**Apostles’ Creed, Third Article**

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

**Nicene Creed**

… And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**AC:IV**

**1** Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. **2** People are freely justified for Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. **3** God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight (Romans 3 and 4 [3:21–26; 4:5].

**AC:V**

**1** So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. **2** Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given [John 20:22]. He works faith, when and where it pleases God [John 3:8], in those who hear the good news that God justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake. **3** This happens not through our own merits, but for Christ’s sake.

**AC:XXIV:28**

**28** Scripture teaches that we are justified before God, through faith in Christ, when we believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake.

**AC:XXVIII:52**

**52** It is necessary for the chief article of the Gospel to be preserved, namely that we obtain grace freely by faith in Christ, and not by certain observances or acts of worship devised by people.

**Ap:II:36-37**

**36** Augustine speaks in the same way when he says, “Sin is forgiven in Baptism, not in such a way that it no longer exists, but so that it is not charged.” Here he confesses openly that sin exists. It remains, although it is not counted against us any longer. Augustine’s judgment on this point was so agreeable to those who came after him that it is often quoted in the decrees of Church councils. In *Against Julian*, Augustine says:

The Law, which is in the members, has been overturned by spiritual regeneration and remains in the mortal flesh. It has been overturned because the guilt has been forgiven in the Sacrament, by which believers are born again; but it remains, because it produces desires, against which believers struggle.

**37** Our adversaries know that Luther believes and teaches this, and since they cannot deny this, they instead try to pervert his words in an effort to crush an innocent man.

**Ap:III:52**

**52** The adversaries approve Article III, in which we confess that there are two natures in Christ. The human nature was assumed by the Word into the unity of His person [John 1:14]. Christ suffered and died to reconcile the Father to us and was raised again to reign, to justify, and to sanctify believers according to the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed.

**Ap:IV:1**

**1** In Articles IV, V, VI, and XX, they condemn us for teaching that “people obtain forgiveness of sins not because of their own merits, but freely for Christ’s sake, through faith in Christ.” They condemn us both for denying that people obtain forgiveness of sins because of their own merits and for affirming that—through faith—people obtain forgiveness of sins and are justified through faith in Christ.

**Ap:IV:5-6**

In other words, in the Old Testament, Scripture promises that Christ will come, and it offers, for His sake, the forgiveness of sins, justification, and life eternal. **6** Or in the Gospel, in the New Testament, Christ Himself (since He has appeared) promises the forgiveness of sins, justification, and life eternal.

**Ap:IV:48**

**48** The adversaries imagine that faith is only a knowledge of the history of Christ. Therefore, they teach that it can coexist with mortal sin. They say nothing about faith, by which Paul so frequently says that people are justified. For those who are counted as righteous before God do not live in mortal sin. But the faith that justifies is not merely a knowledge of history. It is to believe in God’s promise. In the promise, for Christ’s sake, forgiveness of sins and justification are freely offered. And so that no one may suppose that this is mere knowledge, we will add further: it is to want and to receive the offered promise of forgiveness of sins and of justification.

**Ap:IV:61-62**

**61** In the first place, lest anyone think that we speak about an idle knowledge of history, we must state how faith is obtained. Afterward, we will show both that faith justifies and how this ought to be understood. We will also explain the objections of the adversaries. **62** Christ, in the last chapter of Luke, commands “that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name” (24:47). The Gospel convicts all people that they are under sin, that they are subject to eternal wrath and death. It offers, for Christ’s sake, forgiveness of sin and justification, which is received through faith. The preaching of repentance (which accuses us) terrifies consciences with true and grave terrors. In these matters, hearts ought to receive consolation again. This happens if they believe Christ’s promise, that for His sake we have forgiveness of sins. This faith, encouraging and consoling in these fears, receives forgiveness of sins, justifies, and gives life. For this consolation is a new ‹birth› and spiritual life.

**Ap:IV:67**

**67** But God cannot be interacted with, God cannot be grasped, except through the Word. So justification happens through the Word, just as Paul says in Romans 1:16, “[The Gospel] is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” Likewise, he says in 10:17, comes from hearing.” Proof can be derived even from this: faith justifies because, if justification happens only through the Word, and the Word is understood only by faith, it follows that faith justifies.

**Ap:IV:69-70**

**69** Now we will show that faith justifies ‹and nothing else›. Here, in the first place, readers must be taught about this point: Just as it is necessary to keep this statement—Christ is Mediator—so is it necessary to defend that faith justifies. For how will Christ be Mediator if we do not use Him as Mediator in justification, if we do not hold that we are counted righteous for His sake? To believe is to trust in Christ’s merits, that for His sake God certainly wishes to be reconciled with us. **70** Here is a similar point: Just as we should defend that the promise of Christ is necessary apart from the Law, so also we should defend that faith justifies. For the Law cannot be performed unless the Holy Spirit is received first. It is, therefore, necessary to defend that the promise of Christ is necessary. But this cannot be received except through faith. Therefore, those who deny that faith justifies teach nothing but the Law, both Christ and the Gospel being set aside.

**Ap:IV:71-72**

We do not believe like this about faith, but we hold—properly and truly—we are for Christ’s sake counted righteous, or are acceptable to God through faith itself. **72** “To be justified” means that just people are made out of unjust people, or born again. It also means that they are pronounced, or counted, as just. For Scripture speaks in both ways. So we wish to show this first: Faith alone makes a just person out of an unjust person; in other words, that person receives forgiveness of sins.

**Ap:IV:73**

**73** The term *alone* [*sola*] offends some people, even though Paul says in Romans 3:28, “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.” He says in Ephesians 2:8–9, “It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” He says in Romans 3:24, “justified by His grace as a gift.” If the exclusive term *alone* displeases, let them remove from Paul also the exclusives *freely, not of works, it is the gift*, and so on. For these also are exclusives. It is, however, the notion of merit that we exclude. We do not exclude the Word or Sacraments, as the adversaries falsely charge against us. We have said earlier that faith is conceived from the Word. We honor the ministry of the Word ‹Preaching Office and Word› in the highest degree.

**Ap:IV:75-78**

**75** We think even the adversaries acknowledge that the forgiveness of sins is necessary first in justification. We are all under sin. Therefore, we reason as follows:

**76** To receive the forgiveness of sins is to be justified, according to Psalm 32:1, “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven.” By faith alone in Christ—not through love, not because of love or works—**77** we receive the forgiveness of sins, although love follows faith. **78** Therefore, by faith alone we are justified. We understand justification as the making of a righteous person out of an unrighteous one, or that a person is regenerated.

**Ap:IV:79-81**

**79** It will become easy to state the minor premise ‹that we receive forgiveness of sin by faith, not by love› if we know how forgiveness of sins happens. With great indifference the adversaries dispute whether forgiveness of sins and infusion of grace are the same change. Being useless men, they did not know how to answer this question. In the forgiveness of sins, the terrors of sin and of eternal death must be overcome in the heart. Paul testifies about this in 1 Corinthians 15:56–57, “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” In other words, sin terrifies consciences. This happens through the Law, which shows God’s wrath against sin. But we gain the victory through Christ. How? Through faith, when we comfort ourselves by confidence in the mercy promised for Christ’s sake. **80** Therefore, we prove the minor premise. God’s wrath cannot be appeased if we set our own works against it. For Christ has been set forth as an Atoning Sacrifice so, that for His sake, the Father may be reconciled to us. But Christ is not received as a Mediator except by faith. Therefore, by faith alone we receive forgiveness of sins when we comfort our hearts with confidence in the mercy promised for Christ’s sake. **81** Likewise, Paul says in Romans 5:2, “Through Him we have also obtained access” and adds, “by faith.” Therefore, we are reconciled to the Father and receive forgiveness of sins when we are comforted with confidence in the mercy promised for Christ’s sake…Paul, on the contrary, teaches that we have access to God (that is, reconciliation) through Christ. To show how this happens, he adds that we have access by faith. By faith, for Christ’s sake, we receive forgiveness of sins.

**Ap:IV:82**

**82** *Second*. It is certain that sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ as our Atoning Sacrifice, “whom God put forward as a propitiation” (Romans 3:25). Furthermore, Paul adds, “by faith.” Therefore, this atonement benefits us in this way: We receive the mercy promised in Him by faith and set it against God’s wrath and judgment. To the same effect, it is written in Hebrews 4:14, 16, “Since then we have a great high priest … let us then with confidence draw near.” The apostle tells us to come to God, not with confidence in our own merits, but with confidence in Christ as the High Priest. The apostle requires faith.

**Ap:IV:83**

**83** *Third*. Peter says in Acts 10:43, “To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.” How could this be said more clearly? Peter says we receive forgiveness of sins through Christ’s name, that is, for His sake. It is not for the sake of our merits, not for the sake of our contrition, attrition, love, worship, or works. He adds: *When we believe in Him*. Peter requires faith. For we cannot receive Christ’s name except by faith.

**Ap:IV:84-85**

**84** *Fourth*. Forgiveness of sins is something promised for Christ’s sake. It cannot be received except through faith alone. For a promise cannot be received except by faith alone. Romans 4:16 says, “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed.” It is as though he says, “If the matter were to depend on our merits, the promise would be uncertain and useless. For we never could determine when we would have enough merit.” Experienced consciences can easily understand this. So Paul says in Galatians 3:22, “But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.” He takes merit away from us because he says that all are guilty and included under sin. Then he adds that the promise (namely, forgiveness of sins and justification) is given, and he shows how the promise can be received—by faith. This reasoning, derived from the nature of a promise, is the chief reasoning in Paul and is often repeated. Nor can anything be devised or imagined by which Paul’s argument can be overthrown. **85** Therefore, let not good minds allow themselves to be forced from the conviction that we receive forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake, through faith alone. In this they have sure and firm consolation against the terrors of sin, against eternal death, and against all the gates of hell.

**Ap:IV:86**

**86** Since we receive forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit through faith alone, faith alone justifies. For those reconciled are counted as righteous and as God’s children. This is not because of their own purity, but through mercy for Christ’s sake, provided only that they receive this mercy through faith. So Scripture testifies that *by faith we are accounted righteous* (Romans 3:26). We will add testimonies that clearly declare that faith is that very righteousness through which we are accounted righteous before God. This is not because faith is a work that is worthy in itself. It is because faith receives the promise by which God has declared that, for Christ’s sake, He wishes to show favor to those believing in Him, or because God knows that Christ Jesus was “made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

**Ap:IV:87**

**87** In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul discusses this topic specifically. He declares that when we believe God (for Christ’s sake) is reconciled to us, we are justified freely through faith. This point, which contains the statement of the entire discussion, Paul sets forth in the third chapter: “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law” (Romans 3:28).

**Ap:IV:87-89**

These matters, having been considered and treated, according to the ability that the Lord has thought worthy to give us, we conclude that a person is not justified by the precepts of a good life, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

**88** Lest we may decide that “faith justifies” came from Paul without consideration, he fortifies and confirms this teaching by a long discussion in Romans 4. Afterward, he repeats it in all his letters. **89** So he says in Romans 4:4–5:

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but trusts Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.

Here he clearly says that faith itself is credited for righteousness. Faith is that thing God declares to be righteousness.

**Ap:IV:90-97**

**90** Afterward, in Romans 4:9, “We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.” **91** Romans 5:1 says, “Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God.” This means we have consciences that are peaceful and joyful before God. **92** Romans 10:10 says, “With the heart one believes and is justified.” Here he declares that faith is the righteousness of the heart.

**93** We also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law. (Galatians 2:16)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8–9)

**94** But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12–13)

**95** And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life. (John 3:14–15)

**96** For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned. (John 3:17–18)

**97** Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by Him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. (Acts 13:38–39)

How could the office of Christ and justification be declared more clearly? Paul says that the Law does not justify. Therefore, Christ was given, that we may believe that for His sake we are justified. He plainly denies justification by the Law. So for Christ’s sake we are accounted righteous when we believe that God, for His sake, has been reconciled to us.

**Ap:IV:98-99**

**98** This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:11–12)

Christ’s name is received only by faith. Therefore, we are saved by confidence in Christ’s name, and not by confidence in our works. For “the name” here means the cause that is mentioned, because of which salvation is gained. **99** To call upon Christ’s name is to trust in His name as the cause, or price, because of which we are saved. Acts 15:9 says, “cleansed their hearts by faith.” Therefore, the faith that the apostles speak about is not useless knowledge, but a reality. It receives the Holy Spirit and justifies us.

**Ap:IV:100-101**

**100** Habakkuk 2:4 says, “The righteous shall live by his faith.” Here he says, first, that people are just by faith. By faith they believe that God is favorable, and he adds that the same faith gives life because this faith produces peace and joy in the heart and eternal life.

**101** Isaiah 53:11 says, “By His knowledge shall the righteous one, My servant, make many to be accounted righteous.” What is Christ’s knowledge unless it means to know Christ’s benefits, the promises He has scattered throughout the world by the Gospel? To know these benefits is properly and truly to believe in Christ, to believe that He will certainly fulfill what God has promised for Christ’s sake.

**Ap:IV:103-104**

But when the Lord Jesus Christ came, He forgave to all people the sin, which no one could avoid. And, by the shedding of His own blood, He blotted out the handwriting that was against us. This is what he says in Romans 5:20, “The law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” Because after the whole world became subject, Christ took away the sin of the whole world, as John testified, saying in John 1:29, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” And for this reason let no one boast about works, because no one is justified by his deeds. But he who is righteous has righteousness given to him because he was justified from the washing of Baptism. Faith, therefore, is that which frees through the blood of Christ, because he is blessed “whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Psalm 32:1).

**104** These are the words of Ambrose, which clearly favor our doctrine. He denies justification to works and teaches that faith sets us free through the blood of Christ.

**Ap:IV:106**

**106** In the same way, Augustine writes many things against the Pelagians. In *On the Spirit and the Letter*, he says:

The righteousness of the Law—that he who has fulfilled the Law shall live in it—is set forth for this reason: when anyone has recognized his weakness he may attain and do the Law and live in it, reconciling the Justifier not by his own strength nor by the letter of the Law itself (which cannot be done), but by faith. In a justified person, there is no right work by which he who does that work may live. But justification is received by faith.

Here Augustine clearly says that the Justifier is reconciled by faith and that justification is received by faith. A little after:

By the Law we fear God; by faith we hope in God. But to those fearing punishment grace is hidden. And the soul laboring under this fear resorts by faith to God’s mercy, in order that He may give what He commands.

Here he teaches that hearts are terrified by the Law, but they receive consolation by faith. He also teaches us to receive mercy by faith, before we try to fulfill the Law.

**Ap:IV:112-114**

**112** Yet, we must not think that by confidence in this love, or because of this love, we receive forgiveness of sins and reconciliation, just as we do not receive forgiveness of sins because of other works that follow. But forgiveness of sins is received by faith alone. Indeed, this is properly called faith because the promise cannot be received except by faith. **113** Faith, properly called, is what believes this promise. **114** Scripture speaks of this faith. Because faith receives forgiveness of sins and reconciles us to God, we are ‹like Abraham› counted as righteous for Christ’s sake before we love and before we do the works of the Law, although love necessarily follows.

**Ap:IV:115-116**

**115** Nor, indeed, is this faith an idle knowledge, neither can it coexist with mortal sin. It is a work of the Holy Spirit, by which we are freed from death and terrified minds are encouraged and brought to life. **116** Because this faith alone receives forgiveness of sins, makes us acceptable to God, and brings the Holy Spirit, it could be more correctly called “grace making one pleasing to God” (*gratia gratum faciens*). It could not be called an effect following faith (i.e., love).

**Ap:IV:117-118**

**117** In order that the subject might be made quite clear, we have shown well enough so far, both from testimonies of Scripture and arguments derived from Scripture, that we receive forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake through faith alone. We have shown that through faith alone we are justified, that is, unrighteous people are made righteous, or regenerated. **118** How necessary the knowledge of this faith is can be easily judged. Because Christ’s office is recognized in this alone, we receive Christ’s benefits by this alone. Only this teaching brings sure and firm consolation to pious minds.

**Ap:IV:119-121**

**119** In the Church there must be the teaching by which the pious may receive the sure hope of salvation. For the adversaries give people bad advice when they tell them to doubt whether they receive forgiveness of sins. **120** How will such persons sustain themselves in death who have heard nothing of this faith and think that they ought to doubt whether they receive forgiveness of sins? Besides, it is necessary that the Gospel be kept in Christ’s Church, namely, the promise that sins are freely forgiven for Christ’s sake. Those who teach nothing of this faith we speak about, completely abolish the Gospel. **121** But the Scholastics mention not even a word about this faith. Our adversaries follow them and reject this faith. Nor do they see that by rejecting this faith they abolish the entire promise about the free forgiveness of sins and the righteousness of Christ.

**Ap:V:5**

Therefore, when we have been justified by faith and regenerated, we begin to fear and love God, to pray to Him, to expect aid from Him, to give thanks and praise Him, and to obey Him in times of suffering. We also begin to love our neighbors, because our hearts have spiritual and holy movements.

**5 [126]** These things cannot happen until we have been justified through faith and regenerated (we receive the Holy Spirit).

**Ap:V:38**

Since we are not justified by the Law, we receive forgiveness of sins and reconciliation through faith for Christ’s sake. This is not because of love or the fulfilling of the Law; it follows necessarily that we are justified through faith in Christ.

**Ap:V:59-60**

**59 [180]** The promise should always be in sight. Because of His promise, God wishes to be gracious and to justify for Christ’s sake, not because of the Law or our works. In this promise timid consciences should seek reconciliation and justification. By this promise they should sustain themselves and be confident that they have a gracious God for Christ’s sake, because of His promise. So works can never make a conscience peaceful. **60 [181]** Only the promise can.

**Ap:V:61**

**61 [182]** From this it is clear that we are justified before God through faith alone. Through faith alone we receive forgiveness of sins and reconciliation, because reconciliation or justification is a matter promised for Christ’s sake, not for the Law’s sake. Therefore, it is received through faith alone, although, when the Holy Spirit is given, the fulfilling of the Law follows.

**Ap:V:80-81**

Paul also teaches this about works when he says in Romans 4:9–25 that Abraham received circumcision. He did not seek to be justified by this work, for he had already attained justification through faith. He was counted righteous. But circumcision was added so that (a) Abraham might have a written sign in his body, (b) admonished by this, he might exercise faith, and (c) by this work he might also confess his faith before others and, by his testimony, invite others to believe. **81 [202]** “By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice” (Hebrews 11:4). Because he was just by faith, the sacrifice that he made was pleasing to God. It is not that he merited forgiveness of sins and grace by this work, but he exercised his faith and showed it to others, in order to invite them to believe.

**Ap:V:171-172**

**171 [292]** Paul also says that righteousness is not of the Law, but of the promise. The Father has promised that He wants to forgive, that for Christ’s sake He wants to be reconciled. This promise, however, is received through faith alone, as Paul testifies in Romans 4:13. This faith alone receives the forgiveness of sins, justifies, and regenerates. Then love and other good fruit follow. Therefore, we teach that a person is justified (as we have said above) when conscience, terrified by the preaching of repentance, is cheered and believes that for Christ’s sake it has a reconciled God. “Faith is counted as righteousness [before God]” (Romans 4:3, 5). **172 [293]** When the heart is cheered and quickened through faith in this way, it receives the Holy Spirit. He renews us, so that we are able to keep the Law, to love God and God’s Word, to be submissive to God in afflictions, to be chaste, to love our neighbor, and so on. Even though these works are far from the perfection of the Law, on account of faith they please God. Through faith we are accounted righteous, because we believe that for Christ’s sake we have a reconciled God. These things are plain and in harmony with the Gospel and can be understood by persons of sound mind.

**Ap:V:183-191**

**183 [304]** Furthermore, if any learned person objects that righteousness is in the will and, therefore, it cannot be attributed to faith, which is in the intellect, the reply is easy. In the schools even such persons acknowledge that the will commands the intellect to agree with God’s Word. We say also quite clearly, “Just as the terrors of sin and death are not only thoughts of the intellect, but also horrible movements of the will fleeing God’s judgment, so faith is not only knowledge in the intellect, but also confidence in the will. In other words, it is to want and to receive that which is offered in the promise, namely, reconciliation and the forgiveness of sins.” **184 [305]** Scripture uses the term *faith* this way, as the following sentence of Paul testifies in Romans 5:1, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Furthermore, in this passage, to justify means (according to court language) to acquit a guilty person and declare him righteous. But this happens because of the righteousness of another, namely, of Christ. This righteousness is communicated to us through faith. **185 [306]** Therefore, since our righteousness in this passage is the credit of the righteousness of another, we must here speak about righteousness in a way different than in philosophy or in a civil court. **186 [307]** (There we seek after the righteousness of one’s own work, which certainly is in the will.) So Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:30, “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” And in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” But because Christ’s righteousness is given to us through faith, faith is righteousness credited to us. In other words, it is that by which we are made acceptable to God on account of the credit and ordinance of God, as Paul says, “Faith is counted as righteousness” (Romans 4:3, 5). **187 [308]** Although, because of certain hard-to-please people, we must say technically: Faith is truly righteousness, because it is obedience to the Gospel. For it is clear that obedience to the command of a superior is truly a kind of distributive justice. This obedience to the Gospel is credited for righteousness. So, only because of this—because we grasp Christ as the Atoning Sacrifice—are good works, or obedience to the Law, pleasing. We do not satisfy the Law, but for Christ’s sake this is forgiven us, as Paul says, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). **188 [309]** This faith gives God the honor, gives God that which is His own. By receiving the promises, it obeys Him. Just as Paul also says, “No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God” (Romans 4:20). **189 [310]** So the worship and divine service of the Gospel is to receive gifts from God. On the contrary, the worship of the Law is to offer and present our gifts to God. However, we can offer nothing to God unless we have first been reconciled and born again. This passage, too, brings the greatest comfort, as the chief worship of the Gospel is to desire to receive the forgiveness of sins, grace, and righteousness. Christ says of this worship, “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:40). And the Father says, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him” (Matthew 17:5). **190 [311]** The adversaries speak of obedience to the Law, but they do not speak of obedience to the Gospel. We cannot obey the Law, unless we have been born again through the Gospel. We cannot love God, unless we have received the forgiveness of sins. **191 [312]** For as long as we feel that He is angry with us, our human nature runs away from His anger and judgment. If anyone should object that this view of faith (which desires those things offered by the promise) becomes confused with hope, we answer as follows. Hope expects promised things, and hope and faith cannot be separated in reality. Such needless debate takes place in the schools. The Epistle to the Hebrews defines faith as “the assurance (*exspectatio*) of things hoped for” (Hebrews 11:1). Yet if anyone wants a distinction between faith and hope, we say that the object of hope is properly a future event, but that faith is concerned with future and present things. Faith receives the forgiveness of sins offered in the promise in the present.

**Ap:V:199**

**199 [320]** Against these doubts Paul says, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God” (Romans 5:1). We should be firmly convinced that we are granted righteousness and eternal life for Christ’s sake. He says about Abraham, “In hope he believed against hope” (Romans 4:18).

**Ap:V:224-226**

**224 [345]** Thinking about such a thing can greatly exercise the human mind. We will, therefore, reply briefly. It is essential to believe that we are saved by mercy so that hope may be sure, so that there may be a resulting distinction between those who obtain salvation and those who do not. When this is expressed in this way without explanation, it seems foolish. For in civil courts and in human judgment, issues about rights or debts are certain, and mercy is uncertain. But the matter is different in God’s judgment. Here mercy has a clear and certain promise and command from God. The Gospel is properly the command that directs us to believe that God is reconciled to us for Christ’s sake. “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him” (John 3:17). **225 [346]** Whenever mercy is spoken of, faith in the promise must be added. This faith produces sure hope, because it relies upon God’s Word and command. If hope would rely upon works, then it would be uncertain, because works cannot quiet the conscience, as has been said before. **226 [347]** Faith makes a distinction between those who obtain salvation and those who do not obtain it. Faith makes the distinction between the worthy and the unworthy, because eternal life has been promised to the justified. Faith justifies.

**Ap:V:263-266**

**263 [384]** When Paul says, “With the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” (Romans 10:10), we think that the adversaries admit that confession justifies or saves, not by the outward act, but only because of the faith of the heart. Paul says that confession saves in order to show what sort of faith receives eternal life, namely, that which is firm and active. **264 [385]** That faith, however, that does not present itself in confession is not firm. So other good works please because of faith, just as the prayers of the Church ask that all things may be accepted for Christ’s sake [John 14:13–14]. They likewise ask all things for Christ’s sake. For it is clear that this clause is always added at the close of prayers: “Through Christ, our Lord.” **265 [386]** So we conclude that we are justified before God, are reconciled to God and reborn through faith. In repentance this faith lays hold of the promise of grace and truly enlivens the terrified mind. It is convinced that for Christ’s sake God is reconciled and favorable toward us. “Through” this faith, 1 Peter 1:5 says, “[We] are being guarded … for a salvation ready to be revealed.” **266 [387]** The knowledge of this faith is necessary to Christians, brings the most abundant comfort in all troubles, and shows us Christ’s office. Those who deny that people are justified through faith and that Christ is Mediator and the Atoning Sacrifice, deny the promise of grace and the Gospel. When it comes to justification, they teach only the doctrine either of reason or of the Law.

**Ap:VIII:21-22**

Our adversaries defend these errors. Among them is their condemnation of the article about the forgiveness of sins, in which we say that the forgiveness of sins is received through faith. Likewise, it is a clear and deadly error when the adversaries teach that people merit the forgiveness of sins by loving God, before grace. This is an example of removing “the foundation,” Christ. Likewise, why do we need faith if the Sacraments justify by the outward act, without a good motive on the part of the one using them? **22** Just as the Church has the promise that it will always have the Holy Spirit, so it also has warnings that there will be wicked teachers and wolves [Acts 20:29]. Yet, the Church in the proper sense has the Holy Spirit. Although wolves and wicked teachers run rampant in the Church, they are not properly Christ’s kingdom.

**Ap:XII:4-6**

**4** Before we defend our position, we must first say this: All good people of all situations, even the theological profession, undoubtedly confess that the teaching of repentance was very much confused before Luther’s writings appeared. **5** Theologians were never able to explain satisfactorily the numberless questions found in the books of the commentaries on the *Sentences*. The people could not grasp the big picture, nor could they see what things were necessary for repentance, in which peace of conscience could be found. **6** Let any one of the adversaries come forth and tell us when the forgiveness of sins takes place. O good God, there is such darkness! The adversaries do not know whether the forgiveness of sins happens in attrition or contrition. If forgiveness happens because of contrition, why do we need Absolution? What does the Power of the Keys bring about, if sins have been forgiven already?

**Ap:XII:35-37**

**35** As the second part of repentance we add faith in Christ. The Gospel, in which the forgiveness of sins is freely promised concerning Christ, should be presented to consciences in these terrors. They should believe that, for Christ’s sake, their sins are freely forgiven. **36** This faith cheers, sustains, and enlivens the contrite, according to Romans 5:1, “Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God.” This faith obtains the forgiveness of sins. It justifies before God, as the same passage testifies, “since we have been justified by faith.” This faith shows the distinction between the contrition of Judas and Peter, of Saul and David. The contrition of Judas or Saul [Matthew 27:3–5; 1 Samuel 31:4–6] is useless because faith is not added. Faith grasps the forgiveness of sins, given as a gift for Christ’s sake. So the contrition of David or Peter [2 Samuel 12:13; Matthew 26:75] helps because faith, which takes hold of the forgiveness of sins granted for Christ’s sake, is added to it. **37** Love is not present before reconciliation has been made through faith.

**Ap:XII:39-43**

**39** Furthermore, the Power of the Keys administers and presents the Gospel through Absolution, which is the true voice of the Gospel. We also include Absolution when we speak of faith, because “faith comes from hearing,” as Paul says in Romans 10:17. When the Gospel is heard and the Absolution is heard, the conscience is encouraged and receives comfort. **40** Because God truly brings a person to life through the Word, the Keys truly forgive sins before God. According to Luke 10:16, “The one who hears you hears Me.” Therefore, the voice of the one absolving must be believed no differently than we would believe a voice from heaven. **41** Absolution can properly be called a Sacrament of repentance, as even the more learned scholastic theologians say. **42** Meanwhile, in temptations this faith is nourished in a variety of ways: through the declarations of the Gospel and the use of the Sacraments. For these are signs of the New Testament, that is, signs of the forgiveness of sins. They offer the forgiveness of sins as the words of the Lord’s Supper clearly testify, “This is My body, which is given for you. This is the cup of the New Testament,” and so on. (See Matthew 26:26, 28.) So faith is conceived and strengthened through Absolution, through the hearing of the Gospel, through the use of the Sacraments, so that it may not give in to the terrors of sin and death while it struggles. **43** This method of repentance is plain and clear. It increases the worth of the Power of the Keys and of the Sacraments. It illumines Christ’s benefit and teaches us to make use of Christ as Mediator and the Atoning Sacrifice.

**Ap:XII:44-45**

**44** Because the Confutation condemns us for having assigned these two parts to repentance, we must show that Scripture expresses these as the chief parts in repentance or conversion. Christ says, “Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Here there are two parts. The “labor” and the burden signify the contrition, anxiety, and terrors of sin and death. To “come to” Christ is to believe that sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake. When we believe, our hearts are brought to life by the Holy Spirit through Christ’s Word. **45** Here, therefore, are these two chief parts: contrition and faith. In Mark 1:15, Christ says, “Repent and believe in the gospel.” In the first clause He convicts of sins, and in the second He comforts us and shows the forgiveness of sins. Believing the Gospel is not the general faith that devils also have, but in the proper sense it is believing that the forgiveness of sins has been granted for Christ’s sake. This is revealed in the Gospel. You see also here that the two parts are joined: contrition when sins are rebuked; and faith when it is said, “Believe in the gospel.” If anyone should say here that Christ also includes the fruit of repentance or the entire new life, we shall not disagree. For this satisfies us, that contrition and faith are named as the chief parts.

**Ap:XII:48**

**48** Colossians 2:14 says, “[Christ canceled] the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.” Here also there are two parts, the handwriting and the blotting out of the handwriting. The handwriting, however, is conscience, convicting and condemning us. The Law, furthermore, is the Word that rebukes and condemns sins. Therefore, this voice that says, “I have sinned against the Lord,” as David says (2 Samuel 12:13), is the handwriting. Wicked and secure people do not seriously give forth this voice, for they do not see. They do not read the sentence of the Law written in the heart. This sentence is perceived in true griefs and terrors. Therefore, the handwriting that condemns us is contrition itself. To blot out the handwriting is to chisel away the sentence by which we declare that we shall be condemned and to engrave the sentence by which we know that we have been freed from this condemnation. Faith is the new sentence. It reverses the former sentence and gives peace and life to the heart.

**Ap:XII:52-55**

**52** In this manner Scripture is accustomed to join these two, the terrors and the consolation. It does this to teach that there are these chief parts in repentance: contrition and faith that comforts and justifies. Neither do we see how the nature of repentance can be presented more clearly and simply.

**53** God’s two chief works among people are these: to terrify; to justify and make alive those who have been terrified. Into these two works all Scripture has been distributed. The one part is the *Law*, which shows, reproves, and condemns sins. The other part is the *Gospel*, that is, the promise of grace bestowed in Christ. This promise is constantly repeated in the whole of Scripture, first having been delivered to Adam ‹“I will put enmity” in Genesis 3:15›, afterward, to the patriarchs. Then, it was still more clearly proclaimed by the prophets. Lastly, it was preached and set forth among the Jewish people by Christ and then spread out over the entire world by the apostles. **54** All the saints were justified through faith in this promise, and not by their own attrition or contrition.

**55** The examples also show these two parts. After his sin, Adam is rebuked and becomes terrified; this was contrition. Then, God promises grace and speaks of a future seed (the blessed seed, that is, Christ) by which the devil’s kingdom, death, and sin will be destroyed [Genesis 3:15]. There He offers the forgiveness of sins.

**Ap:XII:56-57**

**56** David is rebuked by Nathan in this way. Terrified, he says, “I have sinned against the Lord” (2 Samuel 12:13). This is contrition. Afterward, he hears the Absolution, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.” This voice encourages David, and through faith it sustains, justifies, and enlivens him. A punishment is also added, but this punishment does not merit the forgiveness of sins. **57** Nor are special punishments always added. In repentance these two things ought always to exist, namely, contrition and faith, as in Luke 7. The woman, who was a sinner, came to Christ weeping. By these tears the contrition is recognized. Afterward, she hears the Absolution, “Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace” (vv. 48, 50). This is the second part of repentance, namely, faith that encourages and comforts her.

**Ap:XII:58**

**58** From all these it is clear to godly readers that we assign to repentance those parts that properly belong to it in conversion, or the new birth, and the forgiveness of sin. Worthy fruit and punishments follow rebirth and the forgiveness of sin. For this reason we have mentioned these two parts so that the faith required in repentance might be seen better, and so that faith, which the Gospel proclaims, can be better understood when it is contrasted with contrition and making dead.

**Ap:XII:59**

**59** Since the adversaries clearly condemn our statement that people obtain the forgiveness of sins by faith, we shall add a few proofs. From these it will be understood that the forgiveness of sins is received not by the outward deed (*ex opere operato*) because of contrition, but by that special faith by which an individual believes that sins are pardoned for him. For this is the chief article that we are debating with our adversaries and the knowledge we regard is necessary to all Christians. However, we have said enough already about the same subject and will be brief. For the doctrine of repentance and justification are very closely related.

**Ap:XII:60**

**60** When the adversaries speak of faith, saying that it comes before repentance, they understand faith this way: not that faith justifies, but that, in a general way, it believes that God exists, that punishments have been threatened to the wicked, and so on. In addition to this faith, we require that each one believe that his sins are pardoned. We are arguing about this specific faith, and we contrast it to the opinion that asks us to trust not in Christ’s promise, but in the outward act (*opus operatum*) of contrition, confession, satisfactions, and so on. This faith follows terrors in such a way as to overcome them and make the conscience peaceful. We attribute justification and regeneration to this faith, since it frees from terrors and produces not only peace and joy, but also a new life in the heart. ‹With God’s help,› we shall defend ‹to eternity and against all the gates of hell› that this faith is truly necessary for the forgiveness of sins, and so place it among the parts of repentance. Nor does Christ’s Church believe otherwise, although our adversaries contradict us.

**Ap:XII:61-62**

**61** Furthermore, we ask the adversaries whether or not Absolution is a part of repentance. If they separate it from Confession (they are clever in making the distinction), we do not see what benefit Confession has without Absolution. If, however, they do not separate Absolution from Confession, it is necessary for them to hold that faith is a part of repentance, because Absolution is not received except through faith. However, that Absolution is received only through faith is proven from Paul, who teaches that the promise cannot be received *except by faith* (Romans 4:16). Absolution is the promise of the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, it necessarily requires faith. **62** Neither do we see how the person who does not yield to Absolution may be said to receive Absolution. What else is the refusal to yield to Absolution but charging God with falsehood? If the heart doubts, it regards those things that God promises as uncertain and of no account. So, it is written, “Whoever does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning His Son” (1 John 5:10).

**Ap:XII:63-64**

**63** Second, we think that the adversaries recognize that the forgiveness of sins is either a part of repentance or its end (the *terminus ad quem*). Therefore, whatever receives the forgiveness of sins is correctly added to the parts of repentance. However, it is very certain that even though all the gates of hell contradict us, the forgiveness of sins cannot be received except by faith alone. This faith believes that sins are pardoned for Christ’s sake, according to Romans 3:25, “whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith.” Likewise, “Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace” (Romans 5:2). **64** For a terrified conscience cannot set our works or our love against God’s wrath. It is eventually quieted when it takes hold of Christ as Mediator and believes the promises given for His sake. For those who imagine that hearts become quieted without faith in Christ do not understand what the forgiveness of sins is or how it came to us.

**Ap:XII:65**

**65** So 1 Peter 2:6 cites from Isaiah 49:23 and 28:16, “Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame.” It is necessary, therefore, that hypocrites be puzzled. They are confident that they receive the forgiveness of sins because of their own works, and not because of Christ. Peter also says, “To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins” (Acts 10:43). What he says, through His name, could not be expressed more clearly. He adds, “everyone who believes in Him.” So we receive the forgiveness of sins only through Christ’s name, that is, for Christ’s sake, and not for the sake of any merits and works of our own. This happens when we believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake.

**Ap:XII:66-67**

**66** Our adversaries cry out that they are the Church, that they are following the general agreement of the Church. But Peter also cites here in our issue the consensus of the Church, “To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins” (Acts 10:43). The general agreement of the prophets is certainly to be judged as the general agreement of the Church universal. **67** We admit neither to the pope nor to the Church the power to make decrees against this general agreement of the prophets. But the bull of Leo openly condemns this article, “Repentance,” and the adversaries condemn it in the Confutation. It is clear what sort of a Church we must judge these men to be. By their decrees they not only condemn the doctrine that we obtain the forgiveness of sins through faith (not on account of our works, but because of Christ), but they also give the command to abolish it by force and the sword and by every kind of cruelty to put to death good people who believe this way.

**Ap:XII:72-74**

**72** Therefore, let godly consciences know that God’s command is this: They are to believe that they are freely forgiven for Christ’s sake, and not for the sake of our works. Let them sustain themselves against despair and against the terrors of sin and of death by this command of God. **73** Let them know that this belief has existed among saints from the beginning of the world. For Peter clearly cites the general agreement of the Prophets, and the writings of the apostles confirm that they believe the same thing. Nor are testimonies of the Fathers lacking. For Bernard says the same thing in words that are in no way hidden:

It is necessary first of all to believe that you cannot have forgiveness of sins except by the indulgence of God, but add yet that you believe also this, namely, that through Him sins are forgiven to you. This is the testimony that the Holy Spirit asserts in your heart, saying: “Your sins are forgiven you.” For so the apostle concludes that a person is justified freely through faith.

**74** These words of Bernard shed a wonderful light upon our cause, because he not only requires that we believe in a general way that sins are pardoned through mercy, but he also asks us to add special faith, by which we believe that our sins are forgiven. He teaches how we can be sure about the forgiveness of sins, namely, when our hearts are encouraged through faith and become peaceful through the Holy Spirit. What more do the adversaries require? Do they still dare deny that we receive the forgiveness of sins through faith or that faith is a part of repentance?

**Ap:XII:76**

**76** We, on the other hand, call consciences away from the Law to the Gospel, and from confidence in their own works to confidence in the promise and Christ. We do so because the Gospel presents Christ to us and freely promises the forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake. In this promise it asks us to trust, namely, that we are reconciled to the Father for Christ’s sake, not for the sake of our own contrition or love. For there is no other Mediator or Atoning Sacrifice than Christ. Neither can we do the works of the Law unless we have first been reconciled through Christ. If we would do anything, we must believe that for Christ’s sake, as Mediator and Atoning Sacrifice, we receive the forgiveness of sins, and not for the sake of these works.

**Ap:XII:77**

**77** Yes, it is a disgrace to Christ and a repeal of the Gospel to believe that we receive the forgiveness of sins because of the Law, or any way other than through faith in Christ. We discussed this before in the article on justification. There we declared why we confess that people are justified through faith, not through love.

**Ap:XII:79-82**

**79** For these reasons Paul argues that we are not justified by the Law. He contrasts the Law to the promise of the forgiveness of sins, which we freely receive and which is granted for Christ’s sake. Paul calls us away from the Law to this promise. Upon this he asks us to look. The promise certainly will be void if we are justified by the Law before we are justified through the promise, or if we receive the forgiveness of sins because of our own righteousness. **80** Clearly the promise was given to us and Christ was offered to us because we cannot do the works of the Law. Therefore, it is necessary that we are reconciled by the promise before we do the works of the Law. The promise, however, is received only through faith. It is necessary for contrite persons to take hold of the promise of the forgiveness of sins granted for Christ’s sake through faith and to be confident that they have a reconciled Father freely for Christ’s sake. **81** This is Paul’s meaning when he says, “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed” (Romans 4:16). And, “The Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (Galatians 3:22). This means that all are under sin, neither can they be freed except by grasping the promise of the forgiveness of sins through faith. **82** Therefore, we must accept the forgiveness of sins through faith before we do the works of the Law. Although, as has been said before, love follows faith because the reborn person receives the Holy Spirit and so begins to do the works of the Law.

**Ap:XII:84**

**84** Neither is there any doubt that we are defending Paul’s meaning. He teaches that through faith we receive the forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake, and that through faith we should set Christ as Mediator against God’s wrath, and not our works. Nor should godly minds be disturbed when the adversaries find fault with Paul’s judgments. Nothing is said so simply that it cannot be distorted by objecting. We know that we have mentioned Paul’s true and genuine meaning. We know that our belief brings sure comfort to godly consciences, without which no one can stand in God’s judgment.

**Ap:XII:85-87**

This doctrine is not of the Gospel, but of the Law. It wrongly teaches that a person is justified by the Law before he has been reconciled through Christ to God. Christ says, “Apart from Me you can do nothing”; likewise, “I am the vine; you are the branches” (John 15:5). **86** But the adversaries wrongly teach that we are branches not of Christ, but of Moses. For they want to be justified by the Law and to offer their love and works to God before they are reconciled to God through Christ, before they are branches of Christ. On the other hand, Paul argues that the Law cannot be obeyed without Christ. We must receive the promise first so that through faith we may be reconciled to God on account of Christ. Then we can do the works of the Law. Those who truly feel and have experienced sin and anguish of conscience must cling to the promise of grace. **87** We think that these things are clear enough to godly consciences. In this way they will understand why we have declared before that people are justified through faith, not through love. We must set against God’s anger not our love or works (or trust in our love or works), but Christ as Mediator. We must grasp the promise of the forgiveness of sins before we do the works of the Law.

**Ap:XII:88-89**

Chrysostom asks about repentance, “Where are we made sure that our sins are forgiven?” The adversaries also, in their *Sentences*, ask about the same subject. This cannot be explained; consciences cannot be made at peace unless they know it is God’s command and the very Gospel that they should be firmly confident that sins are forgiven freely for Christ’s sake, and that they should not doubt this. If anyone doubts, he charges the divine promise with falsehood, as 1 John 5:10 says. We teach that the Gospel requires this certainty of faith. The adversaries leave consciences uncertain and wavering. **89** Consciences, however, do nothing by faith when they constantly doubt whether they have forgiveness. In this doubt how can they call upon God? How can they be confident that they are heard? So the entire life would be without God and without the true worship of God. This is what Paul says, “Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). Because they are constantly occupied with this doubt, they never experience what faith is. So finally they rush at last into despair. Such is the doctrine of the adversaries, the doctrine of the Law, the setting aside of the Gospel, the doctrine of despair.

**Ap:XII:92-93**

**92** Therefore, in order that the doctrine of faith might be clearer, we have named it among the parts of repentance. For experience shows that those passages are dangerous that require contrition or good works, and make no mention of justifying faith. **93** Caution can justly be desired in those who have collected these centos of the *Sentences* and decrees. Since the Fathers speak in some places about one part of repentance, and in other places about another part, it would have been good to select and combine their judgments not only about one part but about both, that is, about contrition and faith.

**Ap:XII:94-97**

**94** Tertullian speaks very well about faith, discussing the oath in the prophet Ezekiel, “As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (33:11). As God swears that He does not want the death of a sinner, He shows that faith is required, in order that we may believe the one swearing and be firmly confident that He forgives us. In our estimation, the authority of the divine promises should be great by itself. But this promise has also been confirmed by an oath. Therefore, if anyone is not confident that he is forgiven, he denies that God has sworn what is true. A more horrible blasphemy cannot be imagined. For Tertullian says this:

He invites by reward to salvation, even swearing. Saying, “I live,” He desires that He be believed. Oh, blessed we, for whose sake God swears! Oh, most miserable if we believe not the Lord even when He swears!

**95** Here we must know that this faith should be confident that God freely forgives us for Christ’s sake, for the sake of His own promise, not for the sake of our works, contrition, confession, or satisfactions. For if faith relies upon these works, it immediately becomes uncertain, because the terrified conscience sees that these works are unworthy. **96** So Ambrose speaks well about repentance:

Therefore, it is proper for us to believe both that we are to repent, and that we are to be pardoned, but in such a way as to expect pardon from faith, which obtains pardon as from a handwriting.

Again,

It is faith that covers our sins.

**97** Therefore, there are sentences written by the Fathers not only about contrition and works, but also about faith. But the adversaries, since they understand neither the nature of repentance nor the language of the Fathers, select passages about a part of repentance, namely, about works. They overlook the declarations made elsewhere about faith, since they do not understand them.

**Ap:XIIb:2-8**

**2 [99]** We also keep Confession, especially because of the Absolution. Absolution is God’s Word which, by divine authority, the Power of the Keys pronounces upon individuals. **3 [100]** Therefore, it would be wicked to remove private Absolution from the Church. **4 [101]** If anyone despises private Absolution, he does not understand what the forgiveness of sins or the Power of the Keys is. **5 [102]** Regarding the complete listing of offenses in Confession, we have said above that we hold that it is not necessary by divine right. **6 [103]** Some object to this, saying that a judge should investigate a case before he rules on it, which has nothing to do with this subject. The ministry of Absolution is favor or grace; it is not a legal process or law. **7 [104]** Ministers in the Church have the command to forgive sin. They do not have the command to investigate secret sins. **8 [105]** Indeed, they absolve us from those sins that we do not remember. For that reason Absolution, which is the voice of the Gospel forgiving sins and comforting consciences, does not require judicial examination.

**Ap:XIIb:10-11**

**10 [107]** Let us skip such matters as these. Confession is mentioned at different times in the Psalms. “ ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin” (32:5). Such confession of sin, which is made to God, is contrition itself. When confession is made to God, it must be made with the heart, not only with the voice, like actors on the stage. Confession is contrition in which, feeling God’s anger, we confess that God is justly angry and that He cannot be reconciled by our works. Yet, we seek for mercy because of God’s promise. **11 [108]** Such is the following confession, “Against You, You only, have I sinned … so that You may be justified in Your words and blameless in Your judgment” (Psalm 51:4). This means, “I confess that I am a sinner and have merited eternal wrath. Nor can I set my righteousnesses, my merits, against Your wrath. So I declare that You are just when You condemn and punish us. I declare that You are clear when hypocrites judge You to be unjust in punishing them or in condemning the well-deserving. Yes, our merits cannot satisfy Your judgment. But we will be justified in this way, namely, if You justify us, if through Your mercy You count us righteous.”

**Ap:XIIb:19**

The teaching about faith must be kept, that we receive the forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake through faith, not for the sake of our works that precede or follow.

**Ap:XIIb:41**

Christ speaks of the forgiveness of sins when He says, “Whatever you loose …” (Matthew 18:18). He means sin being forgiven, eternal death taken away, and eternal life bestowed. “Whatever you bind” does not speak of requiring punishments, but of retaining the sins of those who are not converted.

**Ap:XIIb:49-50**

Eternal death is not atoned for by this payment of works because it is idle and does not taste of death in the present life. Something else must be set up against death when it tests us. For just as God’s anger is overcome through faith in Christ, so death is overcome through faith in Christ. Just as Paul says, “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57). He does not say, “Who gives us the victory if we set up our satisfactions against death.” **50 [147]** The adversaries foster needless debates about the pardon of guilt. They do not see how, in the pardon of guilt, the heart is freed through faith in Christ from God’s anger and eternal death. Christ’s death is a satisfaction for eternal death.

**Ap:XIII:23**

On the contrary, Augustine says the faith that uses the Sacrament, and not the Sacrament, justifies. And the declaration of Paul is well-known, “With the heart one believes and is justified” (Romans 10:10).

**Ap:XV:6-9**

**6** We have already discussed at length that people are justified through faith when they believe that they have a reconciled God, not because of our works, but freely, for Christ’s sake. It is certain that this is the doctrine of the Gospel because Paul clearly teaches, “By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works” (Ephesians 2:8–9). **7** Now these men say that people merit the forgiveness of sins by these human celebrations. What else is this than to appoint another justifier, a mediator other than Christ? **8** Paul says to the Galatians, “You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law” (5:4). This means, if you hold that by obeying the Law you merit righteousness before God, Christ will benefit you nothing. Why do they need Christ who hold that they are righteous by their obeying the Law? **9** God has presented Christ with the promise that, because of this Mediator, and not because of our righteousness, He wishes to be gracious to us.

**Ap:XV:18**

**18** Why do we need words on a subject so clear? If the adversaries defend these human services as meriting justification, grace, and the forgiveness of sins, they simply set up the kingdom of Antichrist. The kingdom of Antichrist is a new service of God, devised by human authority rejecting Christ [2 Thessalonians 2:3–4], just as the kingdom of Muhammad has services and works through which it wishes to be justified before God. It does not hold that people are freely justified before God through faith, for Christ’s sake. So the papacy will also be a part of the kingdom of Antichrist if it defends human services as justifying in this way. For honor is taken away from Christ when they teach that we are not justified freely through faith, for Christ’s sake, but by such services.

**Ap:XXIV:12**

It is impossible to receive the forgiveness of our sins because of our own work by the outward act. The terrors of sin and death must be overcome through faith when we comfort our hearts with the knowledge of Christ and believe that for His sake we are forgiven and that His merits and righteousness are granted to us, “since we have been justified by faith, we have peace” (Romans 5:1). These things are so sure and so firm that they can stand against all the gates of hell [Matthew 16:18].

**Ap:XXIV:53-55**

The Levitical sacrifices for sins did not merit the forgiveness of sins before God. They were only an image of Christ’s sacrifice, which was to be the one atoning sacrifice, as we said before. **54** To a great extent the Epistle speaks about how the ancient priesthood and the ancient sacrifices were set up not to merit the forgiveness of sins before God or reconciliation, but only to illustrate the future sacrifice of Christ alone. **55** In the Old Testament, saints had to be justified by faith, which receives the promise of the forgiveness of sins granted for Christ’s sake, just as saints are also justified in the New Testament. From the beginning of the world all saints had to believe that Christ would be the promised offering and satisfaction for sins, as Isaiah 53:10 teaches, “when His soul makes an offering for sin.”

**Ap:XXIV:58-60**

**58** If anyone argues that in the New Testament a priest is needed to make offering for sins, this can only be said about Christ. The entire Epistle to the Hebrews confirms this explanation. In addition to Christ’s death, if we were to look for any other satisfaction that applies to the sins of others and so to reconcile God, this would be nothing more than to make other mediators in addition to Christ. **59** The priesthood of the New Testament is the Spirit’s ministry, as Paul teaches (2 Corinthians 3:6). So it has only Christ’s one sacrifice, which is enough and applies to the sins of others. Besides, this priesthood has no sacrifices like the Levitical order, which could be applied by the outward act (*ex opere operato*) to others. Rather, it offers the Gospel and the Sacraments to others, so that they may conceive faith and the Holy Spirit through them and be brought from death to life. So the Spirit’s ministry conflicts with the application of an outward act (*opus operatum*). The Spirit’s ministry is that through which the Holy Spirit is powerful in hearts. Therefore, this ministry is beneficial to others when it is powerful in them and regenerates and enlivens them. This does not happen by applying someone’s work to another.

**60** We have shown why the Mass does not justify by the outward act (*ex opere operato*) and why, when applied to others, it does not merit forgiveness. This is because both conflict with the righteousness of faith. For it is impossible that sins should be forgiven and the terrors of death and sin be overcome by anything other than faith in Christ, according to Romans 5:1, “Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace.”

**SA:II:Article I**

The first and chief article is this:

**1** Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins and was raised again for our justification (Romans 4:24–25).

**2** He alone is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29), and God has laid upon Him the iniquities of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

**3** All have sinned and are justified freely, without their own works or merits, by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in His blood (Romans 3:23–25).

**4** This is necessary to believe. This cannot be otherwise acquired or grasped by any work, law, or merit. Therefore, it is clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us. As St. Paul says:

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Romans 3:28)

That He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. [Romans 3:26]

**5** Nothing of this article can be yielded or surrendered, even though heaven and earth and everything else falls [Mark 13:31].

For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

And with His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

Upon this article everything that we teach and practice depends, in opposition to the pope, the devil, and the whole world. Therefore, we must be certain and not doubt this doctrine. Otherwise, all is lost, and the pope, the devil, and all adversaries win the victory and the right over us.

**SA:III:XIII**

**1** I do not know how to change in the least what I have previously and constantly taught about justification. Namely, that through faith, as St. Peter says, we have a new and clean heart [Acts 15:9–11], and God will and does account us entirely righteous and holy for the sake of Christ, our Mediator [1 Timothy 2:5]. Although sin in the flesh has not yet been completely removed or become dead [Romans 7:18], yet He will not punish or remember it.

**2** Such faith, renewal, and forgiveness of sins are followed by good works [Ephesians 2:8–9]. What is still sinful or imperfect in them will not be counted as sin or defect, for Christ’s sake [Psalm 32:1–2; Romans 4:7–8]. The entire individual, both his person and his works, is declared to be righteous and holy from pure grace and mercy, shed upon us and spread over us in Christ. **3** Therefore, we cannot boast of many merits and works, if they are viewed apart from grace and mercy. As it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31); namely, that he has a gracious God. For with that, all is well. **4** We say, besides, that if good works do not follow, the faith is false and not true.

**SC:Creed, Third Article**

*Sanctification*

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

*What does this mean?*

Answer: I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise up me and all the dead and will give eternal life to me and to all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

**SC:IV:Baptism Second**

*What does Baptism give or profit?*

Answer: It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

*Which are these words and promises of God?*

Answer: Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Mark, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” [Mark 16:16].

**SC:IV:Baptism Third**

*How can water do such great things?*

Answer: It is not the water indeed that does them, but the Word of God, which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts this Word of God in the water. For without the Word of God the water is simple water and no Baptism. But with the Word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit. As St. Paul says in Titus chapter three, “He saved us … by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy” [vv. 5–8].

**SC:VI**

*What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?*

Answer: That is shown us in these words, “Given for you” and “shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” This means that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

*How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?*

Answer: It is not the eating and drinking, indeed, that does them, but the words, which are given here, “Given … and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins.” These words are, beside the bodily eating and drinking, the chief thing in the Sacrament. The person who believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

*Who, then, receives such Sacrament worthily?*

Answer: Fasting and bodily preparation are, indeed, fine outward training. But a person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words, “Given … and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

But anyone who does not believe these words, or doubts, is unworthy and unfit. For the words “for you” require hearts that truly believe.

**LC: Creed:37-45**

**37** “But how is such sanctifying done?”

Answer, “The Son receives dominion, by which He wins us, through His birth, death, resurrection, and so on. In a similar way, the Holy Spirit causes our sanctification by the following: the communion of saints or the Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. That means He leads us first into His holy congregation and places us in the bosom of the Church. Through the Church He preaches to us and brings us to Christ.”

**38** Neither you nor I could ever know anything about Christ, or believe on Him, and have Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel [1 Corinthians 12:3; Galatians 4:6]. The work of redemption is done and accomplished [John 19:30]. Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, resurrection, and so on [Colossians 2:3]. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew about it, then it would be useless and lost. So that this treasure might not stay buried, but be received and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed. In the Word He has the Holy Spirit bring this treasure home and make it our own. **39** Therefore, sanctifying is just bringing us to Christ so we receive this good, which we could not get ourselves [1 Peter 3:18].

**40** Learn, then, to understand this article most clearly. You may be asked, “What do you mean by the words *I believe in the Holy Spirit*?”

You can then answer, “I believe that the Holy Spirit makes me holy, as His name implies.”

**41** “But how does He accomplish this, or what are His method and means to this end?”

Answer, “By the Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. **42** For in the first place, the Spirit has His own congregation in the world, which is the mother that conceives and bears every Christian through God’s Word [Galatians 4:26]. Through the Word He reveals and preaches, He illumines and enkindles hearts, so that they understand, accept, cling to, and persevere in the Word” [1 Corinthians 2:12].

**43** Where the Spirit does not cause the Word to be preached and roused in the heart so that it is understood, it is lost [Matthew 13:19]. This was the case under the papacy, where faith was entirely put under the bench. No one recognized Christ as his Lord or the Holy Spirit as his Sanctifier. That is, no one believed that Christ is our Lord in the sense that He has gained this treasure for us, without our works and merit [Romans 4:6], and made us acceptable to the Father. **44** What, then, was lacking? This: the Holy Spirit was not there to reveal it and cause it to be preached. But men and evil spirits were there. They taught us to obtain grace and be saved by our works. **45** There is no Christian Church in that. For where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit who creates, calls, and gathers the Christian Church, without which no one can come to Christ the Lord.

**LC: Creed:54-56**

**54** We further believe that in this Christian Church we have forgiveness of sin, which is wrought through the holy Sacraments and Absolution [Matthew 26:28; Mark 1:4; John 20:23] and through all kinds of comforting promises from the entire Gospel. Therefore, whatever ought to be preached about the Sacraments belongs here. In short, the whole Gospel and all the offices of Christianity belong here, which also must be preached and taught without ceasing. God’s grace is secured through Christ [John 1:17], and sanctification is wrought by the Holy Spirit through God’s Word in the unity of the Christian Church. Yet because of our flesh, which we bear about with us, we are never without sin [Romans 7:23–24].

**55** Everything, therefore, in the Christian Church is ordered toward this goal: we shall daily receive in the Church nothing but the forgiveness of sin through the Word and signs, to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live here. So even though we have sins, the ‹grace of the› Holy Spirit does not allow them to harm us. For we are in the Christian Church, where there is nothing but ‹continuous, uninterrupted› forgiveness of sin. This is because God forgives us and because we forgive, bear with, and help one another [Galatians 6:1–2].

**56** But outside of this Christian Church, where the Gospel is not found, there is no forgiveness, as also there can be no holiness. Therefore, all who seek and wish to earn holiness not through the Gospel and forgiveness of sin, but by their works, have expelled and severed themselves ‹from this Church› [Galatians 5:4].

**LC: Creed:61-62**

**61** Now this is the article of the Creed that must always be and remain in use. For we have already received creation. Redemption, too, is finished. But the Holy Spirit carries on His work without ceasing to the Last Day. For that purpose He has appointed a congregation upon earth by which He speaks and does everything. **62** For He has not yet brought together all His Christian Church [*Christenheit*] [John 10:16] or granted all forgiveness. Therefore, we believe in Him who daily brings us into the fellowship of this Christian Church through the Word. Through the same Word and the forgiveness of sins He bestows, increases, and strengthens faith. So when He has done it all, and we abide in this and die to the world and to all evil, He may finally make us perfectly and forever holy. Even now we expect this in faith through the Word.

**LC:IV:84-86**

**84** For this reason let everyone value his Baptism as a daily dress [Galatians 3:27] in which he is to walk constantly. Then he may ever be found in the faith and its fruit, so that he may suppress the old man and grow up in the new. **85** For if we would be Christians, we must do the work by which we are Christians. **86** But if anyone falls away from the Christian life, let him again come into it. For just as Christ, the Mercy Seat [Romans 3:25], does not draw back from us or forbid us to come to Him again, even though we sin, so all His treasure and gifts also remain. Therefore, if we have received forgiveness of sin once in Baptism, it will remain every day, as long as we live. Baptism will remain as long as we carry the old man about our neck.

**FC:Ep:III:1**

**1** It is unanimously confessed in our churches, in accordance with God’s Word and the meaning of the Augsburg Confession, that we poor sinners are justified before God and saved alone through faith in Christ. Christ alone is our Righteousness, who is true God and man, because in Him the divine and human natures are personally united with each other (Jeremiah 23:6; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

**FC:Ep:III:3-11**

**3** 1. Against both the errors just mentioned, we unanimously believe, teach, and confess that Christ is our Righteousness [1 Corinthians 1:30] neither according to His divine nature alone nor according to His human nature alone. But it is the entire Christ who is our Righteousness according to both natures. In His obedience alone, which as God and man He offered to the Father even to His death [Philippians 2:8], He merited for us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. For it is written, “For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).

**4** 2. We believe, teach, and confess what our righteousness before God is this: God forgives our sins out of pure grace, without any work, merit, or worthiness of ours preceding, present, or following. He presents and credits to us the righteousness of Christ’s obedience [Romans 5:17–19]. Because of this righteousness, we are received into grace by God and regarded as righteous.

**5** 3. We believe, teach, and confess that faith alone is the means and instrument through which we lay hold of Christ. So in Christ we lay hold of that righteousness that benefits us before God [Romans 1:17], for whose sake this faith is credited to us for righteousness (Romans 4:5).

**6** 4. We believe, teach, and confess that this faith is not a bare knowledge of Christ’s history, but it is God’s gift [Ephesians 2:8]. By this gift we come to the right knowledge of Christ as our Redeemer in the Word of the Gospel. And we trust in Him that for the sake of His obedience alone we have—by grace—the forgiveness of sins and are regarded as holy and righteous before God the Father and are eternally saved.

**7** 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.” Proverbs 17:15 says, “He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord.” Also Romans 8:33 says, “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.”

**8** At times the words *regeneration* and *renewal of life* (*regeneratio* and *vivificatio*) are used in place of *justify*, as in the Apology. This is done with the same meaning. But, in other places, the renewal of a person is understood by these terms and is distinguished from justification through faith.

**9** 6. We believe, teach, and confess that many weaknesses and defects cling to the true believers and truly regenerate, even up to the day they are buried [1 John 1:8]. Still, they must not on that account doubt either their righteousness, which has been credited to them through faith, or the salvation of their souls. They 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.

**10** 7. We believe, teach, and confess that it is necessary to teach with special diligence the *particulae exclusivae* for the preservation of the pure doctrine about the righteousness of faith before God. We mean the *exclusive particles*, that is, the following words of the holy apostle Paul, by which Christ’s merit is entirely separated from our works and the honor is given to Christ alone. For the holy apostle Paul writes, “Of grace,” “without merit,” “without Law,” “without works,” of works.” All these words together mean that we are justified and saved through faith alone in Christ [Ephesians 2:8; Romans 1:17; 3:24; 4:3–25; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 11].

**11** 8. We believe, teach, and confess that the contrition that comes before justification, and the good works that follow it, do not belong to the article of justification before God. Yet one is not to imagine a kind of faith that 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 through faith, then a true living faith works by love (Galatians 5:6). Good works always follow justifying faith and are surely found with it—if it is true and living faith [James 2:26]. Faith is never alone, but always has love and hope with it [1 Corinthians 13:13].

**FC:Ep:VI:3**

**3** 2. We believe, teach, and confess that the preaching of the Law is to be encouraged diligently. This applies not only for the unbelieving and impenitent, but also for true believers, who are truly converted, regenerate, and justified through faith.

**FC:SD:III:9-16**

**9** We unanimously believe, teach, and confess the following about the righteousness of faith before God, in accordance with the comprehensive summary of our faith and confession presented above. A poor sinful person 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 is adopted into sonship and inheritance of eternal life, without any merit or worth of his own. This happens without any preceding, present, or subsequent works, out of pure grace, because of the sole merit, complete obedience, bitter suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Christ alone. His obedience is credited to us for righteousness.

**10** These treasures are brought to us by the Holy Spirit in the promise of the Holy Gospel. Faith alone is the only means through which we lay hold on, accept, apply, and take them for ourselves. **11** This faith is God’s gift [Ephesians 2:8–9], by which we truly learn to know Christ, our Redeemer, in the Word of the Gospel and trust in Him. We trust 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. **12** Therefore, it is considered and understood to be the same thing when Paul says (a) we are “justified by faith” (Romans 3:28) or (b) “faith is counted as righteousness” (Romans 4:5) and when he says (c) “by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19) or (d) “so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men” (Romans 5:18). **13** Faith justifies not because it is such a good work or because it is so beautiful a virtue. It justifies because it lays hold of and accepts Christ’s merit in the promise of the Holy Gospel. For this merit must be applied and become ours through faith, if we are to be justified by it. **14** Therefore, the righteousness that is credited to faith or to the believer out of pure grace is Christ’s obedience, suffering, and resurrection, since He has made satisfaction for us to the Law and paid for ‹expiated› our sins. **15** Christ is not man alone, but God and man in one undivided person. Therefore, He was hardly subject to the Law (because He is the Lord of the Law), just as He didn’t have to suffer and die for His own sake. For this reason, then, His obedience (not only in His suffering and dying, but also because He was voluntarily made under the Law in our place and fulfilled the Law by this obedience) is credited to us for righteousness. So, because of this complete obedience, which He rendered to His heavenly Father for us by doing and suffering and in living and dying, God forgives our sins. He regards us as godly and righteous, and He eternally saves us. **16** This righteousness is brought to us by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and in the Sacraments. It is applied, taken, and received through faith. Therefore, believers have reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sins, God’s grace, sonship, and are heirs of eternal life.

**FC:SD:III:17**

**17** The word *justify* here means to declare righteous and free from sins and to absolve a person from eternal punishment for the sake of Christ’s righteousness, which is credited by God to faith (Philippians 3:9). This use and understanding of this word is common in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament.

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord. (Proverbs 17:15)

[Woe to those] who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right! (Isaiah 5:23)

Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies [that is, absolves from sins and acquits]. (Romans 8:33)

**FC:SD:III:18-21**

**18** The word *regeneration* is sometimes used for the word *justification*. Therefore, it is necessary that this word be properly explained, in order that the renewal that follows justification by faith may not be confused with the actual justification by faith, but that they may be properly distinguished from each other.

**19** In the first place, the word *regeneration* (*regeneratio*) is used to mean both the forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake alone and, at the same time, the succeeding renewal that the Holy Spirit works in those who are justified by faith. Then again, it is sometimes used to mean only the forgiveness of sins and that we are adopted as God’s sons. It is in this latter sense that the word is used much of the time in the Apology, where it is written that justification before God is regeneration. St. Paul, too, has used these words as distinct from each other:

He saved us … by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5)

**20** The words “making alive” have sometimes been used in a similar sense. For when a person is justified through faith (which the Holy Spirit alone does), this is truly a regeneration. In this he becomes a child of God instead of a child of wrath [Ephesians 2:3]. So he is transferred from death to life, as it is written, “When we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ” [Ephesians 2:5]. Likewise, “The righteous shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17 [see also Habakkuk 2:4]). This is how the word is usually used in the Apology. **21** Again, it is often used for sanctification and renewal, which follows the righteousness of faith. Dr. Luther has used it this way in his book about the Church and the Councils, and elsewhere [e.g., LW 41:114].

**FC:SD:III:22**

**22** We teach that through the Holy Spirit’s work we are born anew and justified. But the sense is not that after regeneration no unrighteousness clings anymore to the justified and regenerate in their being and life. It means that Christ covers all their sins (which in this life still dwell in nature) with His complete obedience. But despite this they are declared and regarded godly and righteous by faith and for the sake of Christ’s obedience (which Christ rendered to the Father for us from His birth to His most humiliating death on the cross [Philippians 2:8]).

**FC:SD:III:23**

**23** True contrition must come first. Out of pure grace, for the sake of the only Mediator, Christ [1 Timothy 2:5], without any works and merit, people are righteous before God in the way stated above (i.e., they are received into grace). The Holy Spirit is also given to them. He renews and sanctifies them and works in them love for God and for their neighbor. But the beginning of renewal is imperfect in this life. Sin still dwells in the flesh, even in the regenerate. Therefore, the righteousness of faith before God comes from the free crediting of Christ’s righteousness, without the addition of our works. So our sins are forgiven us and covered and are not charged against us (Romans 4:6–8).

**24** If the article of justification is to remain pure, the greatest attention must be given with special diligence. Otherwise, what comes before faith, and what follows after it, will be mixed together or inserted into the article of justification as necessary and belonging to it. For it is not one and the same thing to talk about conversion and to talk about justification.

**FC:SD:III:24-25**

**24** If the article of justification is to remain pure, the greatest attention must be given with special diligence. Otherwise, what comes before faith, and what follows after it, will be mixed together or inserted into the article of justification as necessary and belonging to it. For it is not one and the same thing to talk about conversion and to talk about justification.

**25** Not everything that belongs to conversion also belongs to the article of justification. Only God’s grace, Christ’s merit, and faith belong and are necessary to the article of justification. Faith receives these blessings in the promise of the Gospel, by which Christ’s righteousness is credited to us. From this we receive and have forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, sonship, and are made heirs of eternal life.

**FC:SD:III:26-27**

**26** True, saving faith is not in people who lack contrition and sorrow and who have a wicked plan to remain and continue in sins. But true contrition comes first, and genuine faith is in or with true repentance.

**27** Love is a fruit that surely and necessarily also follows true faith. The fact that a person does not love is a sure sign that he is not justified. He is still in death or has lost the righteousness of faith again, as John says (1 John 3:14). But Paul says [in Romans 3:28], “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.” He shows that neither the contrition that comes first, nor the works that follow, belong in the article or action of justification by faith. Good works do not come before justification, but follow it. A person must first be justified before he can do good works.

**FC:SD:III:28-29**

**28** In the same way, renewal and sanctification also do not belong in the article or matter of justification before God, even though it is a benefit of the Mediator, Christ, and a work of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification follows justification since, on account of our corrupt flesh, sanctification is not entirely perfect and complete in this life. Dr. Luther writes well about this in his beautiful and large commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, in which he says the following:

**29** We concede that good works and love must also be taught; but this must be in its proper time and place, that is, when the question has to do with works, apart from this chief doctrine. But here the point at issue is how we are justified and attain eternal life. To this we answer with Paul: We are pronounced righteous solely by faith in Christ, not by the works of the Law or by love.

**FC:SD:III:30**

**30** Troubled hearts should have a firm, sure consolation. Also, due honor should be given to Christ’s merit and God’s grace. Therefore, the Scriptures teach that the righteousness of faith before God stands only in the gracious reconciliation or the forgiveness of sins, which is presented to us out of pure grace, only for the sake of the merit of the Mediator, Christ. This is received through faith alone in the Gospel promise. In the same way also, in justification before God, faith relies neither on contrition nor on love or other virtues. Faith relies on Christ alone and on His complete obedience by which He has fulfilled the Law for us. This obedience is credited to believers for righteousness.

**FC:SD:III:31**

**31** Furthermore, neither contrition nor love nor any other virtue, but faith alone is the only means and instrument by which, and through which, we can receive and accept God’s grace, Christ’s merit, and the forgiveness of sins, which are brought to us in the Gospel promise.

**FC:SD:III:32**

**32** It is also correct to say that believers who have been justified through faith in Christ first have the righteousness of faith credited to them in this life. Then, they also have the initial righteousness of the new obedience or of good works. But these two types of righteousness must not be mixed with each other or both be injected into the article of justification by faith before God. For this initial righteousness or renewal in us is incomplete and impure in this life because of the flesh. A person cannot stand with and ‹on the ground of this righteousness› before God’s court. Before God’s court only the righteousness of Christ’s obedience, suffering, and death—which is credited to faith—can stand. So only for the sake of this obedience is the person pleasing and acceptable to God and received into adoption and made an heir of eternal life. (This is true even after his renewal, when he has already many good works and lives the best life.)

**FC:SD:III:33-35**

**33** Here belongs also what St. Paul writes in Romans 4:3. Abraham was justified before God through faith alone, for the sake of the Mediator, without the cooperation of his works. This was true not only when Abraham was first converted from idolatry and had no good works, but also afterward, when he had been renewed by the Holy Spirit and adorned with many excellent good works (Genesis 15:6; Hebrews 11:8). Paul asks the following question in Romans 4:1–3: At that time, on what did Abraham’s righteousness before God rest for everlasting life, by which he had a gracious God and was pleasing and acceptable to Him?

**34** He answers:

To the one who does not work but trusts Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also [Psalm 32:1] speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works. [Romans 4:5–6]

**35** Therefore, even though people who are converted and believe ‹in Christ› have the beginning of renewal, sanctification, love, virtue, and good works, these cannot and should not be drawn into, or mixed with, the article of justification before God. This is so the honor due to Christ may remain with Christ the Redeemer and tempted consciences may have a sure consolation, since our new obedience is incomplete and impure.

**FC:SD:III:36-39**

**36** This is what the apostle Paul means when he urges so diligently and zealously the exclusive terms in this article of faith (i.e., the words by which works are excluded from the article of justification: *by grace*, *without merit*, *without works*, *not of works*.) These exclusives are all summed up in this expression: *Through faith alone in Christ we are justified before God and saved* [Romans 3:28]. For thereby works are excluded. This does not mean that a true faith can exist without contrition, or that good works should, must, and dare not follow true faith as sure and undoubtable fruit. It does not mean that believers dare not or must not do anything good. But good works are excluded from the article of justification before God because they must not be drawn into, woven into, or mixed with the act of justifying poor sinners before God. They are not necessary. They do not belong to this act. The true sense of the exclusive terms in the article of justification comes from the following, which should also be taught in this article with all diligence and seriousness:

**37** 1. Through these terms all our own works, merit, worthiness, glory, and confidence in all our works are entirely excluded from the article of justification. So our works shall not stand or be regarded as the cause or the merit of justification—not entirely, not half, not in the least part—upon which God could or ought to look. We cannot rely on our works in this article and action.

**38** 2. This remains the office and property of faith alone. It alone, and nothing else, is the means or instrument with and through which God’s grace and Christ’s merit in the Gospel promise are received, apprehended, accepted, applied to us, and appropriated. Love and all other virtues or works are excluded from this office and property of such application or appropriation.

**39** 3. Neither renewal, sanctification, virtues, nor good works are at all a form, part, or cause of justification, that is, our righteousness before God. They are not to stand or be set up as a part or cause of our righteousness. They are not to be mixed into the article of justification under any pretext, title, or name whatever, as though they are necessary and belong to justification. The righteousness of faith stands alone in the forgiveness of sins out of pure grace, for the sake of Christ’s merit alone. These blessings are brought to us in the Gospel promise and are received, accepted, applied, and appropriated through faith alone.

**FC:SD:III:40-41**

**40** In the same way the order between faith and good works must remain and be maintained, just as the order between justification and renewal (or sanctification) must be maintained.

**41** Good works do not come before faith, neither does sanctification come before justification. First, in conversion faith is kindled in us by the Holy Spirit from the hearing of the Gospel. Faith lays hold of God’s grace in Christ, by which the person is justified. Then, when the person is justified, he is also renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. From this renewal and sanctification the fruit of good works then follow. This should not be understood as though justification and renewal were separated from one another in such a way that a genuine faith sometimes could exist and continue for a time together with evil intention. Only the order ‹of causes and effects, of antecedents and consequents› is indicated, how one comes first or follows the other. What Luther has correctly said remains true:

Faith and good works well agree and fit together; but it is faith alone, without works, that lays hold of the blessing. [see LW 22:166]

**FC:SD:III42**

**42** Many disputes are usefully explained well by this true distinction. The Apology shows this in reference to James 2:20, 24. For when we speak of faith and how it justifies, we refer to the doctrine of St. Paul: that faith alone, without works, justifies [Romans 3:28]. This is because faith alone applies and makes Christ’s merit our own, as has been said.

**FC:SD:III:40-43**

**43** James speaks, as the Apology says, about the works of those who have already been justified through Christ, reconciled with God, and received forgiveness of sins through Christ. If the question is about how faith has this result and what belongs to faith so that it justifies and saves, it is false and incorrect to say that faith cannot justify without works. Or, faith justifies or makes righteous if it has love with it, for the sake of which love justification is ascribed to faith. Or, the presence of works with faith is necessary if a person is to be justified by faith before God. Or, the presence of good works in the article of justification, or for justification, is needful, so that good works are a cause without which a person cannot be justified, and that they are not really excluded from the article of justification by the exclusive terms: *without works*, and such (i.e., when St. Paul says, *absque operibus*). For faith makes righteous only because, as a means and instrument, it lays hold of, and accepts, God’s grace and Christ’s merit in the Gospel promise.

**FC:SD:III:53**

Paul’s reason is that we receive both salvation and righteousness in one and the same way. In fact, when we are justified through faith, we receive adoption at the same time and are made heirs of eternal life and salvation. For this reason Paul uses and emphasizes the exclusive terms, that is, those words by which works and our own merits are entirely excluded. He uses “by grace,” “apart from works,” as forcibly in the article about salvation as in the article about righteousness.

**FC:SD:III:54**

**54** The dispute about God’s essential righteousness dwelling in us must also be correctly explained. In the elect (who are justified by Christ and reconciled with God), God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (who is the eternal and essential righteousness) dwells by faith. (For all Christians are temples of God [1 Corinthians 3:16–17] the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who also moves them to do right.) Yet this indwelling of God is not the righteousness of faith St. Paul describes and that he calls God’s righteousness for the sake of which we are declared righteous before God. But it comes after the righteousness of faith, which is nothing else than the forgiveness of sins and the gracious adoption of the poor sinner for the sake of Christ’s obedience and merit alone.

**FC:SD:III:55-58**

**55** In our churches it is acknowledged among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession that all our righteousness is to be sought outside the merits, works, virtues, and worthiness of ourselves and of all people. Our righteousness rests alone on Christ the Lord. Therefore, how Christ is called our Righteousness in this matter of justification must be carefully considered. I mean, that our righteousness rests not on one or the other nature in Christ, but on Christ’s entire person, who as God and man is our Righteousness in His only, entire, and complete obedience.

**56** Even if Christ had been conceived and born without sin by the Holy Spirit and had fulfilled all righteousness in His human nature alone, and yet had not been true and eternal God, this obedience and suffering of His human nature could not be credited to us for righteousness. Also, if God’s Son had not become man, the divine nature alone could not be our righteousness. Therefore, we believe, teach, and confess that the entire obedience of Christ’s entire person (which He has offered to the Father for us, even to His most humiliating death on the cross) is credited to us for righteousness. For the human nature alone, without the divine, could not by obedience or suffering make satisfaction to eternal, almighty God for the sins of all the world. However, the divinity alone, without the humanity, could not mediate between God and us.

**57** As mentioned above, the obedience not only of one nature, but of the entire person, is a complete satisfaction and atonement for the human race. By this obedience God’s eternal, unchangeable righteousness, revealed in the Law, has been satisfied. So our righteousness benefits us before God and is revealed in the Gospel. Faith relies on this before God, which God credits to faith, as it is written in Romans 5:19:

For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

The righteous shall live by his faith. (Habakkuk 2:4 [see also Romans 1:17])

**58** Neither Christ’s divine nor human nature by itself is credited to us for righteousness, but only the obedience of the person who is at the same time God and man. And faith thus values Christ’s person because it was made under the Law [Galatians 4:4] for us and bore our sins, and, in His going to the Father, He offered to His heavenly Father for us poor sinners His entire, complete obedience. This extends from His holy birth even unto death. In this way, He has covered all our disobedience, which dwells in our nature, and its thoughts, words, and works. So disobedience is not charged against us for condemnation. It is pardoned and forgiven out of pure grace alone, for Christ’s sake.

**FC:SD:IV:2**

**2** The other side argued that good works are indeed necessary—however, not for salvation, but for other reasons. The expressions mentioned above are not to be tolerated in the Church. (They are not in accord with the form of sound doctrine and with the Word, and have always been and still are used by the papists to oppose the doctrine of our Christian faith, in which we confess that faith alone justifies and saves.) This is argued in order that the merit of Christ, our Savior, may not be diminished, and the promise of salvation may be and remain firm and certain to believers.

**FC:SD:V:4-6**

For it is written, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). And shortly afterward the chief points are stated: *Repentance and forgiveness of sins*. So when Christ after His resurrection commanded the apostles to “proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15), He compressed the sum of this doctrine into a few words. He also said, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations” (Luke 24:46–47). Paul, too, calls his entire doctrine the Gospel (Acts 20:21). He summarizes this doctrine under two points: *Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*. **5** In this sense the general definition of the word *Gospel*, when used in a wide sense and without the proper distinction between the Law and the Gospel, is correctly said to be a preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins. **6** For John, Christ, and the apostles began their preaching with repentance and explained and taught not only the gracious promise of the forgiveness of sins, but also God’s Law. Furthermore, the term *Gospel* is used in another way. In its proper sense, *Gospel* does not mean the preaching of repentance, but only the preaching of God’s grace. This follows directly after the preaching of repentance, as Christ says, “Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

**FC:SD:V:8**

**8** But in this passage (Mark 1:15) and elsewhere, when repentance and faith in Christ (Acts 20:21), or repentance and forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:46–47), are mentioned as distinct, *to repent* means nothing other than to truly acknowledge sins, to be heartily sorry for them, and to stop doing them.

**FC:SD:V:24-26**

**24** These two doctrines, we believe and confess, should always be diligently taught in God’s Church forever, even to the end of the world. They must be taught with the proper distinction of which we have heard: (a) through the preaching of the Law and its threats in the ministry of the New Testament the hearts of impenitent people may be terrified, and (b) they may be brought to a knowledge of their sins and to repentance. This must not be done in such a way that they lose heart and despair in this process. “So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24); so the Law points and leads us not from Christ, but to Christ, who “is the end of the law” (Romans 10:4). **25** People must be comforted and strengthened again by the preaching of the Holy Gospel about Christ, our Lord. In other words, to those who believe the Gospel, God forgives all their sins through Christ, adopts them as children for His sake, and out of pure grace—without any merit on their part—justifies and saves them.

**FC:SD:XI:15-18**

**15** 1. The human race is truly redeemed and reconciled with God through Christ. By His faultless obedience, suffering, and death, Christ merited for us the righteousness that helps us before God and also merits eternal life.

**16** 2. Such merit and benefits of Christ are presented, offered, and distributed to us through His Word and Sacraments.

**17** 3. By His Holy Spirit, through the Word, when it is preached, heard, and pondered, Christ will be effective and active in us, will convert hearts to true repentance and preserve them in the true faith.

**18** 4. The Spirit will justify all those who in true repentance receive Christ by a true faith. He will receive them into grace, the adoption of sons, and the inheritance of eternal life [Galatians 3:19].

**19** 5. He will also sanctify in love those who are justified, as St. Paul says (Ephesians 1:4).

**FC:SD:XI:95-96**

**95** From our explanation, friends and enemies and, therefore, everyone, may clearly see that we have no intention of yielding any part of God’s eternal, immutable truth for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility, and unity (which is not in our power to do anyway). Such peace and unity would have no permanence, since it is devised against the truth and for its suppression. We are even less willing to adorn and conceal a corruption of the pure doctrine and clear, condemned errors. **96** We do yearn with heartfelt pleasure and love for unity. On our part, we are sincerely willing and anxious to advance that unity (according to our utmost power) by which God’s glory remains unharmed. We willingly advance unity where nothing of the divine truth of the Holy Gospel is surrendered, no room is given to the least error, and poor sinners are brought to true, genuine repentance, raised up by faith, confirmed in new obedience, and justified and eternally saved alone through the sole merit of Christ.