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Sure Grace.

Translated from Dr. E. Preuss's *Die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung*, Part VII.

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Here is sure grace. Is. 55, 3. Not in the doctrine of gradual forgiveness. For what guarantee have I that the little grain of forgiveness which happens to be in my possession at this time is really sufficient for my salvation? Not in the doctrine of a justification through a heavenly voice which comes but once in a lifetime. For the remembrance of the voice heard at that time is effaced by time; and even if time would spare it, what good would that do you? It would no more assure you of your being in a state of grace than the certainty of your birthday gives you the assurance that you are alive now. The assurance of your salvation rather rests on the fact that you are a sinner, but that the blood of Christ which perpetually makes intercession for you is standing between the fierce wrath of Almighty God and you. And as you have the certainty of life in every breath which you take and by means of which you drink the life-sustaining air, so you have sure forgiveness in every grasp of your faith by which you apprehend Christ.

True. But does this also give me the assurance that I will *finally* be saved? Most certainly! For God "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8, 32. And furthermore, God's Word says: "Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." Is. 43, 1. And: "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Is. 54, 10. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors and lay thy foundation with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates and thy gates of carbuncles and all thy borders of pleasant stones." Is. 54, 11, 12.

Notes on the Marburg Articles.

The Marburg Articles embody the result of the deliberations of the Colloquy of Marburg, held October 1—3, 1529. These fifteen articles were drawn up by Luther. "‘We must let the Christian world know,’ said the landgrave, ‘that, except the manner of the presence of the body and blood in the Eucharist, you are agreed in all the articles of faith.’ This was resolved on; but who should be charged with drawing up the paper? All eyes were turned upon Luther. The Swiss themselves appealed to his impartiality.” Thus the Reformed writer Merle d’Aubigné, in the *History of the Reformation*. They were signed by Luther, Melanchthon, and their colleagues, and by Zwingli, Oecolampadius, and their colleagues.

4) [Charlotte Elliott: "Fightings and fears within, without."]

5) Apology. *Trigl.*, 155. 209. 277. 279. Smalcald Articles. *Trigl.*, 517. Formula of Concord. *Trigl.*, 1063—1095, especially 1063. 1067. 1085. 1087.—Luther, Of sure grace: St. Louis Ed., XI, 717—721. 920 ff.; II, 2059—2060. Of fear and its relation to assurance: II, 149. 150. 1917. 1918; IV, 415—417. 921. 922. 1723—1725.—Chemnitz, in his *Examen*, begins the *excursus* on this subject with the question: *An vera fides justificans sit vel fiducia vel dubitatio de remissione peccatorum?* and answers that two things must be distinguished, the *certitudo justificationis praesentis* and the *certitudo perseverantiae*. Concerning the second point he says: *Non docendi sunt homines, quomodocunque se gerant, non posse ipsos excidere gratia Dei. Scriptum est enim Rom. XI: Si permanserit in bonitate; Heb. III: Modo fiduciam retineant usque ad finem. Sed monendi sunt, ut actiones carnis Spiritu mortificent et fide firmiter inhæreant Christo, illique per usum Verbi et sacramentorum magis magisque uniantur et petant a Deo donum perseverantiae. Et hoc modo non debent dubitare de perseverantia, sed statuere juxta promissiones, Phil. I: Confirmabit vos usque in finem, etc. Finally: Agitant has Scripturae sententias: 1 Cor. X: Qui stat, videat ne cadat. Phil. II: Cum timore et tremore, etc. Ad has sententias responsio est: Monent, ne persuasione certitudinis de salute degeneremus in carnalem securitatem, qua ipsa fides extinguitur. Sunt ergo hae sententiae non conciones de dubitatione fidei, sed exhortationes, ne fides possidens certitudinem salutis vel securitate extingatur, vel actionibus carnis excutiatur, sed exerceatur perpetuo in lucta contra carnem, ne illius petulantia effundatur gratia, Spiritus Sanctus et certitudo salutis.* Then follow the excellent closing remarks. (Chemnitius, *Examen Conc. Trid.*, Ed. Francoforti, 165—173.)

The purpose of these lines is, not to discuss the whole matter, but to call attention to three points connected with it.

1. The fifteenth article gives a clear-cut presentation of the situation regarding the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. No agreement had been reached, and no attempt was made to gloss over the difference. It will not be amiss to transcribe portions of D'Aubigné's story of the discussion: "Luther, taking a piece of chalk, bent over the velvet cloth which covered the table and steadily wrote four words in large characters. All eyes followed the movement of his hand, and soon they read: *Hoc Est Corpus Meum*. Luther wished to have this declaration continually before him that it might strengthen his faith and be a sign to his adversaries. — The chancellor having reminded them that the object of this colloquy was the reestablishment of union, 'I protest,' said Luther, 'that I differ from my adversaries with regard to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper and that I shall always differ from them. Christ has said, *This is My body*. Let them show me that a body is not a body. I reject reason, common sense, carnal arguments, and mathematical proofs. God is above mathematics. We have the Word of God; we must adore and perform it.' (Zwingli, Opp. IX, p. 175) . . . Oecolampadius: "There is danger in attributing too much to mere matter.' Luther: 'Everything that God commands becomes spirit and life. If it is by the Lord's order that we lift up a straw, in that very action we perform a spiritual work.' Oecolampadius: 'But since we have the spiritual eating, what need of the bodily one?' Luther: 'I do not ask what need we have of it; but I see it written, *Eat, this is My body*. We must therefore believe and do. We must do — we must do!' Zwingli: 'I oppose you with this article of our faith: *Ascendit in coelum*. If Christ is in heaven as regards His body, how can He be in the bread? . . .' Luther: '. . . I care little about mathematics.' Zwingli: "There is no question of mathematics here, but of St. Paul, who writes to the Philippians, *μορφήν δούλου λαβών*.' Luther, pointing to the words written before him: 'Most dear sirs, since my Lord Jesus Christ says, *Hoc est corpus meum*, I believe that His body is really there.' Here the scene grew animated. Zwingli started from his chair, sprang towards Luther, and, striking the table before him, said to him: 'You maintain, then, Doctor, that Christ's body is locally in the Eucharist? For you say Christ's body is really *there* — *there* — *there*. *There* is an adverb of place. Christ's body is then of such a nature as to exist in a place. If it is in a place, it is in heaven, whence it follows that it is not in

the bread.' Luther: 'I repeat that I have nothing to do with mathematics. As soon as the words of consecration are pronounced over the bread, the body is there. . . .' On the next day Luther said, 'Christ's body is in the Sacrament, but it is not there as in a place.' Zwingli: 'Then it is not there at all.' Luther: '. . . The universe is a body, and yet we cannot assert that it is in a particular place.'" Zwingli next quoted some Fathers. "But Luther still replied: 'It is written, *This is My body.*' . . . The chancellor, alarmed at this termination of the colloquy, exhorted the theologians to come to an understanding. 'I know but one means for that,' said Luther, 'and this it is: Let our adversaries believe as we do.' 'We cannot,' replied the Swiss. 'Well, then,' replied Luther, 'I abandon you to God's judgment and pray that He will enlighten you.' 'We will do the same,' added Oecolampadius." The doctrinal discussion was ended, no agreement had been reached, and, accordingly, the Fifteenth Article reads thus: "We all believe with regard to the Lord's Supper that it ought to be celebrated in both kinds, according to the primitive institution; that the Mass is not a work by which a Christian obtains pardon for another man, whether dead or alive; that the Sacrament of the Altar, too, is the Sacrament of the very body and very blood of Jesus Christ; and that the spiritual manducation of this body and blood is highly necessary to every Christian. In like manner, as to the use of the Sacrament, we are agreed that, like the Word, it was ordained of Almighty God in order that weak consciences might be excited by the Holy Ghost to faith and charity. And although at present we are not agreed on the question whether the true body and blood of Christ are bodily present in the bread and wine, yet each party should show Christian charity for the other, so far as conscience permits, and both parties earnestly implore Almighty God to confirm us by His Spirit in the sound doctrine. Amen."

2. According to the Marburg Articles there was full agreement on fourteen important points. "Luther took his paper and, reading the first article, said: 'First, we, both parties, unanimously believe and hold that there is one sole, true, and natural God, Creator of heaven and earth and of all creatures; and that this same God, one in essence and nature, is threefold in person, that is to say, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as was declared in the Nicene Council and as all the Christian Church professes.' To this the Swiss gave their assent. They were agreed also on the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ," on the Incarnation, on the Personal Union, on original sin, on redemption, on faith wrought by the

Word, on justification by faith, on the external Word as means of grace, on Baptism and good works, on confession, on civil government, on tradition (ecclesiastical usages), and on infant baptism. "Thus far all were united. The Wittenbergers could not recover from their astonishment. The two parties had rejected, on the one hand, the errors of the papists, who make religion little more than an outward form; and, on the other, those of the Enthusiasts, who speak exclusively of internal feelings." (D'Aubigné.) Luther writes: "On all other points they yielded"; and Melanchthon: "They agreed on all points with us excepting only the doctrine of the Real Presence." (Luther, XVII, 1946. 1955.) The Wittenbergers certainly were astonished at this development. Brenz wrote: "We cannot get over our surprise, since we knew that formerly they taught concerning original sin, Baptism, the ministry of the Word of God, and the use of the Sacrament of the Altar altogether differently from what they now freely and willingly confess." (Quoted by Rudelbach, *Reformation*, etc., and by Zwingli.) Luther: "On these points they had taken the wrong position, but were so unstable that at Marburg they yielded everything and spoke differently." (XVII, 1962.) For instance, they had taught rank Enthusiasm. In 1528 Oecolampadius had maintained at the debate at Bern: "Nothing more is assigned to the external words as elements than to signify the internal words which previously are in the heart of man." And at Marburg Melanchthon remonstrated with Zwingli thus: "But you teach, like Thomas Muenzer, that the Holy Ghost acts quite alone, independently of the Sacraments and of the Word of God." So the Wittenbergers naturally were astonished when the Swiss, on hearing Articles VIII and IX, at once agreed to them. These articles state: "We hold unanimously (VIII) that the Holy Ghost, according to the established order (*ordentlich zu reden*), gives this faith or his gift to no one without the preceding preaching or the oral Word, or the Gospel of Christ, but that He through and by this oral Word works and creates faith how and in whom it pleases him, Rom. 10, 17; (IX) that Holy Baptism is a Sacrament, instituted with a view to this faith; and since it is connected with God's command, Matt. 28, 19, and God's promise, Mark 16, 16, it is not merely an empty sign or watchword among the Christians, but a sign and work of God wherein our faith, by which we are regenerated, is confirmed and strengthened." That leaves no room for the position of the Enthusiasts, as D'Aubigné points out. Again, on the doctrine of original sin there had been sharp disagreement.

“‘At least,’ continued Melanchthon, ‘you deny original sin and make sin to consist only in actual and external works, like the Pelagians, the philosophers, and the papists.’” Here, too, we see Zwingli subscribing to the fourth article, which declares “that original sin condemns all men.” So also they clashed on the doctrine of the Personal Union. Melanchthon, referring to the Marburg discussion, wrote later: “I would rather die than affirm that which they affirm: that the body of Christ can be in one place only.” Yet here is the third article with its “undivided person,” and Zwingli signs, relinquishing his position. The Swiss signed, however, without adding any reservations whatever, and the Lutherans accepted their declaration in good faith. So far as men could see, harmony had been restored with regard to fourteen points.

And still — and that is our second point — Luther and his colleagues refused to enter into fraternal relations with them. Their consciences would not permit it (“‘We,’ said Luther, ‘we declare to you once more that our conscience opposes our receiving you as brethren’”; *l. c.*), because God’s Word did not permit it. God’s Word does not tolerate union without unity. And though there was agreement on fourteen points and disagreement on but one, the position the Swiss maintained on this one point, their persistent refusal, on rationalistic grounds, to submit to the plain teaching of Scripture, revealed that they were not in the unity of faith with the Lutherans. “You have a different spirit from ours,” said Luther again and again. And this spirit of indifference glaringly appeared in the insistent demand of the Reformed for fraternal recognition in the face of irreconcilable differences. It amounted to a plea for the toleration of their rejection of God’s Word. “‘Let us confess our union in all things in which we agree,’ said Zwingli, ‘and as for the rest, let us remember that we are brothers. There will never be peace between the churches if, while we maintain the grand doctrine of salvation by faith, we cannot differ on secondary points.’ Such is, in fact, the true principle of Christian union. The sixteenth century was still too deeply sunk in scholasticism to understand this; let us hope that the nineteenth century will comprehend it better.” (*L. c.*) The Lutherans refuse to sanction any departure from God’s Word, not in primary nor yet in secondary points. And the question in dispute did not concern a secondary matter. It was a question of retaining or rejecting God’s Word. Besides, the compliance with Zwingli’s demand would have created a situation intolerable to a fine Chris-

tian conscience. "‘What folly!’ said Melanchthon, who afterwards almost coincided with Zwingli’s sentiments. ‘They condemn us, and yet they desire we should consider them as our brothers!’ ‘What versatility!’ added Brenz. ‘They accused us but lately of worshiping a bread-god, and they now ask for communion with us.’” (*L. c.*) Melanchthon, in his report of the colloquy: “We could in no way comply with their request; we sharply reprovved them and expressed our surprise that their consciences would permit them to look upon us as brethren if they thought that we erred; for how could they permit our doctrine to be taught, held and preached, side by side with their doctrine?” (Luther, XVII, 1946.) Luther: “Briefly, it is a dreadful thing that I hear that in the same church or at the same altar both parties should receive the same Sacrament, one party believing that it receives mere bread and wine, and the other party believing that it receives the true body and blood of Christ. I often doubt whether it can be possible that a pastor should be so hardened and wicked as to keep silence and permit both parties to believe that they were receiving the same Sacrament.” (XVII, 2016.)

The Reformed and all unionists have to this day been heaping bitter obloquy on the head of Luther for his stand. “Zwingli quitted Marburg in alarm at Luther’s intolerance. ‘Lutheranism,’ wrote he to the landgrave, ‘will lie as heavily upon us as Popery.’” D’Aubigné himself goes so far as to write concerning Luther’s illness on his way home: “There is an immediate reaction of the violated law upon him who violates it. Now, Luther had transgressed the royal law, which is charity, and he suffered the penalty.” We thank God that Luther and his colleagues, from the very start, ejected the baleful spirit of rationalism, indifferentism, and unionism which was seeking entrance into the young Church. And we cannot but note with sorrow the declaration made by a prominent Lutheran a few weeks ago, at a meeting attended by representatives of various Lutheran synods, and the approval given it in various Lutheran periodicals: “The world will not listen to our message as long as we Lutherans will stand bickering with one another over differences which we with the most meticulous study cannot convince ourselves of.” That is the spirit of Zwingli, which, for the sake of an external peace and the alleged advantages thereof, is willing to sacrifice “secondary points” of the Scriptural truth.

3. Did the Swiss accept the fourteen articles, every single one of them, in good faith? In other words, did they put the same

construction on them as the other party? One hesitates to doubt their good faith. Luther's great heart did not doubt it at the time, says Rudelbach (*Reformation, etc.*, p. 361), and Melancthon reported: "But they received from us at that time information on this article, as much as the scant time permitted; the more they heard, the more acceptable it was to them, and they yielded on all these points, although before they had publicly written otherwise." (Luther, XVII, 1944.) Our verdict on the matter, however, must be influenced by the following considerations. First, within the year Zwingli repudiated several of these articles, for instance, VIII and IX, and again ranged himself on the side of the Enthusiasts. In the declaration he submitted at Augsburg in 1530, and later again in the same year, he gave this as his belief: "I believe, yea, I know, that all Sacraments are so far from conferring grace that they do not even offer or distribute it. The Holy Spirit needs no leader or vehicle. And we have never read in the Scriptures that sensual things, such as the Sacraments, should surely bring with them the Holy Spirit. . . . We see that in all nations the external preaching of the apostles and evangelists and bishops came before faith, which we owe alone to the Holy Spirit." He is back again in the position of Muenzer, which he had, as D'Aubigné noted with satisfaction, forsaken at Marburg. Had he, under the influence of God's Word, accepted the full import of Articles VIII and IX? Then the only alternative is that, as we heard Luther remark, he had a most unstable character. Another thing: We know that the Swiss did not accept all of these articles in the full sense which Luther's words convey. We are not referring to the fact that a word in the ninth article was not understood by the two parties in the same sense. The sentence which we translated: "wherein our faith is confirmed and strengthened" reads in the original: "*darin unser Glaub' gefoddert.*" Zwingli, Oecolampadius, and Bucer took it in the sense of *gefoddert* (*postulare, requirere, required*); Luther, in the sense of *gefoerdert* (*excitare, promovere*). Some Lutherans also understood it according to the first meaning. No doubt the precise meaning did not come up for discussion. In fact, both meanings bring out the Lutheran sense, so much so that Oecolampadius and Bucer were taken to task by some of their people for their acceptance of this article. (Luther, XVII, 1941. Koestlin, *M. Luther*, II, 646.) But while this matter was harmless, the good faith of the Swiss must be questioned for

other reasons. Rudelbach (*l. c.*, p. 361) states them thus: Oecolampadius flatly declared in his report to Haller that nothing at all had been gained through the disputation; many were wondering why they had signed the articles, and they might well do so, particularly with regard to the wording of the article on Baptism; but he had trusted that they would be able to put the proper construction on this sentence too. When Baptism is called "a work of God," all that is meant is that God instituted it; we maintain as before that children are received into grace only in this sense, that the sponsors are reminded of the covenant of grace. Bucer, the ever-active peace agent, declares that the Reformed accepted the articles only from the love of God; the articles would have been drawn differently if they had had the wording of them. As to Zwingli, Rudelbach judges that his declarations of 1530 prove that he did not consider his conscience bound by the Marburg Articles and then says: "Most of all, one is moved to sorrow and resentment when one hears how Zwingli expresses himself in the circle of his intimate friends, what manner of advice he feels called upon to give, what expectations to cherish. In 1531, the year of his death, he stood exactly where he stood in 1525; tergiversation, which he called a prudent casting of the net, must bring about the happy days when all remnants of papistry (meaning the objective doctrine of the Lord's Supper, of the Sacraments in general, and of faith) would be removed; then there will be good opportunity to make a clean sweep; meanwhile one must deal with the controverted articles with great precaution and softness and thus be able to make a greater catch." Luther: "Zwingli went from bad to worse after the colloquy, and without doubt he dealt falsely with me at Marburg." (Erl. Ed., 32, 409.)

The articles themselves cannot be held responsible for the attempt of the Reformed to read their errors into them. These errors are rejected in unmistakable terms. The articles are drawn up with such fine Christian prudence, their language is both so mild and clear, that they could not fail to make a deep impression. It may be — let us hope so — that at the time they were received in the sense which they carry. It was only natural that in view of later, perhaps immediate, developments, the Reformed errors on the Personal Union, on original sin, on the external Word and on the Sacraments were set forth in still sharper terms, as a comparison with the corresponding chapters in the Schwabach Articles and the Augsburg Confession shows.