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LUTHER'S BREAK WITH ROME.

Leipzig, 1519. The storm which had been brooding over Europe, the clouds thickest over the Vatican at Rome, had pre-saged its coming by mutterings growing ever louder, and finally intermittent flashes of lightning and sudden vehement gusts of wind and rain followed, the harbingers of the breaking storm. Luther's Ninety-five Theses had flashed across the astonished heavens; then, in quick succession, two bolts of lightning which disturbed the Vatican — Cajetan and Miltitz's failure to return to Rome with the evidence of Luther's recantation in their possession. But still the Pope did not realize the magnitude of the danger which threatened the hierarchy. Tetzel had failed, Cajetan had failed, Miltitz had failed, but the man was left who was sure to crush this upstart of a monk and make an end of him — Dr. Eck. Rome looked for an abrupt ending of the disturbances which had been raised by the Wittenberg monk; in 1519 the storm broke in all its fury. 1519 is the great year in the life of Luther, it is the turning-point of his eventful career. Up to Leipzig Luther still had a vestige of faith left in the Pope; after Leipzig we see how the bond between Luther and the Church of Rome had been severed beyond any power to knit it together again. At Leipzig Luther did what no man before him had dared to do — he denied the right of the Pope to call himself the Vicar of Christ, the infallible head of the Church. He dared to express the opinion that church-councils were liable to err, as well as their head, the Pope. He dared to say, "The Scriptures stand above the church-fathers." He

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION IN CONTRAST TO MODERN SECTARIAN VIEWS.*

The doctrine that man is justified before God and saved alone by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, is the central doctrine of the Christian religion. What the keystone is to all the other stones in an arch, this doctrine is to all other teachings of the Christian religion. To remove this doctrine means not merely the removal of a single stone from the arch, but the collapse of the whole structure. A great theologian has well said that all other Christian doctrines serve the doctrine of justification by faith as presuppositions, or else are deductions drawn from it. We do not exaggerate when we say that it is the trademark of the Christian religion and its most exclusive and distinguishing characteristic. We can truthfully say that the chief purpose of the Bible is to reveal to us this wonderful doctrine of man's justification by faith in Christ, and that he that impugns this doctrine in reality attacks the whole Bible; for the elimination of this teaching would be the actual destruction of Christianity. Remove this essential and indispensable doctrine from the body of Christian doctrine, and you have a body without a soul—you have deprived Christianity of its very life. There are in reality only two religions in the world, the Christian religion of faith and the heathen religion of works. To remove the doctrine that man is saved alone by faith in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus from the Christian religion, would be virtually heathenizing it and changing it from the religion of faith into a religion of works. So important is the doctrine of justification that we may say that it illumines all other teachings of the Bible, just as the sun gives light to all the planets around him. When once this light and life-giving doctrine is grasped, it illuminates every verse of the Bible, and fills with life what before seemed dead. But, on the other hand, he who has not learned to regard the teaching of justification by faith as the heart of Christianity is not capable of truly grasping any doctrine of the Christian religion.

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This doctrine is also an absolute necessity for the salvation of the individual. To sincerely build your salvation on Jesus' blood and righteousness alone makes you a Christian. As the article of justification is the article of a standing and falling Church, so it is also the article of a standing and falling soul. Believe this doctrine, and you are a Christian; believe it not, and you are a heathen. As long as this doctrine is proclaimed, so long will God have His people on earth, and so long His Church will prosper among men; but if this doctrine is hushed, the proclamation of all other fundamental doctrines cannot build up the Church or save the individual. Luther and his coadjutors, four hundred years ago, were largely popular preachers, and many of them were eloquent orators. But neither their popular language nor their eloquence brought about the Reformation; the glorious work of the Reformation was accomplished because, like Paul, they were determined to know nothing among men but Christ, the crucified Savior. And it is this same teaching which alone can help the world and save the individual to-day. As all other means failed in days gone by, so they will fail now; the Church and the individual always did and always will need the preaching of justification by faith.

We shall further realize the great importance of this doctrine when we remember that it is the touchstone which detects all false teaching. As a piece of litmus paper will at once show the presence of acid in a substance, so this doctrine, when applied to any teaching, will at once show whether it is true or false. It is a chalkline, which, if faithfully used by us, will prevent us from departing from the truth. It is a true and never-failing compass, infallibly pointing to the truth: if it be used, the simplest Christian need not err. It is the sun that will drive away every shadow of error. Whatever does not fully conform to, and is not perfectly consistent with, this doctrine the Christian knows to be false, and he will at once reject it, no matter how good it may sound, and who may have said it.

The doctrine of justification has naturally been the object

of attack on the part of false teachers at all times, Satan fully realizing, like a good strategist, that the capture of this citadel would mean the fall of the whole fortress. So also in our day this doctrine is being assailed from every side. Our purpose in this paper, therefore, shall be, first, briefly to present the Biblical doctrine of justification, and then to show what points are the particular objects of attack on the part of present-day errorists.

I.

Etymologically the word *justification* undoubtedly means "to make just," to make a thing conform to a correct rule. Printers use the word in this primitive sense when they speak of justifying the type they have set up. This work of justifying as done by the printer includes evening up the lines of type, properly spacing lines, words, and letters, etc. But aside from this specific use of the word by printers in the primitive sense, the word is never used in the sense of correcting what is wrong or making good what is bad. In every-day use the word *justification* always presupposes an accusation. If a person is not charged with any wrong-doing or neglect of duty, he stands in no need of justification. On the other hand, though a person be innocent of any crime, and though he has not been derelict in the performance of his duties, though no charge can be justly and reasonably brought against him, he may, for all that, stand in need of justification. For let it be understood that a wholly unjust accusation may be brought against an absolutely innocent person; and when that is done, the accused may bring forth the proofs of his innocence, and the judge is given an opportunity to justify the accused by a public declaration that the accusation is false, and that the person in question is innocent of the crime charged against him. This is the first and original legal, or forensic, meaning of the word *justification*.

Of course, in this sense no man living can be justified in the sight of God, since all have sinned and are therefore guilty as charged. We have transgressed every commandment of God's Law, and therefore every broken commandment cries out

against us. So also the devil, the arch-accuser, accuses us before God day and night. Satan delights in speaking evil against us for the purpose of doing us injury; and, what is worst, we are guilty of the evil which he charges us with. And, finally, our own conscience joins the chorus of our accusers; it corroborates the charges laid against us by the Law and Satan, and removes all possibility of our denying their accusations. Against this trinity of accusers, as we have said before, no man can justify himself.

But there is still another sense in which the word *justification* is legally, or forensically, used. It is often employed in the sense of pronouncing judgment in a person's favor, acquitting him of guilt, excusing him of bearing a burden, liberating him from punishment, and reputing and declaring him just. In this acceptation of the term, *justification* means a judicial acquittal and is the opposite of *condemnation*. Thus Solomon places the verb *to justify* in opposition to the verb *to condemn*, Prov. 17, 15; and Christ Himself does the same, Matt. 12, 37. (See also Deut. 25, 1; Rom. 5, 16.)

In the evangelical acceptation of the term, *justification* is of God, and signifies that He acquits us from guilt, condemnation, and punishment by a full and free remission of all our sins, that He repute and declares us just persons, and deals with us as though we were upright and innocent in His estimation. In all the passages of the New Testament where the verb *to justify* occurs, — and there are thirty-eight such passages, — it is used in a forensic sense, and never in its primary, etymological meaning. In every case it designates the act of *declaring just*; never is it used in the sense of *making just*. And specifically, speaking of the justification of the sinner before God, justification is represented as an act of judgment performed by God, by which He vindicates His own righteousness and justice, and at the same time our liberation from the punishment due to transgression. His justice consists in accepting a perfect and competent satisfaction offered instead of the debt we owed Him, and in full reparation of the injury done

Him by us, by reason of which substitution and satisfaction we are acquitted of all guilt and our punishment is remitted.

That this is indeed the meaning of the word *justification* is clear from the whole teaching of the Bible. Paul in his epistles especially makes it plain that all men are sinners, Rom. 3, 23, and that they have all become guilty before God, Rom. 3, 19. The Law of the holy and just God condemns all flesh because of its transgressions, Gal. 3, 10, and by its deeds, therefore, no flesh can be justified, Rom. 3, 20. All men are by nature the children of wrath, Eph. 2, 3, and deserving of condemnation. (But the righteous God justifies the ungodly, Rom. 4, 5;) He justifies them freely by His grace, Rom. 3, 24; without the deeds of the Law, Rom. 3, 28. That is, God does not impute men's trespasses unto them, 2 Cor. 5, 19, but Christ's righteousness, Rom. 3, 25, who is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believes, Rom. 10, 4. And now that God thus justifies, no one can charge anything against those whom He has justified, nor can any one condemn them, Rom. 8, 33, 34. Read the whole passage Rom. 3, 21—26.

But God, who is just, does not, and, in fact, cannot, justify the sinner without an adequate ground of justification. God, who has declared that sin must be punished, cannot do away with man's guilt and punishment by simply canceling the debt. A just God must exact competent satisfaction for every transgression and complete reparation for every injury done Him. While God is merciful, He is also just, and He cannot exercise the former virtue at the expense of the latter. The guilt must be expiated and the punishment inflicted. The chastisement of the transgressor's peace must be upon some competent substitute, else a just God's anger cannot be turned, nor the flames of His wrath be quenched. And such a substitute has been found. "God hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him," 2 Cor. 5, 21. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," 2 Cor. 5, 19. Christ, God's own Son, became the Lamb that bore and took

away the guilt of our sins. Because Christ became our Substitute, God in justification accounts the righteousness of Christ our righteousness. The guilt of our sins is imputed to Christ, and Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. Christ's active and passive obedience is the ground of our justification. "Christ's obedience in suffering and dying, but also that He in our stead was voluntarily subject to the Law, and fulfilled it by His obedience, is imputed to us for righteousness, so that on account of this complete obedience, which by deed and suffering, in life and in death, He rendered His heavenly Father for us, God forgives our sins, regards us righteous and godly, and eternally saves us." (Form. Conc.; Sol. Decl. III; Mueller, p. 612 f.)

In passing, let us notice that Scripture uses the terms, *God forgives us our sins*, *God justifies us*, *God imputes righteousness*, *God does not impute sin*, as interchangeable and synonymous terms. It is for this reason not to be commended to say that justification comprises two acts; namely, the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness. According to Scripture, Rom. 4, 6, 7, the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works, consists in the forgiveness of his iniquities and the covering of his sins. Hence also the Apology says: "To attain remission of sins is to be justified." (Mueller, p. 100.)

Justification is through faith. "Faith justifies, not because it is so good a work and so fair a virtue, but because, in the promise of the Gospel, it lays hold upon, and accepts, the merits of Christ." Faith justifies, not because of any intrinsic merit it may possess, but simply because it is the divinely appointed hand wherewith we appropriate unto ourselves all that Christ has gained for us by His redemption. By faith I take possession of all the riches and blessings which Christ procured for me and all men in His state of humiliation. Christ alone is the satisfaction and merit. Faith clings to the cross of Christ, it washes itself in the blood of the Lamb, it clothes itself in the righteousness of Jesus; and solely because it does this does it

justify. Justification does not come unto us — mark it well — *on account of faith*, but solely on account of Christ; and yet it comes *through* faith, because faith lays hold upon the promises of the Gospel. And mark this also — not Christ's person in opposition to His work of redemption is the object of justifying faith. We believe in Christ unto our justification and salvation only when we believe in Him as the One who was crucified for us, who shed His blood for us, who gave His life into death for us, and who fulfilled the whole Law for us. Were faith to apprehend anything else than this, it would be worthless and could not justify. Faith finds in man nothing that is good and right and holy, but it sees in Christ an all-sufficient Savior, a perfect Mediator, who has reconciled us rebellious creatures to an offended God. Faith, justifying faith, is the full surrender of the soul to Christ for salvation; it is casting one's self into Jesus' arms with the full assurance that there perfect safety is to be found, and there alone.

And let us not forget, justification is by faith, *without the deeds of the Law*. Of course, a living faith is never without works, for the presence of faith in the heart is a sure proof that the Holy Ghost also dwells there with all His quickening powers. Faith and holiness of life are always found together, it is true, but the latter is there only as a fruit of faith, and not as a cause, but rather as a result of justification. The works proceeding from faith only declare the righteousness received by faith. "Justification comes to us," says Brenz, "through faith as an instrument, and does not come to us through the fruits of faith or love."

Of course, justification has no degrees. A man is either wholly justified or not at all. Just as a man is either spiritually dead or spiritually alive, there being no room for a state between the two, just so also a man has all his sins forgiven or none at all. The weakest faith, according to the Scriptures, apprehends Christ's righteousness, and therefore the weakest faith will justify as fully as the strongest, since it is not faith, but the object of its apprehension, namely, Christ and His merits,

which really justifies. While there is a difference in the strength of faith in various persons, Scripture nowhere differentiates in the justifying power of a stronger or weaker faith, but ascribes full justifying power to each and every faith. Rom. 5, 1; Col. 2, 13.

A simple, but very comprehensive description of justification is given in the fourth article of the Augsburg Confession: "Also they teach that men cannot be justified [*German*: obtain forgiveness of sins and righteousness] before God by their own powers, merits, or works, but are justified freely [*German*: by grace], for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who by His death has satisfied for our sins. This faith doth God impute for righteousness before Him, Rom. 3 and 4."

II.

In a doctrinal paper read before the Western District of our Synod in 1859, Dr. Walther calls attention to two points in connection with the doctrine of justification which we need to defend in particular against Protestant errorists. And in an essay read at the first convention of the Synodical Conference in 1872, Dr. Walther adds a third point. These three points are the objects of attack to-day as they have been in the past. If we would preserve the true doctrine of justification, we must, first of all, hold fast the truth that all men have been perfectly redeemed by Christ; in the second place, we must earnestly contend for the true doctrine of the means of grace; and, thirdly, we must teach Scripturally concerning faith. Failure to defend these points faithfully is bound to have dire results. There are sectarians, and even Lutherans, who, because they depart from the truth in one or the other of these points, adulterate the Biblical doctrine of justification while making use of an orthodox terminology in presenting their views. Here, as in so many instances, we shall do well to remember that men often use the same words and expressions, and yet do not say the same thing.

For the safe retention of the doctrine of justification it is necessary, first of all, that we should hold fast that grace, righteousness, forgiveness, and salvation actually exist for every man; that God is already reconciled with all men in Christ ever since the Savior cried on the cross, "It is finished"; and that God has absolved and justified every sinner fully and perfectly by raising Christ from the dead. It is genuine Bible-teaching that by Christ's death the whole world is justified from sin, and that Christ's resurrection is the solemn declaration of such justification to the whole world. Christ's death and resurrection have not merely made *possible* the justification of sinners, but the justification of sinners has thereby become an actual fact. The supposition, that, while the redemption of Christ has effected a reconciliation between God and man, this redemption and reconciliation, brought about by Christ's obedience, suffering, and death, must be carefully distinguished from the actual forgiveness of sins, is entirely without a basis of truth. Nor is it Scriptural doctrine that the reconciliation between God and man merely makes possible the forgiveness of sins, and that the possibility of forgiveness becomes a reality only when the sinner is converted and believes in Christ. A little thought will show the great danger of such a position; for this view makes the conversion and faith of man the efficient cause of justification. This view denies that justifying faith apprehends the righteousness of God, and makes the latter the result of such faith. To those who deny the objective justification of the whole world in Christ, faith is no longer a mere hand which accepts an already existing forgiveness, but an act of man which brings about and creates what had no existence before, namely, forgiveness of sins; or, in other words, it makes faith a meritorious human work. Conversion and faith are indeed necessary if a man would be saved, but they do not induce God to justify and save him. Conversion is simply the way in which a man becomes a believer, and his faith then does nothing but accept the perfect and fully procured redemption offered. Therefore it is wrong to say, "Now Christ is

indeed our Righteousness, namely, Christ in His atoning merits, but only as we apprehend Him by faith, and thus have the declaration of righteousness pronounced upon us." (Lanski, *St. Paul*, p. 98.) And it is a positive denial of Bible-truth when the same writer on the same page declares: "It is not true, as Stoeckhardt claims, that God thereby [by Christ's resurrection] actually forgave the sins of all sinners in the world." Scripture teaches that Christ has done all, that the reconciliation with God is a reality, that perfect righteousness had been gained, and that man need only accept this salvation which is at hand. It is not true that God has done only a part, and man must make up the deficiency, nor that man already possesses a part, and God need only make up what is lacking; for God has done it all, and He has done it alone.

To depart from this plain teaching of Scripture is to surrender the doctrine that man is saved alone for Christ's sake, and the surrender of this truth means to lose sight of the vital difference between the Christian religion and heathenism; for in the last analysis this is the deciding difference between Christianity and all other — heathen — religions, that the former teaches that grace and pardon, procured for all men, are an actual reality and fact, while all other religions tell man that grace and pardon are more or less the result of his own endeavors. Christianity tells us that Christ came into the world to save sinners, that He is the Lamb that bore and took away the sins of the world, that He is the propitiation for the sins of the world, that He bought even those who deny Him, and that by Him righteousness unto the justification of life has come upon all men. Redemption is finished, salvation is won, so Christ Himself declared with His last breath.

Such being the case, all those err who demand of man a work of greater or less magnitude before a just God can justify him. Therefore the fetish worshiper of Africa is wrong, because he thinks that he must gain the favor of his fetish by such little sacrifices as he is able to offer; the Shintoist, the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Taoist, and the Confucianist are wrong, for they

all impose upon man tasks which he must perform before he can attain the good will of his gods; the Jew errs when he conditions man's reconciliation with God by the keeping of Moses' Law; the Mohammedan errs, since to him the observance of the Koran's prescriptions is the condition of salvation; the Roman Catholic is wrong when he would merit heaven by his contrition, penances, vigils, fastings, and prayers; and the sects, as well as many bearing the Lutheran name, are wrong in teaching that man's justification is dependent upon something which he must first do. When God through Christ's death reconciled the world unto Himself, He also forgave the sins of the whole world. When Christ died on the cross for all men, God actually forgave all the sins of all men. Christ died, not to procure for us the possibility of forgiveness, but He died to gain actual forgiveness. And He attained His purpose, since He triumphantly cried, "It is finished"; and the apostle declares that God is reconciled unto the world, and that through Christ righteousness unto the justification of life has come unto all men. Man need only believe that Christ has procured for him this perfect forgiveness and salvation in order to become a partaker of all Christ's merits.

In the essay which he read at the first convention of the Synodical Conference, Dr. Walther most convincingly shows that the very concept *faith* demands that grace, reconciliation, and forgiveness precede faith. For if faith is the hand with which I accept God's grace and forgiveness, it necessarily follows that God's grace and forgiveness must exist before I believe. How could God's Word tell me that I shall be justified by faith, reconciled unto God, and saved, if these blessed gifts were not already existent? It would surely be the most shameful irony to invite a starving man to a table which bears no food; but would it not be equally reprehensible on the part of God to tell us to believe in the forgiveness of sin, if such forgiveness were not already an actuality? Surely, justification by faith is possible only if all that is necessary to my justification has actually been procured and is ready for me, requiring on my

part only apprehension by faith. God is a just God and cannot take any one to heaven with whom He is not reconciled; but since He does take to heaven all believers, it follows that righteousness and reconciliation have been fully procured. As soon as you deny the existence of a general objective justification, just so soon you no longer regard faith as an empty hand held out by man to have it filled by the bounty of a gracious God. To deny the existence of forgiveness before faith is to make faith a condition which man must fulfil, and on account of which God takes him to heaven, or an act of cooperation on the part of man to perfect his redemption and reconciliation.

So, then, the very invitation of the Gospel is a proof of our complete redemption and reconciliation. The Gospel invitation is, "Come, *for all things are ready.*" God's immeasurable grace and Christ's perfect obedience have prepared all things, and this perfect feast is announced to us in the Gospel. The Gospel is the proclamation of an accomplished work and an invitation to accept the fruits of this completed work. It is the announcement of a supper that is ready in all its parts, and needs nothing on man's part to complete and perfect it. To say that the Gospel is the announcement that Christ, by His active and passive obedience, has merely made it possible for man to attain grace by his own exertions, as the sectarians and Romanists do, is practically a denial of the Gospel. What the Gospel tells us is this: Christ's death has procured forgiveness and salvation for the whole world and for every individual sinner, and Christ's resurrection is the proclamation unto heaven, earth, and hell of a full, free, and all-comprehending absolution of the whole world and each individual sinner. And because the sectarians deny this, they think so little of the Gospel, and have recourse to so many other means, in the vain hope of thereby saving man.

In this connection let us emphasize the fact that the content of the Gospel is not dependent on man's faith. The Gospel is at all times, faith or no faith, a valid offer of an actually existing grace of God. The fact that a hundred dollars are deposited

to your credit in the bank is not dependent upon your believing that the sum is there, and so the actual presence of God's gracious gifts in the Gospel is in no way conditioned by your faith. Faith or no faith, the treasures of God's grace are deposited in the Gospel, and they are sincerely offered to you. Were we to make the validity and efficacy of the Gospel dependent upon our faith, we would again be stamping faith a good work and an efficient cause of our forgiveness, instead of letting it be the mere instrument which accepts and appropriates the forgiveness already at hand. And in that case we would deprive faith of its real object of apprehension. We could then no longer say: "My faith is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness," but would have to confess: "My faith is built upon its own subjective self." What shifting sand to build on!

The doctrine of justification as taught in Scripture is also most intimately and vitally related to the true doctrine of the means of grace. According to Scripture the Gospel is not a mere word of information, not simply a message concerning Christ, informing us what we are to do now in order that we may obtain the forgiveness and salvation which Christ has rendered possible. In the eyes of the sectarians the Gospel is a mere narrative telling of the possibility of obtaining grace, and the Sacraments are simply signs, nothing more. But according to Scripture the Gospel is immeasurably more than a mere message of good tidings. It is the tidings of salvation in a much larger sense than that it merely announces a salvation which Christ has made possible. It is the tidings of salvation, because it is the very hand of God which brings, offers, and presents the treasures of Christ's redemption, and confers upon us the grace of God. Of course, this Gospel demands faith, as the hand which accepts God's gifts of salvation; but even this very faith is wrought in man by the same Gospel which makes the demand. Besides being the message of God's grace in Christ, the Gospel, then, has a twofold power—the one exhibiting and the other imparting. The Gospel announces and offers the treasures of Christ's redemption, gives and seals

these treasures, and kindles the faith which accepts and apprehends the promised and presented benefits.

It works the faith which firmly clings
To all the treasures which it brings.

All that the Gospel demands is faith, a faith that appropriates the offered full and free salvation. No wrestling, no moaning and sighing, no kneeling down and praying, no particular degree of spiritual warmth, no longer or shorter siege on the "mourners' bench" is demanded—only faith as the hand which takes out of God's full hand the riches of His grace. Oh, that all might have the same confidence in the Gospel that Paul had! He was sure that it was the power of God unto salvation. Yes, Paul had more confidence in the efficacy of the Gospel than has Billy Sunday and those who support him. When the contrite jailer at Philippi in his utmost anxiety asked, "What must I do to be saved?" he was given the prompt answer, without a single "if" or "but," "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Paul did not tell that poor jailer what he would have been told at some sectarian revival-meeting, "You must kneel down, and pray and wrestle with God until you feel His gracious presence." But such was the apostle's abiding confidence in Christ's Gospel that the agonized cry of the sinner was immediately answered by the preaching of the message of salvation. To Paul the Gospel was the glad tidings of God's grace in Christ, the treasure-chest into which God had deposited for sinners the whole riches of Jesus' merits, and the instrument by which God gives the sinner that faith which is needed to accept the glad tidings and appropriate the offered treasure.

A few days ago we read the following beautiful words concerning the Gospel: "The world is aching for a gospel, and it is the labor of the Church to present a gospel that can reach the world's most awful need, that can get down to its deepest depravity, and bring cordials and balms to its most appalling sorrow. And the old Gospel can do it! Yes, the old Gospel, in its working attire, proclaimed by a Church that believes it,

is gloriously efficient to meet the most tremendous needs of this most tremendous day. 'God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' That Gospel, preached by a Church that believes in it, a Church that is redeemed by it, a Church that will give its blood for it, is the sure and certain secret of a comforted, purified, unified, regenerated, and transfigured world." These are the words of J. H. Jowett, a man for whom the Gospel, despite all this fine verbiage, is a mere message, no more, having no more regenerative and communicative power than any other good message. To him the Gospel is but the narrative of God's love and the Son's martyrdom. What a glorious thing it would be for the Church if a man of Jowett's eloquence held the Scriptural view of the Gospel, and, like Paul, knew it to be the power of God which gives forgiveness, life, and salvation. Then our modern sectarian pulpits would not give voice to the "Gospel of Thrift," the "Gospel of Work," the "Gospel of Neighborliness," etc., nor would our modern preachers in such great numbers hope to regenerate the world by the preaching of socialism, eugenics, "Christian" politics, and the like. On the contrary, like the apostle, for every spiritual ill of man they would have but one remedy—the Gospel, and for every spiritual want but one relief—the Gospel again. Not man's strivings, endeavors, feelings, moans, and sighs, but solely God's gracious promises in His Word, must be the foundation of man's salvation.

However, let us not, while insisting upon the truth that the Gospel is the only means of grace, belittle the importance of the feeling of grace and of prayer. God has promised great and glorious things to prayer, and while it is no means of grace, it is certain that the grace of God does not dwell in him who does not pray. And those who feel the presence of God's grace are to be called blessed indeed. But it would be a grievous error were we to found our faith upon this feeling of God's gracious presence and our zeal in prayer. To build our faith on these would be building on sand; for how soon may the blissful

feeling of God's nearness vanish, and how quickly may the time come when it seems as though we could not reach God's ear with our prayer! Therefore let us hold fast to the truth that divine grace is deposited for us all in the Gospel, and let us believe what the Gospel tells us, and comfort ourselves with the grace there offered to us, whether we feel it or not.

Let us say it again: God is reconciled unto the whole world, and in raising Christ from the dead this reconciliation has been made known for the justification of the whole world; God has deposited the treasure of Christ's merits, forgiveness, life, and salvation for all men in the Gospel; these riches of divine grace in Christ are offered to all, and are accepted by faith. Thus man is justified by faith. He accepts the Gospel-promises and with them forgiveness of sins. The Gospel offers grace and forgiveness, works the faith which accepts the offered forgiveness, and thus justifies the sinner. There is no voice outside of the Gospel, either within or without man, which tells him that his sins are forgiven. Faith trusts the Word which promises forgiveness, and thus has what the Word offers. The Gospel is the object to which faith clings, the foundation on which it builds; and never does it trust in the uncertain and fleeting feelings of the human heart or the easily misinterpreted experiences of the soul.

But is it so all-important for the safety of the doctrine of justification that we hold fast the truth that the Gospel is not a mere message telling us of God's grace, but the actual depository of such grace, which it also communicates to all believers? And is it, on the other hand, so very important that we reject the sectarian view that man may find in his own feelings an assurance of his forgiveness? So important is it that we defend the Biblical truth concerning the means of grace against all attacks that its surrender would be a virtual surrender of the whole doctrine of justification. In several notes appended to his doctrinal paper on justification, read at the convention of the Western District in 1859, Dr. Walther in a masterful manner shows that a denial of the communicative power of the

Gospel is a practical denial of man's justification *alone by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith*. By directing people to their own feelings instead of to the means of grace, the sectarians, first of all, adulterate the Scriptural meaning of justifying and saving grace. Whoever bases his forgiveness on his subjective feelings and experiences makes the claim that these subjective feelings and experiences are divine grace, while the Bible, when it refers to the cause of our justification and salvation, by the term *grace* understands God's favor, mercy, and love, which is expressed in the Gospel, and which is to be accepted by us through faith, while the feelings and experience within the heart of man are referred to as *gifts*. The sectarians further practically annul the *alone by grace* when they speak as they do of man's feelings and experiences. By referring the poor sinner seeking divine grace to prayer as the means of attaining the grace sought for, instead of to the promises of the Gospel, they actually deny that God is already gracious to all sinners for the sake of what Christ has done, and that sinners are assured of this in the Gospel. Christ is now to be found in the Word and Sacraments with all His merits and grace, and he who directs poor sinners to seek Christ in their own hearts, and refuses to comfort such poor sinners until they are able to speak of an experience of grace which they have had in their souls, such a teacher is practically denying the atoning death of Christ, and stamps God's Son as a liar for having made the claim that man's redemption is perfectly procured. It is an insult to God, who gave His Son to be the Lamb to bear away our sins, and an insult to Him, who came into the world to save sinners, to want to merit and gain by one's own endeavors what the Gospel assures us has already been completely secured. It is replacing the work of Christ with the work of man. It is the subversion of Christianity, and the teaching of what, in its final analysis, is nothing less than heathenism. Finally, let us also notice that the true meaning of the word *faith* is destroyed by the sectarian view of the means of grace. Faith means to receive without doubt or question God's promises in the Gospel. But the sectarians hold

that faith means a trust of the individual person in his own subjective feelings. Sectarians are not willing to believe God's Word and promises, but are only willing to believe when they feel what they think is the grace of God working within them. We cannot refrain from expressing the fear that in many instances their faith is purely imaginary and based upon sad self-deception.

This building of man's hope of salvation on subjective experience can only have the sad result that many a poor soul will never be certain of God's grace. Of course, the sects strenuously deny this; but though they should deny it ten times louder than they do, the fact remains that, by building salvation on their feelings instead of on the Word, they have built upon a substance less substantial than the shifting clouds, and they can never, if they be consistent adherents of their own teachings, be certain of the forgiveness of their sins. Hence also their revivals, protracted and camp meetings, and other means used by them to arouse their feelings. How sad! God has deposited His grace in the Gospel and Sacraments, where faith may find and appropriate them at any time and at all times, and man passes by this treasure-trove and seeks riches in a poorhouse. However, let us not forget that we are all sectarians at heart, for our heart is always seeking salvation in itself and not in the Gospel. We are all prone to judge God's disposition towards us, not by the assurances of the Gospel, but by our own subjective state and condition. Many an anxious hour we have, simply because we listen to our own feelings rather than to the assurances of God's Word. Hence it is necessary that we never grow weary of telling ourselves and others that our salvation is not to be sought in our own endeavors, exertions, conduct, feelings, and experiences, but wholly outside of ourselves, in the precious promises of the Gospel of Christ, the perfect Savior.

The third danger that threatens the Scriptural doctrine of justification at the hands of modern sectarians is their attempt at making faith a meritorious work on the part of man. While they speak of justification *by* faith, they actually mean a justifi-

fication *on account of faith*. Because of their synergistic leaning they cannot accept the plain fact taught by Scripture that the simple reason why faith justifies is, because Christ has gained salvation for all men, and this is offered to all men as a free gift in the Gospel, so that there is nothing left for man to do. Justification by faith is in direct opposition to justification by works and human merit. Faith justifies simply because it is the means whereby man accepts the righteousness which Christ has merited for him and all men. We do not make ourselves any more worthy of salvation by our faith than a beggar makes himself worthy of the alms offered him by taking the gift. While faith is indeed an act of man's mind, and while it brings about in man a wonderful change, and makes him willing and desirous to do good works, it is not because it is a mental human act, and regenerates the heart, and performs good works, that it justifies, but simply and solely because it is the hand which accepts and apprehends Christ and His merits. Faith justifies because it takes and receives. In justification faith comes into consideration solely as the instrument by which we apprehend all that belongs to our justification, God's grace, Christ's righteousness, life, and salvation. In absolutely no respect does our faith come into consideration as a human work, through which any condition, state, or circumstance is brought about that did not exist before. It is not our faith that decides God's judgment; it is not our acceptance that changes the divine sentence of condemnation into a judgment of acquittal. God's grace and Christ's perfect obedience is the sole cause of our forgiveness. This forgiveness, or justification, is already an accomplished fact, and is offered to all men in the Gospel for the mere taking.

Because the matter stands thus, it is also dangerous to speak of faith as a *condition* of our justification, since in the usual acceptance of the word a condition includes the accomplishment of some performance on the part of the recipient in agreement with some previous stipulation between him and the donor. But faith, as we have again and again heard, does not come into consideration here as an act, deed, or performance.

of man, but as the very antithesis of all human endeavor. Faith is not the condition of our justification at all, but the medium and means by which we become the partakers of that righteousness which God freely offers us by the Gospel. By faith, by believing the gracious assurances of the Gospel, we accept for our person the reconciliation, justification, and righteousness which has already been pronounced upon all men. Through faith the general, objective justification becomes an individual, subjective justification. The justifying judgment of God by faith is appropriated by the individual soul as its justification. By our faith we do not make that which up to that time had been only a possibility to be a reality, but by our faith we simply acknowledge and confirm, receive and hold, what has been a blessed reality all along.

All the arguments that we have set forth above to show the necessity and importance of holding fast the universality of redemption, the true teaching of the means of grace, and the Biblical doctrine of faith, if we wish to retain the pure doctrine of justification, Dr. F. Pieper has most tersely and lucidly summed up thus: "A denial of the universality of Christ's redemption and of God's earnest offer of grace to all in the Gospel is a complete subversion of the doctrine of justification, since such a denial necessitates a miraculous and immediate revelation to give the individual person certainty of his redemption. Again, if it be taught that, while Christ has redeemed all men, His redemption is not perfect; that is, let it be said that Christ has indeed made forgiveness possible, but that forgiveness, or justification, is not really already existent for every sinner, then faith and conversion are made a meritorious cause of forgiveness, and the doctrine of justification by grace for Christ's sake has once more been subverted. Or if it be said that God does not offer His grace to the sinner in the Word and Sacraments, and that grace is not to be sought and found by the sinner in the Word and Sacraments, then is the sinner, by such teaching, told to seek grace in his own subjective state of conversion and renewal, that is, in human works. Again,

if it be taught that faith is not trust in the grace of God as offered in the Word, if faith be identified with subjective feeling, then again not God's grace, but the state of the human heart is made the foundation of justification and salvation. And, finally, if the genesis of faith is ascribed to the cooperation or the good conduct of man, then also the doctrine of justification by grace for Christ's sake is subverted, even though the term *alone through faith* is retained and used." (*Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 36, p. 42.)

In his *Christliche Dogmatik*, Vol. II, 670—672, Dr. F. Pieper writes as follows under the heading, "Modern Protestant Theology and the Doctrine of Justification": "Already Doellinger, in his lectures on the reunion of the Christian Church, gives expression to the observation that the majority of modern Protestant theologians is again standing upon the Romish platform. And very recently Joseph Pohle has written (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, VIII, 576): 'The strict orthodoxy of the Old Lutherans, *e. g.*, in the Kingdom of Saxony and the State of Missouri, *alone* continues to cling tenaciously to a system which otherwise would have slowly fallen into oblivion.' Of course, the Christian doctrine of justification has not disappeared out of the world to the extent intimated by Pohle. The so-called Missourians are not only found in the State of Missouri and in Saxony, but in every State of the Union, in Canada, in South America, and in all parts of the world except Africa. Then, also, justification by faith without the deeds of the Law is preached by many outside of the Missouri Synod and the Saxon Free Church. And this doctrine is believed by all Christians in the whole world, also by Christians who are held captive in the external society of the Papal Church. But it is true that modern Protestant theology, having given up the principle of Scripture with the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, and now trying to determine Christian doctrine by 'experience' and other subjective norms, has broken with the Christian doctrine of justification. We have seen that the doctrine of justification presupposes and includes the following: 1. The objective

reconciliation or justification, procured by Christ's *satisfactio vicaria*; 2. the proclamation and offering of this objective justification, or forgiveness of sins, by the Word of the Gospel; 3. the genesis of faith in the Word of the Gospel through the operation of the Holy Spirit without human cooperation; 4. the appropriation of the forgiveness of sins proclaimed in the Word *sola fide*, without the intermixing of the 'transformation of humanity' or of faith as 'an ethical act' or the 'germ of good works.' As surely as modern theology, negative as well as positive, denies all these factors; namely, as long as it combats the *satisfactio vicaria* as being too 'legal' and 'real' ('dinglich'), as long as it mediates the offer of salvation not only through the Word of the Gospel, but also by the phenomenon of the 'historical Christ'; as long as it teaches synergistically concerning the genesis of faith ('self-decision,' 'self-grafting,' *Selbstsetzung*), and regards faith in justification as an ethical act, or as the germ of renewal, or as the means of implantation into the new humanity, — so surely has it gone over into the Romish and sectarian camp. It shows this by repeating the calumnies against the Christian doctrine of justification which emanated from this camp; namely, the slander that this doctrine, because too 'juridically' and 'intellectually' expressed, is subversive of sanctification and good works. Here again we point out the fact that the representatives of modern theology do not always put into practise their theories, which indeed deny Christianity, but in their intercourse with God, and particularly in the hour of death, forget their 'ethical' conception of justification, find their only comfort in Rom. 3, 28; John 3, 16; John 1, 29; 1 John 1, 7, etc., and thus actually contradict themselves. But this does not excuse us from the duty of earnestly combating their destructive theories as a most dangerous poison for the Christian Church."

It may be interesting, in conclusion, to hear how a number of opponents of the Biblical doctrine of justification in the hour of death reverted to the simple faith of their childhood days, and died trusting in the merits of Jesus as the only Savior.