



**"Meditate
upon these things;
give thyself
wholly to them;
that thy profiting
may appear unto all"**

I Timothy 4:15

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JUSTIFICATION - THE CENTRAL DOCTRINE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

The doctrine of justification, specifically the teaching of the forgiveness of sins, is basic to Christianity. It is its very life, its heart-beat, its flesh and blood, its marrow and bone, its muscle, its brain. Without this doctrine Christianity would become a sham and an empty shell and would lose its distinctive character. Without it, Christianity would be distinguished from pagan worship only by way of terminology and not in essence and in fact. It is small wonder that Satan in his subtle ways seeks to undermine and erode it. Whether it be via the route of human authoritarianism or by the exercise of human reason, the result will be the same when this doctrine is vitiated. The forgiveness of sins will be made conditional or limited or restricted. In spite of pious phrases and expressions regarding the person and work of Jesus, the universality of grace and the *sola gratia* will then be wiped out and destroyed. It is therefore of extreme importance and a *sine qua non* that the doctrine of justification (the forgiveness of sins) be preserved in its Scriptural and pristine purity. Without it salvation is lost, and all ability to detect and reject false doctrine is erased and becomes an exercise of futility. Along these lines Dr. Martin Luther wrote to his friend and co-worker John Brenz as follows:

The principal teaching in all your writings is the doctrine of justification by faith, which you present accurately and faithfully. What a gift of God! This is a gift which you evidence more than many others and which I especially treasure so very much myself. This doctrine of justification is the principal doctrine and cornerstone, which alone creates, strengthens, builds up, maintains and guards the Church of God, and without which the Church of God could not stand for an hour! Of course, you know this very well yourself, dear Brenz; and as one who is united with me in this matter, you express this article of faith forcefully. Actually, no one in the Church who has not grasped this teaching (or as St.

Paul writes in 2 Tim. 4:3, has not grasped sound pure doctrine and holds to it), can teach anything correctly or properly refute any issue. (St. Louis Edition, XIV: 168. Translation by Prof. R. Dommer.)

When Jesus met with His disciples after His resurrection, He said to them: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things," (Luke 24:46-48). These words were spoken by the Savior after He had opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. Thus He made it clear to them that the heart and core of their ministry among all nations was to be the preaching of forgiveness of sins (justification). This message had its source and foundation in the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, the good news of the Gospel proclaimed in the Old Testament promises and now to be preached to all nations after their fulfillment. It is therefore no exaggeration when it is affirmed that this doctrine of justification comprises the central and chief article by which the Christian Church stands when it adheres to it or falls when it departs from it (*Articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*). This being the case, it must be of the greatest concern to every Christian pastor and to every member of the flock to be thoroughly grounded in this chief article. That this may be accomplished it is necessary to search out the Scriptures through which the Holy Spirit gives the assurance of its truth and its great blessing.

What then do the Scriptures teach on Justification (i.e., the forgiveness of sins)? A clear testimony of this subject is given by the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans. After having laid out the fact that Abraham was justified by faith on Him Who justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5), the apostle assures the Roman Christians and us that they and we are justified by faith without any participation on man's part but by virtue of the fact that Jesus was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:25). To the Corinthians he had written: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespass-

es unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:19-21). Proceeding to expand in Romans on the reality and factual existence of the forgiveness of sins for all man, Paul in the fifth chapter lays out the contrast between the reality of sin and judgment as it is passed upon all men by imputation of the sin of Adam and the reality and truth of justification as it has been pronounced upon all men on the basis of a universal redemption by one man, even Christ Jesus, the Savior of the world. Even as the imputation of Adam's sin and its judgment is universal, so also is justification and the gift of life by Jesus universal, for "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:8-9). This is the proof of God's love to the world of sinners. "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:18-19). The many who were made sinners through Adam are also the many who were made righteous through Christ and by virtue of His universal redemption. This then is a justification, a forgiveness, which applies to the whole world of sinners. When God raised up His Son from the dead, He thereby declared His acceptance of His Son's ransom payment for the sins of the world and in Him declared the whole world justified and forgiven in His sight. And it is therefore that we can preach the remission of sins unto all nations as Jesus has commissioned us to do (Luke 24:44-47). This is the ministry of reconciliation.

Now this does not mean that all men are in possession of the forgiveness of sins which is in the heart of God Who so loved the world, nor does it mean that all men will eventually be ushered into heaven (Universalism). Nor is it proper to call all men saints by virtue of the universal justification, for sainthood is a status reserv-

ed for those who have placed their trust in Christ's redemption (Rom. 1:1-7). To teach universalism or to designate all men as saints is a perversion and abuse of the truth of universal justification. For Scripture also teaches a subjective justification, justification by faith.

While Scripture teaches that God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5) and does not impute the trespasses of the world unto them (II Cor. 5:19), it also teaches of one who believes in Him that "his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5). Of Abraham, for instance, it is said: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). This was reckoned to him of grace and not of debt. This, then, is not taught as though faith brings forgiveness into existence or as though faith performs such a work that righteousness is the result. It is indeed the object of faith, namely the righteousness of Christ, and the non-imputation of sin, the forgiveness of sins, which performs such a great work that the believer is accounted righteous. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all. (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:16-17). While indeed Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6) and died for us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8), and while God in Christ did not impute the trespasses of the world unto them (II Cor. 5:19); only he has peace with God and rejoices in the hope of the glory of God who has faith in Jesus and thus places his trust in Him Who is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

Faith then is the receiving hand (*organon leptikon*) which lays hold of, accepts, and puts its trust in the forgiveness of sins. It does not bring into existence that which it grasps but receives the pardon which has been purchased and declared and pronounced upon all the world by the gracious God. It puts its trust in a forgiveness that is real and not merely potential, a pardon

that is conditioned not by anything in man but only by the universal redemption in Christ. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16). "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:13-14). Our Confessions put it this way: "These treasures are offered us by the Holy Ghost in the promise of the Holy Gospel and faith alone is the only means by which we lay hold upon, accept, and apply, and appropriate them to ourselves" (F.C. Thor. Decl. III, Trigl. p. 919). Thus Chemnitz also writes: "Justifying faith deals with its object not merely by cold calculation nor by a general and superficial assent, but in such a way that it acknowledges, considers, desires, seeks, apprehends, accepts and embraces, and so appropriates to the individual believer, Christ with all His merits and through Christ, by virtue of the promise, God's mercy, which is forgiveness of sins" (*Examen, De Fide Iustificante*, p. 161).

The doctrine of Justification is proof positive that man's salvation is in no respect due to his cooperation but rests upon and alone proceeds from the good and gracious favor of God in Christ Jesus. "To him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5). This is just another way of saying that through faith we receive the forgiveness of sins which has already been pronounced upon all men (the ungodly) by the Justifier. The works of the law are clearly excluded from the transaction of justification which places the honor upon Him Who is the object of faith, Christ alone, Who by His fulfillment of the law and the payment of the ransom has provided all that is necessary for our release from the curse and condemnation of the law. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again who is even at the right hand of

God who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:33-34). Justification then did not take place through the ~~infusion~~ of grace (*gratia infusa*) as though it became a reality only by the exercise of love or any other work on man's part. Abraham had nothing whereof to glory except in Him Who declared His righteousness for the remission of sins. Thus our Confessions clearly state the case: "That neither renewal, sanctification, virtues nor good works are *tamquam forma aut pars aut causa iustificacionis*, that is, our righteousness before God, nor are they to be constituted and set up as a part or cause of our righteousness or otherwise under any pretext, title, or name whatever to be mingled in the article of justification as necessary and belonging thereto; but that the righteousness of faith consists alone in the forgiveness of sins out of pure grace, for the sake of Christ's merit alone; which blessings are offered us in the promise of the Gospel, and are received, accepted, applied, and appropriated by faith alone" (F.C. Thor. Decl. III:39, Trigl., p. 929).

At this point it may be helpful to bring in a witness to the Scriptural doctrine of Justification as it was presented in the work of Dr. Ed. Preuss entitled "*Die Rechtfertigung des Suenders vor Gott, aus der Heiligen Schrift dargelegt.*" Concerning this presentation Dr. C. F.W. Walther wrote in *Lehre und Wehre*, July, 1869: "This work constitutes without a doubt the most excellent discussion of justification that has been written in our century." The citation here given is from the translation by the Rev. Julius A. Friedrich and the section is entitled "The Imputation."

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of reconciliation," (II Cor. 5:19). If the king issues an amnesty and does not send his messengers, men or letters, to publish it, it will profit no one. Therefore God has sent His apostles, and the words of St. Paul, spoken at Antioch, "That through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," (Acts 13:38) have for nineteen hundred years continued to ring throughout the nations. The gates of the prison are shattered;

God's messengers are standing on the threshold and cry, "Go forth." Is it God's fault if some remain in it because they love their dungeon? Freedom was granted to all the captive Jews in Babylon, but those who desired to remain there did not come into possession of it. He, however, who hears God's message and goes forth is free; him God, for the sake of the perfect satisfaction rendered by Christ, regards as righteous.

This justification does not coincide with the atonement on the cross, but is rather its fruit. God justifies you by not only announcing grace to you, but by truly and actually receiving you into the relation of grace and sonship. The verb to justify occurs thirty-eight times in the New Testament, and in all these thirty-eight passages it signifies a forensic act. It means to regard as righteous, to declare righteous, not to infuse righteousness. This may be seen most clearly Luke 10:29. The lawyer, "willing to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor?" That certainly cannot be rendered: "He wanted to infuse righteousness into himself," but: "He wanted to be his own judge and acquit himself." Luke 16:15, Jesus chides the Pharisees: "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men: but God knoweth your hearts." Would He have chided them if they had endeavored to bring a gift of righteousness into their hearts? I rather think they wanted to be regarded as righteous without changing their heart. Luke 7:29 it is said of the publicans that they even "justified God, being baptized." Does this really mean they infused righteousness into God? A heathen would be ashamed to talk such nonsense. No; Luther translates correctly: "*Sie gaben Gott recht*"; that is they confessed by their act that God is "just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." When therefore, Scripture says: God justifies the sinner, then this means: He regards him righteous, He acquits him; not: He infuses something into him. Else how could God's justifying and condemning be placed in direct antithesis to each other? But this is done, Rom. 8:33.34: "It is God that justifieth. Who will condemn?" And Rom. 5:16: "The

judgment was by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification"; and Matt. 12:37: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." This is the language employed already by the Seventy who translated the Old Testament Is. 50:8; Deut. 25:1. But lest any one doubt that God's justifying is indeed a judicial sentence, which declares us to be free, we call attention to equivalent expressions in which the Holy Ghost says the same thing in other passages: John 3:18: "Not to be condemned," and John 5:24: "Not to come into condemnation."

Our judge, then, acquits us, and that by grace. But in Scripture "grace" means "God's favor with which He wishes us well and is gracious to us" (Luther). Happy are we beggars! For naught we were sold; we shall be redeemed without money; yes, altogether without our merit. Not as Joseph, who found grace in the sight of Potiphar because he was a prosperous man. And even though we had the virtues of Joseph, God's eyes are not the eyes of Potiphar, but flames of fire, before which no one can stand. Within us there is no merit, no worth, whereon the sentence of God is based; on the contrary, we are conceived in sin, and on account of thousands of sinful deeds we are worthy of death. In us, O Lord, Thou findest no source of blessing, but a fountain of condemnation. Nevertheless Thou justifiest us freely and by grace! True, not without cost on the part of God; for we are justified freely by grace only on the basis of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24). This then, is the real procedure in God's judgment: Just as He, on the one hand, imputed our sin to His beloved Son, who knew no sin, even so He, on the other hand, imputed the righteousness of Christ to us, who knew no righteousness (II Cor. 5:21). That God imputes a foreign righteousness is said Rom. 4:6 and Phil. 3:9. But this righteousness is Christ, we read I Cor. 1:30 and twice in Jeremiah, c. 23:5.6. Therefore the Formula of Concord correctly says: "On account of the complete obedience which He (Christ) rendered His heavenly Father for us, by doing and suffering, in living and dying, God forgives

our sins, regards us as godly and righteous" (Trigl. 919f.).

"Regards us as righteous," not "makes us righteous." The very first passage in the Bible where this word occurs which has caused such controversy is victoriously clear: "God counted it to Abraham for righteousness" Gen. 15:6. True, there is also an imputation "of debt," that of the hire to the laborer. But according to the expressed testimony of the Holy Ghost the imputation of which we are here speaking does not take place as "of debt" (Rom. 4:5). The former has its ground in man, to whom something is imputed; the latter in Him who imputes, in God. Just as Christ was numbered with the transgressors not because He had done evil, but for our sakes, because it so pleased God. And this remains the rock on which the pure doctrine of the imputed righteousness rests; according to II Cor. 5:21 God makes us righteous in the same way as He makes Christ a sinner, and in no other. The papists persist in objecting that an imputed righteousness, which does not dwell in the hearts, is a dream. Very well, if it is a dream indeed, then the vicarious satisfaction of Christ together with His suffering is a dream too. The bitter reality of the one guarantees the truth of the other. For just as little as our own unrighteousness dwelt in Christ as wickedness and was nevertheless truly imputed to Him, just so little does the righteousness which makes us righteous before God dwell in us, and is nevertheless truly imputed to us, so much so that we are of good cheer even in the face of death. Behold, the Holy One in Israel cries on the cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and the sinner Polycarp rejoices in the agony of death, "Lord God, I praise Thee that Thou hast in this day and in this hour counted me worthy to partake, with all Thy martyrs, of the cup of Thy Christ for the resurrection of soul and body in the incorruptibility of the Holy Ghost." Is it not this way: The Man on the cross bore, by imputation, foreign sin, and the man on the pyre, by imputation, foreign righteousness? He wore it as a garment. This picture is used by Scripture to hold up

before our eyes the imputed righteousness of Christ. Isaiah sings: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation. He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Is. 61:10). And Christ advises the bishop of Laodicea to buy of Him white raiment that the shame of his nakedness do not appear (Rev. 3:18). Whosoever is not clothed in the wedding-garment which the King requires, because He furnishes it Himself, will be cast out of the wedding-hall (Matt. 22:11-13). The same picture is employed when Scripture speaks of "putting on Christ"; often also in such passages where it is said that we are or should be in Christ. In Christ we are blessed; in Christ we have grace; in Christ we have redemption, victory. That is to say, blessing, grace, redemption, victory — all these we shall have only when Christ covers us with His merits as with a garment. Thereby both things happen at once: the garment glows about your shoulders, and you are no longer naked. If God bestows the righteousness of Christ on man, He grants him the forgiveness of sins. That is the reason why Scripture sometimes calls the imputation of Christ's merit "Justification," at other times "Forgiveness" (Acts 13:38-39). In fact, those passages in which justification is treated most extensively define the imputation of righteousness simply as forgiveness of sins. Rom. 4:6-7 it is said: "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." That is the doctrine of the Fathers also. And what is more natural? Even our sin has its positive and its negative side ("*ihr Ja und Nein*," i. e. "its yea and its nay"), positive, wickedness; negative, unrighteousness. So grace comes and blots out the negative by imputing the righteousness of Christ and the positive by granting forgiveness.

However, this justification, or imputation, or forgiveness — choose whichever name you will — is an act of God which takes place in time. And mark you,

for every man individually. The justification of Paul did not come to pass at the same time as that of Cornelius; but as often as a heathen forsakes his idols, or a Jew his Talmud, so often does God justify. Come he must, of course. For he that does not come, that is "Believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:16). (In the original German edition of 1871, pp. 17-26.)

The above presentation comprises the entire second chapter, "*Die Zurechnung.*" Rather than to select portions, we thought it best to give the chapter in its entirety. Dr. Walther certainly made no mistake in saying that this is a most excellent discussion.

Among those who reject universal justification and who insert "infused grace" into the doctrine of justification by grace, a common complaint is made against us to the effect that we by-pass and neglect the importance of good works. This is wholly unjustified, for indeed those who uphold the Scriptural teaching of justification are the very ones who teach the true importance of good works. Their teaching of good deeds points to those works which are good and acceptable in the sight of God. Indeed the works of man had no place in motivating God in reconciling the world unto Himself. This took place in Christ and in Him alone. Therefore those who insert the works of man or his so-called better disposition into God's pronouncement of forgiveness detract from the work of Christ and water down the vicarious atonement. The apostle Paul made this abundantly clear when he wrote to the Galatians: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). Previously he had said: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16). Thus the works of the law and anything which man can do or feel are 100% excluded from God's act of justification. But Paul did not ignore or by-pass the importance of good works. What he did was to place their performance into the right and proper relationship to the gift of justification. This he did when he pointed out the truth that good works of a Christian are a result of God's gracious

act of justification and come as a fruit of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 5:22-6:2).

The proper relationship is set forth in Paul's letter to the Ephesians: "For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10). On the basis of this he proceeded to say: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:1-2). Along the same line he had words for the wives, husbands, servants, and masters. Through it all it was made clear that man could find in himself nothing whereof to boast or pride himself as though he had provided anything toward his own salvation. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. 6:14-15).

Certainly faith will bear fruit as surely as it is a true faith. Jesus brought that out when He said: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). Thus our Confessions also say: "We also say that love ought to follow faith, as Paul also says, Gal. 5:6: For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love. And yet we must

not think that on that account that by confidence in this love or on account of this love we receive the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation just as we do not receive the remission of sins because of other works that follow" Apology of the Augs. Conf, Art. IV, Trigl. pp. 153-155). But now someone will say: "Didn't Jesus say that on the last day of judgment the works of the Christian will be brought into evidence?" Indeed He did, but He did not there say how they had become Christians. The practice of ministering to the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger and the imprisoned is cited as being characteristic of those who are the blessed of the Father (Matt. 26:34ff.). As such who have received the greatest of all blessings, justification (the forgiveness of sins), they perform these good works as a fruit of their faith. That there is here no thought of earning salvation is shown by their surprise when the Savior lists their good works and tells them that inasmuch as they have done them unto the least of His brethren, they have done them to Him. Furthermore, they are called heirs of a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. No sign here of *gratia infusa*, of man's work or better disposition as a contributing factor in justification. Indeed the very opposite is the case. That the man of God be thoroughly furnished unto good works is certainly important, for it is the product of justification and is a fruit of faith. Without works following, that which is called faith would be no faith at all but dead and worthless and that man's religion would be vain, as the apostle James testifies. But he who is a doer of the work is blessed in his deed (James 1:25-26).

In closing this dissertation we can do no better than to cite the words of Dr. Martin Luther, who, in commenting on the third article of the Creed where we confess that we believe the forgiveness of sins, said: "Everything, therefore, in the Christian Church is ordered to the end that we shall daily obtain the forgiveness of sin through the Word and signs, to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live here. Thus, although we have sins, the Holy Ghost does not allow them to injure us, because we are in the Christian Church, where there is nothing but forgiveness of sin, both in that God forgives us, and in that we forgive, bear with, and help each other" (Trigl. p. 693).

C. M. Gullerud

QUOTABLE QUOTES ON JUSTIFICATION

"When the Lord Jesus came, He forgave to all sin which no one could avoid, and, by the shedding of His own blood, blotted out the handwriting which was against us. This is what He says in Rom. 5:20: 'The Law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.' Because after the whole world became subject, He took away the sin of the whole world, as he (John) testified, saying, John 1:29: 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'" (Ambrose, quoted with approval in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Art. IV, #103. Trigl., p. 151.)

The obedience of Christ "is a complete satisfaction, and expiation for the human race, by which the eternal, immutable righteousness of God, revealed in the Law, has been satisfied, and is thus our righteousness, which avails before God and is revealed in the Gospel, and upon which faith relies before God, as it is written, Rom. 5,19: 'For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous;' and I John 1,7: 'The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin.' Likewise: 'The just shall live by his faith,' Hab. 2,4; Rom. 1,17." (The Formula of Concord, Art. III, #57. Trigl., p. 935.)

"What does the resurrection of Christ mean? It was the act of God pronouncing Christ righteous. But Christ died, laden not with His own, but with the sins of the whole world and all its unrighteousness. ... But since Christ was condemned, not for His personal guilt, but for the sins of mankind, which He bore, it was not Christ, in His own person, who was justified in the resurrection, but the human race, for which He died and rose again. ... As sure as the Bible says: 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,' so surely there can be no longer any wrath in the heart of God, in so far as He views the world through Christ. ... The world in itself is under the curse and damnation, but as redeemed by Christ, because of His satisfaction, God is reconciled with the world." (Proceedings of the first meeting of the Synodical Con-

ference, 1872, pp. 31-37. Quoted in CTM, Vol. IV, 1933, p. 510.)

At the first meeting of the Synodical Conference in 1872 this statement was submitted and unanimously approved: "The justification of the human race took place indeed also with respect to its acquirement in a moment, in that moment when Christ rose and was thus justified, but with respect to the appropriation it goes on until the Last Day." (Quoted from J. J. Rambach, p. 45. Cited in CTM, Vol. IV, 1933, p. 510.)

"The purpose of this (Christ's) resurrection is manifold. (1) As a phase of Christ's exaltation, it was the natural consequence of his obediencial suffering unto death (Php 2:9; He. 2:9;). (2) It was not possible that he should be holden of death; thus the resurrection is the supreme proof of his divinity (Ro 1:4). (3) Christ repeatedly refers to it as the ultimate proof of his Messiahship (Mt 12:39f; 16:4; Lk 24:26,46). (4) Thus it became the unshakable witness of the justification of all mankind. Since he who offered his life in vicarious atonement for our sin, was raised from death, his work was thereby declared to be accomplished. 'He was raised again for our justification' (Ro 4:25). For this reason Christ's resurrection is the basis of all Christian faith and its denial is a total rejection of the gospel. (I Cor 15:17ff; Ac 2:36)." (*Biblical Christology*, by John Schaller, 1981 edition, p. 107.)

"By the same judicial act by which He pronounced Him guilty who was the world's Substitute, God acquitted and absolved the world, whose sins and guilt He laid to the charge of the Mediator. 2 Cor 5:19. By the resurrection of Christ, God from His judgment-throne pronounced His Son's obedience unto death a perfect atonement and propitiation for all the sins which were imputed to Him, the sins of the world. Rom 4:25. ... When God accounts, or imputes, faith for righteousness, this is the particular, subjective justification of the individual believer." (*Concordia Cyclopedia*, 1927, p. 381.)

"The chief benefit of Christ's vicarious obedience is the perfect righteousness obtained by Christ for all

mankind, the acquisition of which God accepted as a reconciliation of the world to Himself, imputing to mankind the merit of the Mediator — general or objective justification —; and inasmuch as faith is the actual acceptance of this imputation announced in the Gospel, or of the righteousness imputed and offered in the Gospel, it is justifying faith, and God in His judgment graciously and for Christ's sake holds and pronounces the believer actually and by personal application fully absolved from all guilt and punishment while in the state of faith — individual or subjective justification." (*Doctrinal Theology*, by A. L. Graebner, pp. 189-190.)

"While it is true that God has in Christ reconciled the whole world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, this does not become the possession of man except through faith; for it is through faith that we receive that which long since has been declared and pronounced by God, namely, the forgiveness of sins. Whether it be when the Gospel is preached, when the sacraments are administered, or when absolution is pronounced publicly or privately, it is always faith which receives and accepts and appropriates to us that which is given and offered, namely, the forgiveness of sins. Thus Scripture continually speaks of justifying faith as the means through which we receive the peace with God which Christ has fully effected for all men by His vicarious atonement. Let us quote a number of these Scripture passages: 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith unto this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God,' Rom. 5:1.2; 'In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by faith of Him.' Eph. 3:12; 'Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith,' Rom. 3:28; 'To Him give all the prophets witness that through His name, whosoever believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins,' Acts 10:43; 'The just shall live by his faith,' Hab. 2:4." (Proceedings of the ELS, 1939, pp. 26-27.)

"The resurrection of Christ is, as Holy Writ teaches, the actual absolution of the whole world of sinners. Rom. 4:25: 'Who was raised again for our justification.' At that time we were objectively declared free from sin.

The message of this finished reconciliation is brought to us by the Gospel ('the Word of Reconciliation,' 2 Cor. 5:19) and thus the subjective reconciliation takes place only by faith (*sola fide*). In other words: only for this reason does faith reconcile us with God (subjectively) that reconciliation has already been effected through Christ's satisfaction and is proclaimed and proffered to us in the Gospel. 'Be ye reconciled to God' (2 Cor. 5:20) — believe and accept the objective reconciliation procured by Christ and now offered to you. 'We have now' in coming to faith, in being justified, 'received the at-one-ment (reconciliation),' Rom. 5:11. This Scriptural truth that there is but one way of obtaining the subjective reconciliation, namely, by believing that Christ has already procured reconciliation and the forgiveness of sins, is the teaching of our Confessions. The Apology declares: 'Faith, however, reconciles and justifies before God the moment we apprehend the promise by faith' (Trigl. 213, Art. III). 'Thus, therefore, we are reconciled to the Father and receive remission of sins when we are comforted with confidence in the mercy promised for Christ's sake.' (Trigl., Art. IV, II, 81.) 'Faith reconciles us to God ... because it receives the remission of sins' (Trig. 155, *ibid.* 114; 171, Art. III, 61)." (*Christian Dogmatics*, by F. Pieper, Vol. II, pp. 348-349.)

U. S. LUTHERAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE ON JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH: AN EXAMINATION

Under the heading, "Justification by Faith," a U. S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue group last year released a 24,000 word document, the product of five years' work by the commission. Soon after its release on September 30, 1983, headlines appeared in the press from coast to coast, many of them making the most extravagant claims, such as: "Lutherans, Catholics agree on 'faith only' doctrine"; "Lutherans, Catholics settle 462-year dispute"; "Lutherans, Catholics resolve disagreement"; "Retracing the Reformation - Catholic and Lutheran theologians agree on a key doctrinal issue." What the effects of such publicity might be, staggers the imagination. Not even the dialogue group makes such claims as the above headlines are affirming. For one thing, the dialogue members are frankly admitting the obvious, namely that they are not speaking officially for the churches they represent. While the common statement represents a consensus of the respondents and is a report of their agreement on certain differences, they admit freely that some differences remain unresolved. However, it is suggested that these "remaining" differences need not be church-divisive. At the outset it must be noted that what these men consider necessary for church unity and requisite for church fellowship does not respond to what we believe the Holy Scripture requires. For it is quite clear that reservation is made by them for an allowable latitude of theological difference. On the other hand, what they consider a resolving of past differences may indeed be and in fact is a compromise, their claims to the opposite notwithstanding. It is incumbent upon us and important to our confession that their document be examined and judged on the basis of Scripture, lest false conclusions are formed on the grounds of the claims that have been made. Now that the entire document is at hand such an examination is possible. While not every point can be covered, it shall be the goal of this article to examine the basic provisions of the document to determine whether the agreement stands up under the judgment of Scripture or represents a departure from its teachings.

The document is divided into three sections or parts: "I. The history of the question. II. Reflection and Interpretation. III. Perspectives for Reconstruction." In the introduction a guiding principle is set forth on which it is said the Catholic and Lutheran members agree: "Our entire hope of justification and salvation rests on Christ Jesus and on the gospel whereby the good news of God's merciful action in Christ is made known; we do not place our ultimate trust in anything other than God's promise and saving work in Christ. This excludes ultimate reliance on our faith, virtues or merits, even though we acknowledge God working in these by grace alone (*sola gratia*)." (#4) This looks good, although one would like to know why the adjective "ultimate" is added and why it was necessary at this point to add the acknowledgement that God is working in faith, virtue, and merit by grace alone. We naturally look at such phrases with a caveat in view of the Roman Catholic teaching on "infused grace" and their use of *meritum de congruo* and *meritum de condigno*." (Cf. Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Art. III, 167-200. Trigl., pp. 201-209.)

I. The History of the Question

In introducing this section the statement admits that it "does not claim to have done justice to the complexity of the material and the variety of interpretations." As one reviews the highlighting of the aspects which the conferees thought to be of importance to the discussion, their admission is surely an understatement. The historical references to Augustine, Pelagius, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus *et al* do not in our view add any clarity to the discussion as it pertains to the official differences which exist between the Roman Catholic position and the Lutheran Confessions. The confessional writings have to stand on their own feet without any interpretations from scholars which may water down or explain away the differences which the very words of these documents clearly set forth, whether it be in the *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* or in the Lutheran Confessions of the *Book of Concord*.

When the document before us speaks of the need to overcome what it describes as "the confessionally and po-

lemically biased pictures of the past," it can well be said that this moves the discussion into an area of subjective historical criticism. One can see here the traces of the same kind of historical-criticism approach as is utilized by many in their study of the Bible, although in this latter case it is far more destructive. Furthermore, perfectly good and sound statements of doctrine are rendered more or less innocuous by such declarations as this: "Further, what was central to the Reformers was often secondary to their opponents; perhaps neither side fully considered the claims of the other." (#21) It is noteworthy that in setting forth the Decrees of the Council of Trent the condemnatory sections (*damnat sit*) are omitted. These especially set forth the basic difference as for instance: "If any one saith that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost and is inherent in them or even that the grace whereby we are justified is only the favor of God, let him be anathema." (Session 6: Canon 11.) "If anyone saith that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified, let him be anathema." (Session 6: Canon 12.) In reporting on the Lutheran Confessions the rejections of false doctrine are passed over as for instance the following: "We reject and condemn ... That in the sayings of the prophets and apostles where the righteousness of faith is spoken of the words justify and to be justified are not to signify declaring or being declared free from sin, and obtaining the forgiveness of sins, but actually being made righteous before God, because of love infused by the Holy Ghost, virtues and the works following them." (Formula of Concord, Epit. III, #15. Trig1., p. 795.) We can certainly not agree with the statement, "The *Formula of Concord* and Trent seem closer to each other on the role of morality and law in Christian life, the nature of sin, the primacy of grace and even the role of faith than were Luther and the 'Pelagianizers' whom he chiefly attacked." (#63) On the other hand, we can agree with the statement regarding Vatican II that it made no "radical break with earlier Catholic tradition and the doctrine of Trent." (#78) The

attempt of individual Catholic theologians to soften the polemical statements of the Council of Trent has no official standing in the church of Rome, although it may indicate a rebellion within the Roman Church against some of those condemnatory sections.

II. Reflection and Interpretation

But now we proceed to the nub of the dialogue, namely the group's reflection and interpretation. It is here suggested that the differences may be traced to contrasting concerns and patterns of thought in the two traditions and that through research and dialogue it may be seen that they could be complementary and not necessarily divisive. At this point it is quite evident that the Roman Catholic participants' view of justification mixes renewal or sanctification in the narrow sense (good works) into the doctrine of justification implying a *gratia infusa* (#100 and #105) which our confessions specifically warn against, e.g.: "We reject and condemn: That faith has the first place in justification, nevertheless also renewal and love belong to our righteousness before God in such a manner that they are indeed not the chief cause of our righteousness, but that nevertheless our righteousness before God is not entire or perfect without this love and renewal." (Formula of Concord, Epit. IV, #20. Trigl., p. 797.) While the differences here set forth in the document are quite well covered, they are minimized by such a statement as the following: "The essential intentions behind both the Catholic doctrine of merit *ex gratia* and the Lutheran doctrine of promise may be compatible, but the two sides have difficulty in finding a common language." (#112) With this we totally disagree in spite of the explanations given, for it is quite patent that the difference is doctrinal and basic and not just a difference in concern or language.

The document admits differences remain in the doctrine of satisfaction but this is softened by the statement that the Catholic doctrine of satisfaction properly understood may give "a Christian meaning to suffering and to solidarity in the communion of saints." (#116) Regarding official teaching on Mary and the cult of the saints it is certainly much too weak^e when it is said that Luth-

erans wonder whether these "detract from the principle that Christ alone is to be trusted for salvation because all God's saving gifts come through him alone." (#119)

III. Perspectives for Reconstruction

In this section it is not surprising to note that the historical-critical method of studying Scripture is spoken of as an encouraging trend both in Catholic and Lutheran circles. (#122) Needless to say we not only reject this approach but consider it a sign of deterioration and erosion. The historical-critical method is in evidence throughout this section which interprets key passages of Paul on the basis of pre-Pauline sources from the early Christian community. This leads to a statement such as this one: "Thus justification is not simply a future or present event, but is an eschatological reality which stretches from the past through the present and into the future." And here passages are cited such as Phil. 2:12-13. (#136) And accordingly we find such a surprising statement such as the following: "In James 2:14-26 however, we encounter the famous discussion of faith and works, which argues that justification is not by faith alone but by works that complete it." [sic] (#142) The idea of Gospel reductionism also comes out in this section which speaks of those parts of the Bible which focus on matters other than its center and which are therefore called "matters of secondary rank in canonical hierarchy." (#149)

In addressing the subject of growing convergencies we find a very revealing statement: "Theology in both churches is influenced by modern scriptural studies and intellectual developments in the humanities, social studies and the natural sciences." (#151) How true this is and how sad. This is cited as a factor in the drawing together of Lutherans and Catholics in education, social work and mission activity. Differences on purgatory, the papacy and cult of saints are admitted but the Lutheran conferees state that these may be rightly understood in ways consistent with justification by faith and therefore need not be divisive, nor stand in the way of limited admission to the Lord's Supper. (#153)

In a concluding paragraph it is stated: "We are grateful at this time to be able to confess together what our Catholic and Lutheran ancestors tried to affirm as they responded in different ways to the biblical message of justification. A fundamental consensus on the gospel is necessary to give credibility to our previous agreed statements on baptism, on the eucharist and on forms of church authority. We believe that we have reached such a consensus." (#164) Anyone who will compare the Catholic ancestors' response to the doctrine of justification as laid down in the official Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent with the official Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord must surely acknowledge that the differences are far deeper than just different ways of responding to the Biblical message of justification which Lutherans and Catholics can confess together. The difference is doctrinal and while the former teach an unconditioned Gospel (by grace alone) without the merits and deeds of men, the latter teach a conditioned Gospel (with its *gratia infusa*) both in its affirmations and condemnations. The chasm is deep and cannot be bridged or resolved by any historical-critical approach or by resorting to any type of Gospel reductionism. The Catholic conferees have not come over to Wittenberg but the Lutheran dialogue participants have retreated to Rome.

C. M. Gullerud

MEMORIAL ADDRESS FOR MATTHEW WEGENKE

Immanuel Lutheran College, Jan. 17, 1984

Text: Romans 5:1-4

Hymn: 371

Fellow-redeemed in Christ:

"Poverty has done so much good in this world, that I'm not going to be about abolishing it." Those were the words of the American poet, Robert Frost, during a television interview some years ago. He had been asked what he thought about the war on poverty that American was then waging. Recognizing how during this world's history poverty has served again and again as a stimulus to raise a man to new heights of endeavor and achievement, he could answer promptly and with conviction: "Poverty has done so much good in this world, that I'm not going to be about abolishing it."

Perhaps you will permit a paraphrase of Frost's words as we remember Matt Wegenke's days among us here in Eau Claire and at Immanuel Lutheran College: "Suffering has done so much good in this world, that I'm not going to be about abolishing it." Now that may sound like an extreme statement, that suffering has done so much good, but it is Scripturally true for everyone that is a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For listen to these words from God which shall serve as our text, words which show so clearly how suffering serves as a blessing in the life of a Christian, words recorded by the Apostle Paul in Romans 5:1-4:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.

Justification by faith stands at the beginning of our text as the chief blessing of God to fallen sinners.

What is justification by faith? It is the precious Gospel fact that God, for the sake of Jesus Christ's perfect life and His innocent suffering and death, has declared the whole world of sinners to be forgiven and righteous in His sight, and that everyone who looks in faith to Jesus Christ has this blessing of salvation as his very own.

Justification by faith brings with it now certain blessed results, which Paul enumerates in our text. The first is peace with God, that same peace which the angels sang about over the fields of Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will -- God's good will -- toward men" (Luke 2:14). Because of what Jesus has done as mankind's Substitute, God's just wrath over our sin is gone, and He looks upon us now as His own dear children. Moreover, through Jesus we have access by faith into this grace of God in which we are standing, that is, the way to the Father's throne of grace lies wide open before us. As the hymn writer puts it:

Jesus, in Thy cross are centered
 All the marvels of Thy grace;
 Thou, my Savior, once hast entered
 Through Thy blood the holy place:
 Thy sacrifice holy there wrought my redemption,
 From Satan's dominion I now have exemption;
 The way is now free to the Father's high throne,
 Where I may approach Him, in Thy name alone.

Another result of justification by faith is that we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We look forward with joy to that glory that is waiting for us in heaven, when we shall be forever with the Lord in those mansions that He has prepared for us, enjoying with Him and all our fellow believers that inheritance which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" 1 Pet. 1: 4). So great is that glory that is reserved for us by God in heaven, that the apostle can say that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

Our text now adds a fact that must seem strange to anyone who is not a Christian. This rejoicing in the sure

hope of everlasting life in heaven brings with it also this, that we glory in tribulations. Because we are justified by faith, we know that when God sends us troubles in life, He does this, not to punish or harm us, but rather to help and bless us. Because such tribulations exercise our faith and drive us more deeply into the promises of God, they bring with them a whole series of blessings. First, tribulation works patience. The Christian who is pressed down by suffering learns patience, that is, the Holy Spirit gives him the ability to remain under and endure that suffering as something designed by a loving God for his good. Secondly, such patience works experience, namely, a tried and tested Christian faith, a faith which has been exercised and purified like that of the patriarch Job in the Old Testament. And finally, this experience works hope, that is, an eager waiting for eternal life, when "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

In view of what our text says about justification by faith and the purpose of suffering in the life of a Christian, we can understand the words of one of our Lutheran fathers: "When we get to heaven, we shall see that our sufferings here on earth were among the greatest of our blessings." So it was with Matt. As one who was justified by faith, he received from God through his years of sickness those very blessings of which our text speaks. He was at peace with God, because he knew that for Jesus' sake God was at peace with him. He was assured that, again for Jesus' sake, he had access to the Father's throne of grace, so that all of his prayers would be heard and answered in the way and at the time that would be best for him.

There was also the blessing of patience — the ability to bear without complaint the weakness or pain that he might be feeling from day to day. Some of you remember how it would usually take some rather persistent questioning before Matt would begin talking about his health problems. And even then he tended to play those problems down and not make much of them. Then there was the blessing of experience, a tried and tested Christian faith. Those who were close to him could see how from the Word

of God he received a growing depth of understanding about the truths of Scripture and the meaning of life and death, time and eternity. And there was the blessing of hope. Because the promises of eternal life stood before his eyes, he could live each day as it came with the strength that God gave. There was no hopeless resignation and giving up. For example, when his strength began increasing late last fall he made plans to resume his pre-theological studies at the beginning of this semester. God, of course, had other plans for him. For Matt, hope has now become sight!

So the Lord in His loving wisdom has seen fit not to let our departed brother enter the pastoral ministry — in spite of the fact that, humanly speaking, we need more Christian pastors and teachers in our church body. And yet his life among us has been an ongoing sermon. For we have witnessed in him the precious fruits that follow justification by faith in the life of a believer. We have seen before our eyes a demonstration of what the hymn writer so well expresses:

Learn to mark God's wondrous dealing
 With the people that He loves;
 With His chastening hand they're feeling,
 Then their faith the strongest proves:
 God is nigh, and notes their tears,
 Though He answers not, He hears;
 Pray with faith, for though He try you,
 No good thing can God deny you.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, our Savior God forever and ever. Amen.

C. Kuehne

BOOK REVIEWS

Luther Discovers the Gospel, by Uuras Saarnivaara. Paperback. 146 pp. Concordia Publishing House. Price: \$3.50.

This is by no means a new book, having been written in 1943 and published by Concordia in 1951. However, it was received for our review with the following statement:

In our time there is a growing desire in the leading circles of mainline churches to be reunited with the Roman Catholic Church. In promoting this trend, the basic differences between the Evangelical and Catholic teachings on the way of salvation is often misrepresented and confused. In this situation this book of Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara may be a valuable help for obtaining a deeper and more reliable insight into the basic issues; particularly the nature and contents of justification by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, and its relation to sanctification worked by the Holy Spirit in believers. In these matters, Protestant Evangelicals or Bible-believers are practically unanimous, but much confusion is being caused by the liberals and ecumenists.

It was Dr. Saarnivaara's intention in this book, which is an outgrowth of studies made in connection with the preparation of his dissertation at the University of Chicago, to correct some false interpretations of the life and writings of Martin Luther. How had these false interpretations come about? As the author sets forth in his Preface, an interest in Luther which had been aroused when the quadricentennial of the reformer's birth was celebrated in 1883 had been given a new impetus "from the crushing defeat brought by the First World War to the optimistic dreams of the 'liberal' theology and culture." It was the feeling that the "anemic" theology which had been prevalent up to World War I had to be replaced with a more vital and deeper one. The hope was that this would be provided by a study of the writings of Martin Luther, who had rediscovered the Gospel, which alone reconciles

man with God and is itself the only way to salvation and eternal life.

The trouble was that the newly revitalized Luther research, which, as Saarnivaara states, was now growing into a "Luther renaissance," was not content to study Luther's teachings as they stand. Students of Luther began to feel that Luther could only be understood through the historical-critical approach. In other words, their interest lay not so much in what Luther said and wrote, nor even in the Scriptural and doctrinal content of his writings. Rather, they were interested in answering the question: "How did Luther himself find a way to a fellowship with God and to an evangelical faith?" They became convinced that Luther's teaching of the way of salvation could be rightly understood only in the light of his own struggles and experiences. Their intense concern with this historical-critical approach is demonstrated by the fact that more prominent scholars studied this question, and more studies were published on it than on any other topic in the field of Luther research.

We shall let Saarnivaara tell us what then happened:

It was, however, unfortunate that many of the men who tried to trace the path of the Reformer from the Roman Catholic to an evangelical faith had received their theological schooling in the "liberal" tradition of the pre-war theology. The result was very strange indeed: These students of Luther came to the conclusion that Luther's early teaching of justification, which was somewhat related to the ideas of the prevalent liberal theology, was his real teaching and that he himself did not remember correctly his own struggles and his path to the light of the Gospel. He made gross mistakes — these theologians said — in relating his own way and the decisive turning points of it. Only now his way to the evangelical faith and the doctrine he taught was rightly understood.

Some theologians doubted these results, and no wonder. It is hard to believe that a man like Luther could have given such a wrong picture of the great

turning points of his spiritual pilgrimage.

Saarnivaara's aim, then, is to show the unreliability of the prevalent, liberal studies on Luther and his doctrine of justification. He intends to correct false impressions of Luther's doctrine by trying "to show what was Luther's path to a living fellowship with God and to a participation in the grace through which he gained the joyful assurance that he was acceptable to God." While he, too, tries to correct by taking a historical approach, Saarnivaara states: "The author is confident that his interpretation is more reliable than the prevalent one because it respects Luther's own statements on the matter and takes into account all the other documents and facts which throw light on the issue."

The book is divided into two parts: 1) The Significance of Augustine, Staupitz, and Scripture in Luther's Search for Truth and Salvation; and 2) Luther's Early Conception of Justification and His Final Discovery of the Gospel. Central in both sections is a discussion of Luther's "Tower Discovery" with evidence adduced to establish that this experience took place at the end of the year 1518.

There were two vital questions that lay before Luther in seeking to learn how man can become acceptable to God and live in fellowship with Him. First, how can one find peace for his conscience through the forgiveness of sins? Second, how can one become justified or righteous in the sight of God? Luther did not find the answer to these two questions all at once; rather, he went through a period of struggle before the truth was revealed to him. His search for the proper understanding of justification was hindered by at least two prevalent views. The first is the common view of all men by nature that God looks with favor upon those who do their best to obey His Law. In theological terms this is called the "active" way of justification, since, according to it, man becomes acceptable to God if his deeds conform to the Law's demands. The second hindrance came to him through the official teaching of the Church of Rome which declares that man is justified by being healed from his state of sinfulness so that he is able to love God and his fellow men and

thus to fulfill the Law. He becomes righteous before God, according to this view, by a renewal in himself wrought by the grace of God but also through his own righteous activity, or good works. Justification, then, is a gradual process of becoming righteous through a cooperation between the grace of God and man's efforts. The justifying grace of God is poured, or infused, into man's soul through the sacraments, according to this doctrine, and also empowers man to earn eternal life through good works.

Saarnivaara demonstrates that the doctrine held by Luther, particularly after his Tower Experience in 1518, was in no way different from that taught by St. Paul and the other New Testament writers, namely, that man is justified by faith, without works; that God, in His mercy, declared man to be righteous through the merits of Christ Jesus alone; that good works are the fruit of faith, not the foundation of justification. Until recently, Saarnivaara declares, Lutheran theology unanimously regarded Luther's teaching on justification as being the Pauline type. Modern liberal theologians, however, have begun to try to prove that Luther's teaching of justification was more akin to the Catholic doctrine of infused grace.

Based on two sources, Luther's *Preface* to his works, written in 1545, and his lectures and writings, Saarnivaara shows that the "actual daybreak" in Luther's theological understanding of justification was his Tower Experience.

The basic difference between Luther's pre-Reformation and his Reformation doctrine of salvation is to be found in the conception of the nature and essence of justification. The tower experience opened his eyes to see that according to Scripture, and Paul in particular, justification by faith is not a gradual process of renewal or becoming righteous. It is rather the bestowal of the righteousness of Christ by imputation. God justifies the sinner by forgiving his sins and reckoning him innocent and blameless for the sake of the atoning work of Christ. This acquittal God pronounces through the Gospel promises proclaimed by the ministry of reconciliation. By faith the sinner receives this

divine gift promised and offered to him. The foundation of justification and also the object of the believer's faith and trust is not what God has done and does *in* him, but what Christ has done *for* him.

Only the writings of Luther after 1518, then, can be called truly "Lutheran," as Saarnivaara states in his concluding remarks. When Luther, in the tower, first learned the meaning of *justitia Dei* from the inspired words of St. Paul, then alone could he become the Reformer! To put his understanding and teaching of justification in the proper perspective, it is necessary to consider his writing prior to 1518 in a different light than those after 1518.

In all respects this reviewer found that a fresh reading of this book is well worth the effort, especially in view of the recently published efforts of those who would say that there is little important difference between the doctrine of the Church of Rome and the doctrine of the Lutheran Confessions on justification. This book, eminently readable in its English translation, does certainly serve its purpose of shedding light on the subject.

John Lau

Sentenced to Life, by Malcolm Muggeridge and Alan Thornhill. Paperback. 129 pp. Thomas Nelson Publishers. Price: \$3.95.

This work, subtitled "A Parable in Three Acts," is a play which was first performed at the Westminster Theater in London, England, opening on May 17, 1978. This printed version of the play was copyrighted in 1983. The edition is prefaced with an introduction of some thirteen pages written by Malcolm Muggeridge in December, 1982.

This is a play about euthanasia, a topic which, the collaborators agreed, was very much an alive issue. They were also agreed, according to the introduction, "that legalized euthanasia, following on legalized abortion, would mean a further plunge down the slippery slope leading to a totally humanistic, amoral way of life." Argu-

ments in favor of abortion and euthanasia have been presented by the media in terms of compassion (sparing mothers the burden of bearing unwanted children, and delivering the sick and the aged from having to go on living). The collaborators wished to refute this false compassion, but not by making their play a series of arguments. "So, from the beginning we set our faces against polemics as such and looked for a story, or rather a parable, whose unfolding would make audiences see what truly is at stake between the advocates of what they call 'mercy killing' or 'death with dignity' with a view to sustaining 'quality of life,' and those who take their stand on the sanctity of life, which precludes, equally, the murder of unborn children, the incurably sick, and the senile old." (Introduction, p. 9)

The plot involves an Oxford don whose wife, a former concert pianist, was paralyzed to the degree that she was completely incapacitated and required help in eating and in performing all her bodily functions. She wants desperately to die, but cannot kill herself because she is too crippled to do it. She eventually persuades (bullies, really) her husband to give her some poison and bring about her death. As a result the husband is found guilty of murder and is given a suspended sentence. As time goes on, his feelings of guilt overwhelm him and he experiences a desperate need for repentance and regeneration. What is particularly hateful to him is that it was not passion that led him to kill his wife, but just "a vague acceptance" of mercy killing as being compassionate, enlightened, progressive.

Muggeridge states: "From Thornhill's and my point of view, of course, Gerald Vickory's repentance, and subsequent moral and spiritual regeneration, is essentially what our play is about; leave that out, and it is mere 'theatre,' which, in itself, is of no great interest to either of us." Unfortunately, while the character indicates sorrow over having been deluded into committing sin, there is no real evidence in him of godly sorrow over his transgression of God's Law, nor of any awareness of the redemptive power of Christ's sacrifice for all sin, nor of faith in God's forgiveness!

John Lau

BOOK NOTICES

Treasury of Themes and Illustrations, by R. C. Rein. Loose-leaf, spiral bound, paper. 435 pp. Price: \$19.95. Northwestern Publishing House.

This book comprises a pastor's life-time collection of Bible references, quotations, and illustrations, especially suited for use by pastors in their ministry and by teachers in the classroom. Unlike such well-known volumes as Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*, this treasury aims at its use in the presentation of the truths of Holy Scripture. Bible passages, hymn selections, poetry, citations from Christian authors, and illustrations from history and from life are offered as they relate to Scriptural doctrine and to the festivals and observances of the church year. The references are numbered and indexed and are related to about one hundred different Scripture-oriented subjects.

While the organization of materials and the choice of illustrations may not suit everyone's taste or conform to his judgment, nevertheless this book may well serve as an additional tool in a pastor's or teacher's workshop. If any of our readers is looking for a gift to present to a seminary graduate, pastor or teacher, he may want to add it to a list of books to be considered. The price may seem to be a bit high, but tools are expensive these days, as every workman knows.

Sermon Studies on the Gospels, E. H. Wendland, editor. Hardcover. 371 pp. Price: \$8.95. Northwestern Publishing House.

While sermon studies and ready-made outlines can easily become a crutch when not properly used, they may also serve to stimulate and to suggest new approaches in the treatment of an appointed text for Sunday's sermon. The present volume is such a book. It had the original purpose of presenting material to be used in the world mission fields of the WELS, presumably intended to be of assistance to native evangelists who may not have the full-fledged training for the ministry as it is carried out in the continental United States. Surely this pur-

pose is most commendable and will be welcomed by those who serve in foreign mission fields. However, the sermon studies can be useful also in a wider area also in the domestic field.

Of special interest is the choice of a pericopal system developed by the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship. This pericopic arrangement is divided into three series with each of them (with a few exceptions) taking its texts from one of the Synoptic Gospels. The editor has chosen series C, which takes its texts from the Gospel according to St. Luke. After a brief exposition which moves from verse to verse, homiletical suggestions are made for each text with several outlines included. In our seminary instruction in Homiletics our students are cautioned against the use of commentaries and helps before a thorough study of the text has been completed lest they come to depend too much on the work of others. Each text contains all that is essential for the message to be delivered and it devolves on the pastor to apply it to the special needs of his God-appointed flock. No book of sermon studies can take the place of private study, nor does this volume presume to be such a substitute.

The Complete Concordance to the Bible: New King James Version, Thomas Nelson Publishers. Hardcover, 4959-7. Price: \$17.95.

Entirely computer-generated for efficiency and accuracy by the editorial and data processing staffs at Thomas Nelson Publishers, this valuable resource tool contains the entire vocabulary of the New King James Version — over 13,000 words. It is the first concordance published for the New King James Version text. It contains: Over 270,000 Bible references indexed alphabetically; 13,331 words listed — every word in the NKJV vocabulary; Identical words with different meanings marked by asterisks; Complete list of articles, conjunctions, and other words not indexed; Word families and spelling variations cross-referenced; Accuracy facilitated by computer-generated text; Convenient size for book shelf or for carrying; Same readable style and clarity as the NKJV.

C. M. Gullerud

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