

## FAITH

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Faith is a very common noun in Christian circles; it is even common in many non-Christian religions. We are often admonished to have faith, to believe. Faith is well enough known, but not very well understood. Many things that are called faith are not faith at all. Luther explained, "It can well be that a man has faith, that is, he erroneously believes something, but it is not true faith because it lacks the Word. An enthusiast believes the last day will come in four weeks; such faith is a pure lie, because it has no Word of God ... .. Faith without the Word, such as is born in us all through Adam's fall, is a lying faith, but we cling to it more readily than to God's Word." (13,915-916) In his commentary on Galatians he explains,

"The counterfeit faith is that which heareth of God, of Christ, and of all the mysteries of his incarnation and our redemption; which also apprehendeth and beareth away all those things which it heareth, yea and can talk goodly thereof, and yet there remaineth nothing else in the heart but a naked opinion and an empty sound of the Gospel. And in very truth it is no faith, for it neither reneweth nor changeth the heart; it maketh not a new man, but leaveth him in the vanity of his former opinion and conversation; and this is a very pernicious faith, which it were better not to have. The moral philosopher is much better than the hypocrite having such a faith." page 261

Faith is an activity of the soul; not merely an activity of the mind, or of the mind and the will, or even of the emotions, but of the soul. That fact puts it outside the realm of scientific study and outside the clutches of psychology and psychiatry. Faith of course has its effects and connections with the mind, the will, and the emotions, but it lies deeper. It is a spiritual activity, having relation to God and especially to the Holy Spirit.

The source of faith is the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom 10: 17 That verse and that fact tell us that faith is not something that wells up from within the human spirit, as though everyone can believe if he just decides to. As Luther said, "Faith closes its eyes, suppresses all reason, and holds to the Word alone." 3,147 "Faith must conclude against feeling and reason, and cling to that which is presented to it through the Word." 8,1101 "The articles of faith are expressions of things that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, etc., and which are understood only through the Word and the Holy Ghost." 5,452 "It is the nature of all the articles of faith that all reason loathes them, as we see in the heathen and the Jews." 5,452 "All the articles of faith are so high and difficult that no one can understand them without the grace of the Holy Ghost." 12,1604

That verse, "Faith cometh by hearing," also tells us that all true faith comes from the Word of God, and all so-called faith that does not come from the Word of God is not faith but unbelief. It is "faith" only in the sense that someone believes something to be true or relies on something, but that is far different from the faith of which the Bible speaks, of saving faith. It is sometimes observed that evolutionism is just as much an article of faith as anything in the Bible, but then "faith" is used for its very opposite. It is but an intellectual conviction; or, more precisely, as a stubborn refusal to believe the truth which God revealed both in His Word and in the book of nature. It is a deliberate mis-reading of the book of nature. The Mormons, likewise, have a conviction that the Book of Mormon is the Word of God, and they compare it to the conviction of Christians that the Bible is the Word of God. There is a big difference, though. Mormon conviction is not divinely wrought, despite the claim that it is. It cannot be divinely wrought because the Mormon doctrine, derived in part from that book, contradicts the acknowledged Word of God. "The Word of God shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel," say our Lutheran Confessions; not the angel Moroni nor anyone else. See Gal. 1:8. Our conviction, on the other hand, is wrought by the Word of God and not by any other consideration. God's Word bears God's authority, just as when Jesus taught and "the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Matt 7:28-29. The Bible is self-authenticating, its own proof, producing its own conviction; for the Bible is not merely a book, but the living voice of God speaking to the soul. It opens the ears to hear and the heart to believe. How it can have that effect no one can describe and no psychology can explain. Faith that the Bible is the Word of God is not at all comparable to the Mormon idea, which is that they

cannot prove the inspiration of their book, but neither can we. Faith is not something that stands in opposition to the facts.

Faith can be described as illumination, as a light in the soul. Jesus is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," and St. Paul writes that "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God," shines unto us, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2Cor 4:6 In John 8:12 Jesus said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Conversion can be compared to turning on the light.

For a long time there has been discussion of the so-called "order, of salvation," focusing on conversion and referring often to Luther's words from the 111 Article of the Creed: "But the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified, and kept me in the true faith." Men have made of that a chronological order of events in conversion and salvation and have added to it, especially to the word "enlightenment." The synergists, who believe that man co-operates in his conversion, contend that enlightenment takes place in stages. First the mind is enlightened as to what is involved in sin and grace and salvation; then man desires that salvation, and only then is he fully enlightened, repents and believes. So there is an intermediate state in which man is suspended between heaven and earth (or hell), where he must choose to accept the light of God. But the fact is that conversion is instantaneous. It is always instantaneous. You cannot believe and not believe at the same time, nor be at once in death and in life. You cannot idly wait until God takes you through the proper steps of conversion. The heart is "enmity against God" until that moment when God works true repentance and faith through His Word. It is altogether through God's word. He enlightens me with His gifts. The moment there is a spark of desire in the heart for God's grace, conversion has already taken place and faith is present. Present also is the struggle of flesh and spirit, for the Holy Ghost is there to oppose the flesh, and the believer is a new creature in Christ, who hates evil, Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." Men are ill-served indeed who are told that they must struggle and overcome their sinful ways and desires before they are entitled to trust in God's grace.

In the controversy between the Pietist Lange and the orthodox, Lange claimed that without sanctification, one cannot be enlightened; it is quite possible and actually occurs that some are enlightened in their mind, but because of the flesh, not in the will; as was the case with Augustine, he said. The orthodox granted that enlightenment has not reached its full effect where the understanding is enlightened but the will still clings to the works of the flesh; but they rejected the proposition that in such a case the mind's understanding is not spiritual and supernatural, but is only natural. There is no such thing as natural enlightenment, because man is blind, dead, and an enemy of God by nature. To speak of a natural illumination is wrong; the very word illumination means God does it, not man.

There is a difference between literal or pedagogical enlightenment and spiritual or complete enlightenment. God prepares the intellect of man first and instructs him in the knowledge of things to be believed and to assent, disposing him more and more to saving faith. This is the testimony of the Holy Spirit; there is then a certainty in the conscience, yet without a sealing within. It starts with a literal understanding of the words of the Bible, then conviction of conscience and a sense of duty. This the Holy Ghost works externally. But if this is rejected, the Spirit works no further within. Otherwise, he convinces the sinner that Jesus is his Savior. See John 11:50; 18:14 where the high priest says, understanding the words literally but not spiritually, "It is expedient for one man to die for the people."  
What is True, Justifying Faith?

Our Catechism lists three parts or elements of faith: knowledge, assent, and trust. It also quotes among the proof passages James 2:19, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble." This passage tells us, on the one hand, that it is not enough to believe only that there is one God. On the other hand, in its context it tells us that such knowledge is dead faith, as can be seen by the fact that it is unproductive of good works. But it might thirdly be observed that the devils well know every word and every teaching of the Bible, and they are quite certain that every word of it is true; yet they are damned forever because they put no trust in it and in fact hate every word of it. In any case, Martin Chemnitz explains four, actually five, "degrees" of faith, as he calls them. Let us see his five:

Knowledge, or understanding, as in Luke 1:77 "To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins." Also Isa 53: 11; Col 2:3; Eph 3:19. The decree and history of redemption, the gracious and universal promise that God for the sake of that Victim wants to receive sinners who flee to the Mediator in faith -these teachings are to be shown to faith and inculcated from the Word of God.

But because many who hear, understand, and know this either neglect or doubt or reject it, or are turned away and even persecute the faith, therefore it is necessary that to this knowledge be added assent, not indeed just a kind of general assent but that firm persuasion which Paul calls the full assurance of faith whereby each person should determine that the universal promise applies also to him personally and individually, and that he also is included and comprehended in that universal promise -that our Lord God thereby means me. (The belief of devils which James refers to, includes knowledge and "general assent." i.e. conviction that the facts of the Bible are true; but it does not include that firm persuasion that the promises apply to him, for they do not.)

Then from this knowledge and assent in the mind, by the working of the Holy Spirit the heart or will conceives a groaning or desire, so that, because it feels very earnestly that it is burdened down with sins and the wrath of God, it wills, prays, and seeks that these benefits be given to it which are set forth in the promise of the Gospel. This desire burns within "with groanings which cannot be uttered." and it exercises itself in prayer. Rom 10: 13: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" and "Forgive us our trespasses."

This third ingredient of faith was dropped by the later Lutheran dogmaticians, then revived and abused by the synergists in the election controversy of the late 19th Century. Chemnitz means that true faith includes a yearning for forgiveness and consolation under the burden of sin and guilt. The later Pietists and synergists included it in their "order of salvation" and used it to support their doctrine of an intermediate state between unbelief and faith, a state in which the soul does not yet trust in the Gospel, but longs for it nevertheless, a state which they identify with the "enlightened me with his gifts" in the Third Article of Luther's Catechism. This is a revival of the Roman doctrine of prevenient grace. It is true, of course, that many unbelievers yearn for peace with God and with their consciences while they are still unconverted, but they have not reached a more advanced state or nearer proximity to faith than others. God has aroused a hunger within their souls by His divine providence by the work of the Law. They might have a regret over their sins, like unto that of Judas, but not repentance. They are still dead in sins. There is not a magical moment when they are suspended between heaven and hell, or between faith and unbelief There is not a moment when truly free will exists, the ability to choose or reject Christ. In fact, an unbeliever, being still hostile to God, can only yearn for the benefits of salvation of which he may have heard, but he cannot trust or yearn for the Gospel of Christ, but still wants desperately to establish his own righteousness. He may be desperate, but not desperate enough to believe or desire Christ's righteousness. He wants justification on his own terms, namely, because he is righteous, and he will search avidly for God but will be sure to search only where he is not really likely to find him. He may be drawn to the Gospel because it has pleasant-sounding, comforting, but external, promises for the natural man, but he still cannot know or appreciate the things of the Spirit of God. Prof. Arthur Vincent used to distinguish "pre-evangelism" from real evangelism. Pre-evangelism is anything you might do to draw an unbeliever to a position where he will be exposed to the Gospel, but one must remember that pre-evangelism never saved anyone, despite 1 Peter 3:1 ("won" is not the same as "saved.") Luther's "called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith" is not a series of steps in the process of conversion. Enlightenment is the same thing as conversion, not a preliminary step. And sanctification can be taken either in the broad sense, including conversion and faith, or in the narrow sense of renovation. In point of time, in fact, all four items Luther mentions can well be simultaneous.

When in this way you turn away with your mind, your will, and your heart from looking at your sins and feeling the wrath of God and begin to look to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, that is, when from the sentence of damnation pronounced upon you through the Law you flee to the throne of grace, to the propitiation the heavenly Father has set forth in the blood of Christ, it is necessary to add trust. With firm persuasion it concludes from God's Word that God gives, communicates, and applies to you the benefits of the promise of grace and that you in this way lay hold on and receive unto righteousness, salvation, and eternal life those things which the free promise of the Gospel offers. This trust struggles in

time of trials with doubt, with the anxieties of a troubled conscience, even with sin, death, the devil, and hell itself.

Finally, from this faith there follows a confidence which has access to God, Eph 3:12; peace of conscience, Rom 5: 1; "the joy of the Spirit," Rom 14:17, so that the heart, feeling the new life and joy in God, happily rests in the promise of grace, even under the cross, in persecution, finally in death itself; and it has an undoubting "hope of the glory of God," Rom 5:2.

True to form, Chemnitz also adds some practical notes on this description. For one thing, individuals differ from each other and from themselves over time.

"For justifying faith is not always or in all people a brightly burning light; often it is a scarcely smoking flax. It is not always a loud noise, but often an obscure desire and a hidden groaning. One's faith may be weak, e.g., in knowledge, or in trust." Matt 6:30; 14:31. Yet Scripture says that the smoking flax is not put out, the groanings are unutterable, Rom 8:26, that is, weak faith is still true faith, and it justifies.

We must note the foundations. For we are justified by faith, not because it is so firm, robust, and perfect a virtue, but because of the object on which it lays hold, namely, Christ, who is the Mediator in the promise of grace. Therefore when faith does not err in its object, but lays hold on that true object, although with a weak faith, or at least tries and wants to lay hold on Christ, then there is true faith, and it justifies. ... Scripture shows a beautiful example of this in Mark 9:24: "I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

We must note that these individual grades or levels of faith are not always equally brilliant in believers, but faith has more difficulty now on this level, now on that; and yet it is still faith, so long as it clings to the true object. Few spiritual struggles, whether in the area of assent or in desire or in trust, are not signs of unbelief, but true marks of living and efficacious faith, which takes captive both the mind and the will in obedience to God.

We must not determine the status of our faith on the basis of our feeling of comfort or spiritual joy. But because this fifth level follows faith, it is not of the essence of faith; and God often takes away this feeling of peace from believers. But when the true object is firmly centered in the Word and when the predicted emotions follow, or at least the attempts and the desire, then there is true faith. These instructions have great value, so that we do not think of faith as some ideal state of perfection.

The opposites of faith are: unbelief; doubt; false confidence; fear; despair; false faith, self-deceit; unawareness of sin.

The "Psychology" of Faith

In the present century especially the so-called "science" of psychology has attempted to explain faith, just as it has attempted to explain love, hate, and other human emotions, when in fact they remain mysterious and not subject to analysis. The causes of such activities of the soul can be analyzed, of course, i.e., as to what it was that brought them on.

Likewise the consequent actions and complications resulting from them might be noticed and analyzed. G.C. Berkouwer, a Reformed scholar, describing the teachings of Emil Brunner, notes that "Faith is 'pure objectivity' and disdains everything psychological. It is directed only to God, and the less one speaks of it the purer it is. It is the 'empty form, which in and for itself is nothing, except as a vessel for its content.' Faith, Brunner goes on to say, is not a special form of ordinary human confidence, but a 'primal act,' essentially different from every other act of confidence. It crosses over into the absolutely trans-subjective, is a negation of human activity [whatever that means -KKM]. Faith, he contends, falls outside the field of psychology; it is a leap into the beyond and is definable only by its object."

Faith is not really a "negation of human activity;" it is an activity of the soul. It is trust, confidence, and conviction; only, it is divinely wrought. Yet it is not God who does the believing; the believer believes. The dead soul is moved and "energized," we might say, by the Spirit through the Word, like electricity energizing dead tungsten in the vacuum in a light bulb.

Faith is a spiritual activity, an activity of the soul. Being embraced, it embraces; being apprehended, it apprehends. When men try to analyze it as a psychological phenomenon they are out of their depth. Not only so, but when they begin to analyze it they contradict and discourage it; they explain it away, as though it were an error of the mind or emotions, the result of fear or wishful thinking or the like. It is the devil's work to analyze faith. So, for example, Karl Barth described faith thus: "it is, from a psychological viewpoint, a repeated leap into the unknown, into the darkness, into the empty air." On the contrary, it "leaps" (a poor choice of words) into a very well known place, like an infant tossed fearlessly into the air by his father, confident that father will also catch him safely.

Jesus, in fact, attributes the best faith to infants. He speaks of "these little ones which believe in me," Matt 18:6 and says, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." "Take heed that ye despise not these little ones." Baptists and their allies contend that infants cannot be baptized because they cannot believe; they evidently presuppose that faith is at least in part, an activity of the intellect, so that one must be logically convinced of the saving truths involved. Jesus turns it around and says that adults must become as little children and believe as they do.

Francis Pieper, II, 444, observes that faith is direct, i.e., it relies directly on the promises of grace in the Gospel. Reflective faith, where people are conscious of their faith and reflect upon it, is not present in everyone. He says, "It is a grave error to define faith as the conscious acceptance of the grace of God." Otherwise there would be no faith during sleep or in children or in severe trials. Nevertheless, Pieper adds, we should know that we have faith. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." 2 Cor 13:5.

Do I have True, Justifying Faith?

It is the Holy Ghost in the Word of God that testifies to your heart that your faith is true and real. Romans 8:16 tells us, "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." St. John also speaks on the subject, saying,

1 John 2:3-4, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Chapter 3:6, "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."

Verse 10, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

3:17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

3:24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

4:6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

4:13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

5: 10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

5:20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

Justification by Faith

The Bible nowhere says "faith justifies." It says we are justified "by faith" and "through faith," but that is not the same thing. Faith is put forward as the instrumentality or the channel through which justification comes to us, or as the source from which it comes, but not as the act that produces justification. The Bible says, "It is God that justifieth," *theos o dikaios*. See also Rom 4:5. That lies in the very meaning of the word "justify," which is to pronounce righteous. Only God has the authority to pronounce us righteous. Faith but accepts that verdict and agrees with it.

It might be illustrated this way: I live in a land and under its laws, which is then conquered by another King. Now I am under his rule and laws, which are altogether different from the old, just as the Code Napoleon differed from the old provincial laws. In this scenario I would have no choice, unless I become a rebel until I am hunted down and punished. In the new kingdom of Christ, however, legal domination is brought to an end; grace is the order of the day, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," and His grace opens my heart so that I gladly submit to His way, the "law of faith," (Rom 3:27) and trust it and accept it. I believe that I am indeed righteous and without my guilt because of His sacrifice, as His proclamation, His Gospel, declares.

Our Confessions do speak of justifying faith, however, and Apology IV, 61 says that faith justifies. Does faith justify, or does it not? The answer is: not in itself It does not have the power to justify, that is, to declare someone righteous. God is the Judge; our faith is not. Our faith only accepts the judgment of God; it applies it to one's self. The Bible is much more careful and precise with its terminology than our Confessions and our teachers are. We use the expression "Faith justifies" in a looser or different sense, and when we use it we are not putting any accent on any activity of faith, but we rather oppose it to any proposition that works might justify.

Faith is the opposite of works. Yet faith, although it is 100% a gift of God and not a product of our own nature, mind, or heart, is something we do. It is, in a way, a work, a work of obedience to the First Commandment. It is not at all for that reason, however, that faith is said to justify. For when the Bible says, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law," we cannot go back and say faith is a deed of the Law, and therefore we are justified by the Law after all, or else there is no justification whatever. Faith does not justify because of its activity, but because to faith and through faith are given the promises and what they contain. "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." Faith is nothing but the passive act of receiving; it is receptivity. When you are given a gift you cannot say that you merited it, nor that you did a fine thing in accepting it, though you could of course refuse it. It is the giver who gets the credit; it is he that did something, i.e., he gave. All you did was to obtain it. You didn't go out and get it; you didn't hunt for it and take it; you didn't snatch it away from the giver; you just obtained it, or received it. It was given to you.

In our Lutheran Confessions, Melancthon explains:

We, therefore, will add testimonies which clearly declare that faith is that very righteousness by which we are accounted righteous before God, namely, not because it is a work that is in itself worthy, but because it receives the promise by which God has promised that for Christ's sake He wishes to be propitious to those believing in Him. Apol. IV, 86, Trigl. 147.

And the Formula of Concord agrees, adding,

For faith justifies, not for this cause and reason that it is so good a work and so fair a virtue, but because it lays hold of and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy Gospel; for this must be applied and appropriated to us by faith, if we are to be justified thereby. SD, III, 13. Trigl. 919.

There are a few passages where faith is identified as obedience of a sort. Rom 10: 16, "They have not all obeyed the Gospel;" Rom 16:26 "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." 2 Thess

1:8 "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Pet 4:17, "what shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" And then there is Rom 10:3, "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." On the strength of expressions such as these the Reformed concocted the doctrine that the nature of faith, the saving nature of faith, is obedience. That is how it is usually defined in Protestant churches today. But what do those expressions actually mean, to "obey" or "submit" to the Gospel? Lenski explains it as yielding to that which is said. In other words, when God says you are justified and saved not by your works but by His grace, simply by faith, then we are to submit to that way of salvation and believe that it is true, accepting that way of salvation, abandoning our own merits and works, and trusting that God has forgiven and received us by virtue of Christ's merit. The Jews did not do that; they ignored Christ and His righteousness and set about to establish their own righteousness of works. They would not submit to such a plan of salvation or such a Savior. They would not humble themselves in repentance and beg for grace and mercy nor even accept it as a gift. Lenski explains, "To be subjected to the righteousness of God is to bow to it in faith as being the only real righteousness that acquits us before God's judgment seat and to forsake all our own righteousness by which we would seek to acquit ourselves." (On Rom 10:3)

Hence it is an error to define the heart or essence of faith as being obedience, and that especially because of the misleading idea in that word "obedience." Faith does not save because it is obedience, but because of Christ. Faith also does not save because it obeys, either in the sense that it submits to God's will, or in the sense that it produces works of obedience by virtue of regeneration or renovation. Many Protestants and sectarians hold that one is Justified because, being born again, or "healed," he now does the will of God, the Commandments and the law of love. Faith justifies because in the eyes of God it possesses the merits of Christ in which it trusts. The Object of Faith

Edward Preuss wrote, "The righteousness of Christ, then, has been procured; but, as the apostle says, it comes "unto all and upon all them that believe." Rom. 3, 22. He who keeps this in mind will be spared the vexations which the Wurtemberg superintendent experienced. It seemed to him like a faulty circle: "I am to believe and thereby become righteous. But what am I to believe? This, that I am righteous. However, I cannot believe this before it is so. And yet it is not so, for I am first to become righteous." God be praised, the case is different. This we must believe, that Christ has redeemed us. And as God said to His covenant people through Isaiah: "I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine," Is. 43, 1, even so does He tell us through His apostle: "The handwriting that was against us is blotted out., "Col. 2, 14; "He purged our sins," Heb. 1, 3; "We are reconciled," Rom. 5, 10. Eternal peace reigns; all strife is ended. Col. 1, 20. That saving faith apprehends this and nothing else St. Paul teaches in those texts in which he expressly and officially treats of justification. Rom. 4,

24. 25 he says that we are justified "If we believe on Him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead, who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." And 1 Cor. 15, 14 he declares that one is saved by believing "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." And lastly, Gal. 2, 20, he describes his own faith as "the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." This is also the doctrine of the Augsburg Confession (Art. XII) and of the theologians.

"To believe" -what does that mean? Does it mean to take the death and resurrection of Christ for granted as one takes the battle of Pydna for granted? Most certainly not! Although it would be quite agreeable if Messrs. Strauss and Renan were ready to do even this. "To believe" means "to take;" "to believe in Christ's

merit" means "to take Christ's merit" as the lungs take the air. Although the air surrounds you on all sides, yet it will do you no good if your lungs do not inhale it. Just so the all sufficient merit of Christ will not help you if you do not apprehend it. St. Paul writes, Col. 2, 6: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk ye in Him Yes, St. John uses the expressions, "to receive Christ" and "to believe" as equivalents. He says in the first chapter of his Gospel: "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on His name." John 1, 12. And Christ Himself says, John 17, 8: "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me -and they have received them ... and have believed that Thou didst send Me." Vice versa, Scripture describes unbelief as the act of not receiving Christ. "He came unto His own, and his own received him not." John 1, 11. Therefore we say with Chemnitz: "Saving faith is nothing else than the apprehension of Christ (Est igitur apprehensio, acceptio seu applicatio promissionis gratiae formale fidei justificantis); he who will not receive is not justified (Qui non accipiunt, non justificantur)." And with Oeder: "Faith is nothing less and nothing more than the instrument with which we appropriate a foreign righteousness. In truth, as long as we are on this earth, no one sits in the ship, but we are all lying in the water. Therefore we must constantly cling to the rim of the boat in which Christ is sitting. The prayer, 'Suffer us not to sink in the bitter pains of death,' and the other, 'Suffer us not to fall from the comfort of true faith, 'are one and the same. By what other organ than by faith could we possibly become partakers of the merits of Christ? Mental remedies are received in no other way. A father believes his son to be dead. When you tell him, 'He lives!' he hears the message, but lacks faith. What will it profit him? Or a guilty conscience has driven a child away from home. The mother publishes advertisements, 'Return! You are forgiven!' But the child does not believe it. So wrath abideth upon him. John 3, 36. That is what Christ means when He says: 'He that believeth not is condemned already.' John 3, 18.

"Redemption was indeed accomplished for all, but some remain in prison although bright daylight shines through the shattered gates. Rom. 8, 32; 2 Cor. 5, 14. 15; 1 Tim. 2, 6; Heb. 2, 9; 1 John 2,2; 2 Pet. 2, 1. To such the words of Christ apply: 'Ye would not!' Matt. 23, 37. This not willing to believe is the only sin which damns under the Gospel dispensation. Therefore Christ. does not say: "He that sinneth," but: "He that believeth not shall be damned." Mark. 16, 16.

"So we believe, and God justifies. Which of these two comes first? Our faith, it seems. At least St. Paul says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness.' Rom 4:3 Ancient and modern errorists have concluded from this that God regards us righteous on account of the excellent qualities of our faith .... Whoever, therefore, teaches that God imputes our faith for righteousness errs. Rom 4:19-22. Here it is clearly written: God promised Abraham offspring; Abraham firmly relied on the fulfillment of this promise, and God imputed this to him for righteousness. Therefore -so we conclude with Bellarmine -faith is a heroic act for the sake of which God regards us righteous.

"Not so fast! ... Here Paul describes the curative treatment by which God makes all whole, by saying, 'All have sinned, ... being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. ... He, too, believed not in God in general, but in that God who justifies the sinner, the ungodly, Romans 4:5."

Faith certainly does not precede justification; else justification would take place for its sake instead of for Christ's sake. Neither, however, does justification precede faith; otherwise it would take place without faith. Rather, both are together, or coincident.

Because of time limitations we have not been able to touch on several more important aspects of faith, such as objective and subjective justification, the role of faith in justification, the fruits of faith, repentance, the marks of faith, and the importance of the Means of Grace Those subjects, without which faith is not properly treated, will need to be treated at a later time.