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## Reconciliation and Justification

By MARTIN H. FRANZMANN

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

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

2:3). "*Lex enim semper accusat*" (Apology IV, 38). The Law is the letter that kills.

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

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

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

It is not a matter of redispensing an angry deity as in paganism.

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

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

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

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

The formula also deals seriously with the nature of God, the Holy and Righteous, who has nothing in common with sin, who cannot compromise with ungodliness and unrighteousness, whose

wrath is a dreadful reality, a reality about which man dare not have any illusions, a wrath which is revealed "from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18). This formula does not evade the Law of God, God's exacting and punitive will, the Law that reveals sin, provokes and intensifies sins, and curses and condemns the sinner; and therewith the formula remains true to the testimony of Scripture, the testimony that God came to man and in coming to man dealt punitively with sin. In the light of *satisfactio* God is no "good-natured old man." His righteousness is not called into question, and the bright beams of His holiness remain unclouded. He is both "just and the Justifier" (Rom. 3:26).

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

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

And the many passages in which ἀγοράζω and ἔξαγοράζω are used to describe Christians as "bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; 2 Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; Acts 20:28) leave no doubt in the matter.<sup>1</sup>

The same holds for the figure of the high priest and sacrifice, which is often closely connected with that of the payment of a ransom, although this is no longer, strictly, a figure, but rather the reality, to which the type of the sacrificial cultus pointed. This thought is so central that the redemptive work of Jesus has been called His high-priestly office; and rightly so, for the whole New Testament takes up the Old Testament idea of sacrifice and sees it realized and fulfilled in Christ. John the Baptist points to Jesus as the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). At the institution of the Lord's Supper, John Himself interprets His death as a sacrificial death, Mark 14:24. So also Paul in 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:24-26. In the Gospel according to St. John (17:19) we read: "For their sakes I sanctify Myself."<sup>2</sup>

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

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

In *the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Christ is the High Priest *kat'*

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

<sup>2</sup> For the sacrificial implications of ἀγιάζω see Ex. 13:2; Deut. 15:19 (LXX).

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

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

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

In the satisfaction the redemptive work of God meets us in all its comforting severity; it is a comforting severity, for "the terrified conscience could not understand the good news of the Atonement if that good news were not at the same time a testimony to this concrete way in which God has effected the Atonement. Every other form of atonement would evoke no response, would not be

understood by man in his need.”<sup>3</sup> In the little word *vicaria*, on the other hand, we see all the sluices of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God opened for us in their surpassing fullness. This word recalls for us those words of Scripture which attest the death of Christ as the spontaneous act of His love: “I am the good Shepherd. . . . I lay down My life for the sheep. . . . No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.” (John 10:14-18.) “Christ hath *loved* us and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor” (Eph. 5:2).

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>3</sup> Luthardt-Jelke, *Kompendium der Dogmatik*, 15th ed., 1948, p. 326.

<sup>4</sup> *Die Lehre des Luthertums im Abriss*, Section 25.



sively complete: in all that He did and suffered, Christ acted and suffered for the whole world, for all men. His work is intensively complete: by Christ's suffering and death the world was actually reconciled with God; that is, God's wrath against the world was actually done away with, was satisfied and removed. God no longer imputes to men their transgressions. And finally God has ratified the whole of His work, has declared it perfect and complete by raising Jesus from the dead. For if Christ was delivered up for our offenses, He was raised for our justification. To put it crassly, "the account is closed."<sup>5</sup>

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

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

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<sup>5</sup> Cp. Pieper, *Dogmatik*, II, 410—411, of which the above is a free reproduction.

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

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

in that question, are ultimate mysteries before which the believer bows down to adore.

According to the "simple, clear words of Scripture" the Atonement is a present fact, "is *there* before all activity on man's part and independently of it. It is an accomplished fact, like the creation of the world. Rom. 5:10: 'We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son'; then, when Christ died, the Atonement came to be. As the death of Christ lies behind us in time, so also the effecting of our atonement."<sup>6</sup> In Christ God is so disposed toward men that the fact that they have provoked Him to wrath is as if it had never been; it is as if God and man had never been at variance.

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

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

<sup>6</sup> Pieper, *Dogmatik*, II, p. 411.

already been noted. We should note further that the great lapidary statement of objective reconciliation in 2 Cor. 5:19: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," is followed immediately by "not imputing their trespasses unto them." A comparison with Rom. 4:6-8 makes it clear that "not imputing sin" is equivalent to "imputing righteousness," i. e., to justification, so that justification is given in and with reconciliation; the one is as real and objective as the other.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, it is not our intention, in speaking of objective justification, to make the concept "static," to relegate justification to some cool region beyond the humanity that is to hear and receive it. We are thinking and speaking no more "statically" than Luther speaks when he says: "The work is done and accomplished; for Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us" (Large Catechism, III Art., 38). Our concern in speaking of objective justification is rather to keep justification altogether personal. Teachers like Stoekhardt, Engelder, and Schaller emphasize the *comforting* character of objective justification: the sinner is to know of a surety that God had him, just him, in mind and in heart when He delivered up His Son for the sins of the world and pronounced His judgment on the sins of the world; universal grace, universal salvation, objective justification are not to be so thought of or so preached that the individual appropriation of that salvation be left out of sight; Christ, they insist, has not died for the world *in abstracto*, but for each individual in the world. Though we distinguish between objective and subjective justification, it does not occur to us to *separate* them. We can subscribe to the words of Schrenk when he speaks<sup>8</sup> of the "*Heilsobjektivitaet*" as "*rettende Beziehungsobjektivitaet*." And we agree with him when he says: "To be justified once and for all in the cross and to be personally justified, these two facts are not to be separated." We do not speak of two justifications; objective and subjective justification refer to the same act of God.

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

<sup>7</sup> Windisch speaks in his commentary on 2 Corinthians (*ad* 5:19) of "die Versoehnung als Erlass einer umfassenden 'Generalamnestie.'"

<sup>8</sup> In Kittel, *Theologisches Woerterbuch zum N. T.*, s. v. δικαιώω.

and gained the treasure for us. . . . That this treasure . . . might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which He gives the Holy Ghost to bring this treasure home and appropriate it to us.”<sup>9</sup> This Word is brought home to *me* and is appropriated to *me* by the fact that the Holy Ghost creates faith in me. God’s verdict of acquittal upon the sins of the world becomes God’s verdict upon me by the fact that I believe it. So it is that I am justified *by faith*.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>9</sup> Luther, *Large Catechism*, Art. III, 38.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. E. Stauffer, *Theologie des N. T.*, p. 137: “Der antike Begriff des Evangeliums fordert zum Inhalt ein geschichtliches Ereignis, das eine neue Welt-situation herauffuehrt. Der nt. Begriff des Evangeliums hat zum Inhalt das Christusereignis, das eine neue Weltsituation herauffuehrt hat.”

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

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

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