

Essay #2

**The Formula of Concord Article III:
The Righteousness of Faith**

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I was asked to write the essay “Formula of Concord Article III: The Righteousness of Faith.” The assignment mentioned that the essay might be interesting for me as a resident of Finland, since a “new Finnish interpretation of Luther” has surfaced in recent years. I studied Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses at Helsinki University in the early 1980s under the professor of ecumenical theology, Tuomo Mannermaa’s authority. Prof. Mannermaa, who died in 2015, is called the father of the new Finnish interpretation of Luther. I found Prof. Mannermaa to be a kind, competent man dedicated to systematic theology. As he lectured, he had Luther’s Latin Ninety-Five Theses in his hand and he translated them one by one directly into Finnish, and he explained to his students the meaning of Luther’s words. However, I began to estrange myself from him when he, who was formerly known as a conservative Lutheran scholar, informed us students that he had found a solution to accepting women’s ordination without violating the scriptural doctrine. I couldn’t accept his doctrinal change and in the end I chose another professor, Eero Huovinen, to supervise my theological studies. Later I understood that Huovinen also supported Mannermaa’s thinking and is often mentioned as a representative of the Finnish School of Tuomo Mannermaa.¹

In 1979, Prof. Tuomo Mannermaa published his famous book, *Christ Present in Faith: Luther’s View of Justification*, which examined Luther’s theology of justification as demonstrated in his lectures on Galatians and found a point of intersection between Lutheran and Orthodox theology. According to Mannermaa, Luther’s idea of Christ’s presence in faith and the forensic understanding of justification defined in the Formula of Concord are mutually exclusive.² It is not possible to engage in ecumenical dialogue without resolving this inner inconsistency.³

However, in the Lutheran confessional view there is no contradiction between the doctrine of justification in the Formula of Concord III and the reformer Dr. Martin Luther. They both stand within a pattern of confessional continuity in opposition to Rome and Andreas Osiander.⁴ There is a doctrinal unity in the Book of Concord, a unified commitment to the teaching of the Scriptures. Luther wrote three of the works in the Book of Concord. After Luther died all kinds of controversies and misunderstandings broke out among the Lutherans in Germany. After years of debate and monumental attempts at settling the doctrinal issues, the Formula of Concord was

¹ Braaten and Jenson, *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, vii.

² Vainio, “Justification and Participation in Christ,” 3.

³ Timothy Schmeling expresses the Lutheran confessional view of the Mannermaa school’s ecumenical tendency this way: “The ‘new’ Finnish interpretation of Luther’s thought . . . has clouded Luther’s teachings in the name of ecumenical unity with Eastern Orthodox.” See “Life in Christ,” 2.

⁴ The formulators of the FC, one of them Martin Chemnitz, did not consider the FC and Luther’s theology as contradictory. See FC SD III:67.

written in 1577. This was a joint undertaking of a great many Lutheran theologians who wanted to settle the disputes and remain faithful to the Lutheran heritage. The Solid Declaration III:6 of the Formula of Concord names justification by faith the chief article of the entire Christian doctrine without which no poor conscience can have any abiding comfort or rightly understand the riches of the grace of Christ. In support of this thesis, Philip Melancthon's Apology of the Augsburg Confession (IV:2,3) is invoked and Martin Luther's writing is cited.⁵

As member churches of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, as disciples of the Scriptures, we accept the confessions in the Book of Concord to be a correct exposition of the pure doctrine of the Word of God. We believe that the imputation of Christ's righteousness is the very heart of the Lutheran doctrine of justification. Sanctification is regarded logically—but not temporally—consequent to subjective justification. "God forgave the sins of all and declared all to be righteous, because Jesus made the payment for all. This truth, called universal or objective justification, gives each of us the certainty that our sins are paid for and we are indeed redeemed."⁶ "The saving work of Christ is personally received through faith. We have personal or subjective justification as we are moved to believe in Christ."⁷ "When people come to faith in Christ, they have a new self that hates sin and is eager to live a holy life filled with good works. This new life of sanctification flows from a heart that knows it has been justified by grace and desires to thank God."⁸

The CELC follows here the teaching of the Apology. "The imputation is a *synthetic* judgment which, because it is God's almighty and gracious reckoning and verdict, is effective and creative. The imputation makes a sinner righteous. Melancthon means just this when he says that the verdict of justification 'makes' (*effici*) righteous men out of unrighteous men (Apology IV, 72)."⁹ Its basis, and also what is imputed to the believer, is Christ's foreign righteousness.

The "mature" Luther¹⁰ teaches forensic¹¹ justification and sanctification to be simultaneous, but logically the latter is a result of the former. Luther wrote against antinomians in the year 1537: "Whoever, therefore, lays hold of this benefit of Christ by faith has by way of imputation fulfilled the law and receives the Holy Spirit, who renders the law, which otherwise is annoying and burdensome to the flesh, enjoyable and gentle."¹² Logically God's external promise of forgiveness for Christ's sake precedes and creates faith, so imputation (forensic justification) precedes sanctification. The distinction between justification and sanctification was present in the mature

⁵ Dr. Luther wrote, "If this one teaching stands in its purity, then Christendom will also remain pure and good, undivided and unseparated; ... but where this falls, it is impossible to ward off any error or sectarian spirit" (*LW* 14:37, Luther's comments on Psalm 117 in 1530).

⁶ "Ninety-Five Theses for the 21st Century," #55.

⁷ *Ibid*, #56.

⁸ *Ibid*, #65.

⁹ Preus, *Justification and Rome*, 74.

¹⁰ The "Catholic" Luther (1509-1518) had placed sanative healing in the center of his doctrine of justification. However, the later, mature Luther (1528-1546) "carefully separated the gift of the new life of sanctification from the initial gift of grace in justification." See Green, *How Melancthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel*, 57, note 42.

¹¹ According to Gerhard Forde, Luther never uses the term "forensic" as such, but repeatedly speaks of "imputation" as the divine act through which righteousness comes to the sinner. He does on occasion speak of the divine "tribunal," e.g., *WA* 34/2:140, 6. See "Forensic Justification and the Law in Lutheran Theology," 279.

¹² *WA* 39, I, 388, 4. English translation from *Only the Decalogue Is Eternal*, 55.

Luther even though such terminology was not characteristic of his writings.¹³ Personally, I learned to know this mature, confessional Luther from the writings of Finnish theologian, the late Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara.¹⁴

We turn now to the Formula of Concord III, which sums up the Apostle Paul's teaching on our justification before God.¹⁵ I restrict my essay to the doctrine of the Formula of Concord III¹⁶ and explain mainly in the footnote the history of the Formula of Concord III.¹⁷

¹³ Already in his polemics against Latomus (1522), justification was separate from and preceded the sanative healing. This healing was the fruit of faith. In later years Luther would normally not describe the new life of the regenerate as sanative healing. Rather, he would use a concept which later theologians called sanctification. See Green, *How Melancthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel*, 76. Alistair McGrath writes: "In his earlier phase, around 1515-1519, Luther tended to understand justification as a process of becoming, in which the sinner was gradually confirmed to the likeness of Jesus Christ through a process of internal renewal. ... In his later writings ... dating from the mid-1530s and beyond, perhaps under the influence of Melancthon's more forensic approach to justification, ... Luther tended to treat justification as a matter of being declared to be righteous, rather than a process of becoming righteous." See *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 460.

¹⁴ Saarnivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel*, 92-120.

¹⁵ Preus, *Getting into the Theology of Concord*, 49.

¹⁶ The Formula of Concord was presented in 1577 and first published in the Book of Concord in the year 1580, 34 years after Luther's death. The original Formula of Concord version was written in German, and the Latin authentic translation was published 1584. The Formula of Concord contains treatments settling disputes on original sin, freedom of the human will, justification by faith, good works, the distinction of law and gospel, the third use of the law, the Lord's Supper, Christology, Christ's descent into hell, adiaphora, election, as well as rejection of teachings of the Anabaptists, Schwenkfelders, New Arians, and anti-Trinitarians. The Formula of Concord has two parts: The Epitome, a brief and concise presentation of the Formula's twelve articles and the Solid Declaration, a detailed exposition of the twelve articles. The Epitome was written by Jakob Andreae. He first defines the historic *status controversiae*, the controversial question in this dispute, and then he presents approved doctrine in theses and rejected doctrine in antitheses. Martin Chemnitz, David Chytraeus, and Jakob Andreae each contributed more than one-quarter of the final text of the Solid Declaration. The other three signatories were Nicolaus Selnecker, Andreas Musculus, and Christophorus Cornerus. All pledged in 1577 that the Formula of Concord was their faith, doctrine, and confession, in which by God's grace they were willing to appear before the judgement seat of Christ to give account of it.

¹⁷ The instigator of the debate over justification by faith was Andreas Osiander. Already as a Lutheran pastor in Nuremberg, he had been involved in a small skirmish over the meaning of this doctrine. In the 1530s he had objected to the general absolution often announced from the pulpit after the sermon in evangelical parishes. Both Luther and Melancthon responded by defending the practice, but neither seemed to notice that Osiander's position on the absolution was related to his Platonic philosophy. Osiander had studied Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Hebrew he studied in 1515-1520 under Melancthon's uncle and mentor Johannes Reuchlin. However, Osiander absorbed not only the text of the Old Testament but also neoplatonic literature of medieval Jewish philosophy and theology, as found in the system of thought known as the Kabala. The Kabala's mystical metaphysic embedded itself in Osiander's mind, and as his conceptual framework it shaped the way in which he assimilated Luther's thought. Kabalistic studies led him to understand the righteousness that avails before God in a different way than did Luther.

Humanist and theologian Andreas Osiander was a reformer and close colleague of Luther and Melancthon. In 1523, when the eucharist was served in both forms in Nuremberg for the first time, Osiander was there. Two years later, when the city of Nuremberg officially joined the reform movement, Osiander had a great influence on its development. Osiander sided with Luther on the eucharist against Zwingli, and at the Diet of Augsburg he looked after Melancthon, preventing him from conceding too much to the Catholics. In 1532, Osiander and Johannes Brenz established the church orders for Nuremberg-Brandenburg. He was present at Schmalkalden in 1537 where Luther published his articles. In 1548 Osiander fled Nuremberg to Königsberg since he fiercely opposed the hated Augsburg Interim, which would have forced Protestants to accept the traditional Catholic ceremonial, offering them in return only the chalice and clerical marriage as concessions. The so-called adiaphora controversies surrounding the Leipzig Interim caused a split in the Lutheran side between Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans.

In Königsberg, Osiander became professor at the new university even though he had no advanced theological degree. In his inaugural disputation in 1549, Osiander set forth a doctrine of justification which did not acknowledge God's imputation of Christ's vicarious obedience. Osiander's colleague, Friedrich Staphylus, who soon returned to

Righteousness of Faith in the Epitome III¹⁸

The authors of the FC had two purposes in mind as they composed Article III. On the one hand there was a fight among Lutherans about which nature of Christ—human or divine—actually bestowed righteousness on us. On the other hand, and less obviously, the concordists were also

Catholicism, reported privately to Philip Melanchthon that Osiander held another view of justification than the Wittenbergers.

In a 1550 tract arguing that Christ would have become incarnate even if human beings had not sinned, Osiander spoke of God in ways that began to cause concern among both Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans. God was a single, inseparable, pure essence whose essential presence always carried with it God's attributes. Thus, to become righteous in Christ meant that a human being had to be touched by God's essence and thereby receive God's perfect righteousness. Osiander viewed justification as a process whereby human creatures came into direct contact with the essential righteousness of God, not simply with verbal signs of that righteousness. He failed to grasp Luther's more biblical, Hebraic understanding of God in terms of relationship and promise, and preferred instead to view theology in terms of essence and spirit.

Soon Osiander was arguing that Christians were justified precisely when they received the divine essence of Christ's righteousness. Thus, Christ's divinity, not his humanity, is the source of the believer's righteousness. Faith is the channel for receiving this divine essence into the human being. In justification, the soul of the believer participates in the divine righteousness of Christ. In his opponents' eyes this undercut both the Word of God, which was a mere sign for Osiander, not the bearer of God's creative work, and Christ's redemption on the cross, which was an event in the past for him. Osiander insisted that Christ's human nature was not the source of our righteousness, only his divinity was.

In the debate that followed, Osiander was attacked from all sides. The young ducal librarian in Königsberg, Martin Chemnitz, who was later one of the chief authors of the Formula of Concord, studied the church fathers for refutations of the view. As a result, he became very familiar with the theology of the ancient church, and he became friends with Osiander's chief opponent among the Gnesio-Lutherans, Joachim Mörlin. At the same time, Melanchthon joined the fray, realizing that the chief article of the faith was under attack. Not only did Osiander's position seem to undercut the centrality of Christ's incarnation and his death on the cross, it also rejected outright the center of Melanchthon's understanding of justification. He taught that God pronounces us righteous through his promise, to which faith clings, trusting that promise to be our righteousness in Christ before God. Only Johann Brenz, the reformer from Württemberg, who had never studied with Luther, gave faint credence to Osiander's position in part because of earlier personal contact between the two when both were reformers in South Germany. Brenz thought Osiander's teaching differed from Lutheran doctrine in terms and phrases rather than in substance. Melanchthon and Luther advise Brenz in their joint letter to the better theology (See Vainio, "Justification and Participation in Christ," 75-76).

When Andreas Osiander denied that the human nature of Christ contributes to salvation, Francesco Stancaro, who had been driven out of Catholic Italy because he openly expressed his support for the reformers, held that Christ is our righteousness before God only according to his human nature. Stancaro, as a specialist in ancient languages, had been called to the university in Königsberg in hope that he could bring something new to the dialogue between Melanchthon and Osiander. He could not. Stancaro stated that both Osiander and Melanchthon were fools and antichrists. The presence of Stancaro intensified the atmosphere to an extent that weapons were carried into the disputation hall. Stancaro joined the Osiandrian controversy by claiming that Christ is the righteousness of the sinner on behalf of his human nature, which he considered to be the view of Peter Lombard. In order to maintain the idea of God's immutability he was ready to separate Christ's divine nature from satisfaction. God sent only the human nature of the human-divine person to save humanity. The human nature, not the divine nature, sheds blood for the sins of the world. Stancaro was attacked by everyone. In 1553 Melanchthon answered Stancaro's teaching and taught that satisfaction involves not only suffering and fulfillment of the law but also victory over death and crushing the head of the serpent, something mere human nature cannot do. Rather, both human and divine natures are at work in salvation. Stancaro later returned to the Roman Church.

In this short history of the FC III, I follow Arand, Kolb, and Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions: History and Theology of the Book of Concord*; Wengert, *A Formula for Parish Practice*; and Vainio, "Justification and Participation in Christ."

¹⁸ References to the Formula of Concord are from Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*.

reacting to some of the teachings of their Roman opponents, especially as expressed at the Council of Trent.¹⁹

In defining the correct doctrine of justification, the FC teaches that “the righteousness which avails before God: 1) is based on Christ’s vicarious satisfaction; 2) requires possessing of the whole person of Christ, both his divine and his human nature, in faith; 3) means the imputing of Christ’s perfect obedience to the sinner by pure grace through faith, not inner renewal (which is part of sanctification).”²⁰

Already in 1551, Philip Melancthon advised Andreas Osiander that, while the essential righteousness of Christ effects renewal in believers, they have forgiveness of sins and are reputed to be righteous before God on account of the merit of Christ, whose blood and death appeased the wrath of God.²¹ Luther had pithily taught the same forensic doctrine in his 1529 Small Catechism. “Where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation” (Sacrament of the Altar, 6). Pitting forensic justification against its effects was certainly not an issue between Luther and Melancthon.²²

The Epitome III gives an introduction to what it means to be justified.²³ Justification before God is about grace alone. God forgives our sins by sheer grace.²⁴ Justification is about faith alone. Faith alone is the means and instrument through which we lay hold of Christ.²⁵ This faith is not a mere knowledge, but a gift of God in the Word.²⁶ Thus justification is not about feelings or some essential qualities poured into our souls, but it is about the Word alone.²⁷

After asserting that the word “justify” in this article means to pronounce free from sin, the FC explains that in the Apology “regeneration” is sometimes used in place of “justification.” The FC says that when this occurs, the terms mean the same thing. Otherwise the term regeneration refers to renovation and must be completely distinguished from justification by faith.²⁸

¹⁹ The Council of Trent, held between 1545 and 1563 in Trent in northern Italy, has been described as the embodiment of the Counter-Reformation. Trent maintains that justification does not only consist in the remission of sins “but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward being.” The Council of Trent, Sixth Session, Decree on Justification, Chapter 7. Quoted in Preus, *Justification and Rome*, 69.

²⁰ Laato, “Justification: The Stumbling Block of the Finnish Luther School,” 338.

²¹ Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord*, 157. Osiander taught that “the righteousness of faith is the eternal, essential holiness of the divine nature of Christ inhering and dwelling in man.” See Bente, 155.

²² Mattes, “Luther on Justification as Forensic and Effective,” 265.

²³ In this paragraph I partly cite Wengert, *A Formula for Parish Practice*, 50-51.

²⁴ “God forgives us our sins by sheer grace, without any works, merit, or worthiness of our own” (FC Ep III:4).

²⁵ “Faith alone is the means and instrument through which we lay hold of Christ and, thus, in Christ lay hold of this ‘righteousness which avails before God’” (FC Ep III:5).

²⁶ “This faith is not a mere knowledge of the stories about Christ. It is instead a gift of God, through which in the Word of the gospel we recognize Christ truly as our redeemer and trust in him” (FC Ep III:6).

²⁷ “‘To justify’ in this article means ‘to absolve,’ that is, ‘to pronounce free from sin’” (FC Ep III:7).

²⁸ “We believe, teach, and confess that according to the usage of Holy Scripture the word ‘to justify’ in this article means ‘to absolve,’ that is, ‘to pronounce free from sin.’ . . . When in place of this the words *regeneratio* and *vivificatio*, that is ‘new birth’ and ‘making alive,’ are used as synonyms of justification, as happens in the Apology, then they are to be understood in this same sense. Otherwise, they should be understood as the renewal of the human being and should be differentiated from ‘justification by faith’” (FC Ep III:7-8).

To sum it all up, despite our weakness and frailty, we need not doubt this righteousness, reckoned to us through faith, but “should regard it as certain” that we “have a gracious God for Christ’s sake, on the basis of the promise and the Word of the holy gospel” (FC Ep III:9).

The heart of justification is precisely this certainty, which is not a feeling.²⁹ Our feelings change easily. “A young child in a toy store wants everything he or she lays eyes on. Based on this principle, grocery stores long ago learned to put a display of candy in the checkout line.”³⁰ In the same way an adult in the Myeongdong Shopping Street in Seoul or on Madison Avenue in New York or in Mannerheim Street in Helsinki finds so many temptations to buy things he knows he should not. For years Martin Luther went despairing because he sought certainty of salvation in his own feelings and contrition and faith. It was only after he abandoned faith formed by love (*fides charitate formata*) and discovered that faith saves because it grasps the precious pearl Jesus Christ and his alien righteousness that he found peace and security for his conscience.³¹

Righteousness of Faith in the Solid Declaration III³²

The Epitome gives an introduction to the forensic doctrine of justification and the Solid Declaration III explains in more detail what the righteousness of faith means in the Scriptures.

According to the Lutheran Confessions all Scripture should be divided into two chief doctrines. In some places Scripture teaches law, understood as Decalogue; in others, Scripture teaches the promise of Christ, which is to be understood as forgiveness, justification, and eternal life (Ap IV:5). This promise is not conditional upon any merits of ours; it offers justification freely.

a) Faith and Promise

The FC says that justification effects two realities: 1) absolution from sin and 2) adoption as a child of God by sheer grace through the obedience, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (FC SD III:9). The FC testifies that these are true spiritual treasures which are offered by the Holy Spirit in the promise of the gospel and that faith is the only means whereby sinners can apprehend them and make them their own.³³

The FC emphasizes the correlative relationship of the faith and promise when it confesses that faith is solely instrumental. Grace and forgiveness of sins are realities offered by God in the promise of the gospel. Faith does not constitute a cause (*causa*) of grace or forgiveness. The sinner is not justified on account of faith (*propter fidem*) but through faith (*per fidem*).

The FC stresses that the object of saving faith is God’s gracious promise of forgiveness. In sharp contrast, the law only accuses the sinner. Only the promise calls forth that faith by which the sinner is accounted righteous before God.

²⁹ In the Lutheran Confessions justifying faith (trust) is an activity of the intellect and will of the person, not his emotions. The pietists stressed increasingly that justifying faith (trust) is an emotion of the heart. In the Confessions the heart of the believer is associated with his will. See Preus, *Justification and Rome*, 134-135, note 92.

³⁰ Wengert, *A Formula for Parish Practice*, 51.

³¹ Saarnivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel*, 114.

³² In this section I follow and freely cite Johnson’s essay “Justification According to the Apology of the Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord,” 185-199.

³³ “The Holy Spirit conveys these benefits to us in the promise of the holy gospel. Faith is the only means through which we lay hold of them, accept them, apply them to ourselves, and appropriate them” (FC SD III:10).

b) Faith and Justification

The FC quotes the Apology as teaching that the article of justification by faith is the chief article of the Christian doctrine. Then the FC defines the article in terms of the sinner being absolved and declared utterly free from all sins and from the verdict of damnation.³⁴

This forensic justification is offered in the gospel. And faith apprehends it. Faith justifies precisely because it lays hold on the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy gospel. In this context the word “justify” is to be understood as declaring righteous and free from sins.³⁵

The FC teaches that renewal follows justification. Renewal must not be confused with justification.

The FC employs such linguistic precision in order that the article of justification remains pure. That which precedes faith and that which follows faith must never be inserted into the article. Good works are the unfailing consequence of justifying faith. True faith cannot coexist with mortal sin; neither is it ever without the fruit of good works. Luther is cited: “It is faith alone that lays hold of the blessing, apart from works, and yet it is never, ever alone.”³⁶

The FC rejects the notion that believers are justified before God both through the imputed righteousness of Christ, which is by faith, and through their own inchoate new obedience. It also rejects the notion that believers are justified in part by the righteousness of Christ and in part by their own obedience, imperfect though it be.³⁷

c) Faith and Righteousness

³⁴ “Poor sinful people are justified before God, that is, absolved—pronounced free of all sins and of the judgment of the damnation that they deserved” (FC SD III:9).

³⁵ “Accordingly, the word ‘justify’ here means to pronounce righteous and free from sins and to count as freed from the eternal punishment of sin because of Christ’s righteousness, which is ‘reckoned to faith by God’ (Phil. 3[:9]). This is consistent with the use and meaning of this word in Holy Scripture, in the Old and New Testaments. Proverbs 17[:15]: ‘One who justifies the wicked and one who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord.’ Isaiah 5[:23]: ‘Woe to those who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of their rights!’ Romans 8[:33]: ‘Who will bring any charges against God’s elect? It is God who justifies,’ that is, who absolves from sin and pronounces free” (FC SD III:17).

³⁶ “For good works do not precede faith, nor does sanctification precede justification. Instead, first of all, in conversion, the Holy Spirit kindles faith in us through the hearing of the gospel. This faith lays hold of God’s grace in Christ, and through it a person is justified. Thereafter, once people are justified, the Holy Spirit also renews and sanctifies them. From this renewal and sanctification the fruits of good works follow. This is not to be understood as if justification and sanctification are separated from each other in such a way that a true faith can exist for a while along with an evil intention, but rather this only indicates the order in which the one thing precedes or follows the other. For what Dr. Luther correctly said remains true: faith and good works fit beautifully together and belong together. But it is faith alone that lays hold of the blessing, apart from works, and yet it is never, ever alone, as has been explained above” (FC SD III:41).

³⁷ “We must ... reject the following and similar errors: ... that believers are justified before God and are righteous both because of the righteousness of Christ reckoned to them and because of the new obedience begun in them, or in part because of the reckoning of Christ’s righteousness to them and in part because of the new obedience which has begun in them” (FC SD III:44, 50).

The FC (SD III:4) refers to the statement of the Augsburg Confession IV that the righteousness of faith is remission of sins.³⁸

The FC links the righteousness of faith to the obedience of Christ. Through faith this obedience is reckoned by pure grace to all believers as righteousness.³⁹

By the obedience of Christ the FC means the holy and sinless life of Christ, lived in obedience to the law and under the law of God, an obedience involving the whole of his life, right up to the bitter end on the cross, and then the glorious resurrection. The work of Christ affects every man, for it was vicarious. It was a merit, a work, an obedience, in the place and stead of all men, so that the obedience of Christ is in God's eyes the obedience of all men.⁴⁰ By his active and passive obedience Christ satisfied the demands of the law of God and paid for our sins. This is called vicarious satisfaction or atonement.

This is what the Holy Spirit offers through the gospel and sacraments, to be appropriated by faith.⁴¹ In stressing the total obedience of Christ from his holy birth to his death, the FC wants to insist that our righteousness before God rests neither upon the divine nor the human nature of Christ, but upon the entire Christ as he gave himself to the Father for sinners (FC SD III:55-58).

As to the relationship between the essential righteousness of God and imputed righteousness, the FC says that the Triune God dwells by faith in those who have been justified. But this indwelling of the righteous God follows the righteousness of faith, which is the gracious acceptance of sinners on account of the obedience and merits of Christ.⁴²

³⁸ "It is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight, as St. Paul says in Romans 3[:21-26] and 4[:5]" (AC IV:1-3).

³⁹ "We are accepted as children of God for the sake of Christ's obedience alone, which is reckoned as righteousness through faith alone, out of sheer grace, to all who truly believe. Because of this they are absolved from all their unrighteousness" (FC SD III:4).

⁴⁰ Hamann, "Article III, The Formula of Concord," 149. See FC SD III:14.

⁴¹ "For this merit must be applied to us and appropriated through faith if we are to become righteous through it. ... As a result of his total obedience—which he performed on our behalf for God ... in life and death—God forgives our sin, considers us ... righteous, and grants us eternal salvation. This righteousness is conveyed to us by the Holy Spirit through the gospel and in the sacraments. It is applied to us, appropriated and accepted through faith" (FC SD III:13, 15-16).

⁴² "God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is the eternal and essential righteousness, dwells through faith in the elect, who have become righteous through Christ and are reconciled with God. ... However, this indwelling of God is not the righteousness of faith, which St. Paul treats [Rom. 1:17; 3:5, 22, 25; 2 Cor. 5:21] and calls *iustitia Dei* (that is, the righteousness of God), for the sake of which we are pronounced righteous before God. Rather, this indwelling is a result of the righteousness of faith which precedes it, and this righteousness [of faith] is nothing else than the forgiveness of sins and the acceptance of poor sinners by grace, only because of Christ's obedience and merit" (FC SD III:54). Both Augustine and Luther are agreed that God graciously gives sinful humans a righteousness which justifies them. Augustine argued that this righteousness was to be found within believers; Luther insisted that it remained outside believers. For Augustine the righteousness in question is internal; for Luther it is external, an "alien righteousness." God treats or reckons this righteousness as if it were a part of the sinner's person. In his Romans lectures of 1515-1516, Luther developed the idea of the alien righteousness of Christ imputed—not imparted—to us by faith, as the grounds of justification. See McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 457. However, Preus found McGrath's assumption that later Lutheran Orthodoxy in its doctrine of justification bears little relation to that of Luther as "uncritical and cavalier." See Preus, *Justification and Rome*, 119, n.7.

d) Faith and Works

The FC stresses the absolute necessity of good works on the part of the justified Christian.⁴³

But the FC teaches that in our justification before God, all human works and merits as in any sense constituting a meritorious cause of justification must be excluded. Even faith does not justify as a good work, but only because faith lays hold on the merits of Christ in the promise of the gospel.⁴⁴

The FC quotes Luther and says that faith and good works fit beautifully together and belong together. But it is faith alone that lays hold of the blessing, apart from works, and yet it is never, ever alone (FC SD III:41).

The FC explains the proper order of faith and good works in its reference to the “exclusive terms” (*particulae exclusivae*) like “without works,” “without the law,” “freely,” “not of works,” and “through faith alone” (FC SD III:43). Faith makes people righteous only because it, as a means and instrument, accepts God’s grace.

The FC sets forth a distinction between what invariably is associated with justification and what actually constitutes justification (FC SD III:24-43). “The only essential and necessary elements of justification are the grace of God, the merit of Christ, and the faith that receives this grace and merit in the gospel’s promise” (FC SD III:25). “The concomitants of justification by faith, both those that precede and those that follow, are held to be necessary concomitants but not parts of justification itself. These concomitants, with some overlapping, are: contrition, true repentance, love, good works, renewal, sanctification, and the new obedience.”⁴⁵

In conclusion we can say that according to the FC, while it is impossible to separate works from faith, such good works are completely excluded from the article of justification (FC SD III:36-43).

Tuomo Mannermaa and Formula of Concord III

As professor of ecumenical theology at Helsinki University and as one of the leading scholars in the ecumenical dialogue between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, Tuomo Mannermaa attempts to look for a theological motif in the Lutheran concept of Christian faith which would be analogous to the Orthodox notion of divinization⁴⁶ (*theosis*) and could thus serve as a point of contact in the dialogue. Mannermaa finds this point of contact in Luther’s doctrine of the believer’s union with Christ, which Mannermaa equates with the righteousness of faith. According to Mannermaa, Luther does not separate the person of Christ and his work from each other. Instead, Christ himself, both his person and his work, is the Christian

⁴³ “This in no way suggests that ... good works should not, must not, or may not follow from faith (as certain, inevitable fruits) or that believers may or must not do good” (FC SD III:36).

⁴⁴ “For faith does not make people righteous because it is such a good work or such a fine virtue, but because it lays hold of and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy gospel” (FC SD III:13).

⁴⁵ Hamann, “Article III, The Formula of Concord,” 144.

⁴⁶ See Schumacher, *Who Do I Say that You Are?* 20, note 2: “The theology of Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism identifies ‘deification’ with justification, which distorts the meaning of the biblical expressions.” For examples, see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§260, 460, 1692, 1999. Luther very occasionally—about 20 times—uses the medieval mystical term “divinization,” but he always distinguishes Creator from creature. Luther viewed divinization as “the vain wish of the first sinners, not God’s goal in shaping the human creature.” See Kolb, *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith*, 128-129.

righteousness, that is, the righteousness of faith. Christ—and therefore also his entire person and work—is really and truly present in the faith itself (*in ipsa fide Christus adest*). The favor of God (i.e., the forgiveness of sins and the removal of God’s wrath) and his gift (*donum*, God himself, present in the fullness of his essence) unite in the person of Christ.⁴⁷

Although Mannermaa says that, according to Luther, the person of Christ is always in his saving work and the saving work is always in his person, Mannermaa discusses the person of Christ, but is silent about the work of Christ.⁴⁸ This is a fundamental error.⁴⁹ Mannermaa says that salvation is participation in the person of Christ,⁵⁰ the divine attributes,⁵¹ and the divine essence of Christ.⁵² Mannermaa never mentions participation in the cross and resurrection of Christ, although it is mentioned several times by Luther in the quotations reproduced by Mannermaa.⁵³

Unlike Luther, Mannermaa does not refer to the cross or resurrection as Christ’s victory over evil powers. According to Mannermaa, this victory of Christ took place at the incarnation.⁵⁴ Luther instead teaches that the incarnated body of Christ bears and takes away the sins of the world on the cross, not before the cross on the basis of incarnation alone (*LW 26:277*).⁵⁵ Misreading Luther, Mannermaa says that in the incarnation Christ takes the sinful human nature and so has all the human sins in his human nature. In his person Christ’s divine nature overcomes the sin in his human nature. Sin, death, and curse are first conquered in the person of Christ and thereafter the whole of creation is to be transformed through his person. Salvation is participation in the triumphant person of Christ,⁵⁶ i.e., divinization. Luther instead teaches that the human nature Christ assumes is sinless. The whole Christ according to both of his natures is sinless.⁵⁷ However, the sin

⁴⁷ Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 5.

⁴⁸ Ruokanen, “Remarks on Tuomo Mannermaa’s Interpretation,” 7. Ruokanen, a not so enthusiastic supporter of Mannermaa, is the professor emeritus of dogmatics at Helsinki University and nowadays a professor of theology in Nanjing, China.

⁴⁹ Preus cites Francis Pieper: “It is the fundamental error of modern positive theologians when they make the person of Christ the object of faith to the exclusion of the work of Christ, i.e., His fulfillment of the Law and His suffering of the penalty of the Law in the place of man. ... We do not believe in Christ to our justification ... unless we believe in Him as the One who was crucified for the expiation of our sins.” See *Justification and Rome*, 89.

⁵⁰ Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 16.

⁵¹ “Luther believed not that ‘faith communicates divine attributes’ to believers but rather that Christ’s word of forgiveness restores the perfect attributes of God’s human creation.” See Kolb, *Martin Luther*, 128.

⁵² Mannermaa’s view “ignores the nature of the ‘union’ of bride and bridegroom that Luther employed so frequently (in which the two participants in the union do not become ‘one essence’ but retain their distinctiveness), and his understanding of the preposition ‘in’ when Luther uses the Hebraic concept of two distinct entities being ‘in’ each other (that is, in a close association which does not merge them but brings them together in intimate relationship).” See Kolb, *Martin Luther*, 128.

⁵³ Ruokanen, “Remarks on Tuomo Mannermaa’s Interpretation,” 9.

⁵⁴ Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 13-14, 16.

⁵⁵ Mannermaa teaches that in incarnation Christ didn’t take the neutral human nature but concrete and actual human nature (Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 13), which must mean that Christ had a sinful human nature. According to the Scriptures Christ was born as sinless but he took our sins upon his own body and atoned for all sins on the cross. See 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; Heb 4:15.

⁵⁶ Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 13, 16.

⁵⁷ And this “person” who is innocent and righteous is none other than the whole Christ, according to both natures: “The Son of God born of the virgin.” *LW 26:277*. “Luther distinguished sin from humanity as God’s good creation. Jesus assumed the gift of that good, created human nature, in order to restore sinners to their original goodness.” See Kolb, *Martin Luther*, 111.

of humankind was imputed to him. In his own person the perfectly righteous Christ conquered the power of sin—imputed to him—on the cross, not through an internal fight between the two natures of his person. Salvation is imputation to us of the victory of Christ on the cross. We take hold of it with a sure and certain faith.⁵⁸

In Mannermaa's main work *In ipsa Fide Christus Adest (Christ Present in Faith)* there is no mention of the Holy Spirit effecting justifying faith and converting the unbeliever into a believer. Mannermaa also doesn't say that the presence of the Holy Spirit is a synonym of the real presence of Christ in the Christian.⁵⁹

"Mannermaa's central point is that Luther's concept of *unio*"—the believer's participation in God's very nature itself—"has much in common with the Orthodox doctrine of deification in Christ."⁶⁰ Mannermaa finds the classic quotation on God's essential indwelling in the believer (*inhabitatio Dei*) in the Formula of Concord III.⁶¹ According to the FC, God, in the very fullness of God's essence, is present in those who believe in God. The text of the FC explicitly rejects the notion that God in himself would not dwell in Christians and that only God's gifts would be present in them.⁶²

However, Mannermaa finds it problematic for Lutheran self-understanding that the FC's "one-sidedly forensic" definition concerning the relationship between justification and divine indwelling is different than what Mannermaa thinks is Luther's view. In the FC, justification by faith denotes the forgiveness of sins that is imputed to Christians on the basis of the perfect obedience and complete merit of Christ. The *inhabitatio Dei* is made logically subsequent to justification. Justification by faith precedes the presence of the Trinity in faith. Indwelling follows justification and is the result, the consequence of justification. In the concept of the FC, the *inhabitatio Dei*, or *unio mystica* if we follow the language of the later Lutheran dogmaticians, is understood to be in the area of sanctification.⁶³ Mannermaa places the *inhabitatio Dei* in the area of justification.

Mannermaa argues that there are fundamental differences between Luther's theology and the theology of Melanchthon and the FC. For Luther, according to Mannermaa, the presence of the Trinity in faith is the same "*phenomen*" as the righteousness of faith, but for the FC indwelling logically follows justification. Mannermaa says that the FC draws on the later theology of Melanchthon, on which much of Lutheran theology after Luther has relied.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Schumacher, *Who Do I Say that You Are?* 48-49.

⁵⁹ Ruokanen, "Remarks on Tuomo Mannermaa's Interpretation," 16.

⁶⁰ Schumacher, *Who Do I Say that You Are?* 95.

⁶¹ Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 3.

⁶² Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 4.

⁶³ Biblical and Lutheran theology testifies to at least two kinds of grace. *Gratia imputa*, favor of God, is saving grace and is forensic in nature. *Gratia infusa* is sanctifying grace and is not saving grace. The FC and Lutheranism have used the term *unio mystica* exclusively in sanctification since this term is associated with *gratia infusa*. See Schmeling, "Life in Christ," 52-53, 105, 114.

⁶⁴ Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 4. In reality the differences between Luther and Melanchthon are more ones of emphasis and terminology than of real substance. Luther prefers "marriage" and "blessed exchange" images; Melanchthon prefers metaphors that set justification within a specifically legal context. Preus says: "What the Lutherans viewed as necessary concomitants and fruits of justification"—like regeneration, receiving the sanctifying Holy Spirit, and uniting with Christ and the Holy Trinity in the most intimate *unio mystica*—"Rome insisted were an essential part of the process itself." See *Justification and Rome*, 69. Compare Trueman, "*Simul justus et peccator*," 89. Prof. Trueman represents Calvinism.

Mannermaa compares the forensic view of the Formula of Concord on justification with the view of Luther on justification. The FC's problem, according to Mannermaa, is that it separates justification by faith and God's indwelling by faith from each other.

At the same time, the *inhabitatio Dei* is made a separate phenomenon, logically subsequent to justification.⁶⁵

Mannermaa argues that Luther defines the divine indwelling in the believer differently, and this way doesn't separate justification from indwelling.

He does not separate the person (*persona*) of Christ and his work (*officium*) from each other. Instead, Christ himself, both his person and work, is the Christian righteousness, that is, the righteousness of faith.⁶⁶

It seems that Mannermaa doesn't want to make the necessary distinctions between Christ for us and Christ in us in the way that he could at the same time maintain the solid connection between the work and the person of Christ. Mannermaa's student, his school's younger representative, Dr. Olli-Pekka Vainio is more cautious than his teacher. Vainio says that the FC doesn't separate the work of Christ, his obedience, from his person, because the work of Christ belongs to the person of Christ. The work and the person of Christ are closely intertwined in the FC.⁶⁷

We confessional Lutherans teach that the FC clarifies the distinctions between the righteousness of faith and the indwelling of Christ in the believer. Furthermore, we teach that these distinctions were implicit already in Luther's own theology.⁶⁸ Differences in style, origin, and volume between Luther's works and the Lutheran Confessions make it easier for people to misquote Luther than to misquote the Confessions. However, there is no real doctrinal difference between Luther and the Confessions on justification. Luther distinguishes the grace of justification, which is outside of us, from the gift of sanctification, which is inside of us. Although the two go together, they are clearly distinguished.⁶⁹

The FC teaches that the believer is united with Christ, and that the whole Trinity dwells in the believer (FC SD III:54). This indwelling of God is a new reality which results from faith, and God's eternal and essential (*olemuksellinen* in Finnish) righteousness does become present in the believer

⁶⁵ Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 4.

⁶⁶ Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 5.

⁶⁷ Vainio, "Justification and Participation in Christ," 212. However, as a representative of the Mannermaa School Vainio doesn't often mention the cross of Christ in his research but emphasizes the indwelling of Christ in the believer as a basis for justification. See "Justification and Participation in Christ," 53: "As stated, this imputation (of Christ's righteousness) is always based on Christ's presence in faith."

⁶⁸ Schumacher, *Who Do I Say that You Are?* 141. "Luther defined trust [*fiducia*], not an indwelling presence of the divine, as the central human characteristic that brings all else in human life into harmony with the Father who created his people and rescued them from evil through Christ's death and resurrection." See Kolb, *Martin Luther*, 129. "When used in the context of justification, the New Testament word *pisteuō* always means to trust." See Preus, *Justification and Rome*, 81. Luther's 1519 commentary on Galatians offers a new concept of faith as *fiducia*, trust in God. Under Melancthon's tutelage he dropped the medieval idea of faith as a *habitus* or infused substance, and correctly defined faith as *fiducia* or trust in God. See Green, "The Young and the Mature Luther," 124-125.

⁶⁹ Brug, "Osiandrianism—Then and Now," 8-9.

as a power which moves them to act properly. But the FC makes two crucial distinctions⁷⁰ about the indwelling of God and its relation to justification which Mannermaa doesn't make.

First, this new reality results from justification and thus cannot be simply identified with it. The true righteousness of faith is thus not a matter decided on the basis of the ontology of the believer—the ontology of one in whom God dwells. The true righteousness of faith is the forgiveness of sins and the acceptance of poor sinners by grace, only because of Christ's obedience and merit. "The imputed reality of the gospel, this new 'ontology of the word,' results in a completely different kind of life for the Christian, namely an 'alien life,' (*vita aliena*), the life of Another, just as the Christian's righteousness is *iustitia aliena*. ... The point of this expression is not the location; Christ's life remains my 'alien life' even when it is 'in me.'"⁷¹ In this way the FC rejects Mannermaa's notion of justification.

The second distinction made by the FC is between the personal union of the divine and human natures in Christ and the indwelling of God in the believer. A real exchange (*realis communicatio*) has occurred between the divine and human natures in Christ's person (FC SD VIII:63).

Here the FC speaks of a "real-ontic" union—the term emphasized by Mannermaa—which allows Christ's human nature to share the divine glory, power and omnipresence.

The human nature in Christ has received this majesty according to the mode of the personal union, namely, because "the whole fullness of deity" [Col. 2:9] dwells in Christ, not as in other godly people or angels, but "bodily"⁷² as in its own body. (FC SD VIII:64)

This glorification of Christ's human nature is unique and cannot be predicated of any other human creature.

In this way there would be no difference between Christ according to his human nature and other holy people; this would deprive Christ of his majesty, which he has received above all creatures as a human being, according to his human nature. For no other creature ... can or should say, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," and likewise God dwells with the "fullness of his deity," ... in the saints, but not "bodily" in them, nor is he personally united with them, as in Christ. (FC SD VIII:69-70)

The FC excludes the possibility that the union of the divine and human natures in Christ can be regarded as paradigmatic of the union that takes place in believers. There is a difference between the glorified, "deified" human nature of Christ and the human nature of other holy people in whom Christ dwells.

The FC places special emphasis on the salvific role of Christ's human nature, and points out the promises by which believers are united to Christ according to his human nature.

He instituted his Holy Supper as a certain assurance and confirmation of this, that also in the nature according to which he has flesh and blood he wants to be with us, to dwell in us, to work in us, and to exert his power for us. (FC SD VIII:79)

⁷⁰ Concerning these two crucial distinctions in the FC, I follow and freely cite Schumacher, *Who Do I Say that You Are?* 176-178.

⁷¹ Schumacher, *Who Do I Say that You Are?* 49.

⁷² "Bodily" in Col 2:19 is interpreted as "personally." See Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 628, note 290.

The FC, citing Luther's "Great Confession Concerning the Lord's Supper" (1528) and his "Treatise on the Last Words of David" (1543), says that Luther likewise stresses the real humanity of Christ and its importance for the salvation and comfort of human sinners. So according to the FC and Luther in his cited writings, our union with Christ involves especially union with his human nature (FC SD VIII:80-85). Even when the FC talks of a "twofold eating of Christ's flesh" and identifies the first as the spiritual eating of faith, this is directly connected with Christ's human nature, not just his deity (FC SD VII:62).

Mannermaa virtually ignores the human nature of Christ in his version of the union of the believer with Christ.⁷³ It seems Mannermaa bases justification solely on the divine person of Christ and the atonement, the reconciliation and the redemption by the cross of Christ as well as the resurrection of Christ are underemphasized.⁷⁴ However, the soteriology of the Lutheran Confessions depends on Christ having a human nature rather than on us believers having a divine nature.⁷⁵ Mannermaa concentrates entirely on the divine nature as the real source of Christian righteousness. "The human nature of Christ recedes quickly into the background, and is not involved in any 'real' (i.e., ontological) way in the righteousness that counts in the sinner's justification."⁷⁶ It seems Mannermaa doesn't seek the "reality" of justification in the historic suffering and death of Jesus but "in the realm of being itself—and the 'real-ontic' transformation of the believer who 'is' in union with Christ."⁷⁷

Luther instead teaches that it is the alien righteousness that justifies a person before God. This alien righteousness is due to the fact that God accepts you or accounts you righteous only on account of Christ, in whom you believe, and not because Christ indwells the Christian.⁷⁸

Luther's Forensic Understanding of Justification⁷⁹

Throughout Luther's writings, Christ's atoning work in salvation history precedes faith. Because Christ is the object of faith (God's favor), he is present in faith as gift (*donum*). Therefore, for Luther, salvation is based not on the indwelling Christ who deifies, but forensically on Christ who died for us. Indeed, Mannermaa's view leads to an unnecessary dilemma: favor is construed as objective while *donum* is somehow subjective. Instead, Mannermaa argues, the truth is that we have here a two-fold objectivity. A spoken, external Word—which is God's favor in the form of a gift, grounded both in the objectivity of the cross and also in the proclamation to sinners as a benefit that requires such distribution—imparts both death and life to its hearers. Just as God's will is an active

⁷³ Schumacher, *Who Do I Say that You Are?* 179.

⁷⁴ Ruokanen, "Remarks on Tuomo Mannermaa's Interpretation," 4.

⁷⁵ Schumacher, *Who Do I Say that You Are?* 179.

⁷⁶ Schumacher, *Who Do I Say that You Are?* 182.

⁷⁷ Schumacher, *Who Do I Say that You Are?* 183.

⁷⁸ Mattes, "Luther on Justification as Forensic and Effective," 268. Righteousness outside the believer is foreign righteousness, it is external, not located in the believer. God treats or reckons this righteousness as if it were a part of the sinner's person. Through faith the believer is clothed with alien righteousness, the righteousness of Christ. God covers our nakedness with this garment. Faith is the right relationship to God. We remain sinners inwardly, but are righteous extrinsically, in the sight of God. By confessing our sins in faith, we stand in a right and righteous relationship with God. In Luther's words, we are simultaneously totally righteous and totally sinners, totally righteous in Christ and totally sinners in ourselves. See McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 457-458.

⁷⁹ In this section I follow and freely cite two essays. First, Mattes, "Luther on Justification as Forensic and Effective," 267-268. Second, Kolb, "Luther's Truths, Then and Now," 12-13.

Word ordering creation in Genesis, God's favor here is not God's own possession or essence but is precisely God's gift, applied to the unrighteous while and as they are unrighteous. Only on account of this truly objective foundation of imputation as forgiveness for Jesus' sake is the gift (*donum*) of the present Christ preached and so given—not to the old creature as old, but to the new creature as the act of new creation itself. Undoubtedly Luther affirmed that the believer is united with Christ in faith. But it is equally clear that the Christian is justified on the basis of nothing else but Christ's imputed righteousness. Luther often uses the term imputation to describe how God delivers the benefits of Christ's work to sinners.

Mannermaa sincerely wants to cultivate devout Christian living, but he misinterprets Luther both historically and theologically when he ignores what forensic justification means within the context of Luther's thought. God speaks us righteous. The absolutely forensic character of justification renders it effective. Justification actually kills and makes alive. God's forensic judgement—when he imputes sinners righteous, when he pronounces his verdict of innocent upon them—that Word of the Lord, like his Word in Genesis 1, determines reality effectively.

God's saying that we are righteous moves us to recognize that we are passively righteous in his sight. In faith we cannot do anything else but live out that passive righteousness actively, in active righteousness of love and service to the rest of God's creatures. God's Word makes us alive, not to sin the more that grace may abound (Rom 6:1), but to demonstrate to the world that our identity, bestowed by God's grace apart from any merit or worthiness of our own, is real. That Word of forgiveness restructures our entire way of thinking and therefore of acting. The new creature it has called into existence produces the fruits of faith, the fruit of the Holy Spirit. If one finds that not to be the case, it is time to hear again the law that calls to repentance. Luther understood that justification meant that the justified sinner acts like a child of God and combats temptations, killing desires to act against God's will, in daily repentance.

Conclusion

Andreas Osiander argued that while redemption took place through Christ's suffering on the cross, this did not constitute the believer's righteousness before God. Instead, the believer was justified by the indwelling of Christ's divine nature, which made a person essentially righteous before God. He attacked the notion that a believer's righteousness was constituted by the declaration of forgiveness, imputed righteousness.

The Formula of Concord, which belongs to the Lutheran confessional books, rejects Osiander's view of justification without mentioning his name. The FC recognizes as a biblical truth that God, not only his gifts, is present in the heart of the believer. At the same time, the FC teaches that this presence cannot be equated with justification, which is the imputed, foreign righteousness of Christ according to his human and divine nature, conferred upon us through faith. The indwelling of Christ is a consequence of this, and this presence is said not to be our righteousness before God. The FC defends a forensic understanding of justification and teaches that our righteousness consists in God's forgiveness without our past, present, or future worthiness.

Tuomo Mannermaa's view of justification, namely, "Christ present in us is our righteousness," which he created as a Lutheran contact point with Russian Orthodox teaching of deification, comes close to Osiandrianism, according to whom the presence of Christ's divine nature is our justification before God. Mannermaa virtually ignores the human nature of Christ in his version of the union of the believer with Christ. Mannermaa doesn't link justification with the work of Christ, i.e., with his cross, atonement, reconciliation, redemption, and resurrection.

For Luther, justification is forensic, because God as a judge determines reality, determines what happens. Luther rejects all human performance by the reconciled sinner as self-righteousness. Justification means that God kills and makes alive. Sinners must die and be resurrected to life in Christ. God in his judicial action as the just judge demands the death of the sinner and as the new creator gives new life as unconditionally as he did in Eden. Luther understood justification as the execution of the wages of sin upon sinners (Rom 6:23a) and simultaneous resurrection to new life in Jesus Christ, “the free gift of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23b).

Pitting forensic justification against its effects is certainly not an issue between Luther and the FC. Mannermaa’s interpretation of Luther tells more about his ecumenical endeavours than the object of his interpretation, the reformer Martin Luther.

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