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DISPUTATION ON THE JUSTIFICATION OF MAN BEFORE GOD,

In which is explained what would have been the justification of man if, in a state of integrity, he had rendered constant obedience; what is required for the justification of a sinner and how that takes place; and finally, by what reasoning the justification of believers under the New Testament is distinguished from the justification of believers who lived either under the promise alone or under the economy of Moses and the Old Testament.

PREFACE TO THE READER

It is not necessary here to relate at length what moved me, friendly reader, to write these theses on the justification of man before God. Those who know me more intimately, and who are not ignorant of what is said about me and my institution—whether truly or slanderously, here or elsewhere—can easily perceive and guess the reason. For the rest, not to know those things, the knowledge of which cannot edify them, cannot, unless I am mistaken, be troublesome to them. It is the duty of a theologian to prove himself orthodox in all things, lest the labor which he willingly expends for the instruction of youth and other hearers be rendered useless, and all the fruits of diligence which he hopes for from it should perish. I do not say all that can be said on this most weighty matter, but those things which I think pertain to and suffice for the goal I intend. Contrary to my custom, in some places I defend myself by the authority and testimonies of great men, and bind myself a little more closely to their forms of speaking; I also purposely call to testify only those whose books are in everyone's hands, and whose patronage, being less suspect, can free me from suspicion of singularity and novelty. That you may not be unaware, the perversity of this age demanded it—whose very unfair judgments those who teach publicly in the Church or Academy cannot escape. They carp, quibble, twist into alien senses, defame, and all but strike with anathema whatever does not please their palate (corrupted by I know not what vicious humors), or what they did not learn from their teachers—although perhaps they have often heard the same or similar things from them, indeed even very often in Holy Scripture itself, but as usually happens, they have read them too cursorily and hastily. Therefore, it was necessary sometimes to speak according as those to whom we speak are able to hear. Mark 4:33. This συγκατάβασις (condescension) I judged ought both to be employed by me and not to be taken badly by you. These things, benevolent reader, I wished to set forth in your favor, lest you expect from me something more polished and perfect than I am going to give; submitting all things to your fairer judgment.

¹ <https://books.google.com.pe/books?id=mMRjAAAAcAAI&hl=es&pg=PA550#v=onepage&q&f=false>

I. The right to eternal life from God the righteous One—sometimes called righteousness—which was to be hoped for and sought by man created in the image of God (Rom. 1:17; 3:21–22; 4:5; 10:3; Phil. 3:9; Gen. 15:6; Gal. 3:6), arises from the fulfillment of what the law demands from man, so that it may adjudge to him the reward of eternal life.

II. Moreover, this demand of the law—which in the Scriptures is called δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου (righteous requirement of the law), and among the Scholastics is customarily called merit of eternal life—before the fall consisted in the perfect, absolute, uninterrupted obedience and observance of the whole man—both external and internal—of all God’s commandments, persevering even to the end of the course of time which God willed man (as they say) to be a wayfarer, and overcoming whatever temptations to evil (Matt. 22:37; Ezek. 18:24; 33:13; 1 Cor. 6:20; Rom. 12:9; 2 Cor. 6:6; 1 Pet. 1:22; Deut. 27:26; James 2:10).

III. Furthermore, to this obedience God in the covenant of works had annexed by His promise the reward of heavenly life as a righteousness (Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12; Lev. 18:5; Ezek. 20:11). Whence also the law, teaching, approving, and rewarding this obedience and righteousness (which is commonly called of works, although it includes or presupposes also holiness of nature), is called a good commandment and unto life (Rom. 7:10, 12).

IV. Hence, if the first man had fulfilled this obedience—just as from the pact concerning works he would have had a right to seek the reward of life—so also God, the Law, and Conscience could not but justify him; that is, to hold him as just, pronounce him so, or absolve him from further obligation to merit, and adjudge and impute to him heavenly life as a reward by debt (Rom. 4:4).

V. This might indeed seem like a kind of boasting of a man in his own work, because he said before God, "I have not transgressed your commandments, I have done what I ought," and so the reward of glory is stored up for me as the wages of my work by right, Romans 4:4, 1 Corinthians 3:27. Yet it is not properly boasting in himself (for he did not perform the work by himself, but by God) nor in the value, worth, or dignity of his work, Luke 17:10, as if it ought to have been considered of such great value, and the basis of all merit attributed to the work did not depend on the most free—that is, unconstrained—will, goodness, favor, and promise of God. For merit based on worthiness in a mere human is a fiction, and to attribute that to oneself is the boasting of a man against God his Creator—as if he himself did not owe all things to God, but God owed something to him.

VI. Just as God gave the tree of life to man as a pledge, so that he might be more certain of the promised good, from which it received this name because it was a sacrament of the promised life and represented the cause of life (to say nothing of Paradise, which itself

was a symbol of the heavenly country where the author of life dwells, and into which man, if he had remained obedient, would someday have been transferred), so that word of divine threat in the covenant of nature, "Cursed is he who does not abide," etc., declared that there was no other way of obtaining life than that perfect and constant obedience of man.

VII. From this description of legal righteousness and justification, such as it is, one may gather that Adam, the first man, before his transgression, although he was innocent and had uprightness of will and deed and thus conformity with the law (which is sometimes designated by the name of righteousness, Titus 3:5), nevertheless had not yet by this very fact acquired a right to heavenly blessedness, nor had he been justified; but he was established in the way and pursuit of acquiring that right, which had only begun. Certainly, if man had a right to eternal life, it cannot be understood how God, who by this very fact would have been as it were obligated to give the reward—that is, imperishable life—to man, could justly allow him to be tempted by Satan, permit his fall, leave him in his fallen state, and finally condemn him.

VIII. The Palatine Catechism indeed speaks of righteousness and life lost and restored and repaired through Christ, in Question XVII. But either that righteousness is understood as the holiness of man, which it included in the image of God in the first man in Question VI and which is restored through Christ; or, if a right to eternal life is understood, we are said to have lost what was in our power and strength to acquire for ourselves. In this way perhaps the Catechism there includes that heavenly and eternal life under the name of life and teaches that it was lost in our first parents and is to be restored to us through Christ.

IX. But when the first man violated the law of this covenant of nature, not only did he himself become guilty and fall from the happy state in which he was; but also through that transgression all who were in his loins—that is, who were to be born from him by natural power implanted in his loins according to the ordinary mode of generation—were constituted guilty, upon whom the same punishment of sin could justly be inflicted.

X. For the same God who promised life for man's obedience also threatened death for his disobedience; and just as man, if he had steadfastly adhered to his Creator, would have produced from his marriage a seed of God—that is, descendants who were heirs of the divine image and blessing, Malachi 2:15 (of which truth there also seems to be some evidence in that even in the covenant of grace the children of a believing parent are considered holy, notwithstanding the unbelief of the other spouse, 1 Corinthians 7:14)—so after he rendered himself unworthy through his own apostasy, by whom God would communicate his image to others, he necessarily begat such as he himself was after the fall—namely, subject to the same judgment and condemning sentence of God and by

nature children of wrath. Job 14:4–5; Romans 5:14, 16, 18–19; Psalm 51:7; Ephesians 2:3–4.

XI. Therefore, from that time, the law, which was intended for life, became for man a law of death (Romans 7:10), or a law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). That is, by its own sentence it enslaved sin and death, and bound and delivered us over to them as slaves. For it is just that anyone who is overcome by another should be delivered into slavery (2 Peter 2:19). So then, everyone who commits sin becomes a slave of sin (John 8:34), and indeed a slave to death (Romans 6:16). This is the sting of death, which it derives from sin, and the power of sin, which it derives from the law (1 Corinthians 15:56), and the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13).

XII. Thus, when the law received this power to condemn, its power to justify and give life was extinguished. For it was so weakened by the flesh that it is impossible for it to save man (Romans 8:3), even after the promise was repeated (Galatians 3:21). Even if a person were—by an impossibility (I say by an impossibility, because this very law now prevents a sinner from being able to receive the Spirit of sanctification)—to sin no more from that point on, and even to do deeds equal to those of the holy angels in heaven—in a word, no one living, no one born of woman, no flesh can be justified before God (Job 14:1; 15:14; Psalm 143:2). But every person, left to himself, remains a sinner, a child of wrath, and abiding under wrath, subject to God's judgment and eternal condemnation.

XIII. Indeed, so that we may more easily understand this: for the justification of a sinful person, the law now requires not a single and simple debt—as before the fall—but a twofold and double obligation, both of which are impossible for man to fulfill. Namely, it demands both execution and fulfillment: on the one hand, of its sentence by which it requires obedience in order to grant life as a reward; on the other hand, of its sentence by which it attaches a curse to sin. That is, the law demands both that perfect obedience which it approves as sufficient for obtaining life (concerning which see Thesis II), and also the reparation of God's right which was violated by sin. This reparation cannot be accomplished except by undergoing the penalty which the law names in its threat and approves as sufficient for condemning sin and atoning for our many transgressions. Or—which amounts to the same as the latter—atonement must be made through such sufferings by which it may be sufficiently made known, and a person may fully experience: who God is whom he has despised; what His dominion is; what His holiness is; what the vileness of sin is in the eyes of the Lord; what God's wrath and hatred against it are; what God's zeal for His own name is—or if you prefer, by which God is sanctified (Isaiah 5:16; Ezekiel 36:23–24). And even in justifying the ungodly (Romans 4:4–5), He may be justified (Romans 3:26)—namely, before rational creatures. For if He did not demonstrate this glory of His holiness to them, He might seem to them to have become like a sinner (Psalm 50:21), or like a man who—though he ought to reflect God's image,

that is, to know and love Him as He is—is shown to be other than He truly is; which would conflict with the truth and wisdom of God.

Therefore, just as on account of sin, life now includes in the promise of grace the resurrection of the body (Matthew 22:31–32; Luke 20:37–38; John 11:25–26), and justification includes the forgiveness of sins—which before sin they did not include—so now on account of that same sin, the demand of the law includes the sufferings due to sin. Hence, Paul seems significantly to call this demand of the law not simply “the righteous requirement of the law” but “the righteous requirement through many trespasses” (Romans 5:16). That is, a deed or obedience such that it at once frees us from our many transgressions and at the same time gives us the right to seek and obtain eternal life.

XIV. Therefore, since no justification is given except according to this law, which is the truth and immutable will of God (Matthew 18:19; Romans 3:31; Numbers 23:23; John 17:17; Titus 1:2), so that no remission, acceptance, much less annulment (as they say) can take place—for God, who once bound the gift and reward of life to the condition of perfect obedience and by His threat, “Cursed is everyone...” (Deuteronomy 27:26), when He excluded every other reason and way to possess the highest good, then made manifest the indissoluble connection of servitude and death with sin—He cannot by any reason deny His right and that dominion which He exercised in giving the law, nor retract what has been done and revoke His word. But He wills to be acknowledged by His rational creature as most alien from sin and the rewarder of obedience according to the sentence of the law, since in that knowledge the good part of the divine image consists: the holiness, justice, truthfulness, and goodness of God. It becomes clear that the sinful man would have perished eternally unless the law (which by its threat could not prejudice the mercy and goodness of God, nor place an obstacle to them) had admitted a sponsor in his place, who might fulfill that “righteous requirement” (Romans 5:18) on his behalf, so that with the law itself consenting, stipulating, approving, even demanding, and thus with the sanctification of God’s name, sin might be forgiven and life even adjudged to the sinner. And so men through the law might die to the law, to live to God (Galatians 2:19; cf. Romans 7:4, 6). The very word “justification” seems to show that it ought to be the judgment of God, not contrary to His law or with its rescission and abrogation, but according to it and through its observance, so that the precept of the law might be fulfilled in the sponsor (1 John 2:8), and God, justifying the ungodly in the sponsor, might remain just according to the law and be justified by the law (Romans 3:26; 4:5).

XV. The one whom the Law admitted as sponsor, Divine Wisdom suggested, Divine Mercy appointed, the Divine Promise named immediately after sin, and finally Divine Truth gave and sent in the fullness of time—namely, the Son of God, who was made of a woman, our Goel and brother, and made under the law (Galatians 4:4). Out of love for His brothers according to it, desiring God to be sanctified in Himself as an accursed one, lest it be necessary for the same to be sanctified through the punishment of all the

brothers, He did the will of God by which we could be sanctified (Hebrews 10:9–10). And being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8), He offered a suitable and glorious sacrifice to God for expiating sinners, which is therefore called a sacrifice of righteousness (Psalm 51:19), as a priest and prince of their salvation He offered it (Hebrews 7–10), so that by the obedience of one fulfilling the law perfectly many might be constituted righteous, and through the justification of one the benefit might overflow unto all men for justification of life, just as through the disobedience of one many were constituted sinners and through one offense guilt came upon all men unto condemnation (Romans 5:18–19). And so what the law could not do (justification and vivification), since it was weakened through the flesh (by the fault of sinning, by which it is plainly destitute of God's Spirit and is nothing but flesh), God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh (punished it and took away all its power of accusing, condemning, retaining, and possessing sinners), so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us (that which the law promises to the obedient might become ours) (Romans 8:3–4). And with sin as master killed and dead in the flesh of Christ, the law itself, which was of death—that is, its power over the sinner—died (as the law and right of a husband over his wife dies with him), and it became the law of another master, namely Christ, who made it a law of the Spirit and of life for bearing fruit to God, no longer to death (Romans 7:1–6).

XVI. This obedience of the Son as Sponsor, tested and perfected through sufferings which were equivalent to the punishments due to us (Hebrews 2:10), when it is accepted by our Creditor, the Father, and given to us, gives a right to heavenly life, and so becomes for us righteousness.

XVII. And because it is the obedience of the Son himself—indeed, of God—and in it the righteousness of God is revealed and perceived, and it is given to us by God, indeed as a gift out of love and grace, therefore in the Scriptures it is called the righteousness of God. Psalm 143:1–2; Isaiah 56:1; Romans 3:21–22. "The Lord our righteousness," Jeremiah 23:6; 33:15. "God my righteousness," Psalm 4:2. "Christ Jesus, who became for us righteousness," 1 Corinthians 1:30. "Righteousness from God," Isaiah 54:17. "In the Lord all the offspring of Israel shall be justified," Isaiah 45:25. "The gift, the free gift, the gift of righteousness," Romans 5:15–17. "The gift by grace," verse 15. "We are justified freely," Romans 3:24; Revelation 21:6. "Without money and without price," Isaiah 52:3; 55:1, etc.

XVIII. The acceptance, imputation, donation, impartation, reception, conscious reception, sealing, and demonstration of this righteousness of Christ the Sponsor is called by the name of JUSTIFICATION; it is not, however, an internal change of the sinful person (which some call real and physical) from depravity to uprightness according to habit. For although this justification does not occur without such sanctification—indeed, not infrequently sanctification, especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews, includes

justification—nevertheless this term (which owes its origin not so much to Latin as to the Church, and was adopted to express the Hebrew and Greek words used in this matter in the Holy Scriptures, and therefore must be explained from those writings) never in the Holy Scriptures means the same as making someone holy habitually and inherently, or, as others wish to say for the sake of distinction, it is not the same as being made righteous.

XIX. This justification, broadly speaking, is accomplished and completed in two stages—to use the language of Amesius in his **Sciagraphia Catechetica**, page 126—as if by two steps.

First, it was given to us from eternity and before the ages of time in God’s decree and purpose (in the mind of God appointing His gifts for us), this grace in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 1:9). Even then, by the eternal testament of God, among other things pertaining to our inheritance, this gift of righteousness was written down, given, and granted—just as a human testator gives his goods by will to an heir, long before his own death; especially since this will of God concerning our inheritance is not changeable like a human will, but is without repentance. Already then the Father, trusting in His Son according to that eternal counsel and covenant between them—trusting in the Son who promised satisfaction and obedience and who asked for the inheritance on the basis of that pledge—not only gave us ourselves to Him as a sure seed, but also delivered into His hands the gifts to be shared with us, indeed all things (John 3:35), and gave Him authority to bestow and distribute them (John 17:2; 5:22). This power had its effects even before the Son descended in the flesh and brought eternal righteousness. Already then a certain union and communion—or exchange—of goods between Head and members, Sponsor and guilty ones, was made. Already then the benefits of God were prepared, as Augustine says, by which most certainly all who are delivered are delivered. Already then the justifying sentence of every believer was, as it were, conceived in the mind of God through the decree of justification (Gal. 3:8). These are the words of Amesius in **Medulla Theologiæ**, book 1, chapter 27, §9. And in this sense our salvation and all its parts are eternal in Christ, as Zanchius says in his explanation of Ephesians 1:4.

XX. Second, because our sins (the penalties for sins) that were demanded were laid upon Christ coming into this world, and He received them as His own (Isa. 53:5–7; Ps. 40:13). And by fulfilling the will of the Father, by which we are sanctified (Heb. 10, from Ps. 40:7), He was freed from any further debt of meriting and from our crimes—by the Father raising Him from the dead—and He was absolved and justified from the law (1 Tim. 3:16; Ps. 16:2; “the righteous one,” Isa. 53:11; 1 John 2:1). He was declared the perfect and completed Savior (Heb. 2:10; 5:9; John 19:30; 17:4), and the reward was assigned to Him. For by that very fact all those whose place He took under the law, and who were or were reckoned in Him federally as in the Second Adam, were in a certain way absolved and justified.

For just as in the first Adam we were made sinners and guilty and condemned by the sentence of the law, so in Christ we have satisfied the law, we have died to the law, and by it we have been justified in our Head. At least no less than our old man was crucified with Him (Rom. 6:6), we died with Him (Rom. 6:8—“but he who has died is justified from sin,” Rom. 6:7), we were circumcised (this circumcision includes our justification, of which the circumcision of Christ our Head was the sign and seal—Col. 2:11), buried with Him, raised together, made alive together by the Father forgiving our sins (Col. 2:12–13), seated in the heavenly places (which presupposes or includes justification—Eph. 2:5–6).

And reason itself seems to teach that the sponsor is not justified and absolved without the debtor being in some way absolved and justified at the same time and by the same act. The name of each is customarily erased in accounts and the bond torn up (cf. Col. 2:14). Justinian in *Institutes*, book 3, title 30: “Every obligation is extinguished by payment of what is owed, or if with the creditor’s consent something else is given instead. Nor does it matter who pays—whether the debtor himself or another on his behalf—for he is freed even if another pays, whether the debtor knows or does not know, or even if payment is made against his will.” Likewise, “if the principal debtor pays, even those who intervened for him are freed.” The same happens conversely if the surety pays: “for not only is he himself freed, but also the principal debtor.”

XXI. Hence Calvin, *Institutes*, Book 2, Chapter 16, Section 5: “This absolution of ours is because the guilt which held us liable to punishment was transferred to the head of the Son of God.” Ames, *Medulla*, Book 1, Chapter 27, Section 4: “The justifying sentence was pronounced in Christ our head rising from the dead.” 2 Corinthians 5:19; and in the *Sketch of the Catechism*, Lord’s Day XXIII: “In our head Jesus Christ rising from the dead we were virtually justified, just as in Adam sinning all his posterity had been virtually sinners.” Maccovius, *Anti-Sociniana*, Chapter XI, Canon I: “We say therefore that God justified us at that time when He cast all our iniquities upon Christ; this is shown thus: when guilt was taken away from us, at that time we were justified; but indeed when our sins were cast upon Christ, guilt was taken away from us; therefore at that time we were justified,” etc. The same disputation, *Common Places* XVI: “Whose debts someone received from a creditor to pay, and the creditor so accepts that one’s surety that he rests in it, that one is now on the part of the creditor free from debts. But Christ received from God the Father the debts of all the elect individually to pay from when He was made Mediator, and God the Father accepted this surety and rested in it.” Therefore, Cloppenburg, *On Evangelical Justification*, Thesis 30: “Therefore from His mother’s womb Christ was the surety of their righteousness, although not yet revealed to them, but to be revealed at the opportune time with regeneration; and in Christ also is the hidden treasure of their justification (and kept for them as a deposit to be bestowed upon each one) from which Christ, having been justified (by His completed obedience), was

given to them as Sponsor: in this way we understand that concerning the right of justification for all once obtained: ‘He was raised because of our justification’ (Romans 4:25).” Perkins, *On Predestination and the Grace of God*: “The raising of Christ is His actual (so to speak) absolution from the sins of those for whom He died; for as the Father in delivering Christ to death really condemned the sins imputed to Christ of those for whom He died, so in raising Him from the dead by that very act He absolved Christ from their sins, and also absolved them in Christ; but those absolved from sins will not perish, but will be saved.”

XXII. Add thirdly, that here also before regeneration and faith given to the elect there must be considered in them a certain non-imputation of sins, at least as to penalties which hinder regeneration or conflict with it: hence that 2 Corinthians 5:19 immediately joins non-imputation with the reconciliation of those for whom Christ died, as opposed to that imputation of sins by which, for example, God imputed sins to the Gentiles before the enmity was slain in the body of Christ and peace given on earth (Ephesians 2:14–18; Luke 2:14), and imputes to all those whom He never calls by the word of reconciliation, or at least does not effectually call. For this very non-calling and non-sanctification are the most just penalties of sins, which God forgiving makes us alive (Colossians 2:13). This non-imputation of sin is as a certain binding of Satan (Revelation 20:1–3), who otherwise holds the sinner under his power and by force of law delivers him to sin.

XXIII. Some add here a certain imputation of Christ’s obedience, on account of which it comes about that life to be begun by regeneration may be adjudged to us ungodly along with sanctification of God’s name (Ephesians 5:16), or we may be given to the Spirit to sanctify us. For unless in some way (so they seem to reason) before faith the righteousness of Christ becomes ours and is imputed to us, the law of sin and death retains its power over us and does not permit that we be freed from that death and life be given to us, or that we be incorporated through the Spirit of God into Christ the bridegroom, so that He may live in us and we in Him (Romans 7:1–3; 8:2), any more than the law of a husband permits a wife, while her husband lives, to marry another. By the merit of Christ’s obedience we are regenerated, which cannot be conceived to be the cause of our regeneration and not be imputed to us (John 3:3, 5), since the law grants life to no one except one having perfect obedience. God sprinkling us with clean waters at last gives His Spirit in our midst (Ezekiel 36:25, 27).

XXIV. Indeed, some openly place before faith a certain application of satisfaction, the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, and justification. Maccovius, in his *disputation on Common Places XVI*, states: “Even before faith and repentance, the satisfaction of Christ is applied to us, namely on account of which we obtain efficacious grace for believing in Christ and performing repentance.” Here he also quotes the words of Daniel Tossanus as agreeing with him, all of which the most distinguished Hornbeck adopts in his *Institutes of Theology*, chapter XI, on justification. The same Maccovius, in his collected

disputations on justification, disputation VIII, says: “God gives no one His Holy Spirit and faith unless justified; for unless God had accepted us in Christ and, on account of Christ, had been propitious toward us, He would not at all have granted us efficacious grace by which we might believe in Christ,” etc. And a little later: “Through the imputed righteousness of Christ we not only obtain remission of sins and a right to eternal life, but also faith and all spiritual benefits.” Ephesians 1:2. Perhaps not against the author’s intent, one may extend the words of the most distinguished Voetius in his disputation on the state of the elect before conversion, where he says: “The elect, even if not yet federally united or regenerated in infancy, in that state of impenitence are nevertheless in a state of justification and reconciliation with God—actively understood,” 2 Corinthians 5:20. And in his disputation on regeneration: “The proximate subject of regeneration is the elect sinner, but one given to Christ and on account of Him justified and included in the covenant of grace,” John 6:37 with chapter 17, verses 19–20. Cluto, in disputation XXVIII, thesis 31: “Justification in the prior sense (that is, insofar as it signifies the very pronouncement or constitution of the justifying sentence in the divine mind) is accomplished before all faith, since God reckoned as innocent and righteous all those to whom He imputed the sufferings and righteousness of Christ, while they were still His enemies and therefore without faith.” Romans 4:5.

XXV. It is not the place here to recount how the Wittenberg theologians in their recent writing, “Gründlicher Beweis” etc., have abused these testimonies and many others produced from Textor, Piscator, Smout, Vogel, Rhetorfortius, etc., to prove that the Reformed overthrow the foundation of salvation. Whatever may be said about the manner of speaking, which seems to offend the Wittenbergers and others because Holy Scripture appears to ascribe and derive every justification of a sinner from faith, we have not yet been able to observe in the cited testimonies—beyond what we have thus far said concerning the decree of justification, the satisfaction of Christ rendered in our place and accepted by the Father, and the non-imputation of sin (which, unless I am mistaken, can hardly be criticized by the Wittenbergers)—anything singular or different from them being taught, if we consider the matter itself.

XXVI. Fourthly, or most properly and according to the Scriptures, God is said to justify us when He joins us to Christ and gives faith. For when in the hour of our salvation He bestows upon us the Spirit of Christ, through that same Spirit we are also united with Christ and become partakers of Him, Hebrews 3:14. And with this heavenly gift, we receive all the good things which He has merited for us, Romans 8:32; 2 Peter 1:13, and therefore also righteousness. And so by this union into one body with Him through baptism, 1 Corinthians 12:13, having been made by Him and with Him as His members, we actually receive and possess obedience and righteousness, or the right to conduct ourselves as children of God, John 1:12. God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son; he who has the Son has life, 1 John 5:11–12.

And while the same Spirit works faith in us—the first of His works, by which He is in us—by which we lay hold of Christ and the cause of righteousness as our stronghold for making peace with God, Isaiah 27:7, we commit our souls to Him as a faithful Savior, Psalm 22:1,9,11; Psalm 37:5; we put Him on, Galatians 3:27; as a bridegroom who desires to betroth us to Himself, Hosea 2:20; and by the love which He testifies through the Spirit descending into our hearts and working in them as a gift, we are joined together with reciprocal love. And by this same confession, acknowledgment, and acceptance of faith, the spiritual marriage and covenant upon the sacrifice, Psalm 50:5, is consummated and completed.

While, I say, the Spirit through faith thus causes us to cleave to Christ, the same right is given to us, and the communion of goods is ratified and made irrevocable. This very pledge of faith confirms it. For whoever commands that a free gift offered and promised by him be accepted, by that very act declares that he will regard the one who accepts it as having the right to claim and expect that good. And the bride, embracing the bridegroom who offers and testifies his love with her consent, the joining of hands, and a reciprocal kiss, makes the marriage valid; and as she becomes one flesh with the bridegroom, so she has communion of goods with him. Similarly, we through faith receive the dowry of righteousness and become heirs of God. For by that which makes us the bride of Christ, by that also we become partakers of the dowry of righteousness and the inheritance, which are joined together, Isaiah 54:17.

XXVII. Thus the obedience and right of Christ become our obedience and our right; for in communion with the Son of God, our firstborn brother who sanctifies us, we possess all good things by the title of inheritance as sons, Isaiah 54:17, Romans 8:17. So we are made righteousness in him, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and he is made righteousness for us, 1 Corinthians 1:30. Thus we are said to be found in him, not having our own righteousness which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God by faith, Philippians 3:9. So having communion with Christ, we are sprinkled with hyssop, Psalm 51:7, and the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin, 1 John 1:7. So believers in Christ are said to wash and make white their robes in the blood of the Christ, Revelation 7:14, that they may be pure and whiter than snow, Psalm 51:7. And in them is fulfilled the requirement of the law, Romans 8:4, by which in Christ—not as sinners but as his members having perfect obedience—they are judged; or Christ in them as members receives gifts as a reward for his obedience, Psalm 68:18. Calvin, Institutes, Book 3, Chapter 11, page 261: “Whom the Lord receives into union when he is said to justify; for he cannot receive into grace nor join to himself without making a sinner righteous.” In the same place: “Faith justifies in no other way than because it brings us into communion with the righteousness of Christ.”

XXVIII. Scripture teaches the same when it says that we are justified by faith, Romans 3:28; that we are made righteous by the knowledge and faith of Christ, Isaiah 53:11;

Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38; add Romans 5:1; Galatians 3:8; Galatians 2:16; that righteousness is by faith, Romans 9:30; Romans 10:6; that the righteousness of God is or comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all and upon all who believe, Romans 3:22; Galatians 2:16; that God justifies the one who is of faith, Romans 3:26. For although before faith the righteousness of Christ is in some way ours and for us—by the destination and estimation of the Father, and by the acquisition of the Son as Sponsor, or insofar as we were federally in Christ in his obedience and resurrection representing us, and not by imputation of sin or of those things which hinder the giving of faith, as declared above—nevertheless, only then does God deliver righteousness into our hand as it were his manna, and we become partakers and possessors of it, and we receive that gift of righteousness and the right to claim the other goods of God, Romans 5:17; Psalm 24:5. And we possess it after we are regenerated, or when the Spirit regenerates us and faith apprehending Christ is given. Just as indeed we sinned in and with the first Adam and were made sinners and guilty and condemned, yet only then are we accounted such and become subject to sin and guilt when we are generated and become partakers of the Adamic nature, by whose bond we are joined. A son becomes a partaker of his father's merits and goods when he is born of his blood or brought into the family. This is how Twiss explains it in Maccovius's Collegiate Disputations on Justification, Disputation VIII.

Therefore, that righteousness of Christ—that is, of Christ insofar as it was performed by Christ—is also ours insofar as it was performed for us, and that before faith it is ours—namely, as being meritorious for bestowing faith itself freely—ours, I say, by right and reason; because it was performed for us by the decree of God the Father and the purpose of the Son, but not by our possession with respect to the sense and acknowledgment of so great a benefit bestowed upon us. For this acknowledgment arises and emerges through faith.

XXIX. But when the same Scripture says that “faith was counted to him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3, 5, 9, 10, 22; Gen. 15:6; Gal. 3:6; James 2:23), it does not indicate that faith is a righteousness required of us, or a meritorious work that gives a right to eternal life (for on the contrary, faith is a renunciation of any such righteousness or merit in ourselves). Nor does it mean that faith, either alone or together with obedience to the commandments, is by some new covenant put in the place of the condition of the covenant of works—that is, chosen by God to be substituted in place of perfect obedience, accepted, and held as standing and in the stead of righteousness (they call this “acception”)—so that by it God is obligated to justify a person and give life to the one who believes and works. Nor does it command us to believe that faith is by God's grace and mercy reckoned so that on account of it we, who are guilty of the most grievous sins, are considered righteous. For such a justification is not a judgment of God according to truth (Rom. 2:1–2), but an abolition of the law of God through faith (Rom. 3:31), a

profanation, blasphemy, and denial of the name of God, and thus dishonorable to God in more than one way.

Rather, by a metaphor taken from merchants, it is taught that God, as if taking His book or account books (in which He writes all our deeds, even our very tears—Ps. 56:8—and according to which all judgment will be carried out), blots out on one side and page our names and sins (whence the phrase “blot out my transgressions,” Ps. 51:1; cf. Matt. 18:23), and on the other side, in place of the obedience we owed, writes and records Christ’s obedience as giving a right to life, and so imputes it to us; and our faith, as the means by which that obedience becomes ours for having a right to life—or by which, united to Christ, we are found in Him having not our own righteousness but the righteousness of God, which is not from the law but from faith (Phil. 3:9)—and so He imputes it to us, so that when those books are inspected, the justice and holiness of our justification may be manifest.

XXX. In this sense we are said to be justified by faith alone, insofar as it alone unites us to Christ and is the first effect of the Holy Spirit, through whom Christ is in us; and insofar as by its confession it consummates the spiritual marriage and actually makes us partakers and as it were possessors of the righteousness which is in Christ and of all gifts with Him (Rom. 8:32; 2 Pet. 1:3), so that the sentence of absolution, remission of sins, and right to eternal life truly belong to us and are ours. For there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1), and as many as received Him—that is, by true faith as a gift—to them He gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12), that is, to act and claim for themselves what belongs to the children of God—for example, remission of sins, the right of inheritance and eternal life, etc.—even though perhaps a fearful conscience, which does not satisfy itself in its duty at that moment and before a fuller examination of itself and testing of its faith, does not yet dare to absolve itself, claim such a right for itself, affirm such grace about itself, glory in God, and rejoice securely and notably.

XXXI. Moreover, the same faith, insofar as it is felt by us (whether this happens through an act of reflection, as they say, or whether our mind by one and the same action perceives both the object and itself turning about the object), becomes in us and for us a most certain sign, testimony, evidence, seal, and pledge of our redemption and of the righteousness in Christ given to us through it, and of the right of the children of God and eternal life. By this God testifies to our souls that He is our God (Ps. 35:3) and declares His will concerning our salvation; and thus He makes us conscious of His love toward us and of the judgment by which He has granted us forgiveness of sins and adjudicated life to us, and has written our names in heaven—that is, in His testament. For faith is the most certain effect and interpreter of this will, love, and grace; and so the Spirit of faith in us becomes a mark and seal of God and a pledge (2 Cor. 1:22; Rev. 7:2–8; Ezek. 9:4), and as it were an impressed and indelible character, testifying that we are Christ’s own

possession, which He acquired for Himself, to inherit life with Him as coheirs (Eph. 1:13–14); and a white stone in the urn of our heart (Rev. 2:17), which stands as a witness of forgiveness of sins and righteousness received—as formerly an acquittal in judgments. Consider also Rom. 8:16; 1 John 5:10.

XXXII. This, indeed, is the seal of our justification and the demonstration of the right obtained—a certain other, new, and (pardon our words, even as used by other orthodox writers) a second justification in our hearts: not now of the unjust, but of the just; not by which the former righteousness, as imperfect, is perfected, but is sealed and confirmed in us. So that a good conscience, finding and perceiving in itself the sincerity of faith, may apply the word of absolution to itself and, as it were, take the place of God in speaking to itself; may receive the sacraments, as “pledges” (1 Peter 3:21), as tokens of its own right and seals of the righteousness of faith (Romans 4:11); and using them as firm foundations and, so to speak, as God’s oath concerning the constancy of His grace, may with boldness ask for the things that belong to the children of God. And thus it may absolve itself, console itself, calm itself, yes, even glory—not indeed in itself and its works before God or toward God (Romans 3:27; 4:2), as if in its own name as a sinner God were so glorified (Isaiah 66:5), that with its heart received into its faith it dares to approach Him (Jeremiah 30:21)—but before itself and men, in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation (Romans 5:11).

XXXIII. In this way, if faith is considered, it does not justify by itself alone, but with it, every work of the Spirit and faith in us. All love and obedience are testimony, evidence, pledge, and effect—not of a dead faith, but of a living one; and so also of communion with Christ and righteousness received in Him, from which it is also called righteousness (Deuteronomy 6:25). All salutary good things which God works in us in this life are certain “firstfruits of the Spirit” (Romans 8:23), sealing God’s justification and the gift of Christ in our hearts and fortifying us for salvation. For while Christ places His goods in us as His dwelling and variously exerts His efficacy through our sanctification, we sense that He has not only simply joined Himself to us but also dwells in our hearts, fully flows into us, occupies us, strengthens us, stirs us to every good work—indeed, performs it in us and through us—so that our very works now become testimonies of His dwelling in us and tokens of the righteousness obtained with Him and of our acquisition (Ephesians 1:14). “If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

XXXIV. Therefore, James rightly says (2:24) that a person is justified also by works, and not by faith only—teaching that there is a justification of the sinner by faith alone, but that it is not alone; since it is followed by another justification of one already just, which is not by faith only. This he shows by the example both of Abraham—who, after he believed and faith was imputed to him for righteousness, and he received the seal of the righteousness of faith, circumcision in his flesh—was nevertheless justified by works;

and of the prostitute Rahab (vv. 21–23, 25). So the more these evidences multiply in us, the more throughout our whole life we are justified—that is, we experience ourselves justified before God and perceive the love of God poured out in our hearts. Hence also (Revelation 22:11), “He who is justified, let him be justified still”—that is, by the exercise of faith and good works let him increase his consolation concerning his justification before God, and before his own conscience and that of others let him show more and more that he is just. “Whoever does righteousness is born of God, and is righteous, just as Christ is righteous” (1 John 2:29; 3:7). To this pertains the fact that—in this sense—not only faith is said in Scripture to be imputed for righteousness, but also acts and works of faith and sufferings—that is, exercises of patience—as fruits, proofs, and pledges of righteousness (Psalm 106:30; Psalm 56:9). These are those “righteous deeds” and justifications with which the Bride of the Lamb is clothed, as with pure and shining fine linen (Revelation 19:8).

XXXV. There remains justification and absolution, which occurs at the death of each believer, as well as that which is deferred until the last day. But since what we have said so far is sufficient for the purpose we intend, we will not trouble our reader with an unnecessary appendix. We proceed, therefore, to what is the main point of the matter we have proposed to explain here, and for the sake of which we have premised the foregoing—namely, the distinctions in justification into different kinds. These arise from certain intervening circumstances: for example, the fall of man creates a distinction between the justification of the covenant of works and that which is by grace. The law added to the promise of grace makes a difference between the justification of believers before Moses and the law, and that which happened to them under the Mosaic economy and law. Finally, the actual redemption and satisfaction of Christ distinguishes the justification of the New Testament from that which preceded it. How the justification of the law or covenant of works differs from justification by grace can be sufficiently gathered from what has been said above, and the occasion given us for writing these theses does not require us to add more. Therefore, we will devote the remaining pages to the distinctions in justification by grace that arise from the diversity of states in which believers lived from the first promise until Christ’s ascension into heaven and the occupation of his kingdom.

XXXVI. We by no means say, nor have we ever said, that believers of former ages obtained no remission of sins at all, or were justified on no grounds. We know from Scripture and publicly profess that Abraham believed, and it was counted to him for righteousness, and so he was justified (Rom. 4:3, 4, 9; James 2:23), and that he received the sign of the righteousness of faith (Rom. 4:11); that the elders obtained testimony that they were righteous (Heb. 11:4, 39); that Noah is expressly called righteous (Gen. 6:9). We believe that we who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham (Gal. 3:9) as his sons (v. 7), who is the father of all who believe though uncircumcised, that righteousness

might be imputed to them also (Rom. 4:11). The fathers were saved through the same grace of the Lord Jesus Christ by which we are saved (Acts 15:11). Lazarus was carried into Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22), as afterward the Gentiles (Matt. 8:11). The faithful of David are given to us in Christ as gifts (2 Sam. 23:8; Isa. 55:3; Acts 13:34), who called him Lord (Ps. 110:1). We wholeheartedly embrace that the fathers were not only justified but also after death brought into glory (Heb. 2:10) and made perfect in heaven (Heb. 12:23), there in their own dwellings—which indeed even in Christ's time were many in his Father's house (John 14:2)—constituting the entire city, namely the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22), of which the earthly pledge had been sealed to them, which is the mother of us all and of which we are children (Gal. 4:26, 31), and that they lived to God (Matt. 22:32; Luke 20:38). In a word, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8).

XXXVII. So much so that here, either a voluntary and affected ignorance—which they wish to reproach in us and which also belongs to the Socinians themselves—or an imprudent and premature zeal in rebuking brethren, or certainly an unworthy imprudence in defaming with unchristian boldness, is displayed by any who dare to compare us with Socinus or his disciples and attempt by this method and reasoning to render our opinion suspect and hateful to the simpler sort. I would dare to affirm that against the insidious schemes of the Socinians—who today with most pestilential artifice and cunning, and most harmful to the church of God, strive to snatch away the Word of God from us through Scripture itself because we do not attend worthily enough to the phrasing of the Holy Spirit—no more effective resistance can be made in this matter than by this very explanation of the genuine difference between the justification of the Old and New Testaments. For by this means those texts of Holy Scripture which they abuse to cloak and embed their error—and thus their chief weapons—are, as it were, struck from their hands.

XXXVIII. The Socinians do not deny that the Fathers before Christ obtained the remission of sins, but on the contrary assert that God so fully pardoned the sins of the ancients that He neither demanded nor would demand any true satisfaction of His justice from them or from any surety. They add that the method of justifying man before God is the same under both covenants, insofar as in both cases the remission of sins is required on God's part. They only deny that the remission of sins which they obtained was promised to them in the old covenant, and they establish some difference between these justifications on the part of men, with respect to obedience, which in these covenants is not entirely the same, and thus in some way changes the method of justification. See Socinus, *Synopsis on Justification*, pages 15–16, and *Theological Lectures*, chapter XVII, where he expressly attempts to prove by many arguments that the ancients had justification and remission of sins without any true satisfaction, either then present or future. This perfection of Socinian justification, which is imperfect and unjust without

any satisfaction to be represented, is directly opposed to our πάρεσις (which is more imperfect and without satisfaction sometimes to be represented), as well as to our ἄφεσις. For they think that every true satisfaction is excluded by ἄφεσις, but we deny that ἄφεσις, emphatically so called, can be given without true and actual satisfaction, which it includes. We abstain from every odious comparison which we might perhaps here return to our detractors.

XXXIX. But setting aside the errors of Socinus and the suspicions or hatreds of others, let us diligently, briefly, and as clearly as possible explain the truth itself. It cannot be denied that as long as the sending of the Son of God into this world and into flesh was delayed by the wisdom of God, the righteousness of the ages had not yet been brought in (Dan. 9:24); but the Fathers anxiously expected and thirsted for the bringing in and manifestation of that righteousness, which they contemplated in figures, testified and promised by the Law and the Prophets (e.g., Isa. 56:1; Ps. 40:10; etc.), Rom. 3:21—that is, the obedience of Christ, which justifies as δικαίωμα and a cause of right (Rom. 5:16, 18), had not yet existed. It is also manifest that at that time that sacrifice had not yet been offered, by whose blood, as the blood of the covenant of grace, the sin of the whole earth was to be expiated and wiped away (Dan. 9:24; Zech. 3:9; 9:11)—which the sacrifices of the Old Testament, the blood of bulls and goats, could not do (Ps. 40:7; Heb. 10:4). That eternal Priest had not yet come (Ps. 110:4), nor that righteous Servant from whom the Father would require our sins, who would bear them, who would become a pattern of the chastisement of our peace, whose soul would make an offering for guilt, a satisfaction price (Isa. 53). But the Fathers sought this salvation (by which the Messiah would save His people from their sins, Matt. 1:21), searching into what and what manner of time the Spirit of the prophets signified concerning the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glories (1 Pet. 1:10–11)—that is, the satisfaction of Christ and those sufferings which would perfect the Author of salvation even for the Fathers themselves (Heb. 2:10) had not yet existed.

XL. God, indeed, wisely willed beforehand to show what is the impotence of the flesh and the law for justification after sin, so that henceforth no flesh might contend with Him, but He alone might have wholly and entirely the glory of regeneration and justification; what is the power of the surety-ship of the Son even before His advent, which is indicated in Isa. 63:9 and Heb. 11:30; and finally, what is the power of His Spirit in the hope of the Redeemer—which is to give redemption itself—not as formerly that legal expiation and redemption of souls (Exod. 30:12, 15) through silver, but without silver (Isa. 52:3) and through righteousness, by which God is sanctified (Isa. 1:27; 5:16), and the outpouring of its communicable fruits in this life.

XLI. From this it is clear, Fathers, that even if they had a sponsor before God on account of whom their sins were not imputed to them for condemnation and exclusion from heaven, but they were brought into glory after death (Heb. 2:10), nevertheless they had

not yet been redeemed: their sins had not yet been expiated and blotted out, so that for them a ransom had not yet been paid, nor indeed satisfaction made for them; the punishment of sins had not so much been removed as deferred to that time when sins would be laid upon Christ, made under the law, to be borne by him on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24). God had not so much forgiven or pardoned sin as, by a certain passing over (Rom. 3:25), he had winked at and tolerated it; which he showed he could do without prejudice to his holiness through the demonstration of his righteousness in Christ's blood (Rom. 3:25–26). God had not so much laid aside his wrath as restrained it; which perhaps, among other things, was signified in 1 Sam. 6:19. And so sin, its guilt, condemnation, and curse—which the accursed death on the tree later testified—were still in the world (Rom. 4:15; 5:13; Heb. 9:15) and lay upon the human race up to that time, so that it could be imputed to all until that judgment (by which sin in the flesh of Christ, who was made sin, guilt, and a curse for us [Gal. 3:13], was judged, condemned, and fully driven away from the throne of divine justice so that it might no longer accuse us [Isa. 1:27; 5:16; Rom. 8:3]; indeed, Satan himself, our accuser, was cast down from heaven [Luke 10:18]) was completed, and Christ had undergone the death of the cross for the redemption of those transgressions that were under the former Testament, and indeed also before it (Heb. 9:15).

XLII. Similarly, it is evident that because the cause of the remission of sins and the right to eternal life did not yet exist—and on the contrary the cause of condemnation was still in the world, namely sin not yet abolished—the Fathers, who could fall into temptation in which they would have to struggle with fear arising from this defect (which the Devil could truthfully object to them), lacked the consolation of the righteousness brought in and the cause of the remission of sins or purification before God (Heb. 1:3). I say nothing of the fact that the Devil could still tempt that very sponsor, the second Adam, not only as before with words and promises, but also by the force of the law with dire, dreadful, even infernal sufferings to evil and thus to seduction—a circumstance which, however much the faithful of that time could have thought about it, I do not know what disturbance it might have produced in the minds of those who only dimly foresaw the mysteries of God. Let us consider what scandals occurred even to the Apostles themselves while eating and drinking with Christ. But whatever may be said about that, certainly the consolatory word about expiated sins and reconciliation accomplished, or about Christ delivered up for our offenses and raised for our justification (Rom. 4:25), could not yet be preached and heard; they could not yet exclaim, “Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ who died, indeed who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:33–34). That absolution had not yet been made by which Christ (and we with him) was absolved and justified from our crimes. See Thesis XX.

XLIII. What? Even the Fathers before Christ was manifested in glory, although on account of the unshaken certainty and possession of inalienable and unchangeable blessedness in that glory and enjoyment of God they could not be disturbed or anguished by any temptation or fear; nevertheless, with respect to this cause of righteousness and remission of sins perfected, they had not yet been wholly consummated. To what extent perhaps we may extend that saying of Paul (Heb. 11:13, 39–40), that they did not receive the promise and were not made perfect apart from us.

XLIV. However, although sin, involving the whole human race in guilt, remained in the world in the manner described above until its expiation and purification (Heb. 1:3) through Christ's blood took place, and could even be imputed to the Fathers; nevertheless, before Moses and as long as the law did not exist, its imputation is denied by the Apostle (Rom. 4:15; 5:13)—that is, nothing was imposed by God or the law upon the Patriarchs to be done for sin or to expiate it, and which would be a burden to them and declare them unclean; but they lived free from public remembrance, accusation, reproach of sin, from the subscription and signing of the handwritten record of debt against them (Col. 2:14), from the yoke and bondage etc., which came from the subsequent law of Moses until the year of grace and acceptance (Isa. 61:1–2), working wrath (Rom. 4:15)—free and as if in the silence of the law blessed by God. Hence the faithful of the New Testament are called their children (especially Abraham justified in uncircumcision) with respect to this common freedom (Gal. 4:31).

XLV. This was the condition of the Fathers before the law was given: they were debtors, yet not compelled by God the creditor or by the law to write a bond or anything similar to the law which was later introduced, any more than if they had not yet taken into account the reckoning of sin not yet atoned for; hence the manner of their justification is easily understood. But after the Israelite people, especially in the wilderness through the making of the calf, had nullified God's covenant contained in the Decalogue and provoked God by their folly—lest the sinner, because of indulgence toward his own offenses, should seem holy and just in his own eyes and think to establish his own righteousness, or lest God be considered like a sinner and His righteousness and grace be despised, and so redemption through the blood of the Sponsor not be esteemed, but rather that on the contrary sin and the power of sin might abound and grace and its power might become more illustrious (Rom. 5:20), that the weakness of the flesh for submitting to the law and the necessity of righteousness or of much healing might be more clearly recognized and its manifestation more anxiously awaited and sought with more vehement desire—God, as a severe and provoked Lord, determined to restrain the former liberty of the Fathers, to change this delicate economy into a harsher one, and to impute sin at least to the fear of death and servitude, and so in this life to take vengeance in His own way. Namely, upon Israel, as upon a disobedient servant and an unruly people, wishing to exercise dominion and power, He neglected them (Heb. 8:9) and subjected them to the law of decrees and to

the dominion and discipline of fleshly legislators and fathers who were rigid enforcers of that law, as is treated in Ezekiel 20 and in sacred history. This imposition of the yoke provides a most clear testimony that the sins of the former testament still remained and persisted.

XLVI. Thus the law is said to have been introduced (Rom. 5:20) and added to the promise because of the transgressions of Adam and of the Israelites (Gal. 3:19), no longer to be overlooked in the former manner: namely, the law through its precepts—not good (the Apostle calls them useless and powerless, Heb. 7:18)—concerning sacrifices for sin and guilt, concerning the distinction of clean and unclean foods, concerning the difference of days, concerning purifications, etc., was purifying the Israelites (Ezek. 20:26ff.), declaring, reminding, indeed accusing and reproaching that their guilt remained and that a worthy sacrifice was required and still desired for them as for the unclean. Hence the law is said to work wrath (Rom. 4:15) and to be a bond against debtors (Col. 2:14). Hence that unbearable yoke (Acts 15:10) and burden of servitude; hence fear of afflictions and death (Luke 1:74; Heb. 2:15), even distinct from eternal death (v. 14)—examples of which are provided by Uzzah, David, the Beth-shemites, etc.—aroused partly from the promise of an earthly pledge which they were bound to love in a special way, partly from the threats of the law and the power of the avengers of the law against transgressors. Hence even the Spirit of the faithful of the Old Testament is called the Spirit of servitude (Rom. 8:15) and the Spirit of fear (2 Tim. 1:7), because He worked in them in a manner suited to that servitude and fear which the law produced—that is, not only did He not remove servitude and fear, but on the contrary caused them to submit to a servile economy and in a singular way to fear for themselves from afflictions and bodily death.

XLVII. Therefore, through hope in the future Messiah (Acts 26:6–7)—by which hope those who hoped are called “the hopeful” (Eph. 1:12), because faith in Christ manifested had not yet come (Gal. 3:23)—and by the force of His pledge, sins indeed in the Israelites, as also in their earlier fathers, were not punished according to merit; indeed, on the contrary they received the right to enter into glory after death (Heb. 2:10), and the grace of remission of sins came to them and was intimated to them. Yet that intimation was accompanied by another intimation—namely, of those things which seem not a little to diminish the sense, certainty, and fruit of that grace. For it was not done without that wrath which the law worked (Rom. 4:15), and in some way upon the cattle of the Israelites—sacrifices which were regarded as part of the priest because they were food to be converted into his substance, and so as it were into the priest himself as a type who bore the sins of the people—and it was poured out upon the Israelites themselves through servitude until He poured it out most fully upon Christ: not without some indignation and severity (Isa. 10:25; Dan. 8:19); not without fear of death and servitude in this life (Heb. 2:15; Luke 1:74); not without daily subscription of the bond which was against them

(Col. 2:14); not without remembrance of sin (Heb. 10:3, 17); not without accusation of violating the covenant of works—a reminder leading to prison and servitude, as Cloppenburg says concerning the Old Testament, thesis XII—a reproach and a kind of condemnation or sentence.

48. Although the faithful of the Old Testament were not under the curse and condemnation of the Law in such a way that it excluded them from the grace and benefit of regeneration, sanctification, glorification, and communion with God—nor did it sentence and deliver them over to the kingdom of sin and death, as all Gentiles and unbelievers were under the curse, since the Mediator’s pledge prevented this—nevertheless, they are considered to have been under the Law’s curse and condemnation in a certain sense (Galatians 3:10, 13; 4:4–5).

This was not only because the Law had not yet been abolished, or because Christ had not yet become a curse to redeem them from the Law’s curse—since that abolition was still required and awaited, a state in which the Fathers before Moses also lived—but also because, on account of the sin of the Israelites, power was granted and given (previously restrained) to the cursing and condemning Law. Through commandments that were not good, useless, powerless, difficult, and unbearable (which are therefore called the wrath that the Law works), along with threats of temporal punishment and lasting curse set before them, it compelled even the faithful Israelites to make a confession of the curse still in effect, to acknowledge the guilt of their sin, to affirm the sentence of condemnation as just, and to write a bond against themselves, as if doing something to atone for sin and satisfy the curse.

By this very means, not only was the word of righteousness—or concerning the imputation of faith for righteousness—hidden, as it were, under this veil of cursing, and the question of the Law’s righteousness made more difficult, but it also came about that the Jews, pursuing the Law of righteousness, did not attain to the Law of righteousness (Romans 9:31). That is, they loved cursing—that is, they loved the cursing Law and sought life through it—and cursing came upon them, and they took no delight in blessing (Psalm 109:17), that is, in the word of blessing or the Gospel; and blessing was far from them, although both blessing and cursing had been set before them by Moses, and blessing had been commended above cursing (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19–20).

Thus, they indeed obtained the righteousness of their father Abraham, but not the same liberty—much less that which belongs to the New Testament. For all these things and their proclamation were a kind of veiling of the promised righteousness, which was later to be revealed apart from the Law (Romans 3:21), and a diminution with respect to its fruits that could be experienced by the faithful in this life. In this way, the justification of the faithful under the Old Testament lost something of the justification of the Fathers who

lived under the promise alone and fell far short of the justification of the faithful under the New Testament.

In a word, as long as the first tabernacle was still standing, the way into the sanctuary had not yet been made manifest and open—the new and living way that Christ inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, through His flesh (Hebrews 9:8; 10:20).

XLIX. Therefore, those who once lived under Moses were all under the ministry of condemnation and death, not under the ministry of righteousness and the Spirit. Moses, as a minister of sin (Galatians 2:17), served that power which makes one guilty, declares, demands the written bond, accuses, reproaches, etc., through his laws. And when he imposed these laws upon Israel and laid that harsh yoke upon their neck, he performed what seemed like a welcome service.

L. Hence it is that the Apostle, who calls the forgiveness of our sins—for those who believe in the dead Christ—ἄφεσιν (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 10:18), distinguishes it from that which belonged to those who hoped before Christ, calling it πάρεσιν—προγεγονότων ἀμαρτημάτων ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ (Romans 3:25), as if a connivance and dissembling of past sins in the forbearance of God, which bore only the appearance thereof. For what else? When that which could be punished according to the law's demand—and nothing prevents its punishment by actual satisfaction—is not punished, or is not punished according to its merit, is it not rightly called by the Apostle πάρεσις—a passing over, a remission, a letting go? Where a daily subscription of the bond is rigorously demanded from the debtor for payment not yet rendered, and so there remains a reminder of the penalty still due and of guilt outstanding or not yet punished—indeed, where there is a certain imputation of sin, and from the anger and severity of the creditor some penalty (e.g., servitude in this life) is imposed upon the debtor, who does not sufficiently acknowledge the grace and clemency of the creditor but is ungrateful, until payment is made and he pants after it; where effects of wrath and remembrance of the violated covenant of works (ἀνάμνησις) are mingled with the consolation of forgiveness of sins, pointing to prison and servitude in this life (see Zechariah 9:11–12); where sacrifices are imposed as if for expiation and satisfaction, though they cannot accomplish it—is there in such a case ἄφεσις τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν in its full emphasis and completeness? Or is it such and as full as that of the New Testament, where all these things are absent? Indeed, as it was fitting for God, because He had brought His sons under the Old Testament into glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering at the end of the ages (Hebrews 2:10), so it was not fitting for Him to forgive fully the sins of His sons under the old testament. And as it was necessary for God, in His forbearance of the sins of the Old Testament, to demonstrate His righteousness (or that He had justly passed over them and not punished them) by delivering up His Son to death, so it was necessary that the righteousness of God under the Old Testament did not

dismiss the punishment of those sins which were tolerated but could still demand it—indeed, did demand it.

LI. Lest this opinion and interpretation of Paul's words be dismissed as novel and hitherto unheard of in our Church, or become a stumbling block to some because it perhaps opposes their preconceived opinions (as even Christ's true and good words were to His hearers, Matthew 15:12), it must be supported by the authority of certain orthodox men of like mind. And lest I seem to have sworn by the words and meaning of one man (whom I revere and am not ashamed to thank publicly because he does not begrudge the Church of God those insights into Scripture which he himself attained by God's singular grace but makes them public property—indeed, does not cease to urge me privately both to meditate more carefully on Holy Scripture myself and to impress its study more diligently upon my hearers), and lest I be accused (as some slanderously say of me) of making an idol of him because I prefer to speak with him from Scripture rather than swear by human words (which are often *καινοφωνία* and *κενοφωνία*), I have resolved to use not his testimony alone but that of several other very learned men.

LII. Theodore Beza, in his Major Notes on Romans 3:25, says that by the words *πάρεσιν* and *ἀνοχῇ* the Apostle explains in this passage what happened to the fathers who preceded Christ's coming in the flesh and the redemption afterward accomplished by Him for us. In the former time, he says, God exercised His great clemency toward sinners—that is, He did not deal with them as they deserved; yet He did not forget the punishment of sins (which His nature cannot allow), but in His singular forbearance He lightly passed over their punishment until, in His appointed time exhibited in Christ, He might at once expiate them together with the sins of others redeemed by Christ. And at verse 26, Beza says: The Apostle shows why, or for what purpose, God so long delayed avenging the sins of the fathers who preceded Christ by His severest judgment in Christ, exhibited so many ages later.

LIII. Cloppenburg, in his disputation on the testimony of the Old and New Testaments common to us concerning salvation, thesis VIII, provides this paraphrase from the words of Romans 3:25:

We understand it thus: because of the passing over (*πάρεσιν*) of sins—that is, the mere dissimulation and forbearance of sins during the time of the Old Testament—since there could not be *ἄφεσις*, or that full remission (which we now enjoy in the present time of the New Testament, so that no offering for sins, whether real or typical, is any longer needed, as in Hebrews 10:18), until full satisfaction was made to the justice of God for sins, God, for the demonstration of His righteousness, etc.

And in thesis IX, he illustrates that paraphrase (which he says is confirmed by Beza in the words we cited) appropriately, as H. Grotius notes on the word *ἀνοχῇ*, which we

translate as “forbearance,” that this word in Greek means a truce, during which war is suspended for a time.

In his **Defensio Catholicae fidei de satisfactione Christi**, page 27 of the first edition (page 23 in my copy), he accordingly attributes to that time of truce what the Apostle calls πάρεσις of sins. Concerning this word, Grotius affirms that Beza’s judgment confirms it means not remission but passing over, and it alludes to that assimilation of the Old Testament to a truce, when through Christ manifested and dying on the cross, it is said that peace has now been made and enmity abolished (Ephesians 2:13). That is, the truce is understood to be ended by full peace, during whose time formerly enmity was not abolished but only suspended and dissembled.

LIV. The same author, in his disputation on the comparison of the Old and New Testaments, thesis VIII:

Through Christ, remission of sins and eternal life are now given to us—not as formerly anticipated on account of a pledge from the surety Christ, who had indeed undertaken it but not yet discharged it—while meanwhile the bonds (chirographa) of sins remained in the instituted worship. But now it is obtained perfectly by a title of right, with the fullest liberty and immunity from the yoke of the old ceremonial law, so that henceforth no offering for sins, whether real or typical, is needed, and that daily repetition of the mention of sins which accompanied the offering of the ancient sacrifices—and which was implicit in it—ceases even in external worship and religion.

As long as this continued, that promise of the New Covenant, “I will remember their iniquities no more,” did not yet have its complete fullness. And therefore, now that this remembrance of sins has ceased in public worship, that promise is rightly claimed as a special privilege of the New Economy of the New Covenant, which is called the New Testament in the passages already compared: Hebrews 8 and 10 with Jeremiah 31.

The same author, on the priesthood of Christ, thesis 16:

God did not remit the sins of the Old Testament with that full remission spoken of in Hebrews 10:18, but only by dissimulation or passing over, in His patience, by which He awaited payment from the Surety.

LV. William Apollonius, Professor in the School of Middelburg, in his disputation on the Law of God, chapter XI, thesis VII:

The orthodox establish this difference in the remission of sins administered under the Old and New Testaments: that under the Old Testament there was πάρεσις of sins, but in the New Testament there is ἄφεσις of sins, as the Apostle also indicates to us in Romans 3:25–26, etc.

In what follows, he adopts Cloppenburg's words from theses 53 and 54 and illustrates them with certain rules, which for brevity's sake we do not transcribe here.

Paraeus, on Hebrews chapter 10, teaches that even the sins of the ancients were remitted without true expiation remaining until they were at last expiated by the death of the Mediator; and that by this expiation having been made, both their sins and ours were truly at last abolished in the judgment of God; and that only in the New Testament is full remission obtained.

LVI. Lucas Gernler, Pastor of the Basel Church and Professor of Common Places and Controversies, in his inaugural disputation on the Covenant of God, thesis LV:

Although he does not interpret Paul's words directly, he says the same thing:

Their sins were remitted to them, yet the bonds (chirographa) of sin remained in the exaction of ceremonial and satisfaction and in the exercise of the moral law; just as a creditor, though given a pledge but not yet paid, neither returns the bond nor ceases to demand payment. They were sons of God but were treated as servants (Galatians 4:1). They were sanctified but with a more sparing measure of the Spirit; they were heirs of eternal life, yet "the way into the sanctuary" (Heb. 9:8) was not yet made manifest.

In the New Testament these benefits come both by a more excellent title and in more abundant measure. Hence they are sometimes ascribed to the New Testament especially or antonomastically: Jeremiah 31:32ff., Galatians 4:5 (?), Joel 2:29 (?), 2 Timothy 1:10.

LVIII. Mestresatius, Pastor of the Parisian Church, on Hebrews 10:17, at the words "I will remember no more," acknowledges that it can be understood as we do, saying: "The word 'more' refers either to the time when Christ had not yet presented His sacrifice to God for our sins, at which time the wrath of God rightfully remained upon men, although God in His goodness restrained it, looking to the satisfaction promised through Christ," etc. That is: The word "more" refers either to the time when Christ had not yet offered His sacrifice to God for our sins, at which time the wrath of God remained by right upon men, although God in His goodness restrained it, looking to the satisfaction promised through Christ, etc. The epitomizer of the Commonplaces of Franciscus Gomarus: "The perfection" in Hebrews 11:40 is to be understood with respect to the merit of Christ; how the fathers were not perfected because the Redeemer had not yet come, and therefore the promised price of redemption had not yet been paid.

LIX. Not entirely unrelated here is the passage of the great Calvin, also observed by others, Institutes, Book 2, Chapter 7, Section 17. After teaching from Augustine that in the Jewish ceremonies there was more a confession of faults than an expiation, he adds: "For what else did they accomplish by sacrifices than confess themselves conscious of death, who substituted victims in their place? What by purifications, except that they

testified themselves unclean? Thus the record of their guilt and punishment was repeatedly renewed by them; the absolution was not in that testimony." In this way the Apostle writes that through the death of Christ intervening, redemption was accomplished for the transgressions that remained under the Old Testament. Therefore, the Apostle rightly calls the records adverse to their worshippers, since through them they openly attested their own condemnation and impurity, etc. From the same Calvin, Marloratus on Hebrews 10:18: "Yet the Prophet, as if bringing something new and previously unheard of, promises that under the New Covenant there will be no remembrance of sins before God. Hence it may be gathered that sins are now forgiven in a different way than formerly. Moreover, this diversity lies not in the word nor in faith, but in the very price of remission. Now, therefore, God does not remember sins because atonement for all has been made once for all. Otherwise, it would be said in vain by the Prophet that this would be a benefit of the New Covenant, that God will not remember sins."

LX. From these it is now clear to anyone paying attention that if someone says, according to a certain phrase of Scripture (which is taken from the cited passages), that in the Old Testament remission—that is, ἄφεσιν—of sins did not exist, he speaks no more heterodoxly than if from John 7:37 he says the Holy Spirit did not exist; from Galatians 3:23 that faith did not exist; from Daniel 9:27 that righteousness did not yet exist—not to mention that it is a familiar phrase of Scripture to deny that things which exist in a lesser degree are present, and conversely to speak of things which are found in a greater degree as if they were absent. On this matter let us hear Friedrich Spanheim in *Dubia Evangelica*, Part 3, Doubt 106, page 531: "Finally, it must be noted," he says, "that Holy Scripture often attributes various benefits to the economy of the New Testament—for example, remission of sins, inscription of the law in human hearts, outpouring of the Spirit, knowledge of God, and other things of that kind—as if they had plainly not occurred for the children of God in the Old Testament, although they did occur for them, because they did not occur in that degree, that measure, that abundance," etc. Mestresatius in *Explanation of Acts 2*: "If someone says to me in Latin: 'Did the faithful of the Old Testament not partake of the Holy Spirit?' To this I respond two things: First, the measure by which they received the Holy Spirit was so small compared to the abundance which God bestows upon the faithful under the New Testament, that Scripture makes no account of it, just as things of small quantity are said to be nothing compared to abundance."

LXI. Indeed, it cannot be denied that this especially applies here, since the Prophets of the Old Testament promise that justification and remission which removes all remembrance of sins as a future good of the New Testament, as we have just observed from Calvin—for example, Jeremiah 31:34. Concerning this passage, let Paul certainly be read in Hebrews 8:7–13; 10:16–18, where he clearly asserts that this remission of sins is properly given only in the New Testament and confirms it from that promise of God. The

other testimonies of the Prophets which contain the promise of this remission and justification proper to the New Testament, because they do not have such an express and lengthy commentary in the same Scripture, we also purposely omit here for the sake of brevity in the disputation.

62. Therefore, when in the last days Christ obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12), and made atonement and purification for sins in His own body (Heb. 1:3), and accomplished that long-desired salvation (Matt. 1:21), and brought in everlasting righteousness (Dan. 9:24), all those defects of justification under the preceding administrations were removed. And from that time, which is moreover called the time of reformation (Heb. 9:10), righteousness has more excellent effects and worthy manifestations—namely, the imputation of former sin and wrath ceased because the law ceased (Gal. 3:19; Rom. 5:12; Rom. 4:15). And we are no longer under law but under grace (Rom. 6:15), and we have complete peace with God (Rom. 5:1). Wrath and severity ceased, and the year of acceptance succeeded (Isa. 61:2). The remembrance of sins ceased (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:12; Heb. 10:17–18), and in its place was substituted the remembrance of Christ crucified (1 Cor. 11:24–25) and of His blood shed for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28). For this is that fountain opened for sin and uncleanness promised under the New Testament (Zech. 13:1). We have not received again the spirit of bondage to fear, but the Spirit of adoption and boldness as sons of God, so that we cry, “Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15). The dominion of the law’s enforcers ceased after Christ freed Himself and the Church from their power—indeed, He stripped them of their authority (Zech. 11:8; Isa. 52:3, 5, 8–9; Col. 2:15). And now, as spiritual priests, without their ministry and subjection, we serve God and approach Him by the newly revealed way of the saints (Heb. 9:8; Heb. 10:20), with confidence (Heb. 4:16), and worship in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23). We obtain mercy and find grace for timely help (Heb. 4:16). Thus the yoke is broken (Isa. 10:27), so that we can no longer be burdened by it (Acts 15:21). The handwriting that was against us was nailed to the cross and blotted out by Christ’s blood (Col. 2:14). There is no accusation, no reproach, no condemnation, since Christ died and sits at the right hand of God (Rom. 8:33–34). There is no more anxiety and weariness like that of the ancients, but rest and satisfaction. The fear of death and afflictions is removed, so that we may now glory in them as in a way fruits of righteousness and effects of Christ’s merit, serving our sanctification and the testing of our faith (Rom. 5:3–5), for greater consolation and peaceful fruits of righteousness (Heb. 12:11), and so that we may serve God without fear (Heb. 2:15; Luke 1:74).

63. This degree of justification, which is granted without those defects in the New Testament, is called forgiveness (Jer. 31:34; Jer. 33:8; Jer. 50:20), remission (Heb. 10:18), which is ascribed to redemption (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). Indeed, in these passages redemption and remission of sins are conjoined by the Apostle, so that we understand that neither is given without the other, neither is separated from the other, and one includes

the other (cf. also Matt. 26:28; Luke 1:77; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; Acts 5:31). It is the non-imputation of sin, which is joined to reconciliation, excluding that imputation of the Old Testament (2 Cor. 5:19); the abolition of sin (Heb. 9:26); the perfection of conscience—indeed, the perfection of those who are sanctified, who previously were not made perfect (Heb. 10:1, 14; cf. Heb. 9:9); the sprinkling of the conscience (Heb. 10:22; cf. Heb. 9:14); the purification of conscience and removal of consciousness of sins (Heb. 9:14; Heb. 10:2, 22); rest for souls (Matt. 11:28–29); peace with God (Rom. 5:1); the summing up of the faithful on earth with perfected spirits in heaven (Eph. 1:10; Heb. 12:22–23; Heb. 11:40); justification (Isa. 53:11); justification through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24); and sanctification (Heb. 10:10–20), etc.

We conclude our theses with the apostolic explanation in Acts 13:38–41:

“Therefore let it be known to you, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses (by its yoke and bondage as well), everyone who believes is justified by Him. Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the prophets should come upon you:

‘Look, you scoffers,

be astounded and perish;

for I am doing a work in your days,

a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.’”

CONCLUSION TO THE READER.

Dear Reader,

What we have here compiled into these theses for the academic exercise of our hearers, we cannot but teach—especially the latter parts—whenever our office requires us to speak about our justification before God, in order to justify others (Dan. 12:3). For if we do not teach these things, we fear that we may not sufficiently glorify God: first, by failing to acknowledge that grace which has come to us (1 Pet. 1:10), and the better things God has provided for us under the New Testament (Heb. 11:40); and second, by failing to distinguish clearly between the fullness of the Christian Church and the thirst of the former age—thereby confusing them, which is not without sin (Deut. 29:19). This amounts to failing worthily to confess that Jesus came in the flesh and is the Christ (1 John 4:2–3), and to being unskilled in the word of righteousness (Heb. 5:13).

O, the excellence of the blessings of the New Testament!

Therefore, we ask you by Him who was made righteousness for us: if you find anything here that seems poorly expressed or not open to a favorable interpretation, do not on that

account think ill of us or our studies, nor let your suspicion burden us. Do not bring an accusation against your presbyter—perhaps even a fellow presbyter (1 Tim. 5:19). You know how unstained the authority of a man of God ought to be, lest the word of God spoken from his mouth be held in contempt; and how, on the other hand, by Satan’s cunning, he is exposed to many slanders and false accusations.

Rather, in a friendly and brotherly way, advise us of what concerns you. Be assured that even if you are a babe in Christ, we will not grieve or take offense at you, but will receive your modest admonition with thanksgiving.

Support us with your watchfulness and prayers, and ask God to be gracious to us and bless our labors more and more.

Chrysostom, Tom. II, Basel Edition, 1558, Homily on Matthew 3, p. 93

But how does Luke say that John the Baptist came into the region around Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins? For that baptism did not actually confer remission; this was the function of that baptism which was given later. For in this [later baptism] we were buried with Him, and our old man was crucified with Him; and before the cross there was absolutely no remission of sins anywhere, since everywhere this is attributed to His blood.

Indeed, Paul affirms the same when he says: “But you were washed, you were sanctified, not by John’s baptism, but in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” And elsewhere he says: “John preached a baptism of repentance,” and he does not say “of remission,” so that they should believe in Him who was to come after him. For since the sacrifice for the sins of the world had not yet been offered, since the Holy Spirit had not yet descended, since sin had not been loosed, nor the enmity between God and man removed, nor the curse blotted out—how could remission of sins take place?

Although we do not now approve these words of Chrysostom in every particular, they nevertheless seem, when taken with discernment, in some measure to illustrate and confirm our own views.

TO GOD ALONE BE THE GLORY.

THE END.