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Justification in Article III of the Formula of Concord

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JUSTIFICATION IN ARTICLE III
OF THE FORMULA OF CONCORD

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Systematic Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Original
I. Thesis: Luther's Doctrine.....1.
II. Antithesis: Osiander.....9.
III. Antithesis to Antithesis: The Osiandrian Contro-
versy.....31.
Final
IV. ~~Syn~~thesis: Formula of Concord.....42.
Bibliography.....50.

I. Thesis:
Luther's Doctrine

John Andrew Quenstedt, the great Lutheran theologian, defined justification as "the external, judicial, gracious act of the most Holy Trinity, by which a sinful man, whose sins are forgiven, on account of the merit of Christ apprehended by faith, is accounted just, to the praise of God's glorious grace and justice and to the salvation of the justified."¹

This definition is entirely Scriptural. In fact, only in this way can the Scriptural concept of justification, as this is taught by Paul but present already long before him in the history of Abraham and the prophecy of Habakkuk, be correctly defined. Quenstedt's definition contains all the elements of the Biblical doctrine, and any disagreement with it necessarily involves a denial of Scriptural truth.

The history of such denials and of the errors which were connected with them is the history of Christian thought.

1. Theologia Didactico-Polemica, III, 526, quoted in Heinrich Schmid, The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, p. 426. Hollaz said: "Justification is a judicial, and that, too, a gracious act, by which God, reconciled by the satisfaction of Christ, acquits the sinner who believes in Christ of the offenses with which he is charged, and accounts and pronounces him righteous." Ibid., p. 428.

The doctrine of justification is the article by which the Church stands or falls. It is, therefore, almost impossible to overstress its importance or to understress the danger of error in this most fundamental of all teachings. And so studying an error in the doctrine of justification is profitable for understanding and appreciating the true doctrine of Scripture in other points as well.

Andrew Osiander was not the first man in the history of Christian thought to err in the doctrine of justification. In every period of Church History, there have been aberrations; and in some periods in the history of the Church, the correct doctrine of justification has been almost entirely obscured. The outstanding example of such a period are the Middle Ages, during which the Biblical truth was a thing of the almost completely forgotten past.

But God has been good and gracious to His Church. Not only did He reveal the truths of justification once and for all in the Scriptures; but He also saw to it that, in spite of the efforts of devils and men, these truths came out of the darkness into the light which was their original dwelling-place. This God did, for example, after the darkness of the Middle Ages, through His chosen instrument, Dr. Martin Luther.

What did Luther believe about justification? In 1529 he wrote in the Schwabach Articles that "God reckons and regards as righteous, good and holy, and presents with the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting, all those who have

this faith in His Son."² In October of the same year he repeated this view in the Marburg Articles, in which he expressed his faith that³

....this faith is our righteousness before God, since on account of this, God reckons and regards us righteous, godly, and holy, without all works and merit, and thereby delivers us from sin, death, hell, receives us into grace and saves us, for the sake of His Son, in whom we accordingly believe, and thereby enjoy and partake of the righteousness, life and all possessions of His Son.

Finally, the Smalcald Articles of 1537 assert:⁴

What I have hitherto and constantly taught concerning this I know not how to change in the least, namely, that by faith, as St. Peter says, we acquire a new and clean heart, and God will and does account (reputare) us entirely righteous and holy for the sake of Christ, our Mediator.

Such a view of justification as the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the sinner was unheard of in Luther's day. Luther himself did not hold it all his life. In the early part of his life, he thought of both justification and of the "righteousness of God" in a totally different way. An interesting passage in his Table-Talk, translated by Reu, reveals the thoughts about "iustitia

2. Article V, quoted in M. Reu, The Augsburg Confession, Part II, "A Collection of Sources," pp. 41-42.

3. Article VII, quoted ibid., p. 45. The underlining is our own. The underlined sections, especially the second one, are quite pertinent for the discussion to follow in Chapter II.

4. Article XIII, Concordia Triglotta, p. 499.

Dei" which obsessed Luther in his early days:

Illud vocabulum iustitia Dei was like a thunder-clap in my heart, nam quando in papatu legerem: In iustitia tua libera me, item, In veritate tua, mox putabam illam iustitiam vindicantem, furorem scilicet divinae irae. I hated Paul from the bottom of my heart, ubi legebam, 'revelatur iustitia Dei per evangelium.' Sed postea cum consequentia viderem, scilicet sicut scriptum est: 'Iustus ex fide sua vivet' et insuper Augustinum consularem, I became happy. Ubi iustitiam Dei misericordiam iustos reputantem cognovi, ibi afflicto remedium contigit.

If God had not been gracious to Luther and helped him to a correct understanding of "the righteousness of God", the Reformer, then an Augustinian monk, would probably have gone mad. But God was gracious to Luther and delivered him. As he himself narrates, he learned to know that the Bible was not speaking of the essential or active righteousness of God, but rather of the passive or imputed righteousness of the Son of God which God then reckons as the sinner's own and by which the sinner becomes righteous before God. Or, as Luther put it:

Da fing ich an zu verstehen, dasz die Gerechtigkeit Gottes die sei, durch welche der Gerechte durch die Gabe Gottes lebt, naemlich durch den Glauben... naemlich die leidende (passivam), durch welche unser barmherziger Gott durch den Glauben gerecht macht, wie geschrieben steht.

5. Tischreden, IV, 4007, quoted in M. Reu, Luther's German Bible, Part I, "Historical Presentation: Notes", pp. 335-336.

6. In the preface to his Latin writings of 1545, Saemmtliche Schriften, XIV, 447.

There are many other statements in Luther's writings about justification, but it does not lie within the scope of this thesis to list them. Julius Koestlin's summary of what Luther meant by "making and becoming righteous" is very much to the point:

7

Our becoming righteous through faith means that God regards, declares, accounts, pronounces etc., us as righteous. That is to say, He so accounts us just because He no longer looks upon that in us which conflicts with righteousness, but, on the contrary, looks only upon our faith, which lays hold upon the righteous Christ....So entirely does he...place the righteous-making in the forgiveness, or imputation, that he bluntly declares, that Christian righteousness is not in the heart or soul of man, into which it is, according to the teaching of our opponents, supposed to have crept as a qualitas; but we become righteous simply through the forgiveness (of our sins).

From the writings of Luther this doctrine of justification found its way into the Confessions of the Lutheran Church. It is sometimes said in our day that there is a discrepancy between the teachings of Luther and the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology. But, as Elert points out, in the doctrine of justification we find no essential difference between Luther and the early Melancthon as the latter expressed himself in the Confessions of 1530.

Consequently, the Augustana states that "men...are freely justified for Christ's sake (propter Christum),

7. The Theology of Luther in its Historical Development and Inner Harmony, II, pp. 436-437.

8. Werner Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums, I, p. 85.

through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight."⁹

Because of Roman Catholic opposition to this view, as voiced particularly by Eck in the 404 Articles or Confutation, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession is even more explicit and detailed in its treatment of these matters. It says, for instance, that "faith, which freely receives the remission of sins, sets Christ, the Mediator and Propitiator, against God's wrath";¹⁰ "faith justifies and saves, not on the ground that it is a work in itself worthy, but only because it receives the promised mercy";¹¹ "faith is that very righteousness by which we are accounted righteous before God...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";¹² "faith, therefore, is that thing which God declares to be righteousness, and he adds that it is imputed freely";¹³ "for Christ's sake we are accounted righteous when we believe that God, for His sake, has been reconciled to us";¹⁴ "we conclude

9. Article IV, Concordia Triglotta, p. 45.

10. Article IV, ibid., p. 133.

11. Ibid., p. 137.

12. Ibid., p. 147.

13. Ibid., p. 149.

14. Ibid., p. 149.

that we are justified before God, are reconciled to God and regenerated by faith, which in repentance apprehends the promise of grace...and is convinced that for Christ's sake God is reconciled and propitious to us."¹⁵

In addition, the Apology recognized a difficulty in the use of the word "to justify"--a difficulty which played a significant role in the controversy which is the subject of this thesis. The Apology says:¹⁶

We maintain this, that, properly and truly, by faith itself, we are for Christ's sake accounted righteous, or are acceptable to God. And because "to be justified" means that out of unjust men just men are made, or born again, it means also that they are pronounced or accounted just. (The term "to be justified" is used in two ways: to denote, being converted or regenerated; again, being accounted righteous.) Accordingly we wish first to show this, that faith alone makes of an unjust, a just man, i.e., receives remission of sins.

This is the doctrine of justification as taught by Luther and laid down for all time in the Augsburg Confession and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession. If we compare it with Quenstedt's definition given at the beginning of this chapter, we can see that they are in agreement. Justification as taught by Luther and the Confessions may well be summarized in Luther's translation of the phrase:

15. Ibid., p. 225.

16. Ibid., p. 141.

"the righteousness of God." He translates it as "die Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt." It is therefore, the imputed righteousness of Christ which covers the guilt of the sinner before God.

As we have already stated, this Scriptural definition of justification was restored to the Church of God through His chosen instrument, Martin Luther. Unfortunately, the men who came after Luther did not follow him; if they had, this thesis would be unnecessary. After Luther's death, so-called Lutherans turned away from his doctrine of justification and tried to return to false teachings.

Luther knew that this was coming. Chemnitz writes: "I frequently shudder, because Luther--I do not know by what sort of premonition--in his commentaries on the Letter to the Galatians and on the First Book of Moses so often repeats the statement: 'This doctrine (of justification) will be obscured again after my death.'¹⁷"

The story of how Luther's prophecy came true in the person and doctrine of Andrew Osiander will take up the bulk of the remainder of this thesis.

17. Loc. cit., II, 201, quoted in C. F. W. Walther, Der Concordienformel Kern und Stern, pp. 26-27.

II. Antithesis: Osiander

In our first chapter we attempted to give a brief outline of the doctrine of justification as it was taught by Luther and expressed in the first Confessions of the Lutheran Church. It was the doctrine that we are justified by faith, which is the hand grasping for the righteousness of Christ; this righteousness God forensically imputes to us as our own, even though it is a foreign righteousness.

As well as he recognized the truth of this concept of justification, Luther recognized that those who would follow him might--in fact, probably would--pervert this doctrine, as they did so many. He put this recognition in the form of a prophecy. And this chapter is the story of how Luther's prophecy came true, in a far worse way than he could have known or even imagined. It came true in the life and teachings of Andrew Osiander.

Andreas Hosemann, though known more commonly in history as Andreas Osiander, was born a few years after Luther, on December 19, 1498. Although his opponents insisted that he had translated his name into Greek ("Mann" is "aner, andros"), he stated that his grandfather, Conrad¹ Osiander, had employed this form. The son of a blacksmith,

1. W. Moeller, "Andreas Osiander", Real-Encyklopaedie fuer protestantische Theologie und Kirche, XI, 120.

Osiander found life difficult because of the financial condition of his family. In addition, he may have been partially of Jewish extraction; this, too, may have made his youth bitter.²

Somehow, Osiander managed to overcome these handicaps and to secure a fairly decent education. He attended the schools at Altenburg, Leipzig, and Ingolstadt. It has been suggested that he also went to the University of Wittenberg.³ But this is hardly likely since he did not meet Luther until Marburg in 1529 and since, moreover, he did not have any academic degree when he became professor at Koenigsberg; as will be mentioned later on, this latter fact had some connection with Osiander's controversy.

At the age of 24, in the year 1522, he became a pastor of St. Laurentius Church in Nuernberg. He not only served as priest in this free city, but he also taught Hebrew in the Augustinian cloister. In the same year, 1522, he displayed his ability by publishing an edition of the Vulgate, corrected from the original and supplied with explanatory notes. It was also in 1522 that the papal legate,

2. This is conjectured from three factors: first, his somewhat swarthy appearance; second, his predilection for the study of Hebrew; and third, the fact that he wrote a defense of the Jews: "Ob es war vn glaublich sey dass die Juden der Christen Kinder heymlich erwuerger, und jr blut gebrauchen ein treffenliche schrifft auff enes yeden vrteyl gestellt. Wer Menschen blut vergeuszt des blut sol ouch vergossen werdn." Ibid.

3. Johann Georg Walch, Einleitung in die Religions-Streitigkeiten der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche, IV, 141.

Chierigati, criticized him for the apparently "Lutheran"⁴ tone of his sermons.

After a youth full of difficulties and trials, Oslander had finally achieved a position of some importance. Without an attempt at psychoanalysis, we may well understand his frame of mind after such a victory. But he had difficulties in Nuernberg, too, even before the Augsburg Interim; this is apparent from a letter he wrote to Duke Albert of Prussia.⁵ His ministry was, however, a successful one, as we see from the fact that he won Albert for the cause of Lutheranism. He also administered communion under both kinds to Queen Isabella of Denmark, the sister of Emperors Charles V and Ferdinand I. As pastor for 26 years, first alone, later with the assistance of Veit Dietrich, Oslander wielded a great influence for the Reformation in the city of Nuernberg.

Oslander's activities were not confined to his pastoral activities at Nurnberg. In 1529, at the invitation of Philip of Hesse, he attended the Marburg Colloquy; here he met many of the Wittenberg theologians and also made the personal acquaintance of Luther. He took part in the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, attended Smalcald in 1537, and Hage-

4. Moeller, *loc. cit.*

5. Wilhelm Preger, Matthias Flacius Illyricus und seine Zeit, I, p. 209.

nau and Worms in 1540.

In 1548, when the Augsburg Interim was forced on the southern cities, Osiander protested and so had to leave his charge in Nuernberg. He immediately thought of his friend, Duke Albert of Brandenburg, and asked him for help in securing a position. Duke Albert then made him superintendent and professor at Koenigsberg. He arrived on January 27, 1549, and became professor primarius at the University of Koenigsberg. ⁶ Because of this position, he naturally became the object of a good deal of resentment on the part of his colleagues, particularly because, as has been mentioned above, Osiander held no academic title.

⁷
Dr. Bente is probably right when he states:

The dissatisfaction which this unusual preferment caused among his colleagues, Briessman, Hegemon, Isinder, and Moerlin, soon developed into decided antipathy against Osiander, especially because of his overbearing, domineering ways as well as his intriguing methods. No doubt, this personal element added largely to the animosity and violence of the controversy that was soon to follow, and during which the professors in Koenigsberg are said to have carried firearms into their academic sessions.

Osiander did not live to feel this resentment very long; for he died on October 17, 1552, and was buried with high honors in the Old City Church in Koenigsberg.

6. Walch, op. cit., p. 141, says that Osiander was a pastor as well and that, after the old bishop, Dr. Georgius von Polenz, had died, Osiander took over his position, too.

7. "Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church", Concordia Triglotta, p. 153.

An understanding of the Osiandrian Controversy is almost impossible without an understanding of the character and general theological system of Andrew Osiander. And so, before going into his doctrine and the controversy which it caused, it may be well to characterize him as a man and as a theologian.

As even our opening biographical sketch indicates, Andrew Osiander was a man of quite definite personal characteristics, characteristics which were significant in the controversy which embittered the last years of his life. Perhaps the first striking personality trait is his intellectual ability. This is apparent from his writings, which cover a wide field of human knowledge. We have already mentioned his edition of the Vulgate in 1522. In 1537 he published a harmony of the Gospels; this he did at the suggestion of Cranner, who was in Germany to discuss the divorce of King Henry VIII. In addition to his theological writings, more of which will be alluded to in the following discussion, Osiander also delved into astronomy. He read proof-sheets and wrote a preface to the work of Copernicus, "Concerning the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies" (De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium). This book was later on put on the Roman Catholic index.

But, as happens so often, Osiander's intellectual brilliance was combined with arrogance and pride. The hard-

8. Moeller, op. cit., p. 122.

ships of his early life have already been mentioned; we can easily understand that when these had turned to success, the result was an overbearing conceit. This contention is supported by descriptions we have of him. Melancthon writes of Osiander that he would often study from nine at night until one or two in the morning; he adds, however, that he did not get up early in the morning either. When he did get up, just before the noon meal, he would come down the steps carrying his trousers. This is a sign of his pride and inconsideration. He is said to have wanted to drink with the Prussians and to have had other immoral habits. Nevertheless, in an evaluation of Osiander's character, the point which Walch makes is very well taken:

All sorts of other things are related about him, which have, however, no foundation. He had his notable failings; but these were not different from, but rather in conformity with those of the times in which he lived.

Luther is said to have predicted of Osiander: "Osiander hat einen hochmuetigen Geist; nach meinem Tode wir er in der Kirche grosse Unruhe erregen."

Keeping Osiander's personal characteristics in mind--on the one hand, his brilliance; and on the other hand, his inordinate pride--we can proceed to an evaluation of Osiander as a theologian, and from this to an analysis of his peculiar views on justification.

9. Walch, op. cit., p. 142.

Basically, Osiander's entire theology is a protest or revolt against what he considered too cold and intellectual a theology, namely, that of Philip Melanchthon. Osiander's approach to theology has well been summarized by Dorner:

Whilst Melanchthon contented himself with treating Luther's doctrine of faith in a more popular, empirical, and practical form, Osiander early evinced an inclination to penetrate to its deeper roots, and speculatively to reconstruct the evangelical system. In pursuance of this design, he naturally formed a terminology of his own, and thus exposed himself to much misinterpretation. Osiander's opposition to Melanchthon's method and system did not arise solely from jealousy of the high esteem in which that theologian was held; but from his accurate perception that Melanchthon's formulas embodied too little of the vital element of Mysticism, and that, on the contrary, the rational divine substance of Christianity was rather dissipated by the sharp definitions and calculations of Melanchthon's understanding.

As to the sources of Osiander's theology, various possibilities have been suggested:

- 1) Occamism. (But apparently this did not affect his thinking very much.)
- 2) Platonism. (There is a strong resemblance between Platonism and Osiander's view of the image of God, a concept which will be treated under justification. Cf. p.18.)
- 3) Medieval Scholasticism. (Osiander's relation to the Roman Catholic theology is a problem also to be discussed; see p. 38.)

10. History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ, Division Second, II, pp. 108-109. Dorner's views are, of course, colored by his own opinions; such words as "accurate" above bear that out. Nevertheless, his summary sets Osiander in his correct historical place.

4) Lutheranism. (It is the opinion of some writers that Osiander was never a real Lutheran, but there were influences nevertheless.)¹¹

Because of its bearing upon a true evaluation of the doctrine of justification in Osiander, one rather minute detail of his system deserves attention. It is his doctrine of the Antichrist and, more generally, his view of the Roman Catholic Church. Osiander was very strongly anti-Roman and took every opportunity to point out that the Pope of Rome was the true Antichrist. As early as 1524 he wrote "Ein gut Unterricht und getreuer Ratschlag aus heiliger goettlicher Schrift, wesz man sich in diesen Zwie-trachten ndern heiligen Glauben und christliche Lehre betreffend, halten soll; darin, was Gottes Wort und Menschenlehre, was Christus und Antichrist sei, fuernaemlich gehandelt wird." In 1527 he joined forces with the famous German poet, Hans Sachs, to put out "Die wunderliche Weis-sagung", an interpretation of old anti-Roman pictures in the sense of the Reformation; in the same year he published the prophecies of St. Hildegard. In 1533 he attacked Romanism, particularly Eck, in his "Verantvortung des Nuernber-gischen Katechismi." And, finally, in 1544 he wrote his

11. These possibilities have been taken from O. Ritschl's Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus, II (Erste Haelfte), pp. 456-457.

Coniecturae de ultimis temporibus, an apocalyptic discussion of the Pope as Antichrist.¹²

What is Osiander's peculiar doctrine of justification? It is a complicated and confusing set of principles, and an attempt to present these in a systematic way misses somewhere along the line. Nevertheless, it can be understood only if taken point by point; and thus we shall consider it.¹³

The first concept to be considered in an evaluation of Osiander is his doctrine of the Image of God. This phrase, which is Biblical, has caused a good deal of trouble in the history of the Church and has called forth an enormous literature. It is being discussed even today.¹⁴ We can see the concept "image of God" in Osiander's thought from a correct angle only if we consider Luther's doctrine. In his Commentary on Genesis,¹⁵ Luther says:

The image of God created in Adam was a workmanship, the most beautiful, the most excellent, the most noble...his intellect was most clear, his memory most complete and his will the most sincere, accompanied by a most charming security, without any fear of death and without any care or anxiety whatever.

12. Moeller, op. cit., pp. 122-123, has set this up.

13. I have followed the outline given by Thomasius in his Die Christliche Dogmengeschichte als Entwicklungsgeschichte des kirchlichen Lehrbegriffs, II, pp. 251-258.

14. Even Reinhold Niebuhr has a treatment of it under the chapter title, "Man as Image of God and as Creature", The Nature and Destiny of Man, I, pp. 150-177.

15. Quoted ibid., p. 161.

In contrast to this, Osiander taught that the image of God in man was the Son of God, and the Verbum incarnandum at that. It was the man Jesus, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily (Col. 1:15; 2:9). This image of the Son exists in God's Spirit as an idea, similitudo, and "the divine destiny of man is to set the image of God in its true and full sense, in other words, to become the full indwelling of divinity and humanity."¹⁶ In this idea Osiander appears to be related to Origen; for this early heretic, too, taught that Adam was created according to the image of Christ's human nature. Scripture is clear on this point. It maintains that man was created according to the image of the Triune God (Gen. 1:26-27), that Christ is the last man and that Adam was the first (1 Cor. 15:45 ff.), and that Christ assumed the flesh and blood of man, not vice versa¹⁷ (Heb. 2:14). Nevertheless, it was Osiander's view that man was created in the image of the Son of God who was to become flesh.

In Adam the image of God was realized and destroyed. In his state of innocence, Adam had enjoyed full participation in the righteousness (iustitia) not of the entire Trinity, but of the Son of God who was to become incarnate. But when he fell into sin, Adam lost this participation;

16. Thomasius, op. cit., p. 252.

17. This criticism is taken from Franz Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik, I, pp. 617-618, note 1534.

for when he turned away from God, God turned away from him. And the only way this could be restored was the way God's image was to have been completed originally, namely, by the incarnation of the Son of God.

The second premise of Osiander's doctrine was his view of the Word of God. This concept is a weird combination of mystical and Biblical ideas. For the phrase "word of God" in Osiander's writings means three things, very often all three at the same time: Jesus Christ, the "inner word", and the "external word."

Osiander toyed around very much with the Logos of St. John. In fact, he saw the essence of all of Christianity not in Romans, as Luther had, but in the prolog, sixth chap-¹⁸ter, and last discourses of St. John's Gospel. Of course, this is in keeping with Osiander's view of the incarnation of the Son of God as necessary for the re-establishment of a connection between God and man.

To this idea Osiander adds his views of the "inner" and "outer" word. He seems to identify with the Incarnate Word, which is eternal; the external word, the "outer", is the word as preached by men, and therefore a human word,¹⁹ and therefore transient. It must be preached so that men

18. O. Ritschl, op. cit., p. 457.

19. Thomasius, op. cit., pp. 253-254.

can, through it, come into possession of the "inner" word.

Osiander's terminology in his discussion of the "word" is vague and very confusing, since it is so foreign to our whole way of thinking. Hence, if Dorner's view is correct,
20
it certainly helps to clear things up:

This outward actuality through which He is approachable to us, continues to exist for us in the preaching of the outer word. The outer word is not empty sound, but the manifestation of the "Verbum internum": the latter comes along with the former, and enkindles the light also in susceptible hearts. It is true, the Christ who is veiled under the external word, as an inner word, can only be recognized by the spiritual eye: if we lay hold on and believe the inner word, that Word which is true God and true man abides in us.

Subjective justification, which we shall discuss in more detail a little later on in this chapter, is effected, so Osiander taught, when in the word of the sermon the Logos
21
enters us and brings His blessings with Him. Somehow, Osiander managed to maintain Luther's doctrine of the Sacrament, teaching that Christ is present in it. But here, too, his peculiar views play a part; for Osiander taught that in the Sacrament of the Altar we receive the assurance that Christ truly dwells in us and we become flesh of His
22
flesh.

20. J. A. Dorner, op. cit., pp. 111-112.

21. R. Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, IV, 2. Haelfte, p. 500.

22. Fr. H. R. Frank, Die Theologie der Concordienformel, II, p. 21.

The third, and yet the basic point in Osiander's theory of justification is his view of righteousness. Like the preceding, this is difficult to place, for Osiander is nowhere very definite on this. In one place he says: 23

Die Gerechtigkeit ist kein Werk, kein Thun, kein Leiden, sondern ist die Art, die diejenigen, der sie bekommt und hat, gerecht macht und recht zu thun und zu leiden bewegt, und musz aller Dinge zuvor da sein, ehe denn die Werke und Fruechte der Gerechtigkeit herausbrechen und wachsen, wie aus dem guten Baume die guten Fruechte.

This quotation is found in his main writing, "Von dem Einigen Mitler Jhesu Christo vnd Rechtfertigung des Glaubens." The treatise contains his main ideas; and for a presentation of Osiander's views, it may be best simply to list or to outline his doctrines as presented in this book. They have been summarized in nineteen points. 24

1. The office of the Mediator consists in two acts: a) that he make a gracious God for us, who will accept us as His children; b) that he make us righteous. The first act is redemption, the second is justification.

2. On Redemption. Because we can neither bear the punishment of sins nor fulfill the law for ourselves, the sole Mediator stepped into our place and, first of all,

23. Quoted by Thomasius, op. cit., p. 254.

24. This excellent overview is taken over, except when otherwise indicated, from Preger, op. cit., pp. 211-216.

took upon Himself the sins of all the world and so suffered everything which we had deserved for our sins; secondly, He fulfilled the law purely and completely for us, so that we would not have to be cursed for not fulfilling the law completely in this life.

3. Through both, through the fulfilling of the law and through His living and death, the Mediator has earned that grace for us from the Heavenly Father, that He not only forgave us our sin and took the unbearable burden of the law from us, but also wants to justify us through faith in Christ, that is, wants to make us righteous or infuse²⁵ righteousness.

4. On Justification. Therefore, the other part of the office of Jesus Christ is, that he now turns around to us) and deals with us poor sinners as with the guilty party, that we recognize such great grace, accept it gratefully by faith, so that He, by faith, makes us alive out of the death of sin, and that the sin, which is already forgiven, but which still dwells in our flesh, is completely destroyed in us.

25. In another place, his treatise Disputatio de iustificatione, thesis 73, Osiander said: "Glacie frigidiora docent, nos tantum propter remissionem peccatorum reputari iustos, et non etiam propter iustitiam Christi per fidem in nobis inhabitantis." Quoted in Seeberg, op. cit., p.497.

5. The Savior first has the law preached to us, so that by repentance we become hungry and thirsty for righteousness.²⁶

6. After repentance the Lord Christ has the Gospel preached to us, in which we should believe.

7. God decreed from eternity that He would relieve us of the curse of the law through the obedience of His Son.²⁷ This eternal decree of God is an inner word and is God Himself, and that God who became man, and is Jesus Christ our Lord, true God and man. And this His inner word, which is God Himself in Himself and was born true man from the Virgin Mary, God put into the outer word and had it preached to us by His prophets and apostles through Christ. The inner and the outer word together is the Gospel.

8. The correct, true Christian faith, which God works in us, grasps the Gospel, the way a goblet surrounds that which is to be drunk.

9. Where there is such a faith, there the Gospel shows its divine power very mightily: first it brings us, in the outer word, the ineffable treasure which Christ has won for us through His fulfilling of the law, His suffering and

26. Osiander was an ardent supporter of private absolution and fought general absolution. Moeller, *op.cit.*, p. 122.

27. In 1550 Osiander wrote a book entitled An Filius Dei fuerit Incarnandus, si peccatum non introivisset in mundum, in which he maintained that the Son of God would have been incarnate even if Adam had not sinned. It is summarized in Albrecht Ritschl, A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation, pp. 216-217.

dying, by which we are saved and reconciled, namely, that we, being made free from the law and the curse, have forgiveness of sins.

10. Secondly, in the outer word the holy Gospel brings us the inner word of God the Father, which is also true God and God Himself, but not entirely, the way He is Himself in His divine nature (for so we could not grasp Him), but as He became man and is our dear Lord, Savior, and only Mediator, Jesus Christ, God's Son and Mary's, true God and man, who died for our sin and was raised again for our righteousness, who then lives through faith in our heart, soul, and spirit, as true God and man. And therefore the Gospel proves its power further in this, that through the word, that is, the divine nature in Christ, we become alive out of death in sin, and enlightened again. But when we say that the word, that is, the divine nature in Christ, is our life, we do
28
not want to neglect the human nature of Christ:

...even as the entire vine constitutes the branches one nature with it, and enables them to bring forth fruit. For in the vine also there are two natures, of which one is wood, which abides even though the vine itself would wither, the other is completely hidden, bears fruit, produces grapes. Now, as the vine could not be of a grape-bearing nature if it were not wood of the wood of the vine-stock; even so we cannot become partakers of the divine nature unless we are so incorporated with Him by faith and baptism, as to become flesh, blood, and bone of His flesh, blood and bone.

28. Quoted and translated in Dorner, op.cit., p. 112.

And just as we receive divine life from God in the word by the human nature of Christ, of which we are members, so we receive also divine light, which is the very same life and word of God, God Himself, and through it we are so enlightened through faith we see, with our spiritual eyes in the same light, what God is, what He demands of us, etc.

11. Thirdly, as the Gospel brings the word of God, which is God Himself and was born of the pure Virgin Mary, became flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, to our heart, soul, and spirit through faith, so that, awakened by it, we again live in God and by God; so it shows its power further and also justifies us, that is, makes us righteous.

12. Holy Scripture speaks of a righteousness of faith. Some think it is the mere faith in itself; some, trust in the mercy of God; some, only the forgiveness of sins; some, that God receives us into eternal life; some, the righteousness of God outside of us; some, the obedience of Christ, which has flowed out of His righteousness; some think that it is the merit of the obedience of Christ which is the
29
righteousness of God imputed to us through faith.

13. But some, struck by the Holy Scripture, confess that

20. In accordance with his rejection of all these views on the "righteousness of God" and his acceptance of the view to follow, Osiander rejected Luther's translation of dikaio-syne tou Theou as "die Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt." But this phrase is the crisis of the Lutheran doctrine of justification. W. Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums, pp. 96-7.

Christ Himself is our righteousness and is in us; but they do not want to leave Him as our righteousness according to His divine nature, but rather divide the divine nature of Christ from His human nature in justification. Because these men do this, they err greatly, being unable either to say or to know what there is about or in Christ that they should set up as our righteousness: one says, it is a work of God which God works in Christ; another says, it is a middle righteousness, neither the divine nor yet the human righteousness; another says, it is the blood of Christ;³⁰ another says, the essential righteousness of God creates a new creaturely righteousness in us; another says another thing.

14. These men err terribly: first, in that they understand and interpret the word "justify" only as "to consider and declare as righteous" and not to make righteous in deed and in truth; then, too, in that they make no distinction³¹ between redemption and justification; furthermore, in that

30. Osiander was probably thinking of the familiar idea expressed in the hymn:

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head. (# 371.)

31. "When Osiander, starting from a systematic order of ideas, sharply distinguishes the effect of Christ's work upon God from that upon man, his meaning is, that the former, which has been accomplished more than 1500 years before, might well be called our redemption, but not our justification. For to justification our faith is necessary; and to believe, one must exist. But we were not living then; and therefore we could not be justified by Christ's twofold fulfilment of the law." A. Ritschl, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

they can set nothing definite as the righteousness of Christ which must be in us through faith and which is imputed to us; and finally they err in that they separate Christ's divine nature from the righteousness and divide and give up Christ.

15. It is necessary to know that there are two kinds of piety and righteousness, namely, human and divine. Human righteousness is that which a man can do from his own powers without the Holy Ghost, moved by the law and other human discipline. But divine righteousness is that which God Himself has, yea, which God Himself is, namely, that which He had in Himself and decreed from eternity: that this righteousness which is God Himself would be united with His humanity when He became flesh in the word, and thus to make the same most holy humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ righteous with His eternal righteousness, to guide and to lead to all obedience and good works and to all patience, to suffer for us and our sin, that He might redeem us and then rise again for our justification.

16. Now, when Paul says that Christ is made unto us righteousness (probably a reference to 1 Cor. 1:30), I shall face the issue, since this is the main point of controversy, and I shall say: Since Christ is made unto us righteousness and "Christ" is the name of the entire, undivided person, in which both the divine and the human nature are united, now the question is, according to which nature is He our righteousness. Just as it is asked: according to which nature is

He Creator of heaven and earth? or according to which nature did He die? Here is now my simple, correct, and clear answer: that He is our righteousness according to His divine nature, and not according to His human nature, although we cannot find, come to, or grasp His divine righteousness outside of His humanity.

17. When He lives in us through faith, He brings along His righteousness, which is His divine nature, which is then also imputed to us as though it were our own, yes, it is given to us and then flows out of His humanity as out of the head into us as His members and moves us to dedicate our members as weapons of righteousness.

18. Fourthly, the Gospel proves its power also in this, that since it brings the Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man, into our hearts through faith, and with Him also the Father and the Holy Ghost, He is made unto us, as Paul says, 1 Cor. 1:30, sanctification or holiness; and indeed He is our holiness also according to His divine nature.

19. Fifthly, since the Gospel brings the word of God, which is God Himself, into our hearts through faith, it demonstrates its power further and saves us also from everything by which we might lose this our costly treasure before we come to the eternal fatherland. He chokes the sin in us and kills the death so that through the resurrection we become free of all the danger in which we now stand. And that is redemption.

This is, in sketchy survey, Osiander's doctrine of justification. Instead of treating justification as a forensic imputation of an alien righteousness to the sinner, it takes justification as a medical infusion of Christ's essential righteousness to the sinner.

When did Osiander first get these views, and when did he first make them public? This question is interesting, and the answer to it is helpful in evaluating Osiander's views as well as his motives. Some peculiar views were apparent already in his "Gut Unterricht" of 1524, where he dealt with Jer. 23:6, "this is the name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." In 1525, at the Nuernberg Colloquy, he distinguished the two steps mentioned above. At Augsburg in 1530, he made his peculiar ideas known to Melanchthon at the house of Urbanus Regius.³²

But it seems as though he feared Luther and did not want to bring his doctrine into the open until after Luther's death, knowing that Luther would be able to defeat him on the basis of Scripture. He seems to have held these ideas all his life; as Bente says, "Osiander never attained to a clear apprehension of the Lutheran truth."³³

Luther's death was the signal for all the false doctrines which had been in hiding under the guise of Luther-

32. All these references, elaborated in Moeller's book, are taken from his article, pp. 121-123.

33. Op. cit., p. 153.

anism to break forth; one of these was Osiander's doctrine of justification. Fired by his animosity for Melancthon and the Wittenberg theologians, and confident that his superior gifts would defeat them, Osiander brought out his doctrine. Frank's analysis is keen:

34

As long as Luther was alive , he did not dare to express his peculiar doctrine of justification openly; but after the death of the lion, he thought he would make short work of the hares and foxes.

Thus were Luther's two prophecies fulfilled: his prophecy that after his death men would pervert his doctrine of justification, and his prophecy that after his death Osiander would cause trouble in the Church. They were fulfilled in one man, in Andrew Osiander and in his weird doctrine of justification.

35

By the grace of God, this man did not go unchallenged. There were still men who knew the truth and who were ready to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. The story of these men and of their defense against Osiander's perversions will be told in Chapter III.

34. Theologie der Concordienformel, II, p. 150.

35. See p. 8 and p. 14 of this thesis.

III. Antithesis to Antithesis:

The Osiandrian Controversy

Here and there in our discussion of Osiander's doctrine we have indicated its anti-Scriptural and anti-Lutheran character; this was inevitable, since in dealing with matters which touch the core of Christianity, absolute objectivity is almost impossible.

Nothing in our criticism of Osiander was original. It did not have to be; for almost as soon as Osiander made his views known and began to make propaganda for them, he was met by opposition. The record of this opposition is the history of the Osiandrian Controversy. This history is almost as long and complicated as it is tragic, and it is not the purpose of this monograph to give it in full. Rather, a recital of the principal facts--the men involved, the books they wrote, the meetings they held--will have to suffice as a means of explaining the final synthesis, which was really the same as the original thesis, the settlement in the Formula of Concord.

1. As in the discussion of Osiander's doctrine of justification in Chapter II we leaned rather heavily upon Preger's exposition and only supplemented this from other sources, so in the discussion of the Osiandrian Controversy we have followed the outline and general line of thought and facts given by Johann Georg Walch in his Historische und Theologische Einleitung in die Religions-Streitigkeiten der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche, IV, pp. 144-182. Where there is no source marked, the material is from Walch.

Walch divides the participants in the Osiandrian Controversy into three classes:

I. Those who thought that Osiander had not erred substantially, but had made mistakes only in choosing unfortunate terminology.

II. Those who supported Osiander.

III. Those who opposed Osiander.

We may consider these classes one by one, evaluating their views on Osiander as we go along. As we just said, the first class consisted of those who thought that Osiander did not really mean what he said, but that he had rather chosen words and phrases which sound much worse than they were really meant to sound.

The chief representatives of this class were the theologians of Wuerttemberg, especially Johann Brenz. After Duke Albert had tried everything to put an end to the controversy in Koenigsberg, he sent out a request on October 5, 1551, to all supporters of the Augsburg Confession in Germany, asking for their opinion on Osiander's doctrine. In January, 1552, the theologians of Wuerttemberg replied. Their reply contained the views already mentioned, that Osiander did not deny the humanity of Christ nor the efficacy of His obedience, that he did not exclude faith, that in reality the controversy was a strife about words in which each side supported its pet words and phrases although they both agreed essentially.

In 1554 the declaration of the Wuerttemberg theologians appeared in printed form under the title: "Johannis Brentii und anderer ihm zugeordneten Theologen von der Rechtfertigung des Menschen Confession und Declaration." This declaration, which is in eight articles, expresses the view we mentioned above.²

In the same year, Aurifaber (of whom more a little later) sent Brenz a series of questions. Two of these are interesting and give Brenz' views on Osiander. The first question was: "Does not iustificare also mean 'make righteous' in the Scriptures?" To this Brenz answered that in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans it means as much as "to forgive sin", but that it may well mean "to make righteous" as well. The second question was: "Can we say that we are justified through God's essential righteousness, and that God is our righteousness?" Brenz answered that this was an unusual mode of speaking, from which he shied away, but that he would not condemn anyone holding it as a heretic; for it can be interpreted in a charitable way to mean the true doctrine.

So much for Class I. From our discussion of Osiander's doctrine, it should be quite obvious that Osiander's error

2. This view is still held in some circles. Dorner, for example, says of Osiander's design to speculate: "In pursuance of this design, he naturally formed a terminology of his own, and this exposed him to much misinterpretation." Op. cit., II, p. 108.

was more than the choice of a few unfortunate expressions; Osiander had really and truly strayed from the essence of the Lutheran doctrine of justification: the forensic imputation of an alien righteousness to the sinner through his faith in Christ.

II. Some went farther than Brenz and the Wuerttemberg theologians had. Not only did they not oppose Osiander; they followed him and accepted his views. For this there are, as happens so often, very good political reasons. Duke Albert has been referred to several times in this thesis; Osiander had brought him to Lutheranism--or, rather away from Popery--and so the Duke considered Osiander his spiritual father. In the controversy on justification Osiander enjoyed the full support of the Duke; and where the carcass was, the eagles gathered. Some of those who sided with Osiander were the following:

Johann Funck. He was preacher at the court of Duke Albert. Described as a vacillating theologian, he wrote a personal confession in 1551, which completely agreed with the doctrine of Osiander. At the Synod of Riesenburg in 1556, he was forced to recant and to ask for God's forgiveness. Ten years later he was executed for some political manipulation, although the reason may have been his heresy. He wrote a "Wahrhaftig und gruendlich Bericht" on Osiander.

Johann Sciurus. He was one of Osiander's colleagues at Koenigsberg and taught Hebrew, Osiander's favorite subject. During a debate in 1552 he was accused of holding heretical views on the human nature of Christ. As a result he wrote and had published his "Apologia; oder Schutz-Rede wider bee-
de Bartholomaeum Wagner und Johann Hoppium Magistros, von denen ich offentlig beschuldigt worden bin, als solte ich in Christo, wahren Gott und Menschen, wenn wir ihn anrufen, und anbeten, die menschliche Natur ausschliessen, samt einem kurtzen und christlichen Bekaenntnis von dem Artikel der Rechtfertigung."

Melchior Isinder. He had been professor of theology at Koenigsberg, but his place had been taken by Osiander. Though at first irritated by this, he nevertheless sided with his successor in the Controversy. Walch describes him as "ganz unsinnig und toll."

Ottomar Epplin. He had been pastor primarius in Goerlitz; later on he was preacher at the court of Duke Albert.

Johann Aurifaber. Duke Albert had called him to be professor of theology at Koenigsberg. Because of his political loyalty to the Duke, Aurifaber sided with Osiander. After Osiander's death, Aurifaber, as Vice-President of the bishopric, carried on the fight. In 1565 he went to Breslau, where he died three years later. Andrew, his brother, was Albert's physician.

Peter Artopaeus. Pastor of a church in Stettin, he corresponded quite steadily with Osiander. Because Artopaeus was preaching on the Epistle to the Romans according to the Osiandrian doctrine, he got into trouble with his fellow-pastors; and two synods were held in Stettin to straighten things out.

Leonhard Culmann. He was pastor in Nuernberg, and because of his Osiandrianism, Melanchthon himself came to the city for an investigation. Unwilling to recant, Culmann was deprived of his pastorate. This controversy within a controversy produced some writings, which were really reprints of sermons and addresses. They included Melanchthon's Adhortatio ad eos, qui docent in ecclesia Noribergensi, and a sermon by Jacob Runge.

According to the sources, all these men supported the ideas of Osiander. What can be said about him applies to them as well, for they are merely followers.

III. A great deal was said about him and about them by the third party, those who opposed Osiander. First of all, we shall list the faculties and groups which opposed him; then we shall mention some of the individuals.

The theologians of Weimar and Coburg published Censurae in 1552-4. There were three of them; it is thought that Menius, who edited all three, wrote the first; that Strigel wrote the second; and that Schnepf wrote the third.

Under the leadership of Andrew Musculus, the doctors of Brandenburg put out a "Gruendliche Anzeigung" in 1552; in it they accuse Osiander of making two persons out of Christ and call him a Novatian, Eutychian, and a Jew. The writing is said to have been very coarse in its tone.

The Synod of Cuestrin accused Osiander³ of Pelagianism in its "Widerlegung der Opinion" of 1552.

Accusing Osiander of making Christ's blood nothing more than His deity, the theologians and pastors of Pomerania branded Osiander as a heretic in their "Antwort."

One of the few treatises in the Controversy which is called moderate is the Responsio ministrorum ecclesiae, quae est Hamburgi & Luneburgi.

The most significant group writing is the answer by the theologians of Wittenberg, "Antwort auf das Buch Herrn Andreae Osiander von der Rechtfertigung des Menschen." The views of these men will be discussed under their own names. We might mention, however, that Osiander himself answered the charges of this book in his Widerlegung of 1552.

We come now to the individual theologians who opposed Osiander's doctrine of justification:

3. It is difficult to say whether the cause of this is in Osiander or in his opponents. True it is that Osiander mingled justification and sanctification. However, his view on the destruction of the image of God seems to indicate that he recognized the existence of sin as well as anyone.

Joachim Moerlin. Born April 6, 1514, Moerlin was Luther's chaplain from 1539 on. In 1544 he was inspector of the churches in Goettingen, and later on came to Koenigsberg, where he preached in the Cathedral. He was one of the leading antagonists of Osiander in the controversy, publishing several books. He was opposed in his writings by Osiander himself, as well as by Osiander's supporter, Vogel. Although he wrote several books under the title Antwort or Apologia, his most significant work is his "Historia, welche gestalt sich die Osiandrische Schwaermerey im Lande Preussen erhaben, und wie dieselbe verhandelt ist."

Also significant, though his work comes later, was the great Lutheran theologian, Martin Chemnitz. At that time he was Duke Albert's librarian. He it was who accused Osiander of Romanizing the doctrine of justification. The symboli-⁴
cian Moehler writes:⁵

Osiander took the liberty of propounding a peculiar doctrine of justification, which was, if we enlighten his dark method of speech and that which was unclear even to him, entirely Catholic.

4. This is an oft-repeated accusation and not without ground; for it is very good Romanism to mingle justification. It is also in keeping with papal doctrine to deal with the essential righteousness of God. Above all, Osiander was Catholicizing in that he discarded the forensic act and substituted the medical act. Cf. F. Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik, II, pp. 635-636. On the other hand, see R. Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, IV, 2. Haelfte, p. 502.

5. Symbolik, p. 155, quoted in Frank, Theologie der Concordienformel, p. 92.

Matthias Flacius. This man, who played such a great part in the history of the Lutheran Church after Luther's death, was also one of Osiander's most vigorous opponents. It is said that Duke Albert attempted to bribe Flacius for Osiander's cause with a gift; be that as it may, Flacius wrote much in the Osiandrian Controversy. His outstanding work in this field was his "Verlegung des Bekaenntnis Osiandri von der Rechtfertigung der armen Suender durch die wesentliche Gerechtigkeit der hohen Majestaet Gottes allein." This he put out in co-operation with Nicholas Gallus. In addition, he wrote many other works against Osiander; in these he attacked the heresy as it grew, point for point. He accused Osiander and his cohorts of deifying themselves by their discussion of the divine image; one of the works in which he brought this out was his "Antidotum auf Osiandri giftiges Schmeckbier."⁶

Nicholas Amsdorf. In 1552, he wrote a treatise which was entitled: "Auf Osianders Bekenntnis ein Unterricht und Zeugnis, dasz die Gerechtigkeit der Menschheit Christi, darinnen sie empfangen und gebohren ist, allen glaubigen Suendern geschenket und zugerechnet wird, und fuer ihre Person hier auf Erden nimmermehr gerecht und heilig werden."

John Pellicarius. In the same year, this superintendent

6. The history of the controversy between Osiander and Flacius is recorded in detail by Preger, Matthias Flacius Illyricus und seine Zeit, I, pp. 217-297.

in Weissenfels wrote an "Antwort auf das Buch Osiandri von der Rechtfertigung des Menschen."

Anton Otto Herzberger. He was pastor in Nordhausen. The title of his polemic is: "Wider die tiefgesuchten und scharfgespizten; aber doch nichtigen Ursachen Osianders, damit er den Artickel von der Gerechtigkeit laestiget und verkehret klaeglich."

Justus Menius. Already mentioned in connection with the Censurae of the theologians from Weimar and Coburg, this man called Osiander an alchemist because of his view on the relation between the two natures in Christ.

Alexander Alesius. Located in Leipzig, he wrote tres disputationes de mediatore & reconciliatione & iustificatione hominis.

Wolfgang Waldner. He was pastor in Nuernberg and accused Osiander of being a Schwaermer.⁷

Michael Roeting. He was rector in Nuernberg and wrote his Testimonium contra falsam Andr. Osiandri de iustificatione sententiam, to which Osiander answered in his polemical writing, Schmeckbier.

And finally, Peter Palladius lists Osiander as a contemporary false teacher in his catalogue of heretics.

Quite a formidable array of opponents! In one year, 1552, they certainly published their share of books; and

7. On the Schwaermeri cf. Pieper, op.cit., II, p. 635.

all of Protestant Germany was torn with the conflict. It is hard for us in the twentieth century to estimate what a controversy can do to an entire land. Especially is this true of the Osiandrian Controversy, since, as we have seen, the political aspect was very prominent in it.

One opponent we have not yet mentioned. This is Franciscus Stancarus. He does not really come up for consideration in this paper, but he should be referred to. Driven on by the heat of the controversy against Osiander, Stancarus went too far in the other direction, teaching that Christ is our Mediator only according to His human nature.⁸

By the 1570's everyone was tired of controversy. In addition to the Osiandrian Controversy, there were the other disputes after Luther's death; and almost everybody had had quite enough. The grace of God, which had granted Luther a full insight into the Scriptural truth, granted leaders to the Church who reformulated Scriptural truth in God's gift to the Lutheran Church, the Formula of Concord.

8. Cf. Seeberg, op. cit., pp. 507-508.

III. Synthesis: Formula of Concord

"Against both the errors just recounted, we unanimously believe, teach, and confess that Christ is our Righteousness neither according to the divine nature alone nor according to the human nature alone, but that it is the entire Christ according to both natures, in His obedience alone, which as God and man He rendered unto the Father even unto death, and thereby merited for us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, as it is written: 'As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.' Rom. 5:19."¹

With these words the fathers of the Lutheran Church opened the third article of the Formula of Concord, after listing the heresies of Osiander and Stancarus. The article is, appropriately enough, entitled "Of the Righteousness of Faith before God." In it are very clearly set forth the true teachings of Scripture concerning the justification of the sinner and the relation of Christ's person to it.

Before giving the article, one word is necessary. Although this chapter of this thesis is entitled "Synthesis", this by no means indicates that the teaching of the Formula

1. Formula of Concord, Art. III, "Epitome", Concordia Triglotta, p. 793.

lies somewhere between the doctrine of Luther and the Augustane, on the one hand, and the heresies of Osiander and Stancarus on the other hand. Quite to the contrary! The Formula of Concord merely restated the teaching concerning justification which God had permitted Luther to see after much tribulation. In terms of our chapter titles, the "synthesis" is the same as the "thesis." The Formula had to define the doctrine a little more carefully because of the controversy which had preceded.

Here lies the good of the Osiandrian Controversy: that despite the offense that it caused and the making of books that it precipitated and the ink and paper that it wasted, this controversy forced the Lutheran Church to reexamine its position and set down the truth of the Bible in that doctrinal gem, the Formula of Concord. In this controversy, as in the others which preceded the Formula, one must call to mind, almost involuntarily, the words of Joseph to his brethren: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Gen. 50:20.

There is no better way to summarize the content of this thesis than by giving the third article of the Formula of Concord, where the positive and negative aspects of this monograph are well presented.

2. "Epitome", Concordia Triglotta, pp. 791-797.

STATUS CONTROVERSIAE.

Since it is unanimously confessed in our churches, in accordance with God's Word and the sense of the Augsburg Confession, that we poor sinners are justified before God and saved alone by faith in Christ, and thus Christ alone is our righteousness, who is true God and man, because in Him the divine and human natures are personally united with one another, Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21, the question has arisen: According to which nature is Christ our Righteousness? and thus two contrary errors have arisen in some churches.

For the one side has held that Christ according to His divinity alone is our Righteousness, if He dwell in us by faith; contrasted with this divinity, dwelling in us by faith, the sins of all men must be regarded as a drop of water compared to the great ocean. Others, on the contrary, have held that Christ is our righteousness before God according to the human nature alone.

AFFIRMATIVA.

1. Against both the errors just recounted, we unanimously believe, teach and confess that Christ is our Righteousness neither according to the divine nature alone nor according to the human nature alone, but that it is the entire Christ according to both natures, in His obedience alone, which as God and man He rendered to the Father even

unto death, and thereby merited for us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, as it is written: 'As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.' Rom. 5:19.

2. Accordingly, we believe, teach, and confess that our righteousness before God is this very thing, that God forgives us our sins out of pure grace, without any work, merit, or worthiness of ours preceding, present, or following, that He presents and imputes to us the righteousness of Christ's obedience, on account of which righteousness we are received into grace by God, and regarded as righteous.

3. We believe, teach, and confess that faith alone is the means and instrument whereby we lay hold on Christ, and thus in Christ of that righteousness which avails before God, for whose sake this faith is imputed to us for righteousness, Rom. 4:5.

4. We believe, teach, and confess that this faith is not a bare knowledge of the history of Christ, but such a gift of God by which we come to the right knowledge of Christ as our Redeemer in the Word of the Gospel, and trust in Him that for the sake of His obedience alone we have, by grace, the forgiveness of sins, are regarded as holy and righteous before God the Father, and eternally saved.

5. We believe, teach, and confess that according to the usage of Holy Scripture the word justify means in this

article, to absolve, that is, to declare free from sins. Prov. 17:15: 'He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the righteous, even they both are abomination to the Lord.' Also Rom. 8:33: 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.'

And when, in place of this, the words regeneratio and vivificatio, that is, regeneration and vivification, are employed, as in the Apology, this is done in the same sense. By these terms, in other places, the renewal of man is understood, and distinguished from justification by faith.

6. We believe, teach, and confess also that notwithstanding the fact that many weaknesses and defects cling to the true believers and truly regenerate, even to the grave, still they must not on that account doubt either their righteousness which has been imputed to them by faith, or the salvation of their souls, but must regard it as certain that for Christ's sake, according to the promise and immovable Word of the holy Gospel, they have a gracious God.

7. We believe, teach, and confess that for the preservation of the pure doctrine concerning the righteousness of faith before God it is necessary to urge with special diligence the particulae exclusivae, that is, the exclusive particles, i. e., the following words of the

holy Apostle Paul, by which the merit of Christ is entirely separated from our works, and the honor given to Christ alone, when the holy Apostle Paul writes: 'Of grace, without merit, without Law, without works, not of works.' All these words together mean as much as that we are justified and saved alone by faith in Christ. Eph. 2:8; Rom. 1:17; 3:24; 4:3 ff.; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 11.

8. We believe, teach, and confess that, although the contrition that precedes, and the good works that follow, do not belong to the article of justification before God, yet one is not to imagine a faith of such a kind as can exist and abide with, and alongside of, a wicked intention to sin and act against the conscience. But after man has been justified by faith, then a true living faith worketh by love, Gal. 5:6, so that thus good works always follow justifying faith, and are surely found with it, if it be true and living; for it never is alone, but always has with it love and hope.

ANTITHESIS or NEGATIVE.

Contrary Doctrines Rejected.

Therefore we reject and condemn all the following errors:

1. That Christ is our Righteousness according to His divine nature alone.
2. That Christ is our Righteousness according to His human nature alone.

3. 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 sins, 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.

4. That faith looks not only to the obedience of Christ, but to His divine nature, as it dwells and works in us, and that by this indwelling our sins are covered.

5. That faith is such a trust in the obedience of Christ as can exist and remain in a man even when he has no genuine repentance, in whom also no love follows, but who persists in sins against his conscience.

6. That not God Himself, but only the gifts of God, dwell in believers.

7. That faith saves on this account, because by faith the renewal, which consists in love to God and one's neighbor, is begun in us.

8. 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 (renewal and love) 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.

9. That believers are justified before God and saved jointly by the imputed righteousness of Christ and by the new obedience begun in them, or in part by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, but in part also by the new obedience begun in them.

10. That the promise of grace is made our own by faith in the heart, and by the confession which is made with the mouth, and by other virtues.

11. That faith does not justify without good works; so that good works are necessarily required for righteousness, and without their presence man cannot be justified.

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