

Formula of Concord - Epitome Article III

Explained by the Historical Introduction and the Thorough Declaration with Practical and Relevant Considerations.

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This paper will deal with the Osiandrian and Stancarian Controversies. The Osiandrian Controversy broke out when Andreas Osiander, banished from Nurnberg because of refusing to accept the Augsburg Interim, proposed a new doctrine of justification. This was something which Luther had predicted would happen. It did not take Osiander long after the death of Luther to publicly declare his teaching. In 1549 he turned away from the teaching of justification by imputation of the merits of Christ and took up the Roman teaching of justification by infusion. This was not an entirely new teaching for Osiander which came upon him all of a sudden, he had this idea back in 1522, but he made no effort to bring his view to the public while Luther was still living. However, after Luther's death, Osiander is retorted to have said, "Now that the lion is dead, I shall easily dispose of the foxes and hares."

"Osiander, lauded by modern historians as the only real 'systematizer' among the Lutherans of the first generation, was a man as proud, overbearing, and passionate as he was gifted, keen, sagacious, learned, eloquent, and energetic." He was a man who took part in many important works during his time. He was at the Marburg Colloquy in 1529, where he met Luther; at the Diet in Augsburg; 1530; at Smalcald, 1537; at Hagenau and Worms in 1540.

When the Augsburg Interim was introduced in Nurnberg, Osiander resigned. (Some sources say he resigned and some say he was fired). In 1543 Duke Albert of Prussia hired him as superintendent and professor in Koenigsberg at double salary. With this special treatment Osiander was receiving, much dissatisfaction developed among his colleagues of Briessman, Hegemon, Isinder, and Moerlin. Much hatred built up between these men, so much, that it is reported that they carried firearms into their sessions. Yet, in spite of all of this, the real conflict approached because of Osiander's views on the image of God and justification and the righteousness of faith. The problem seems to be that Osiander never really cleared himself from the Roman teachings and did not clearly understand the Lutheran truths.

As we had mentioned before, Osiander's views on justification extended back into the early 1520's, but they became a public battle after he delivered his inaugural disputation in 1549, *Concerning the Law and Gospel*. "Osiander's vanity prompted him at least to hint at his peculiar views which he well knew were not in agreement with the doctrine taught at Wittenberg and in the Lutheran Church at large." At this time then his colleagues began to take issue with him. The first one was Matthias Lauterwald who said, "Osiander denied that faith is a part of repentance." In the following year he delivered another disputation in which he did not hint concerning his views but openly came out with his views which were contrary to the Lutheran doctrine. But at this time he was confronted by a much more determined combatant, Joachim Moerlin, "who henceforth devoted his entire life to defeat Osiandrianism and to vindicate Luther's forensic view of justification.

Moerlin understood "that solid comfort in life and death is possible only as long as our faith rests solely on the *"aliena iustitia,"* on the objective righteousness of Christ, which is without us, and is offered in the Gospel and received by faith; and fully realizing also that Christian assurance is incompatible with such a doctrine as Osiander taught, according to which our faith is to rely on a righteous condition within ourselves, Moerlin publicly attacked Osiander from his pulpit, and in every way emphasized the fact that his teaching could never be tolerated in the Lutheran Church. Osiander replied in his lectures. The situation thus created was most intolerable. At the command of the Duke discussions were held between Moerlin and Osiander, but without result."

Then in 1551, Duke Albrecht asked others to study the controversy and send their reactions to Koenigsberg. A number of opinions arrived and with the exception of John Brenz and Matthew Vogel, both of whom regarded Osiander's teaching as differing from the doctrine received by the Lutheran Church in terms and phrases rather than in substance, they were unfavorable to Osiander.

In spite of the many people who were against him, Osiander felt quite safe under the protection of Duke Albrecht. He continued to publish material concerning justification that was contrary to the Lutheran Church. Melancthon also got on the wrong side of Osiander and was considered by Osiander as a "pestilential heretic."

Before lone Osiander had many opponents such as Flacius, Gallus, Amsdorf, and Wigand. Meanwhile, Moerlin published a large volume entitled *Concerning the Justification of Faith*. Osiander replied in his *Schmeckbier* of June 24, 1552, a book as keen as it was coarse. In 1552 and 1553 Flacius issued no less than 12 publications against Osiander.

Just as the controversy was reaching its climax, Osiander died, in 1552. Shortly thereafter Duke Albrecht had Moerlin banished. He accepted a position as superintendent in Brunswick, where he zealously continued his opposition to Osiandrianism as well as to other corruptions of genuine Lutheranism. At Koenigsberg the Osiandrianists continued to enjoy the protection of Duke Albrecht. The leader of the small band was John Funck, the son-in-law of Osiander and the chaplain of the Duke. In 1566, however, the king of Poland intervened, and Funck was executed as a disturber of the public peace. Moerlin was recalled and served as bishop of Samland at Koenigsberg from 1567 till his death in 1571.

Osiander's Views - "Osiander's theory of justification, according to which the righteousness of faith is the eternal, essential holiness of the divine nature of Christ inhering and dwelling in man, consistently compelled him to maintain that justification is not an act by which God declares a man just, but an act by which He actually makes him inherently just and righteous; that is not an imputation of a righteousness existing outside of man, but an actual infusion of a righteousness welling in man; that it is not a mere acquittal from sin and guilt, but regeneration, renewal, sanctification, and internal physical cleansing from sin; that it is not a forensic judicial act outside of man or a declaration concerning man's standing before God and his relation to Him, but a sort of medicinal process within man; that the righteousness of faith is not the alien righteousness, consisting in the obedience of Christ, but a quality, condition, or change effected in believers by the essential righteousness of the divine nature dwelling in them through faith in Christ; that faith does not justify on account of the thing outside of man in which it trusts and upon which it relies, but by reason of the thing which it introduces and produces in man; that, accordingly, justification is never instantaneous and complete, but gradual and progressive."

Osiander also taught that the righteousness of faith (our righteousness before God) is not the obedience rendered by Christ to the divine Law, but the indwelling righteousness of God, essentially the same original righteousness or image that inhered in Adam and Eve before the Fall. It consists, not indeed in good works or in "doing and suffering," but in quality which renders him who receives it just, and moves him to do and to suffer what is right. It is the holiness which consists in the renewal of man, in the gifts of grace, in the new spiritual life, in the regenerate nature of man. Osiander said that Christ by his suffering and death made satisfaction and acquired for us forgiveness, but He did not thereby effect our justification. His obedience as such does not constitute our righteousness before God, but merely serves to restore it. It was necessary that God might be able to dwell in us, and so become our life and righteousness. Faith justifies, not inasmuch as it apprehends the merits of Christ, but inasmuch as it unites us with the divine nature, the infinite essential righteousness of God, in which our sins are diluted, as it were, and lost, as an impure drop disappears when poured into an ocean of liquid purity.

Osiander also taught that we are not justified and accepted by God only because of Christ and the pardon offered in the Gospel, but also because of an inhering righteous quality in us. Our assurance is conditioned not alone upon what Christ has done outside of us and for us, but rather upon what He is in us and produces in us. The satisfaction rendered by Christ is not the only ground on which God regards

us just, nor a sufficient basis of our certainty that we are accepted by God. Not the Christ for us, but rather the Christ in us, is the basis both of our justification and assurance. Therefore, it is not enough to satisfy the scared sinner with the Gospel promise of divine absolution. Also, one must be sure that the righteousness and holiness of God is dwelling in him. While Luther had urged alarmed consciences to trust in the merits of Christ for their justification and salvation, Osiander led them to rely on the new life of divine wisdom, holiness, and righteousness dwelling in their own hearts.

Therefore, all that Osiander was doing, was polluting the doctrine of justification. In fact, his theory was but a revamping of just such teaching as had driven the Lutherans out of the Church of Rome. True, Osiander denied that by our own works we merit justifications that our righteousness consists in our good works; that our good works are imputed to us as righteousness. But the fact that he held a subjective condition to be our righteousness before God gives to his doctrine an essentially Roman approach, no matter how widely it may differ from it in other respects. Moehler, a renowned Catholic, declared that, properly interpreted, Osiander's doctrine was "identical with the Roman Catholic doctrine."

Osiander also taught that Christ is our Righteousness only according to His divine nature. He said, "If the question be asked according to what nature Christ, His whole undivided person, is our Righteousness, then, just as when one asks according to what nature He is the creator of heaven and earth, the clear, correct, and plain answer is that He is our Righteousness according to His divine nature, and not according to His human nature, although we are unable to find, obtain or apprehend such divine righteousness apart from his humanity."

Osiander also taught that it was only the righteousness of the divine nature of Christ which was able to save us. He said, "For of what help would it be to you if you had all the righteousness which men and angels can imagine, but lacked this eternal righteousness which is itself the Son of God, according to His divine nature, with the Father and the Holy Ghost? For no other righteousness can lift you up to heaven and bring you to the Father. But when you apprehend this righteousness through faith, and Christ is in you, what can you then be lacking which you do not possess richly, superabundantly, and infinitely in His deity? Since Christ is ours and is in us, God Himself and all His angels behold nothing in us but righteousness on account of the highest, eternal, and infinite righteousness of Christ, which is His deity itself dwelling in us. And although sin still remains in, and clings to, our flesh, it is like an impure little drop compared with a great pure ocean, and on account of the righteousness of Christ which is in us God does not want to see it."

Osiander also went on in great detail to say that righteousness is infused into believers. "It is apparent that whatever part Christ, as the faithful Mediator, acted with regard to God, His heavenly Father, for our sakes, by fulfilling the Law and by His suffering and death, was accomplished more than 1,500 years ago, when we were not in existence. For this reason it cannot, properly speaking, have been, nor be called, our justification, but only our redemption and the atonement for us and our sins. For whoever would be justified must believe; but if he is to believe, he must already be born and live. Therefore Christ has not justified us who now live and died but we are redeemed by it (His work 1,500 years ago) from God's wrath, death, and hell.... This, however, is true and undoubted that by the fulfillment of the Law and by His suffering and death He merited and earned from God, His heavenly Father, this great and super-abounding grace, namely, that He not only has forgiven our sin and taken from us the unbearable burden of the Law, but that He also wishes to justify us by faith in Christ, to infuse justification or the righteousness, and, if only we obey, through the operation of His Holy Spirit and through the death of Christ, in which we are embodied by the baptism of Christ, to mortify, purge out, and entirely destroy sin which is already forgiven us, but nevertheless still dwells in our flesh and adheres to us. Therefore the other part of the office of our dear faithful Lord and Mediator Jesus Christ is now to turn toward us in order to deal also with us poor sinners, as with the guilty party, that we acknowledge such great grace and gratefully receive it by faith, in order that He by faith may take us alive and just from the death of sin, and that sin, which is already forgiven, but nevertheless still dwells

and inheres in our flesh, may be altogether mortified and destroyed in us. And this, first of all, is the act of our justification.”

Osiander also taught that justification is practically identical with regeneration, renewal, and gradual sanctification. To justify, he says, means “to make a just man out of an unjust one, that is to recall a dead man to life.” Again, “Thus the Gospel further shows its power and also justifies us, i.e., it makes us just, even as, and in the same degree as, He also makes us alive.”

The Stancarian Controversy also deals with the Formula of Concord, Article III. The Stancarian controversy was brought about by Francesco Stancar, an Italian ex-priest, who had emigrated from Italy on account of his Protestant views. He was a very proud, vain, haughty and stubborn person who created trouble wherever he went. Stancarus treated all of his opponents as ignoramuses and spoke contemptuously of Luther and Melanchthon, branding the later as an antichrist. When in Koenigsberg he also became involved in the controversy which was brewing. He also opposed Osiander and declared him to be the personal antichrist. However, the opponents of Osiander were not pleased to have Stancarus on their side. The reason being that he also was in error, He taught that Christ is our Righteousness before God according to His human nature alone. He eventually moved away but continued to write concerning his view. Unfortunately he was just ignored and not opposed with his views.

Stancarus was a great follower of Peter Lombard and in one of his writings he stated, “one Peter Lombard is worth more than a hundred Luthers, two hundred Melanchthon, three hundred Bullingers, four hundred Peter Martyrs, five hundred Calvins, out of whom, if they were all brayed in a mortar, not one drop of true theology would be squeezed.”

Lombard said, “Christ is called Mediator according to His humanity, not according to His divinity.... He is therefore Mediator inasmuch as He is man, and not inasmuch as He is God.” Stancarus also agreed that Christ is our Righteousness only according to His human nature, and not according to His divine nature. Stancarus said that the divine nature of Christ must be excluded from the office of Christ’s mediation and priesthood; for if God the Son were Mediator and would do something which the Father and the Holy Spirit could not do, then He would have a will and an operation and hence also a nature and essence different from that of the Father and Holy Spirit. He wrote, “Christ, God and man, is Mediator (Redeemer) only according to the other nature, namely, the human, not according to the Divine; Christ made satisfaction for us according to His human nature, but not according to His divine nature; according to His divine nature Christ was not under the Law, was not obedient unto death.” Stancarus also argued, “Christ is one God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Apart from the three personal properties of *‘paternitas, filiatio, and spiratio passiva’* the three divine persons are absolutely identical in their being and operation. Their work is the sending of the Mediator, whose divine nature itself, in an active way, participates in this sending; hence only the human nature of the God-man is sent, and only the human nature of the Mediator acts in a reconciling way. Men are reconciled by Christ’s death on the cross; but the blood shed on the cross and death are peculiar to the human nature, not to the divine nature; hence we are reconciled by the human nature of Christ only tend not by His divine nature.”

Affirmativa

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

Thorough Declaration – “for He has redeemed, justified, and saved us from our sins as God and man, through His complete obedience; that therefore the righteousness of faith is the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and our adoption as God’s children only on account of the obedience of Christ, which through faith alone, out of pure grace, is imputed for righteousness to all true believers, and on account of it they are absolved from all their unrighteousness.”

Christ is our righteousness as the God-man. Justification consists in forgiveness of sin, imputation of Christ’s righteousness, and acceptance as God’s children for the sake of Christ, whom we receive through faith.

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

Thorough Declaration – “poor sinful man is justified before God, that is, absolved and declared free and exempt from all his sins, and from the sentence of well-deserved condemnation, and adopted into sonship and heirship of eternal life, without any merit or worth of our own, also without any preceding, present, or any subsequent works, out of pure grace, because of the sole merit, complete obedience, bitter suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us for righteousness.”

A sinner is justified without any previous or following merit exclusively out of pure grace, because of the sole merit of Christ, accepted through faith, which is produced by the gospel.

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

Thorough Declaration – “These treasures are offered us by the Holy Ghost in the promise of the holy Gospel; and faith alone is the only means by which we lay hold upon, accept, and apply, and appropriate them to ourselves.”

Faith justifies, not because it is a good work, but solely because it accents the merit of Christ.

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

Thorough Declaration – “This faith is a gift of God, by which we truly learn to know Christ, our Redeemer, in the Word of the Gospel, and trust in Him, that for the sake of His obedience alone we have the forgiveness of sins by grace, are regarded as godly and righteous by God the Father, and are eternally saved.”

This faith is not a “bare knowledge” (Roman Catholic error), it is a God given trust and confidence in Christ.

5. We believe, teach, and confess that according to the usage of Holy Scripture the word justify means in this article, to absolve, that is, to declare free from sins. Prov. 17:15, “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the righteous, even they both are abomination to the Lord.” Also Rom. 8:33: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.”

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

Thorough Declaration - “The word “regeneration” is used, in the first Place, to include both the forgiveness of sins solely for Christ’s sake and the subsequent renewal which the Holy Spirit works in those who are justified by faith. But this word is also used in the limited sense of the forgiveness of sins and our adoption as God’s children. In this latter sense it is frequently used in the Apology, where the

statement is made, "Justification is regeneration," that is, justification before God is regeneration, just as St. Paul uses the terms discriminately when he states, "He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing in the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). "Likewise the term "vivification," that is, being made alive, has sometimes been used in the same sense. For when the Holy Spirit has brought a person to faith and has justified him, a regeneration has indeed taken place because he has transformed a child of wrath into a child of God and thus has translated him from death into life, as it is written, "When we were dead through our trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ" (Eph. 2:5). "He who through faith is righteous shall live" (Rom. 1:17). The Apology often uses the term in this sense."

We are justified, absolved, solely because of Christ.

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

Thorough Declaration – "When we teach that through the Holy Spirit's work we are reborn and justified, we do not mean that after regeneration no unrighteousness in essence and life adheres to those who have been justified and regenerated, but we hold that Christ with his perfect obedience covers all our sins which throughout this life still inhere in our nature. Nevertheless they are regarded as holy and righteous through faith and for the sake of Christ's obedience, which Christ rendered to his Father from his birth until his ignominious death on the cross for us, even though, on account of their corrupted nature, they are still sinners and remain sinners until they die."

Regeneration and justification do not imply that we have no more sin, but that sin is covered, and that we are accounted pure before God.

7. We believe, teach, and confess that for the preservation of the pure doctrine concerning the righteousness of faith before God it is necessary to urge with special diligence the '*particulae exclusivae*,' that is, the exclusive particles, i.e., the following words of the holy Apostle Paul, by which the merit of Christ is entirely separated from our works, and the honor given to Christ alone, when the holy Apostle Paul writes: "Of grace, without merit, without Law, without works, not of works." All these words together mean as much as that "we are justified and saved alone by faith in Christ." (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 1:17; 3:24; 4:3 ff.; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 11.)

Thorough Declaration – "And to those who by sheer grace, for the sake of the only mediator, Christ, through faith alone, without any work or merit, are justified before God (that is, accepted into grace) there is given the Holy Spirit, who renews and sanctifies them and creates within them love toward God and their fellowman. But because the inchoate renewal remains imperfect in this life and because sin still dwells in the flesh even in the case of the regenerated, the righteousness of faith before God consists solely in the gracious reckoning of Christ's righteousness to us, without the addition of our works, so that our sins are forgiven and covered up and are not reckoned to our account," "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law."

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

Thorough Declaration - "Love is a fruit which certainly and necessarily follows true faith. For if a person does not love, this indicates certainly that he is not justified but is still in death, or that he has again lost the righteousness of faith."

“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. But wilt thou know, O vain man that faith without works is dead? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead” James 2:17, 20, 25).

Negativa

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

Thorough Declaration – “Thus neither the divine nor the human nature of Christ by itself is imputed to us for righteousness, but only the obedience of the person who is at the same time God and man. And faith thus regards the person of Christ as it was made under the Law for us, bore our sins, and in His going to the Father offered to His heavenly Father for us poor sinners His entire, complete obedience, from His holy birth even unto death, and has thereby covered all our disobedience which inheres in our nature, and its thoughts, words, and works, so that it is not imputed to us for condemnation, but is pardoned and forgiven out of pure grace, alone for Christ’s sake.”

3. That in the sayings of the prophets and apostles where the righteousness of faith is spoken of the words ‘justify’ and to be justified’ are not to signify declaring or being declared free from sins, and obtaining the forgiveness of sins, but actually being made righteous before God, because of love infused by the Holy Ghost, virtues, and the works following them.

Here they say that a moral change takes place.

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

We reject that we are justified by inhabitation.

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

A true faith will show itself in the believers life.

6. That not God Himself, but only the gifts of God, dwell in believers.
7. That faith saved on this account, because by faith the renewal, which consists in love to God and one’s neighbor, is begun in us.
8. That faith has the first place in justification, nevertheless also renewal and love belong to our righteousness before God in such a manner that they (renewal and love) are indeed not the chief cause of our righteousness, but that nevertheless our righteousness before God is not entire or perfect without this love and renewal.
9. That believers are justified before God and saved jointly by the imputed righteousness of Christ and by the new obedience begun in them, or in part by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, but in part also by the new obedience begun in them.
10. That the promise of grace is made our own by faith in the heart, and by the confession which is made with the mouth, and by other virtues.
11. That faith does not justify without good works; so that good works are necessarily required for righteousness, are without their presence man cannot be justified.

In these last five statements we have a confusion of justification and sanctification. They believe that works are necessary and man is saved by them. This also leads into the next controversy of Major in

Article IV. Luther writes in his exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians, “We concede indeed that instruction should be given also concerning love and good works, yet in such a way that this be done when and where it is necessary, namely, when otherwise and outside of this matter of justification we have to do with works. But here the chief matter dealt with is the question, not whether we should also do good works and exercise love, but by what means we can be justified before God, and saved. And here we answer thus with St. Paul: that we are justified by faith in Christ alone, and not by the deeds of the Law or by love. Not that we hereby entirely reject works and love, as the adversaries falsely slander and accuse us, but that we do not allow ourselves to be led away, as Satan desires, from the chief matter with which we have to do here to another and foreign affair which does not at all belong to this matter. Therefore, whereas, and as long as we are occupied with this article of justification, we reject and condemn works, since this article is so constituted that it can admit of no disputation or treatment whatever regarding works; therefore in this matter we cut short all Law and works of the Law.”