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Dr. C. F. W. Walther as Theologian

(*Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 36, 1890)

By DR. FRANCIS PIEPER

Translated by JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

(Concluded)

But there is another doctrine which belongs to that of justification, namely:

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF THE MEANS OF GRACE

This is to say that in order to preserve the doctrine of justification in its purity, there must be added to it the Scripture teaching that God imparts and communicates to men the forgiveness of sins procured by Christ for the entire world in no other way than by the Gospel and the Sacraments. Therefore the Biblical doctrine of justification stands and falls with the Biblical doctrine of the means of grace.

Walther, first of all, stresses the fact that the divine Word, as it comes to man in the proclamation of the Gospel and in the Sacraments, has a twofold power. The one is the effective, or operative, power (*vis effectiva, operativa*), by which it works faith and everything that must take place in man if he is to become a Christian. The other is the collative, or conferring, power (*vis collativa*), by which it actually gives and confers what the words say and declare. He writes: "The Word and the Sacraments are the hand of God with which He bestows upon us what Christ has acquired for us and brought forth for us out of the grave. Hence, when we speak of the power and efficacy of the means of grace, we mean to say that the Word and the Sacraments are not a mere announcement, or proclamation, or a mere power to create faith, but that they themselves are the bestowal, communication, and sealing of the very blessings which they announce and proclaim."⁵

It is therefore true that forgiveness of sins or righteousness for all men is stored up in the means of grace and that through them these gifts must be apprehended by faith. Consequently the peni-

⁵ SCR, pp. 48—57; cf. Dr. Walther's lecture of April 20, 1877.

tent person, humbled by the divine Law, should not be told that by prayer and wrestling he must first fetch down from heaven the forgiveness of his sins, but he should be urged to believe in the grace which God has already brought down from heaven for all sinners and which He offers to them in the Word and the Sacraments. Here again Lutheranism and enthusiasm part company. Walther used to explain this in connection with St. Paul's treatment of the jailer at Philippi (Acts 16:30,31). He writes:

The enthusiasts tell a person whose heart has been smitten by the divine Law: "You certainly are terrified in view of your sins, and God's grace must come to your aid. But do not seize upon it too soon. First go into your prayer room, and get down on your knees, and wrestle with God until you have worked your way to the feeling of divine grace. Only then you may believe that you are in possession of grace." But this is a most impious way of dealing with people, for by that way you will lead them only to despair and not to the real assurance of their salvation. Rather tell the sinner: "If you acknowledge that you are a sinner and you are terrified because of God's wrath, then believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are saved." That is what the Apostle told the jailer at Philippi; and he told him that—note well—when he was about to take his life by his own hand and then, terrified on account of his sins, asked: "What must I do to be saved?" Imagine what an enthusiast would have told him! He, no doubt, would have said: "Don't believe too soon. Try it out; pray and wrestle with God. It may take a long time before grace may assert itself in you and you will feel that God has accepted you." But St. Paul was no enthusiast; his method of dealing with the criminal jailer bears this out. But how could the Apostle so deal with the jailer? Because he knew that the Word (the Gospel) is the means of grace, by which he imparted to him both life and salvation. (SCR, p. 52.)

Walther, it is true, again and again reminded his hearers that they must not summarily reject the feeling of grace and prayer. On the latter point he writes: "It would be dreadful indeed to speak against prayer, for we know that God has commanded it and has given us the sure promise that He will hear us. But it is just as dreadful to believe that prayer is a means of grace. By prayer we certainly ask God for grace, and that is something we

should do. But prayer cannot communicate, impart, or confer grace." Forgiveness of sins is granted to us through the Word, or the Gospel. He says: "We indeed pray for forgiveness of sins, but not so much to obtain it without means as rather to strengthen our faith by it." On the feeling of grace Walther has this to comment:

We by no means deny that the Spirit of grace makes Himself felt in the hearts of sinners unless they maliciously harden themselves against His operations. But it is a colossal mistake if the feeling which the enthusiasts arouse by their praying and wrestling is regarded as grace. At best—for often this feeling is effected by other causes, and not by God's Spirit—that which the enthusiasts call grace is a gracious effect produced by the Holy Ghost. But that grace by which we are justified and saved is something outside us and not anything in us. . . . Therefore when a penitent sinner comes to a Lutheran pastor with the question: "Where may I, a lost and condemned sinner, find grace?" the Lutheran pastor will answer him: "Comfort yourself with God's grace, as it is stored up for you in the Gospel and the holy Sacraments. Believe what God tells you there, and be of good cheer because of the grace which is granted to you in the divine Word. Receive absolution, and go to the Lord's Table, for it is there that God offers, imparts, grants, and seals to you His grace and the forgiveness of all your sins." (*SCR*, p. 49.)

But why does the denial of the means of grace on the part of the enthusiasts annul the doctrine of justification? The enthusiasts, says Walther, regard it as a great advantage over the Lutherans that they direct people not to the means of grace, but to their own hearts. "But of all the errors which separate the enthusiasts from the Lutherans as by a strong wall, the greatest of them all is their false doctrine regarding the power of the Word," that is to say, their denial of the means of grace as a conferring power. (Lecture, April 20, 1877.) Those, indeed, who deny the conferring power of the Word and the Sacraments and therefore direct penitent sinners, asking for grace, to prayer, the feeling of grace, the regenerated heart, and the like, and not to the means of grace, pervert the doctrine of justification in all its parts. Indeed, they deny that sinners are justified and saved by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith.

In that case, first of all, the concept of justifying and saving grace is corrupted. For whoever does not base the forgiveness of his sins on the divine Word, but upon his feeling, or his so-called experiences, regards these experiences, that is, the special emotions or sensations in his heart, as the grace of God, while Holy Scripture, when speaking of the cause of justification and salvation, understands by grace something that exists in God's heart for Christ's sake, namely, His unmerited favor, mercy, and love, which are made known in His Word and should be believed by us. Holy Scripture calls the feelings of grace and other similar experiences the gifts of grace. (*LDJ*, pp. 85 ff.)

Again, the enthusiasts by their false practice pervert also the Scriptural concept expressed in the phrase *for Christ's sake*. By directing penitent sinners who ask for grace, not to the means of grace, but to prayer in order to gain grace, they deny the fact that God for the sake of Christ's atonement is already reconciled with all sinners and has promised His grace to all men in the Gospel. Those who tell sinners to seek Christ in their hearts and not in the Gospel, refusing to comfort sinners until they *feel* grace and have been renewed, "make themselves a false Christ and reject the Christ who was nailed to the cross and now gives Himself to us in His Word." (*LDJ*, pp. 86 ff.) They want to achieve by struggling what the crucified Christ has already earned for us. Walther says: "To direct a penitent sinner to his feeling of grace and not to the divine Word is not only wrong in itself but also means adopting a religion entirely different from that of the Bible."

In the third place, the enthusiasts by their unscriptural practice also falsify the concept of *faith*. To believe means to trust in God's promises as these are revealed in the Gospel. But what do the enthusiasts make of faith? "They ask," as Walther says, "whether penitent sinners experience Christ in their hearts or whether they feel how He works in them. Should anyone reply in the affirmative, they tell him that he should be of good cheer and hope, for this indicates that he has faith. An enthusiast, for instance, comforts persons only when they declare that they feel Christ in their soul. But what the enthusiasts thus regard as faith is not faith at all, but a definite delusion or, at best, the fruit of faith." Indeed, Walther says that if anyone refuses to believe the

Word of God, as He speaks it to him, but insists that he has faith only when he feels grace in his heart and supposes that he can gain assurance of salvation by his own wrestling, then such a person has actually made shipwreck of his faith, though this illusion is commonly regarded as the greatest humility and piety. (*LDJ*, pp. 84, 87.)

When the doctrine of justification is thus completely corrupted by the denial of the means of grace, the pernicious result of this perversion will not fail to appear—namely uncertainty in regard to grace or justification. Walther writes: "It is the greatest grace that God has joined His pardon to His Word, since otherwise no one could know for sure whether or not God is speaking to him, just as the enthusiasts can never tell from whom their experiences at the mourners' bench really come" (*LDJ*, p. 84). Again:

The enthusiasts declare that they distinguish themselves from the Papists in that they are sure of their state of grace.⁶ Nevertheless, the enthusiasts revert to the papistic principle of justification because their assurance of salvation rests not upon the eternally abiding Word, but upon their own vacillating feeling; hence they are bound either to become hypocrites or often to lament that they have lost Christ. It is for this reason also that they put forth such efforts to arouse their feelings by all manner of means and that now this one and then another boasts of his conversion, while in a short time they are obliged, because of their lack of comfort, to return to the mourners' bench. (*LDJ*, pp. 78 ff.)

But both their teaching and practice are downright wrong, for God in His tender mercy has taken care of sinners in an altogether different way. He does not say: "Grace indeed has been acquired for you, but now you must do all you can to obtain it." God has so taken care of sinners that "even the greatest sinner, standing on the gallows, may be sure of his justification before God." He has put His grace into the Word and the Sacraments, from which faith can and should take it at any time. (*RWD*, 1875, p. 21.)

Walther thus makes this point very clear: If the doctrine of justification is to be preserved in its purity and if sinners are to receive its full comfort, we must be unyielding in maintaining

⁶ The Papists, as is well known, regard it as a criminal presumption for the ordinary Christian to claim to be sure of his state of grace.

that God will not offer and impart to us His grace, or the forgiveness of sin, procured by Christ, in any other way than through the means of grace which He has instituted.

But Walther also reminds us that we need to safeguard this truth against ourselves and not merely against the enthusiasts. "The enthusiasts," he writes, "regard everyone who bases the forgiveness of his sins on the Word, and not on his so-called experiences, as one who is not yet converted" (*LDJ*, p. 81). But owing to our corrupt nature we also are prone to the same error, since "man does not want to base his salvation on anything outside himself, but only on something that is within himself" (*ibid.*). Many of the believers' trials have their source in the mistake that they judge their state of grace according to their own subjective feeling and not according to God's gracious promises in the Word and the Sacraments. That mistake continues to occur even among those who hear the Biblical doctrine of justification. Walther writes:

Our church indeed teaches in its Confessions and in the writings of its loyal teachers that God so faithfully cares for us that His grace, obtained for us by Christ, is imparted to us in the Word and the Sacraments. Nevertheless, the error of the Reformed, alas, has infected very many also in our church. It is for this reason that some in our congregations oppose the confession and absolution every Sunday after the sermon. If people would really believe that the absolution is the imparting of forgiveness to all sinners, they would gladly walk thousands of miles to receive it. Again, many say: "If the Lord Himself told me that my sins are forgiven, as He did the paralytic, then indeed I would believe it. But what good does it do me to have a minister tell me this? He cannot read my mind and might regard me as more penitent than I really am." Can there be any other reason for this objection except the fact that people do not believe that Christ has procured all blessings . . . and that the forgiveness of sins has been placed into the Gospel, which pastors now proclaim? (*LDJ*, pp. 83 f.)

"There are many who for a long time remain away from confession and the Lord's Table because they do not regard themselves as worthy of the Lord's Supper. If finally they do come, they do so because they do not want to give offense or stand before God

as despisers of His grace. Yet they doubt the absolution which they hear, because they base their absolution on their own qualification and do not hold in true faith to the objective validity of absolution." Thus since they want to earn their forgiveness by their repentance instead of receiving it by faith as a free gift, they often become Papists without a Pope.

If a Christian therefore wants to remain true to the Biblical doctrine of justification, he must accustom himself, contrary to the doctrine and practice of the enthusiasts and that of his own erring heart, to base his faith on the objective means of grace. Unless he does that, he is basing his state of grace on his own subjective condition, i. e., on his own worthiness or good works. For this reason Walther admonished all Lutheran ministers never to be unmindful of this point. On the one hand, the pastor must always rebuke the self-delusion by which unregenerate sinners regard their mere intellectual knowledge as true faith. On the other hand, he must direct those who are truly terrified by God's wrath to the promises of the Gospel and not to any feeling in their hearts. He writes: "Christianity is faith in the promise of the Gospel, which Christ has commanded His church to proclaim. A minister must therefore train his people to say: 'It is written: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' . . . It is bad enough when Christians morbidly want to feel first and then believe; but how dreadful if that is preached to them!" "The characteristic mark of our precious Evangelical Lutheran Church is its objectivity. In all its teachings it endeavors to turn people away from their own efforts to seek salvation in themselves, in their own qualification, their own desire, their own ability, and their own good works, and to have them seek their salvation outside themselves. On the other hand, the characteristic mark of all other denominations is their subjectivity; they endeavor to teach people to base their salvation on themselves." This results from a denial of the Biblical doctrine of the means of grace.

How strongly Walther insisted that the forgiveness of sins, or justification, occurs through the Gospel became clear during a discussion of the doctrine of the election of grace at the Chicago Pastoral Conference in 1880. . . . Here he stressed especially one point. A representative of the view that the election of grace oc-

curred in view of the believer's foreseen faith said—trying to find an analogy for his teaching in justification—that subjective justification is a special judicial act of God taking place after a person has apprehended by faith the forgiveness of sins which is pronounced in the Word. To this Walther replied, among other things: "When we believe in Christ, we have righteousness and salvation; for then it has been already awarded to us by God's express promise. It is not true that when we have appropriated the objective righteousness by faith a new divine act must be added. The act has already occurred. Already by faith we have righteousness, and it is not necessary for God to grant it to us afterwards by a special promise." The first speaker then remarked that in that case he had not known what subjective justification really was, for he had always been of the opinion that subjective justification is a special judicial act of God. Walther thereupon commented that the apprehension of Christ's righteousness by faith and God's imputation of it coincide. He added in explanation: "As soon as we believe, we have what faith apprehends. Why? Because God awards it to us judicially by His Word. . . . As soon as we believe, God has forgiven our sins judicially. The Word is God's hand which imparts the gift. My faith is the hand that receives what God's hand presents to me as a gift."⁷

What Walther wanted to stress here is the fact that also the so-called subjective justification, or the verdict which God pronounces in subjective justification upon those who believe in Christ, must not be sought outside the Word. Recently this explanation caused someone to charge us with denying subjective justification altogether. But this charge is not true. Walther very earnestly taught, on the one hand, that by Christ's death and resurrection the objective justification of all men has been accomplished and that what God does in subjective justification is only the application to the individual of the justification which He has already pronounced. On the other hand, he sharply distinguishes between objective and subjective justification and describes the latter as an act that occurs only when a person comes to faith. In his exposi-

⁷ Minutes of the Pastoral Conference at Chicago, 1880, pp. 45 f.

tion of the 12th thesis on justification in the report of the first meeting of the Synodical Conference Walther writes on page 68:

The purpose of this thesis is to show that though we teach that forgiveness of sins has been procured for all men and that righteousness and salvation exist for all men insofar as their acquisition is concerned; and though we also teach that this treasure is offered and imparted in the Word and the Sacraments, yet we do not deny that God in Christ and for Christ's sake regards the individual believer who accepts this treasure as one who possesses the treasure and that He in the same moment, so to speak, inscribes his name into the book of life. This is the justification which in ecclesiastical terminology is, without any qualification, called the justification of a penitent sinner, because now the individual person stands before God's judgment seat and is personally absolved. This forensic or judicial act continues throughout the life of the believer, for God again and again declares him free from sin, death, and damnation.

But this judicial verdict of God, by which He ascribes righteousness to the believer, is one which must not be sought outside the promises of the Word, or immediately in God, and to which later the Gospel must be added, but it is the Gospel itself. Justification, as Walther always stresses, is an act, which occurs in God's heart, and not in the heart of the individual person; but it occurs in God's heart inasmuch as it is present and is revealed in the Gospel. Therefore faith, which lays hold of the Gospel, apprehends by this very act God's verdict or His judicial imputation. In this sense Walther says: "As soon as we believe, God has forgiven us judicially." But he rejects the view that justification is a special judicial act which follows the believing apprehension of the divine promise in the Gospel. The one and same Gospel offers forgiveness of sins, works faith, and declares the believer to be righteous.

It is of the greatest importance for us to maintain this truth, just as it is also of the greatest practical significance for the Christian life. At Chicago Walther remarked in passing that he who expects a new judicial act of God outside that of the Gospel, as, for example, outside the promise that whoever believes in Christ shall have remission of sins, renders his own subjective

justification uncertain.⁸ That indeed is true. If a new verdict outside the Gospel is to be awaited, the penitent sinner who asks for righteousness before God will ultimately have to adopt the point of view of the enthusiasts. If it were true that to the absolution which is given in the Gospel there must be added a new judicial verdict so that this divine verdict would be outside the Word, then no one could be sure of God's absolving verdict, which we have in the Gospel. The penitent sinner, seeking assurance of his justification, would be forced to draw a conclusion based on his own subjective condition of faith. Asking himself whether God has justified him, he would be obliged to scrutinize his own heart, and he could not consider God's heart as it is revealed in the Gospel. In that case justification would no longer be by faith, for faith has but one correlative—God's verdict revealed in the Gospel. A new judicial verdict of God, outside the Gospel, could not be the object of faith, for faith always demands as its correlative the Gospel. Hence, in order to preserve the doctrine of justification in its purity, we must not seek the divine judicial verdict of justification in a new act that is outside the Gospel.

In order to continue to possess the doctrine of justification unadulterated, we must also preserve in its Scriptural purity

THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH

Since we had to refer frequently to this doctrine in our previous discussion, we may here confine ourselves to a few salient points.

Walther used to stress the fact that in Christendom ignorance with regard to what justifying faith is and how faith justifies is widespread. He writes: "All Christian denominations indeed speak very much of faith, yet only a few have the right understanding of what faith really is and how it justifies" (*RWD*, 1875, p. 35). With respect to this point there prevails a veritable Babelic confusion of tongues (*SCR*, p. 29). "They stress it so much that faith justifies and saves, and yet, when the matter is pressed, they have nothing definite to say about it." A careful analysis shows that also at this point works are mixed into the article of justifica-

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47. Note the words of Dr. Walther: "How can I know that [namely, that God has absolved me]? I must cling to this: God has said it. I do not wait for a new judicial act of God."

tion. Even if their terminology excludes works from justification and the *sola fide* is expressly asserted, they nevertheless renounce the essence of justification and thoroughly falsify this chief article of the Christian religion, since they regard faith itself as a good work. Their intention evidently is to leave room for the co-operation of a person who comes to faith, by which he distinguishes himself from another who does not believe. They assume that this co-operation takes place in a person's repentance, or in his conversion, or in his sanctification, or in his very coming to faith.

Walther was concerned to ward off the error of changing in any way the faith by which a person is justified into a work or of mixing into a person's faith his own work, worthiness, or merit. Again and again, Walther emphasized: "When God demands faith of us, He does not mean to say that though His Son has atoned for our sins and has redeemed the whole world, yet we, too, must do something to earn salvation. On the contrary, faith is necessary for the very reason that nothing remains for us to do to merit salvation." Again: "The reason why faith justifies, and nothing else, is that there is nothing left to be done by man; for righteousness and salvation have already been procured and are offered to all men in the Word and the Sacraments as a free gift." Or: "Faith justifies and saves, because man is justified and saved gratuitously by grace and in no way by his works." In justification, faith is to be considered in contrast to every work and merit. "If righteousness would not be a gift of grace, then certainly some work would have to be demanded of man to obtain it. But since it is conferred by grace, faith suffices for salvation, for it consists of accepting Christ's righteousness." Indeed, faith justifies insofar as it is the acceptance of the righteousness and salvation which actually exist by Christ's meritorious obedience and are offered to the sinner in the promises of the Gospel. Faith certainly embraces knowledge, assent, and trust. But it "does not justify inasmuch as it is a knowing, assenting, and confiding, in the sense that these terms express a meritorious quality in man, but inasmuch as faith is the means by which the already existing righteousness is received." Man cannot in any way render himself worthy of righteousness and salvation by believing. In justification faith does not come into consideration as a meritorious act or as

obedience or inasmuch as it effects an inward change in man or produces pious sensations or good works. In stressing the thought that faith must never be regarded as supplementing divine grace and the merit of Christ, Walther said: "Even if the word *faith* would never occur in Scripture, the Bible would nevertheless teach salvation by faith, because it says that we are saved by grace for Christ's sake." In another place he states that if we would have nothing else than faith, and not Christ (which, of course, is impossible), we would be damned despite all our believing, for we are not made acceptable to God by the *act* of faith, but by Christ and His righteousness, which we lay hold of by the hand of faith. (*SCR*, p. 35.) In this connection Walther used to quote Calov's statement that even faith itself, inasmuch as it is merely the hand, is rightly opposed not only to all works of obedience and piety but also to faith itself inasmuch as this is our work or act.⁹

Also in his "Luther Hours" Walther again and again showed that in justification faith must not be considered as a good work. He said that faith does not justify inasmuch as it regards something as true, but inasmuch as it trusts in the Gospel that God for Christ's sake is gracious to men. In a lecture delivered on September 14, 1877, he stated:

When unbelievers hear that in the Christian religion divine grace and good will and everlasting salvation are ascribed to faith, they imagine that it is the peculiarity of *all* religions, which pretend to have been revealed in a divine, supernatural way, that they demand faith of their adherents in mysteries that contradict reason and that they promise all who believe them eternal life. Thus Mohammed demanded faith of his followers as also did Moses and Christ. But they argue: Of what concern could it be to God — if indeed He exists — whether or not we believe in something that contradicts reason? Why should those be better and more worthy of heaven — if indeed there is a heaven — who do violence to their reason than those who use it? From these arguments it is obvious that unbelievers have no conception of what that faith is to which in the Christian religion divine grace and everlasting life are ascribed. The mere assent to Scripture as being true is,

⁹ Baier's *Compend*, ed. C. F. W. Walther, III, 270.

according to our Christian confession, so very far from being the faith which justifies and saves that Scripture teaches: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19). To regard what Scripture teaches merely as true is something which, the Bible teaches, even the devils can do and yet are not saved. The faith, to which Christianity ascribes salvation, is therefore something else entirely. It is, as Scripture itself teaches, "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). It is receiving and accepting Christ (John 1:12). God has performed the unspeakable miracle of His eternal love in that He has sent His only-begotten Son into the world, has let Him become incarnate, has through Him paid the debt of all human guilt, and thus has procured for all men heaven and salvation, which they had lost by their sin; and finally He offers and imparts to them these blessings in the Word and the Sacraments. What, then, is left for us to add? Absolutely nothing but that we should give all glory to God by accepting His gift. That, and nothing else, is faith. When we merely regard the Scripture message as true, we do not yet personally accept it, and so we still are without true faith. But when we accept the grace that is offered to all men in the Word and the Sacraments and sincerely trust in it, we have the true and saving faith. Those who are offended at this doctrine of faith are really offended at the greatness of divine grace, at the blessed counsel of salvation, and at Christ, the Savior of the world. Would to God that only the atheists would reject this true doctrine of faith! But, alas, this is done by entire major denominations.

In another "Luther Hour" Walther said:

The Christian religion demands assent to its divine truth. But this is by no means the faith to which it ascribes salvation. When Christ says: "He that believeth . . . shall be saved," He does not mean: "He that regards everything I teach as true, shall be saved." But this is what the words of Christ mean: "You poor people have fallen away from Me by your sin and have thereby contracted an everlasting debt of guilt, which you cannot pay off. But do not despair, for I, the Son of God, have paid the debt of your guilt and thus have secured for you divine grace and eternal salvation. All these precious gifts I offer to you as a free gift. So, then, accept My gifts and you will be saved." This accepting and receiving is the faith which the Christian religion teaches.

This most careful separation of every work and good quality of man from faith is absolutely necessary in order that all glory may be ascribed to Christ and that consciences may not become confused by a false conception of faith. Walther writes: "There are many who do not dare to believe, because faith is wrongly presented to them as their own good work, their good quality, their love, which gives to faith its value, or their feeling of grace, and the like."

Walther took issue with old and new errors in this area. His strictures against these aberrations will be summarized in the following:

The Papists err very grossly in this article of faith, because they teach that the faith which justifies is a good quality or a virtue in man's heart, and includes love and all the good works that flow from it.

On this point again all those err who, like the enthusiasts, regard justifying faith as a renewal of the heart. It is indeed true that faith effects a renovation of the heart. But the renewing, sanctifying power of faith is not the reason it justifies. Those who ascribe to faith justification in this sense base it not on Christ, but on the person himself, namely, on the renewal which has taken place in him.

Another error which must be repudiated is this, that justifying faith is, as the enthusiasts teach, a wrestling or struggling for grace. Walther writes: "Those err indeed who think that we Lutherans are opposed to all earnest piety and that we reject all prayer and struggling, crying, and lamenting. No, indeed, many of us, no doubt, kneel much more than do those who desire to earn grace by their kneeling. But we oppose the error that we must achieve grace by prayer, crying, and wrestling." In its relation to justification, faith is not to be considered as something that wrestles and struggles, but something that rests upon the promises of the Gospel, or something which is the sincere confidence which appropriates to itself the gracious promises that are offered both in the Gospel that is proclaimed and in the Gospel which in the Sacraments appears as the visible Word. (*RWD*, 1875, p. 22.) Should anyone say that faith justifies inasmuch as it wrestles or

struggles for grace, "then God is robbed of His glory, and there is established a pagan form of righteousness, adorned with a few Christian trimmings" (ibid.).

The enthusiasts and modern theologians describe faith as the condition of justification. That description is wrong if the word "condition" is taken in its proper and usual sense. This point Walther stressed very emphatically. He admitted that the term "condition" in this connection may indeed be used if by it the necessity of faith is to be pointed out, or if the truth is to be asserted that without faith there can be no justification. But whenever the term is used, then all misunderstanding must be obviated, since the word "condition," as it is commonly used, presupposes an achievement on the basis of which one receives something. But in the article of justification faith is not to be considered as something that a person does, but as the very opposite of all human performance. Faith therefore is not the condition on the basis of which we are justified, but it is the way or means by which we receive the righteousness which God granted us long ago when He raised His Son, our Lord, from the dead, and which He freely offers to all men in the Gospel. Scripture indeed says: "If thou . . . shalt believe in thy heart . . . thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9). But the particle "if" has two usages. It denotes either the cause or the manner and way by which a certain thing is accomplished. It is used etiologically of the cause and syllogistically of the way or manner. When the Law says: "If you do this, you will live," then the etiologic "if" most certainly demands obedience as the cause of living. But when the Gospel says: "If you believe, you will be saved," then the syllogistic "if" points out the way by which we receive salvation.

Modern Lutheran theologians show a special liking for the expression that a person is justified under the condition of faith. This fondness is explained by the fact that their theology is saturated with synergism. They call faith "an act of our ego" or "a noble moral deed of the will which appropriates to itself salvation." In reality this description amounts to a rejection of the Biblical doctrine of justification, even when the clause that a sinner is justified and saved by faith is retained. In that case the expressions "faith" and "by faith" as also "by faith alone" have taken

on different meanings. Synergists, however, are compelled to pervert the doctrine of justification, since they regard faith as a meritorious act of man. Referring to the predestinarian controversy, Walther wrote: "Even now [in the controversy concerning the doctrine of conversion and election] the point at issue is none other than justification. The question facing us is this: Is a person actually justified and saved by grace alone? Is it Christ who does it all, or is there a cause in man why a person is saved? Does faith save because Christ has already accomplished our redemption so that nothing remains for us but to accept it? Or is faith something which man on his part must still do? Is faith necessary because on the part of man something still remains to be done?"

Walther frequently designated the preservation of the doctrine of justification in its purity as the chief gain that accrued to our church from the recent controversy.

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