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## The Means of Grace.

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

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(Concluded.)

But can it be said also of children that Baptism justifies them? They are certainly, it is argued, not yet able to partake of the merits of Christ. That was the reason why the disciples turned them away. Matt. 19, 13; Luke 18, 15. But what did Jesus say? "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 19, 14; Luke 18, 15; Mark 10, 14. These "little children" cannot possibly have been fully grown up, for they were carried in the arms. Matt. 19, 13; Mark 10, 13; Luke 18, 15. And the disciples did not chide the children, but those that bore them. Furthermore, the term which Luke employs to designate the children (*βρέφη*) is used in his writings only of the new-born or of the fruit in the womb. Luke 18, 15. [Note. — *Βρέφη*: of the new-born, Luke 2, 12; Acts 7, 19; of the fruit in the womb, Luke 1, 41. 44.] But the meaning of the "kingdom of heaven" which belongs to the children is shown Rom. 14, 17: "The kingdom of God is not meat or drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." So, then, these three things belong to them: the righteousness of Christ, the peace of God, and the joy in the Holy Ghost. But does not Christ say, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven"? Matt. 19, 14. Happy are we that He did say so; otherwise no adult would get into heaven. But did He, with the words "of such," wish to exclude the little children? Surely not; He rather made them the leaders of the procession to Salem. He says: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me"; they will be saved before all others; indeed, only such as they. [Note. — The *Hirschberg Bible* gives a very good explanation of the word "such" in Matt. 19, 18: "The children and those who, by committing themselves without malicious resistance to My arms of grace, become like them." . . . Christ

# The Historical Significance of the Formula of Concord.

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## IV.

The proper way to become duly saturated with the theological atmosphere of the generation after Luther's death would be to read the publications of that period, not by subject or by author, but by the year, aye, by the month or week, just as they appeared. For the issues which caused controversies within the churches of the Augsburg Confession did not follow one another, but were, in a great measure, contemporaneous. The line-up of the polemical writers, also of the civil authorities, was serrated; for those who stood together in upholding one subject sometimes opposed each other in another. The discussion of a certain issue would produce

a line of arguments sometimes including unguarded statements, and these would open up a side campaign, while the original issue was let alone for a time to be taken up again later with different groupings and not necessarily having settled the problem of the episode. Writers on the history of dogma or on the history of polemics or on symbolics create the impression that the period under discussion was entirely given over to disputes.<sup>1)</sup> But both the leaders and the men *minoris generis* were also busy in promulgating the Gospel, in preaching saving faith and sanctification; they were busy in rearing the walls of a positive Bible Church structure. They were doing that in the lecture-room, in the pulpit, in the schools; by word of mouth and by printing pertinent material for the clergy and the laity; by precept of ordinances and by inspections and visitations. Nor must the fact that several of the polemical productions were published in sermon form be taken as evidence that their invectives had been hurled into the congregations assembled for worship. All this should be kept in mind, lest the picture become gloomier than reality warrants; it is gloomy enough. It certainly is not a pleasant picture when, at the synod at Eisleben, 1554, we see the minority spared express rejection of a phrase because the majority "feared it would not be an honest rejection anyhow";<sup>2)</sup> nor when the younger Philippists hurled venomous invectives of personal insults while the Gnesio-Lutherans of ducal Saxony had recourse to the tyrannical measure of excommunication and exile; nor when two sets of theologians met at Altenburg,<sup>3)</sup> but from October, 1568, to March, 1569, stiffly exchanged notes instead of meeting one another in person. However, this lack of charity, deplorable as it always is, is not really the thing which stamps our period the Critical Period. Indeed, it is not merely the coexistence of the two parties, Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans, which is to be deplored. In fact, there were some distinct aberrations from the position of 1530—46, aberrations which cannot be put into one or the other of these rubrics.

One such aberration was that of Osiander. It is astonishing that the tendency of this Koenigsberg professor was not recognized sooner; for in the fifties he could truthfully say that he had taught

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1) C. S. Schluesselburg, in his *Catalogus Haereticorum*, 1599, offers a very full enumeration of the books, booklets, and documents produced during that time.

2) *Acta des Synodi zu Eisleben, 13. Feb. des Jars 1554.* Fol. C.

3) *Colloquium zu Altenburgk in Meissen.* Jena, 1569. Fol. 473. Procured through the *Auskunftschausschuss* of German libraries.

his doctrine for thirty years. He had studied, mainly philology, at Ingolstadt.<sup>4)</sup> In 1522 he took charge of St. Lawrence's Church at Nuremberg and became a champion of the Reformation, stressing particularly its Biblicism. As far as theological learning is concerned, he possibly was an autodidact.<sup>5)</sup> The Interim exiled him from Nuremberg, but Duke Albrecht of Prussia made him professor of theology at Koenigsberg; for he had always stressed his agreement with Luther, while in reality he entertained views entirely different from the teachings of Luther, and that with regard to the principal doctrine of the Christian religion — justification. Already at Nuremberg, in 1525, he had shown that the starting-point for him, also in the question of justification, was the Gospel of St. John: the first chapter, the sixth, and the farewell addresses of our Lord.<sup>6)</sup> Challenged for some assertions he had made in his Koenigsberg lectures, 1549, he found it necessary to explain in detail his views concerning redemption and justification.<sup>7)</sup> From eternity the Word, or Son, *Logos*, he taught, was predestined to become man; and He would have come in the flesh even if sin had not entered the world; for the *image of God* was thus to become reality. During the eternal process, God pours into His image, the divine Word, His entire divine essence, including His holiness. On the other hand, man is originally destined for the indwelling of the divine essence. As Jesus is to be God's image through the personal union of the divine and the human nature, so is man to be His image. Presupposition for this is Christ's redemption on the cross, the historical fact which procured remission of sins. But this remission is not justification; for it happened before we existed, and he who wishes to be justified must believe, which only those can do who exist. To quote him:<sup>8)</sup> "Us, who now live and die, Christ has not justified; but we are redeemed thereby from wrath, death, and hell. Therefore Scriptures speak so much of conciliation, redemption. But it is indubitably true that through the fulfilment of the Law and through His suffering

4) W. Moeller, *Andreas Osianders Leben u. ausgew. Schriften*. 1870.

5) Moeller, p. 4, 524.

6) *Ain gut underricht . . . aus hailiger . . . schrift*, etc., published by three clergymen, but written by Osiander. Moeller, p. 23.

7) *Von dem Einigen Mitler Jhesu Christo u. Rechtf. des Glaubens*. 1551. In it he charges that Melancthon had misunderstood Luther for the last sixteen years. One month later the book was published in Latin: *De Unico Mediatore*.

8) G. Arnold, *Kirchen- u. Ketzerhistorie*, Part II, Book 16, chapter 24, § 1.

and death He has earned and acquired this great grace, so that the Father has not only forgiven sin and removed the unbearable burden of the Law, but also intends to justify through faith in Christ, *making* us righteous, pouring into us His righteousness, . . . and killing, sweeping away, and entirely destroying the sins which, though forgiven, still dwell in us. So, then, the other part of our dear Mediator's office is to turn *now* to us poor, guilty sinners that we may recognize such great grace and accept it gratefully through faith. Through this faith He resuscitates us from the death of sin and makes us righteous . . . and destroys the sin in our flesh. And that is primarily our justification." The love of God is proclaimed to man in the audible Word, and whenever one trustfully accepts it, the "Inner Word," Logos, and His eternal righteousness enter the heart; not the Word in its purely divine nature, but as it is incarnate in Christ. Thus the indwelling divinity is the Christians' life; but through the medium of its human nature Christians become members of His body, members into which divine holiness is transfused, and the image of God is regained. The act of this kind of justification, of course, is a continuous one, growing in time and accelerated, for instance, by Holy Communion, in which Jesus Christ enters into the Christian in an additional manner. The righteousness which the believer possesses in justification is the essential, eternal, divine righteousness itself. Remission of sins is needed for the sins committed before justification; it is not to be considered a divine imputation upon which man might build his confidence. The thing to do is to depend upon Jesus as He lives and reigns in the heart of the Christian rather than to depend on any imputation, since righteousness in the faithful is not righteousness because it *counts* as such before God, but because it really is God's own righteousness. Luther's use of "*die vor Gott gilt*" he explained as intending merely to guard against the false assumption of a punitive justice in the various passages with *dikaïosyne Theou*. All the Biblical passages in which *justify* undoubtedly means *iustum pronuntiare* are to him figurative; for *iustificare* originally and really "*est ex impio iustum facere sive mortuum ad vitam revocare.*"

Osiander's doctrine is a fine specimen of systematic construction, possibly with the exception of his contention that the righteousness of Christ dwelling in the believer is accounted to him also toward forgiveness.<sup>9)</sup> From 1549 to his death, 1552, Osiander had

9) O. Ritschl calls it a pleonasm. *Dogmengesch. des Prot.*, II, 1, p. 465.

to defend himself against the almost unanimous attacks of Philipists and Gnesio-Lutherans.<sup>10)</sup> And when he had passed away, the battle continued. And well it might. For Osiander had touched the spinal nerve of the Lutheran Church. Even though he rejected the Roman Catholic claim that in the infusion of supernatural power human merits cooperate, and though he described the sanctifying indwelling of Jesus in the believer as mere grace, yet his teaching was essentially Roman in that he assumed that great fact which opens the gates of eternal life to be the amelioration of character in man, going on in successive stages and therefore never fit to give sure peace to the penitent sinner. Brenz did not entirely condemn Osiander's statements, but in his *Wuerttemberger Responsum* (December, 1551) he tried to act as mediator. A second Wurttemberg *Opinion* tried to do the same thing; it did not touch the real point at issue. The Duke of Prussia had sent Osiander's *Bekentnis* to evangelical princes and cities and synods. Objections were raised against his mysticism of the divine indwelling, against the one-sided stressing of Christ's divine nature, against the separation of forgiveness from justification, against his confounding justification and regeneration. And yet, at the funeral service, held after his death, October 19, 1552, a most glorious eulogy was delivered by the Osiandrist Funck. A few months later a Prussian edict declared in favor of the second *Wuerttemberger Gutachten* and commanded silence. Moerlin, one of the most aggressive exponents of Gnesio-Lutheranism, was deported; but Funck continued his activities, uniting the adherents of Osiander into a sort of political court party. There was so much restiveness in Prussia that at last, in the middle of the sixties, the king of Poland, whose vassal the Prussian duke was, had Funck apprehended, tried on a charge of treason, and executed.

The defense of Lutheran concepts of justification, or rather, the attacks upon those of Osiander, brought to light a great many new problems and a great many differences among the attackers themselves. The Italian Franciscus Stancarus, professor at Koenigsberg in 1551, one of the most brusque opponents, had concocted a truly scholastic theory of the Trinity, taking his cue from Peter Lombard, who, to him, was worth more than a hundred Luthers or five hundred Calvins. This peculiar Christology prompted him to insist on the *human* nature of the Savior as effecting reconciliation in the believer's heart, and when he wan-

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10) Also Calvin fought against him in *Inst. Rel. Christ.*

dered through Poland, Hungary, Frankfort-on-the-Oder, he proclaimed this particular doctrine of his as the most important fundamental doctrine of Christianity. That he found strong groups of assenters in Poland is indicated by the title of Calvin's books, published nine years after Osiander's death.<sup>11)</sup>

During the controversy against Osiander, questions as to the value of the Lord's active obedience arose and occasioned both sound and scholastic argumentation. It is interesting, though sad, to see theologians grasp at anything that tends to make their position acceptable. God's revelation, it is true, shows us many, many facts of which we never would have dreamed, so much do they pass our understanding. But does that permit us to make irrationality a criterion? Osiander's opponents, insisting upon *iustitia imputativa*, argued that irrationality of this *iustitia* was a point in its favor.<sup>12)</sup>

When we imagine ourselves transported to that part of the sixteenth century, — and every student of Reformation history must do that, — divesting ourselves of the knowledge of later events, we cannot help but make the following three remarks: That the peculiar theological trend of a renowned, honored man, known for a generation, can escape the verdict of being a basis on which only a false doctrine of justification can be built, is very odd. Was the satisfaction in Central and Northern Germany of having a valiant, courageous ally in the South overshadowing other things? What is the psychology of it? Secondly, although Melancthon's partisans and those who gathered about Flacius, Menius, Moerlin, etc., had to regard Osiander as their common adversary, and that in a matter essential to the entire cause, this fact did nothing to really unite them. Thirdly, the literature of the period indicates that the central, the pivotal, article of the Reformation, in all its ramifications, was not as clear in the minds of the clergy and the theological professors and was not so well considered by them in all its points at the beginning of this controversy as at the time when the Formula of Concord was agreed upon.

(To be concluded.)

11) *Calvini Responsum ad Fratres Polonos . . . ad Refutand. Stancari Errorem*. Geneva, 1561, and *Epist. Duæ ad Ecclesias Polonicas . . . de Negotio Stancariano*, etc., 1561. (Schluesselburg, Book 9, p. 184 sqq.)

12) Menius, *Von der Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt*, 1552, fol. O, 4. Amsdorff, *Auff Osianders Bekenntnis*, 1552, fol. B, 2. Flacius, *Verlegung des Bekenntnis Osiandri*, 1552, fol. A, 4.