

# JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN Mission

December 2015 | Vol. 2 | No. 5

*Special Issue*

## Table of Contents

SERMON FOR INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL—2015 WORLD CONFERENCE, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA BY HANS-JÖRG VOIGT .....	2
AUGSBURG CONFESSION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: CONFESSING THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS BY ALEXEY STRELTSOV .....	5
CHAIRMAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL REPORT BY HANS-JÖRG VOIGT .....	12
STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL ON THE DOCUMENT “FROM CONFLICT TO COMMUNION:” LUTHERAN—CATHOLIC COMMON COMMEMORATION OF THE REFORMATION 2017 .....	17
SERMON ON ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS (LUKE 10:20; REV. 12:11) BY ALBERT B. COLLVER III .....	20
OUR CONFESSION IN AUGUSTANA IV–VI BY SERGIO ADRIÁN FRITZLER .....	22
DEVOTION ON MATTHEW 6:24–34 BY LAWRENCE R. RAST, JR. ....	36
AUGUSTANA VII: THE CHURCH AND FELLOWSHIP BY ALBERT B. COLLVER III .....	38
BRINGING THE REFORMATION TO THE WORLD: THE MEANS OF GRACE BY HANS-JÖRG VOIGT .....	45
FAITH, ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE THOUGHTS AND WORK OF PASTOR VLADISLAV SANTARIUS BY MARTIN PIĘTAK .....	52
BOOK REVIEW: <i>MISSION SHAPED BY PROMISE: LUTHERAN MISSIOLOGY CONFRONTS THE CHALLENGE OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM</i> BY JOHN T. PLESS .....	62
BOOK REVIEW: <i>CALLED TO WITNESS: DOING MISSIONAL THEOLOGY</i> BY JOHN T. PLESS .....	64
BOOK REVIEW: <i>GNOSTIC AMERICA: A READING OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CULTURE &amp; RELIGION ACCORDING TO CHRISTIANITY’S OLDEST HERESY</i> BY CARL ROCKROHR .....	66
BOOK REVIEW: <i>CHURCH ORDER FOR BRAUNSCHWEIG-WOLFENBÜTTEL: HOW DOCTRINE, CEREMONIES, AND OTHER CHURCH-RELATED MATTERS SHALL (BY GOD’S GRACE) BE CONDUCTED HENCEFORTH</i> BY ALBERT B. COLLVER III .....	68

© 2015 The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.  
Reproduction of a single article or column for parish  
use only does not require permission of *The Journal  
of Lutheran Mission*. Such reproductions, however,  
should credit *The Journal of Lutheran Mission* as the  
source. Cover images are not reproducible without  
permission. Also, photos and images credited to  
sources outside the LCMS are not to be copied.

Published by The Lutheran Church—  
Missouri Synod.  
Please direct queries to  
[journaloflutheranmission@lcms.org](mailto:journaloflutheranmission@lcms.org).  
This journal may also be found at  
[www.lcms.org/journaloflutheranmission](http://www.lcms.org/journaloflutheranmission).  
Find the *Journal of Lutheran Mission* on  
Facebook.

Editorial office:  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road,  
St. Louis, MO 63122-7294,  
314-996-1202

Member: Associated Church Press Evangelical Press Association (ISSN 2334-1998)  
A periodical of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s Offices of National and International Mission.



As soon as we abandon the Lutheran Confessions as our sure boat to navigate Scriptures, we cannot avoid being carried about by every wind of doctrine that may blow.

# OUR CONFESSION IN AUGUSTANA IV–VI

by Sergio Adrián Fritzler

*Editor’s note: This paper is written by a member of an LCMS partner church. His views may not necessarily reflect those of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.*

## Introduction

*“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you (1 COR. 16:23).”  
Amen.*

I’m grateful for the invitation to lecture on this central topic of the Christian faith and on the current challenges for the Lutheran Church around the globe.

I will pursue a double objective: (1) to reaffirm what “we believe, teach, and confess” as confessional Lutheran leaders, gathered by means of the International Lutheran Council (ILC); and (2) to reflect upon certain current concepts and practices in our churches that are related to the proposed articles.

It is assumed that the church leaders here present are pastors who have subscribed to the Book of Concord of 1580 unconditionally, as the “faithful exposition of the Word of God and a right articulation of the doctrine of the Lutheran Church” (i.e., a *quia* subscription),<sup>1</sup> as our lens for approaching and understanding the Word of God. However, to be honest, today we have a difficult time accepting that we should have a rule or norm (*regula fidei*) for reading Scriptures (*norma normans*), since there are many who like to establish on their own what is good and acceptable for their ears, there are many who like to participate, that is to say, to be themselves the subjects of the interpretation of the Bible, whereas this *norma normata* proposes a different kind of approach (i.e., to be the object of that interpretation) that is not quite acceptable for the man today. This becomes evident in every aspect of the life of the Church: her liturgy, her ways of making

Justification is the center of all the other biblical doctrines.

decisions, her understanding of the mission, including also her position regarding the office of the ministry.

As soon as we abandon the Lutheran Confessions as our sure boat to navigate Scriptures, we cannot avoid being carried about by every wind of doctrine that may blow as a sign of the times, so that, in a slow and unnoticed way, we end up distancing ourselves from the Scriptures, while inventing new reinterpretations of the universal, Christian doctrines and practices. An example of this is the enthusiastic proposal of *Ablaze!* that was suggested to the confessional Lutheran churches around the world as a way

of focusing on mission. *Ablaze!* challenged the churches to search for new strategies and to think the “outside”<sup>2</sup> of the Church (deprived of the Means of Grace). Thus, a new ecclesiology and a new understanding of the ministry of the proclamation was being proposed, one that defined the “within” from the perspective of the “outside.” This example exposes the Church as accepting and subscribing to the Confessions quatenus.

Ascribing the *Confessio Augustana* its proper place as *regula fidei* (what implies a *quia* subscription), the confessors write:

Once again we wholeheartedly confess our adherence to this same Christian Augsburg Confession, solidly based as it is in God’s Word, and we remain faithful to its simple, clear, unequivocal meaning, which its words intend. We regard this confession as a pure, Christian creed, which (after the Word of God) should guide true Christians in this time, just as in earlier times Christian creeds and confessions were formulated in God’s church when major controversies broke out. To these documents the faithful teachers and their hearers confessed their

<sup>1</sup> The *Ritual Cristiano* used in Latin America adds: “Will you preach and teach the Word of God in accordance with the Confessions of the Lutheran Church?” (128).

<sup>2</sup> It is possible that many churches accepted *Ablaze!* because of LCMS World Mission’s financial support depended on its acceptance. As the saying goes, “The one that pays, the one that mandates.”

adherence at those times with heart and mouth. By the grace of the Almighty **we, too, are resolved to abide faithfully until our end in this oft-cited Christian confession**, as it was delivered to Emperor Charles in 1530. **We do not intend to deviate in the least from this Confession either in this document or in any other, nor do we intend to submit any other, new confession** (SD, *Definitive Repetition and Explanation*, 4–5, emphasis added).

Justification takes place apart from the law, genuinely by grace, for the sake of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, through faith.

analysis (AC IV–VI) form a unity under the concept of faith (faith as imputed righteousness): “We receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ’s sake through faith” (AC IV), the way the justifying faith is obtained: “the Office of Preaching” (AC V) and what justifying faith produces: “good fruits and good works” (AC VI).

**Faith as imputed righteousness (AC IV)**

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (EPH. 2:8).

The three articles that were proposed for our

IV. Concerning Justification	Artikel 4. Von der Rechtfertigung	Art. IV. De Iustificazione
<p>Furthermore, it is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ’s sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight, as St. Paul says in Romans 3 and 4.</p>	<p>Weiter wird gelehrt, daß wir Vergebung der Sünden und Gerechtigkeit vor Gott nicht erlangen mögen durch unser Verdienst, Werk und Genugtun, sondern daß wir Vergebung der Sünden bekommen und vor Gott gerecht werden aus Gnaden um Christus willen durch den Glauben, so wir glauben, daß Christus für uns gelitten hat, und daß uns um seinetwillen die Sünden vergeben, Gerechtigkeit und ewiges Leben geschenkt wird. Denn diesen Glauben will Gott für Gerechtigkeit vor ihm halten und zurechnen, wie St. Paulus sagt zu den Römern im 3. und 4. Kapitel.</p>	<p>Item docent, quod homines non possint iustificari coram Deo propriis viribus, meritis aut operibus, sed gratis iustificentur propter Christum per fidem, quum credunt se in gratiam recipi et peccata remitti propter Christum, qui sua morte pro nostris peccatis satisfacit. Hanc fidem imputat Deus pro iustitia coram ipso, Rom. 3 et 4.</p>

This is the central article of the Christian faith (*articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*), this is the doctrine of the Gospel itself. Justification is the center of all the other biblical doctrines, for it is the great principal star that, just as with the sun, all the other articles round about it are in a vital dependence of its warmth. Luther affirms:

This doctrine is the head and cornerstone. She only engenders, nurtures, builds, preserves, and defends God’s church; and apart from her God’s church cannot exist for one hour ... For no one that may not adhere to this article — or, to use Paul’s expression,

this “healthy doctrine” (TIT. 2:1) — is able to rightly teach in the church, or to successfully resist the adversary ... This is the heel of the offspring that opposes and bruise his head. At the same time, for this reason Satan cannot do anything else than to persecute her.<sup>3</sup>

Justification takes place apart from the law, genuinely by grace, for the sake of the redemption that is in Christ

<sup>3</sup> Ewald Plass, ed., *What Luther Says: An Active In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 2195.

Jesus, through faith.

The Scripture's language for redemption is justification: "'Justify' is used **in a judicial way** to mean 'to absolve a guilty man and pronounce him righteous,' and to do so on account of **someone else's righteousness, namely, Christ's**, which is communicated to us through faith" (Ap IV, 305, emphasis added). Just as Paul affirms: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 COR. 5:21).

Justification is through faith, faith as a divine gift and not a human work, that appropriates Christ's gifts:

Because the righteousness of Christ is given to us through faith, therefore **faith is righteousness** in us by imputation. That is, by it we are made acceptable to God because of God's imputation and ordinances, as Paul says (ROM. 4:5), "Faith is reckoned as righteousness" (Ap IV, 307, emphasis added).

For faith does not make people righteous because it is such a good work or such a fine virtue, but because it lays hold of and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy gospel. For this merit must be applied to us and appropriated through faith if we are to become righteous through it. Thus, the righteousness that out of sheer grace is **reckoned before God to faith** or to the believer **consists of the obedience, suffering, and resurrection of Christ** because he has satisfied the law for us and paid for our sins (SD III, 13–14, emphasis added).

There is nothing that man is or performs that can contribute, not even in the least sense, to his salvation before God (*coram deo*), just as the article says: "We cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions." It is God who imputes Christ's work to the sinner:

Christ remains the mediator. We must always be sure that for his sake we have a gracious God in spite of our unworthiness. Paul clearly teaches this when he says (1 COR. 4:4), "I am not aware of anything against me, but I am not thereby justified." But he believes that he is accounted righteous by faith for Christ's

sake, according to the statement (Ps. 32:1; Rom. 4:7), "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." This forgiveness is always received by faith. Thus also the imputation of the righteousness of the Gospel is through the promise. Therefore, it is always received by faith; we must always hold that we are accounted righteous by faith for the sake of Christ (Ap IV, 163).

The *Solid Declaration* reaffirms the foundation of the doctrine of justification by faith confessed in AC IV:

Regarding the righteousness of faith before God, we unanimously believe, teach, and confess on the basis of the general summary of our Christian faith and confession expressed above that poor sinful people are justified before God, that is, absolved — pronounced free of all sins and of the judgment of the damnation that they deserved and accepted as children and heirs of eternal life — without the

least bit of our own "merit or worthiness" [SC, Creed, 4], apart from all preceding, present, or subsequent works. We are justified on the basis of sheer grace, because of the sole merit, the entire obedience, and the bitter suffering, death, and the resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us as righteousness (SD III, 9).

God forgives our sin, considers us upright and righteous, and grants us eternal salvation. This righteousness is conveyed to us by the Holy Spirit through the

gospel and in the sacraments. It is applied to us, appropriated and accepted through faith. Therefore, believers have reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sins, and God's grace, and are children and heirs of eternal life (SD III, 15b–16).

During the last years, new metaphors for describing and announcing Christ's redemption have been incorporated with the intention of somehow eliminating the form of the biblical theology that has its center in the Pauline doctrine and in our confessions: justification as a forensic act and within a judicial context.

The Old Testament already speaks in judicial terms about the "covenant" as a legal concept. It is in this context (in relation to the covenant) that the Ten Commandments

Justification presents the cross as the main place of divine revelation to the human being, and that is strongly rejected by our reason, because it is the most unimaginable folly in the entire human history, since it contradicts our flesh.

were revealed as God's Law. The New Testament, on its turn, refers to the vicarious expiation in legal terms, as a *satisfactio vicaria*. The Holy Spirit is named παράκλητος: one who functions as a lawyer (a defender). The Lord's Prayer describes our sins not only as offenses, but as "debts" toward God and the neighbor. The end of times is, in the same connection, portrayed in terms of "final judgment."

Justification is a judgment both to absolve and to condemn. It is the Judge's verdict that imputes Christ's works to one who has a death warrant, in order to liberate him from his prison, on account of Christ having been condemned in his stead. Martin Chemnitz affirms:

But it must be diligently considered why the Holy Spirit wanted to set forth the doctrine of justification by means of judicial terms. Worldly, secure, and Epicurean men think that the justification of the sinner is something easy and perfunctory, therefore they are not much concerned about sin and do not sincerely seek reconciliation with God, nor do they strive with any diligence to retain it. However, the peculiar nature of the word "justify" shows how weighty and serious an action before the judgment seat of God the justification of a sinner is. Likewise, the human mind, inflated with a Pharisaical persuasion when it indulges in its own private thoughts concerning righteousness, can easily conceive a high degree of confidence and trust in its own righteousness. But when the doctrine of justification is set forth under the picture of an examination and of the tribunal of divine judgment, by a court trial, so to say, those Pharisaical persuasions collapse, vanish, and are cast down. Thus the true peculiar nature of the word "justify" preserves and defends the purity of the doctrine of justification from Pharisaical leaven, and from Epicurean opinions. And the entire doctrine of justification cannot be understood more simply, correctly, and appropriately, and applied to serious use in the exercises of penitence and faith, than through a true consideration of the judicial meaning of the word "justify," as the examples of many fathers show.<sup>4</sup>

Redemption is about God in His disposition of grace toward human beings through the work of Jesus Christ.

To preach this cornerstone doctrine, it is necessary to distinguish Law and Gospel. Many of the current efforts to say the same thing, but in a more acceptable way, are motivated by a rejection of the Law and the judgment of God. There are preachers who do not expose the Law in its second use (to kill any attempt of the human flesh), thinking that the Law can be inferred out of the general context of the exposition, or that people already come [to Church] bearing the Law because of [the consequences of] their sins, as if they were mere victims, and not responsible doers of the sin, in need of dying to rise again with Christ. Just as Melancthon puts it: "People cannot by their own powers live according to the law of God and because all are under sin ... [they are] guilty of eternal wrath and death" (Ap IV, 40). Only that one who preaches God's judgment and condemnation can also preach the Gospel and salvation in Christ through faith, for if the Law is minimized, then the preaching of the Gospel has no effect.

It is also heard that "people should not be attacked" through the preaching, that is to say: It is necessary "to be able to say things in a way that may not hurt the hearer." However, this eagerness to please others moves one to call evil good and good evil (*Heidelberg Disputation*, Thesis 21),

making him a theologian of glory (*theologus gloriae*).<sup>5</sup> Luther says: "Preach one thing: the wisdom of the cross!"<sup>6</sup>

Justification presents the cross as the main place of divine revelation to the human being, and that is strongly rejected by our reason, because it is the most unimaginable folly in the entire human history, since it contradicts our flesh.

What man regards as good may be sin in the sight of God, as for example, the striving for virtue by moralists following Aristotle and Kant. What human wisdom thinks to be luck and therefore desirable for man — health, wealth, success, victory — precisely that may be regarded by God as hurtful for man and therefore denied to him. In the judgment of God, sickness, failure, poverty may be much more precious; and this judgment of God is right even if it contradicts all human reason. Confronted by an incurable sickness which after years of suffering

<sup>5</sup> AE 31, 40.

<sup>6</sup> WA 1, 52.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, trans. Fred Kramer, vol. 1. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 476–477.

leads to a painful death, our human judgment sees something definitely negative. But as God sees it, such unreasonable fortune may be something quite positive. Thus Luther in *The Bondage of the Will* ventures to say: “When God brings to life, he does so by killing; when he justifies, he does so by accusing us; when he brings us into heaven, he does so by leading us to hell” (WA 18, 633). He makes alive by killing! — that is the adequate way to speak of the unreasonable way God acts.<sup>7</sup>

Our current world prefers the theology of glory in its multiple expressions that function in accordance with the principles of contextualization and missions, over against the theology of the cross that is expressed in terms of the forensic justification of the sinner through the cross. This is not a mere academicism or intellectualism with which we “rationalize” Christ’s redemption, but it is the real way God reconciles us to Himself. To change redemption language to speak about God’s forgiveness not using the judicial or legal framework of Scriptures amounts to despise the high price of the gratuitous grace that is given through the work of Christ in His death of the cross. This doctrine gives consolation and security to the believer for the forgiveness of his sins. If it is not spoken in this way, it is released to God’s good “humor,” who grants us an amnesty out of sheer goodness. This sets apart the work of God that is centered in the cross of Christ, and gives the centrality to God’s goodness (in terms of “good humor”). Osiander took the teaching of justification “as cold as ice.”<sup>8</sup> But adding “human warmth” is to locate the human being as subject instead of object of his redemption. This [i.e., the pure teaching on justification] is a doctrine that brings ineffable peace and joy to the souls of people, because it is God’s own love in action.

Suffering and afflictions are not part of justification, as [if they were] a fragment of Christ’s work, but they are intended to mortify our flesh:

Even though we still have troubles, Scripture

By faith, the human being is nothing but the receiver of His (Christ’s) favor.

interprets them as the mortifications of present sin, not as a payment for or a ransom from eternal death ... So afflictions are not always punishments or signs of wrath ... afflictions have other more important purposes, lest they think that they are being rejected by God since in the midst of such afflictions they see nothing but God’s punishment and anger. They must consider these other more important purposes, namely, that God performs his “alien work” in order to do his **proper work** (Ap XII, 157–158, emphasis added).

Then, it is added:

Thus Paul says [2 COR. 12:5, 9], “The power of God is made perfect in my weakness.” Thus, in accord with God’s will, our bodies ought to be sacrifices to show our obedience, not to pay for eternal death — for which God has another payment, namely, the death of his Son (Ap XII, 160).

Afflictions are followed by repentance, and, even if death comes, the work of Christ is totally fulfilled, since “God imposed bodily death on human beings, and even after the forgiveness of sin he did not eliminate it for the sake of exercising righteousness, namely, in order that the righteousness of those who are sanctified might be exercised and tested” (Ap XII, 161).

The theology of the cross renders God’s stuff hidden for our fleshly eyes (*sub cruce tectum*). The Church of Christ is hidden, just as believers are and the Means of Grace are: God’s own Word hidden under the words of the ordained minister, Christ’s own body and blood are hidden in the Eucharist under the earthly elements. The theology of the cross is not about a mere symbol, but about God’s own reality in action.<sup>9</sup>

Forensic justification exposes the objective basis on which redemptions depends: it is *extra nos*. Upon the sure basis of AC IV is confessed the following article that describes the manner God established His gift to be conferred.

<sup>7</sup> H. Sasse, “La Teología de la Cruz” [Carta a los pastores luteranos No 18, Jubilate 1951] en: Confesamos A Jesucristo (Vol. 1). Traducción del alemán al inglés: Norman Nagel; Traducción del inglés al castellano: Martin Teigen; Corrección del texto castellano: Roberto Bustamante, 2008), 8. The letter can be found in English Sasse, H. (1951). “Luther’s Theology of the Cross” in <http://www.wlssays.net/files/SasseCross.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> *El Marco Legal del Evangelio*, 3.

<sup>9</sup> H. Sasse, “La Teología de la Cruz,” 8.

## The way justifying faith is obtained (AC V)

“For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts” (MAL. 2:7).

V. Concerning the Office of Preaching	Artikel 5. Vom Predigtamt	Art. V. De Ministerio Ecclesiastico.
<p>To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching [Predigtamt], giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel. It teaches that we have a gracious God, not through our merit but through Christ’s merit, when we so believe.</p> <p>Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that we obtain the Holy Spirit without the external word of the gospel through our own preparation, thoughts, and works.</p>	<p>[oder Von der Erlangung des Glaubens durch die Gnadenmittel] Solchen Glauben zu erlangen, hat Gott das Predigtamt eingesetzt, Evangelium und Sakramente gegeben, dadurch er, als durch Mittel, den Heiligen Geist gibt, welcher den Glauben, wo und wann er will, in denen, so das Evangelium hören, wirkt, welches da lehret, daß wir durch Christus’ Verdienst, nicht durch unser Verdienst, einen gnädigen Gott haben, so wir solches glauben. Und werden verdammt die Wiedertäufer und andere, so lehren, daß wir ohne das leibliche Wort des Evangeliums den Heiligen Geist durch eigene Bereitung, Gedanken und Werke erlangen.</p>	<p>Ut hanc fidem consequamur, institutum est ministerium docendi evangelii et porrigendi sacramenta. Nam per Verbum et sacramenta tamquam per instrumenta donatur Spiritus Sanctus, qui fidem efficit, ubi et quando visum est Deo, in iis, qui audiunt evangelium, scilicet quod Deus non propter nostra merita, sed propter Christum iustificet hos, qui credunt se propter Christum in gratiam recipi.</p> <p>Damnant Anabaptistas et alios, qui sentiunt Spiritum Sanctum contingere sine Verbo externo hominibus per ipsorum praeparationes et opera.</p>

God has instituted the Office of Preaching in order to confer the gifts of salvation that Christ [obtained] through His bitter passion, death and resurrection, through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments (these forms of the *externum verbum* as *instrumenta prima*<sup>10</sup> — MATT. 10:1–15; 28:18–20; MARK 16:15–16; LUKE 9:1–6; 10:1–24; 24:45–49; JOHN 20:21–23; 21:15–17; ACTS 20:28; AC V, XIV, XXVIII). Christ locates Himself in the Gospel and the sacraments for the forgiveness of sin. “If you want to have God, then mark where He resides and where He wants to be found.”<sup>11</sup>

Together with the Means of Grace, as part of the same office of preaching (the ministry as *instrumentum secundum*), God established those who were to give

and administer these means. Since it is an institution of Christ, it is He who determines the “what,” the “how,” the “who,” and the “for what purpose” of the ministry (*iure divino*). It is not the Church who does it.

**[T]he power of the keys or the power of the bishops is the power of God’s mandate** to preach the gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer the sacraments. For Christ sent out the apostles with this command [JOHN 20:21–23]: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you. ... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” (CA XXVIII, 5–6, emphasis added)

“To obtain such faith:” It deals with the justifying faith that was referred to in the previous article. The office

<sup>10</sup> Gerhard (Loca XXIII 20:14).

<sup>11</sup> AE 23, 121.

exists to bestow the gifts of the Gospel. That is why this doctrine is in intimate connection with the justification by faith (the *articulus stantis*). Without the office there is no saving faith. Christ has not given us the Holy Scriptures; “Christ rather gave the office of the proclamation of the Gospel.”<sup>12</sup>

The task of pastors is the same task that Christ entrusted His apostles (MATT. 28:18–20; LUKE 24:45–47). They were to distribute what Jesus had bought through His bloody death and His resurrection. The authority they received is transmitted throughout the history of Church. It is the authority of the Office of the Keys that is publically exercised by a pastor in the congregation, when he preaches the Gospel, pronounces the absolution and administers the sacraments. His authority does not depend on the dignity of man, but on the power of God, on the authority of the Word and on the work of the Holy Spirit (JOHN 20:19–23). These words of Jesus are an ongoing mandate. It is for this reason that the pastor says: “In His stead and because of the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you.” Keys are all this is about.

The Office of the Holy Ministry is an administration in the stead of Christ (*in persona Christi*). The apostle Paul writes that he is an ambassador “on behalf of Christ” (2 COR. 5:20), and that it is for this reason that he can deliver his proclamation in the name of Christ (*in persona Christi*) in speaking to his audience (“We implore you ... be reconciled to God” [2 COR. 5:20]). To be placed into the office of preaching is to be under the office of Christ. There is no personal search, but it is Christ Himself who participates in those whom He calls and establishes in the office. That is why Jesus says to the apostles: “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (JOHN 20:21). This is a public and official commission. Melancthon affirms that those who are in the public office “**do not represent their own persons,**” since “they represent the person of Christ on account of the call of the church.” Therefore, “[w]hen they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they offer them **in the stead and place of Christ**” (Ap VII, 28, emphasis added; see also Ap VII, 47). The minister is not to be confused with his Lord, but he has to understand that he is in the office because the Lord has called and commissioned him to preach redemption. He responds to the purposes of God and serves those that he has under his care by means of the Word of God.

<sup>12</sup> Hermann Sasse, “The Lutheran Doctrine of the Office of the Ministry,” in *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letters* (1941–1976), vol. 2 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 124.

*Schwabach Article VII*, written by Luther in 1529, is the “type” of AC V, the “antitype.”

To obtain such faith or to give it to us human beings, God has instituted the preaching office or **spoken Word** (that is, the Gospel), through which he has this faith proclaimed, along with its power, benefits, and fruits. God also bestows faith through this Word, as through an instrument, with his Holy Spirit, when and where he wills. Apart from it, there is no other instrument or way, passage or path, to obtain faith. Speculation [about what happens] apart from or previous to the spoken Word, as holy as good as they appear, are nevertheless useless lies and errors (emphasis added).

And the following article says:

With and alongside of this spoken Word, God has also instituted external signs: Baptism and the Eucharist. Through these, alongside the Word, God offers and gives faith and his Spirit and strengthens all who desire him.

So that it may be heard, God instituted the Office of the Ministry (*ministerium ecclesiasticum*). God wants people to have certainty that it is His Word. This is why He has instituted this Office (Amt). It is not “a Catholic remnant.”<sup>13</sup>

God decided that justifying faith may be produced through the oral preaching of the Gospel (the *externum verbum*). “Denial of the external word is then denial of the gospel.”<sup>14</sup> No preaching, no Gospel; no Gospel, no faith. The principal work (*opus proprium*) of the Office of the Ministry is the preaching and administration of the sacraments (*ministerium porrigendi sacramenta*), both together. Sasse asserts: “The Gospel is this and nothing else: that in Jesus Christ there is forgiveness of sins, in him alone and nowhere else in the world, but also truly in him. A sermon that did not say that, a sermon in which this real Gospel was not mentioned would not be a Christian sermon.”<sup>15</sup>

Extra nos is then both the way in which our salvation was achieved and the way in which it is delivered: “as through means,” *tamquam instrumenta*. Both *instrumentum* and *externum* confess and guard the gospel and the dominical certainty that it is the Lord

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>14</sup> Norman Nagel, translated into Spanish by Roberto Bustamante, “Externum Verbum,” *Logia*, 6:3 (1997): 28.

<sup>15</sup> Sasse, “The Lutheran Doctrine of the Office of the Ministry,” 125.



who is saying, doing, giving out his gifts. Where gifts happen, there are two involved: the one who gives the gift and those to whom the gift is given. The Lord does not leave us unlocatedly in doubt about his giving to us of his gifts.<sup>16</sup>

What opposes the *external*, opposes the Gospel and goes according to AC IV's "through our merit, work, or satisfaction." Therefore, it is also opposed to the affirmation of the justification through faith that goes together with the exclusive articles.

Not being certain about God's call or about the conferral of Christ's gifts without a call is to step into sinking sands, for in this way one tries to validate the Means of Grace on account of their efficacy, regardless who performs it, that is to say: without a regular call (*rite vocatus*).

To speak and act in the stead of Christ and having been called provides the certainty that it is God who speaks and acts. *The Large Catechism* affirms: "To be baptized in God's name is to be baptized not by human beings but by God himself. Although it is performed by human hands, it is nevertheless truly God's own act" (*Baptism*, 10). The opposite of this is "as something that we do" (LC, *Sacrament of the Altar*, 7; see also *Baptism*, 12).

God works through external means, as Luther says:

Yes, it must be external so that it can be perceived and grasped by the senses and thus brought into the heart, just as the entire gospel is an external, oral proclamation. In short, whatever God does and effects in us he desires to accomplish through such an external ordinance (LC, *Baptism*, 30).

If this doctrine is not believed, doctrine, comfort and the certainty about God's forgiveness are lost.

In these matters, which concern the spoken, external Word, it must be firmly maintained that God gives no one his Spirit or grace apart from the external Word which goes before. We say this to protect ourselves from the enthusiasts, that is, the "spirits," who boast that they have the Spirit apart from and before contact with the Word. On this basis, they judge, interpret, and twist the Scripture or oral Word according to their pleasure (SA III 8, 3).

Hermann Sasse warns that if the [preaching of the] Gospel in the mission field goes without the Sacraments, it is not a Church that will be constituted, but a society with a Christian worldview: "The proclamation of the

Gospel would die away like a voice in the wind if those who came to faith were not baptized and the baptized did not celebrate the Lord's Supper. Why this is so, we do not know."<sup>17</sup> In that same place, Sasse also confronts the position that holds that Scriptures are the only and supreme Means of Grace, in detriment of the Sacraments that are thus taken as mere "duplicates or appendages to the Word of God."<sup>18</sup>

The phrase "hear the gospel" must not be interpreted too narrowly so as to mean listening to the reading of the Bible. The Latin version speaks of the ministry as a "ministry of teaching the gospel" (*ministerium docendi evangelii*). The German version calls it the "office of preaching" (*Predigtamt*). The Schwabach Articles described the "office of preaching" as "the oral Word, viz., the gospel." The Apology even includes reading under the hearing of the gospel. The Holy Spirit therefore accompanies any communication of the truth of the gospel. The Marburg Articles had agreed "that the Holy Ghost gives this faith or his gift to no one without preaching, or the oral Word, or the gospel of Christ preceding."<sup>19</sup>

There is only one ministry (*unum ministerium ecclesiasticum*). Grades and differences (*gradus in ecclesia*) are established by the Church. "That which distinguishes a bishop from his youngest pastor are rights of purely human origin."<sup>20</sup> Any difference that may be established or any discharge of administrative tasks in those who preside the congregation do not encroach the office.

Augustana XIV defines those that are regularly called and ordained, in the same way as the Small Catechism affirms in asking: "What do you believe according to these words?: I believe that **when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command**, ... this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, **as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself**" (SC, *Confession*, emphasis added). Those who have been called and ordained into this office by the Church are these "duly called by Christ ... in accordance with his divine command" (1 TIM. 4:14; 2 TIM. 1:6; AC XIV). This is the pastoral ministry as the Holy Scriptures understand it (JOHN 10:7-21; 1 TIM. 3:1-7, TITUS 1:5-9). For this reason, the apostle Paul affirms:

<sup>17</sup> Sasse, "The Lutheran Doctrine of the Office of the Ministry," 127.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>19</sup> W. D. Allbeck, *Studies in the Lutheran Confessions* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1952), 74.

<sup>20</sup> Sasse, "The Lutheran Doctrine of the Office of the Ministry," 128.

<sup>16</sup> Nagel, "Externum Verbum," 28.

God our Savior, **who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.** For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. **For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle** (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth (1TIM. 2:3-7).

The content and purpose of the ministry is Christ given to the sinner. It is not possible to speak about the ministry outside its institutional reality (*de iure divino*) and its Christological matrix that emanates out of the cross. The office of preaching depends on Christ (the Church's Head), the one who calls, and on the Church, Christ's Body (that is under the Head). Christ constituted "some as ... and some as" (EPH. 4:11). It was the Holy Spirit who "has made you overseers" (ACTS 20:28). The office also depends on the Church that, as Christ's Body, issues the divine call, has to externally sustain the public office among the baptized, and also has to exhort her pastor and verify the right doctrine, since it is she who knows the voice of Christ (LUKE 10:16).

Sasse affirms: "For everything which we today can be, say, and do in the service of the church is completely dependent upon how we understand our office."<sup>21</sup>

The doctrine of the ministry is one totally different from the doctrine of the priesthood of believers. Certainly they are related to each other, since both of them form part of the same reality of Christ in his Church. However, the priesthood of believers is not included in the ministry, as many times people try to force. Not any [biblical] text has a direct application to any person. For instance, Matt. 28:18-20, the so-called "Great Commission" text (under a Calvinistic conception), is connected to the apostolic ministry, since it mentions that [Christ speaks it] to the "eleven."

Jobst Schöne narrates the metamorphosis that the doctrine of the priesthood of believers suffered along the years. Roberto Bustamante reproduces Naomichi Masaki's summary of this story as follows:

- (a) **Luther** (16th century) defended the doctrine over against two different distortions in Rome: the synergist idea of "indelible character" and the doctrinal and administrative tyranny of Rome;
- (b) **Pietism** (17th century) uses it as a category to define a "true Christian";
- (c) **Modernism** (19th century) fills in this term

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 120.

with the new connotation of a shift in governmental system (from oligarchy to democracy); (d) the **Ecumenical Movement** (20th century) promotes the new identification of this doctrine with the concept of laymen's apostolate ("everyone a minister").<sup>22</sup>

Establishing the differentiation between the priesthood of believers and the office of preaching, C. F. W. Walther affirms:

Although Holy Scripture attests that all believing Christians are priests (1 PETER 2:9; REVELATION 1:6; 5:10), at the same time it teaches very expressly that in the Church [*Kirche*] there is an office to teach, feed, and rule, which Christians by virtue of their general Christian calling do not possess. For thus it is written: "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? **Are all teachers?**" (1 CORINTHIANS 12:29). Again: "How are they to preach unless they are **sent?**" (ROMANS 10:15). Or: "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment" (JAMES 3:1).<sup>23</sup>

Today people try to re-interpret the Confessions from the vantage point of the practice [of the Church], what triggers a *quatenus* subscription. Positions are established out of practices that attempt to innovate, claiming either that it is about "cases of necessity" and not of doctrine (of faith), or that it is "all a matter of interpretation,"<sup>24</sup> in order to make innovation the best option.

These reinterpretations title AC V as "Concerning the Work of the Holy Spirit" or "Concerning the Means of Grace," instead of "Concerning the Office of Preaching." It is held that this article that speaks about the pastoral ministry, but AC XIV, disconnecting in this way the foundational character of the Means of Grace in relation to the ministry and the Christological character of the same ministry. It is as if Christ instituted the means, and now it is His Church that takes the decision regarding those means: regarding who it is (or who are those) that will perform the task that Christ ordered to be done. This is a functional position that amounts to a Calvinist one, since both are the same. The Spanish edition [of the Book of Concord],<sup>25</sup> includes a footnote that affirms: "The text of this article demonstrates that the Reformers thought of

<sup>22</sup> R. Bustamante (2015). *Documento de posicionamiento*. (Buenos Aires: Seminario Concordia, 2015), 4.

<sup>23</sup> C. F. W. Walther, *The Church & The Office of The Ministry*. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), 152.

<sup>24</sup> Nagel, "Externum Verbum," 31.

<sup>25</sup> The only edition in the world that has reserved copyright.

‘the office of the ministry’ in other than clerical terms.”<sup>26</sup> This reading promotes a clergy versus laity reading of the text and comes from the notes in the Spanish and Portuguese editions of the Book of Concord.<sup>27</sup>

This clergy verses laity understanding of the office of preaching affects all the Article V, what ends not bestowing the justifying faith (AC IV). It becomes evident in the following aspects and topics on which we should reflect:

**1.** The creation of a department on Missiology in theological education, disconnected from Systematic and Pastoral [Theology], that seems to sustain the idea that these are two distinct — and for instance divorced — aspects: practice and doctrine. This dualist conception of Christian life makes us value the practice in the Church as “the mother of theology,” instead of allowing the doctrines to establish the practices, just as the Christian Church has sustained since [the time of] Christ. Doctrine also is rendered flexible because “we have to be pastoral” in our approach. We end denying the doctrines that are held, “erasing with the elbow what we wrote with our hand.”

**2.** The previous point moves us to the disconnection between missionary strategies and the Means of Grace (*externum verbum*). It is social culture; cultural anthropology, phenomenology of religion, business management and psychology are established as the starting point. Then it is concluded, in this train of thought: “God left a mission, and it is the Church who takes the turn that Christ left behind; so, each one has to consider how, according to his gifts, is to ‘take Christ’ to the people; and, to obtain [positive] results, we need to do [our task] in a creative and innovative way.” At the end of the day, everyone is a minister under this conception.

**3.** From this, it is derived that the main function of the pastor is to “equip the members in [the use of] their gifts,” coordinating and leading different tasks and groups. This represents a Church [that lives] for herself, that, as any society, has different activities and needs to establish her goals, strategies and projects that barely have to do with the Means of Grace, and usually with “being active” in the Church. There is a *status quo* that has to be fed.

**4.** The democratic conception of congregationalism gets

empowered with this laical understanding. The Means of Grace are taken as functions/tasks that somebody has to perform. Thus, the congregation has to select someone who has “the [necessary] conditions” for this; just as a waiter who brings the food to the customers in a snack-bar, [this person] brings Christ’s food. In this way, the ministry is [taken as] functional (anyone whom “the congregation authorizes” can perform it), and no longer Christ’s institution, but the congregation’s. The “tasks” are distributed among those whom the congregation “authorizes.” A pastor is established together with a team (board of directors, Bible school teachers, etc. — as if these were “minor offices” within the very office). This is not a “gifts company,” but the Christ’s own ministry for the forgiveness of sin. We are not to mistake the “gifts of the Spirit” for the Means of Grace: the former belong to the fruits of faith for a service of mercy to the neighbor (AC VI; ROM. 12:3–12; 1 COR. 12), the later belong to the external Word by means of which Christ comes to serve us, bringing us forgiveness of sins, life and salvation (MATT. 28:18–20; JOHN 20:19–23; ROM. 10:14–16).

**5.** Out of the previous idea, it is asserted that if it is true that the pastor is the only one that is called by God to bestow the gifts of grace, the proclamation of the Gospel gets limited. This leads to the belief that the Gospel is in the Church’s hands and not in her Lord’s hands. The work always remains as God’s work, since it is the Holy Spirit who “calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith” (SC, *Creed*, 6). God does the work in spite of both human limitations ([our] financial and human resources) and of the manifest sins that divide the Church. To believe that this limits the Gospel is to put the Church and the very Gospel in human hands, and not to believe that this is the work of God Almighty, the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier.

**6.** To sustain the argument that AC V speaks about the Means of Grace and not about the *Predigtamt*, the categories of “abstract” (general) and “concrete” (particular or proper) were superimposed on it. Thus, AC V speaks about a general referent regarding the way in which God works through the Means of Grace, whereas AC XIV presents the concrete mode of doing it. This is to believe in an abstract ministry of Christ, what is not admissible, since the ministry is in the person of Christ. This concept goes in opposition to the doctrine of Incarnation: Christ as a human being. The office or the ministry deals with persons, therefore, it is no abstract something. Otherwise,

<sup>26</sup> A. A. Meléndez, ed. *Libro Concordia Las Confesiones de la Iglesia Evangélica Luterana*. (San Louis: Editorial Concordia, 1989), 29 note 25.

<sup>27</sup> The Preface of the Spanish edition indicate that footnotes were taken from the Portuguese version (Dr. Arnaldo Schüller’s *Livro Concórdia*). However, this particular note is not there in the Portuguese edition. [Translator’s note: The discussed note is a modification of footnote 4 in Tappert’s edition (p. 31).]

Jesus would neither have chosen His apostles, nor ordered them to administer the Means of Grace.<sup>28</sup>

**7.** The concept of “emergency” for the administration of Holy Baptism or private Absolution (in a situation in which a person needs one of them or is in doubt about his salvation), has allowed the dividing line between the office of preaching and the priesthood of the baptized to be displaced, on the basis of a lack of pastors or because of the financial situation of a congregation. Thus, lay preachers are permitted (*Nothelfer*, those who help in a situation of emergency), with the argument that things are being done in accordance to AC XIV, though it is interpreted as [referring to] an “authorization” and not as it has been historically understood (that is, treats about call and ordination — *rite vocatus*).

**8.** In this context, preaching becomes *synergist*, just as any other kind of normal human communication, instead of *monergist*, in accordance with the doctrine of the efficacy of the Word. It is as if it were necessary to “help” the Word in its efficacy, even though this very efficacy is brought up over against the necessity of the ministry. The pastor is established as a function of the Means of Grace. Therefore, he has no authority apart from them, but only that one that the means grant him: it is the very authority of the Gospel and the Sacraments.

Chemnitz affirms:

Because God Himself deals with us in the church through the ministry as through the ordinary means and instruments. For it is He Himself that speaks, exhorts, absolves, baptizes, etc. in the ministry and through the ministry. Lk 1:70; Heb 1:1; Jn 1:23 (God crying through the Baptist); 2 Co 2:10, 17; 5:20; 13:3. It is therefore absolutely necessary that the minister as well as the church have sure proofs that God wants to use this very person for this His ordinary means and instrument, namely the ministry.<sup>29</sup>

The doctrine of the pastoral ministry does not annul at all the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, but places each one in his own vocation. The pastoral ministry, matrimony (the offices of father and mother that come about from the same institution), and the secular authority are the divine offices instituted by God. These are the “holy orders” the *Small Catechism* refers to. The whole life is based upon them. Any authority that has

been established by God represents God Himself. Thus, at home, father and mother speak in the stead of God and exercise His authority. In AC V, the priesthood of all believers is connected with the phrase “in them that hear,” since “faith comes from hearing” (ROM. 10:17). It [the priesthood] is defined here in a passive role, not in an active one, as it is required today. The believers’ active role is located in AC VI, not in AC V. No one can serve himself the gifts; he needs the beautiful feet (ROM. 10:15).

“Condemned are” asserts Article V in its second part. In our postmodern times, no one is condemned. Every position is accepted, but all of them become mere opinions. Biblical doctrine is not the result of clarification of different positions among people, nor the result of agreements and decisions taken in conventions, but it comes “from above” (“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” [MATT. 16:17]). Thus, to clarify positions is not to expose opinions, but [to expose] the biblical doctrine revealed in Holy Scriptures. To clarify positions, God Himself has given the rule of faith through the apostolic writings. Therefore, new doctrines do not exist: “Listen to him” (MATT. 17:5).

“The Anabaptists and others” (AC V) are those who think that God works apart from the external Word and from the office of the ministry; those who oppose that which God established.

Speaking about the office of preaching, Luther distinguishes it from the diaconate:

See how far the glory of the church has departed! The whole earth is filled with priests, bishops, cardinals, and clergy; yet not one of them preaches so far as his official duty is concerned ... The duty of a priest is to preach, and if he does not preach he is as much a priest as a picture of a man is a man ... It is the ministry of the Word that makes the priest and the bishop ... However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. (For what is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called.) ... And the diaconate is the ministry, not of reading the Gospel or the Epistle, as is the present practice, but of distributing the church’s aid to the poor, so that the priests may be relieved of the burden of temporal matters and may give themselves more freely to prayer and the Word.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The argument based on the *Confutatio* [fails at not understanding that this text] is not a hermenutical key to read the Lutheran Confessions.

<sup>29</sup> Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion*, 29–30.

<sup>30</sup> AE 36, 110–112.

Hermann Sasse affirms:

Then the humble preaching of the Gospel and the administration of these simple Sacraments are the greatest things that can happen in the world. For in these things the hidden reign of Christ is consummated. He himself is present in these Means of Grace, and the bearer of the *ministerium ecclesiasticum* actually stands in the stead of Christ. That certainly puts an end to any clerical conceit. We are nothing. He is everything. And that means that the terrible sin of pessimism, which is the pastor's greatest temptation, is finished with as well. It is nothing but doubt and unbelief, for Christ the Lord is just as present in his Means of Grace today as he was in the sixteenth or the first century. And "all authority in heaven and on earth" [MATT 28:18] is just as much his today as it was when he first spoke that promise to the apostles. And it remains so into all eternity.<sup>31</sup>

To conclude our analysis of AC V, let's hear Luther once again:

For we must believe and be sure of this, that baptism **does not belong to us** but to Christ, that the gospel **does not belong to us** but to Christ, that the office of preaching does not belong to us but to Christ, that the sacrament [of the Lord's Supper] does not belong to us but to Christ, that the keys, or forgiveness and retention of sins, do not belong to us **but to Christ**. In summary, the offices and sacraments do not belong to us but to Christ, for he has ordained all this and left it behind as a legacy in the church to be exercised and used to the end of the world; and he does not lie or deceive us. Therefore, we cannot make anything else out of it but must act according to his command and hold to it. **However, if we alter it or improve on it, then it is invalid and Christ is no longer present, nor is his ordinance.**<sup>32</sup>

The doctrine of the ministry is a gift of God to be celebrated and thanked for!

### What justifying faith produces (AC VI)

"Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (MATT. 25:40).

<sup>31</sup> Sasse, "The Lutheran Doctrine of the Office of the Ministry," 139.

<sup>32</sup> AE 38, 200.

VI. Concerning the New Obedience	Artikel 6. Vom neuen Gehorsam	Art. VI. De Nova Obedientia
<p>It is also taught that such faith should yield good fruit and good works and that a person must do such good works as God has commanded for God's sake but not place trust in them as if thereby to earn grace before God. For we receive forgiveness of sin and righteousness through faith in Christ, as Christ himself says [Luke 17:10]: "When you have done all [things] ... , say, 'We are worthless slaves.'" The Fathers also teach the same thing. For Ambrose says: "It is determined by God that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved and have forgiveness of sins, not through faith alone, without merit."</p>	<p>Auch wird gelehrt, daß <i>solcher Glaube gute Früchte und gute Werke bringen soll</i>, und daß man müsse gute Werke tun, allerlei, so Gott geboten hat, um Gottes willen, doch nicht auf solche Werke zu vertrauen, dadurch Gnade vor Gott zu verdienen; denn wir empfangen Vergebung der Sünden und Gerechtigkeit durch den Glauben an Christus, wie Christus selbst spricht, Luk. 17: „So ihr dies alles getan habt, sollt ihr sprechen: wir sind untüchtige Knechte.“ (Al)so lehren auch die Väter. Denn <i>Ambrosius</i> spricht: „Also ist's beschlossen bei Gott, daß, wer an Christus glaubt, selig sei, und nicht durch Werke, sondern allein durch den Glauben ohne Verdienst Vergebung der Sünden habe.“</p>	<p>Item docent, quod <i>fides illa debeat bonos fructus parere</i>, et quod oporteat bona opera mandata a Deo facere propter voluntatem Dei, non ut confidamus per ea opera iustificationem coram Deo mereri. Nam remissio peccatorum et iustificatio fide apprehenditur, sicut testatur et vox, Christi Luc. 17, 10: <i>Quum feceritis haec omnia, dicite: Servi inutiles sumus</i>. Idem docent et veteres scriptores ecclesiastici. Ambrosius enim inquit: <i>Hoc constitutum est a Deo, ut, qui credit in Christum, salvus sit sine opere, sola fide gratis accipiens remissionem peccatorum</i>.</p>

*Sola fide* is the doctrinal principle that comes out of Christ's work. But then comes faith as active in works of love. As Luther affirms "He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love."<sup>33</sup> Melancthon reaffirms: "Therefore we must first receive the forgiveness of sins by faith before we keep the law, although, as we said above, love follows faith because the reborn receive the Holy Spirit and therefore begin to keep the law" (Ap XII, 82).

First, God gathers people to Himself through grace, bringing them into the faith, and then He sends people out to the world in order to "proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 PETER 2:9). This is the rhythm of Christian life, just as breathing: inward, outward; a centripetal and a centrifugal force. With this article the unity of faith is completed, bearing fruits, what justifying faith produces. However, those works do not contribute to salvation.

Dr. Jack Preus III affirms in a categorical way: "Christians are people that move from the inward to the outward." Thus also Luther says: "A Christian lives not in himself" (if he lives in himself he is not a Christian at all).

These are the two different ways by which a Christian lives: by faith and by love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor. Christian always lives outside himself: he lives in God and in his neighbor. If he lives in himself he is not a Christian at all. Living in oneself is the all form that has been left behind; now there is the new life, living oneself for the others.<sup>34</sup>

Christian vocation in love to the neighbor is the adequate answer to this God who mercifully deals with people. This answer called "service" does not take place under coercion, but it is given freely. And this because our works have no merit before God, since it takes place around faith and not works. Some people think that if they perform good works, then God will approach near them. If good works are thought to have any kind of meritorious character, then the gratuitous dimension of salvation in Christ is totally destroyed (AC IV). Redemption is about God in His disposition of grace toward human beings through the work of Jesus Christ. By faith, the human being is nothing but the receiver of His favor.

Even though usually a Church is evaluated on account

of her "good works," these do not determine her reality as Church. This, as it was already said, is always hidden to human eyes. When it is human eyes that establish the assessment parameters, they will be established in terms of good works, and certainly this is a mistake. It also is not a cause of pride, even when our old man loves pretending to contribute something to "feel himself useful." This should never be the parameter of Christian service.

We have to be careful regarding overemphasizing Christian life even above Christ's own work. The way to do it, as our article affirms, is to say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty" (Luke 17:10). This also can be related to preaching, if we speak more about what people can do, rather than what God has done for us in Christ. Then, we are justifying ourselves.

Preaching is more *kerygmatic* than *didactic*. This is one of the main differences with Calvin and with his friend Spener (who, in fact, never met each other). In Reformed theology, the Law in its third use is regarded as leading and motivating Christian life. And this Reformed understanding of the Law has reappeared in contemporary evangelicalism.<sup>35</sup> Christian service is always focused in love toward the neighbor. God works by means of good works in the different walks of life of people that work as masks of God (*larva dei*). It is His creative work that still remains present in human vocations (*creatio continua*).

When Luther said that Christians are little "Christs" to the neighbor, he was pointing Christian vocation in love toward the neighbor. This means that when people see Christians around the world, they see Christ. Just as the apostle Paul affirms: "You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all" (2 COR. 3:2). This is what it means to be Christian: It means that the believer lives just as He lived, not for himself but for others.

Regarding our service to the neighbor, God says, "Do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you" (1 SAM. 10:7), "as we have opportunity" (GAL. 6:10). Christian service is circumscribed to the context and the emerging necessities, considering at the same time one's own human limitations. "The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so **that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works**. These things are excellent and profitable for people" (TITUS 3:8, emphasis added).

<sup>33</sup> AE 31, 375.

<sup>34</sup> J. Preus, *Christian Vocation*. Foro de Uruguay (Sin publicar). Apuntes, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> David P. Scaer, *Ley y Evangelio y los Medios de Gracia*. trans. José Pfaffenzeller (Buenos Aires: Seminario Concordia, 2012), 81.

But conscience also grasps its own good works and sustains regarding them that they **should gratuitously be done** only for the neighbor's good and for body exercise and in no way to proportionate righteousness, peace, satisfaction for and remission of sins. Because **conscience looks for these things only in Christ's work** and it is there that it finds them in an enduring faith, as it sees that Christ has gratuitously fulfilled his works for our good and for the use of his body according to God's will.<sup>36</sup>

Enough now of freedom. As you see, it is a spiritual and true freedom and makes our hearts free from all sins, laws and commands, as Paul says, I Tim. 1[:9], "The law is not laid down for the just." It is more excellent than all other liberty, which is external, as heaven is more excellent than earth.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

The articles here assessed give us peace and comfort in the faith, just as the certainty that we have a God of grace and mercy, who on account of Christ's passion and death gives us all that we cannot attain by ourselves: forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. They also provide us certainty that it is God who bestows it on us through those He calls into the office of preaching. This, in turn, gives the Church confidence that God speaks and works through the pastor's beautiful mouth, hands and feet.

As long as the world remains, these articles will be always despised and negated by our enemies, the world, our flesh and the devil. Therefore, we know that they will be always objects of scorn and controversy. In the face of it, if these fundamental articles are obscured, then comes into the reign of free thought that wishes to satisfy one's flesh (reason and practice) and to accommodate things to the world, thus serving in this way the devil.

The promise is that Christ's true Church will remain forever and that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (MATT. 16:18), and this not on account of ecumenical agreements, but because Christ's work will remain forever. It is not because of our work, but because Christ is the Head of the Church, who will lead her work forever. This puts us into the perspective of AC VI, "We are worthless slaves" because we have been incorporated into his body, to do his work (EPH. 2:10).

May the triune God comfort us always in Christ's work! May this be the main and only goal of our churches! And finally, "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 PETER 5:10-11).

---

*The Rev. Sergio Fritzler is director of Seminario Concordia in Buenos Aires, Argentina.*

<sup>36</sup> Martín Lutero, *Obras de Lutero*, (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1967-1985), OL 1, 134.

<sup>37</sup> AE 31, 375.