

Proceedings of the Synod.

The Synod continued in the discussion of the theses dealing with the subject:

“That only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church alone is all honor given to God, an incontrovertible proof that the doctrine of the same is the only true one.”

These are as follows:

Thesis I. [1873 Western]

Since religion is the way of worshipping God, only that religion is true which in all its teachings gives glory to God alone.

Isaiah 42:8, Romans 1:21, 25, John 7:18, 8:49, Luke 2:14, Romans 3:27, 4:20

Thesis II. [1873 Western]

Since a visible church is an assembly of people who “profess one doctrine and religion”, the only true church is the one that gives glory to God alone through all its teachings.

Ps 26:8, Rev 14:6, 7, John 5:44.

Thesis III. [1873-1880 Western]

Only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone; this is evident, among other things, from its doctrine:

1. of the Word of God;
2. of the cause of sin, death, hell and damnation;
3. of divine providence;
4. of the general will of God's grace;
5. of the reconciliation and redemption of the human race;

6. the justification of the sinner by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ without merit of works;

7. the necessity of regeneration, sanctification and good works;

[A. Regeneration] — [B. Sanctification] — [C. Good Works]

8. the foundation, validity, power and immutability of the means of grace;
9. of conversion;
10. of the invocation and worship of God;
11. of obedience to men in matters of faith and conscience;
12. the election of grace.

[6. The Justification of the Sinner by Grace Alone Through Faith in Jesus Christ Without Merit of Works.]

We moved on to the 6th point of the 3rd thesis ([^](#)), according to which the truth that all glory is given to God alone through the teaching of the Lutheran Church is proven by its doctrine “of the justification of the sinner by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ without merit of works.”

God has created everything for his glory, says the Holy Scripture. This is not to say that God is a venerable being who needs creatures in order to be properly honored; rather, it is to say: God is such a kind and loving God that he did not want to have his glory alone; he wanted to draw other beings into his glory. But this can only happen if they recognize his glory and thus give him all the glory. As much as man truly recognizes God, so much is he blessed; as much of God remains hidden from him, so much is he miserable and full of sorrow; hence the Scripture says that hell will be eternal darkness, for the damned will not recognize God. All religion should bear witness to the glory of God, reveal him in his glory. Now that religion will be the true one which in all

its teachings gives glory to God alone, i.e. whose teachings are such that through each of them God's glory is revealed; and all religions are false which give glory to any being besides the dear God. Therefore, even if a religion and church calls itself Christian, indeed wants to be the only true one, if it has such doctrines through which God is deprived of glory and the creature is given glory, then it is a false religion and church. In truth, the Lutheran Church gives all glory to God alone in all its teachings. We have seen this so far in its doctrine of the Word of God, of the cause of sin, death, hell and damnation, of divine providence and of God's general will of grace; we also see this in its doctrine of justification.

Not every doctrine of justification gives God all the glory. There is no church party that does not have a doctrine of justification, for those who have nothing of it are pagans, Jews or Turks. The question is rather: what is the biblical doctrine of justification? The church that does not have this biblical doctrine deprives God of glory. Scripture itself expressly says in Romans 3:27, 4:20, Ephesians 2:8-9, that through its doctrine of justification all glory is taken away from men, but all glory is given to God. For when the latter passage says: by grace you have been saved, this is synonymous with: justified; the justified person does not yet fully enjoy salvation on earth, but the beginning of salvation is here. He carries something within him which death cannot eradicate, but which becomes perfect when the body has died. Whoever teaches justification in such a way that man can still boast of something, has only the appearance of truth, not the truth itself. By this the church must test its preacher, the preacher his brother in the ministry; for by this teaching the church is distinguished from the whole world. The Jews and pagans, even the atheists, are also aware that they must become righteous. For why do even the atheists give themselves the appearance of an honorable life? why do they not live before all the world like the dear cattle? Because they have the law in their hearts; life must be in accordance with the law of right and wrong. But no man knows by nature how we are to become righteous; this has never come into the heart of man, God alone has known it for all eternity and has revealed it to us through his prophets in the Old Testament and even more gloriously, more abundantly, more clearly and more fully in the New Testament through his holy apostles.

So what is the doctrine of justification?

Five points in particular are to be considered here:

1. No man is just by nature, but unjust, and therefore accursed and damned and condemned to hell, even when he comes into the world; for the doctrine of justification does not say that

man is just, but that he is to become just. So this is evident: he is conceived and born in sin. Whoever does not teach this, in relation to the doctrine of justification, robs God of the glory and gives it to men.

2. God alone has made provision for man's justification by sending his only begotten Son into the world according to his unfathomable mercy, laying on him the sins of the whole world and punishing them in him. Thus there is no sin that has not been atoned for, no matter how great it may be, whether it has already been committed or is yet to be committed: Christ has borne them all, has felt them all, has been punished for them all. But he also kept the law perfectly, even though he was not obliged to do so. He did not live a pious life because it is part of human life to be pious, for he was far above the law as its giver and master; but for us he fulfilled the law perfectly. So the righteousness that is before God has been acquired for us, it is finished, it is there. He who does not believe this, who does not teach it, robs God of his glory; he who thinks he must add a little something to his righteousness, gives himself the credit, says: God has not justified the world through Christ; he therefore tramples Christ's blood underfoot, rejects the atonement of God, desecrates the death of Christ, rejects Christ's resurrection and ascension, in a word: rejects the whole redemptive work of Christ.

3. Where do I find the righteousness of Christ? where is it?

The good Lord did not say: it is acquired, now see to it yourself to get it; nor did he say: pray, struggle, wrestle until you realize that you have it. How could I ever be sure that I have it through my imperfect prayers and struggles? And if you think you have obtained it in this way, it is only a dream from which you will wake up in horror. No, we must be absolutely certain that we have grace; even the greatest sinner, who is already on the gallows ladder, must be able to be certain that he too is to be justified before God. So where do we find God's grace? Answer: In the Word of God and in the holy sacraments, nowhere else. He has put it there. Whoever does not take it out of these, his justification is only imagination, only foam and appearance, and even if he wept bloody tears over his sins and laughed in his feeling of bliss, like the angels in heaven — he does not have righteousness, he only imagines it. Such enthusiasts also show this clearly in temptation or in the time of death; for in the end they must take refuge in the Word of God, in the promises of Baptism and Holy Communion, and he who does so dies blessedly; for God is always ready to give his grace to the poor sinner, he has condemned none; but he will not allow it to be

stolen from him, nor attained in any other way, no matter how steep a climb it may involve. He does not want to stand beside false spirits, but wants us to receive his grace in the way he has ordained, namely from the Word and Sacrament; he has bound it to these means. In order to show us this correctly, God also prescribed the cultus in the Old Testament down to the smallest detail, e.g. how the roses on the pillars of the temple should be arranged or how the priestly garments should be cut. He did not do this as a joke, it was not a gimmick, for God does not play jokes or gimmicks; rather he wanted to say: keep exactly to my instructions, otherwise you will be lost, seek my grace in my word, that is the shrine where I have placed the jewel. — This brings us to the fourth question concerning justification:

4. How do I get this?

Everyone will easily realize that the three points just mentioned give God all the glory — and men all the shame. Finally, should something still be demanded of man, that he is perhaps the main person who causes him to go to heaven? However, this is what the sects think. They say that man must do the main thing if he wants to be saved; if he struggles, strives, fights and prays enough, he can also attain salvation. In this way, however, God is again deprived of all honor and a pagan justification is erected with a few Christian rags around it. No, by faith, by faith alone, and by no works whatsoever, I attain righteousness, I receive it from Word and Sacrament. But what is faith? Holy Scripture has told us: faith is the confidence of the heart that appropriates the promise of grace that lies in the audible (Word of God) and visible (Sacrament) Gospel. Whoever does this has it, whoever does not, does not. The East Indians, in order to be saved, torture themselves to death with the most cruel tortures, have themselves hanged alive on iron hooks, crushed by the chariot of the juggernaut; but where do they go with it? to the devil whom they have served. It is the same in Christianity: a man may fast to death to obtain God's grace, but he is the devil's martyr. No, he who is thirsty should go to the fountain to drink, namely to the Word and Sacrament. But faith is often taught falsely, and thus all honor is taken from God. In his treatise on indulgences, Luther fights primarily against the definition of justification by the medieval scholastics, who teach that justifying faith is a quality in the heart that includes love. Whoever has this and proves it in good works will be saved. But God will tear this false, self-made righteousness from the bodies of those work-saints like cobwebs and say to them, since all that man does is wretched: For my glory have I created you,

for my shame have you lived; and God will trample underfoot him who has rejected the righteousness which the Scriptures offer, but brings his wretched works before God. God's gifts of grace are not a piece of merchandise that we could buy from God for our rusty money; the church of Christ is not a junk shop; if God accepts something from us in grace, which we give him out of gratitude for the grace we have received, God must first give it to us, and then it is still mercy that he allows himself to be pleased with it. This is Lutheran teaching; anyone who does not have this is not Lutheran.

But if you say: yes, I don't want to be Lutheran at all, then know that you are not Christian either, for Lutheranism is nothing other than Christianity. If you torture yourself until you lie half-dead on the ground, if you do not grasp in faith the righteousness of Christ, which he acquired for you when He, the true God, lay for you in his blood, wrestling with death, on the ground in Gethsemane, then nothing can comfort you, nothing can save you from the jaws of death, nothing can tear you out of the furnace of hell. This: "Therefore we hold that a man is justified without the works of the law, through faith **alone**" [Rom. 3:28] is true Christianity, but it is also true Lutheranism. Luther had already heard the words of Scripture in Germany: "The just shall live by faith", but had not understood them. Then, as he slid up Pilate's Stairs in Rome to beg an indulgence from the Pope, it rang in his heart with a voice of thunder: the just shall live by his faith, the just shall live by his faith, — and as if shattered by this voice, he staggered half-dead back down the stairs, slinking away like a criminal. God's voice in that saying told him: "To the devil's indulgence you flee, and Christ's indulgence you despise; the Lord has done such hard work to redeem men, and you wretched man do not accept it! — and so the scriptural teaching drove Luther to the great work of Church Reformation.

Man should do nothing, nothing at all, to become righteous before God; he should only believe, i.e. acquire the righteousness that is valid before God through faith; that is the right doctrine. Remember, God did not create man as *a tabula rasa* (i.e. as a clean slate) and then watch and wait to see what would become of man; man was not neutral after creation, but perfect. God himself said: everything was very good. He had created him with righteousness, a holy will, clear knowledge, an enlightened mind, pure love of God and neighbor; man was not to become righteous first, but God had already made him righteous when he created him. What will God do now that man has so horribly squandered this great good and is lying in the dunghill, dirty, torn and ragged in his blood? Will he call out to him? Now

arise, thou dead, thou sick, thou sinner, thou reprobate, and become a better man? No, certainly not. God creates everything, so he also restores to man the righteousness which He had created for him in Adam, but which he lost in Adam, and people should rely on this grace in faith.

No one should think that even the ungodly can believe. Only he who is so crushed by the preaching of the law that he despairs of himself, only he comes with difficulty and seeks the consolation of the gospel; and this then calls out to him: Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and your household will be saved; but he also testifies to his faith by a holy walk.

Now since God justifies us, and we obtain righteousness through faith, it is evident that man can do nothing and does nothing to obtain faith, but only God works and gives it. Only this terrible power is available to man to reject faith, not to accept it, to resist grace. As Stephen said to the high council, you always resist the Holy Spirit, just as your fathers did, so you also; and as Christ proclaims about Jerusalem, how often have I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you did not want to. So no one may say: Yes, I have often wanted to convert, but have not been able to, because I am dead in sins; God answers him: Have I not wanted to convert you? Has not my Word often reached your heart in a holy place, and you have gone out of the church into the next drinking saloon, drank away the grace I offered you, scratched out again what I had written in your heart? Just as Lazarus was raised from the dead by Christ's almighty word, so it is with us in the spiritual realm. We are all spiritually dead by nature; when the life-giving Word of God comes to us, we wake up, but most do not want to get up and therefore die again until they go to eternal death.

So it is to God alone that we owe all our salvation, for we owe all righteousness to him; and this is one and the same, for where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation. So God has all glory, but man only all guilt and shame. This is Lutheran doctrine. The Lutheran Church says: "Just as God gives us bodily life without all our cooperation, so also spiritual life. Just as God created righteousness for us in paradise, he also gives it to us again without any action on our part. It is true that Christians must also struggle, pray and fight, but not in order to obtain grace, but in order not to lose it again. Those who think that the Lutheran doctrine that faith is given by God alone without any effort on our part makes people safe are very much mistaken; On the contrary, precisely because it is such a great gift of God,

true Christians and Lutherans pray, struggle and wrestle most earnestly and fearfully, lest their corrupt flesh and blood, their evil heart, their old Adam, under whom they are sold unto death, the wicked world and the wretched devil, these enemies of their salvation, should rob them of it. Therefore, the following applies: Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. He, on the other hand, fights against grace, indeed, he blasphemes it, who thinks he has to ask for it and fight for it, for he says: "I do not really trust God to give me grace; I would rather take the certain instead of the uncertain, I want to work it out for myself.

From all this we can see how important this doctrine of justification is. Life and salvation depend on it; therefore it must not be taught in passing, but must be placed at the center of all teaching and preaching; anyone who does not do this is not a Lutheran teacher. All other church bodies teach it at most now and then, because they do not really trust it. Yes, the Jesuits, those wicked scoundrels, only reveal it to the people at the hour of death; why? they first want to cheat the people out of their money in life by their shameful doctrine of works. Then, in death's bed, when they have nothing more to hope from them, they reveal the secret to them. Our Church, however, in the Augsburg Confession, in the Small Catechism, etc., takes this doctrine very seriously. It is its Alpha and Omega, the heart in the body, the soul that governs and moves everything in the Lutheran church body and gives it all life, the kernel in the shell. For what good would it do us if we knew that God is triune, that Christ is God and man in one person, that our flesh will one day be resurrected, and had all the other glorious doctrines of faith, but did not have the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone, without merit of works? This is the sun, the other doctrines are the rays that go out from it and return to it; they are all there for the sake of justification; they open up the understanding of justification for us. For example, we must know that God is triune in order to recognize it: It is God who gives us grace, it is Christ who obtains it for us, it is the Holy Spirit who appropriates it to us through faith. For faith is nothing other than the acceptance of the gift of God's grace, as is especially evident from Romans 4:16. Everyone should remember this precious passage!

Our church confessions also testify that the Lutheran church also proves itself to be the true church of God through the doctrine of justification, because it also gives all glory to God alone through this doctrine.

This is shown, among others, by the Jena theologian [\[Johann Christoph\] Köcher](#) when he writes: "Whatever the Lutheran religion teaches, be it doctrines of heavenly truth or moral precepts, all of this is without

exception to the divine glory. To God alone it gives this praise, that He has prepared and provided the means by which mortal men can be saved from their so great misery. In expounding this at length, she praises God's dignity with the greatest diligence and extols His mercy, justice and power to the utmost." (*De veritate et praestantia, relig. ev.-luth. ex Aug. Conf. ducent. Jenae, 1731. p. 59 sq.*)

The works saints would of course like to see themselves and their works honored in heaven and boast: oh what we have done and suffered, how hard we have made it for ourselves to earn our salvation, but now we are also here in heaven; and would like to say with a regretful sideways glance at the others: if they had also been so pious, they could also be fine here. But that is accursed talk. Just read the songs of the blessed in heaven, as described in the Revelation of John. Do they perhaps praise something in themselves? No, they know nothing of their wretched works, but to God they bring praise, honor, glory and worship from eternity to eternity. Not as if they had no good works; the Christian does indeed do many good works, but not in order to earn salvation, but out of gratitude for the grace received from God. The justified person says: "If I, a shameful sinner, have obtained grace, who before lay there like a worm trampled underfoot in my shame and unworthiness, what should I now do out of gratitude for it? and now the good works begin, now he loves God, now he helps his neighbor, now he reconciles himself with his enemy, and so on.

Köcher continues: "For the honor of Christ's death and satisfaction, which alone can save men, it fights valiantly, rejecting the means of salvation which men are wont to devise and apply, rejecting the merits of the saints, and teaching that trust in them is a false one. Hence the 2nd article of the Augsburg Confession states: 'Hereby are rejected the Pelagians and others, who ... make nature pious by natural powers to the dishonor of the sufferings and merits of Christ.'" (*l.c.*; [AC 2, 3](#))

This is the most powerful proof. Through works-righteousness the suffering of Christ is dishonored. Where the Lord redeems us by the sweat of His blood, where He Himself says through the mouth of the prophet: "I tread the winepress alone, and there is none among the nations with Me" (Ezek. 63:3), there they want to help, there they rob Christ of the honor of redemption and take it for themselves. Thus Antichrist robs the glory of the Lord and attributes it, among other things, to Mary, i.e. the Mary of his own imagination; for the Mary of pabstdom is not the true Mary, but an idol.

Köcher continues: "Furthermore, in the [27th article](#): 'Now it is the day

that the monks have taught and preached that the imaginary clergy do enough for sin, and obtain God's grace and righteousness. What is this but diminishing the glory and the price of grace? "Even those who want to be justified by vows are alienated from Christ and lack the grace of God, for they rob Christ of his glory, who alone justifies, and give such glory to their vows and monastic life. *) [*] The honor of Christ is thus the supreme principle and touchstone of all doctrine in the Augsburg Confession.] In the [last article](#) it says: 'Now this is publicly contrary to God's command and word, to make or command laws of opinion, that thereby one may do enough for sin and obtain grace: for the honor of Christ's merit is blasphemed, if by such statutes we forbear to merit grace'." (l. c.; [[Triglotta p. 81, 89](#)])

If the grace and mercy of God is diminished, this is blasphemous and terrible. But this is what is happening in our time from the various false church parties. In general, temptation now appears everywhere in its most subtle form, often under a very pious appearance, but especially that which wants to put JEsuM aside with fine speeches and to shred man into a fine place.

Furthermore, the [Apology](#) says: "We condemn such public error and false doctrine of works. First, that thereby the honor is taken away from Christ, the true Mediator, and is given to wretched works, if we want to present our works in Christ's stead as a treasure and propitiation for divine wrath and sin. For the glory belongs to Christ alone, not to our wretched works." ([Ap 4. 204](#))

What comfort there is in these words! The devil, reason, or other such friends say: Do this, do that, if you want to be saved. But do not listen to those voices! In this God wants to be honored, that he gives us, who deserve hell a thousand times over, both wine and milk freely and without money, that he takes care of the poor sinner out of free grace, so that he may come and drink to the full. Therefore, let no one be deterred from coming! Let him take it precisely when he feels nothing of salvation or even pure darkness within himself. Let the devil and hell rage around him and condemn him, the debtor, but let him grasp it with confidence; here is capital enough for his bankruptcy, which Christ has earned for us through his hard work, and that will be Christ's reward enough for us to accept his merit, and whoever believes it has it; may all devils then condemn him: God himself calls out to him: "You are not lost after all.

"You are my dear child after all,
In spite of the devil, the world and all sounds."

But of course, we must also speak:

In me and my life
 There is nothing on this earth;
 What Christ has given me,
 That is worthy of love.

[Article IV. § 256 of the Apology](#) states: "But if there is to be and remain a Christian church, the pure doctrine of Christ, of the righteousness of faith, must be preserved. Therefore we must challenge such great Pharisaical errors, so that we may save the name of Christ and the honor of the Gospel and of Christ." — and previously [§ 33](#): "The woman comes to Christ in the confidence that she will obtain forgiveness of sin from him, that is, to recognize and honour Christ properly." — and [§ 35](#): "For if we trust in our works, Christ's honor is taken away, and Christ is not the propitiation and mediator."

The *Apology* goes on to say: "Thus he wants to be honored, that we should take and receive grace, salvation, all good things from him, namely by grace, not for the sake of our merit." (Art. 4. fol. 35b.)

Thus the Augsburg Confession excludes all personal merit. What, on the other hand, does the pope do? He curses those who hold to Christ's merit alone, and demands that each one do enough himself for the sins he has committed after Baptism. Thus the [Council of Trent](#) says: "If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing other than a trust in divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that this trust alone is what justifies us, let him be accursed." Thus the Pope curses Christ's merit, God's grace, the Gospel, in a word: Christ.

In the *Formula of Concord* ([Part 1, Art. III, § 10](#)) it says: "We believe, teach and confess that for the preservation of the pure doctrine of the righteousness of faith for God, the *particulis exclusivis*, that is, the following words of the holy apostle Paul, whereby the merit of Christ is completely separated from our works and the glory is given to Christ alone, is to be kept with special diligence, as the holy apostle Paul writes: By grace, without merit, without law, without works, not of works, which words are all at the same time so much as by faith alone in Christ alone we are justified and saved."

It is also extremely important to keep this doctrine pure and clear for the sake of those who are under attack, for the person under attack doubts whether he has grace with God and considers himself unworthy of it because of his sins. This is due to the blindness of reason, which also thinks that

something must happen in a person in order to make him worthy of grace. Thus Osiander taught that the Lutheran doctrine of justification, according to which God declares the sinner righteous for the sake of Christ, is contrary to the truthfulness and righteousness of God, for since according to it God only rewards good with good, man must also have something good to show. We are also blasphemed because of our polemics against all those who falsify the doctrine of justification; we are called syllabists, people who only wage wars over words: but we will gladly take this upon ourselves, we want to preserve the high jewel of justification for our dear children through our polemics and also offer it to those who are tempted; the latter, however, find strong consolation precisely in the fact that “by grace alone” serves the glory of God, therefore all poor sinners should be justified for the sake of God's glory. It is also important that Luther always shows how those who want to enter heaven by works do not go the way of the Spirit, but the way of the flesh, and therefore fear true justification as they do death and hell. It is not merely above reason, but against it. Thus Luther also shows how all false doctrine of justification is contrary to the first commandment and sets God aside; especially how it abolishes the three fundamental attributes of God, his love, justice and truth. For no man can acquire righteousness, even if God demanded but little, he could not afford it; so if God had not bestowed his love on men, they would still be lost, whereas the Christian religion is purely a religion of thanksgiving for God's love, and the temple itself is called the place of thanksgiving by the Holy Spirit. But it also argues against God's justice, because then God would demand that the guilt of sin be paid twice, once by Christ, the other time by us. But it also argues against God's truth; for since the resurrection of Christ is the Father's declaration before the whole world and to the whole world that it is now righteous before Him, so that it may believe that it is redeemed and reconciled, since Christ sends his disciples into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature, all false teaching makes God and Christ a liar by denying that the world is truly redeemed. The wretched people! And if one man slipped on his knees over the whole world, he could not earn the grace that Christ, lying on his knees in the Garden of Gethsemane and hanging on the cross at Golgotha, has earned for us. Thus the false doctrine of justification brings people back under the bitter wrath of God and into hell, and whoever wants to be justified by works confesses Christ with his mouth, but his heart knows nothing of him, and when sin awakens in him, he has no consolation.

While mere head-faith, or mouth-faith, leads to hell, a poor sinner who grasps God's grace through true faith

is transformed and renewed in his heart by such faith that he now walks around with a completely new courage, heart and mind, laughing at the whole world, and is richer in Christ's blood than if he possessed heaven and earth. But such a one does not allow his sins to rob him of this treasure; rather, he now also calls upon God in all earnestness for strength for sanctification. Those are greatly mistaken who think that we are opposed to earnest godliness, that we reject struggling, praying and wrestling, sighing and weeping; oh no! some of us are perhaps more on our knees than those who want to earn grace with it; we are only opposed to the fact that we must ask for grace, sigh for it, earn it.

Luther writes: "This doctrine or sermon (of Christ and faith) takes from us all the glory of holiness and says: there is nothing good in us of which we can boast; and again it teaches the conscience how it should behave towards God, shows it God's grace and mercy and the whole Christ. This is called God rightly revealed and praised, which is also the right sacrifice and worship.... No false Christian, nor the spirit of the riot, can understand this doctrine. How much less will he preach and confess it rightly! Even if he takes the words and repeats them, but still does not stick to them, nor does he leave them pure; he always preaches in such a way that one grasps that he is not right; yet he smears his zeal on it, thereby taking away Christ's honor and assigning it to himself. Therefore, this alone is the most certain work of a true Christian, when he praises and preaches Christ in such a way that people learn how they are nothing and Christ is everything." (Walch. VII, 622. f.; [[St. L. 7, 418-419](#); [AE 21 65 f.](#)])

This is a beautiful passage against the enthusiasts of our time. Woe to those who boast of the great earnestness they use to get to heaven; the harlots and tax collectors will get there sooner than they will. Their earnestness is not so great. It is wonderful that Paul says in Galatians 6:12 that those who set their works beside faith are afraid to be persecuted with the cross of Christ, but this is so. The pagans wanted to laugh themselves to death at this. It was too great for them that the apostles taught that through faith in Jesus who hung on the cross, all sinners would be justified. "This is the right worship," says Luther, "that faith should be preached; for where works are set up, the cult of man is set up; and where the first commandment is established, the grace of God is established. This is what we are to preach, "as we are nothing and Christ is everything"; the better a man knows how to preach this, the better he preaches; while he who does not understand this gives a loud froth, even if the listeners sponge in tears over his sermon.

Furthermore, Luther writes: "The faithless works-saints make it very sour for them with much and various repentance, fasting, prayer, cross and suffering; but because they think they want to appease God's wrath and earn mercy, they do not give God his honor, that is, they do not think that he is merciful, true and sufficient for his promise or promise: but consider him an angry judge, whom one must reconcile and appease with works. And just thereby they despise God, punish him with lies in all his promises, deny Christ together with all his good deeds: in sum, they cast God from his throne of majesty and put themselves in his place." (Walch. VIII., 2045; [St. L. 9, 303-304](#); [AE 26, 229](#))

As early as 1518, Luther wrote in the interpretation of his 95 propositions: "In this way the true glory of God springs from this Gospel, when it is taught that the law has been and will be fulfilled, not by our works, but by the grace of God, who has mercy on us in Christ; not by works, but by faith; not by offering something to God, but by receiving and partaking of everything from Christ, from whose fullness we all received and partake of." (Walch. XVIII, 505; [St. L. 18, 250](#); AE 31, 231)

Here reference was made to the example of Myconius, who, although in great need of forgiveness of sins, did not want to have an indulgence from Tetzl if he was not to have it in vain, because otherwise he would not have been assured of the forgiveness of his sins. *)

*) Read this delicious and edifying story in Mykonius' own words, told in [No. 2 of the 28th volume of *Der Lutheraner*](#). Editor's note]

But modern theology, too, teaches again the doctrine of works, and indeed the most refined, in that it presents faith as a work by which we acquire grace. The clever Jesuits do likewise; they also pretend to teach that faith justifies, but they say that faith must be active in love. According to them, therefore, faith and love justify. Love is in faith like the powder in a gun, which [gun] only fulfills to its purpose through the powder; or the jewel in a box, which only becomes precious through the jewel.

Thus Luther also writes on Gal. 2:4-5: "It is only a vain, useless rubbish what the foolish sophists have taught about *fide formata*, that is, about faith, which is to receive its right kind and form from love. For it is faith alone that justifies, which is grasped by the word of Christ and adorned and decorated with it, and not that faith that has love in it. For if faith is to be certain and steadfast, it must grasp nothing else, nor hold to anything else but the

one Christ. For in the distress of conscience it can stand on no other ground than this noble pearl alone." (Walch. VIII, 1729; [St. L. 9, 129](#); AE 26, 88 f.)

This also lies in the nature of faith; for it belongs to the nature of faith that it trusts in a promise; but this we have only in the word, not in our works, for our works promise us nothing; so that this papal faith is superstition, so also the faith of all enthusiasts is thereby thrown overboard.

Finally, with regard to the doctrine of justification, the following must be considered: 5. that God does not justify us on one condition.

*) From here begins the protocol of Pastor Achilles.

*) It is common to say that God justifies man, but on the condition of faith. Man must also do something for justification, namely believe. Justification is therefore not to be ascribed entirely to God. But this means nothing other than taking away part of God's glory and attributing it to man. Thus it would not be God alone who saved us, but we with Him. Only those who do not know how to distinguish clearly between condition and means can come up with such ideas. A condition implies an achievement on the part of the one who is to receive something. For example: I give you the horse on the condition that you give me this much for it. By fulfilling the condition, the other person promises to fulfill his counter-performance. It would be the same with faith if it were made a condition of happiness. Faith would then be an achievement on our part, for which God would give us salvation in return. But this is wrong. We are not reconciled with God when we believe, but we are already redeemed, already reconciled with God, so that we believe. It is the same with justification. The whole world is already justified in Christ, but faith is not the condition by which we are justified, but the way in which we become partakers of the righteousness that God has long since given us. As it says in Scripture: God gave his Son to the world. He did not merely give the world permission to appropriate his Son, but, as it says in John 3:16, he gave him to us for this reason, that we should believe in him, and not only when we believe. This is rather like a beggar. Would such a person not be astonished if someone said to him: I will give you something, but only on condition that you stretch out your hand and take it? After all, he wants nothing more than to be given alms. It goes without saying that he takes it with his hand. This is the mere

way in which he receives it. The doctrine of justification can only be correctly understood if faith is presented merely as the hand, as the instrument, by which we appropriate the offered righteousness. The ancients speak of two means of attaining righteousness: the means of giving, namely Word and Sacrament, and the means of receiving, namely faith. If there is a means of giving, the gift itself must first be there. It is the same with righteousness. It is already there. The only question is how God wants to give it. The answer is: he gives it through his Word and Sacrament in his holy Christian Church. It is God's treasure house, the rich and beautiful storehouse in which he distributes his gifts. The preachers and originally all believers have the key to it, that is, the preaching and the administration of the holy sacraments, through which these gifts are imparted to us.

Faith is not a condition under which God first gives us, but he has already given it. For when God raised his Son from the dead, he did not forgive his own sin, but that of all mankind, which he had taken upon himself; he did not justify Christ from his own guilt, but from our guilt, which he had allowed to be imputed to him. Thus the whole world has already been justified by the resurrection of Christ, which man must now appropriate for himself through faith. Therefore, when Holy Scripture says that we are justified by faith, it is basically saying nothing other than that we are justified by grace, not that faith brings this about as a meritorious work, as the apostle Romans 4:16 writes.

A passage from [[Jacob Heerbrand](#)] was quoted in this connection. (Heerbrand wrote [a book](#) which almost brought about a union with the Greek church). Heerbrand writes: "The promises of the law are conditional, for they have the added condition that the law be kept and fulfilled perfectly. (Deut. 18:5. Matt. 19:17.) But the evangelical promises are promises of grace, which are free from all conditions." Note carefully the great difference in contrast. The gospel promises without any condition, whereas the great condition of the law is: keep it!

Heerbrand continues: "For they promise eternal life to all who believe in Christ."

Papists, Arminians and other sects now come and say: there you see what a beautiful doctrine the Lutherans have. They say: salvation is given without condition. According to this, the wicked, thieves, liars, etc. are all saved. Just as the Universalists teach that no man is lost, but that all are saved, even the devil. According to them, this is the true doctrine of grace. But this is nothing but pure

fraud. The enthusiasts know very well that we do not teach this. Rather, such a doctrine is a true doctrine of shame, whereby God is made into a devil. According to this, God gave the law, but it has nothing to do with anything. If it threatens all transgressors of God with eternal wrath, it is not meant to be so bad. Sin does not need to be atoned for, it does not need to be blotted out, it can be done without it. On the other hand, Holy Scripture expressly says that in order to save us, God himself had to become a man and keep the whole law, that he had to atone for our sins in such a way that no human thought can fully comprehend it. For every sin he suffered severely. Again, man must now accept what Christ has acquired, otherwise he does not have it, and otherwise God cannot save him either. This does not mean, however, that God can do many things, but that this is too great for him, but that God is holy and cannot cease to be holy. It is impossible for man to cast God from his throne through his sin. He will remain seated. The whole human race must go to hell before God is deprived of his holy and righteous majesty.

Heerbrand continues: "One interjects: Faith is also demanded as a condition, according to that word: 'He that believeth shall be saved. Furthermore: 'If one believes from the heart' (Rom. 10:10)." It was noted that in the Bible the expression "if we believe, we will be saved" is never used in the sense that it indicates a condition. Nor does it say: because of faith, but through faith, by grace. A teacher must be very careful here that he does not use incorrect words in the exposition of this doctrine, whereby the clarity of it is impaired. What a sweet and comforting teaching it is that we do not have to earn righteousness first, but that God gives it to us! Just as God himself once made clothes for men from sheepskins and gave them to them, so God has also prepared the garment of righteousness for us and gives it to us. But this garment is nothing other than the suffering and death of Jesus Christ; this is our righteousness.

So what does Heerbrand answer to our question? Answer: Faith is not a condition, nor is it required as a condition; because justification is not promised or offered on account of the worthiness or merit of it, or in so far as it is a work.

It has been remarked that if faith were a condition on which God justifies us, there must be some worthiness or merit in faith, or it must be such a work as God would regard. But this is a real confusion of different concepts. Does a hand have merit because it grasps a gift? Would it not be madness to say such a thing? Faith, too, is nothing other than the uplifted hand which man stretches out

to take what God presents, gives and seals to him without condition.

Heerbrand continues: "It is only the way of accepting the benefits offered and given through and for the sake of Christ; and thus the instrument or, as it were, the hand that grasps and appropriates Christ and his benefits offered in the gospel. Just as when a beggar is given alms, which he takes with his hand, the hand is not called the condition, but the means and instrument by which the alms is accepted." ([*Compend. Theologiae. 1582. p. 379. sq.*](#))

Note well: it is only a way of accepting it. The question why faith is this way is easily answered. Because there is no other way in which it could happen. It cannot be love, because I cannot grasp a promise through it. God gives us everything through the promises in His Word. But how can we grasp them other than through faith? For example, if someone promises something, I must believe that he will keep it. Therefore, only faith can be the means by which we receive what God gives us through His promises. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are likewise nothing other than promises, except that an outward sign is added to them; they are the visible Word. Since God gives everything by promise, there is no other way than to accept everything by faith. There is no other way. Faith is therefore the instrument, or as it were the hand, with which we grasp what God offers us in his promises. If we want to make it clear to people how faith relates to justification, these two expressions are best suited to achieve this. It is very necessary to be clear on this point; only then will we teach correctly about justification. As much as all Christian bodies talk about faith, few have a proper conception of faith and how it justifies. They think of faith as a special quality in man. Man is now no longer as before, but transformed, that there is now something good in him, which is why God now regards him as righteous. But faith is only a taking; that it transforms is only a fruit of it. If he receives, the fruits follow: a different will, a different mind, indeed man is now a new creature.

The accusation that we Lutheran preachers proclaim the forgiveness of sins to all, regardless of whether they are repentant or not, is unfounded. We preachers are not preachers of the heart. Forgiveness of sins is also acquired for the impenitent. It is only their unbelief that prevents justification from being put into effect for them.

So it is not that God accepts faith in us, or

that he has chosen us because we believe, since he has chosen us only through his grace. Thus our Lutheran Church proves to be the true one in this respect as well, insofar as it teaches that it is God alone who justifies us. Justification is not something that happens in our hearts, but in God. Sanctification takes place in us. Justification is a judicial act of God, in which he acquits the sinner of guilt and punishment and declares him righteous. The question as to whether these expressions, "we are justified or saved on the condition of faith", had no justification at all, was answered as follows: if one speaks of the necessity of faith, then one can certainly use this expression, but not without first having removed all misunderstanding. If it is said in Romans 10:10: "If one believes from the heart, he is justified", this is indeed a conditional form of speech; but since faith itself is a gift of God, which he gives to man, it also fulfills this condition itself, and only the willful resistance, by which the faith offered is rejected, prevents man from his salvation. Otherwise it is true that if a person does not believe, he cannot be saved.

The following passage from Gerhard was quoted in this regard: "The little word 'if' is either etiological or syllogistic. That is, it denotes either the cause or the consequence. In the preaching of the law: 'If you do this, you will live', the little word 'if' is etiological, because obedience is the cause for which eternal life is given to those who keep the law; but in the evangelical promises: 'If you believe, you will be saved', the little word 'if' is syllogistic, because it designates the manner of appropriation established by God, which belongs to faith alone." (*Loc. de evangelio* § 26.)

So when the little word "if" is used in Scripture, it is not always necessarily a conditional "if", but often a syllogistic "if", which serves to indicate the consequence. If faith were the condition of salvation, then man would also do something towards it if he fulfilled this condition. Just as if I sold a house worth a thousand dollars to someone for a hundred dollars, I would not have actually given it to him, since he had given a sum for it, however small. God asks nothing of us, we are only supposed to take. And since God Himself works faith, it cannot be a cause or condition, but only a means of justification.

[J. B.] Carpzov in his interpretation of the symbolic books therefore says: "It is inaccurate to call faith the instrumental cause of justification."..... (*Isagoge in libros Symbol*, p. 206.) Otherwise it would not be God alone who justifies us, but our

faith would also produce it. God would then not yet be fully reconciled with us, but we would first have to reconcile him. Christ's merit would not have been sufficient to earn us the righteousness that is valid before God. Indeed, the whole work of redemption would be called into doubt. But, thank God, our justification has already been accomplished. Christ has left us nothing more to do, he has already done everything; we have only to rejoice in it, to appropriate it to ourselves in order to be saved.

Carpzov says in another passage: "Faith contributes to justification in no other way than that it is the instrument by which the justifying cause is received by us." (Ibid. p. 1298.)

The actual cause of our justification is Christ. Faith is not itself a work, but only an instrument. We have nothing to accomplish, because we cannot accomplish anything, not even faith. If our justification depended on the perfection of our faith, we would all be lost. When it says in Scripture: "I look upon the wretched and brokenhearted, who fears my word" (Isaiah 66:2), it means nothing other than: I look upon a poor sinner who clings to my grace. Why does God look at him? For the sake of Christ, not for the sake of his faith. Faith in itself is an empty hand. But just as a wooden box containing a precious stone becomes a precious box, so faith is only precious because it holds Jesus in its hands. The hand itself remains as before. When one says that faith justifies, this is nothing but a metonymy, whereby one communicates to that which contains something the properties of that which it contains. We say: drink a cup of coffee. One does not drink the cup itself, but only the coffee; but one says: That was a nice cup. However, we do not mean the cup, but the coffee it contains.

Faith justifies only because it has taken hold of Christ, who justifies the sinner, not as a work, or as something good, or because it is active, but because faith undergoes something, because God gives it something. If faith were a virtue, there would have been enough deficiency in Paul's faith to bring him to hell. What is true of unbelief is not true of faith. Unbelief is the cause of damnation, but faith is not the cause of salvation.

This doctrine is also important because if one makes faith the condition of salvation, one thereby ascribes to man the ability to work faith. This is the error of the Methodists and other sects, that they think that God gives grace and that it is up to man to accept it, that it is therefore not God who gives faith. But the glory of God and the salvation of man are

most closely connected. As soon as one ascribes the least in the work of salvation to man, one takes it away from God.

How can one comfort someone who is tempted? After all, he thinks he cannot believe. Such a person would have to despair at this teaching, while one must try to convince him that the Savior is already there for him, has already forgiven him, and wants to accept him. As soon as faith is made a condition of justification in the slightest, all the comfort of the gospel is taken away from such a person.

It can also be seen from this that our doctrine is the true one, because we give God the glory and teach that He alone works faith. Modern Lutheran theologians teach the opposite, just as the lowans do, namely that God does indeed give the power to believe, but that it is up to man to decide that he must produce faith in himself instead of accepting it.

Thus writes Kahnis: "Children are capable of being born again. But they cannot have the fruit of rebirth, faith. Faith is an action of our ego. ... In rebirth, the Holy Spirit brings about the power to believe, not the act of faith." (*Die Lehre vom heiligen Abendmahl*. 1851. p. 431.) Is not this terribly spoken by those who are regarded as pillars of the Lutheran Church? According to this, the power would be there for the cause, but not the cause itself. Is that not inconsistent? As if someone wanted to say: the power to eat is there, but I cannot eat. Then we would first have the power to believe, and then we would be converted, whereas according to Scripture only a converted person believes.

Adam Osiander says: "Not only the power to believe is from God, but also the actual faith itself, because before the last effect of prevenient grace man is not yet converted; but the last effect of prevenient grace is the gift of faith." (*Collegium*. V, 116.)

This is like a fortress that a king wants to conquer. First he surrounds it, then he fires at it and tries to get closer and closer by digging trenches. But much happens before he can take it. One bullet after another has to be fired into it first. Soon there is a fire here, soon there. But the fortress still refuses to surrender. Many a day has passed in this way; many an assault has been made in vain; at last a final blow is struck against it, forcing it to surrender. Whereupon the king makes his entry into the conquered city with the sound of music. So it is with a man. God takes hold of him in many ways, strikes blow after blow against him, but this is not yet something that happens inside the fortress, but everything happens from the outside. Jesus stands at the door and knocks. Soon he uses the law, soon the gospel. When the time finally comes, when he has broken down this fortress of the devil,

then he enters as the victor. That is the effect of faith. As soon as Christ enters, faith is there. Only then, when God dwells in man, does he work with us. When God gives the power to believe, he has given faith to man. We therefore stand by what the Scripture says: "This is the work of God, that you believe". John 6:29, Further, "You, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time". 1 Peter 1:4-5 And who can count all the passages of the Scriptures in which it is said that God works faith? It is precisely to those who believe that the Savior says: "Without me you can do nothing". [John 15:5]

So these three points stand fast:

1. God has acquired righteousness and has decided to give it to us.
2. Then He also had it preached and offered to the human race.
3. Finally, He also creates the hand by which we grasp it.

It is also God's work that man remains in faith and grace. So then, man did not make righteousness himself, nor did he get it himself, nor did he grasp it himself, but God Himself has presented it, and also created the hand in which He puts it. Thus God is All in All. And we will have nothing else to do for all eternity but to offer Him our thanksgiving that He has justified and saved us sinners by grace. Every true Christian already says it now: he cannot understand that God has chosen him out of thousands and brought him to true knowledge. How much greater will our astonishment be when we see the depths of God's mercy before us. Everyone will only be able to speak: How wonderful it is that I am in heaven! I cannot even explain it to myself.

It is the infinite mercy,
That surpasses all thought;
It is the open arms of love
Of Him who leans towards sinners,
Whose heart always breaks,
We come or we do not come. (See [The Lutheran Hymnal, 385:2](#))

To say that faith is a meritorious work or a meritorious assurance is one and the same thing, and both are ungodly speech. When the law of faith is spoken of in Romans 3:27, it is an antanaclasis, that is, a way of speaking in which a word that someone has used incorrectly is also used, but with a different meaning attached to it, so that the former sees that he has used the word incorrectly. Thus, for example, the Jews spoke of God's works. But because they were self-righteous people, they understood this to mean

works of the law, by which they would be saved. The Savior takes the word out of their mouths, and to rebuke them properly, he says to them: This is the work of God, that ye believe. You speak, he wants to say, of works that bring salvation: I will show you which is the right work that brings salvation: "believe", i.e. do nothing. It is the same with this passage: Where is the glory now? It is gone. By what law? By the law of works? Not so, but by the law of faith. This is a holy mockery of the apostle, with which he wants to say: You miserable babblers, you want to appear before God with your paltry works and like to have glory. You also think you have glory because you keep the law. So you do have glory, but certainly not before God. For only one work counts before him, namely faith in the "Son of God, and that is because God himself works it.

This is just like someone who presents himself in the church as if he were the richest and who therefore demands that everything must go according to his will. But I would know that he had a lot of debts, and I would say to him: It is true, you are very rich, but certainly in debt. So the apostle of faith also calls the law a law. Some people might think that the law of faith only applies to the New Testament, but in the Old Testament it was not the law of faith but the law of Moses that applied. But this is not the case. Christ is also the reason for justification in the Old Testament, as it says in Scripture: The Lamb slain before the world began.

[7. The Necessity of Regeneration, Sanctification and Good Works.] [^](#)

[A. Regeneration]

We now moved on to the 7th point of the 3rd thesis. Just as it is only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church that all glory is given to God alone, this also applies to our Church's doctrine of regeneration.

If we Lutherans were to teach that a person could enter heaven in the state of sin and godlessness, that would be a teaching that would dishonor God. This would be a horrible kingdom of God, where the ungodly, fornicators, thieves, liars, murderers and robbers, who do not want to know anything about God, would find themselves in the fellowship of God and His holy angels for eternity. Then God's heaven would be a pigsty. We do teach that man is justified and saved by grace alone through faith alone, but we also teach that where this faith is, man also becomes a new creature, which is produced by regeneration. If faith does not have this effect, that it transforms man, then this is not the faith of which Scripture usually speaks, but the faith of which James speaks, that it is dead in itself. The Jesuits maintain that we teach: "Live as you will, only believe; works are not necessary, neither are rebirth and regeneration, but only say

to the pastor, 'I believe', and he will say, 'Go in peace; all is well'". Of course, if we had such a teaching, God's honor would be terribly defiled. But these rascals know well that they are lying and that this is not our teaching. Rather, we teach that as soon as a person is in the true faith, he is also a new person. Thus the Lord said to Nicodemus: "You must be born again of water and the Spirit. When Nicodemus became extremely distraught, he made it clearer and clearer to him. Finally he comes out with the whole thing: Just as Moses lifted up a serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that all who believe in Him may not perish but may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, etc., John 3:14-16. The original text says "For so". This "For" is very important, for it indicates that the regeneration is nothing other than the living faith which the Holy Spirit works. And it is impossible that, when one has come to living faith, his heart should not become joyful and merry in God, that he should not say, "Farewell, world, to your pleasure and joy. I have now found something else in which I delight, namely Christ and his grace. In him I have rest, peace, comfort, happiness and salvation.

Oh, how would it be possible if someone had fallen into a horrible cesspool, and a man saw it, jumped in after him into the horrible hole, caught him and lifted him out, and he now saw how his rescuer himself fell into the horrible pool of filth and suffocated in the dung, that such a rescued man could laugh about it and now say: What did he intend to do with me? Why didn't he leave me in it? No, such a person would have to be entirely of Satan. Rather, he would have to think: Oh, if only my rescuer were still alive, how I would thank him! Oh, that he had perished so miserably! But the Son of God has done more for us. He was stuck in the devil's cesspool and perished, and only because He was God was this bite too hard for the infernal Leviathan. Christ punched a hole through his [Leviathan's] body and rose again. How would it be possible to believe this from the heart and yet despise Christ? To ask nothing of the heavenly Father, but to keep company with God's enemies? No, that is not possible. One can speak with the mouth: I believe, but such mouth-faith brings no one to heaven, but certainly to hell. No, he who believes in this love with all his heart, weeps over the excess of God's love and thanks him. Whoever believes in this love from the heart receives divine powers for a new life.

What we Lutherans understand by true faith is what Luther says in his Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. Wesley was once converted through this passage. He came to America to convert the Indians,

but he found that he himself had not yet been converted. After some time, he returned to Europe and was walking through the streets of London one evening. He hears singing in the basement of a house. He goes in and finds Herrnhutters there reading Luther's preface to Paul's Epistle to the Romans. There is also this passage where Luther describes faith. As he hears it, he says to himself: I still lack this faith. But it is not long before he experiences the power of divine grace, comes to faith and becomes a different person. This passage by Luther is a true hymn to faith. One can confidently ask anyone to show such a description of faith in another human book. There is none like it again.

Luther writes [[St. L. 14, 99](#); [AE 35, 370-371](#)]: "Faith is not the human delusion and dream that some take for faith. — And when they see that neither improvement of life nor good works follow, and yet can hear and speak much of faith, they fall into error and say: Faith is not enough, one must do works if one is to be pious and saved. This is what happens when they hear the gospel, so they fall into it, and by their own efforts form a thought in their hearts that says: I believe. But just as it is a human figment and thought which the heart never realizes, so it does nothing, and no improvement follows afterwards. But faith is a divine work in us, which transforms and regenerates from God, John 1:13, and kills the old Adam, making us completely different people in heart, courage, mind and all powers, and bringing with it the Holy Spirit. Oh, faith is a living, active, powerful thing, so that it is impossible that it should not work good without ceasing. Nor does it ask whether good works are to be done, but before it is asked, it has done them and is always doing them. But he who does not do such works is a faithless man, groping and looking around for faith and good works, and knows neither what faith nor good works are, yet babbles and chatters many words about faith and good works. Faith is a living, bold confidence in God's grace, so certain that it will die a thousand times over. And such confidence and knowledge of divine grace makes one cheerful, defiant and joyful toward God and all creatures, which the Holy Spirit does through faith." — A believer is a perverse person. He talks to God as if he were talking to his own kind. God already understands him. He knows how to deal with him. He laughs at the world, the devil, death and hell. As Gerhard says in that hymn:

'The world is a laughing stock to me,
With its great wrath.
It is angry and can do nothing,
All work is lost.
The gloom does not cloud
My heart and face.
Misfortune is my light,
The night is my sunlight. [[The Lutheran Hymnal, 192:5](#)]

"Therefore, without compulsion, man becomes willing and eager to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer all kinds of things, to love and praise God, who has shown him such grace. So that it is impossible to separate works from faith, yes, as impossible as burning and shining can be separated from fire." — Someone may try, but he will not be able to do it. In the same way, where God has kindled the fire of faith, it shines out of eyes, countenances, words and all works, and we do not know what we would like to do to please God. — [Luther]: "Therefore beware of your own false thoughts and idle chattering, who want to be wise about faith and good works and make judgments, and are the greatest fools. Ask God to work faith in you, otherwise you will probably remain without faith forever, thinking and doing whatever you want or can." (Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. XIV, 114. F.; [[St. L. 14. 99-100](#); [AE 35. 371](#)])

This clearly shows that it is not only the enthusiasts who know that man must be born anew. Luther also experienced and taught this. And the whole Lutheran Church, so far as it includes true Lutherans, teaches nothing else than that God closes the door of heaven to all those who are not born again. Thirty years ago there was no living Lutheran Church in this country. The enthusiasts took advantage of this and sought out the Lutherans, but with the truth they also brought their errors. Things are different today. God has called a living Lutheran Church into being. Where there is one, the enthusiasts can do little. Living Christians also know that they do not need to go anywhere else to look for good, because they will find it in their mother's house. With the enthusiasts, on the other hand, they find not only good, but also poison, from which they can die eternal death.

The Roman Church also distorts the doctrine of regeneration. Although it says that we are born again through Baptism, it does not even mention that faith must be generated. According to its doctrine, it erases original sin and takes away its character of sin. It also says that when an adult is converted, his natural powers are supported by the impartation of the first grace to such an extent that his good works now correspond perfectly to God's requirements, and he thus becomes partaker of the righteousness that is valid before God. This is not regeneration in the proper sense, and because they say that only the nature of sin is taken away from original sin, according to them no new creation takes place in Baptism.

This is also the case with the enthusiasts. For them, regeneration is not the production of faith, but they feel something, and in their imagination they think this is regeneration. The doctrine of the Swedenborgians, according to which man actually regenerates himself, is completely terrible. Oh, how shameful such teachings are, since they

rob God of the honor of creating and preserving a new life through the Holy Spirit for the sake of Christ until He completes it in eternal life!

It should also be mentioned how the Methodists very often accuse us of the error of saying that Baptism is regeneration. This is not true. Nor is it a correct doctrine. Rather, we teach that it works regeneration, and only in those who believe. Anyone who has not received Baptism in faith is not born again. Therefore, do not confuse the terms with one another. It is therefore a shameful distortion of our doctrine when Methodists accuse us of the same thing and tell us that Lutherans have taken the easy way out with regeneration. We certainly believe that we were once truly born again when we were baptized in childhood. For there is no willful resistance in children. But when a person has grown up and attained self-consciousness, and then becomes fond of the world, he loses his rebirth again, and must then be reborn once more. If a person perseveres in the grace of Baptism, he has no need to convert again afterwards, but he always needs the word of grace anew for his inner man, otherwise he will die, just as a child must die without food. And such a person who has died twice, as the Scriptures say [John 3:3], must then be born again to new life. So it is not everyone who is baptized who is born again, but everyone was once born again in their childhood. If he received Baptism as an adult without faith, he was not born again. The Savior did not say: water and the Spirit is the rebirth, but: you must be born again of water and the Spirit. And Paul says of Baptism that it is “washing of regeneration” [Titus 3:5]. So he does not call it regeneration, but a “washing of regeneration”. Why does he not call it regeneration, but a “washing of regeneration”? Because something is worked through it. It is not a bath in which the body is washed from bodily impurities, but the soul is washed from sins, a blessed, heavenly bath. Baptism should therefore not be made into a new work. What saves us is Christ alone. We would therefore trample this teaching of ours underfoot if we were to teach otherwise. When the Lord says that ‘he who does not believe will be condemned’ [Mark 16:16], this is true even in this life. An unbeliever is already a damned person. And that only he who believes will be saved, the Lord reinforces by saying: He who does not believe will be condemned.

That the sects think so little of Baptism is because they do not believe that Baptism is the means of regeneration. They put more emphasis on their “anxious bench” than on Holy Baptism, and want to be saved by their own means and not by the means that God has ordained. One would hardly believe that there could be a true Christian among them,

since they so blaspheme God's honor. Yet they are not to be judged, but pitied. They are under God's judgment. O how fortunate we are to have pure knowledge by the grace of God!

An example was given of a Methodist who had spoken out against a Lutheran pastor, saying that Baptism was of little use. How can one say that about God's things! That is blasphemous. They are also wrong to separate the Word from the water. They say that we must be born again by the Spirit. But isn't the Holy Spirit involved in Baptism, isn't the Word of God involved? A Methodist, who did not want to admit that baptism is a power to give birth to children again and that this must happen later, answered the question as to when it happens with them: "About when they are seven years old". It doesn't help them either, even if you bring them evidence from God's Word, they still stick to their bare assertions. But that is the terrible thing about the Methodists, that they accuse us of teaching nothing about the new birth, or of teaching it in a false way, while they know that they are lying. But otherwise they can keep their true Christians, who are still among them, in no other way than by telling them that the Lutherans want to enter the kingdom of heaven without regeneration, without repentance and without conversion; so that then such poor Christians must get the idea: Oh, I will beware of the Lutherans! Such godless Methodist preachers then tell their parishioners, who may have had an unbelieving rationalist as a preacher in Germany, that the Lutheran pastors are of such a nature, while the latter is nothing other than an enemy of the truth, a wolf in the sheepfold. These are, they say of us, their shepherds, while such are the greatest enemies of our church, who only destroy and devastate it, and which the poor congregations in Germany must take, since they have no right to choose their pastors themselves, but they are forced upon them. Is it not terrible that they make us out to be such rationalists? But truly, they will have to answer for it in that day. Where did they get the good that is still to be found among them? They owe it to the Lutheran Reformation. The rest is nothing but the thoughts of men, which they have smeared. How much do they teach differently now than they did thirty years ago? Such as, for example, confirmation, which they once fought against most bitterly, and which they themselves are now beginning to ape again. They no longer dare to say as much about the "anxious bench" as they used to. This is because the light has shone into their hiding places. Now they can no longer mumble in the dark. But they still don't give the truth the credit. That is the curse of false teaching.

It is to be deplored that in recent times there are also those in the

Lutheran Church who teach that something remains in man from Baptism that cannot be eradicated. Delitzsch, for example, still wants to shake hands with the notorious anti-Christian Wislicenus because he was baptized and therefore carries something within him that is unquenchable. This causes the sects great annoyance. Therefore, do not take offense if we also attack the neo-Lutheran professors. For our whole church would be disgraced if this were really our doctrine. This battle is assigned to us. We must make a serious front against them, even if they are considered great heroes of the faith before the world, while they are only those who undermine the foundation of the faith. Let us not be deceived by their babblings. They do not represent God's work, but human thoughts. As much as we respect science, we do not want to be deterred from opposing it because we are not as learned as they are. God has given us the light, so we want to attack them despite their mockery.

[B. Sanctification] [^](#)

We now moved on to the part of the thesis that deals with sanctification. So far we have dealt with how God's glory is revealed in his unspeakable love, with which he has mercy on us, how he has carried out our salvation, which he had decided upon, how he has ordained the means of grace, and how he has given us the hand with which we can grasp it. As glorious as all these things are, it cannot be denied that if the Christian religion contained nothing else, the full and true glory of God would not be revealed. It is also necessary that man should be shown how he is made holy and renewed in the image of God. Christianity would be a terrible religion if it only covered sin with a cloak and thus received man into heaven. Holy Scripture teaches most clearly that the ultimate purpose of the whole work of redemption is sanctification. Pardon, reconciliation and justification are not the ultimate goal, but only the means and the way by which sanctification is made possible. God forgives us sin so that we can come out of sin. Christ is our Savior not only because he frees us from guilt and punishment, but also because he frees us completely from sin. This only happens completely in that life. Here in this life all God's children must lament to the end: I am carnal, and sold under sin, etc., Rom. 7:14. No matter how earnestly one fights against sin, one is never completely freed from it here. The Methodist teaching that one can become completely holy and perfect on earth is a terrible heresy. It obliterates the merit of Christ. From the time you become perfect, you no longer need Christ. For where one does not need forgiveness of sins, because one imagines one no longer sins,

one also has no need of a Savior who forgives sin. Even if the Methodists do not want to admit it, the latter remains true. We are sinners unto death, but sin must not dominate us. As it is written: Sin shall not have dominion over you, Rom. 6:14. Whoever still allows himself to be dominated by a single sin is still under the wrath of God.

The life and walk of a Christian is a pursuit of sanctification. As Paul also says: Pursue sanctification, Heb. 12:14. The perfect saints, on the other hand, no longer need to do so, they already have it. This pursuit applies to every Christian; anyone who does not pursue it, or thinks that he no longer needs to do so, but has already achieved everything, is not a Christian. Anyone who makes the doctrine of justification a resting place and thinks I can live in sin and shame is not a Christian. To him the precious sermon of free grace becomes an odor of death unto death, instead of an odor of life unto life. The Lutheran Church knows nothing of this. Rather, as decisively as it teaches that we are justified by God for Christ's sake, free of charge and by grace, it also demands sanctification from every Christian.

We cannot thank God enough that this doctrine of sanctification was brought forth at the time of the Reformation. Luther found a time that lacked above all the message of grace. The Roman priests were not concerned with the salvation of souls, but only with the promotion of their rule. They had crushed the people with the law, tortured their consciences and presented Christ before their eyes not as the Savior of sinners but as an angry judge. The only comforting figure was the Virgin Mary. Then Luther appeared with the blessed message of grace. That man is justified without the work of the law through faith alone was the motto of his life. But he also taught that one must do good works and pursue sanctification. But if the [Antinomians](#) had not stood up, Luther would probably never have given such powerful testimony to the necessity of sanctification. God once wanted to thoroughly reform his church, so he gave Luther the opportunity to bear witness to the necessity of sanctification just as powerfully as he had previously done to the forgiveness of sins by grace. As is always the case in the Church, if a doctrine should become quite dear to her, God allowed the devil to awaken heretics who had to attack this doctrine. Such was the case with Agricola. At first he was in complete agreement with Luther. But, as often happens, he fell from one extreme to the other. First he was a papist teacher of works, now he became an enemy of the law. He said that the law belonged in the town hall, even on the gallows. He even secretly pronounced it: Luther had not yet

reached the Gospel properly; the Reformation must proceed even more thoroughly and the law in the church must be completely abolished. Luther was not at all aware of this. After all, Agricola had been his companion for a long time. But finally it came out that he was taking the Gospel to the flesh and that he wanted nothing to do with sanctification. Luther's attitude towards the Antinomians can be seen from the following passage:

"My Antinomians preach very finely, and (as I cannot think otherwise) with right earnestness, of the grace of Christ, of forgiveness of sins, and what more is to be said of the article of salvation. But they flee from this consequence like the devil, that they should tell people about the third article, sanctification, that is, the new life in Christ." [[St. L. 16, 2241](#); [AE 41, p. 113](#)]

He wants to say: First you admit that Christ is your Savior, and then you deny that he really came to redeem you, in that he "should" redeem you from guilt, but not from the dominion of sin. But this is nothing but empty talk, for there is no such Christ, even if you call him your Savior a thousand times.

"For they think that we should not frighten or grieve people, but always preach comfortingly about the grace and forgiveness of sins in Christ, and by all means avoid these or similar words: 'Do you hear this? You want to be a Christian, and yet remain an adulterer, a fornicator, a complete swine, proud, avaricious, usurer, envious, revengeful, malicious'; but they say: 'Do you hear this? You are an adulterer, a fornicator, a miser, or any other sinner, if you only believe, you are saved, you must not fear the law, Christ has fulfilled it all'. Dear one, tell me, does that not mean admitting the fallacy and denying the corollary? Yes, in the same sentence it means to take away and nullify Christ when he is preached at the highest." [[ibid.](#)]

This is a terrible word for such a Lutheran preacher, who thinks that one should always preach very comfortingly; for he preaches Christ the least when he seems to preach Him the highest.

"And all is but yes and no in one and the same matter. For such a Christ is nothing and nowhere, who died for such sinners who, after the forgiveness of sins, do not turn from their sins and live a new life."

There is no such Christ who would have come to comfort people about their sins by telling them: "I have obtained grace for you, what harm is it that you sin? Just live as you wish. This would be a Savior from hell and not from heaven. For he does not save men from sins, but leaves them in sins.

"So they preach Christ finely in Nestorian and Eutychian dialectics, that Christ is, and yet he is not, and are fine Easter preachers, but shameful Pentecost preachers."

Nestorius correctly claimed that Christ was true God and man in one person. And yet, he said, one must not speak: Mary gave birth to God. For, he said, what she gave birth to was only a man and not God. But if Mary only gave birth to a man and not to God, then Christ is not God and man in one person. Nestorian and Eutychian dialectics therefore means first admitting something, from which another proposition follows, which one does not admit. This is also the case here. The Antinomians admitted that Christ was the Savior from sin, but that they had to be converted from sin, they wanted to know nothing about that.

These words: “and are fine Easter preachers, but shameful Pentecost preachers” — should be taken to heart by every Lutheran preacher in the most serious way. Woe to us if we only know how to speak beautifully about how Christ has acquired grace, but not also about how necessary the work of the Holy Spirit is in us, through which this redemption is manifested in us.

“For they preach nothing of the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, but only of the redemption of Christ, when Christ (whom they preach highly, as is fitting) is Christ, or has purchased redemption from sins and death, so that the Holy Spirit should make us new men from the old Adam, that we should die to sins and live to righteousness, as St. Paul teaches, Rom. 6:2 ff, beginning and increasing here on earth, and accomplishing it there.”

This is why Christ has obtained forgiveness of sins for us, to make us new people. In heaven we no longer need forgiveness, for there we will be like God. We do not become holy, as the enthusiasts teach, by putting away all sin here, but we teach what John teaches: we will be like God, for we will see him as he is. This says: “Dear believers, as soon as you die, you are completely holy. When your body decays, a process takes place whereby you attain sanctification. The old Adam does not decay, but when you see God, you will be so illuminated by his holiness that you will be completely holy. Just as a body that is dark in itself then becomes full of light as the light shines on it, so it is with us in relation to sanctification. Or, to illustrate this with an example: suppose I am in a dark cellar into which only a few rays of light fall, my body will also remain dark. If, on the other hand, I place myself in the rays of light that penetrate from outside, my body will also become a little light. But if I step out of the cellar and stand in the bright rays of the midday sun, my whole body will be light. So here too we have only a few rays of the knowledge of God, and therefore our sanctification is only imperfect. For it is through the knowledge of God that our sanctification

is effected. Insofar as a person recognizes God, he is holy. Here we recognize him only in part, therefore our sanctification here is also still imperfect. In eternity, however, our knowledge of God will be perfect, and there we too will be completely holy. But of course, sanctification must already be present with us here, otherwise we will not attain it for all eternity. He who dies without God is eternally without God. He who dies without grace is eternally without grace. He who dies without sanctification is eternally full of sin. Perfect sanctification on earth is not possible. If the same were demanded of us, we would all be lost. But we must be dead to sin so that we do not enjoy any sin. It is true that even a true Christian may still feel a sinful desire within himself, but he should not think that he is therefore not a Christian. This desire is only an impulse of the old man in him; the new man fights against it. Whoever does not regard sin as an enemy that wants to break into the land and at whose approach one begins to trumpet loudly to call everyone together not to let the enemy in, is not a Christian. The battle of the flesh and the spirit is the true mark of a true Christian. Even in this battle the spirit does not always triumph, but is often overcome by the flesh: if only we do not allow ourselves to be dominated by the flesh.

"For Christ has not only merited for us grace, but also the gift of the Holy Spirit, that we might not only have forgiveness of sins, but also cessation from sins (John 1:16, 17). Whoever therefore does not cease from sin, but remains in his former evil nature, must have a different Christ from the antinomians. The true Christ is not there, and if all the angels cry out vainly, "Christ! Christ!" and must be condemned with his new Christ." (Walch. XVI, 2741 f.)

He has a new Christ who preaches such a Christ, who delivers us from guilt and punishment, but not from the dominion and filth of sin. Justification and sanctification are closely connected. Therefore, it cannot be true what that superintendent once said: "I have the grace of justification, but not the grace of sanctification.

How terrible it is that the Roman Church has a doctrine of justification which is nothing other than a doctrine of sanctification. According to its doctrine, sanctification does not come about by the fact that justification produces a new man who walks in a new life, but rather that the first grace and the ability to love are poured into man so that he can storm heaven. In this way, however, God's glory is taken away and attributed to man. The worst thing about them is that by faith they understand only the historical.

Therefore our doctrine of justification is a mystery to them, which they cannot comprehend. That is why they are frightened when we say that we are justified by faith alone. But when we speak of faith, we are also speaking of regeneration. For the rebirth is nothing other than the birth of faith. Now the Romans think that if everyone who believes is born again, then it is an easy thing to be born again, whereas this is precisely what we can see from the fact that faith is not what many people understand it to be. Precisely because regeneration does not come from us, but from the Holy Spirit, faith is also not our work, but that of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration and faith coincide. If the one who has not been born again is not to see the kingdom of God, then nothing but faith can enable me to see the kingdom of God.

As soon as faith begins, sanctification also begins. The two cannot be separated, any more than light and fire can be separated. The thief on the cross is a good example of this. For as soon as he believed, he also began to punish the other evildoer. Otherwise the Scriptures could not say: "Follow...holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord". [Hebrews 12:14] It does not say: without good works, but: without sanctification you cannot be saved. Hence Paul also says: "Those whom he has justified, he has also glorified". [Romans 8:30] This glorification means nothing other than perfect sanctification in eternal life. Likewise, the Savior says of the Holy Spirit: He will glorify me. This happens in sanctification.

To the remark as to whether the use of such sharp expressions as "he is not a Christian" was not to be feared by those under attack, the reply was made: It could not be prevented that they would misunderstand such words, otherwise they would not be challenged. For every temptation is a lack of divine light and knowledge; otherwise one could speak until death: "I rejoice in the Lord, and am joyful in my God". [Isaiah 61:10] But I must not abandon the doctrine just because someone is offended by it. Paul says clearly: "Sin will have no dominion over you", etc. Rom 6:14. If I am a Christian, sin can attack me like a robber. But I do not treat him as my king. I give him [the king] what he demands. But I am not at the will of the robber, but try to slip away from him, draw my pistol and say to him: "Come now! I do not value my life so highly, but I am in a state of self-defense, and must not do every street thief's bidding." Anyone who does not stand against sin as against a robber, but as against his superiors, is not a Christian. We must preach like this, otherwise we will strengthen the security of the secure. Otherwise the hypocrite might think he is going to heaven too. That is also a danger to the soul, which we have to take into account. Or should I, in order to comfort

only the challenged, let the secure go to hell? There is thunder and lightning in the pulpit, that has to happen, otherwise you are not a faithful preacher. We must first do the law as a foreign work before we can comfort the brokenhearted. This is especially true for our time. Things are not the same for us Christians now as they were at the beginning of the Reformation. Luther found a poor, shattered people who, like Israel, had run out of water from the bottle, as he himself wrote. In his own words, he had to preach grace and nothing but grace. But when Germany was filled with the gospel, he saw with horror how security and recklessness took over. Just read his *House Postils* and see how he is often violently zealous in it, while in the *Church Postils* he simply pours out grace. Our congregations are usually such that we can bring them more of the message of grace, but in new congregations we need the law more. Nor should we refrain from preaching the law in old congregations, not only because Christians easily fall back into security, but also because new members are constantly being added. The fearfulness in such a case arises from the fact that the Pietists speak of different degrees; but it is unfounded if only the preaching is otherwise pure. One says to such a person: You no longer love sin, but would prefer to be rid of it. This will not confuse them any more than if you demand such a certain degree from them. If, for example, someone who is afflicted and has an unreconciled heart wanted to complain about it, we would have to comfort him. But if he said, "I will not be reconciled," we would have to answer him, "First be converted". The example was given of one who was afflicted, whose heart was troubled because he did not love God. When he was comforted, he simply said, "I am not doing it," and went away crushed. But he did not say, "I will not", but rather: "I, a poor damned man, am not able to".

We preachers must certainly remember that we Christians are made up of two people, the old and the new; otherwise we will never be able to practice true pastoral care. All sins are still rooted in the Christian. Out of the heart come evil thoughts, etc., says the Lord in Matt. 15:19. This does not only apply to the ungodly, but anyone who has a heart should take note of it. Whoever does not believe this is a miserable Pharisee. If someone who has been spiritually disturbed comes and complains that he does not love God, answer him, "I believe it, but I do not. At first he will be dismayed. Now say to him: I do not do it according to my old man, who cannot love God, but hates Him. I also have another man, the new man, who loves God and hates the old man. Whoever does not have this is not a Christian.

It should also be borne in mind that the spiritually disturbed are always in great danger of either despairing or falling into sin. They have to endure the most terrible hardship. Some cannot endure this, but to numb themselves they give themselves over to sin. This must be pointed out to him and he must be told: Be careful that you do not give in to sin. Paul so beautifully describes the inner being of a Christian with the words: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do". Romans 7:19. This always applies to the whole person. Whoever can say: I do not will the evil that I do, is a Christian. So it remains with the Christian until death. Anyone who thinks otherwise is a fool. But we cannot thank God enough that we have this passage. It gives us a deep insight into the heart of the apostle and shows us how he too was imperfect. The Methodists, of course, find it very uncomfortable. They try to make do by explaining it from the state before his conversion; otherwise they would be holier than the apostle. So it is done by [\[William\] Nast](#) in his commentary and even by a [Neander](#). But this is refuted by Paul himself in the following words: "I delight in God's law according to the inward man". [Romans 7:22] And further: "So then I serve the law of God with my mind, but the law of sin with my flesh". [Romans 7:25]

Now since we derive all sanctification from faith, and do not teach that we can improve ourselves by our own strength or even become perfect here, but that the Holy Spirit equips us with new powers and purifies us more and more, until He will make us perfect there in eternal life, we also give all glory to God in this doctrine. Let us learn from Luther not only how to preach faith, but also how to preach sanctification.

[C. Good Works.] [^](#)

In the doctrine of good works, too, we give all glory to God, and in this, too, our church proves itself to be the true one.

The Lutheran Church is accused of being very zealous in teaching justification, but little about sanctification and especially too little about good works; this is its weakness. However, we do not condemn good works, but only those that are not such, or those in general by which one seeks to earn merit with God. This is rightly done by us. If God has promised something to good works, it is out of pure goodness and is a reward of grace. Just as it is with a father who does not want his child to be idle, keeps him busy and orders him to carry the shavings out and in, from which he may not even benefit, so God also keeps us busy without benefiting from us. And just as a father praises such a child and gives him a piece of candy, so

God also rewards our works out of pure goodness. If anything could be earned by our works, it would make God's grace an article of commerce, God a junk dealer and the Church a junk shop. Even Adam in paradise, if he had remained faithful to God, would not have earned eternal life, but would have obtained it out of pure goodness. You can't say "out of pure grace", because grace presupposes guilt. What would have happened out of goodness then, happens out of grace now that we have fallen. Hence the unbelievers call Christianity a beggar's religion, of which they therefore want to know nothing. As [[Johann Gottfried Seume](#)] expressed himself in such a godless sense, he did not want to beg for mercy from God, but would say to Him: "I have done this, give me my reward!" God will certainly give such people their reward and say to them: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!" [Matt. 25:31]

Our Lutheran Church's doctrine of good works is the right one because it gives God all the glory, firstly by separating everything false from the doctrine of good works, which destroys God's majesty and independence. Man can never lay claim to a reward, but can only hold up to God the promises which He has given us in His Word by grace.

In the Lutheran Church we give God the glory by calling only those good works that really are good works. We only call that a good work when we either do something that God has commanded us to do or leave something that he has forbidden. Everything that the papists devise for themselves, fasting, monasticism, pilgrimages, etc., are shameful works; likewise what the enthusiasts devise for themselves. Such works are nothing but pure sin, since they arise from lust for reward and are directed against God's majesty; because they forbid something that God has not forbidden, and which therefore no creature can forbid, and because they command something that God has not commanded, and which therefore no conscience can bind.

Furthermore, we give glory to God by teaching that only those works which God does are good.

And finally, by teaching that only that is a good work which is done to the glory of God and for the good of men.

We can see how seriously Luther demanded good works from the following passage: "We say that God saves us through faith alone, without regard to works. Why then does St. Peter say that he judges not according to the person but according to the works?" — This seems to be quite contrary to Luther's teaching, and yet it agrees with it in the most glorious way. — "Answer: What we have taught about how faith alone justifies is undoubtedly true, since it is so clear from Scripture that it cannot be denied. It is also true that the apostle says here (1 Peter 1:17) that God judges according to works. But it

should certainly be taken for that: Where faith is not, there can be no good work; and again, that where there are no good works, there is no faith. Therefore He joins faith and good works together, so that in the two there is the sum of the whole Christian life. As you now live, so it will be with you, and God will judge you accordingly. Therefore, even though God judges us according to our works, it remains true that works alone are the fruit of the tree, by which one can see where faith or unbelief is; therefore God will judge you by your works and convince you that you have believed or not believed." — Many hypocrites shamefully abuse the doctrine of faith, thinking that if they only say to God: "I have believed", then all is well; he will not ask about their works. But God will answer them: "Now I am not asking how you believed, but what you did". And from this He will draw the conclusion as to whether you have also believed. Otherwise the devil might say afterwards: How can you save him? But God will show the devil and the wicked from the works of his believers that they have had true faith. — [Luther continues:] "Just as a liar cannot be judged and condemned on the basis of his words; nor is it evident that he does not become a liar by his words, but was a liar before he spoke a lie, for the lie must come from the heart into the mouth. Therefore understand this saying most simply, that works are fruits and signs of faith, and that God judges people according to such fruits, which must surely follow, so that it may be seen publicly where faith or unbelief is." — God sees faith, but we do not see it. But one day He will reveal it when He brings the good works of Christians to light, so that the wicked will marvel at them, even though they once noticed nothing but weakness in the believers. Then God will reveal the counsel of the heart, i.e. it will become apparent what a new heart the Christian has received through faith. — "God will not judge whether you are called a Christian or whether you have been baptized, but will ask you: If you are a Christian, tell me, where are the fruits so that you can prove your faith?" (Luther in the interpretation of 1 Peter 1:17. Walch. IX, 672 f. [[St. L. 9, 993-994](#); [AE 30, 34-35](#)])

If one always hears the message of grace, one can easily fall into the trap of disregarding good works. A true Christian rejoices when he is warned of this danger. He needs such salt that he does not become lazy.

How highly Luther placed works is also evident from the following passage: "Behold, how finely they (the Anabaptists) teach of good works; say, they give their good works for a penny." — (But they were not even worth a penny.) — "Thus they want to be our monkeys,

and teach like us, because they have heard that we teach that good works do not make pious, nor do they blot out sin, nor reconcile God. But the devil makes his addition to this, and despises good works so much that he wants to sell them all for a penny. Then I praise God my Lord that the devil, in his cleverness, must so shamefully abuse and deceive himself. We teach, then, that God's reconciliation, his making pious, his blotting out sin, is such a great, high, glorious work that Christ alone, the Son of God, must do it, and is actually a pure, unique, special work of the one true God and His grace, for which our works are and can do nothing. But that therefore good works should be nothing, or be worth a penny, who has ever heard or taught this except from the devil's lying mouth?" [[St. L. 14, 310](#); not in Am. Ed.]

We preachers should remember that it is part of our task to emphasize the necessity and high value of good works; otherwise we are neglecting a high duty and doing great harm to our congregations. In justification we should trample all works underfoot, but outside of justification we should emphasize works. Many praise the gospel, but they are lazy about good works. They think it is enough if they go to church and hear God's Word; but if something is to be done for the kingdom of God, they are so shamefully stingy that they would rather have their finger cut off than give anything for it. If there is something to be done in the church, they have no time. If they have to do something for their neighbor for which they get nothing, they also have no time. They don't go to the church meeting, they speak: This can be done without me, and thus prove that they lack the right seriousness in Christianity; otherwise they would be happy and cheerful to do good. Such do not consider the harm they do to themselves, not through their powerlessness but through their sluggishness to do good works.

The apostle uses the expression Phil 4:17: "I desire fruit that may abound to your account." So God has, as it were, a book in His hands, in which every good work, every prayer, every Lord's Prayer, every sigh, every tear, every gift that I have given for His kingdom out of true love for God, every thanksgiving to God, every act of charity toward my neighbor, every reconciliation with my enemy is recorded. Yes, whatever work it may be, everything is written in it, even the glass of water with which I gave to the thirsty for the sake of Christ shall not be forgotten. What a great sum of good works will be found among true Christians! They themselves will be amazed at it. But the sluggish will see what a great difference there is between those who are always ready to serve everyone and those who are not, not in terms of salvation but in terms of glory.

True Christianity consists not only in diligent church attendance. As good as this is in itself, it is only the means to it. Many a man reads his morning and evening prayer, or goes to a prayer meeting, or even gives up smoking, and now thinks what a good work he has done. But it is not a question of what we regard as good works, but what God regards as good works. He demands works from us that come from love for Him and gratitude. That is a big difference. But he then wants to reward such works in the richest possible way. As it says in Scripture: God will give "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" [Ephesians 3:20]. And in another place: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us". [Romans 8:18] Therefore, no preacher should shed a tear when oppressed by his congregation. He will marvel at the glory that awaits him in return in eternal life. And if it were possible, he would say: Oh, if only I had suffered more! Let no one be indifferent to the affliction that befalls him, but if he suffers for Christ's sake, let him rejoice as much as he can, for it is all in his account. Let no one consider a Christian a fool because he puts up with everything. For he who is despised here will one day be seen there in great glory. But let him who is slow to do good know that he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. We must reproach people with this. Otherwise the devil will blind them so that they forget all about sowing. We should not wrongly rely on God's mercy and neglect works, because 1. we will easily lose grace; 2. we will show our ingratitude to God, who requires us to do them; 3. we will be surprised at what we have in eternal life that others do not have.

Some will lose the jewel because they think that good works are not necessary. They are certainly not necessary for salvation, but otherwise they are necessary. Anyone who denies this is not a Lutheran. According to Scripture, Christians strive for eternal life through good works.

Luther continues: "I would not give one of my sermons, one of my lessons, one of my Lord's Prayer, no matter how small works I have always done, or still do, for the whole world's goods; yes, I consider it more precious than my life, which is and should be dearer to everyone than the whole world. For if it is a good work, God has done it through me and in me. If God has done it and it is God's work, what is the whole world compared to God and his work? Even if I do not become pious through such a work (for that must first happen through Christ's blood and grace, without works), nevertheless it is done to God for praise and honor, for the benefit and salvation of my neighbor, which cannot be paid for or compared with the world's goods." (Preface to *Justi Menii Büchlein von der Wiedertäufer Lehre und Geheimniß*. 1530. XIV, 281. f.)

Let no one therefore despise his good works when he knows for certain: "I have done this out of love for You, my God."

Note well the principle: Only that is a good work which brings about something good. All self-chosen works are not good works. Some people think that if they enter a monastery they are doing a good work, whereas such a person is nothing but a glutton who spends his life in laziness, begging instead of working. Such a man is of no use to anyone. Once there came a man to Alexander the Great who had great skill in throwing peas a long distance to the head of a needle. He wanted to show his skill to the king and wondered what reward he would receive. But Alexander ordered him to be given a large sack of peas so that the man would have something to do. That's the way the good Lord does it with useless saints who do something for themselves and expect miracles in return.

The best way to test a good work is to ask oneself whether it benefits one's neighbor or whether one does it only because it benefits him. If this is not the case, then it is an ungodly work. Now consider his good works: how many such works do we do? Certainly not enough. We must not forget that it is often said in Scripture that they will be well rewarded. A preacher should not think that he is not allowed to speak of this. The Scriptures themselves speak of it. A Christian needs to be given such support. Therefore we say confidently: Dear brothers, do this work, it will be well rewarded to you in heaven if you do it for God's sake. There is no need to be afraid of making people greedy for rewards. First preach diligently about grace, then you can also preach confidently about the great reward of good works. But if the doctrine of justification is not preached with emphasis, then you can certainly do harm by preaching about works. Good works that come about through threats are not good works. But boldly remind Christians of the reward of grace that the Lord has promised them; then some will certainly find themselves willing to give with joy and pleasure. Our pastors neglect far too much to encourage people to do good works. If one is to appeal to his congregation to contribute their gifts for a certain purpose in the kingdom of God, some people think that this is an uncomfortable work, but it is a blessed work that we should do properly. We should try to get to people's hearts and work to take away all their unwillingness and instead awaken in them a desire and love for good works.

One such request that we could make to our congregations at the present time would be for contributions to the new building of our college. We should ask them to do this and tell them that we are doing it because we

wish that it would one day be in their account. It is true that God can build his kingdom without us. If we do not want to contribute anything, God will not throw up His hands and say, "Now I can do nothing, those on earth will not give me money. He has no need of us, but he will gladly make us his instruments, whom he also wants to reward. Now a pastor says to his congregation: "Because I don't want you to be deprived of this reward, I would like you to give something in return. You would have to reject me as godless if I passed you by. Just as a true Christian feels hurt when a truly needy beggar goes to all the others in the neighborhood and does not come to him. We need the college building most urgently. If we don't want to do it, God may let his work with us go backwards and raise up others to build his kingdom. But do not threaten, but ask the people for the sake of God's mercy, and tell them that it is a grace to give something for God's kingdom, and that you want to give them the opportunity to reap a harvest. This harvest would be abundant.

Once when it turned out in a community that the school was not paying for itself, and in order to get the teacher's salary, even those who had no children were asked to do something, one of them refused to pay a contribution for the school. He was then told that of course it could not be imposed on him, but if one day in heaven the reward for the blessing that had been bestowed by this school was distributed by our Lord Christ, then he would receive no reward for it, but should go away empty-handed, whereupon he also became willing to support the school. This is what it means to encourage good works by offering a reward.