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Miscellanea

W. Arndt

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Miscellanea

"God Purposes to Justify Those That Have Come to Faith"

These words in the *Declaration* of the American Lutheran Church have aroused misgivings in some circles, and it may be profitable to spend a few minutes over them. The difficulty which people find here lies in the relative position given to faith and justification. Everybody can see that the sentence under discussion puts the creation of faith before the pronouncement of justification. The question is whether giving faith such a position does not militate against the cardinal truth that our salvation rests entirely on divine grace.

In seeking to arrive at a proper estimate of these words, one must not forget that they speak of subjective justification, that is, justification in which the general sentence of acquittal, in which the whole world has been declared righteous, is in a judicial act of God applied to an individual whose faith grasps the merits of Christ. It is the justification spoken of Rom. 3:28: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," to mention but one of numerous passages. What I should like to point out, in the first place, is that the phraseology employed in the sentence of the *Declaration* is in keeping with that of our classical Lutheran literature. "Those that have come to faith" is, as everybody will have to admit, simply another expression for "those who possess faith," "those who believe," "believers." Now let the reader examine the following sentences from our theological literature and see whether they do not likewise let the creation of faith precede the declaration of justification. The meaning, of course, is not that there is an interval of time between the creation of faith and the verdict of acquittal, but that from the point of view of logical sequence the former is prior to the latter.

The Fourth Article of the Augsburg Confession, speaking of justification by faith, says in its last sentence, "This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4." (*Trigl.*, p. 45.) Faith comes to exist and it is imputed for righteousness. The German version is still more striking: "Denn diesen Glauben will Gott fuer Gerechtigkeit vor ihm halten und zurechnen, wie St. Paulus sagt zu den Roemern am 3. und 4." It is very true that in Article VI the Augsburg Confession says, "For remission of sins and justification is apprehended by faith, as also the voice of Christ attests: 'When ye shall have done all these things, say: We are unprofitable servants,' Luke 17:10." In this passage justification is spoken of as existing before the creation of faith; the term (the German version has *Gerechtigkeit*) evidently refers to objective justification, the great treasure which according to Rom. 1:16 f. is revealed and offered in the Gospel. Thus the Confession speaks of both acts of God, the general and the specific declaration, the objective and the subjective verdict of acquittal.

The language of the Apology agrees with that of the Augsburg Confession. In Article IV, Par. 45 (*Trigl.*, p. 133), Melancthon says, "This

special faith, therefore, by which an individual believes that for Christ's sake his sins are remitted him and that for Christ's sake God is reconciled and propitious, obtains remission of sins and justifies us." Faith is viewed as existing and "obtaining" justification for us. A special heading, prefixed to Par. 61 of the Apology (*Trigl.*, p. 137), reads, "that faith in Christ justifies." Faith is the subject of the action which is denoted by the predicate. No one can deny that here the sequence: creation of faith—justification, is indicated. It would, I gladly add, be very easy to point out passages in the Apology where objective justification is taught, passages in which righteousness is viewed as existing and as being apprehended by faith; hence in this splendid work, too, both aspects of the doctrine of justification are set forth. The Smalcald Articles likewise declare that "Faith alone justifies us" (*Trigl.*, p. 461), thus presupposing from the point of view of logical sequence the existence of faith before the sentence of acquittal is spoken. The Formula of Concord, in the Third Article of the Epitome, says, when speaking of the righteousness of faith before God, "We believe, teach, and confess that faith alone is the means and instrument whereby we lay hold of Christ, and thus in Christ of all that righteousness which avails before God; for His sake this faith is imputed to us for righteousness, Rom. 4:5" (*Trigl.*, p. 793). Let the mode of speech be noted: faith is imputed for righteousness. Faith is viewed as existing, and with reference to it a great declaration is made; it is imputed for righteousness. The sequence here is the same as in most of the other passages that have been quoted.

In Walther's edition of Baier (III, pp. 265 ff.) are quoted utterances of the chief Lutheran dogmaticians on the role of faith in justification. Baier (§ 9) calls faith in Christ the minor motivating cause (*causa impulsiva minus principalis*) of justification, adding at once that faith moves God to justify man not through its own worthiness, force, or value, but through the value and worth of what it apprehends. His nomenclature sufficiently indicates that he views faith as preceding the verdict of justification. Baier admits, one ought to add, that some Lutheran teachers refused to call faith a motivating cause because they feared that such terminology might ascribe some merit to man in the matter of justification, but he evidently was convinced that his language was sufficiently guarded to ward off any such wrong notion. It would be better, of course, not to use such terminology. Quenstedt, too, uses the term *causa* in speaking of faith, calling it *causaληπτική* (apprehending factor). To make certain that he would not be understood as if he ascribed any merit to faith, he says, *Causalitas fidei consistit in apprehendendo et recipiendo, h. e., non est alia quam organica et instrumentalis*. (Faith is a cause because it apprehends and receives, that is, it is a cause merely inasmuch as it is a means and instrument.) Continuing our way through the quotations submitted by Walther, we find that Carpzov calls faith *organum apprehensivum*. He compares faith to the hand of a pauper who receives an alms. Gerhard, prince of dogmaticians, emphasizes that we are justified not on account of faith, but through faith which seizes the merits of Christ—a distinction which is of highest importance. Faith in justification is not a meritorious, but merely an instrumental factor, he says. But even so, even if faith

is nothing but an instrument, it precedes justification, if the relations are logically analyzed, just as the instrument which is used in the performance of an act exists before such performance. It is impracticable to quote all the other writers whom Walther marshals in this connection. But one must not be omitted in this brief survey, sturdy Calovius. He is rather inclined to take issue with those who call faith a *causa impellens*. The paragraph cited from his *Systema* closes with these words, "Whatsoever there exists of activity on our part in the reception of Christ or the apprehension of divine grace as it is offered and conferred, namely, after (postquam) faith has by the Holy Spirit been created in our hearts: this feature of it certainly does not come before us when our justification is considered; yes, faith itself, as far as it is an instrument, is rightly said to be placed in antithesis not only to all works of obedience and piety, but to faith itself, in as far as it is a work or act of ours, and to its value. If this is not devoutly maintained, the Arminian heresy of faith as of a quality or work and act of ours, producing our justification, can easily creep in" (Baier, III, p.270). This is a ringing declaration, seeking to prevent the conception that faith is given a meritorious role in the act of justification. For our present purpose the little word after (postquam) must be noted. Calovius literally places the apprehension of the merits of Christ, that is, our justification, after the production of faith.

Walther, after inserting the Antithesis of Quenstedt in which the opposing errors are noted, submits another group of quotations in which objective (or universal) justification is duly set forth and exalted. Baier, one must remember, in the paragraphs we are discussing, speaks merely of subjective justification. It makes a Christian's heart rejoice to read the warm, gripping testimonies of Lutheran leaders in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries praising God for providing justification for the whole world through the work of Christ. A word of Luther's, for instance, is adduced in which the Reformer mightily declares that Jesus in His victorious struggle with sin, death, and the devil has made all men just, alive, and blessed (selig). Certainly this justification precedes faith.

In Par. 12 (III, p.285) Baier says that "the recipient (*subjectum*) of justification is sinful, but converted or regenerated man." Plainly, the creation of faith accomplished in conversion or regeneration is placed before the act of justification. In this connection Walther submits this quotation from Huelsemann, whom he esteemed highly (I give a very free rendering), "At least with respect to natural sequence a person to be ready for justification must first be provided with justifying faith before absolution or justification follows, for in point of time they are simultaneous" (oportet, *subjectum adaequatum justificationis saltem ordine naturae prius esse instructum fide justificante, quam ipsa absolutio sive justificatio sequatur, etiamsi tempore simul sint*). The italization reproduced above is undoubtedly due to Walther. The passage very definitely states that when logical sequence is considered, the creation of faith precedes justification, although in point of time there is no interval between them.

In order not to extend this survey unduly, I shall now conclude it with quotations from two Missouri Synod theologians. Stoeckhardt

in his *Commentary on Romans*, discussing Rom. 4:1-5, says (p.184), "In the expression ἡ πίστις λογίζεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην faith is considered as the logical *prius* and man's becoming just as the logical *posterius*. This does not contradict what we have said before about the relation between πιστεῦεν and δικαιῶν τὸν ἑαυτοῦ. The verdict of justification which is pronounced in the Gospel, I by faith apply to my own person, in *individuo*, and thus God considers and views me in particular, me personally, in *individuo*, as righteous." I need not bring proof that in other passages Stoeckhardt powerfully argues for the teaching we call that of objective justification, making justification the *prius* and faith the *posterius*. In fact, his whole exposition of Rom. 3-5 becomes meaningless if his espousal of this doctrine is lost sight of. Pieper, in his *Christliche Dogmatik* (II, p. 606), states that "in the very moment in which a person comes to believe in Christ or the Gospel, that is, in the remission of sins, earned by Christ and offered in the Gospel, he through this faith is justified before God." He adds, "This is the so-called subjective justification, in distinction from the so-called objective justification, which is in existence before faith." Thus Pieper stresses, on the one hand, that in point of time the creation of faith and man's individual, that is, subjective justification, are simultaneous, on the other, that objective justification exists before faith is created. The reader should compare another passage, found II, p. 666, where Pieper properly warns against putting an interval of time between the creation of faith and the verdict of subjective justification. However, he does not hesitate to use the expression "faith justifies," which from the point of view of logical analysis puts faith before the act of justification (see, for instance, II, p. 524).

Now, if the question is asked, whether in addition to the passage in Romans in which Stoeckhardt finds definitely that faith is given the status of the logical *prius* (Rom. 4:5) there are Scriptural pronouncements in which the same relation between faith and the act of justification is expressed, I can think of no clearer one than Gal. 2:16, "Even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith in Christ." Here unmistakably, when a logical analysis is undertaken, the conception is that when faith has been created, this act is followed by the act of justification. Moffatt renders these words thus, "We ourselves have believed in Christ Jesus so as to get justified by faith in Christ." Goodspeed's translation is, "Even we believed in Christ Jesus so as to be made upright [?] by faith in Christ." The Twentieth Century New Testament has this rendering, "So we placed our faith in Christ Jesus in order that we might be pronounced righteous as a result of faith in Christ." All these translations recognize that in Paul's words the creation of faith is given the position of the logical *prius*. I shall content myself with drawing attention to one more passage, Rom. 8:30. Here we have the golden chain comforting to Christian hearts: Predestination—the calling—justification—glorification. Since "calling" here signifies the creation of faith, it is very evident that Paul gives to this act of God the status of the logical *prius* with respect to the other act, the pronouncement of justification.

The above, I hold, has shown conclusively that the sentence under

discussion is acceptable and satisfactory. Certainly, if the Bible itself uses such terminology, we cannot say that the doctrine of pure grace is jeopardized by this mode of speaking; and that the Lutheran teachers of the past were not averse to using expressions identical with, or similar to, the one before us the quotations have demonstrated. W. ARNDT

Variety in Gospel Preaching

"A minister of the Gospel is continually preparing bouquets of flowers from the garden of the Word," as Cyril of Alexandria says, "to delight and benefit those to whom he ministers. Such bouquets do not consist of the quickly wilting flowers of this earth, but of the enduring doctrines, perpetually in their native vigor. A gardener in the paradise of God's Word has therein a never-ending source of joy; but by his profession as a gardener he has a never-ending obligation also, that of turning over the soil, of keeping out the weeds, of planning his beds of various flowers, and of preparing the baskets and bouquets for the presentation."

"Preaching the Gospel" is a term signifying occasionally the entire ministry of the Word, including the preaching of the Law. For the purpose of this discussion, however, we shall restrict it to the proclamation of the glad tidings of salvation in Christ, which by common consent should be preached in every sermon.

It is not strange that expressions of despair have been heard regarding this task of ever presenting the Gospel in a new and original and effective manner to the same hearers. It is a difficult task; but one which the Holy Spirit renders grateful and agreeable.

A study of many texts and sermons will show that there is a great variety of ways in which the Gospel can effectively be introduced into the sermon, that is, from the homiletic viewpoint. The Gospel will remain effective at any time when it is preached, for it is the power of God. On the human side, however, we shall find that there are some ways which interest the mind and reach the heart better than other ways. Certainly, variety is desirable.

I

The texts which contain a statement of the Gospel present no great problem, for the sermon outlines based upon them will necessarily dwell on it. Such a text is the Gospel Lesson for Easter Tuesday, Luke 24: 36-47, in which we read, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name." Compare also the Quasimodogeniti Gospel and the Misericordias Domini Epistle. The Ascension Gospel mentions the Gospel by name, but does not contain a definite statement of the *satisfactio vicaria*. A Quinquagesima Gospel makes a direct statement: "The Son of man came . . . to give His life a ransom for many"; besides it is so rich in starting points for the preaching of the Gospel, that almost any method of handling it is bound to take the preacher to the heart of Christianity. This can be said of many texts.

II

But in a very great number of texts the homilete must take certain words of the text as a starting point and introduce the Gospel. By this method the continuity of the sermon is preserved, and the real basis for variety in Gospel preaching is laid down.

A certain text may contain a *prophecy*, or the New Testament record of the fulfillment of a prophecy, with a direct reference to a Prophet or to prophecy in general. A *doctrine* may be expressly stated in the text, and the homilete can make an effective transition to the doctrine of the Gospel, for Christian doctrine is a harmonious unit in spite of the fact that we should not presume to understand all its depths. It is God's revelation of the plan of salvation. Again, in a few instances the Gospel is itself the subject of the text, but in the form of an *allegory*, e. g., John 12:24: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Finally, the text may treat the *purpose* or *final accomplishment* of the saving acts of God, and the preacher may trace back the future or the present blissful state to the cause or the means by which salvation was accomplished.

An instance of the prophetic approach to the Gospel may be found in the Lesson for the Third Sunday in Advent, Matt. 11:2-10. Both Isaiah and Malachi are quoted, affording abundant opportunity for the introduction of the Gospel. The occasion is John's question "Art Thou He that should come?" Beautiful sermons in which the Gospel preaching is colored by the prophetic viewpoint may be found in abundance in Stoeckhardt, Mezger, and others of our synodical fathers, revealing the high status they attained as Bible students.

The possibilities of this text (Matt. 11) are not exhausted, however, by the prophetic emphasis. The doctrine of Christ's divinity is clearly demonstrated to the disciples of John the Baptist in the works which they witnessed. From the omnipotence and benevolence of the Savior the sermon could proceed effectively to the divine grace and favor, thus stressing the doctrinal elements in the text.

The quotation from Isaiah could be used to introduce the Gospel allegorically, if the lame are interpreted as the spiritually lame, and the blind, the lepers, the deaf, the dead, and the poor in like manner. That is Stoeckhardt's manner of bringing the Gospel into the Ephphatha Gospel, Twelfth after Trinitatis. Mezger uses this method in the Gospel of the pool called Bethesda. He says in the introduction (*Hom. Mag.*, 42, 366): "Als einen maechtigen Helfer in der Not zeigt sich der Herr in unserm Text, der helfen kann und will, wenn alle menschliche Hilfe vergebens ist. Seine allmaechtige Hilfe aber, die er in leiblicher Not hier erzeugt, ist uns auch ein Bild seiner Hilfe in unserer noch viel groesseren Not im Geistlichen, in der Not unserer Suenden. So wollen wir heute unsern Text anwenden." The fanatic allegorist might take the above passage from Isaiah and proceed to prove by his interpretation that there is a difference between men in their natural state, some lame, some blind, some dead, etc. But—*abusus non tollit usum*.

More than one connection can frequently be made between the text and the Gospel, and the sermon will improve thereby. A sermon which

approaches the Gospel by a tenuous bypath will be homiletically (perhaps also practically) unsatisfactory, especially when there are broad highways leading directly to it. Gospel preaching gains in vigor when it is substantiated by the text, and the more firmly its roots are grounded in the text, the more impressive is its power, humanly speaking.

Strictly, the prophetic approach and the eschatological may be said to be contained in the doctrinal, but for homiletical study we have separated them. This article does not presume to be more than an attempt to show how a great degree of variety can be and has been attained in Gospel preaching. The number of sermons which might be studied for an exhaustive treatise on this subject is unlimited.

Texts which treat of the purpose and final accomplishment of the Gospel are John 11:20-27, "I am the Resurrection and the Life"; John 14:1-6, "that where I am, there ye may be also"; the parables in Matt. 25; 1 Cor. 15; 1 Thess. 4:13-18. A beautiful example is that of Karl Gerok in "Hirtenstimmen," based on Rev. 7:13-17, the theme: "Die himmlische Sonntagsfeier im oberen Heiligtum, 1. die himmlische Sonntagsgemeinde, 2. der himmlische Sonntagsschmuck, 3. der himmlische Sonntagsdienst, 4. die himmlische Sonntagsfreude."

The types and antitypes in Scripture also provide an approach to the Gospel. Though we would refuse to go the length exhibited in some of the earlier writers on the types of Christ and of the Church, we should not ignore the real types.

III

There are texts which seem to offer no cue at all from which one might proceed to the Gospel. Teachers of homiletics have advised in general against the use of these. It is not difficult to avoid such passages, for it is not easy to find a text in Scripture which does not teach a spiritual truth, at least, by inference.

Scripture passages of this nature will sometimes be found very appropriate on special occasions. There is a great variety of logical steps by which the gap may be bridged from the matter in hand to the Gospel. Dr. Sommer in a mimeographed course on homiletics offered logical steps for the connection between the introduction and the sermon proper which may be considered for our purpose, too: From the need to the reality (general and personal need of the Gospel), from cause to effect, from the accidental to the substantial, from the consummation to the cause or method, from the universal to the particular and vice versa, from the objective to the subjective and vice versa, a simile, a *maiore ad minus*, a *minore ad majus*, a *posse ad facere*.

The difficulty of preaching the Gospel is greatly felt in a series on the Ten Commandments, or in a succession of miracle texts or hortatory Epistles. We believe, however, that to omit the saving truth of the Gospel is a case of malfeasance in preaching, and from the point of view of purely homiletical skill a *confessio paupertatis*. The presentation of the Gospel need not take up a great portion of the sermon, but it should stand out as important and strike the hearer as appropriate, necessary, and welcome.

OTTO F. STAHLKE

Concerning Choir and Organ

"We gave considerable thought to the question, Where should the organ and choir be placed? The tendency of late, even among non-liturgical churches, has been to place the choir in the chancel. This has obvious advantages for a liturgical service and for churches using a processional and recessional, which we do not. We finally decided to place the organ and choir in the rear balcony. This makes the music impersonal, free from the sometimes distracting appearance and idiosyncrasies of the singers. It subordinates the music to the worship and saves the singers from the temptation to "concertize." In a chancel the choir is divided; it is impossible so to place the console that the organist can see them all; if he wishes to direct with his hand (as he is especially likely to do in a cappella numbers), the movement of his hand is visible to the congregation. In a rear balcony the choir is together, grouped closely about the console, and the organist can direct with his hand without being seen. Moreover, in the music in which the people participate the choir supports them, singing with them instead of at them. Finally, in the spacious rear balcony there was far more room for the organ than in the chancel. Most organs housed in the chancel end are so crowded that the maintenance man needs to be an acrobat to get into the organ chamber; and many are divided, placed in chambers on either side, to the detriment of the ensemble effect."

"We Build a Church." Anonymous
Atlantic Monthly, January, 1943

