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Of Faith.

(Continued.)

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But where is it written that Abraham believed Christ? Does not Scripture rather designate the promise of the Seed as the contents of his faith? True, but this Seed was Christ. This is the testimony of the same apostle who sets Abraham's faith before us as an example. Gal. 3, 6. But if Abraham became righteous through faith in the Seed, and if this Seed was Christ, then he became righteous through faith in Christ. Pray do not tell us that we illumine the mind of Abraham with the torch of Paul; that the patriarch understood the seed to be a child and nothing more. Nothing more? May it tickle the contemporaries to crowd their father Abraham under their footstool — he was greater than they. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day," says Christ, "and he saw it and was glad." John 8, 56. It makes no difference whether one takes the "day of Christ" to be the day of His incarnation or the day of His appearing in the Plain of Mamre — it is certain that Abraham saw Christ, either with the eyes of his body in the door of his tent or by faith, when God promised him Seed, or both. See Him he did; this Christ testifies expressly, and so also the Jews understand Him: "Thou art not yet fifty years old and hast seen Abraham?" John 8, 57. How in the name of common sense can there have been a personal acquaintance between you? Very easily, answers Christ; for "I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." John 8, 58. Will you still say that we illumine the eyes of Abraham with the lamp of Paul? Methinks they do not need it. One should not picture the patriarchs to one's eyes as poor simpletons — with eyes turned to the ground, moved by earthly promises, without knowledge of Christ, and without hope of the life to come. Did they not have the Gospel of the "Seed of the woman" who was to bruise the head of the serpent? Gen. 3, 15. And they faithfully pondered it in their

hearts and waited for their Savior, from Eve, Gen. 4, 1, to Simeon, Luke 2, 25—37. [Note. — Gen. 4, 1 can mean nothing else than, "I have the Man Jehovah."] "And [they] confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth," Heb. 11, 13, "and looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder is God," Heb. 11, 10. "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." Heb. 11, 16. And would you know the difference between Abraham's faith and ours? We become righteous through faith in the Lord who has come; Abraham, through faith in the Lord who was to come. The object of our faith, therefore, is present as regards the virtue, but past as regards the time; what Abraham believed was also present as regards the virtue, but future as regards the time.

So the example of Abraham also confirms the thesis of the Formula of Concord: "For faith justifies, not for this cause or reason, that it is so good a work and so fair a virtue, but because it lays hold of, and accepts, the merit of Christ in the promise of the Gospel." (*Triglotta*, p. 919.)

Now we shall also be able to answer the question which precedes, justification or faith. Faith certainly does not precede justification; else justification would take place for its sake instead of for Christ's sake. Neither, however, does justification precede faith; otherwise it would take place without faith. Rather, both are together, or coincident. As the electric spark goes through your body at the same moment that your hand touches the wire, so God regards you righteous at the same moment that you apprehend Christ. "He that believeth hath," we read John 3, 36; not: "He that believeth will receive." Neither: "He that believeth hath had." But: "He hath." And Acts 13, 39: "All that believe are justified." Not: "Will be justified," or: "Have been justified," but: "Are justified," in the same moment in which they believe. Just as the woman who had an issue of blood was healed the very moment she touched Christ's garment. Mark 5, 28, 29. For this reason the Holy Spirit so often says that we become righteous *through* [*by*] *faith*, Acts 26, 18; Rom. 3, 25, 28, 30; Gal. 2, 16; 3, 14; Eph. 2, 8; 3, 12, not for the sake of faith or in consequence of faith. Most strikingly, however, the matter is illustrated by a type to which the Lord Himself points us. When the fiery serpents in the desert tormented the children of Israel, Moses, by the command of God, made a serpent of brass and set it upon a pole; and if a serpent had bitten any man, he looked upon the serpent of brass, and *when he beheld, he lived.*

Num. 21, 6—9. So we become righteous the moment the eye of our faith looks up to its brazen serpent, the Son of Man, who was lifted up. John 3, 14—16.

But in order to safeguard the pure doctrine against corruption, Scripture adds "without works" to the words "by faith." Eph. 2, 8, 9: "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; *not of works*, lest any man should boast." And still stronger Rom. 11, 6: "If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace." And Rom. 4, 2, 6: "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. . . . Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth *righteousness without works*." But if we are justified without works, then *all* works are rejected, be they small or great. For in the sight of God nothing counts but solely and only His beloved Son Jesus Christ; He is altogether pure and holy before Him. Where He is, there God looks and is well pleased in Him. Luke 3, 22. Now, the Son is not apprehended by works, but only by faith, without all works. (Luther, St. L. Ed., XVIII, 670.) So, then, works have absolutely nothing to do with justification, neither as merit nor as means. And when the Jesuits pretend that faith justifies through works, then this fiction is dashed to pieces in Eph. 2 and Rom. 4, just as that other one: faith and works. It certainly is not the same whether a prince rules through the Jesuits or without them.

Besides these comprehensive and unmistakable expressions others are found in Scripture, such as Rom. 3, 28: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law," and Gal. 2, 16: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law." But the Law includes all that which God has commanded, especially the Ten Commandments, Rom. 3, 20; and its sense is not carnal, but spiritual, Rom. 7, 14. "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind . . . and thy neighbor as thyself." Matt. 22, 37, 39. The works of this Law cannot possibly be anything else than works which conform to it: justice and love, and all the others. For Christ expressly numbers mercy and faith among the chief parts of the Law. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" He cries out Matt. 23, 23, "for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cumin and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and faith. These ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone." But such works, in fact, all works, Paul excludes from justification. But when it is said

that the good works of the regenerate are not works of the Law, then this contradicts Jer. 31, 33. There God testifies that the saints of the New Covenant shall not lose the Law, but that it will be written in their hearts. So their works are truly works of the Law, a thousand times more works of the Law than those of the Pharisees. However, whether the Law be within or without, with justification it has not the least to do. This fact Scripture teaches expressly Rom. 3, 21: "The righteousness of God *without the Law* is manifested," and Gal. 3, 11: "No man is justified by the Law." Therefore cherish it in your heart as did Paul, Rom. 7, 22, humble yourself before it like Ahab, 1 Kings 21, 21. 27. 29, — it is not your righteousness before God.

But that God indeed disregards all works of the regenerate, even the best, when He acts judicially with us, is shown by the example of Abraham. For the apostle does not ask whereby he became righteous in his first conversion, when he emigrated from Chaldea, but he asks wherein the righteousness of Abraham consisted at the time when he was already adorned with a wreath of good works. By faith he had gone out of his father's house, Gen. 11, 31; Heb. 11, 8; by faith he had sojourned in the land of promise, Heb. 11, 9; had built altars unto God, Gen. 12, 7; 13, 18; had publicly called upon His name, Gen. 12, 7; 13, 4; had kept peace with Lot, Gen. 13, 8. 9; had not sought his own, Gen. 14, 21—24. In the midst of this course of truly good works the apostle stops him with the inquiry, "What is your righteousness?" Not his new obedience; not his humbleness; no blossom from the wreath of his works, — but this alone, that he laid hold on Christ; for He had been prophesied to him.

Therefore St. Clement of Rome teaches: "We do not become righteous through ourselves, or through our wisdom, or through our fear of God, or through works which we performed in pureness of heart, but through faith, by which God has justified all from the beginning." This our fathers summed up in these three words, "By faith *alone*." Luther translates Rom. 3, 28: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified without the deeds of the Law, by faith alone." And to those who protested against this version because the word "alone" is not found in the original text, he replies: "I am surprised at the opposition in this manifest matter. Do tell me whether the death and resurrection of Christ is our work. It certainly is not our work nor the work of any Law. Now, alone the death and resurrection of Christ make us free from sin, as St. Paul says. Furthermore, tell me, which is

the work by which we take and hold the death and resurrection of Christ? It certainly must be no external work, but solely and only faith in the heart. This faith alone, yea, all alone, without all works, apprehends the death and resurrection of Christ where it is preached through the Gospel. . . . Now, if this is manifest, why, then, should we not also speak thus?" (Luther, St. L. Ed., XIX, 980f.) Article XX of the Augsburg Confession indeed uses this language four times. And the Apology advises those who are not pleased with the little word *sola* to erase in so many places in the epistles of St. Paul these words, "by grace," "not of works," "gift of God," "lest any man should boast." (*Trigl.*, 140.) Also the Formula of Concord confesses "that for the preservation of the pure doctrine concerning the righteousness of faith before God it is necessary to urge with special diligence the *particulæ exclusivæ*, that is, the exclusive particles, *i. e.*, the following words of the holy Apostle Paul, by which the merit of Christ is entirely separated from our works and the honor given to Christ alone, when the holy Apostle Paul writes: *Of grace, without merit, without Law, without works, not of works.* All these words together mean as much as that we are justified and saved alone by faith in Christ." (*Trigl.*, 795.) The *Book of Confessions* of Duke Julius of Brunswick (*Corpus Doctrinæ Julium*) declares with no less firmness that nothing must be put into the article of justification before God but what necessarily belongs into it, such as the pure grace and mercy of God, solely and exclusively the merit of Christ, our Lord, the alone-saving faith, which apprehends the grace of God and the merit of Christ, all of which the Scriptures combine and mean when they say, "by faith alone," "by grace," "for the sake of Christ, our Lord." But works are thus excluded in order that they be not mingled with the article of justification, neither as cause or merit of righteousness nor as means to acquire righteousness, or as the form or constituent part of justification, or under whatever other show or title it might be done. For also that would be false if one were to deduce or conclude this, that faith, in order to make righteous and save, must necessarily have with it good works, or that the presence of good works were necessary before God in order that faith might make us righteous before God, as though it could not accomplish this without works. For St. Paul testifies that this is false by ascribing and attributing justification before God solely to the grace of God, solely to the merit of Christ, solely to faith, and posits it alone in the reconciliation to God and in His receiving us into grace without any preceding, concomitant,

or following works. So also Chemnitz teaches in his private writings, also Aegidius Hunnius, likewise Gerhard, together with their followers. Even V. E. Loescher still defends the old pure doctrine with zeal and earnestness. But the confession of the fathers lived, and still lives, especially in the church-hymns.

But we exclude good works "not in the sense that a true faith can exist without contrition or that good works should, must, and dare not follow true faith as sure and indubitable fruits, or that believers dare not nor must do anything good; but good works are excluded from the article of justification before God so that they must not be drawn into, woven into, or mingled with, the transaction of the justification of the poor sinner before God as necessary and belonging to it." (*Trigl.*, 927.)

But what is the disposition and nature of our faith? Is it a feeling of dependence, as some say? Maybe the "faith" of the heathen is of this nature, for they neither know of God nor trust in Him; but not our faith; for our faith is knowledge and confidence. That it is knowledge is shown by those texts in which "believing" and "knowing" are joined together, forming one expression. Thus it is said John 6, 69: "We believe and are sure [Luther: "*haben erkannt*"] that Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," and Eph. 4, 13: "Till we all come in the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God"; also John 17, 8: "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me." But lest any one form the opinion as though faith and knowledge were altogether different things, Scripture, in the quoted texts, often simply says "knowing" for "believing." Is. 53, 11: "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." John 17, 3: "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." At the same time other texts teach that eternal life consists in *faith* in Jesus. John 3, 16. 36; 5, 24; 6, 40. Now, either John contradicts John and Christ contradicts Christ in these texts, or "knowing" is "believing." Similarly we read 2 Pet. 2, 20: "After they have escaped the pollutions of this world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," and 1 Tim. 2, 4: "God will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." According to this it is certain that knowledge is one part of the essence of the Christian faith. True, not knowledge alone, but also confidence. Right there where justification by

faith is described for the first time, Gen. 15, 6, the original text says Abraham "trusted" in God. Just so in many other texts: Is. 7, 9; Num. 14, 11; 2 Chron. 20, 20; Ps. 114, 10. Is. 28, 16 the same verb is applied to Christ: "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a Stone, a tried Stone, a precious Corner-stone, a sure Foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste." This is also the basic meaning of the verb "to believe" in the New Testament. With the heathen authors it means to trust in men or in their words; in the New Testament, to trust in Christ. Such confidence in Him is the fundamental condition of all healing of the body, Matt. 9, 22; Mark 5, 36, and of the soul. Therefore the Lord says to the man sick of the palsy, Matt. 9, 2: "Son, *be of good cheer*, thy sins be forgiven thee." And with his joyous "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" He urges His apostles to believe. But our faith is such a firm confidence that it banishes doubt and sinks itself with all its might down into Christ, the Rock. [Note. — *Πιστεύειν εἰς Χριστόν*. Matt. 18, 6; Mark 9, 42; John 2, 11; 3, 16. 18; Acts 10, 43; Gal. 2, 16; Phil. 1, 29; 1 Pet. 1, 8.] Finally, God combines both parts of faith Is. 43, 10: "Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, and My Servant, whom I have chosen, that ye may *know* and *believe* Me and understand that I am He."

Whether we, therefore, say with Chemnitz that faith has four parts: knowledge, assent, longing of the heart, and confidence, or with Gerhard that it has three parts: knowledge, assent, and confidence, these two, knowledge and confidence, will always remain the chief ones. For knowledge and will are the two basic powers of our soul, and when the Holy Spirit moves it, it reaches with both its arms for the precious pearl. (Note. — God is the Author of faith, Matt. 16, 16. 17; Heb. 12, 2; His instrument is the Word, John 17, 20; Rom. 10, 17.) Therefore we teach with the Apology: "That faith which makes pious and righteous before God is not merely this, that I know the stories of Christ's birth, suffering, etc. (these things the devils, too, know), but it is the certainty or the certain trust in the heart, when with my whole heart I regard the promises of God as certain and true, through which there are offered me, without my merit, the forgiveness of sins, grace, and all salvation, through Christ the Mediator." (*Trigl.*, German text, 134.)

Good, says Perrone, and thence comes the happy disposition of the Protestants which enables them to comfort themselves with the forgiveness of their sins in fornication and murder if they only

hold firmly to their faith. (*"Inde rursum originem habet illa securitas, illa jucunditas, qua inter fornicationes, adulteria, homicidia, aliaque ejusmodi peccata laetantur Protestantes, dummodo firmi in fide persistent, juxta Lutherum."*) Perhaps it is more convenient to use the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free for a cloak of maliciousness than the miracle-working medallion of Pope Gregory XVI. We shall leave the decision to Perrone. We, for our part, know nothing of forgiveness under unchastity and murder. The blood of Christ and sin agree like fire and water: either the water escapes in vapor, or the fire is extinguished. 2 Cor. 6, 15; 2 Tim. 2, 19. If a man says that he is saved in Christ and is a murderer, he lies, for "no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." 1 John 3, 15. "Neither fornicators nor idolaters, nor adulterers, . . . nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. 6, 9, 10; Gal. 5, 19—21. Therefore God's Word links repentance and faith together with an adamant chain. Paul himself at all times testified to both the Jews and Greeks "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 20, 20, 21. Yes, the very first sermon which flowed from the lips of Christ was: "Repent ye and believe the Gospel." Mark 1, 15. These two go hand in hand throughout the whole Scriptures to the Revelation of John. Rev. 3, 3. Repentance is always the beginning, Acts 26, 20, so much so that God's Word sometimes includes faith in it and says "repentance" for both. Matt. 3, 2; 4, 17; Mark 6, 12; Luke 15, 7; Acts 11, 18; 17, 30. In fact, none other come to Christ but they that labor, Matt. 11, 28; neither does God give beauty for beauty, but beauty for ashes; not oil of joy for oil of joy, but oil of joy for mourning; and the beautiful garment of the righteousness of Christ no one receives but only they that mourn in Zion. Is. 61, 3. Therefore the psalms abound in penitential complaints: "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me." Ps. 38, 4. "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice; let Thine ear be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" Ps. 130, 1—3. (*Note.*—In general, the seven Penitential Psalms: Pss. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143.) Thus our fathers complained with King David and then rejoiced with him: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name, . . . who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases." Ps. 103, 1, 3. Therefore they also confessed at all times that the doctrine of justification

exists for none other than terrified consciences and that it cannot be understood apart from the penitential conflict. (*Trigl.*, 55.) And the Smalcald Articles declare: "This, then, is the thunderbolt of God by which He strikes in a heap both manifest sinners and false saints . . . and drives them all together to terror and despair. . . . This is true sorrow of heart, suffering and sensation of death. This, then, is what it means to begin true repentance; and here man must hear such a sentence: You are all of no account, whether you be manifest sinners or saints; you all must become different and do otherwise than you are now doing. [Only then comes] the consolatory promise of grace through the Gospel." (*Trigl.*, 479f.) So also the Formula of Concord teaches (*Trigl.*, 923. 953—955), yes, even the much-maligned Confession of the faculty of Wittenberg of the year 1665. (*Consensus Repetitus Fidei Vere Lutheranae.*) And Martin Chemnitz says: "The pure doctrine of the Word of God concerning justification can be understood by such only as in affliction are troubled on account of their sins or are trembling in the agony of death." And so they all teach. Repentance is wrought, however, by the Word of God, that breaketh the rock in pieces, *Jer.* 23, 29; not by the Gospel, which "is properly nothing else than the preaching of consolation and a joyful message" (*Trigl.*, 803), but by the Law (*Trigl.*, 478. 480. 955—961). God assists in this with the hammer of the cross. For vexation teaches to give heed to the Word. Repentance, however, is not a means of atonement (*Trigl.*, 257), neither is our faith; but the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from sins.
