

A Dose of Bertram in Anticipation of Reformation Sunday

Co-Missioners,

Some of us are already starting to slip our Reformation caps on. This year's annual Lutheran observance, on October 27, is but three Sundays hence. The day's Epistle, Romans 3:21-28, ends with the resounding declaration that "a person is justified by faith." So really, what does that mean?

With this in mind, we take you today to a thirty-year-old article that has lurked for years in our online library. The author is Robert W. Bertram, who picks through the question above with the care and precision of which he was an absolute master. He does so here in the English scholars use. It portends heavy reading for some of you. The effort is worth it. Those scheduled to step into pulpits on Reformation Sunday will want to search along the way for an "Aha!" or two that they can pass along in plainer speech to others who need it. We are all such others in our addiction to the universal supposition that it's up to us to sort ourselves out. *Kyrie eleison*—a prayer God answers without ceasing.

Peace and Joy,

The Crossing Community

“FAITH ALONE JUSTIFIES”: LUTHER ON *IUSTITIA FIDEI*

by Robert W. Bertram

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THESES

Introduction

Thesis One. The one theme in the Augsburg Confession that aroused both the strongest opposition from papal critics and

simultaneously, from Melanchthon and Luther, the strongest claim, namely, the claim to be “the main doctrine of Christianity,” is this: in Christ God graciously justifies sinners altogether through their faith, independently of the work which their faith of course does. The issue, in short, was *sola fide*.

Thesis Two. Even though some Roman Catholic admirers of Luther prefer him to Melanchthon and use that as a reason for not acknowledging the Augsburg Confession, and though some Lutherans may share that preference, it is the Augsburg Confession and the other Lutheran Confessions, not Luther, which in fact are normative for Lutherans in interconfessional dialogue.

Thesis Three. On the other hand, the Lutheran Confessions themselves occasionally invoke this or that writing by Luther not only as suggestions for further reading but as landmark insights into the word of God which the Confessions honor as precedent and with which they identify ecclesially.

Thesis Four. Specifically with reference to the topic at hand, justification by faith, the Formula of Concord (1577) concludes its article on that subject by reaffirming Melanchthon’s “Augsburg Confession and its subsequent Apology” but then, for a more “detailed explanation,” recommends also “Dr. Luther’s beautiful and splendid exposition of Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians” (FC SD 3:66-67).

Thesis Five. That recommendation is worth heeding not only because Luther had been preparing those lectures on Galatians (1531) almost simultaneously with Melanchthon’s writing and rewriting of the Apology (promoting interesting speculations nowadays about mutual influence) but simply for the reason which the Formula of Concord cites, “by way of a detailed explanation” of justification by faith. Luther’s classroom lectures, even as

edited from students' notes, do in fact reveal a depth not immediately evident in Melanchthon's more public, churchly Augsburg Confession and Apology.

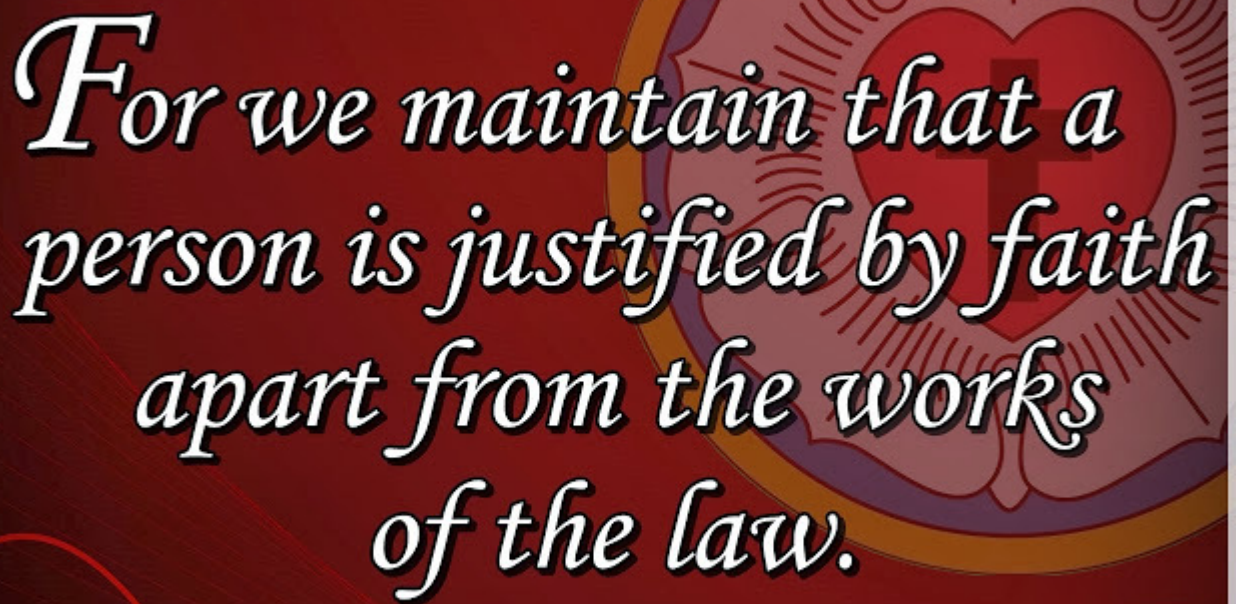
Thesis Six. The hope is, by recourse here to Luther's "detailed explanation" in his lectures on Galatians, we might help make the Augsburg Confession's knotty issue of *sola fide* a bit clearer, perhaps even winsome, and not only to our Roman Catholic partners but also to Lutherans.

Thesis Seven. What Luther's lectures might contribute to the *sola fide* of the Augsburg Confession (and of the Apology) is, in particular, his clarifying of faith's *iustitia*: what is it about faith which is justifying; how is it "righteous"? For therein lies faith's *sola*, namely, in its surpassing value.

Thesis Eight. What Luther's lectures say about *iustitia fidei* (a) magnifies the value of faith as much as any fideist might, but precisely as a way of redirecting believers to their value in Christ (theses 9-16, below) and (b) magnifies as much as any imputationist might how Christians' value is something "reckoned" to them, but to them as believers, because of how valuable their faith is (theses 17-21, below).

Part I: Faith's Deficient Righteousness

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*For we maintain that a
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apart from the works
of the law.*

Romans 3:28

makes a major point of insisting, more boldly and explicitly even than Melancthon does, that “faith alone justifies,” faith “makes a man God,” and “if you believe, you are righteous.”

Thesis Ten. Nor can Luther’s extolling of faith be explained away as an unbiblical departure which, in the heat of polemics, had lost touch with Scripture, or with everything in Scripture except Paul.

Thesis Eleven. Nor can the unique value of faith be explained by the fact that faith after all is the doing of the Holy Spirit or of Christ in us. That much, as Luther points out, must be said of all the other godly things as well which Christians do: love, obey, serve, pray, and the like. Of course there is a sense in which love, not faith, is “the greatest of these,” yet still not great enough – as faith is – to save or to justify.

Thesis Twelve. Those statements by Luther which sound most suspiciously like fideism (a faith in faith itself) are those which mete out Christians' righteousness according to the measure of faith they happen to have. For instance: "As much as I grasp, that much I have" (*Quantum comprehendo tantum habeo*).

Thesis Thirteen. The trouble with such a quantifying, relativizing statement of the sinners' justification is not that it gives them credit for doing something righteous, namely, for believing God and to that extent "having" him. On the contrary, precisely by limiting their justification to whatever measure of faith they happen to have, the statement seems to deny the gospel's claim that in Christ they are righteous altogether. The statement, *Quantum comprehendo tantum habeo*, turns out to be not reassuring but accusing.

Thesis Fourteen. The first step toward a solution (the second and third steps follow in theses 15 and 16) comes in the form of a distinction: not the distinction between Christ's total victory and our insufficient one but the distinction rather between our *own* total victory, which we find only in Christ, offered us in the promise, and our *own* insufficient victory, which is all we find in ourselves. Everything depends on where we look at *ourselves*. At ourselves as Christ's? Or at ourselves alone?

Thesis Fifteen. A second step in the solution is that, as believers locate their own vindication in the victory of Christ, they assert a new mastery also over the law, yet not by complying with the law but by surmounting it.

Thesis Sixteen. A third stage in the solution is that, as the law exposes believers in the littleness of their faith, they in turn respond by utilizing that very criticism as a reminder of their need of Christ. Thus the rule, *Quantum comprehendo tantum*

habeo, which begins by humbling, functions in the polar dialectic of Christian subjectivity to redirect believers' attention away from their believing and back to the one they believe in.

Part II: Faith's Surplus Righteousness

Thesis Seventeen. Also the opposite misinterpretation of Luther, objectivism, seems at first glance (as fideism did) to be well attested by Luther's own statements, particularly on the matter of divine imputation. This is the case especially if we make the initial mistake of assuming that the value that Christians enjoy "objectively," that is, in God's regard for them, and the value of their believing that, are separable.

Thesis Eighteen. Once more, therefore, it is necessary to recall that for Luther what makes faith righteous is not that God somehow pretends it is righteous when in fact it is not. Granted, faith is righteous at all only if what it believes, Jesus' gospel, is itself righteous. But then, conversely, the gospel's own righteousness does characterize as well the believing, the sacrificial and doxological believing of that gospel. Believing is as right, or righteous, as what it believes.

Thesis Nineteen. In the passage from Galatians that Luther is expounding ("Thus Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness") what is the unrighteous reality which God reckons as righteous? Not Abraham's *faith* – faith is already righteous – but *Abraham*! God reckons his righteous faith to "him" as righteousness – to the whole unrighteous Abraham, who is far more unbeliever than believer. There is something surpassingly righteous about his faith, however feebly he believes, which makes it accruable, gives it surplus value for him even in his unrighteousness.

Thesis Twenty. But that does bring us to a radical opposition, not within ourselves but within God, not between the righteousness of our faith and the righteousness (that same righteousness) which is reckoned to us, but rather between the God who “hates sin and sinners” and God – the same God – who nevertheless loves those sinners. To believe, in face of his holy indignation, that he does love them would be wrong unless he himself reconciles that fearsome “opposition” (*contraria*). In Christ he does, thus vindicating the faith of those who depend upon this Christ to be right in order for themselves to be.

Thesis Twenty-one. The way faith shares in that very righteousness which it believes is analogous to the way faith shares in the *truth* which it believes. Faith *is* the truth trusted.

Part III: An Ecumenical Reflection

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n confessors and their papal critics, in their theologies of justification, disagreed vehemently over the *sola fide* (as opposed to “faith formed by love” [*fides caritate formata*]), still their very disagreement on that point presupposes a common commitment between them which they not only agreed upon but which they agreed was decisively important. And this common presupposition of theirs distinguishes both of them from many subsequent theologies which have been mightily influential but much less radical.

The determinative assumption which Luther shared, as Melancthon did, with the pontifical Confutators is this: for Christians to have that sort of ultimate value which assures their viability with God, it is not enough merely that he values them whether or

not they themselves acknowledge that; rather, what is essential to his valuing them is that they in turn receive that as subjects, autobiographically, and that the very way they respond is itself part of what makes them so valuable to him. The divine rescue depends that fully upon human history, both Jesus' history and also the history of his followers.

True, this common catholic insistence upon the decisiveness of Christians' "having" the divine mercy autobiographically and having it righteously in order to have it all only intensified that other question to which both sides also subscribed: How, then, in face of such historical contingency, can Christian teaching do justice also to the unconditionality of the divine grace in Jesus Christ? For the Lutheran Confessors the only biblical and catholic way to be faithful to both concerns was to insist upon not only the *SOLA fide* but the *IUSTITIA fidei*.

COMMENTARY

Comment on Thesis One. What was it about the Augsburg Confession especially that had drawn the fire of the Pontifical Confutation and thus confirmed Melanchthon's – even more, Luther's – apprehensions that "in this controversy the main doctrine of Christianity is involved?"¹ What possible "chief topic of Christian doctrine" (*praecipuus locus doctrinae christianae*) could here have been so in jeopardy that Melanchthon was now driven to devote at least a third of his whole long Apology to this one embattled doctrinal center, as Luther meanwhile was straining to do the same, so consumed were they by this single issue? Was not the issue only too obviously the issue of "justification?"

Yes and no. For merely to name the "article on justification" with no further specification is to leave out of account that one feature about justification which was for the Lutheran confessors especially crucial and for their Roman critics

especially objectionable, namely, that justification is always and only by *faith*. Indeed, for these Confessors the *sola fide* characterizes not only the forensic theme of justification but every other soteriological theme as well. If anything, justification simply serves to expose how basic the *sola fide* is to Christian doctrine throughout. *Sola fide* is a dimension, as the Roman *Confutatio* and the Lutheran *Apologia* lavishly document, which implicates the widest imaginable range and variety of biblical texts, many of which have no conspicuous connection with justification.

It is this confessional preoccupation with *sola fide* which has appealed – baselessly, no doubt – to later Lutheran fideists and, by reaction, has embarrassed later Lutheran objectivists. The latter, eager to prevent a subjectivist reading of the Augsburg Confession, have effectively subordinated its *sola fide* and have emphasized instead that justification is *propter Christum* and *sola gratia* – which of course it is. But those elements were not at issue at Augsburg, at least not frontally. What was at issue frontally, as the *praecipuus locus doctrinae christianae*, was the Confessors' insistence that sinners are justified (or forgiven or reborn or vivified or saved or whatever) entirely by their faith. Only because that dimension of Christian soteriology was at stake were its other features, its Christological and gratuitous features, thought to be endangered.



Therefore simply to declare without qualification that the principal concern of the Apology or the Augsburg Confessions is its concern with justification is at best a half-truth. And this half-truth in turn – also in its generalized version, namely, that justification is the main issue of the Reformation itself – begets other, worse half-truths. It begets the inference, for example, that if in later ages justification does not happen to be particularly at issue, the Reformation must then be correspondingly irrelevant. Or it begets the understandable criticism from biblical scholars that a reading of all Scripture through the single grid of justification is, though perhaps confessionally flattering, indefensible exegetically. In any case, to mistake the discussions at Augsburg as a vague, unspecified controversy about justification in general is to render those discussions practically irretrievable for Lutheran-Roman Catholic negotiations today.

On the other hand, though it is a mistake to suppose that by “the main doctrine of Christianity” Melancthon meant the

doctrine of justification as loosely as all that, the mistake is understandable. For the title that is editorially inserted above article 4 of his Apology does read, simply, "*De Iustificatione*." And later on in the Apology (18:3) Melanchthon himself refers back to article 4 simply as "the article on justification." Likewise the corresponding fourth article in the Augsburg Confession, the original to which Apology 4 is the sequel and the "substantiation," was similarly entitled "*Von der Rechtfertigung*." That same shorthand was common with Luther.

Nonetheless, already in his opening sentence of Apology 4 Melanchthon explicitly broadens his defense to include all of what the papal critics had condemned not only in the Augsburg Confession's fourth article but "in the fourth, fifth, and sixth articles, and later in the twentieth." 2 The Augsburg Confession's fifth article had dealt with "The Office of the Ministry," the sixth article with "The Ministry of the Church," and the twentieth article with "Faith and Good Works." Apology 4 now grapples with what the Confutation had condemned in all four of those articles. But Melanchthon sharpens all that it condemned into a single issue, an issue which admittedly comes to its climax in the article on justification but is by no means unique to that article: *sola fide*. "They condemn us," he says, "for affirming that men receive the forgiveness of sins by faith and by faith in Christ are justified." 3

Melanchthon was right. The Confutators had condemned the Lutheran Confessors at Augsburg precisely on the point of *sola fide*. At one place, for example, the Confutation reads: Their ascription of justification to faith alone is diametrically opposed to the truth of the Gospel, by which works are not excluded. . . . Their frequent ascription of justification to faith is not admitted since it [viz., justification] pertains to grace and love. 4

At another place the Confutation explains that “their [the Lutheran princes’] reference here to faith is approved in so far as *not faith alone* (as some incorrectly teach) but faith which works by love is understood. 5

The clash, at least directly, was not over the question of Christ or of grace. As for grace, says Melanchthon, already the old Scholastics were “boasting in the schools that good works please God because of grace and that therefore we must place our confidence in God’s grace.”⁶ What those Scholastics had meant by grace, of course, may have raised a further problem. But even if they had understood it as they ought, as “God’s grace and mercy toward us,” still, “whenever this is mentioned, faith should be added, since we take hold of God’s mercy . . . only by faith.”⁷ And as for the *propter Christum*, “in the schools they also boast that our good works are valid by virtue of Christ’s suffering. Well said! But why not say something about faith?” “For,” as Melanchthon concludes, “if the doctrine of faith is omitted, it is vain to say that our works are valid by virtue of the suffering of Christ.”⁸ As Melanchthon reminds his readers later on in article 12, “Our opponents expressly condemn our statement that men obtain the forgiveness of sins by faith. . . . This is the chief issue on which we clash with our opponents and which we believe all Christians must understand.” 9

That “the chief issue” at Augsburg was not justification in general but, more pointedly, justification *sola fide* is easily documented by the immediate sequel to the Augsburg Confession, especially by Melanchthon’s Apology and most especially the Apology’s fourth article. The entire inner progression of that article argues for *sola fide*, both in its first main section on “promise” as well as in its second section on “law.” By what, and by what alone, is the promise of divine mercy grasped? Only-faith-not-works. And which works, and only which works, qualify as “good”? Only-works of-faith. Either way, the contention

throughout is for *sola fide*.

But even without analyzing the logic of Apology 4's lengthy and tedious argument, something so superficial as a word count within that article will already signal the same conclusion. As often as *iustificatio* and its cognates (*iustificare*, *iustus*, *iustitia*, and the like) occur in their approved sense (as opposed to the sense which the Confutators are said to ascribe to them), the term *fides* and its cognates (*fiducia*, *credere*, *apprehendere*, and the like) occur more often. For that matter, in the more than 230 occurrences of the "justification" terms, more of these than not appear in association with "faith" terms. In addition, again as many "faith" terms appear in connection with other soteriological words, like *remissio peccatorum*, *reconciliation*, *accessum habere*, *misericordia*, and the like. If any term outnumbers the "faith" terms, it is *Christus* (ca. 330 times) – and even that may not.¹⁰ But word counts aside, there is more substantial evidence from the documentary account of the negotiations at Augsburg to demonstrate what priority the controversy had to give, and gave more and more, to the issue of *sola fide*.

As new research on the subject accumulates,¹¹ the suggestion becomes more and more plausible that these years from 1530 on, during and after the imperial diet at Augsburg sharply intensified the problem of *iustificatio sola fide* as a problem of unfinished business not only for Melanchthon but for Luther as well. At first, during the early days of the diet, this doctrinal issue seems to have been relatively little in evidence. But as it loomed larger in the ensuing discussions, the "gospel" which Luther's letters from the Coburg urged Melanchthon not to compromise is the gospel "that we live by faith and by faith alone" (*ex fide vivere et sola fide*).¹² Next, in view of the direction which the proceedings at Augsburg took during the month of August, Luther contemplated writing on the

subject of justification in a book of his own.¹³ It is presumably in this connection that he outlined his *Rhapsodia seu conceptus in Librum de loco iustificationis*.¹⁴ A mere snippet – but on the subject of *sola fide* – did show up that autumn in his open letter *On Translating*, where he expressed the hope, “If God gives me grace, I shall have more to say about it in the tract *On Justification*.”¹⁵

Luther reproached himself for having let the enthusiasts (*Schwärmer*) distract him from the work he ought properly have been doing all along, on justification.¹⁶ It may be that what he now hoped to accomplish in his projected book was in fact accomplished by his Galatians lectures of 1531 or in his later disputations *De iustificatione*, or, for that matter, already accomplished for him and to his satisfaction by his younger colleague’s Apology, article 4. Perhaps. Yet the fact remains, as Robert Stupperich observes, “Unfortunately Luther never wrote his book after all, *De Iustificatione*,” the book which was intended to demonstrate “that justification occurs independently of works altogether by faith” (*iustificationem contingere sine operibus et sola fide*).¹⁷ As for Melanchthon, though he was less than satisfied with his product in the Apology and attempted in repeated efforts to bring the matter of justification to better clarity, he records his left-handed thanks to the Confutators for having compelled him at Augsburg to face anew that central issue in justification when other questions on the agenda had come close to crowding it out.¹⁸

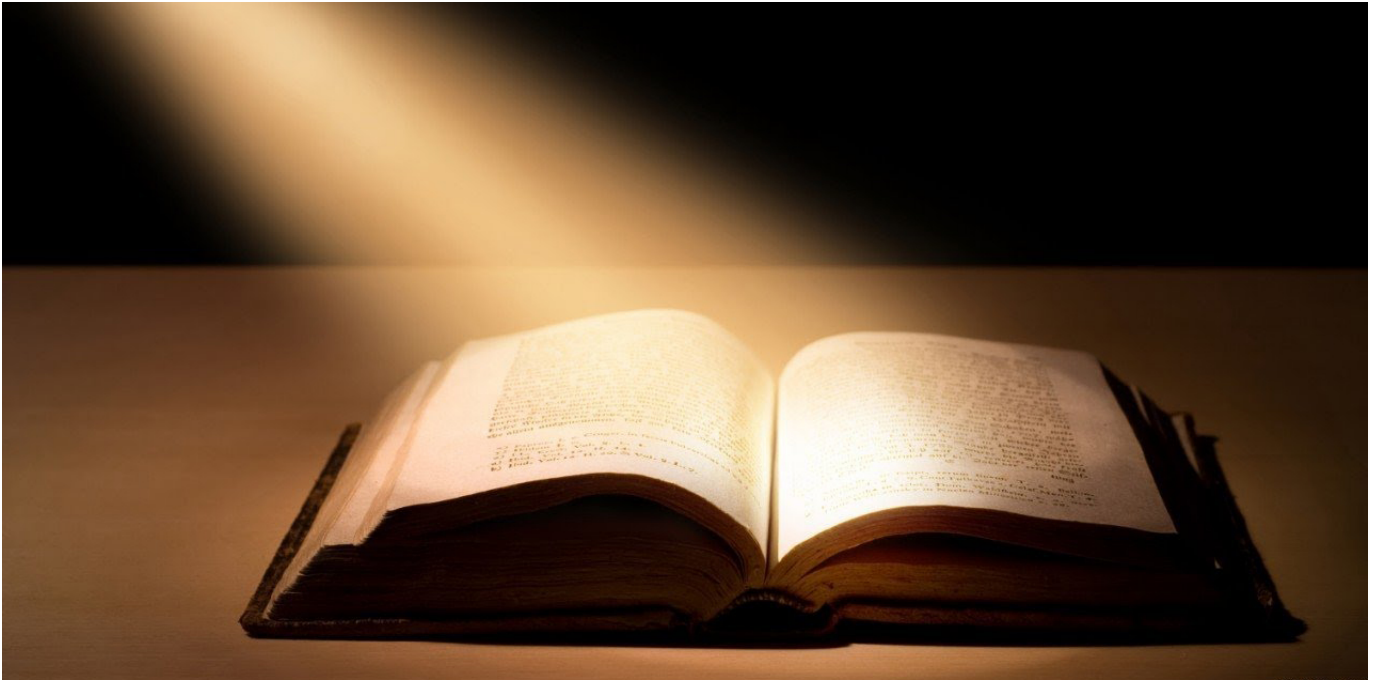
Comment on Thesis Twenty. It is not faith that needs to be covered by God’s imputation. But sin does. Faith is not sin. However – and this is the rub – sin “really is sin.” Sin is the real *contrarium*.¹⁹ God reckons “sin as not sin, even though it really is sin.”²⁰ If what faith believes about God is to be at all warranted, then it is for God to warrant such faith by overcoming this opposition (*contraria*) in his relations with

sinners. “ . . . God overlooks all sins and wants them to be covered *as though* they were not sins.”²¹ But a merely supposititious “as though” is not good enough. `

That this is a real and not a trumped-up paradox, Luther will not let his students forget. These two things are diametrically opposed: that a Christian is righteous and beloved by God, and yet that he is a sinner at the same time. For God cannot deny His own nature. That is, He cannot avoid hating sin and sinners; and He does so by necessity, for otherwise He would be unjust and would love sin. Then how can these two contradictory things both be true at the same time, that I am a sinner and deserve divine wrath and hate, and that the Father loves me?²²

“Who will reconcile those utterly conflicting statements?”²³

Who will? Surely not believers by somehow joining these opposites through the sheer passionateness of their own subjectivity. Yet it is the righteous mark of their faith that they know who does reconcile them: “Only the Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 2:5). To this quotation Luther immediately adds another: “There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).²⁴



With that Luther brings his lecture on Gal. 3:6 to a climax and a close. Only at the last moment has he disclosed where the one real conflict emerges when God reckons the righteousness of faith as the righteousness of sinners. It is not a conflict between the subjective righteousness of their faith and the objective righteousness which God graciously imputes. For these are one and the same righteousness, namely the righteousness of their faith simply credited to them in their entirety as sinners. No, the conflict rather is between their being righteous at all (whether "in the heart" or imputed), on the one hand, and their being sinners on the other hand. How can they be the one and still be the other, if God is truly righteous? Only at the very end does Luther identify the one in whom alone, and in biographical fact, *that* conflict, that great conflict (*magna pugnancia*), was fought out and reconciled: "Jesus Christ, the one and only mediator between God and human beings" (*unicus Mediator Dei et hominum Iesus Christus*). If because of him it is right for God to forgive sinners, then it is right for sinners to trust God's forgiveness and for exactly that same reason: in Christ the *contraria* within God's own attitude are overcome. That reconciliation within the deity, yet also within human

history in Jesus, is what grounds faith as right and for that reason alone makes faith in this God righteous enough to accrue to sinners in their entirety.

Comment on Thesis Twenty-one. It might be helpful, by way of conclusion, to listen in on Luther's comments upon faith as "truth," according to which "the truth about God" becomes, in faith, "the truth of the heart."²⁵ Thus the object of faith, without ceasing to be that, determinatively characterizes and belongs to the believing subject as well. In the second period of that same two-session lecture that we have been analyzing, namely, on August 29, Luther takes pains to prove that "truth is faith itself."²⁶ Some of Luther's critics (possibly Johannes Cochlaeus) had argued "that the Hebrew term [in Genesis 15] means 'truth,' not 'faith,'" and, moreover, "that the vocable 'faith' means 'truth' in Hebrew and that therefore it is being misapplied" when Luther translates it as "faith."²⁷ Luther denies that the two terms pose any real difference. On the contrary, "truth is faith itself" (*Veritas est ipsa fides*).²⁸ "Faith is nothing else but the truth of the heart."²⁹

This quotation could mislead us into supposing that by "truth of the heart" Luther intends some brand of "truth as subjectivity" in the superficial sense that faith is true when it is subjectively heartfelt, when it corresponds to its object by an appropriately matching pathos. To be sure, faith is a decisive change of the self (or it is not faith at all) beginning with the crucifixion of the believers' ratio. But that death of their flesh and its replacement are necessarily brought about by what they believe, the cruciform intervention by God in Christ. At any rate, the quality of their believing subjectivity, though of course there is that, is clearly not what Luther here means by faith as "truth" (*veritas*).

That "faith is . . . the truth of the heart" Luther immediately

explains: “that is, the right knowledge of the heart *about God*.”³⁰ Faith is right, or true, only when it is right about its object. Similarly, when Luther speaks, as he did the week before, of faith as “obeying the truth,” he does not mean that faith is true when it conforms psychologically or ethically to some norm for obedient behavior. No, people “disobey” the truth when they falsify the object (“Christ Jesus . . . portrayed before their eyes”), when they are “bewitched, deceived . . . by erroneous opinions,” when they are “concerned how to resist the truth and how to evade the arguments and passages of Scripture. . . .”³¹ For a person to have faith is to “think correctly *about God*, . . . [to] have the truth *about God*, . . . [to] think or judge correctly about him, . . . [to] have a true idea about God.”³²

Notice in the following quotation the determinative force of the object. Thus truth is faith itself, which judges correctly about God, namely, that God does not look at our works and our righteousness, since we are unclean, but that He wants to be merciful to us, to look at us, to accept us, to justify us, and to save us if we believe in His Son, whom He has sent to be the expiation for the sins of the whole world (I John 2:2). This is the true idea about God, and it is really nothing other than faith itself.³³

A moment before, Luther had been making the same point with a paraphrase of John 16:7. Christ says to the disciples about himself – about “this object, this ‘I’ sent from the Father into the world”:

“Because you have taken hold of this object, the Father loves you, and you please him.”³⁴

Faith is right when it is right about its object. What is right about faith is not that it is from the heart. That much can also

be said of unbelief, "the inner diseases of the heart, such as unbelief, doubt, contempt and hate for God."³⁵ The "heart" can just as easily be the throne of the beast "reason" (*ratio*). Faith is in the heart, of course; it is *fides in corde*. Where else could it displace the hostile *ratio*? But the way faith does that, the way it performs its righteous sacrifice, is by believing what and whom it does, "the Gospel of Christ the crucified."³⁶ The opposition here between faith and reason is not that the one is from the heart and the other is from the head. No, what is wrong about *ratio* is that it is wrong about its object, God. It "cannot think or judge correctly about Him. Thus when a monk supposes that [his works] . . . make him acceptable, . . . he does not have a true idea about God; he has an idea that is wicked and a lie."³⁷ Therefore, if faith is only as right as its object, namely, the God whom it believes, then the righteousness of faith hinges altogether on whether that God, so believed, is righteous indeed. That much we have said before.

However, the purpose that prompts this concluding postscript about Luther's equation of faith with "truth" is to avoid that opposite danger, the sort of preoccupation with the object, the truth- about, which neglects the subject, the truth-in. Much as Luther's faith depends for its truth on the object it believes, nevertheless the "truth" in this case – that is, the Hebrew "truth" which Luther equates with faith – characterizes not only the object but the subject as well, and the two inseparably. Truth in this context is not just about an objective, separate reality. Truth is that reality believed – believed and realized. Truth is the real situation in the form of its being believed.

Granted, as we did, Luther speaks also of "truth" in a more objective sense, "the truth about God" (*veritas de deo*), but he does so with reference to the *unbeliever*, who "does not have the truth about God."³⁸ Faith, on the other hand, is not only truth-

about. But simultaneously, exactly because it is the believer's "true idea about God," (*vera cogitatio*), his "right knowledge of the heart about God," therefore faith is also a truth-in or a truth-of: "truth of the heart."³⁹ "Having" the truth is itself truth.

Elsewhere Luther even intimates that there is a difference between merely *having* "the gospel," which is not enough, and having "the *truth* of the gospel," which is what faith is. Unfortunately, "many have the Gospel but not the *truth* of the Gospel."⁴⁰ For example, the inconstant Peter before the Judaizers at Antioch, though he certainly had the gospel and had been preaching it and "knew the doctrine of justification better than we do,"⁴¹ nevertheless had to be accused by Paul of failing and of swerving from the "truth of the Gospel."⁴² To have the truth of the gospel is not only to have its words but so clearly to have it in head and heart that it can be distinguished from the law in face of even the direst personal temptations to the contrary.⁴³ "Truth is faith itself," the truth about the object as well as the truth *of* the believing subject.

Endnotes:

1. Ap. 4:2 BS 159; BC 107.

2. Ap 4:1; BS 158; BC 107.

3. Ibid.

4. Quoted in BC 107, n. 8. See *Confutation Pontificia*,, Part I, Article VI, in J. Michael Reu, ed., *The Augsburg Confession: A Collection of Sources*(Chicago: Wartburg Press, 1930) 352; CR 27:99-100; Herbert Immenkötter, *Die Confutation der Confessio Augustana vom 3. August 1530* (Corpus Catholicorum 33; Münster: Aschendorff, 1979) 91, 93.

5. Quoted in BC 137, n. 9; BS 202, n. 1; in Reu, op, cit.,. 351. Emphasis added. See also

Johann Eck, *Four Hundred and Four Articles*, in Reu, op. cit., 97-121, esp. the articles "Against Faith" (186-191), "Against Works" (192-202), "Against Merits" (203-205), and "Against Love" (206-212).

6. Ap 4:381; BS 231-32; BC 165.

7. Ibid.

8. Ap 4:382; BS 232; BC 165.

9. Ap 12:59; BS 263; BC 190.

10. I am indebted for this word count to my former assistant, Pastor Richard Kraemer.

11. See especially Roert Stupperich, "Die Rechtfertigungslehre bei Luther und melanchthon, 1530-1536," in Vilmos Vajta, ed., *Luther und Melanchthon: Referate des Zweiten Internationalen Lutherforscherkongresses* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961) 73-88; also Martin Greschat, *Melanchthon neben Luther: Studien zur Gestalt der Rechtfertigungslehre zwischen 1528 und 1537* (Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1965) esp. 50-79.

12. WA Br 5:500.

13. Ibid. 560.

14. WA 30/2:657-676.

15. WA 30/2:643; LW 35:198.

16. WA 40/3:361.

17. Stupperich, op. cit., 76, 74

18. Ibid., 81.

19. WA 40/1:368, 27; LW 26:232.

20. WA 40/1:367, 20-21; LW 26:232.

21. WA 40/1:367, 27-28; LW 26:232. Emphasis added.

22. WA 40/1:371, 33-372, 16; LW 26:235.
23. WA 40/1:373, 13-14; LW 26:235.
24. WA 40/1:373, 16-17; LW 26:236.
25. WA 40/1:376, 27, 23-24; LW 26:238.
26. WA 40/1:377, 13-14; LW 26:238.
27. WA 40/1:376, 16; 375, 30-31; LW 26:238.
28. WA 40/1:377, 13-14; LW 26:238.
29. WA 40/1:376, 23-24; LW 26:238.
30. WA 40/1:376, 24; LW 26:238. Emphasis added.
31. WA 40/1:323, 33-34; 324, 11; 323, 25-26; LW 26:198. 32. WA 40/1:376, 24-277, 13; LW 26:238. Emphasis added.
33. WA 40/1:377, 13-18; LW 26:238.
34. WA 40/1:371, 30-33; LW 26:234-35.
35. WA 40/1:364, 31-365, 13; LW 26:230. Emphasis added. 36. WA 40/1:361, 26; LW 26:228.
37. WA 40/1:376, 28-377, 13; LW 26:238.
38. WA 40/1:376, 27; LW 26:238. Emphasis added.
39. WA 40.1:376, 23-24; LW 26:238. Emphasis added.
40. WA 40/1:207, 11; LW 26:115. Emphasis added.
41. WA 40/1:202, 23-24; LW 26:112.
42. WA 40/1:206, 27-28; LW 26:115.
43. WA 40/1:204, 11ff., LW 26:113.

Thursday Theology: that the benefits of Christ be put to use
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