

An aerial, black and white photograph of a city, likely Cologne, Germany, showing the massive Gothic cathedral of St. Andrew's. The cathedral's two tall spires are prominent. The surrounding city is densely packed with buildings, many of which appear to be in various states of ruin or reconstruction, suggesting a historical context of destruction and rebuilding. The text 'Letter of' is in a smaller, red, cursive font, and 'Marque' is in a large, bold, red, cursive font, both overlaid on the top half of the image.

Letter of
Marque

The gates of hell will not prevail

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Biblical Study: Regarding Original Sin



Summary of the Biblical Teaching Regarding Original Sin

True Christendom confesses the clear teachings of the scriptures, that sin comes from one literal historical human being, Adam, through whose disobedience all people became sinners and subject to death and the devil. This is called the original sin, or the chief sin.

The fruits of this sin are the subsequent evil works, which are forbidden in the Ten Commandments, such as unbelief, false belief, idolatry, being without the fear of God, presumption, despair, spiritual blindness, and, in short, not knowing or honoring God. Beyond that, there is lying, swearing falsely by God's name, not praying or calling on God's name, neglect of God's Word, being disobedient to parents, murdering, behaving promiscuously, stealing, deceiving, etc.

This inherited sin has caused such a deep, evil corruption of human nature that our reason does not comprehend it; rather, this must be believed on the basis of what God has revealed in the Scriptures.¹

¹ This doctrinal summary is edited from Luther's Smalcald Articles III: I

Biblical Texts Regarding Original Sin and Its Consequences

Genesis 2:15–17 “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.””

Genesis 3:6 “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”

Romans 5:12 “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned”

Romans 5:19 “for as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners

Genesis 6:5 “The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Genesis 8:21 “the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth”

Psalms 51:5 “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

Ephesians 2:1–3 “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and

the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind”

Psalms 14:2-3 “The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God...They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.”

Romans 3:10-18 “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.””

Isaiah 59:2 “but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.”

Exodus 33:20 “But,” he [the LORD] said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.””

John 1:10 “He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.”

Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”

Matthew 15:18-19 [Jesus said] “what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.”

Ephesians 4:18 “They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.”

Matthew 7:11 [Jesus said] “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”

John 8:44 [Jesus said] “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Colossians 2:13 “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh”

Colossians 1:21 “And you, who once were alienated [from God] and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,”

Ephesians 2:12 “remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world”

Romans 8:7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.”

It is clear from these passages that many popular Christian leaders, authors and Seeker-Driven pastors have taught pure error and blindness against this Biblical teaching. Namely that:

1. Sin is caused by believing Satan's lies and that obedience to God can be achieved by replacing those lies with an understanding of Biblical principles.²
2. Obedience and the blessings that accompany it can be achieved by discovering "The Champion in You".³
3. That after the fall of Adam the natural powers of the human being have remained whole and uncorrupted, and that each human being possesses by nature sound reason and a good will, as the philosophers teach.
4. That the human being has a free will, either to do good and reject evil or to reject good and do evil.
5. That the human being is able, by using natural powers, to keep and carry out every command of God.
6. That human beings are able, using natural powers, to love God above all things and their neighbors as themselves
7. That if human beings do as much as is in their power, then God will certainly give grace to them to achieve the rest of obedience.

These and many similar things have arisen from a lack of understanding and ignorance about both sin and Christ our Savior. We cannot tolerate these purely pagan teachings, because, if these teachings were right, then Christ has died in vain. For there would be no defect or sin in humankind for which he had to die—or else he would have died only for the body and not for the soul, because the soul would be healthy and only the body would be subject to death.

- Continued in the next edition Letter of Marque

² Warren, Rick - Purpose Driven Preaching lectures available at Saddleback Church's website.

³ Joel Osteen

Prophetic Preaching: A Sermon on 1 Peter 3:15



“...always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.”

Editor’s Note: This sermon originally appeared in the October, 1898 edition of *Theological Quarterly*, published by Concordia Publishing House. The author is known only as “J.A.F”. I’ve modernized the language for the sake of readability.

Warning, this sermon is overtly partisan in its Lutheranism and is one of the most politically incorrect sermons I’ve read. It is precisely because of these traits that this sermon is a bold breath of fresh air in the suffocatingly sappy, politically-correct, post-modern, ecumenical atmosphere that we are currently entrapped.

It won’t matter if you’re Lutheran, this sermon will probably offend and challenge you (but if you’re not a Lutheran it could offend you double). But, don’t let that dissuade you! J.A.F’s points are brilliantly argued from the text of scripture. And the spirit of this sermon drips with bold confidence in the Word of God and it also exudes a Godly defiance against those who promote doctrinal obscurity, Biblical fallibility and modernist ‘feel good’ ecumenism.

Prepare to be offended, challenged and edified by this “flamethrower of truth” sermon.

— The Editor

Dearly Beloved in Christ:

Dr. Luther says, "A preacher must not only feed, in such a way that he instruct the sheep how they shall be true Christians, but besides this he must ward off the wolves that they may not attack the sheep and seduce them with false doctrines and introduce error, since the devil does not rest. Now we find many people nowadays who like to see that the Gospel is preached, if we only do not cry out against the wolves and preach against the church's leaders. But even if I do preach rightly and do feed and teach the sheep faithfully, yet this is not watching and guarding the sheep sufficiently, that no wolves may come and again lead them astray. For what do I build up, if I pile up stones and then look on while another one pulls them down again? The wolf likes to see the sheep fed well, he loves them the more because they are fat; but this he cannot bear, that the dogs raise a hostile bark."

God has made me an overseer of His Hock to feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood.⁴ My first and most blessed duty, then, is this, to proclaim unto you, my dear friends, the sweet and glorious Gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ; to feed you with the bread of heaven and to lead you to the waters of life which ripple from the cross of your Redeemer. And would to God there were no other duty for me to perform!

But alas! We, you, my flock, and I, are not yet in heaven. We are still wandering in the wilderness of this wicked world, beset on all sides by hungry wolves and roaring lions, who go about seeking to devour us, by leading us away from the narrow path of truth down into the gruesome depths of error, despair, unbelief and eternal perdition.

On the one hand we are surrounded by the ungodly world, which endeavors to induce us to run with them into their excess,

⁴ Acts 20:28 "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood."

such as sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry”⁵ Against such enemies of your souls I must earnestly and persistently warn you, and exhort you in the Lord: Do not be conformed to this world!⁶ Love not the world, neither the things that are in this world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.⁷

On the other hand we are assailed by spiritual wolves, who persistently try to break into the fold of our Church, that they either by cunning craftiness or by open force may carry some of our members away into their dens. These spiritual wolves are the false prophets, men who, coming in sheep’s clothing as angels of light, boast of great godliness, creep into private houses and established congregations and lead captive those who are not firmly founded in the word of truth, by corrupting the Word of God with their lies and false dreams. And so the Holy Spirit warns Christians on almost every page of the Bible to beware of all false prophets and their lies and corrupt doctrines, even so it is my bound duty to stand on the battlements of Zion, to sound the trumpet of warning, that my people may not be taken unawares by the enemy. I am bound to do this by the pains of God’s wrath and my own damnation. For thus says the Lord of the Church to everyone of His ministers: “Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth and give them

⁵ 1 Peter 4:3–4 “For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;”

⁶ Romans 12:1–2 “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

⁷ 1 John 2:15 “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

warning from me;" and then He adds the awful threat that He will require the blood of all those who die in sin because they have not been warned by the minister at the hands of such unfaithful watchman.⁸ More than this. God's Word does not only command the minister to preach the pure Word and to warn his hearers against all error, it also requires him to "stop the mouths" of such false teachers, "to rebuke them sharply," and to refute their teaching.⁹

It is my firm resolution to execute as best I can this solemn command of my Master, in whose vineyard I have been called to labor and who will ask me to give an account of my stewardship. With the help of God I will so fulfill my duties as a shepherd and watchman that on the last day I may "I testify to you... that I am

⁸ Ezekiel 3:17–21 ““Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die. Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul.””

⁹ Titus 1:9–13 “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,”

innocent of the blood of all of you;"¹⁰ that I have not only faithfully fed you with the bread of the Gospel, but also have warned and defended you against the grievous wolves and their perverse doctrines. And above all will I unto my dying breath beg, exhort and warn you not to fall away from the pure and glorious confessions of our beloved Lutheran Church.

The Word of God tells us expressly that in the last times perilous days shall come, and that there shall come a general falling away and departing from the faith; that many will not endure sound doctrine but rather give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Yes, our blessed Savior tells us that there shall "arise false prophets, and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."¹¹ And he closes his admonition with these warning words: "See, I have told you beforehand."

The first aim and purpose of all false prophets is to cause doubt to arise in our hearts concerning God's Word and to induce us to sacrifice our faith either in part or entirely. Now, we are Lutherans. We know and are sure that we have the pure, unadulterated Word of God and the true and uncorrupted Sacraments. We openly confess before all the world that this is our firm conviction and refuse the hand of church fellowship to everybody who does not accept our faith as his own, or who holds and defends false, unscriptural doctrines. This position of ours is furiously assailed from all quarters. We are branded and denounced as a sect, as obscure, ignorant, thick-headed barbarians; as bigoted fanatics, as uncharitable hypocrites. We are openly charged with placing obstacles in the way of reform movements by refusing to lay aside our "denominational prejudices" and join the work of other churches who attempt to bring about the millennium. We hear the cry raised on all sides: Away with all creeds and confessions! Down with these

¹⁰ Acts 20:26 "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you,"

¹¹ Matthew 24:24 "For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect"

barbaric barriers! Welcome everybody as a brother in Christ who confesses Christ to be the Son of God and accepts the divine obligation of the sabbath! But this is not all. It is even charged that creeds are an obstacle, a hindrance to come to a full and blessed union with Christ. From pulpits and platforms the watchword has been given out: "Give us less dogmatical theology and more practical Christianity! Let us have less creed and more Christ! " The real meaning of this is apparent. It is a cunningly devised snare; and as far as our Lutheran creed is concerned it is a flagrant falsehood standing in absolute contradiction to God's clear and most emphatic command. It is my purpose to faithfully warn you not to be deceived by such cunning and crafty words.

It is my purpose to answer this question to you tonight, What does God's word teach us concerning confession of faith?

- 1. It most emphatically commands us to confess our faith;**
- 2. It most emphatically commands us to hold fast such profession without wavering.**

Thou, O Lord, sanctify and confirm us in Thy truth; Thy Word is truth. Amen.

1.

The terms "creed," "confession of faith," "symbol" all denote the same thing, only from different points of view. Now, what is a creed? The term comes from the latin word credo, which means: "I believe," and with which the Apostles' Creed begins. A creed, then, is "a definite summary of what is believed". This believing, of course, takes place in the heart and is invisible to the eyes of man. But as soon as I declare that which I believe in my heart with words of my mouth I have made this creed a confession or profession of my faith. It is possible, however, yea, even probable, that not all men will agree with me and my belief, and yet it is my desire and my duty to unite with those who hold the same faith as I

do. How can this be done? Only in this way, that I confess and declare that which I believe to be God's revealed truth in certain definite and unmistakable terms and then invite all who accept this as their faith to come and unite with me or allow me to unite with them. In this way the creed, the confession of faith has become a "symbol" i. e., a standard or ensign by which those that hold the same faith are known and distinguished from those who differ from them.

Now, this faith of a Christian is not a vague, indefinite sentiment; no hypothetic opinion or view; no philosophical theory. It is a firm, unwavering conviction; an unconditional acceptance of and reliance in the absolute infallibility of every word written in the Bible. "Faith," says St. Paul, "comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."¹² Hence: Faith begins where the written word of Scripture begins; it accepts absolutely nothing but the written word; it believes every word as it is written; and finally, it stops where the written word stops. For the only object of faith is the written word! Whatever is taught and accepted in spiritual matters without a clear word of God written in the Bible is not faith but unbelief and false. "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"¹³ says our Lord.

But one might say: That is all well and true, of course, every one who would be a Christian must believe certain things contained in the Bible; but he need not air his convictions regarding them. I would reply: In the first place, a Christian must not only believe "certain things contained in the Bible," *he must believe the whole Bible, each and every word of it*, and he must do this under pain of God's displeasure and wrath. For the Bible is His word; He

¹² Romans 10:17 "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

¹³ Luke 11:28

gave all Scripture by inspiration,¹⁴ and He is absolute Truth. By doubting or refusing to accept one word of this, you insult His majesty by impeaching His veracity.

Remember we are now not speaking of how much of the Scriptures a man must know and believe in order to be saved. That is quite another question. The question here is this: If I have the whole Bible; if I know its contents; if I know that it claims to be the revealed word of God, may I then knowingly reject any part of it, and yet be a good Christian? Or, to bring the point out still clearer, is it true — as the Rev. Dr. D ... said last Sunday in his sermon on "Biblical Stumbling Blocks"—is it true that "no belief or disbelief on such a subject as Samson's foxes or Jonah's whale, can affect man's salvation?" I say most emphatically, it is not true. It is a flagrant insult to God, a self-conceited criticism of His wisdom and power. And by disbelieving these passages of Scripture you as surely and as effectually deny your God, as if you denied the Gospel of Christ's atonement; for both are the word of one and the same God.

On the other hand, you are bound, strictly bound to make profession of such your faith before men. Our text says: "always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" It is difficult to see how anyone who still claims to be a Christian can deny the necessity of a clear confession of faith; or how he can advocate and participate in so-called "un-sectarian" or "undenominational" church fellowship in the face of such unequivocal and emphatic command of God! Let me warn you, my friends, never to forget, that it is your bound duty to "always give an answer to every man that asks you a reason for the hope that is in you." You must confess your faith, whether such confession bring you friends or foes, weal or woe, honor or disgrace. And this confession must encompass not only a thing or two contained in the Bible, no, it must be thus: It is written I And

¹⁴ 2 Timothy 3:16–17 "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."

whatsoever is written, that do I believe. If you do not this, you deny your God, and disobey His command.

But this is not all. If you are a true believer, you cannot help it, you must make such confession. Faith must speak out loudly the reasons of its hope. David says: "I believed, therefore I have spoken."¹⁵ With faith the desire to confess such faith is linked so closely together, that the one cannot be without the other, even as the flame cannot help giving out heat and light. St. Paul expresses this truth thus: "For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved".¹⁶ Now, what must follow from this? This, if you claim to have faith and refuse to confess it you then and there give evidence that your claim is a falsehood.

But it is argued: "We are opposed to creeds and confessions because they are the products of men; and we will not be bound by human rules and standards. The Bible alone is our guide." How now? Does this brilliant argument not place us poor confessionalists in an awful dilemma? Hardly. If you will examine it but for a moment in the light of God's Word, you will find that it is nothing but a miserable subterfuge of vain reason, which thereby hopes to gain the privilege of believing or rejecting whatever it pleases. Let me illustrate. You are approached by a man who says to you: "I believe the world has existed forever, what do you believe concerning this question?" You answer: "I believe that God created the world out of nothing in six actual days." Now what is this? It is a confession of your faith concerning the creation. But how dare you, a sinful mortal, make a creed of that kind? You will say: "Why, I have but stated in a few words what the Bible, the Word of God, teaches in so and so many passages, which I believe to be the truth." Now, these last words are another confession of faith, another creed, for in them you declare it to be your belief, that the Bible is the Word of God, and, therefore, infallible truth. But your opponent is not

¹⁵ see 2 Corinthians 4:13 and its citation of Psalm 116:10

¹⁶ Romans 10:10

to be silenced by such answers. He asks with a sneer: "Well, now tell me what do you believe concerning Samson's foxes, and that jawbone of an ass?" You promptly reply: "I believe that Samson caught three hundred foxes; tied them in pairs, tail to tail; fastened a firebrand to the tails, and then, letting them go into the fields, burnt the corn, olives and vineyards of the Philistines. I also believe that Samson actually slew a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass." But how dare you make such "unessentials" articles of your faith? Simply because the Word of God clearly and expressly relates it in the 15th chapter of the book of Judges! ,

And right here it might be in order to say a few words about the question, why and how creeds and confessions originated in the Church. Already in the days of the Apostles false teachers, who, while they pretended to accept the Gospel, secretly corrupted the Word of God by introducing their own opinions. In order to guard against such heresies the Church of the first centuries formulated the so-called "Apostles' Creed" as a true and definite summary of the Christian doctrine. Soon, however, men like Arius arose and under the guise of accepting and subscribing to the Apostles' Creed taught false doctrine concerning the divinity of Christ. They used the same terms as the orthodox Christians but gave them an entirely different meaning. To preserve and defend the true doctrine of the Gospel concerning the person of Christ and to condemn and reject these blasphemous heresies, the Church, at the Synod of Nicea, A.D. 325, again publicly and solemnly confessed the scriptural truth in this important question by formulating and publishing the so-called "Nicene Creed" which some years later was augmented by what is known as the "Athanasian Creed."

Then came popery, that abomination of Anti-Christ, and under an outward display of great concern for the Confessions of the Church it, in the course of time, corrupted and adulterated almost every fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion confessed in those creeds, especially the central doctrines of the Gospel, of sin and grace, of Christ's redemption and a sinner's justification before God. Luther's great life-work was to again bring forth

and proclaim these Gospel truths; and being called upon to do so, he and his co-laborers compiled and published that glorious testimony of our beloved Church, the Augsburg Confession. They presented this document to Charles V and the world at large, not as a statement of their private opinions, but as a brief and clear explanation and exposition of God's Word. Yea, they close that grand confession of their faith with these words: "If anyone should be found who has an objection to them" —the foregoing articles— "we are ready to give him further information with reasons from Holy Writ," i. e., they stand ready to prove every statement in their confession from the Scriptures, whence it had been taken.

It wasn't long, however, before grievous wolves arose in the very midst of our own Church having been infected by all manner of sacramentarian and synergistic heresies began to undermine the foundations of the true Lutheran Church. Although they formally and nominally subscribed to the Augsburg Confession, still they taught doctrines which were expressly condemned therein as being unscriptural. Then the Lutheran Church once more set to work and from the Fountain of Truth, the Bible, set forth in a clear, concise, exhaustive and conclusive manner the great doctrines of the Gospel, especially those of sin, free will, conversion and justification, the Sacraments and the election of grace, in that much despised but nevertheless sublimely grand confession the Formula of Concord.

You see from this sketch that confessions were formulated by the Church because she, the handmaiden of the Lord, in obedience to her Master's command, cheerfully and boldly made profession of her faith, testifying to the truth and rejecting and condemning as heretical and false every doctrine repugnant to the Word of God. True, if our confessions were mere fabrications of men's fancies, then they would not be worth the paper on which they were written, much less could they bind our conscience to conformity.

What Bible-Christian cares a whit for all the matter contained in the ponderous volume of the popish canonical law, in the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent, in the papal bulls?

They have no grounding in God's Word. And this holds good of all other confessions or parts of confessions which do not agree with the Scriptures. But such is not the case with our confessions. For 337 years the defiant challenge of our Church has stood before the world, that whoever thinks that he is able to do so shall come forth and prove that they contain one doctrine which is not in absolute harmony with God's Word! But this proof has never yet been brought.

Therefore, my dear Lutheran friends, we, you and I, do no more than God commands us to do, if we boldly and steadfastly confess our faith before all men always!

2.

It is highly improbable that we would incur the displeasure and scorn of our adversaries in such a degree as we do if we were ready to say to them: "This is our honest belief and confession. But we do not pretend to have the truth alone. You believe just about the opposite of what we believe; but that shall not keep us from conceding that you have the full truth also." Satan is well satisfied to see the truth preached—if he cannot help it—as long as error is not exposed, testified against and condemned. He knows very well that men will a thousand times sooner follow his lies than the truth of God. You will find this statement confirmed in the history of the Church. As soon as God's witnesses lifted up their voices and cried out against false doctrines, lies and abomination in holy places they were doomed to hatred, persecution and death. And in our ecumenical and indifferent times, thousands join in the syncretistic chant which runs thus: "In essentials"—but you must not ask for a definition of these essentials, that would bring disharmony into the "sweet music"—"in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity!" And this hymn is sung to the old satanic tune: "We all believe in a deity—the Christian, Jew, Turk and Parsee!" It is said: whatever the form of our religion, whatever the name of our deity may be, whether Jehovah, or Buddha, or Shiwa,

or Manitou, or Allah, or Supreme Architect of the universe, that makes no difference, for we all mean the same one and only God.

My friends, you shudder at such fearful blasphemy. But I ask you before God, am I not saying the truth? Did we not behold this sickening sight at the so-called Parliament of Religions at Chicago, where Christians, Jews, Turks and Heathen sat and prayed together and said all kinds of nice things about universal brotherhood to each other? Was not this abomination originated by a man who claims to be a minister of Christ? Was it not endorsed and fostered and promoted by men, high and low, who bear the Christian name?

But why go into the distance! Let us look about in our immediate neighborhood. Do we not behold this same pitiful spectacle right here at our very doors? Do we not see Christians sitting in assemblies which force them by terrible oaths to "leave their religious prejudices at the door; " to never speak of their creed in such assemblies, and never to refuse to join with Jew or Muslim or Agnostic in the "worship at one common altar?" Do we not see the spectacle of Christian ministers desecrating their holy office by sitting together with those who ridicule their faith and brand it as "old fogyism"? Yes, have they not even opened their pulpits to such lying spirits, male and female?

Has it come to this? Has the Church of God been brought so low that she, the beautiful bride of the Lord, must cringe at Satan's throne; that her servants burn frankincense before the devil's shrine? If that be the case, and it is, oh, then let us pray the Lord that He come with His last day and put an end to such misery!

But, meanwhile, what can we do? What will we do? What must we do? This: we must hold fast to the profession of our faith without wavering! This is God's clear command. Our faith rests entirely on God's Word, and therefore we cannot sacrifice one jot of our confessions; for by doing so we would concede that at least in some respects our faith is not derived from the Word of God. The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible is the source and norm of our faith. By sacrificing one word of it we deny it all. Therefore, before we can give up a single article of our faith we must be

convinced from clear passages of Scripture that it is false; otherwise we dare not and must not sacrifice it by pains of eternal damnation. We must say as did Luther before Charles V at Worms: "Unless I be convicted of error by clear testimonies of Scripture... recognizing as I do no other guide than the Bible, the Word of God—I cannot and will not retractHere I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen!" *That*, my friends, is holding fast the profession of faith without wavering. No, instead of sacrificing any part of our faith, we must rather contend, fight for it, fight earnestly, fight valiantly, fight to our dying day! For thus says the Word of our God: "I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."¹⁷ And in Revelations our Savior says: "I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown".¹⁸ But here comes a would-be friend of ours and advises us: "Well, then, keep your faith for yourselves as strictly as you please, but do not let that keep you from keeping fellowship with us in external works of the Church, such as missions, charities, social reform movements," etc. My friend, we cannot do that either. For, in the first place, God expressly demands of His children that their union be a unity of the Spirit;¹⁹ that they have one faith and one baptism;²⁰ that they be like-minded;²¹ having a unity of mind;²² that they all speak the same thing; that they be perfectly joined to-

¹⁷ Jude 3

¹⁸ Revelation 3:11

¹⁹ Ephesian 4: 3

²⁰ Ephesian 4:5

²¹ Romans 15:5

²² 1 Pet. 3:8

gether in the same mind and in the same judgment.²³ Isn't that plain enough? But here is another Word of God, which is still plainer, and to which I would especially call your attention: "as for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned."²⁴ And again: "If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth"²⁵ And Listen: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works."²⁶

I have done. I have testified to you the clear command of your God, as to how you must stand concerning your faith. I can do no more. He that will not heed my warnings and sacrifice his faith does so at his own peril. I am pure from his blood. But God grant that we all may constantly heed the solemn warning of the Holy Spirit: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful."²⁷

Amen.
J. A. F.

²³ 1 Corinthians 1:10 "I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment"

²⁴ Titus 3:10–11

²⁵ 1 Timothy 6:3–5

²⁶ 2 John 1:10–11

²⁷ Hebrews 10:23

Notable Quotes



Against Craftily-Constructed Plausibilities

Inasmuch as certain men have set the truth aside, and bring in lying words and vain genealogies, which, as the apostle says, “minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith,” and by means of their craftily-constructed plausibilities draw away the minds of the inexperienced and take them captive, I have felt constrained, my dear friend, to compose the following treatise in order to expose and counteract their machinations. These men falsify the oracles of God, and prove themselves evil interpreters of the good word of revelation. They also overthrow the faith of many, by drawing them away, under the pretense of superior knowledge from Him who rounded and adorned the universe; as if, indeed, they had something more excellent and sublime to reveal, than that God who created the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein. By means of specious and plausible words, they cunningly allure the simple-minded to inquire into their system; but they nevertheless clumsily destroy them, while they initiate them into their blasphemous and impious opinions... and these simple ones are unable, even in such a matter, to distinguish falsehood from truth.

Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced more true than the truth itself.

- Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 1:1-2

Definition of Theology

Theology...is a discipline given by God, bestowed upon man through the Word, by the Holy Spirit, by which he is not only instructed in the knowledge of divine mysteries, by illumination of the mind, so that what he understands produces a salutary effect upon the feelings of his heart and the actions of his life, but so that it also renders him ready and expert in informing others concerning these divine mysteries and the way of salvation, and in vindicating heavenly truth from the aspersions of its foes' so that men, resplendent with true faith and good works, are introduced in the Kingdom of Heaven"

- Johann Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces, II, 13*

Aim of Theology

...the immediate aim of Theology is true faith in Christ, the operation of which is twofold, viz.: *internal*, which embraces Christ with his benefits, and *external*, which produces good works, the fruits of righteousness. The *ultimate* end of Theology is eternal happiness, which consists not only in the intuitive knowledge of God, but also in the enjoyment of him. Because Theology treats of man, not *theoretically*, as the subject of its description, as certain qualities are ascribed to man in physiology, but as the subject of its *operation*, or how he, as a sinner, is to be freed from his misery and transferred into a state of blessedness... Because Paul himself defines Theology to be "the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness." Titus 1:1

- David Hollazius, *Examen Theologicum Acroamaticum*

*The Four Books You Need to
Read to Help You Better
Understand the Proper Biblical
Distinction of Law and Gospel*



Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther

by Roland Herbert Bainton

Hammer of God

by Bo Giertz

**Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions -- A Reader's
Edition of the Book of Concord**

edited by Paul Timothy McCain

Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible

by C.F.W. Walther

Defense of the Augsburg Confession: Justification Part 1



Editor's Preface: This is by far, one of the greatest doctrinal and theological treasures in all of Christendom. Martin Luther said that the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone by Christ's work alone is the doctrine by which the Christian church either stands or falls. That being the case, this defense of the doctrine of justification written in the opening years of the Reformation stands as one the most brilliant and seminal apologetic works in the entire history of the Christian Church.

This edition is taken from the *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church: German-Latin-English*. Published in 1917 by resolution of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921). This text is in the public domain and may be freely copied.

I've removed the section headings and most parenthetical punctuation so that they would not be a distraction. I've also provided, in the footnotes, a modern translation of the Biblical passages employed in this work. I pray that you will both enjoy and be edified by this brilliantly argued defense of the central doctrine of the Christian faith.

- The Editor

Article IV (II): Justification.

In the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and, below, in the Twentieth Article, they [the Roman Catholic Scholastic theologians] condemn us, for teaching that men obtain remission of sins not because of their own merits, but freely for Christ's sake, through faith in Christ. They reject quite stubbornly both these statements. For they condemn us both for denying that men obtain remission of sins because of their own merits, and for affirming that, through faith, men obtain remission of sins, and through faith in Christ are justified. But since in this controversy the chief topic of Christian doctrine is treated, which, understood aright, illumines and amplifies the honor of Christ, which is of especial service for the clear, correct understanding of the entire Holy Scriptures, and alone shows the way to the unspeakable treasure and right knowledge of Christ, and alone opens the door to the entire Bible, and brings necessary and most abundant consolation to devout consciences, we ask His Imperial Majesty to hear us with forbearance in regard to matters of such importance. For since the adversaries understand neither what the remission of sins, nor what faith, nor what grace, nor what righteousness is, they sadly corrupt this topic, and obscure the glory and benefits of Christ, and rob devout consciences of the consolations offered in Christ.²⁸ But that we may strengthen the position of our Confession, and also remove the charges which the adversaries advance against us, certain things are to be premised in the beginning, in order that the sources of both kinds of doctrine, i.e., both that of our adversaries and our own, may be known.

All Scripture ought to be distributed into these two principal topics, the Law and the promises. For in some places it presents the Law, and in others the promise concerning Christ, namely, either

²⁸ Today, far too many Evangelical preachers and teachers, in the same way, due to their ignorance of the scripture and what they teach regarding the Gospel and Justification rob consciences of the comfort offered through the Gospel.

when, in the Old Testament it promises that Christ will come, and offers, for His sake, the remission of sins justification, and life eternal, or when, in the Gospel, in the New Testament, Christ Himself, since He has appeared, promises the remission of sins, justification, and life eternal. Moreover, in this discussion, by Law we designate the Ten Commandments, wherever they are read in the Scriptures. Of the ceremonies and judicial laws of Moses we say nothing at present.

Of these two parts the adversaries select the Law, because human reason naturally understands, in some way, the Law, for it has the same judgment divinely written in the mind; the natural law agrees with the law of Moses, or the Ten Commandments, and by the Law they seek the remission of sins and justification. Now, the Decalog requires not only outward civil works, which reason can in some way produce, but it also requires other things placed far above reason, namely, truly to fear God, truly to love God, truly to call upon God, truly to be convinced that God hears us, and to expect the aid of God in death and in all afflictions; finally, it requires obedience to God, in death and all afflictions, so that we may not flee from these or refuse them when God imposes them.

Here the scholastics, having followed the philosophers, teach only a righteousness of reason, namely, civil works, and fabricate besides that without the Holy Ghost reason can love God above all things.²⁹ For, as long as the human mind is at ease, and does not feel the wrath or judgment of God, it can imagine that it wishes to love God, that it wishes to do good for God's sake. But it is sheer hypocrisy. In this manner they teach that men merit the remission of sins by doing what is in them, i.e., if reason, grieving over sin, elicits an act of love to God, or for God's sake be active in that which is good. And because this opinion naturally flatters men, it has brought forth and multiplied in the Church many services,

²⁹ Rick Warren and Joel Osteen also teach an obedience based on reason but do not understand the deeper demands that the law of God places upon us. Thus, they deceive themselves and their hearers into believing that they are obeying God's law.

monastic vows, abuses of the mass; and, with this opinion the one has, in the course of time, devised this act of worship and observances, the other that. And in order that they might nourish and increase confidence in such works, they have affirmed that God necessarily gives grace to one thus working, by the necessity not of constraint but of immutability, not that He is constrained, but that this is the order which God will not transgress or alter.

In this opinion there are many great and pernicious errors, which it would be tedious to enumerate. Let the discreet reader think only of this: If this be Christian righteousness, what difference is there between philosophy and the doctrine of Christ? If we merit the remission of sins by these elicited acts that spring from our mind, of what benefit is Christ? If we can be justified by reason and the works of reason, wherefore is there need of Christ or regeneration as Peter declares, 1 Pet. 1:18ff?³⁰ And from these opinions the matter has now come to such a pass that many ridicule us because we teach that an other than the philosophic righteousness must be sought after. Alas! it has come to this, that even great theologians at Louvain, Paris, etc., have known nothing of any other godliness or righteousness, although every letter and syllable in Paul teaches otherwise, than the godliness which philosophers teach. And although we ought to regard this as a strange teaching, and ought to ridicule it, they rather ridicule us, yea, make a jest of Paul himself. We have heard that some after setting aside the Gospel, have, instead of a sermon, explained the ethics of Aristotle.³¹ I myself have heard a great preacher who did not mention Christ and the Gospel, and preached the ethics of Aristotle. Is this not a

³⁰ 1 Peter 1:18–19 “knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.”

³¹ How is this any better or worse than the Purpose-Driven preachers of our day who are delivering sermons based upon the moral lessons found in the latest Hollywood movies?

childish, foolish way to preach to Christians? Nor did such men err if those things are true which the adversaries defend, if the doctrine of the adversaries be true, the Ethics is a precious book of sermons, and a fine new Bible. For Aristotle wrote concerning civil morals so learnedly that nothing further concerning this need be demanded. We see books extant in which certain sayings of Christ are compared with the sayings of Socrates, Zeno, and others, as though Christ had come for the purpose of delivering certain laws through which we might merit the remission of sins, as though we did not receive this gratuitously because of His merits. Therefore, if we here receive the doctrine of the adversaries, that by the works of reason we merit the remission of sins and justification, there will be no difference between philosophic, or certainly pharisaic, and Christian righteousness.

Although the adversaries, not to pass by Christ altogether, require a knowledge of the history concerning Christ, and ascribe to Him that it is His merit that a habit is given us or, as they say, *prima gratia*, "first grace," which they understand as a habit, inclining us the more readily to love God; yet, what they ascribe to this habit is of little importance, is a feeble, paltry, small, poor operation, that would be ascribed to Christ, because they imagine that the acts of the will are of the same kind before and after this habit. They imagine that the will can love God; but nevertheless this habit stimulates it to do the same the more cheerfully. And they bid us first merit this habit by preceding merits; then they bid us merit by the works of the Law an increase of this habit and life eternal. Thus they bury Christ, so that men may not avail themselves of Him as a Mediator, and believe that for His sake they freely receive remission of sins and reconciliation, but may dream that by their own fulfillment of the Law they merit the remission of sins, and that by their own fulfillment of the Law they are accounted righteous before God; while, nevertheless, the Law is never satisfied, since reason does nothing except certain civil works, and, in the mean time, neither, in the heart, fears God, nor truly believes that God cares for it. And although they speak of this habit,

yet, without the righteousness of faith, neither the love of God can exist in man, nor can it be understood what the love of God is.

Their feigning a distinction between *meritum congrui* and *meritum condigni* [due merit and true, complete merit] is only an artifice in order not to appear openly to Pelagianize. For, if God necessarily gives grace for the *meritum congrui* [due merit], it is no longer *meritum congrui*, but *meritum condigni* [a true duty and complete merit]. But they do not know what they are saying. After this habit of love is there, they imagine that man can acquire merit *de condigno*. And yet they bid us doubt whether there be a habit present. How, therefore, do they know whether they acquire merit *de congruo* or *de condigno* [in full, or half]? But this whole matter was fabricated by idle men. But, good God! these are mere inane ideas and dreams of idle, wretched, inexperienced men, who do not much reduce the Bible to practice, who did not know how the remission of sins occurs, and how, in the judgment of God and terrors of conscience, trust in works is driven out of us. Secure hypocrites always judge that they acquire merit *de condigno*, whether the habit be present or be not present, because men naturally trust in their own righteousness; but terrified consciences waver and hesitate, and then seek and accumulate other works in order to find rest. Such consciences never think that they acquire merit *de condigno*, and they rush into despair unless they hear, in addition to the doctrine of the Law, the Gospel concerning the gratuitous remission of sins and the righteousness of faith. Thus some stories are told that when the Barefooted monks had in vain praised their order and good works to some good consciences in the hour of death, they at last had to be silent concerning their order and St. Franciscus, and to say: "Dear man, Christ has died for you." This revived and refreshed in trouble, and alone gave peace and comfort.

Thus the adversaries teach nothing but the righteousness of reason, or certainly of the Law, upon which they look just as the Jews upon the veiled face of Moses; and, in secure hypocrites who think that they satisfy the Law, they excite presumption and empty

confidence in works, they place men on a sand foundation, their own works, and contempt of the grace of Christ. On the contrary, they drive timid consciences to despair, which laboring with doubt, never can experience what faith is, and how efficacious it is; thus, at last they utterly despair.

Now, we think concerning the righteousness of reason thus, namely, that God requires it, and that, because of God's commandment, the honorable works which the Decalog commands must necessarily be performed, according to the passage Gal. 3:24:³² The Law was our schoolmaster; likewise 1 Tim. 1:9:³³ The Law is made for the ungodly. For God wishes those who are carnal [gross sinners] to be restrained by civil discipline, and to maintain this, He has given laws, letters, doctrine, magistrates, penalties. And this righteousness reason, by its own strength, can, to a certain extent, work, although it is often overcome by natural weakness, and by the devil impelling it to manifest crimes. Now, although we cheerfully assign this righteousness of reason the praises that are due it, for this corrupt nature has no greater good in this life and in a worldly nature, nothing is ever better than uprightness and virtue, and Aristotle says aright: Neither the evening star nor the morning star is more beautiful than righteousness, and God also honors it with bodily rewards, yet it ought not to be praised with reproach to Christ.

For it is false, I thus conclude, and am certain that it is a fiction, and not true that we merit the remission of sins by our works.

³² Galatians 3:24 “So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.”

³³ 1 Timothy 1:9–10 “understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine”

False also is this, that men are accounted righteous before God because of the righteousness of reason, works and external piety.

False also is this that reason, by its own strength, is able to love God above all things, and to fulfill God's Law, namely, truly to fear God, to be truly confident that God hears prayer, to be willing to obey God in death and other dispensations of God, not to covet what belongs to others, etc.; although reason can work civil works.

False also and dishonoring Christ is this, that men do not sin who, without grace, do the commandments of God, who keep the commandments of God merely in an external manner, without the Spirit and grace in their hearts.

We have testimonies for this our belief, not only from the Scriptures, but also from the Fathers. For in opposition to the Pelagians, Augustine contends at great length that grace is not given because of our merits. And in *De Natura et Gratia* he says: If natural ability, through the free will, suffice both for learning to know how one ought to live and for living aright, then Christ has died in vain, then the offense of the Cross is made void. Why may I not also here cry out? Yea, I will cry out, and, with Christian grief, will chide them: Christ has become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from grace. Gal. 5:4;³⁴ cf. 2:21.³⁵ For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Rom.

³⁴ Galatians 5:4 "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace."

³⁵ Galatians 2:21 "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose."

10:3-4,³⁶ And John 8:36:³⁷ If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. Therefore by reason we cannot be freed from sins and merit the remission of sins. And in John 3:5³⁸ it is written: Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. But if it is necessary to be born again of the Holy Ghost, the righteousness of reason does not justify us before God, and does not fulfill the Law, Rom. 3:23:³⁹ All have come short of the glory of God, i.e., are destitute of the wisdom and righteousness of God, which acknowledges and glorifies God. Likewise Rom. 8:7-8:⁴⁰ The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can it be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. These testimonies are so manifest that, to use the words of Augustine which he employed in this case, they do not need an acute understanding, but only an attentive hearer. If the carnal mind is enmity against God, the flesh certainly does not love God; if it cannot be subject to the Law of God, it cannot love God. If the carnal mind is enmity against God, the flesh sins, even when we do external civil works. If it cannot be subject to the Law of God, it certainly sins even when, according to human judgment, it possesses deeds that are excellent and worthy of praise. The adversaries consider only the precepts of the Second Table which contain civil righteousness that reason understands. Content with this, they think that they

³⁶ Romans 10:3-4 “For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

³⁷ John 8:36 “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

³⁸ John 3:5 “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

³⁹ Romans 3:23 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

⁴⁰ Romans 8:7-8 “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

satisfy the Law of God. In the mean time they do not see the First Table which commands that we love God, that we declare as certain that God is angry with sin, that we truly fear God, that we declare as certain that God hears prayer. But the human heart without the Holy Ghost either in security despises God's judgment, or in punishment flees from, and hates, God when He judges. Therefore it does not obey the First Table. Since, therefore, contempt of God, and doubt concerning the Word of God, and concerning the threats and promises, inhere in human nature, men truly sin, even when, without the Holy Ghost, they do virtuous works, because they do them with a wicked heart, according to Rom. 14:23:⁴¹ Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. For such persons perform their works with contempt of God, just as Epicurus does not believe that God cares for him, or that he is regarded or heard by God. This contempt vitiates works seemingly virtuous, because God judges the heart.

Lastly, it was very foolish for the adversaries to write that men who are under eternal wrath merit the remission of sins by an act of love, which springs from their mind since it is impossible to love God, unless the remission of sins be apprehended first by faith. For the heart, truly feeling that God is angry, cannot love God, unless He be shown to have been reconciled. As long as He terrifies us, and seems to cast us into eternal death, human nature is not able to take courage, so as to love a wrathful, judging, and punishing God, poor, weak nature must lose heart and courage, and must tremble before such great wrath, which so fearfully terrifies and punishes, and can never feel a spark of love before God Himself comforts. It is easy for idle men to feign such dreams concerning love, as, that a person guilty of mortal sin can love God above all things, because they do not feel what the wrath or judgment of God is. But in agony of conscience and in conflicts, with Satan, conscience experiences the emptiness of these philosophical

⁴¹ Romans 14:23 "For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin."

speculations. Paul says, Rom. 4:15:⁴² The Law worketh wrath. He does not say that by the Law men merit the remission of sins. For the Law always accuses and terrifies consciences. Therefore it does not justify, because conscience terrified by the Law flees from the judgment of God. Therefore they err who trust that by the Law, by their own works, they merit the remission of sins. It is sufficient for us to have said these things concerning the righteousness of reason or of the Law, which the adversaries teach. For after a while, when we will declare our belief concerning the righteousness of faith, the subject itself will compel us to adduce more testimonies, which also will be of service in overthrowing the errors of the adversaries which we have thus far reviewed.

Because, therefore, men by their own strength cannot fulfill the Law of God, and all are under sin, and subject to eternal wrath and death, on this account we cannot be freed by the Law from sin and be justified, but the promise of the remission of sins and of justification has been given us for Christ's sake, who was given for us in order that He might make satisfaction for the sins of the world, and has been appointed as the only Mediator and Propitiator. And this promise has not the condition of our merits it does not read thus: Through Christ you have grace, salvation etc., if you merit it, but freely offers the remission of sins and justification as Paul says Rom. 11:6:⁴³ If it be of works, then is it no more grace. And in another place, Rom. 3:21:⁴⁴ The righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, i.e., the remission of sins is freely offered. Nor does reconciliation depend upon our merits. Because if the remission of sins were to depend upon our merits, and reconciliation were from the Law, it would be useless. For as we do

⁴² Romans 4:15 "For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression."

⁴³ Romans 11:6 "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace."

⁴⁴ Romans 3:21 "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it"

not fulfill the Law, it would also follow that we would never obtain the promise of reconciliation. Thus Paul reasons, Rom. 4:14:⁴⁵ For if they which are of the Law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. For if the promise would require the condition of our merits and the Law, which we never fulfill, it would follow that the promise would be useless.

But since justification is obtained through the free promise it follows that we cannot justify ourselves. Otherwise wherefore would there be need to promise? And why should Paul so highly extol and praise grace? For since the promise cannot be received except by faith, the Gospel which is properly the promise of the remission of sins and of justification for Christ's sake, proclaims the righteousness of faith in Christ, which the Law does not teach. Nor is this the righteousness of the Law. For the Law requires of us our works and our perfection. But the Gospel freely offers, for Christ's sake, to us, who have been vanquished by sin and death, reconciliation which is received not by works, but by faith alone. This faith brings to God not confidence in one's own merits, but only confidence in the promise, or the mercy promised in Christ. This special faith, therefore, by which an individual believes that for Christ's sake his sins are remitted him, and that for Christ's sake God is reconciled and propitious, obtains remission of sins and justifies us. And because in repentance, i.e. in terrors, it comforts and encourages hearts, it regenerates us and brings the Holy Ghost that then we may be able to fulfill God's Law, namely, to love God, truly to fear God, truly to be confident that God hears prayer, and to obey God in all afflictions; it mortifies concupiscence etc. Thus, because faith, which freely receives the remission of sins, sets Christ, the Mediator and Propitiator, against God's wrath, it does not present our merits or our love, which would be tossed aside like a little feather by a hurricane. This faith is the true knowledge of Christ, and avails itself of the benefits of Christ, and regenerates hearts, and precedes the fulfilling of the

⁴⁵ Romans 4:14 "For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void."

Law. And of this faith not a syllable exists in the doctrine of our adversaries. Hence we find fault with the adversaries, equally because they teach only the righteousness of the Law, and because they do not teach the righteousness of the Gospel, which proclaims the righteousness of faith in Christ.

What Is Justifying Faith?

The adversaries feign that faith is only a knowledge of the history, and therefore teach that it can coexist with mortal sin. Hence they say nothing concerning faith, by which Paul so frequently says that men are justified, because those who are accounted righteous before God do not live in mortal sin. But that faith which justifies is not merely a knowledge of history, not merely this, that I know the stories of Christ's birth, suffering, etc. (that even the devils know,) but it is to assent to the promise of God, in which, for Christ's sake, the remission of sins and justification are freely offered. 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. And that no one may suppose that it is mere knowledge, we will add further: it is to wish and to receive the offered promise of the remission of sins and of justification. Faith is that my whole heart takes to itself this treasure. It is not my doing, not my presenting or giving, not my work or preparation, but that a heart comforts itself, and is perfectly confident with respect to this, namely, that God makes a present and gift to us, and not we to Him, that He sheds upon us every treasure of grace in Christ.

And the difference between this faith and the righteousness of the Law can be easily discerned. Faith is the *latreiva* [divine service], which receives the benefits offered by God; the righteousness of the Law is the *latreiva* [divine service] which offers to God our merits. By faith God wishes to be worshiped in this way, that we receive from Him those things which He promises and offers.

Now, that faith signifies, not only a knowledge of the history, but such faith as assents to the promise, Paul plainly testifies when he says, Rom. 4:16:⁴⁶ Therefore it is of faith, to the end the promise might be sure. For he judges that the promise cannot be received unless by faith. Wherefore he puts them together as things that belong to one another, and connects promise and faith. There Paul fastens and binds together these two, thus: Wherever there is a promise faith is required, and conversely, wherever faith is required, there must be a promise. Although it will be easy to decide what faith is if we consider the Creed, where this article certainly stands: The forgiveness of sins. Therefore it is not enough to believe that Christ was born, suffered, was raised again, unless we add also this article, which is the purpose of the history: The forgiveness of sins. To this article the rest must be referred, namely, that for Christ's sake, and not for the sake of our merits, forgiveness of sins is given us. For what need was there that Christ was given for our sins if for our sins our merits can make satisfaction?

As often, therefore, as we speak of justifying faith, we must keep in mind that these three objects concur: the promise, and that, too, gratuitous, and the merits of Christ, as the price and propitiation. The promise is received by faith; the "gratuitous" excludes our merits, and signifies that the benefit is offered only through mercy; the merits of Christ are the price, because there must be a certain propitiation for our sins. Scripture frequently implores mercy; and the holy Fathers often say that we are saved by mercy. As often, therefore, as mention is made of mercy, we must keep in mind that faith is there required, which receives the promise of mercy. And, again, as often as we speak of faith, we wish an object to be understood, namely, the promised mercy. For faith justifies and saves, not on the ground that it is a work in itself worthy, but only because it receives the promised mercy.

⁴⁶ Romans 4:16 "That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,"

And throughout the prophets and the psalms this worship, this *latreiva*, is highly praised, although the Law does not teach the gratuitous remission of sins. But the Fathers knew the promise concerning Christ, that God for Christ's sake wished to remit sins. Therefore, since they understood that Christ would be the price for our sins, they knew that our works are not a price for so great a matter could not pay so great a debt. Accordingly, they received gratuitous mercy and remission of sins by faith, just as the saints in the New Testament. Here belong those frequent repetitions concerning mercy and faith, in the psalms and the prophets, as this, Ps. 130:3:⁴⁷ If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Here David confesses his sins, and does not recount his merits. He adds: But there is forgiveness with Thee. Here he comforts himself by his trust in God's mercy, and he cites the promise: My soul doth wait, and in His Word do I hope, i.e., because Thou hast promised the remission of sins, I am sustained by this Thy promise. Therefore the fathers also were justified, not by the Law, but by the promise and faith. And it is amazing that the adversaries extenuate faith to such a degree, although they see that it is everywhere praised as an eminent service, as in Ps. 50:15:⁴⁸ Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee. Thus God wishes Himself to be known, thus He wishes Himself to be worshiped, that from Him we receive benefits, and receive them, too, because of His mercy, and not because of our merits. This is the richest consolation in all afflictions, physical or spiritual, in life or in death, as all godly persons know. And such consolations the adversaries abolish when they extenuate and disparage faith, and teach only that by means of works and merits men treat with God, that we treat with God, the great Majesty, by means of our miserable, beggarly works and merits.

⁴⁷ Psalms 130:3–4 “If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.”

⁴⁸ Psalms 50:15 “all upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me”

That Faith in Christ Justifies.

In the first place, lest any one may think that we speak concerning an idle knowledge of the history, we must declare how faith is obtained, how the heart begins to believe. Afterward we will show both that it justifies, and how this ought to be understood, and we will explain the objections of the adversaries. Christ, in the last chapter of Luke 24:47,⁴⁹ commands that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name. For the Gospel convicts all men that they are under sin, that they all are subject to eternal wrath and death, and offers, for Christ's sake, remission of sin and justification, which is received by faith. The preaching of repentance, which accuses us, terrifies consciences with true and grave terrors. For the preaching of repentance, or this declaration of the Gospel: Amend your lives! Repent! when it truly penetrates the heart, terrifies the conscience, and is no jest, but a great terror, in which the conscience feels its misery and sin, and the wrath of God. In these, hearts ought again to receive consolation. This happens if they believe the promise of Christ, that for His sake we have remission of sins. This faith, encouraging and consoling in these fears, receives remission of sins, justifies and quickens. For this consolation is a new and spiritual life, a new birth and a new life. These things are plain and clear, and can be understood by the pious, and have testimonies of the Church as is to be seen in the conversion of Paul and Augustine. The adversaries nowhere can say how the Holy Ghost is given. They imagine that the Sacraments confer the Holy Ghost *ex opere operato*, without a good emotion in the recipient, as though indeed, the gift of the Holy Ghost were an idle matter.

But since we speak of such faith as is not an idle thought, but of that which liberates from death and produces a new life in hearts,

⁴⁹ Luke 24:46–48 “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

which is such a new light, life, and force in the heart as to renew our heart, mind, and spirit, makes new men of us and new creatures, and is the work of the Holy Ghost; this does not coexist with mortal sin, for how can light and darkness coexist? But as long as it is present, produces good fruits, as we will say after a while. For concerning the conversion of the wicked, or concerning the mode of regeneration, what can be said that is more simple and more clear? Let them, from so great an array of writers, adduce a single commentary upon the *Sententiae*⁵⁰ that speaks of the mode of regeneration. When they speak of the habit of love, they imagine that men merit it through works, and they do not teach that it is received through the Word, precisely as also the Anabaptists teach at this time. But God cannot be treated with, God cannot be apprehended, except through the Word. Accordingly, justification occurs through the Word, just as Paul says, Rom. 1:16:⁵¹ The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Likewise Rom. 10:17:⁵² Faith cometh by hearing. And proof can be derived even from this that faith justifies, because, if justification occurs only through the Word, and the Word is apprehended only by faith, it follows that faith justifies. But there are other and more important reasons. We have said these things thus far in order that we might show the mode of regeneration, and that the nature of faith, what is, or is not, faith, concerning which we speak, might be understood.

Now we will show that faith, and nothing else justifies. Here, in the first place, readers must be admonished of this, that just as it is necessary to maintain this sentence: Christ is Mediator, so is it

⁵⁰ *Sententiae* are brief apophthegms from ancient sources, quoted without context. They were a tool of scholasticism, which was popular in the Middle Ages as a form of rhetoric.

⁵¹ “Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

⁵² Romans 10:17 “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

necessary to defend that faith justifies, without works. For how will Christ be Mediator if in justification we do not use Him as Mediator; if we do not hold that for His sake we are accounted righteous? But to believe is to trust in the merits of Christ, that for His sake God certainly wishes to be reconciled with us. Likewise, just as we ought to maintain that, apart from the Law, the promise of Christ is necessary, so also is it needful to maintain that faith justifies. For the Law does not preach the forgiveness of sin by grace. For the Law cannot be performed unless the Holy Ghost be first received. It is, therefore, needful to maintain that the promise of Christ is necessary. But this cannot be received except by faith. Therefore, those who deny that faith justifies, teach nothing but the Law, both Christ and the Gospel being set aside.

But when it is said that faith justifies, some perhaps understand it of the beginning, namely, that faith is the beginning of justification or preparation for justification, so that not faith itself is that through which we are accepted by God, but the works which follow; and they dream, accordingly, that faith is highly praised, because it is the beginning. For great is the importance of the beginning, as they commonly say, "The beginning is half of everything; just as if one would say that grammar makes the teachers of all arts," because it prepares for other arts, although in fact it is his own art that renders every one an artist. We do not believe thus concerning faith, but we maintain this, that properly and truly, by faith itself, we are for Christ's sake accounted righteous, or are acceptable to God. And because "to be justified" means that out of unjust men just men are made, or born again, it means also that they are pronounced or accounted just. For Scripture speaks in both ways. The term "to be justified" is used in two ways: to denote, being converted or regenerated; again, being accounted righteous. Accordingly we wish first to show this, that faith alone makes of an unjust, a just man, i.e., receives remission of sins.

The particle alone offends some, although even Paul says, Rom. 3:28:⁵³ We conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law. Again, Eph. 2:8:⁵⁴ It is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. Again, Rom. 3:24:⁵⁵ Being justified freely. If the exclusive alone displeases, let them remove from Paul also the exclusives freely, not of works, it is the gift, etc. For these also are very strong exclusives. It is, however, the opinion of merit that we exclude. We do not exclude the Word or Sacraments, as the adversaries falsely charge us. For we have said above that faith is conceived from the Word, and we honor the ministry of the Word in the highest degree. Love and works must also follow faith. Wherefore, they are not excluded so as not to follow, but confidence in the merit of love or of works is excluded in justification. And this we will clearly show.

That We Obtain Remission of Sins by Faith Alone in Christ.

We think that even the adversaries acknowledge that, in justification, the remission of sins is necessary first. For we all are under sin. Wherefore we reason thus:

⁵³ Romans 3:28 “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”

⁵⁴ Ephesians 2:8–9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

⁵⁵ Romans 3:21–25 “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”

To attain the remission of sins is to be justified, according to Ps. 32:1:⁵⁶ Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven. By faith alone in Christ, not through love, not because of love or works, do we acquire the remission of sins, although love follows faith. Therefore by faith alone we are justified, understanding justification as the making of a righteous man out of an unrighteous, or that he be regenerated.

It will thus become easy to declare the minor premise that we obtain forgiveness of sin by faith, not by love, if we know how the remission of sins occurs. The adversaries with great indifference dispute whether the remission of sins and the infusion of grace are the same change, whether they are one change or two]. Being idle men, they did not know what to answer, cannot speak at all on this subject. In the remission of sins, the terrors of sin and of eternal death, in the heart, must be overcome, as Paul testifies, 1 Cor. 15:56:⁵⁷ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. That is, sin terrifies consciences, this occurs through the Law, which shows the wrath of God against sin; but we gain the victory through Christ. How? By faith, when we comfort ourselves by confidence in the mercy promised for Christ's sake. Thus, therefore, we prove the minor proposition. The wrath of God cannot be appeased if we set against it our own works, because Christ has been set forth as a Propitiator, so that for His sake, the Father may become reconciled to us. But Christ is not apprehended as a Mediator except by faith. Therefore, by faith alone we obtain remission of sins, when we comfort our hearts with confidence in the mercy promised for Christ's sake. Likewise Paul,

⁵⁶ Psalms 32:1–2 “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.”

⁵⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:56–57 “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Rom. 5:2, says:⁵⁸ By whom also we have access, and adds, by faith. Thus, therefore, we are reconciled to the Father, and receive remission of sins when we are comforted with confidence in the mercy promised for Christ's sake. The adversaries regard Christ as Mediator and Propitiator for this reason, namely, that He has merited the habit of love; they do not urge us to use Him now as Mediator, but, as though Christ were altogether buried, they imagine that we have access through our own works, and, through these, merit this habit, and afterwards, by this love, come to God. Is not this to bury Christ altogether, and to take away the entire doctrine of faith? Paul on the contrary, teaches that we have access, i.e., reconciliation, through Christ. And to show how this occurs, he adds that we have access by faith. By faith, therefore, for Christ's sake, we receive remission of sins. We cannot set our own love and our own works over against God's wrath.

Secondly. It is certain that sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ, as Propitiator, Rom. 3:25:⁵⁹ Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation. Moreover, Paul adds: through faith. Therefore this Propitiator thus benefits us, when by faith we apprehend the mercy promised in Him, and set it against the wrath and judgment

⁵⁸ Romans 5:1–2 “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

⁵⁹ Romans 3:21–25 “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”

of God. And to the same effect it is written, Heb. 4:14,16:⁶⁰ Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest, etc., let us therefore come with confidence. For the Apostle bids us come to God, not with confidence in our own merits, but with confidence in Christ as a High Priest; therefore he requires faith.

Thirdly. Peter, in Acts 10:43, says:⁶¹ To Him give all the prophets witness that through His name, whosoever believeth on Him, shall receive remission of sins. How could this be said more clearly? We receive remission of sins, he says, through His name, i.e., for His sake; therefore, not for the sake of our merits, not for the sake of our contrition, attrition, love, worship, works. And he adds: When we believe in Him. Therefore he requires faith. For we cannot apprehend the name of Christ except by faith. Besides he cites the agreement of all the prophets. This is truly to cite the authority of the Church. For when all the holy prophets bear witness, that is certainly a glorious, great excellent, powerful decretal and testimony. But of this topic we will speak again after a while, when treating of "Repentance."

Fourthly. Remission of sins is something promised for Christ's sake. Therefore it cannot be received except by faith alone. For a promise cannot be received except by faith alone. Rom.

⁶⁰ Hebrews 4:14–16 “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

⁶¹ Acts 10:42–43 “And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.””

4:16:⁶² Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure; as though he were to say: "If the matter were to depend upon our merits, the promise would be uncertain and useless, because we never could determine when we would have sufficient merit." And this, experienced consciences can easily understand and would not, for a thousand worlds have our salvation depend upon ourselves. Accordingly, Paul says, Gal. 3:22:⁶³ But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. He takes merit away from us, because he says that all are guilty and concluded under sin; then he adds that the promise, namely, of the remission of sins and of justification, is given, and adds how the promise can be received, namely, by faith. And this reasoning, derived from the nature of a promise, is the chief reasoning [a veritable rock] in Paul, and is often repeated. Nor can anything be devised or imagined whereby this argument of Paul can be overthrown. Wherefore let not good minds suffer themselves to be forced from the conviction that we receive remission of sins for Christ's sake, only through faith. In this they have sure and firm consolation against the terrors of sin, and against eternal death, and against all the gates of hell. Everything else is a foundation of sand that sinks in trials.

⁶² Romans 4:14–16 “For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all”

⁶³ Galatians 3:21–24 “Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.”

But since we receive remission of sins and the Holy Ghost by faith alone, faith alone justifies, because those reconciled are accounted righteous and children of God, not on account of their own purity, but through mercy for Christ's sake, provided only they by faith apprehend this mercy. Accordingly, Scripture testifies that by faith we are accounted righteous, Rom. 3:26.⁶⁴ We, therefore, will add testimonies which clearly declare that faith is that very righteousness by which we are accounted righteous before God, namely, not because it is a work that is in itself worthy, but because it receives the promise by which God has promised that for Christ's sake He wishes to be propitious to those believing in Him, or because He knows that Christ of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. 1:30.⁶⁵

In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul discusses this topic especially, and declares that, when we believe that God, for Christ's sake, is reconciled to us, we are justified freely by faith. And this proposition, which contains the statement of the entire discussion, the principal matter of all Epistles, yea, of the entire Scriptures, he maintains in the third chapter: We conclude that a man is justified

⁶⁴ Romans 3:26–28 “It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”

⁶⁵ 1 Corinthians 1:30–31 “And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.””

by faith, without the deeds of the Law, Rom. 3:28.⁶⁶ Here the adversaries interpret that this refers to Levitical ceremonies, not to other virtuous works. But Paul speaks not only of the ceremonies, but of the whole Law. For he quotes afterward (7:7)⁶⁷ from the Decalog: Thou shalt not covet. And if moral works that are not Jewish ceremonies would merit the remission of sins and justification, there would also be no need of Christ and the promise, and all that Paul speaks of the promise would be overthrown. He would also have been wrong in writing to the Ephesians 2:8:⁶⁸ By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works. Paul likewise refers to Abraham and David,

⁶⁶ Romans 3:27–30 “Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.”

⁶⁷ Romans 7:7–9 “What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.”

⁶⁸ Ephesians 2:8–9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Rom. 4:1,6.⁶⁹ But they had the command of God concerning circumcision. Therefore, if any works justified, these works must also have justified at the time that they had a command. But Augustine teaches correctly that Paul speaks of the entire Law, as he discusses at length in his book, *Of the Spirit and Letter*, where he says finally: These matters, therefore having been considered and treated, according to the ability that the Lord has thought worthy to give us, we infer that man is not justified by the precepts of a good life, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

And lest we may think that the sentence that faith justifies, fell from Paul inconsiderately, he fortifies and confirms this by a long discussion in the fourth chapter to the Romans, and afterwards repeats it in all his epistles. Thus he says, Rom. 4:4,5: To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt . But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Here he clearly says that faith itself is imputed for righteousness. Faith, therefore, is that thing which God declares to be righteousness, and he adds that it is imputed freely, and says that it could not be imputed freely, if it were due on account of works. Wherefore he excludes also the merit of moral works not only Jewish ceremonies, but all other good works. For if justification before God were due to these, faith would not be imputed for righteousness without works. And afterwards, Rom. 4:9:⁷⁰ For we say that faith was reckoned to

⁶⁹ Romans 4:1-8 “What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.””

⁷⁰ Romans 4:9 “We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.”

Abraham for righteousness. Romans 5:1 says:⁷¹ Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, i.e., we have consciences that are tranquil and joyful before God. Rom. 10:10:⁷² With the heart man believeth unto righteousness. Here he declares that faith is the righteousness of the heart. Gal. 2:16:⁷³ We have believed in Christ Jesus that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law. Eph. 2:8: 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.

John 1:12:⁷⁴ To them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 3:14,15:⁷⁵ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever be-

⁷¹ Romans 5:1 “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”

⁷² Romans 10:10–11 “For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.””

⁷³ Galatians 2:15–16 “We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified”

⁷⁴ John 1:12–13 “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

⁷⁵ John 3:14–15 “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

lieveth in Him should not perish. Likewise, 3:17:⁷⁶ For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned.

Acts 13:38-39:⁷⁷ Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses. How could the office of Christ and justification be declared more clearly? The Law, he says, did not justify. Therefore Christ was given, that we may believe that for His sake we are justified. He plainly denies justification to the Law. Hence, for Christ's sake we are accounted righteous when we believe that God, for His sake, has been reconciled to us. Acts 4:11-12:⁷⁸ This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. But the name of Christ is apprehended only by faith. I cannot believe in the name of Christ in any other way than when I hear His merit preached, and lay hold of that. Therefore, by confidence in the name of Christ, and not by confidence in our works,

⁷⁶ John 3:16–18 ““For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God”

⁷⁷ Acts 13:38–40 “Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses”

⁷⁸ Acts 4:11–12 “This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”

we are saved. For "the name" here signifies the cause which is mentioned, because of which salvation is attained. And to call upon the name of Christ is to trust in the name of Christ, as the cause or price because of which we are saved. Acts 15:9:⁷⁹ Purifying their hearts by faith. Wherefore that faith of which the Apostles speak is not idle knowledge, but a reality, receiving the Holy Ghost and justifying us not a mere knowledge of history, but a strong powerful work of the Holy Ghost, which changes hearts.

Hab. 2:4:⁸⁰ The just shall live by his faith. Here he says, first, that men are just by faith, by which they believe that God is propitious, and he adds that the same faith quickens, because this faith produces in the heart peace and joy and eternal life which begins in the present life.

Is. 53:11:⁸¹ By His knowledge shall He justify many. But what is the knowledge of Christ unless to know the benefits of Christ, the promises which by the Gospel He has scattered broadcast in the world? And to know these benefits is properly and truly to believe in Christ, to believe that that which God has promised for Christ's sake He will certainly fulfill.

But Scripture is full of such testimonies since, in some places, it presents the Law and in others the promises concerning Christ, and the remission of sins, and the free acceptance of the sinner for Christ's sake.

Here and there among the Fathers similar testimonies are extant. For Ambrose says in his letter to a certain Irenaeus: Moreover, the world was subject to Him by the Law for the reason that,

⁷⁹ Acts 15:8-9 "And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith."

⁸⁰ Habakkuk 2:4 "Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith."

⁸¹ Isaiah 53:11 "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities."

according to the command of the Law, all are indicted, and yet, by the works of the Law, no one is justified, i.e., because, by the Law, sin is perceived, but guilt is not discharged. The Law, which made all sinners, seemed to have done injury, but when the Lord Jesus Christ came, He forgave to all sin which no one could avoid, and, by the shedding of His own blood, blotted out the handwriting which was against us. This is what he says in Rom. 5:20:⁸² "The Law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Because after the whole world became subject, He took away the sin of the whole world, as he [John] testified, saying John 1:29:⁸³ "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And on this account let no one boast of works, because no one is justified by his deeds. But he who is righteous has it given him because he was justified after the laver of Baptism. Faith, therefore, is that which frees through the blood of Christ, because he is blessed "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," Ps. 32:1⁸⁴, These are the words of Ambrose, which clearly favor our doctrine; he denies justification to works, and ascribes to faith that it sets us free through the blood of Christ. Let all the Sententiarists, who are adorned with magnificent titles, be collected into one heap. For some are called angelic; others, subtle, and others irrefragable, that is, doctors who cannot err. When all these have been read and reread, they will not be of as much aid for understanding Paul as is this one passage of Ambrose.

⁸² Romans 5:20–21 "Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"

⁸³ John 1:29 "he next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

⁸⁴ Psalms 32:1–2 "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit."

To the same effect, Augustine writes many things against the Pelagians. In *Of the Spirit and Letter* he says: The righteousness of the Law, namely, that he who has fulfilled it shall live in it, is set forth for this reason that when any one has recognized his infirmity he may attain and work the same and live in it, conciliating the Justifier not by his own strength nor by the letter of the Law itself (which cannot be done), but by faith. Except in a justified man, there is no right work wherein he who does it may live. But justification is obtained by faith. Here he clearly says that the Justifier is conciliated by faith, and that justification is obtained by faith. And a little after: By the Law we fear God; by faith we hope in God. But to those fearing punishment grace is hidden; and the soul laboring, etc., under this fear betakes itself by faith to God's mercy, in order that He may give what He commands. Here he teaches that by the Law hearts are terrified, but by faith they receive consolation. He also teaches us to apprehend, by faith, mercy, before we attempt to fulfill the Law. We will shortly cite certain other passages.

Truly, it is amazing that the adversaries are in no way moved by so many passages of Scripture, which clearly ascribe justification to faith, and, indeed, deny it to works. Do they think that the same is repeated so often for no purpose? Do they think that these words fell inconsiderately from the Holy Ghost? But they have also devised sophistry whereby they elude them. They say that these passages of Scripture, (which speak of faith,) ought to be received as referring to a *fides formata* (faith formation), i.e., they do not ascribe justification to faith except on account of love. Yea, they do not, in any way, ascribe justification to faith, but only to love, because they dream that faith can coexist with mortal sin. Whither does this tend, unless that they again abolish the promise and return to the Law? If faith receive the remission of sins on account of love, the remission of sins will always be uncertain, because we never love as much as we ought, yea, we do not love unless our hearts are firmly convinced that the remission of sins has been granted us. Thus the adversaries, while they require in the remission of sins and justification confidence in one's own love, alto-

gether abolish the Gospel concerning the free remission of sins; although, at the same time, they neither render this love nor understand it, unless they believe that the remission of sins is freely received.

We also say that love ought to follow faith, as Paul also says, Gal. 5:6:⁸⁵ For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love. And yet we must not think on that account that by confidence in this love or on account of this love we receive the remission of sins and reconciliation, just as we do not receive the remission of sins because of other works that follow. But the remission of sins is received by faith alone, and, indeed, by faith properly so called, because the promise cannot be received except by faith. But faith, properly so called, is that which assents to the promise, is when my heart, and the Holy Ghost in the heart, says: The promise of God is true and certain. Of this faith Scripture speaks. And because it receives the remission of sins, and reconciles us to God, by this faith we are, like Abraham. accounted righteous for Christ's sake before we love and do the works of the Law, although love necessarily follows. Nor, indeed, is this faith an idle knowledge, neither can it coexist with mortal sin, but it is a work of the Holy Ghost, whereby we are freed from death, and terrified minds are encouraged and quickened. And because this faith alone receives the remission of sins, and renders us acceptable to God, and brings the Holy Ghost, it could be more correctly called *gratia gratum faciens*, grace rendering one pleasing to God, than an effect following, namely, love.

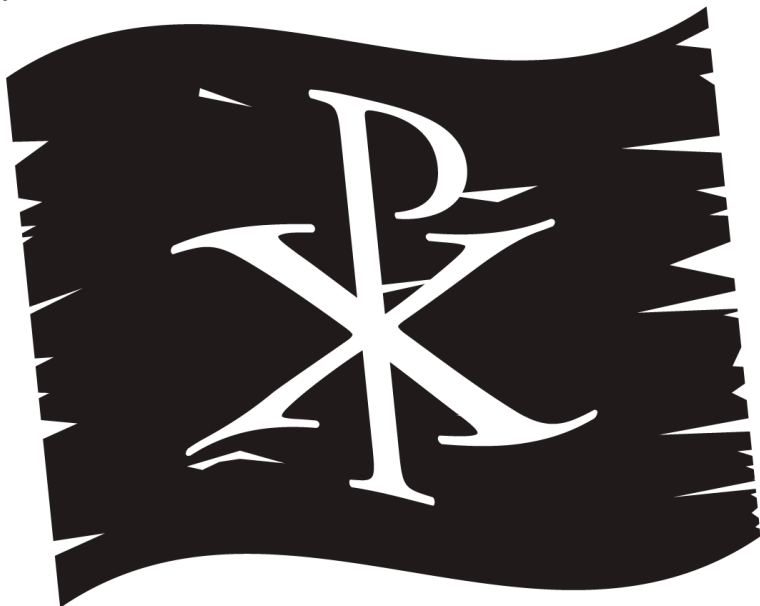
Thus far, in order that the subject might be made quite clear, we have shown with sufficient fulness, both from testimonies of Scripture, and arguments derived from Scripture, that by faith alone we obtain the remission of sins for Christ's sake, and that by faith alone we are justified, i.e., of unrighteous men made righteous, or regenerated. But how necessary the knowledge of this faith is, can be

⁸⁵ Galatians 5:5–6 “For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.”

easily judged, because in this alone the office of Christ is recognized, by this alone we receive the benefits of Christ; this alone brings sure and firm consolation to pious minds. And in the Church if there is to be a church, if there is to be a Christian Creed, it is necessary that there should be the preaching and doctrine by which consciences are not made to rely on a dream or to build on a foundation of sand, but from which the pious may receive the sure hope of salvation. For the adversaries give men bad advice therefore the adversaries are truly unfaithful bishops, unfaithful preachers and doctors; they have hitherto given evil counsel to consciences, and still do so by introducing such doctrine when they bid them doubt whether they obtain remission of sins. For how will such persons sustain themselves in death who have heard nothing of this faith, and think that they ought to doubt whether they obtain the remission of sins? Besides, it is necessary that in the Church of Christ the Gospel be retained, i.e., the promise that for Christ's sake sins are freely remitted. Those who teach nothing of this faith, concerning which we speak, altogether abolish the Gospel. But the scholastics mention not even a word concerning this faith. Our adversaries follow them, and reject this faith. Nor do they see that, by rejecting this faith they abolish the entire promise concerning the free remission of sins and the righteousness of Christ.



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