphere of this article. In fine: Where this article exists, there surely is Christ, there are Christians, there is Christ's Church, and where it is not, there is no Church.

(end of November 1, 1872 portion of SCR 1872 report, first Thesis; continued in November 15, 1872 issue)

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(Lutheran Standard, November 15, 1872, page 169f, column 2)

The second Thesis points out how the doctrine of Justification forms the starting point of the Reformation, begun by God through the instrumentality of Luther. Luther would never have become the Reformer of the Church, if he had not attained the true apprehension of this very article. Many before him undertook to reform the Church, but it is quite evident that they failed in this leading point, from which alone the Church can be reformed, and their efforts were not attended with success. It pleased God however to suffer this light to dawn upon Luther and increase in brightness by degrees. He led him to despair of himself, and, by means of the reading of the Scriptures and the writings of Augustine, to embrace the merits of Christ, and in this way to perceive the infernal gloom reigning in the papacy, where, in opposition to this very article, the Gospel was turned into a new law. The manner in which God conducted His servant is exhibited by the following passage from his writings:

"I indeed heartily yearned to understand St Paul's Epistle to the Romans aright, and *nothing else had hitherto hindered me, but only the single expression, 'justitia Dei' (righteousness of God) in the first chapter, verse 17, where Paul says the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel.* I hated this expression 'the righteousness of God,' and knew no better, according to the custom and instruction of all teachers, than to understand it in a philosophical sense of the righteousness in which God is righteous *of Himself*, does right and punishes all the sinners and unrighteous, which righteousness is called the essential (*formalen*) or the actual (*activem.*) Now I was in such a state, that although I lived as a holy and blameless monk, I found myself a great sinner before God, and moreover possessed of a timorous and disquieted conscience, and did not venture to appease God with my satisfactions and merits. Therefore I did not love this [KM6] righteous and angry God at all, who punishes sin, but hated Him, and (if this was no *blasphemy* or to be accounted as such) secretly and earnestly *frowned* upon God. And I oftentimes said: Is not God content with this, that He subjects us poor miserable sinners, already under the condemnation of eternal death by reason of original sin, to all manner of this life's sorrows and tribulations, besides the terrors and threatenings of the law; and must He augment this misery and grief through the Gospel, and proceed to threaten and announce His righteousness and severe

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anger through its message and voice? Here I was often angered in my perplexed conscience; but nevertheless I continued, revolving in my mind what blessed Paul might mean in this place, and was heartily anxious to ascertain it. I spent day and night in such reflections, until I perceived, by the grace of God, how the words are connected thus: The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel, as it is written, The just shall live by (his) faith. Here I learned to understand it as the *righteousness of God*, in which the just, through the grace and gift of God, lives by faith alone, and that the Apostle's meaning is this: *The righteousness is revealed through the Gospel which is accounted before God, in which God, of pure grace and mercy, justifies us by faith*, which is called in Latin *justitiam passivam*, as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." *Here I presently felt that I was wholly born anew, and had now found, as it were, a wide opened door leading into Paradise itself.* Now I also regarded the blessed Scriptures quite differently from what I had done before; and therefore ran through the whole Bible, as far as I could recollect it, and also gathered all its expositions, couched in other terms, according to this rule, as, for instance, that *God's work* means what He works in us Himself; *God's power*, the act of invigorating and strengthening us; in like manner the other: God's strength, God's salvation, God's glory, and the like. Wherefore, even as formerly I sincerely hated the expression 'the righteousness' of God, I now began to treasure it as my dearest and most comfortable word, and the same passage in St. Paul was to me, in truth the very gate to Paradise."

Also in the words, "In my heart reigns alone and shall also reign this only article," Luther declared that nothing else but this doctrine directed him in the work of the Reformation. Also in other lands and ages, it was this doctrine which renewed the Church. Luther had indeed early discerned the multitude of popish abominations, but he still entertained the false doctrine concerning the Church, and therefore imagined a vigorous opposition to these would involve rebellion against the Church. Only when he clearly realized that the righteousness of the Gospel is that which God imparts and by which He justifies sinners, the gates of Paradise were unfolded to him, and now he could encounter the papacy with all its deceits, like a hero in the strife. The results attending the corruption of this article may be plainly recognized in our own land. What abominable and crazy errors arise and find supporters nevertheless! Why? Because when people have lost the rule determining [KM7] truth and error, they indeed doubt for a while, but falling into the hands of a cunning fox who knows how to impart an air of plausibility to the matter,

they espouse the error after all. We must therefore have a rule and standard which cuts off the possibility of adopting error, and this rule is the doctrine of Justification. Whoever

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has apprehended this, laughs at all the learning and eloquence of all unbelieving and half believing Professors, when they teach wrong; if, what they establish and announce does not harmonize with the simple truth, "The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin," even the most simple treads it under foot, though arrayed in all the show of wisdom and holiness. This was the reason why Luther was such an unconquerable Reformer. If he had failed here, a man like Erasmus could have vanquished him with ease. But since he stood upon this rock, he laughed at the Pope's Doctors and at Zwingli besides. When new, delusive spirits presented themselves, he tried them according to this article, and if they dissented, he unceremoniously cast them out. But this doctrine must be espoused by us in such manner as to form the leading principle of all our faith, life, ministry, &c., and then our congregations will rejoice in its consolation. When they realize that we go about to assure them of salvation, they will regard us as the best friends they have. For what are they profited by eloquent orators, popular preachers, dignified ministers? Little indeed. But when they can affirm that their pastors assure them of salvation, so that they are able to exult, "We know in whom we believe;" then they have the "better part" for time and eternity. Then they will no longer regard Churches and Synods as clerical institutions, which spend much and profit little, but realize that our whole object is to communicate to them and all the world the good tidings, Ye are redeemed and saved: only believe and accept it as your own. Then they will cheerfully assist in the dissemination of these tidings by their gifts.

Now important as this doctrine is, it can nevertheless be preached in the fullness of its consolation, and power, and in all its transparency, even by those less liberally endowed when the Reformation began, what ministers preached the Gospel? What sort of troops were there to oppose the devil and his hosts? They looked poor enough indeed, and according to human opinions we would have been obliged to say: Poor Luther, retire to your cell, and hide yourself, for with your poor bankrupt little priests you will accomplish never a whit. But lo, they possessed the article of Justification in its purity, and thus constituted an unconquerable and victorious host. It is the same with us today. A comparison of many of our students with those educated 200 years ago, might cause us to despair. But we need not despair. For even the weakest, if he has grasped the doctrine that the grace of God has been manifested in Jesus Christ and is apprehended by faith, can preach so as to lead men to the assurance of their salvation; and that outweighs all the gifts and treasures of the world. Such ministers will never lack material. They will ever be ready to speak of what God has in mercy done for us, and that will ever replenish them with new joyfulness. What is all learning, important as it is in its own place, in comparison with [KM8] the wisdom of God, which is proclaimed when simply the passage is expounded, "God so loved the world," &c.? This fills sinners with joy, calls forth the admiration of all the holy angels, and in the presence of this the whole world ought to cast itself upon its knees and sing praises to God. If our rising generation of ministers preaches this, then they shall be the people who may begin a reformation in this land; for a small beginning has already been made in this way. For this

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creates truly living congregations, and not such as make a great noise about their activity and deeds, but such as, living in this doctrine, willingly offer in the beauty of holiness. In fine: Let us learn of Luther that we cannot inaugurate a reformation here, unless we firmly believe this doctrine, with Divine assurance proclaim it, and hold it fast and guard it.

In the 3rd Thesis three points are particularly specified, because, in setting forth the doctrine of Justification, it is customary to speak of three causes where we wish to describe the originating principle of the whole doctrine. Then we inquire first, what is the efficient cause, secondly, what is the moving cause, and thirdly, what is the instrumental cause, whereby that which the efficient cause has designed for us is brought into our actual possession. The first cause of Justification is the Triune God, which every one admits who still speaks of Justification, and therefore we pass over this point. The second is two-fold, an internal and external cause. The internal is God's grace and mercy, which again no body denies, not even the pope. But now the question arises, What is the external moving cause? We reply, The redemption of Christ, which moves God to declare us poor accursed sinners righteous. The instrumental causes are again of a two-fold nature, one on the part of God and the other on the part of man. On the part of God it is the Word and Sacraments. Here already all parties begin to diverge. On the part of man it is faith, and here there is a truly Babylonian confusion among the sects, when they undertake to explain what is faith. One regards it as something transpiring in the mind, another as something experienced in the heart, &c. If, accordingly, we desire to be assured of our unity, the discussion will chiefly relate to the external moving cause of Justification, the redemption, and to the instrumental causes, to wit, the Word and Sacraments, and faith. If we are of one accord in these points, we are truly one in the whole body of doctrine; for all the differences existing in Christendom originate in this point. This doctrine cannot be considered, indeed, without at the same time considering the complete corruption of man, on account of which he is by nature a child of wrath and

damnation ; but our attention must be chiefly directed to the point *how* lost and condemned man is *justified and saved*.

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Thesis 4. As in Adam all men have fallen and passed under the wrath of God and everlasting damnation as the punishment of sin, so also in Christ, as the second Adam, all men have been truly redeemed from sin, death, devil, and hell, and God is truly reconciled to them all.

This Thesis declares that the [KM9] redemption by Christ is not for a select few, but absolutely for all, and hence also for those who are lost. This is proved by Holy Scripture when it speaks of the redemption by Christ without any restriction, and ascribes universality to it, even as to the fall of Adam. "Christ," says the Apostle, "is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the *sins of the whole world*." And John 1, 29 He is called "the Lamb of God which taketh away *the sin of the world*." It is affirmed of Him, 2 Cor. 5, 19, "God was in Christ, *reconciling the world unto Himself*," &c., and Col. 1, 20, "To *reconcile all things* unto Himself," and that "by the grace of God He tasted *death for every man*." Heb. 2, 9. All these passages prove that the redemption of Christ was made for all. As an explanation of the phrase, "Christ the second Adam," we subjoin the following declaration of the Apology:

"But the whole world is therefore subject to God, subdued by the law; for, by the commandments of the law, we are all accused; but by the works of the law, no one is justified. Through the law sin is made known to us,

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but guilt is removed by faith. It appears, indeed, as if the law had done harm, by including all under sin ; but Christ the Lord has come, and remitted our sins, which we could not avoid; and has blotted out the hand-writing, by the shedding of His blood. This is what Paul says to the Romans, 5, 20: '*The law entered, that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound through Jesus. For, inasmuch as the whole world is guilty, He has taken away the sins of the whole world; as John testifies: 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'*'"

We must not however extend the analogy between Christ and Adam too far, for there is a difference between grace and the curse. As soon as a man is man, he is in possession of the curse, but not in possession of the merits of Christ. The treasure indeed is provided for all, his debt is paid, forgiveness of sins, life and salvation is restored; but in order to take personal possession of this treasure, it is necessary that he should acknowledge and accept the work of Christ, and in this respect there is a difference between Adam and Christ. Adam was not a *Mediator* but a *progenitor*, who propagated death in his *natural* children. But Christ does not propagate life through natural descendants, but *spiritually*, when sinful man acknowledges and accepts His work, which takes place by faith. Hence we must accept Christ's universal payment, as our own, in order that it may be *imputed* unto us individually. It is not written, As by one man all men are begotten in sin, so by another all are begotten righteous; but, "As by the offence 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." The analogy accordingly is this: As sin and damnation came upon all through Adam, so righteousness and salvation came upon all through Christ; as death came upon all through Adam, so life came upon all through Christ.

The universality of redemption must however be considered in the same way as we consider the liberation of a number of slaves enfranchised by purchase. [KM10] As soon as the money is paid down, we say they are all free, though, if they do not accept the liberation, they are not individually free. *They are free according to the intention of him who liberated them, but in bondage by reason of their own wicked will*. Thus Christ liberated mankind, the slaves of death and hell, for He made full payment for all, so that none need remain a slave; but nevertheless the majority remain in bondage, because they do not consider His payment a full equivalent for their sins. Therefore since the resurrection of Christ, it is not so much this or that particular sin which damns, but unbelief, which is the sin of sins. Therefore the Lord also says, "The

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Holy Ghost will reprove the world of sin," and immediately adds, "Of sin, because they believe not on Me," intending to show, that since the Son of God has liberated mankind, the debt of the whole world is truly discharged. This is attested in particular by the resurrection of Christ. What was the resurrection of Christ? It was an act of God in which Christ was pronounced righteous. Christ entered into death laden not with his own, but with the sin and unrighteousness of the whole world. For the sake of these sins He was sentenced and consigned to death. When the Father raised Him again He declared that the debt is discharged, He is righteous. As therefore Christ was

condemned not for His own sake, but for the sake of mankind whose sins He bore; so was He not justified for His own sake by the resurrection. Mankind however was justified, for whose sake He died and rose again.

The apparently contradictory statements of Scripture, that the world is absolved, and that the guilt rests upon unbelievers as long as they do not repent, must be solved in this wise: We must distinguish two ways in which God views mankind. When He views the world in Christ, He looks upon it with infinite love; but when He beholds it out of Christ, He can no otherwise than behold it with fiery indignation. Accordingly the wrath of God abides upon him who does not believe in Christ, or even rejects Him, notwithstanding the fact that God beholds him with the eyes of love when He beholds him in his Son and considers His atonement; even as Scripture says: "*God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son.*" Hence God is angry at sinners, and yet loves them, and loves them in such wise as to give His Only-begotten Son to die for them! Beholding the world in the atonement of His Son, He looks upon it as a reconciled world. But when an individual comes and refuses this reconciliation, him He can none otherwise behold but in flaming indignation. *According to the procuration of salvation, God is no longer angry with any man; but according to the appropriation thereof, He is angry at every one who is not in Christ.* We may say that in such wise as the individual is a part of redeemed mankind, God is not angry with him; but in such wise as he is individually an unbeliever, God is angry with him indeed. But here is a profound mystery. God is without passions, unchangeable, for [KM11] "Thou art the same." Therefore we cannot clearly conceive *how* God can love the world collectively, and yet be angry at the sinner individually; but Scripture teaches both. Now it is the Lutheran fashion to accept with implicit faith what we cannot reconcile. As *incomprehensible* however as it is, it is still by no means *self-contradictory*. God loves the world and hates unbelievers: we must supplement, in a different respect. It is something like this: Man is both mortal and immortal: mortal in body but immortal in soul. Christ has taken the place of the whole world, and

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atoned for it. God in this wise regards the world with delight. But not so out of Christ. In this respect His wrath, if it were possible, must be even greater after that event. In regard to the question whether it is proper to say, The totality of mankind is indeed acquitted, but not individually, it is necessary to reply: Through Christ God is reconciled to each and every one individually. Judgment must however be pronounced upon every person individually, either for his acquittal or condemnation. Luther declares that God requested His Son to be Peter who denied, Paul who persecuted, David who committed adultery, the sinner who ate the forbidden fruit, &c. He says:

"Here the law comes and accuses Christ, and declares: I find Him among the sinners, yea, as Him who has taken the sins of all men upon Himself, *and lo, in the whole world there is no sin, but on Him alone.*" Again: "*Through the innocent death of Christ the whole world is cleansed and liberated from sin and therefore delivered from death and [KM12] all evil.*" Then, after enlarging on this subject, he proceeds: "*One of these two must certainly and incontrovertibly be true: Namely, if the sins of all the world rest upon the one Man Jesus Christ, as the Holy Ghost testifies by Isaiah 53, 6, they certainly do not rest upon the world; if they do not rest upon Him, then without fail, they certainly must still rest upon the world.* Again: *If Christ Himself became guilty of all the sins we ever committed, we certainly are absolved, liberated, and acquitted of all sins; not however was such accomplished by our own selves, our works or merits, but by Him.*"

The fanatics generally regard the matter thus: Christ only suffered in order that God might be enabled to take man to heaven for the sake of his conversion. They do not believe that all, without exception, was done by Christ, and that God therefore freely bestows salvation without our concurrent deeds. Something, according to their opinion, remains to be done by man. And this is conversion. But Scripture teaches that all was done by Christ, and that salvation awaits us, and is dispensed in the Holy Christian Church through the Gospel. Nothing more is [KM13] necessary, but that salvation should be accepted. This is what we wish to say when we speak of perfect redemption. Not that man is already in possession of something and that God only supplies the remainder, or that God has done something, and man supplies the rest, but that God has already done all. When Lutherans, who otherwise use Lutheran phrases, deny that God is reconciled to the whole world, they must deny what they have already granted. The angry God cannot offer pardon, but God who loves all in Christ because purchased by Him. Of course man must be converted if he wishes to be saved, but conversion is not the cause why God saves, but the way in which man attains faith, which simply embraces the complete salvation already bestowed.

The benefits of the kingdom of God are in store not only for those in the kingdom, but for all, without exception. There is room for all, but all do not take possession of the room. Those who oppose the doctrine of the perfect redemption of Christ generally say: Indeed, Christ redeemed all, but we are not perfectly redeemed until we believe. But those who make this affirmation, do not consider what they maintain. If we are saved by the belief that we are saved, salvation must previously be in store. Who would be so foolish as to

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imagine that by believing something to exist, we cause it to exist! Therefore as certainly as God says we shall enjoy pardon and salvation, so certainly all these things must exist before we believe. When we make this affirmation we do not wish to tell people: Never mind if you do not believe, you can slip into heaven anyhow, for your atonement

has already been made. On the contrary, we testify to them that their damnation is infinitely greater if they do not believe; for the table was prepared, but they would not come; therefore none of these slights shall taste of His supper. But justification by faith is possible for the very reason that all necessary to the attainment of salvation has already been accomplished, so that man need only accept the gift. This act of *acceptation* the Bible calls *faith*. Righteous God could not take us to heaven before being reconciled to us; but He does take all to heaven who believe, therefore righteousness and reconciliation must already exist.

The sectarians do not simply regard faith as a *hand*, but as a *condition* which man must fulfill before he can go to heaven; whereas faith is nothing but an empty hand which God must fill. If we had nothing else but faith, and not Christ, (which of course is impossible), we would be damned with all our faith; for not the act of faith, [KM14] but Christ whom we thereby embrace, makes us pleasing to God. And this is what all fanatics overlook. They wish to secure some place for the activity of man, and therefore they now lodge it in man's faith, now in his penitence, again in his conversion, and yet again in his sanctification. As said before, man cannot get to heaven without conversion, change of heart, &c., but he is not saved on account of his change of heart, but must come as a poor sinner, appealing to the compassion of God by the redemption of Christ. All conceivable stress must be laid upon the fact that God's wrath is already turned from all mankind by the passion of Christ, and that the Gospel invitation be extended to all, Take and accept the proffered grace! It would indeed be terrifying if a minister were obliged to think that the wrath of God was still abiding upon his congregation; but such not being the case, he can cheerfully exclaim, "*Be ye reconciled to God!*" The Formula of Concord intimates that Pharaoh was damned for none other reason than that he pertinaciously resisted the workings of God's grace. If no change in God's relation to man had taken place through the atonement of Christ, what sense would the word "atonement" convey. We would be obliged to erase it from the Bible. As certainly therefore as the Bible says, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" just as certainly no wrath can exist in His heart, when He conceives the world as in Christ. But that God does so in fact, is not an empty imagination, but attested by the redeeming work of Christ. But God also looks about the world and beholds how some would rather be descendants of monkeys than embrace the atonement of Christ; wherefore the fire of His indignation kindles upon them 'into the nethermost hell. This is no contradiction. But it indeed is a contradiction to affirm that God must be reconciled by our faith; for without the fact of God's previous reconciliation nobody can obtain faith.

This two-fold relation must also be observed in another respect. Christ on the Cross is both righteous and a sinner. Now, is He a sinner or not? [KM15] He is not a sinner in His

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own person; but as the world's substitute He is such indeed, yea as Scripture says, "*Sin*," because the sins of sinners were imputed unto Him. Hence according to His person He is righteous; but according to His mediatorial office He is a sinner. it is the same way with believers. When considered according to their nature they are sinners; but when considered according to their "Righteousness," which they have embraced in faith, they are indeed righteous. In certain respects the same is also true of the world. In its own nature it "lieth in wickedness;" but redeemed by Christ, it is reconciled to God. In such wise it is true there is no more sin in the world. Christ has taken it away; and in such wise the whole world is also free from death, the devil, and damnation. And this must be preached, and not obscured. The fear that people may abuse this doctrine dare not restrain the truth. And this is just what keeps back the fanatics from proclaiming it without any restriction. They imagine that it leads to carnal security.

The Formula of Concord says: "Concerning the righteousness of faith before God we teach unanimously, that poor sinful man is justified before God-that is, absolved, and declared free from all his sins, and from the sentence of his well-deserved condemnation, and is adopted as a child and an heir of eternal life -without any human merit or worthiness, and without any antecedent, present, or subsequent works, out of pure grace, for the sake of the merit, the perfect obedience, the bitter sufferings and death, and the resurrection of Christ our Lord alone; whose obedience is imputed to us for righteousness. *These blessings are offered unto us through the Holy Spirit, in the promise of the Gospel*; and faith is the only medium through which we apprehend and receive them, and apply and appropriate them to ourselves. Accordingly, these propositions are equivalent when Paul says, that '*man is justified by faith*;' or that '*faith is counted unto us for righteousness*;' and when he says that '*by the obedience of one Mediator, Christ*, [KM16] '*shall many be made righteous*;' or that '*by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men, unto justification of life*.' For faith justifies us, not because it is a work of great value and eminent virtue, but because it apprehends and receives the merit of Christ in the promise of the Gospel. Since, however, it is the obedience of the whole person [of Christ], it is also a *perfect satisfaction and reconciliation for the human race*."

"Gospel" means "glad tidings." Why is it called so? Because Christ has done the work which we ought to do, but never could do, and the Heavenly Father by a sign from heaven - the resurrection of His Son - declared Himself perfectly satisfied, wherefore all we need to do is to accept what is done and rejoice with all our heart. Whoever takes offence at this and imagines that it leads off to carnal security, only shows that he has not yet tasted that manna himself. Experience [KM17] would teach him a different lesson. He might as well preach the Koran, or the Talmud, or the Pope's Canon Law; but if he wishes to make happy Christians, let him preach "the good tidings of great joy." There is ample provision against carnal security. The Law must be preached in all its terrors, and in

such manner as to cause men to quail with fear, so that not a ray of hope seems left. Then the contrary must be disclosed by the Gospel. Such preaching establishes men on a firm foundation. The sectarians conceive of redemption thus: Christ by His passion opened

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a way for men to accomplish of their own accord what is necessary to salvation. Though they discourse largely about faith, they entertain this opinion nevertheless, and even turn faith into a meritorious work. This is characteristically popish. The Papists do not deny that Christ died for our sins, but after all they do not believe it; for they teach that we must obtain heaven by penitence and other good works, to which, of course, Christ imparts meritoriousness, and supplies the rest. In the same way the sects mingle man's work into the business of justification; wherefore they hate the doctrine of the vicarious, active, obedience of Christ, (as the Methodists have publicly opposed it for a succession of years), and of His perfect redemption, and imagine that if they only get rid of their past sins through Christ, they will presently become so holy in life, as to cause God Himself to marvel. We, on the contrary, confess our-selves as lost and condemned sinners, and affirm that God must do all for our salvation, and *bestow* a righteousness upon us, which calls forth the admiration of angels, yea, of the Son of God Himself! For He declares, "God so loved the world," &c., as if He wished to say: Who ever heard the like? "*so*," so intensely God loved *the world*, that He gave His Son to such a pack of scandalous sinners; gave Him in such manner as to let them deal with Him as they pleased; consigned Him to misery, and left them to slay him, in order that the world might be redeemed! Thus the Son of God Himself marvels. Therefore the Apostle says: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: *that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled* IN US, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Inasmuch as He became our Brother, flesh of our flesh, righteousness is fulfilled *in us*; not indeed in every one individually, but in human kind. For this reason it was of such importance that Christ should not bring down a humanity from heaven, but should assume the same from Mary the Virgin; for now humanity is truly justified in Him. This we are to preach, [KM18] and whoever embraces this, is a happy man. Unhappy however is he, who dislikes this; for God cries out into the world, "All things are ready," hasten, and take grace, health, life; but alas, proud man disdains these choicest of God's gifts, which God offers, *extends, and imparts* in the Gospel. It is best, however, to drop the word "*mittheilen*" (communicate) when speaking of the universal justification of the world, since it is generally understood to embrace the *acceptance* of the offer at the same time.

Thesis 5. As by the vicarious death of Christ, the guilt of the whole world was cancelled, and the punishment thereof was borne; even so by the resurrection of Christ, righteousness, life, and salvation is restored for the whole world, and in Christ, as the Substitute of all mankind, has come upon all men.

This Thesis is added to the former in order to show how the resurrection of Christ is the foundation and corner-stone of justification. By the shedding of His blood, Christ paid the ransom of the world, and by His resurrection the Father testifies that He accepted the sacrifice of His Son as full, perfect, and sufficient. In Scripture the death and resurrection of Christ are often coupled together, and the Apostles, characterizing the substance of their office, straightway call themselves witnesses of the resurrection, in order to give promi-

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nence to the importance thereof at the same time. Thus, for instance the Apostle Paul says: "Christ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Accordingly if Christ was raised for *our justification*, the resurrection must be the foundation upon which it rests, without which it would be impossible. But this justification is general, and is acquired for all, for it is written: "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; *even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto the justification of life.*" Laden with sin, which through one man came upon all, Christ entered death, and from this sin of *all* He was absolved by the resurrection, which took place for the good of all mankind. Therefore it is not enough, according to Rom. 8, 33, 34 that Christ died, but the resurrection is rather the great and final cause of Justification. Wherefore the Apostle writes, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." Accordingly the whole work of redemption would have been pronounced ineffectual, if God had not raised Jesus from the dead. Even many of the clergy do not properly understand the object of the resurrection. According to certain Scriptural passages they regard it as a proof of Christ's divinity and a demonstration of the fact and certainty of our own resurrection. But true as this is, it is not the chief object. To furnish a *mere* [KM19] proof of the former, Christ would not have died and risen again; and the latter was sufficiently demonstrated by the resurrection of others before Christ. Now the world is free from guilt, therefore it can shout victory. This does not conflict with the fact that man is justified by faith; for when we speak of faith, we lay stress upon the personal appropriation on the part of man, of the righteousness acquired by Christ; and its imputation on the part of God. But this would be impossible, if the world had not first been justified by the death and resurrection of Christ, and if Christ's condemnation in death had not been followed by His absolution in the resurrection.

Dr. Luther commenting on Galatians 1, 2, "*And God the Father who hath raised Him from the dead,*" speaks of the subject on this wise: "It seemeth here that the adding of these words, 'And by God the Father,' &c. is

not necessary. But because (as I said) Paul speaketh out of the abundance of his heart, his mind burneth with desire to set forth, even in the very outset of his Epistle, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to preach the righteousness of God, 'which is called the resurrection of the dead.' Christ who liveth and is risen again, speaketh out of him, and moveth him thus to speak; therefore, not without cause he added, that 'he is also an Apostle, by God the Father, who hath raised up Jesus Christ from the dead.' As if he should say, I have to deal with Satan and with those vipers, the instruments of Satan, who go about to spoil me of the righteousness of Christ, who was raised up by God the Father from the dead; by the which alone we are made righteous, by the which also we shall be raised up at the last day, from death to everlasting life. But they that in such sort go about to overthrow the righteousness of Christ, do resist the Father and the Son, and the work of them both. Thus Paul, even at the first entrance, bursteth out into the whole matter whereof he treateth in this Epistle. For (as I said) he treateth of the resurrection of Christ, *who rose again to make us righteous*, and in so doing lie hath over-

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come the law, sin, death, hell, and all evils. (Rom. 4, 24.25.) Christ's victory, then, is the overcoming of the law, of sin, our flesh, the world, the devil, death, hell, and all evils; and this His victory He hath given unto us. Although, then, that these tyrants, and these enemies of ours, do accuse us, and make us afraid, yet can they not drive us to despair, nor condemn us; for Christ, whom God the Father hath raised up from the dead, is our righteousness and victory (1 Cor. 15, 57); therefore, thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

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In reference to an inquiry of the Norwegian Synod as to the judgment of the Synodical Conference in regard to the charges made by the Iowa Synod against the Norwegian Synod's defense of the doctrine of a universal justification, Conference replied to this effect:

This doctrine is positive1y taught Rom. 5, 18, and it is therefore not only a Biblical *doctrine*, but also a Biblical expression, that *the justification of life came upon all men*. None but a Calvinistic exposition could explain this passage in such manner as to restrict this universal justification to the elect. Therefore elder orthodox theologians of our Church also speak of the universal justification acquired and extended to all. Gerhard says, Christ's resurrection is the universal [KM20] absolution; but absolution is nothing else but justification. In Christ the sinful *world* was condemned to death, and in His resurrection even the *same world* was pronounced righteous. Accordingly, when the minister absolves he dispenses the: previously existing treasure of the forgiveness of sins. If the treasure did not exist, no minister could absolve, nor could we even speak of justification *by faith*, since faith is equivalent to the acceptance of what previously exists. For if the world was not already justified, believing would e equivalent to the performance of a work unto justification. Wherefore this language is not only not objectionable, but even perfectly Biblical. Those who affirm that God *made*, but did not *pronounce* the whole world righteous, again

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deny the whole work of general justification; for the "declaration" of the Father cannot be severed from the righteous "making" of the Son. Of course this does not avail to the possession of salvation if man does not accept justification. Therefore the subject was again illustrated by the liberation of a number of slaves. Our older theologians would have employed the term more frequently, (since they believed and taught the thing), if Huber had not coupled universal justification with a universal election. In 1593 the ~~Wittenberg~~ [error in Lutheran Standard – Württemberg – RL] theologians Heerbrand, Gerlach, Hafenreffer, Osiander, Bidenbach and others, conceded to Huber that he dissented from them "more in the terms and manner of speech than in the subject itself." The Wittenberg theologians, Gesner, Leyser, Hunnius and others, refused to tolerate Huber's expression, "Christ *properly* imparts the redemption to the whole human race, because the term "*proper* impartation," "as employed in the universities," refers to the *appropriation* thereof. [KM21] Nevertheless no small number of undoubtedly sound theologians speak of general justification or absolution.

John Quistorp: "The word justification and propitiation is used in a twofold manner, (1) in reference to the acquired merit, (2) in reference to the appropriated merit. Thus all are justified, and *some* are justified. *All* in reference to the acquired merit; *some* in reference to the appropriated merit."

John Gerhard: "As God punished our sins in Christ, because cast upon and imputed to Him as our Substitute; so in like manner, by raising Him up from the dead, He, by this very deed, absolved Him from our sins imputed to Him, and hence, in Him, has also absolved us."

Godfrey Olearius says, in his dissertation on the resurrection of Christ, that Christ paid what He pledged Himself to pay, and that His payment was sufficient His resurrection proves, inasmuch as it shows that our Substitute was acquitted, because the obligations He assumed were discharged by His satisfaction, whence we with Him are justified before the tribunal of God. Hence the word of faith, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again."

John Jacob RAMBACH: "Christ, in His resurrection, was first of all justified for His own person, Isaiah 50, 5, 1 Tim. 3, 16, when the righteousness of God declared itself perfectly satisfied and paid by this our Substitute, and, as it were, furnished Him with a receipt thereof; and this took place in tile resurrection, when He was dismissed from the debtors' prison and set at large. Now, inasmuch as the Substitute was justified, *all debtors have also been justified in Him.*" Again: "*The justification of the human race indeed also took place in a moment as regards its purchase; but as regards its appropriation, it continues to the day of judgment.*"

ADAM STRUENSEE: "What Paul says of Christ's death, 2 Cor. 5, 14, 'We thus judge,

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that if one died for all, then were all dead,' can also be applied to Christ's resurrection: *If one arose for all, then are all arisen and justified;* because God was in Christ and reconciled the world unto Himself, and imputed their sins not unto them, for He imputed them to Christ."

PH. D. BURK: "Indeed it cannot be denied that the Scriptures in some places speak of *justification* as a *universal* blessing extending over all mankind; for instance Rom. 5, 18, 'By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto the justification of life.' Again 2 Cor. 5, 19, 'God reconciled the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' And a witness of the truth must by all means preach the Gospel in such manner as to make God's universal offer of grace to all men his chief business. *And every soul which is expected to attain faith, must lay the foundation in the apprehension of this universal justification over all mankind.*'

The Iowaans [KM22] are well aware that the people whom they defend over against the Norwegian Synod occupy a false position in regard to the doctrine of justification, absolution and the means of grace; and thus they exhibit their spiritual affinity and show how much they care for purity of doctrine. Loehe's successor, Doctor Weber, plainly teaches what the Norwegians defend, but because he is one of their own, they have not a word to say. But when the Norwegians say the same thing, they attack them as the most abominable heretics. And what is the heresy, after all, which they are able to descry? That Christ bore the sin of the whole world, and that the Father raised Him from the dead, they are not able to deny; therefore they are obliged to fasten on one or two expressions which perhaps may not be fitly chosen. The whole strife looks as if it were only calculated to divert the attention of the Church from their own faults. For instance, it is utterly Pelagian, when they maintain that the final decision in conversion is to be sought in man. Thus also in this matter, when G. Fritschel maintains, "In the Gospel God shows the sinner a way of escape, which can redeem him from death and damnation, and *bring to pass the forgiving of his sins,*" – he denies that justification is already accomplished by Christ, and that righteousness already exists. But thus the Bible teaches, and thus the Church teaches in the Augsburg Confession: "Remission of sins and justification *is apprehended by faith.*" "Grace, and forgiveness of sins, and justification, *are received by faith.*" The Apology says: "*Faith accepts the remission of sins and justification.*" "Justification is a thing freely promised for Christ's sake, wherefore it is always *accepted* before God by faith alone."

These passages plainly show that justification must previously exist before it can be accepted by faith and that faith does not bring justification to pass, but embraces it as already existing. But if some one should affirm that the forgiveness of sins indeed exists, but not

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justification, he would show that he is a stranger to our Confessions, which expressly teach that justification and remission of sins is the same thing. "We believe, teach, and confess," says the Formula of Concord, "that according to the phraseology of the Holy Scriptures, the word 'to justify,' in this article, signifies to absolve, that is, to pronounce a sentence of release from sin." Let no body therefore think that this is a mere strife about words. No, it involves the maintenance of the most important of all matters against the attack of error. Especially in this land of sectarianism we must diligently preach the doctrine of universal justification, inasmuch as the sects only too plainly show that they regard faith as the efficient cause of justification, whereby they despoil Christ of His glory. For what else is he doing but setting aside the merits of Christ, who affirms that faith justifies for the reason that it imparts power to perform good works, to pray, wrestle with God, &c.? [KM23]

We subjoin the testimony of a Swede, ANDREW ROHRBERG. He writes: "If God had not raised up our Mediator, He would have given us to understand thereby, that He was not yet perfectly satisfied with us; now, however, that Jesus is arisen, God has thereby declared that He has been satisfied, wherefore Jesus also, as Mediator, was justified in the sinners' stead. And in such wise as the *whole human race*, when it is considered generally and as *one person was justified with Him* at the same time, it was also, as a fruit of this justification, admitted into God's covenant of peace, and thus the peace, which had been lost in Adam, was again established between God and man." Again: "In the consideration of this subject, it remains for us to apply it to ourselves, whereby the question

immediately arises, whether all men were justified in Christ, inasmuch as He was justified in their stead. To deny this positively, would be the same as depriving us men of a great consolation, and it would at the same time militate against God's Word, which teaches so expressly. But if, on the other hand, the question should be answered in the affirmative in such wise, as to involve the inference, that man no longer needs any justification after he has once been justified in and with Christ, it would likewise militate against God's Word, and lay the foundation for carnal security. Accordingly precaution is necessary, in order to keep in the middle course, so that truth may not suffer injury on either side. The Apostle Paul sheds light upon the subject, when he institutes a comparison between Adam and Christ, the two heads of the human race. As concerns Adam, he stood not for himself in the test, but in his single person he represented the whole human race, whose cause lay upon him, either to guard or damage it, so that, whatever he did, and what consequently passed upon him, should afterwards be imputed to the whole race and pass upon the same. Rom. 5, 18. 19. Now what this first Adam damaged, our Saviour Christ, who is called the last Adam and the second man, transferred to Himself, for the purpose of restoring it again, and the Apostle shows, that He occupies the same relation, only in an inverted order. Jesus, in His single person, thus also represented our whole race, which, under Him, was considered as *one* body, one person, one multitude, whose head He was. And inasmuch as the whole guilt of the world was laid upon Jesus, it could no longer remain upon the world, for it could not be in two places at once. Thus the world,

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through Christ's passion and death; was considered free and acquitted of all guilt. After Jesus, upon whom the whole burden of sin lay, had so fought His way through, that God, according to His stringent righteousness, found it just to take the guilt away from Him and to justify Him, it is clear, that the guilt, with all its condemnation, was not only removed from Jesus, but also from the world; for the guilt could not again fall back upon the world, inasmuch as its deputy, upon whom all its guilt lay, did efface the same. We see thus, that a justification also passed upon the world, in the same hour in which Jesus was justified, and moreover together with Him."

When Holy Scripture affirms, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins;" when the article concerning the resurrection is called by the Fathers the most Christian article, when the Church is jubilant in her Easter hymns on account of the resurrection; then the Holy Ghost, the inspired Apostles, the Church and the Fathers must indeed have had reason for using such language and for attaching such importance to the resurrection of Christ. [KM24]

Thesis 6. This grace, forgiveness, righteousness, life and salvation, again acquired for all men by Christ's redeeming work, God brings to man in the means of grace. For the evangelical promise, which is contained in the Word of the Gospel and in the Holy Sacraments, is not an empty sound or a promise devoid of contents, but a powerful proffering (*Darreichung*) and presentation (*Schenkung*) of all the gifts, promised by God in the same Word of grace.

In this paragraph the doctrine of the *means of grace* is compendiously set forth, exhibiting their nature as vessels in which the whole treasure of the gifts acquired by Christ's death and resurrection is deposited, in order that men may be made partakers of the same. It is of particular importance that more than ordinary prominence should be given to the fact that the promise of God is not an empty sound, but a real proffer of the gifts promised in the Gospel. Likewise in regard to the Sacrament. By this doctrine we are distinguished from all who do not believe that such means exist whereby God offers, extends, and presents what the Saviour acquired for our use. When a disquieted person asks the *sectarians*, what he must do to be saved, and how he is to ascertain the certainty of the remission of his sins, they tell him to pray, pray, pray, and fall upon his knees, and wrestle with God until He pours these things into his heart. Now, we do not wish to deny that the Spirit of grace indicates His presence in our hearts; but it is a fearful mistake to consider this feeling which arises in sectarian hearts in consequence of struggle and prayer, as grace itself. In many instances its origin may be plainly traced to quite a dubious source; and in the best case it is only an operation of grace. Grace is *external* to us, not *in* us, even as righteousness is something outside of us. Therefore when a stricken sinner resorts to a *Lutheran* minister, in order to ascertain where he may find grace, [KM25] assurance, pardon, &c., he directs him to the Gospel and the Holy Sacraments, and bids him cheerfully lay hold of the merciful provision there laid in store for him. But this is just what the sectarians deny. They know indeed of grace, but they know not where to find it; therefore they expect to call it in by prayer. It would indeed be wicked to say a word against prayer; but it is just as fearful to regard prayer as a means of grace. None can pray but such as already

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enjoy grace. We are bidden indeed to ask for grace in prayer; but prayer cannot convey, bestow, give and bring it. Here all the sects err. They affirm the Word of God has a testifying, or at most an operative power, but the communicating power they positively deny. We must distinguish between *vis et virtus operativa et collativa* -the operative and communicating power.

JOHN BENEDICT CARPZOV writes: "The Augsburg Confession here treats in the 5th Article of the Word and Sacraments, in such wise as they are operative means and are active according to the nature of physical

operation, inasmuch as the question in this place is, Whence comes faith? and whether the Word and Sacraments effect it. For apart from this mode of operation, yet another is due to the Word and Sacraments, which is of a moral nature, and consists in the handing or offering, communicating and sealing of the justifying gift. For we may not interchange what the Word and Sacraments do, in such wise as they beget, nourish or incite faith, and what the Word does, in such wise as it conduces (*concurrit*) to justification. For, whereas in the first case the Word and Sacraments have the relation of instruments which not only produce (*effectiva*) the supernatural powers unto faith, but also excite (*excitativa*) the spiritual motions of faith; so in the other case, namely in justification, they are only the giving, communicating, and sealing instruments (*dativa, collativa, et obsignativa*) of the justifying gift, which is Christ's obedience."

This giving and communicating power, the sects think, the Word has not. Therefore they do not believe that the means of grace are the hands of God by which He bestows all upon us needful to salvation. Whoever does not believe this, does not believe the existence of means of grace at all. But whoever would speak of means of grace, must believe grace to be acquired already, which God dispenses by the means as by a hand; for if means exist by which grace is conveyed, it can only be for the reason that grace already exists. But such being our belief, we cheerfully make the affirmation that the Word and Sacraments are God's hands, [KM26] by which He offers what Christ acquired and brought from the tomb. Hence we do not regard the Word and Sacrament as a mere sign-board or announcement, nor simply as a power conceiving and begetting faith; but a means unto the giving, communicating, and sealing of the gifts themselves, which they point out and announce. Rom. 1, 16, the Gospel is called the power of God unto salvation; hence not only a testimony of salvation, or a direction how to obtain righteousness, but the communication of the same. We must carefully distinguish between operative and communicating power. For the Word of God is a Word of the Spirit, producing heavenly motions in our hearts, as penitence, faith, sanctification, &c., but it not only brings us the tidings that the gifts of grace are in store for us, but conveys these gifts themselves. It is not like a message accidentally heard behind the bars of a prison, but like a message conveyed by the authorized ambassador of a king in a sealed instrument of pardon.

Now, every believing Christian is such an authorized ambassador. If people refuse to believe him, he shows it by the Bible. Thus when a minister preaches to his people, it is the same as when an ambassador tells a culprit, Be of good cheer, you shall not be slain. I hereby announce to you that in the name of

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His Majesty, the king, you are freely pardoned. And when a minister directs his people to the Word and the Sacraments, it is the same as when a royal ambassador produces his sealed document exhibiting pardon, in order to convince the culprit of the truth of his word. Thus a minister says to the trembling sinner: Here read God's pardon, sealed by the Blood of Christ, and witnessed by the Holy Ghost; believe it, and the Spirit shall also bear record in your heart. Hence the necessity of distinguishing between the power of the means of grace according to which they work everything necessary to constitute a man a child of God; and the power according to which they really convey what the words affirm. The majority of those who claim the Christian name, still admit the first. Zwingli of course did not admit it. He declared God needed no wagon, and that sensible objects have no force in the realm of the spiritual. But not all in the Reformed Church believe on this wise; it is rather a fact that all the simple-minded in the sects believe Christ's words, My words *are* spirit and *are* life, and do not explain them to mean, My words convey the message concerning spirit and life. But all, without exception, deny that the Word has power to *impart* that of which it speaks. They think this destroys conversion; whereas nobody is put in possession of the gifts by conversion, but by God who dispenses them in the means. Of course he does not receive, if he spurns them; but his taking does not make the gifts, but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are present even without man's acceptance, but lie who rejects them smites the hand of [KM27] grace and casts them away by unbelief, and treads them under foot. Nevertheless God has truly and sincerely extended the gifts; else how could he have trodden them under foot? But what God holds out once, He bestows forever. Wherefore, when a man, for instance, is baptized, he has received the remission of sins, etc., forever. Indeed many live on in wickedness and sin, and all the while tread these sublime treasures under foot. But, nevertheless, they *remain given* unto him. Therefore he can return to his Baptism at any moment, and embrace the long spurned gifts, without committing a theft.

A great mistake is here often committed even by Lutheran ministers. They fail to distinguish between the *power* to believe, and *permission* to believe. Therefore the law must be preached in all its terrors, in order that people may be enabled to realize their misery; and then the Gospel in all its sweetness, in order that they may be enabled to believe; for permission is a matter of course. But the sectarians tell a man who is smitten by the law: You are indeed terrified on account of your sins, and God's grace must help you; but be careful not to stretch out your hands too quick. Go into your closet and wrestle with God, until you have worked yourself into a feeling of grace; and *then* you are entitled to believe that you possess it. This is a godless way of dealing with souls. In this way they may be goaded to despair, but are never brought to true assurance of salvation. Therefore we must tell the sinner if you are heartily sorry for your sins, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Thus the Apostle said to the jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." And this he said to one who was about to commit suicide, but who, suddenly in terror on account of his sins, exclaimed, "What must I do to

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be saved?" What reply would a Methodist have made? He would have told him, Not so quick, my friend. Just try, and pray, and wrestle; but it may take a long time before you obtain grace, and feel you are acceptable to God. But Paul was no Methodist; therefore he could speak as he did. He knew that the Word was the means with which he extended grace and salvation the moment he spoke. Therefore Lutherans ought to learn of Paul. This is what the Apology teaches, when it says:

"Therefore, whenever we speak of justifying faith, (*fide justificante*), it includes, first, the *Divine promises*; secondly, that they offer grace *freely* and *without our merit*; thirdly, that *the blood of Christ and His merits are the treasure which atone for our sins*. The promises are received through faith; but as they offer grace without merit, all our worthiness and merit fall to the ground, and grace and boundless mercy alone is praised. The merit of Christ is the treasure; for that must indeed be a treasure and noble pledge, which pays for the sins of the whole world. All the Scriptures, of the Old and New Testaments, when speaking of God and faith, often use the expressions - goodness, mercy, *miser cordia*; and in all their writings the holy Fathers teach that we are saved by grace, goodness, and forgiveness. Now whenever we find the word mercy in the Scriptures, or in the writings of the Fathers, we must [KM28] remember that it refers to faith, which embraces the promise of such mercy. Again, whenever the Scriptures speak of faith, they mean the faith which is based upon grace alone. For faith does not justify us before God as if it were in itself our work, and our own, but solely because it receives the grace, promised and offered without merit, and presented out of the rich treasures of mercy."

This passage is of such importance, because it shows that the Book of Concord means something totally distinct from what the sects understand by means of grace. They regard the Divine promises like man's word, which does not contain that whereof it speaks; but with God the thing is wrapped up in the Word. Therefore the Symbolical Books employ the language of the Bible, which often designates the abstract, and means the concrete. Thus Paul, who always means the *thing promised* by the term *promise*. Thus also in the Smalcald Articles the Sacraments are called "means through which this promise is imparted to every one that desires it." Also what the Large Catechism says is applicable here:

"We, moreover, further believe that in this Christian Church we have forgiveness of sins; which takes place through the Holy Sacraments and Absolution, and besides, through all consolatory passages of the whole Gospel. Out of the Christian Church, however, where the Gospel does not exist, there is no forgiveness of sins, and consequently, there can be no holiness. Therefore, all those have separated and excluded themselves from this Church, who wish to seek and merit holiness, not through the Gospel and the remission of sins, but through their own works. But inasmuch as sanctification is commenced, and daily increases, we are awaiting the time when our flesh shall have perished, with all its imperfections, and when it shall have been raised again in complete holiness, in a new and eternal life. For now we are only partially pure and holy; and it is necessary for the Holy Ghost continually to operate on us through the Word. and daily to impart for-

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giveness, till we, in a future life, in which there will be no more forgiveness, but completely and entirely pure and holy persons full of piety and righteousness, removed and freed from sin, death, and every misfortune, shall enjoy a new, immortal and glorious life." "This merit of Christ and His benefits are *offered, administered, and distributed* to us, through His Word and Sacraments."

The ancients, when they spoke of those who do not yet believe, mostly employed the word *offerre* - to set before and offer. *Conferre*, to confer, is only used in connection with man's simultaneous acceptance. But on God's part the Sacraments communicate the gifts as certainly as God does not lie. When God, accordingly, says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," He [KM29] also certainly gives what the words declare. When we speak of "*mittheilen*," to communicate, we do not at all speak of what may take place under circumstances. In the strictest sense of the word, of course, they do not impart anything to him who does not believe. But we speak of the power which the means of grace intrinsically possess, and in this respect we affirm, that their power does not consist in their pointing out what God has done for us, now that God, through their instrumentality, knocks at the door of our hearts, but that they possess the wonderful power of giving what the Word contains. When God says, "Thou art my child," the person has really become His child through the Word; even as the Saviour says, "Ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you." Even as the Word in creation had the power of calling things into being, so also in the justification of a sinner; only that man has the terrible power of resisting the Word.

In regard to the question, how the Word can effect something, without communicating the grace at the same time, it is necessary to reply: There is a difference between offering (*darreichen*) and communicating (*mittheilen*.) When the Word offers the forgiveness of sins it is one part, and when it works faith, which embraces the thing offered, it is the other part. The better class of the Reformed admit the first; the others deny both. To some extent they do not deny that the Word kindles faith; but then, according to their opinion, faith takes a walk and seeks where it may find God. But God's Word teaches and Lutherans believe that forgiveness of sins, life, salvation is contained in the Word. The Reformed occasionally admit that God's Word has an operative power, but then they

think, after all, that remission sins must be sought from heaven. We affirm, however, that the Word not only changes and makes us meet for the gifts, but also brings and gives us the same, so that man, after hearing the heavenly gifts designated and described, need not enquire, But how shall I obtain them? but may rather exclaim, They are contained in the Word, and in Holy Baptism they have been imparted to me. If he declares he has fallen after his Baptism, we tell him, his Baptism has not fallen with him, but still stands with all its gifts; wherefore we admonish him to embrace the gifts already given to him in Baptism. But this the sects do not believe. They think it is conversion which again puts man in possession of grace, and attribute his possession of the remission of sins to his change of heart. This is building the state of grace upon man's new heart, and establishing the cause upon the effect. This evidently shows that their conception of faith is altogether different from that of the

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Bible. They imagine that faith is a new feeling in the heart, which possesses nothing as yet, but seeks what it has not. How differently the Catechism speaks of the effect of the means of grace. In reply to the question, "What are the benefits of Baptism?" the Catechism says: "It causes the forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to those that believe; as the Word and promise of God declare." In reply to the question, "How can water produce such great *effects*?" it says: "it is not the water that produces them, but the Word of God, [KM30] which is connected with the water; and our faith confiding in this Word of God, in the water." Likewise in reply to the question, "How can bodily eating and drinking produce such great effects?" - "It is not the eating and drinking that produces them, but the words that stand here...whoever truly believes these words, has what they promise, the forgiveness of sin."

As soon as the Word issues forth, everything is present which it declares ; whereas those who only ascribe the operative power (*vis effectiva*) to it, regard it as a seed, from which everything must grow. Both however is deposited in the Word: the gift of grace, and the power requisite for its acceptance. The necessary change in man is wrought by God, and wrought moreover by the means. This is done in the order of grace. But, beside the latter, man must receive something which cannot be *wrought in* him: grace, remission of sin, justification. The latter takes place *in God*, and accordingly, cannot be *wrought in man*, but must be given to him. This is the communicating power of the means of grace (*vis collativa*) Therefore the Symbolical Books describe the means of grace at onetime as instruments which produce faith in the hearts of men, and then again as vessels in which God extends His heavenly gifts. For when God comes to man He finds him (1) miserably *poor*, and (2) *dead*; therefore God must do both through the means of grace: He must (1) quicken him, and (2) present him with the riches of His house. Thus God is our *Physician* and our munificent *Benefactor*; and His Word is both medicine, and the bearer of the heavenly gift. If the power to obtain faith were lodged in our-selves, it would indeed be sufficient for the Word to inform us simply of the treasures; but we have not even the power to will, to seek, to embrace, the gifts; therefore the twofold power of the means of grace is necessary to salvation.

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Thesis 7. The Gospel is therefore not a mere historical narration of the accomplished work of redemption, but rather an effectual declaration of peace and Divine promise of grace to the world redeemed by Christ, and thus always an effectual means of grace, in which God on His part brings, proffers, distributes, gives and bestows the forgiveness of sins and righteousness acquired by Christ, although all, to whom God extends His sincere and gracious call, do not accept this invitation of the reconciled God, and thus do not become partakers of the accompanying gifts.

The chief question in this matter is, What is the Gospel? – It is the pardon

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of God to the world. Being reconciled by Christ, He wishes that fact to be made known, in order that the whole world may be moved to suffer itself to be reconciled to Him also. The Formula of Concord says: "We must firmly and constantly maintain, that, as the preaching of repentance is universal, so is also the promise of the Gospel, that is, it extends to all persons. Therefore Christ commanded that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations." Thus also the Gospel is called Absolution: "The Word of Absolution announces to us peace, and is the Gospel itself." [KM31] The Reformed regard the Gospel as a mere historical report of what God has done. But our Church regards it as an Absolution, which is fraught with grace, wherefore those who do not believe it, hear it unto condemnation. They think that the Gospel has a treasure only for the penitent; and thus mistake two things: The nature of Absolution, and its right application by the minister. The Gospel is to be preached in such manner as to apply to the penitent. But what they say about the Gospel is a miserable doctrine, placing men in a position like those who have taken chances in a lottery. If they belong to the faithful, the Gospel proclaims to them

the grace of God; if they do not, the message is none of their concern. The fault is, they do not believe that God is already reconciled to the world. When pardon is pronounced in favor of a condemned culprit, his pardon does not consist in his removal from the gallows by the judge's own hand, but in the declaration of pardon, which embraces all the rest. Thus when God acquits, He has also justified by the Word. Whoever denies that the Gospel is an Absolution to the world, denies the very Gospel itself; for then it is not the "glad tidings," but a piece of instruction regarding the way in which we must reconcile God. The Lord says expressly that the Gospel should be preached among the nations "as a testimony against them;" or, as Saint Paul says, "a savor of life" unto some, and "a savor of death" to others. The contrary doctrine always requires faith before the presence of the gift; therefore it is a godless doctrine, from which men ought to flee with terror. For of what benefit then is all exhortation to faith? What are men expected to believe before the existence of the gift? But we pass on to the next Thesis.

Thesis 8. Holy Absolution is a proclamation of the Gospel to one or more particular persons, who desire the comfort of the Gospel. The same is therefore always valid and effectual of itself; for God, through the mouth of His minister, therein declares Himself truly reconciled by the blood and death of Christ, and on His part communicates the gift of forgiveness and Justification to all who receive Absolution, though many do not become partakers of the gifts of grace extended in the Gospel on account of their unbelief.

We are true Lutheran ministers only when we are positively assured that the moment we pronounce Absolution, we also loose those present from their sins; and they only are true Lutherans who believe that they were verily acquitted by God in that very moment. Let none thin, If the minister only knew what a character I am, he would have surely denied me Absolution, therefore the Absolution does not apply to me; but rather, all ought to leave the church perfectly assured that God has pardoned them of all guilt. This of course presupposes the belief that the world is redeemed, and that Absolution accordingly is nothing else but a communication of the fact [KM32] of that redemption accomplished 1800 years ago, with the admonition, Believe it and you are saved. What wicked people we must

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be not to believe it! Some might think we would thus be obliged to absolve the most wicked characters, even monkey – Vogt; but Christ's order provides that the holy thing shall not be cast before swine. Even monkey – Vogt would be absolved if he heard the Gospel; but he would make a jest of it, and tread the gift under foot, like the sow the precious pearl. But inasmuch as this consequence is self-evident in the case of acknowledged infidels, we for this reason do not absolve them, not at all because we believe that they are not redeemed. If infidels knew and considered this, they would not regard us as an inflated pack of priests, who mean to do them wrong. They think that we regard Absolution as our won peculiar *prerogative*, like the Romanists; but we teach that it requires no extraordinary qualities to absolve men, inasmuch as every man, woman, and child can do the like, who only knows how to tell that Jesus died for us. For Absolution is not based upon the quality of the speaker, but upon the Word of the Gospel and redemption accomplished once for all. Therefore the Apology declares that those who reject Absolution are ignorant of the nature of the Gospel; and Luther says, he prizes Absolution, in order that people might understand the mission of the Gospel.

The Gospel is a message, not like any other, but transmitted by Almighty God Himself. To this end He inspires His messengers with confidence, and declares that they should cheerfully preach, assuring them that He will prove no liar, but verify the Word He puts into their mouth. Therefore Luther says, "A minister cannot open his mouth without pronouncing Absolution," for as soon as he mentions his Lord Jesus Christ, he has already pronounced Absolution. Therefore the claim of a Lutheran minister to the power of Absolution is no indication of assumption, inasmuch as he does not trace it to the sacredness of his person imparted by ordination, as something limited to a select few, but to the power of the Word, which his office authorizes him to preach. Through the declaration God wishes to impart all that He declares; and Absolution is only an epitome of what the sermon affirms, in direct application to a particular person. "By authority of mine office" is by authority of the Gospel; as Luther says, "By the words 'Whosoever sins ye remit,' etc., is not ordained the power of him who speaks; but of those who believe." Therefore people are not to be told, that if they do not exhibit a particular grade of penitence, Absolution is none of their concern; but that they are accursed if they do not believe it. For it is a great sin, to go to confession, and not believe the Word of Absolution. [KM33] Of course an impenitent sinner *cannot* believe, but that does not change the efficacy of Absolution. Because Absolution is nothing else but the Gospel, our Fathers did not commit themselves to any particular formula; but expressed that belief in whatever form they used.

It is particularly necessary to emphasize the fact that the Gospel is an offer of grace requiring nothing on man's part to insure its validity. Faith must have an object; therefore if the Gospel is not valid unless man believes, what is he expected to believe? This is racking men's consciences. Therefore the Augsburg Confession says:

"Men are taught, that they should highly regard Absolution, inasmuch as it is God's voice, and pronounced by God's command. The power of the Keys is honored, and mention is made, how great consolation it brings to terrified consciences, and that God requires faith, that we believe that Absolution as a voice sounding from heaven, and

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that this faith in Christ truly obtains and receives remission of sins.”

Accordingly Absolution is an object for our faith and not simply a directory to faith. Men stricken in their consciences must ever seek comfort and forgiveness in the promises. Therefore if faith is requisite to constitute Absolution what it is, faith is completely changed in its nature and no longer the act of embracing the gifts already at hand. The Apology teaches:

“But we add the other part of repentance, namely, *faith in Christ*, and say, that in such terror, the Gospel of Christ, in which is promised the gracious remission of sin through Him, should be presented to the conscience, which should then believe its sins forgiven for the sake of Christ. This faith encourages, consoles, imparts life and joy to such contrite hearts; as Paul, Romans 5,1 says: ‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.’ This faith truly shows the difference between the contrition of Judas and Peter, of Saul and David. And for this reason the contrition of Judas and Saul was of no account, because they did not by faith [KM34] cleave to the promise of God through Christ. On the other hand, the contrition of David and Peter was genuine: for they by faith embraced the promise of God, that offers the remission of sins through Christ.”

And in the Large Catechism: “But in reply to our sophists, the innovating spirits, who assert that faith alone saves, and that works and external things add nothing to salvation, we say, it is true, that nothing in *us* effects it, but faith, as we shall hear subsequently. But these blind leaders will not observe, *that faith must have something which it believes*, that is, to which it adheres, and upon which it rests and depends. Now, these innovators are so insane as to separate faith and the object to which it adheres, although that object is external. Indeed it should and must be external, so that it can be perceived and apprehended by the senses, and conveyed to the heart through them; for the whole Gospel is an external and oral message. In a word, whatever God does and performs in us, He wishes to effect through such external ordinances.”

If some one should affirm that bread is nutritive only when eaten by the hungry, or that medicine possesses healing powers only when taken by the sick; the sectarians would perceive the ludicrousness of this assertion at once. It is the same with the Gospel, whether it be proclaimed to a person hungering and thirsting after righteousness, or to the ungodly. But it is true that bread does not nourish him who does not eat it; that medicine does not cure him who does not take it; and that the Gospel does not comfort him who does not believe it. But sectarians ought to see that the power of the Word no more resides in man than the nutritive power of bread. The denial of the efficacy of the Gospel and Absolution in the case of the impenitent involves fearful consequences. It leads to a denial of the perfect redemption of the world; since it requires faith as a supplementary work, whose presence is necessary to insure the existence of forgiveness in the Gospel. It leads to the conclusion that Christ’s merit is not all-sufficient. But if so, He is not true God. Neither could we preach the Gospel or administer the Sacrament to any one with a good conscience, unless we were *positively certain* that he believed. We should not indeed admit any to the Sacrament without examination and a declaration of belief on their part. But whether they speak the truth we cannot tell; inasmuch as we have no ability to read people’s hearts. Therefore we must do our office, and positively believe that we truly absolve all, though

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ignorant as to the persons by whom it is appropriated.

For Justification is not only *made possible* for us, but *accomplished* and *acquired already*. Therefore the Bible uses the very language we employ in regard to the Gospel and Absolution, affirming that God gives, without reference to the acceptance or rejection of His gifts. Hence we simply adhere to [KM35] these words in opposition to our assailants: “If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” “For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid.” According to the doctrine of our opponents we would be obliged to cast everything away the moment we begin to doubt the genuineness of our faith, and resort to Baptism again, if we are uncertain whether we received it in a proper frame of mind. But thanks be to God, whatever He has done to us, He has done forever; wherefore we hold that doctrine accursed which makes the force and efficacy of Absolution dependent on our faith. This unimpeachable certainty of God’s dealings is the very consolation of a poor sinner. Wherefore we should rejoice in His gifts now, if we did not receive them aright before; for He cannot repent of His deeds. Thus our Baptism is valid, even if we fell from its grace; for we may in deed have fallen overboard, but the ship did not, but is just as safe as ever, with all its provisions for the journey of life. Wherefore all we need to do is to reenter the ship. If it were possible that a man could be ungodly and yet retain his Baptism, he would certainly get to heaven; but that is simply impossible. This is a most comfortable doctrine for a disquieted sinner; for it shows him that the devil has not power over him as long as he clings to the Word. Wherefore we cannot lay stress enough upon what the Augsburg Confession says, viz. that Absolution pronounced unto us, is always God’s Word. The meaning is not that the words are simply taken from the Bible, but that the Absolution of the minister is invariably God’s message to us, who, through the mouth of a sinner, assures us of unquestionable pardon. It would be as ungodly to disbelieve that God absolves us in the words of Absolution, as to refuse to believe upon the testimony of His Word that God created heaven and earth. If the doctrine of our opponents were true, infidels would be justified in railing at the clergy. But as gold remains gold, even though

stolen or cast into the mud; so Absolution remains Absolution even though despised by unbelievers. Even as pardoned transgressors who are pleased to remain in prison, are pardoned nevertheless, so likewise those are also absolved who do not accept the Word. Luther beautifully writes:

“Therefore in the Keys of Christ must be concealed His blood, death and resurrection, whereby He opened heaven for us, and accordingly communicates to poor sinners through the Keys what He acquired by His blood. Think, accordingly, that the Keys or remission of sins are not grounded upon our contrition or worthiness, as they teach and pervert; for that is altogether Pelagian, Turkish, [KM36] heathenish, Jewish, Anabaptistical, fanatical, and Antichristian; but rather that our contrition, work, heart, and whatever we be, shall be established upon the Keys, and with all due consideration cheerfully confide in them, as in God’s Word, and not by any means doubt, under the pain of forfeiting body and soul, what the Keys say and give unto thee, that it is as certain as if God spake it Himself: even as He indeed surely speak it Himself; for it is His command and Word, and not the word or command

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of a man. But if you doubt, you charge God with a lie, you pervert His ordinance, and establish His Keys upon your contrition and worthiness. Do not suffer yourself to be led astray by the Pharisaic talk by which divers persons dupe themselves, how a man may forgive sin, saying he cannot bestow grace or the Holy Ghost. Keep you to the words of Christ, and rest assured, that God has no other mode of forgiving sin, than through the oral Word enjoined upon us men. If you do not seek forgiveness in the Word, you will gape toward heaven in vain after grace or (as they say) after the inward forgiveness. If you say, however, as the fanatical spirits and sophists also do: Many hear the binding and loosing of the Keys, and yet pay no regard to them, and remain unbound and unloosed; wherefore something else must needs be present than the Word and the Keys: the Spirit, Spirit, Spirit must do it; we ask, do you think that he is not bound, who does not believe the binding Key? He shall indeed find out in his own due time, that on account of his unbelief the binding was not in vain and did not fail. In like manner, he that does not believe that he is loosed and that his sins are forgiven him, shall also indeed find out in the course of time how truly his sins were forgiven him now, and he would not believe.” [end of KM36] Finally Luther shows how mischievous the doctrine of *conditional* Absolution is, as professed in the Church of Rome.

(end of January 1, 1873 portion
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(January 1, 1874, page 11, column 1; concluding portion) [KM38- NOTE: All of KM37 omitted by Lutheran Standard/Schmidt]

Thesis 9. The only means by which man is put in possession of the grace acquired by Christ and extended in the Word and Sacraments is FAITH, which believes the gracious promises of God, and thus appropriates the gift of the merits and righteousness of Christ proposed in this promise of God, and seeks consolation in the benefits of Christ as its Saviour and Destroyer of sin.

“Therefore righteousness is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.”

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Here the Apostle testifies that faith is not a condition to be fulfilled on our part, but, inasmuch as *nothing more* remains to be done, it is by the *grace* we are saved, wherefore *faith* is sufficient, since it is only the acceptance of the proffered salvation. When a person promises to present us with a gift, what else can we do but believe the promise? Charity, meditation, holiness, &C. renders no assistance, since they do not correspond to the nature of a free gift, which requires nothing else but simply acceptance.. This is [KM39] faith. And here the individual rests assured that God has made the promise even unto *him*. Luther once requested a troubled woman to repeat the second Article of the Creed, assuring her that if she believed these words, it was well with her. And indeed it is so. For whoever can truly say, "I believe that Jesus Christ hath redeemed *me*," is in possession of life and salvation. These words condemn the popish delusion that faith is a virtue, like charity and hope, and also the sectarian imagination that faith as a change of heart renders man acceptable to God, *for the sake of faith*. Faith is simply like a ring which holds a diamond enclosed. The ring derives its value from the gem, and so faith, worthless in itself, is precious on account of Christ accepted and embraced. The Formula of Concord says:

"These blessings are offered unto us through the Holy Spirit, in the promises of the Gospel; and faith is the only medium through which we apprehend and receive them, and apply and appropriate them to ourselves. This faith is the gift of God. Faith justifies us, not because it is a work of great value and an eminent virtue, but because it apprehends and receives the merit of Christ. This righteousness is offered unto us through the Gospel and in the Sacraments, by the Holy Spirit; but through faith it is applied, appropriated, and embraced; hence believers derive reconciliation with God, remission of sins, the grace of God, adoption as children, and the inheritance of eternal life."

The phrase, "Justification by faith," is accordingly a metonymy, *ie.*, the thing containing is taken for the contents; as we say a man is nourished by eating, whereas it is the food that nourishes. [KM40] In addition to this we must lay particular stress upon the fact that faith is a gratuitous gift of God. The Formula of Concord says that man is "merely passive" in conversion; he does nothing himself, but something is done to him. Then when faith is wrought he can begin to cooperate. But lately the Iowaans have openly maintained that the final decision for salvation rests with man. They of course admit that man is saved by grace. But they maintain that when God offers grace, man can presently have grace enough to cooperate and decide for himself. They declare that man's will is liberated by grace to such an extent, as to enable him to decide for the acceptance or rejection of grace, so that man is saved by the faithful use made of the power offered unto him. According to reason we, of course, cannot determine otherwise than that, if some accept the proffered grace while others do not, though all are subject to like inability and guilt, some must be better than others, because they decide for the acceptance of the gifts. But the Bible declares that damnation is man's fault, whereas faith is the free gift of God.

THESIS 10. Accordingly faith in Christ does not justify and save because, as an excellent work of man, it acquires a bountiful merit before God, and as a satisfaction for sin reconciles Him unto man; but because, on man's part, it is the receiving hand which really embraces and accepts the treasure of the merits of Christ, forgiveness, righteousness and salvation, which are

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offered and presented in the promises of the Gospel. Neither does faith justify and save before God, because freely of grace and love, He is willing to account it as a meritorious work of righteousness and obedience towards God's Word; but because the treasure of the merits of Christ, which even the weakest faith embraces in the promises of the Gospel, really embrace the all-sufficient satisfaction for all the guilt and punishment of sin, as well as the perfect obedience toward all the demands of God's law.

This Thesis is added on account of the Arminians, who affirm that the grace of God consists in this, that God is willing to regard faith of such value as to save man on its account. But we must remember that even the weakest faith, if it only be such indeed really embraces the whole satisfaction' and obedience of Christ; even as a gem may rest in the hand of a sick child or in the powerful grasp of a vigorous man.

THESIS 11. Neither by its power does the faith of the individual render the Evangelical promises which God pronounces in the Word of the Gospel or Absolution really valid, effectual and true; but faith simply adheres to the promise of grace and forgiveness as Divinely true and [KM41] effectual, and inasmuch as it thus accepts the promises of God, it also embraces the gift of righteousness and salvation therein, and has what the words declare.

This subject has already been sufficiently discussed. It is not the office of faith to impart contents to the Gospel, but to appropriate that which is already contained therein. Wherefore we never find the language in Scripture, *Because, or for the sake of faith*, but always, "*By,*" or "*of faith.*" Here the passages of the Concordia are applicable, in which it is affirmed that the Gospel does not profit without faith, although the treasure is all-sufficient. For the *existence* of the treasure is one thing, and its *profit* quite another.

THESIS 12.. When an individual sinner embraces the promises of the Gospel in the Word or Sacraments by faith, and thus appropriates the treasure of the merits of Christ unto his justification and salvation; he is also regarded, accounted, and pronounced of God, in a forensic action before the bar of God, as one who; for his own person, is partaker of the merits and righteousness of Christ unto salvation, and thus, by personal possession of the benefits of Christ, is also personally righteous and an heir of everlasting life.

The object of this Thesis is to show that, although we believe righteousness and salvation acquired for all, and although we believe this treasure to be offered unto all in the Word and Sacraments, we nevertheless do not deny, that God accounts the individual, when he embraces this treasure, as one who has this righteousness, and that, in the same hour, He records, as it were, his name in the Book of life, and that this is the justification, designated as such in ecclesiastical terminology. This forensic act extends through our whole life, since God continually repeats this declaration to man. We teach, when the individual believer has taken possession of the gift, God acknowledges this in His judgment, inasmuch as he has entered into Christ. As the Apostle says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Now he has part in the redemption acquired by Christ. Before faith, the sinner is only righteous before God according to the procuration of righteousness, and according to the Divine intention; but he is actually and personally righteous, only when he believes. This is analogous to the reconciliation of Christ. God is reconciled to us before we believe, and

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whilst we are yet enemies; but when we believe, *we* are also reconciled to God. Thus Quenstedt says, As Christ reconciled us to God by His death, even so He reconciles us to God, in virtue of his death, by converting us through the Word of the Cross. For this constitutes conversion, that a man begins to believe. We are thereby reconciled *to God*, as God is reconciled *to us* by Christ's death. Wherefore the Formula of Concord says: "The blood of Christ *cleanseth* us from all [KM42] sin, not only according to the *merit* which was once acquired upon the Cross; but in

this place John is speaking of this matter, namely, that in the work or act of justification, not only the Divine nature in Christ, but also His blood cleanses us from all sin, *per modum efficae*, that is, *actually* cleanseth us from all sin."

(end of January 1, 1874; end of essay)

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