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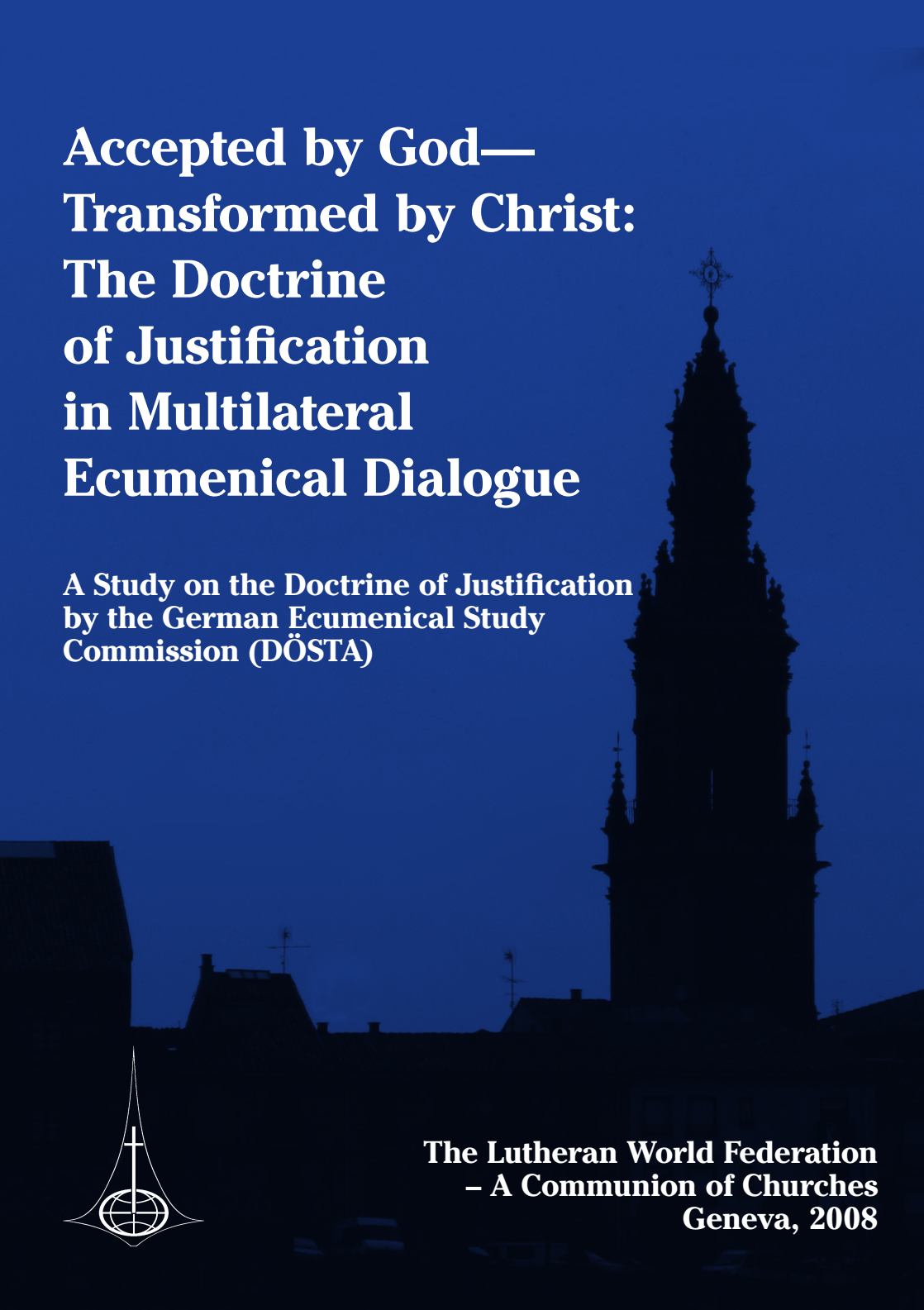
Accepted by God - transformed by Christ#: the doctrine of justification in multilateral ecumenical dialogue.

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Accepted by God—Transformed by Christ: The Doctrine of Justification in Multilateral Ecumenical Dialogue

A Study on the Doctrine of Justification by the German Ecumenical Study Commission (DÖSTA)



The Lutheran World Federation – A Communion of Churches
Geneva, 2008

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Department for Theology and Studies

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Preface

The signing of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (*JDDJ)* on 31 October 1999 in Augsburg, Germany, was an ecumenical event of historical significance. In this careful document, Lutherans and Roman Catholics spoke in one voice on a subject central to the quarrels which had divided them almost five hundred years earlier:

> Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works (*JDDJ* no. 15).

Following the confirmation of this *Joint Declaration* by the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, it was recommended that this historical document be further studied in seminaries and parishes. Furthermore, it was requested that common and deepening ecumenical reflection be continued on the biblical message of justification and its meaning for the churches, for the lives of individual persons, and for society at large.

There have been a number of efforts around the world to respond to this invitation. In 2001, for example, a consultation in Columbus, Ohio, USA, brought together Reformed and Methodist scholars along with Roman Catholics and Lutherans to talk about questions of reception. In 2003, The Lutheran World Federation convened a symposium which included Orthodox, Reformed and Anglican representatives as well as Catholics and Lutherans in a conversation which sought explicitly to ask how agreement on justification could "bear fruit in the life and teaching of churches" (*JDDJ* no. 43). This consultation resulted in the publication, *The Doctrine of Justification: Its Reception and Meaning Today*.[1] Moreover, on the fifth anniversary of the signing of the *Declaration* there was a celebration in South Africa, which invited again to study and reception around the world.

The study by the German Ecumenical Study Commission (DÖSTA), involving representatives of the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches, as well as delegates from the Orthodox, Old Catholic, Baptist, Mennonite and Methodist churches, represents another such undertaking. The commission's state-

[1] Karen L. Bloomquist and Wolfgang Greive (eds), *The Doctrine of Justification: Its Reception and Meaning Today. LWF Studies 02/2003* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2003).

ment shared here is a helpful example of a regional attempt to facilitate the reception process within the wider communion.

As the members of DÖSTA concluded:

> We have not only seen that many churches have welcomed the signing of the *JDDJ* as a positive step, but that the representatives of these other traditions have recognized that their faiths are in fact in agreement with the "consensus in basic truths" of the doctrine of justification as set forth in the *JDDJ*. Often, these representatives have pointed out that their own traditions had already attempted to harmonize the different concerns posed in Roman Catholic and Lutheran theology.[2]

Included in this volume for easy reference are also the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,* the *Official Common Statement* and its *Annex,* and the 2006 *Statement of the World Methodist Council.*

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[2] DÖSTA study, para. 72, p. 29 in this publication.

Accepted by God—Transformed in Christ: The Doctrine of Justification in Multilateral Ecumenical Dialogue

A Study on the Doctrine of Justification by the German Ecumenical Study Commission (DÖSTA)[3]

Introduction

1. Not ten years have passed since the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Roman Catholic Church signed their *Official Common Statement* (*OCS*), and still this event can already be characterized as a watershed in recent church history. With this statement, signed on Reformation Day, 31 October 1999, in Augsburg, Germany, both parties confirmed—officially and "in its entirety"—the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (*JDDJ*), which they had completed in 1997. The event is of historic significance since for the first time in history, the Roman Catholic Church concluded a doctrinal agreement with a church community rooted in the Reformation, and an agreement, moreover, that nullified the validity of the major doctrinal condemnations issued in the sixteenth century.

2. Particularly in Germany and the USA, the agreement was preceded by years of theological dialogue, which focused on a major topic of inquiry among Protestant churches with regard to the Roman Catholic Church: that of the doctrine of justification. A "consensus in basic truths" was arrived at with regard to the doctrine, which, in the sixteenth century,

[3] First published in German, "Von Gott angenommen—in Christus verwandelt. Die Rechtfertigungslehre im multilateralen ökumenischen Dialog. Studie des DÖSTA zur Rechtfertigungslehre," in Uwe Swarat, Johannes Oeldemann, Dagmar Heller (eds), *Von Gott angenommen—in Christus verwandelt. Die Rechtfertigungslehre im multilateralen ökumenischen Dialog*. Beiheft zur Ökumenischen Rundschau 78 (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2006), pp. 13–54.

had been one of the decisive factors leading to the alienation of the two church traditions from one another. With this consensus, any remaining differences over language, theological detail and emphasis are to be regarded as "acceptable," thus posing no further cause for mutual doctrinal condemnation. Although a sizeable group of Protestant professors of theology in Germany expressed their sense that the agreement placed the Lutheran proprium in jeopardy, the majority of Lutheran churches concurred with its acceptance. The agreement seems to be an ecumenical breakthrough for many Christians, not only in the original home of the Reformation, but particularly for those outside Europe.

3. Only two church traditions, viz. the Roman Catholic and Lutheran traditions, were involved in this agreement, reflecting the fact that these churches were the first two opponents in the Reformation struggles, as well as their years of intensive preparation on the matter. If the *JDDJ* is to grow beyond a basic understanding between Lutherans and Catholics, and to provide a long-term foundation for the reestablishment of unity among all Christians, then additional churches of the Reformation tradition and others must also be included in the process. One must examine how the Lutheran-Catholic consensus, which involves the basic truths of the doctrine of justification and the teachings of other Christian traditions concerning justification and salvation, could be extended to agreements between these two churches and others.

4. The German Ecumenical Study Commission (DÖSTA) of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Deutschland (Council of Christian Churches in Germany – ACK), comprises members of numerous different churches. In addition to representatives of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the Roman Catholic Church, the group includes delegates from the Orthodox, Old Catholic, Old Lutheran, Baptist, Mennonite and Methodist traditions. The group was thus well suited as a forum to consider the *JDDJ* from the standpoint of other Christian traditions. From 2002 to 2005, the doctrine of justification was discussed multilaterally in a DÖSTA study project. The results of the project were summarized in the present collective paper, which speaks to a broad, theologically interested audience, including, in particular, those churches and congregational groups represented in the ACK, and the professors and students of theology within the various Christian traditions. This paper is presented with the request that the reader bear in mind the paper's ecumenical approach to Christian soteriology in theological doctrine and future interchurch discourse.

5. In its study project, DÖSTA attempted to understand and correlate the approaches of the various traditions represented in the commission to justification, salvation and the Lutheran-Catholic *JDDJ*. The group also sought to discover how Lutherans and Catholics have assessed the dialogue process and its consequences so far. Furthermore, it focused on two tasks laid out in the *OCS* as areas in which further and more intensive ecumenical discussion seemed particularly urgent, viz. the study of the biblical foundations of the doctrine of justification and the interpretation of the message of justification "in language relevant for human beings today."

6. DÖSTA hopes that, with the publication of the presentations held as part of the project and the compilation of their results within the present study,[4] ***all*** Christian traditions will be taken sufficiently into account in future ecumenical considerations pertaining to justification and human salvation. The commission's work demonstrated how one's own thoughts on an appropriate understanding of the salvation event can be enhanced by an appreciation of other churches' and confessions' priorities in this regard. A willingness to listen and learn from one another hence serves to promote Christian unity, to reveal new insight into truth and thus also to praise God.

I. Background and Discussion of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification among Lutherans and Catholics

7. "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1). It was with these words that the apostle Paul summarized the Christian message. The development of a fixed doctrine based on this and other biblical passages, a doctrine that can be found as a separate topic in the dogmatic textbooks of most Western Christian confessions, was the result of the debate on the correct understanding of the relationship between God and human beings, as initiated by the sixteenth-century Reformation.

8. For the Lutheran confession, the doctrine of justification became an *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* (article by which the church stands or falls) in the struggle with the Roman church and its doctrine of justification by works, which was much criticized by Martin Luther, and took on its most egregious proportions in the sale of indulgences. People cannot attain jus-

[4] *Cf. ibid.,* pp. 57–349.

tification on their own. Only God in God's righteousness can justify sinners by faith and without merit of their own for the sake of Christ. Justification thus constitutes the decisive moment in which God's reconciliation with the world as a whole reaches each individual. Luther identified two aspects of this process: God's fundamental acceptance of a person, i.e. justification, and renewal through the Holy Spirit, i.e. sanctification. Salvation is based on God's acceptance of a person through Jesus Christ's alien righteousness. And yet, it is also anchored in the certainty that God affirms a person's actions derived from faith. According to Luther, good works do not make a good person; good people perform good works. In this, he focused on two matters based on the freedom granted in Christ: overcoming the doctrine of justification by works and curbing excessive freedom.

9. In its examination of Luther's biblical discoveries, the Council of Trent (1545–1563) dealt with the doctrine of justification by distancing itself from perceived Lutheran positions. Catholic doctrine was marked by a strong opposition to Lutheran doctrine, as was especially borne out in defensive language. This was partly due to misunderstandings and a poor grasp of Reformation positions, e.g. in Canon 9 and Canon 32 of the Council's decree on justification. And still, Trent made it quite clear that a person cannot be justified before God by works alone without divine grace through Jesus Christ—thus seizing upon Luther's own premise. In its portrayal of the complex interaction between prevenient grace and human action, the Council bore the concrete process of coming-to-faith in mind, while the Reformers were interested primarily in the fundamental determination of divine action and human faith. The Lutherans expressed condemnations in their 1577 Formula of Concord, although strictly speaking only one such condemnation in the Formula's Solid Declaration can be seen to attack the Catholic position. This denounced the view that justification by faith, or indeed faith itself, can be received and preserved through human works.

10. A state of opposition between Lutherans and Catholics on the doctrine of justification has existed ever since. In spite of various attempts to meet in order to discuss the matter, it took until 1967 for an official dialogue to commence between the Roman Catholic Church and the churches united in the LWF. This dialogue spans both justification and ecclesiology, leading to important studies in the area of justification: "The Gospel and the Church" (1972) and "Church and Justification" (1993). Also of considerable importance were "Justification by Faith," the 1983 report of the US Catholic-Lutheran dialogue, and the work of the Ecumenical

Working Group of Protestant and Catholic Theologians in Germany, which, together with the Gemeinsame Ökumenische Kommission (Joint Ecumenical Commission), in 1986 published the study "The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?"

11. These texts were introduced into the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the LWF to be developed further in the discussions leading up to the 1997 *JDDJ*. The *Declaration* sought to "show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ" (*JDDJ* no. 5). In this light, justification means that "Christ himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father. … By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works"(*JDDJ* no. 15). And finally: "Through Christ alone are we justified, when we receive this salvation in faith. Faith is itself God's gift through the Holy Spirit who works through Word and Sacrament in the community of believers and who, at the same time, leads believers into that renewal of life which God will bring to completion in eternal life" (*JDDJ* no. 16).

12. Differences, however, did persist on a number of points discussed and presented in the *JDDJ*, which uses a form of differentiated consensus, in which meaning and intention are explained within the context of the respective traditions. This means that differences are not eliminated but are framed within the basic consensus of the paper, and thus interpreted merely as differences of focus or emphasis within this overall consensus.

13. One important question is the degree to which the doctrine of justification can be a criterion for Christian doctrine as a whole. The *JDDJ* establishes that the doctrine of justification "is an indispensable criterion that constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ" (*JDDJ* no. 18). While Lutherans emphasize the unique significance of this criterion, although they do not deny the interrelation and significance of all truths of faith, Catholics see themselves as bound by several criteria, although they do not deny the special function of the message of justification. Similarly, common views precede the *JDDJ*'s presentation of the individual positions of the two confessions as variations of emphasis within one consensus on topics including: sin; the way in which God forgives sins and makes

people righteous; justification by faith and through grace; the justified as sinners; law and gospel; and the good works of the justified.

14. A number of professors of theology, primarily within the German-speaking world, began to protest already during the period leading up to the signing of the document by the LWF and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU).[5] Their chief point of criticism was that no agreement had been achieved on the matter of decisive importance to the churches of the Reformation, namely whether faith assures salvation, nor on the question of whether the justified are sinners, nor in the significance of good works for salvation. This criticism thus refuted the assertion that the *JDDJ* achieved a consensus between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran churches in basic truths concerning the doctrine of justification. The critics also pointed to a lack of sufficient consensus regarding the question of law and gospel. The Lutheran emphasis on justification as a unique criterion, and the statement that Catholics see themselves as bound by several criteria, would seem to preclude one another, thus denying any possibility of a differentiated consensus, i.e. any coexistence of differences within a wider consensus. Moreover, they criticized that the adoption of the *JDDJ* would have no effect on the matter of eucharistic fellowship and on a mutual recognition as churches.

15. In 1998, the Vatican published its "Response of the Catholic Church to the *Joint Declaration* of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on the Doctrine of Justification."[6] In part, the response addressed the same groups of questions raised by the aforementioned German professors. For example, it determined that the phrase "at the same time righteous and sinner" in *JDDJ* no. 29 was "not acceptable for Catholics." The Catholic response also sees the necessity to clarify the questions concerning the criteria and on human cooperation in salvation. With regard to the several criteria to which Catholics see themselves bound, the response spells out the particular Catholic wish to maintain a fundamental adherence to Christological dogma and the Trinitarian church creed.

16. The various reactions, not all of which can be listed here, led to the formulation by a small joint working group of an Official Common Statement by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church (*OCS*) including an Annex. The document was signed by both parties at a ceremony on 31

[5] Cf. *epd-Dokumentation* 11/98.

[6] Cf. *epd-Dokumentation* 27a/98.

October 1999, at Augsburg, Germany. The text addressed these critical inquiries and confirmed the *JDDJ* "in its entirety." Shortly before this date, however, numerous professors—again chiefly in Germany—spoke out against its signing.[7] Generally speaking, the same points were criticized as in the professors' earlier reaction to the *JDDJ*.

17. The points criticized were in fact already treated as differing views in the *JDDJ*, but these differences were presented within the basic consensus determined in the *JDDJ*. This criticism, however, demonstrated that there was in fact still some disagreement over the degree to which different views can be tolerated before this precludes a basic consensus. While it is not the task of the present study to solve this problem, future ecumenical discussion will have to address this matter.

18. Discussion on the *JDDJ* continued after the signing of the *OCS*. The critique—again primarily German in origin—focused more strongly on the question of the *JDDJ*'s significance and the extent to which it would be binding for both parties. Official Catholic statements characterized the *JDDJ* as an important foundation for ecumenical-theological endeavors. Even if it is not yet seen as an official doctrinal document, its inclusion in the collection of Catholic doctrinal decisions ("Denziger-Hünermann") is a clear indication of its reception in Catholic theology. While the member churches of the LWF, the Lutheran signatory to the *JDDJ*, are not bound by church law to the organization's decisions, the *JDDJ* was accompanied by an affirmation on the part of leading church organs that is rare when it comes to the signing of ecumenical documents. The synods of all LWF member churches in Germany, for example, expressed their support for the *Declaration*. As it is with the reception of other ecumenical documents, divergent backgrounds in ecclesiology and church order play a role in this particular case. One will need to bear these in mind in further relevant efforts while working towards a view of these different perceptions all being legitimate expressions of Christian faith.

II. Justification and Salvation as Viewed in Other Christian Traditions

19. The *JDDJ* deals with questions and problems that arose between Lutherans and Catholics at the time of the Reformation. These two churches therefore

[7] Cf. *epd-Dokumentation* 45/99.

continued to be the churches most directly involved in this dispute, but the controversy soon reached other Christian churches, which subsequently developed their own nuanced views on justification theology.

20. The ***Old Lutherans*** of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (SELK) constitute such a tradition represented on DÖSTA. Since SELK is not a member of the LWF, it was not involved in the preparing and signing of the *JDDJ*. While the church has not developed its own theology of justification to contrast with sixteenth-century Lutheran theology, it does maintain its own views with regard to the *JDDJ*. The Old Lutherans, for example, emphasize the forensic character of justification as a release from God's wrath which, within the context of the Lutheran confessional tradition, they would like to distinguish clearly from the effective view of justification. Believers are assured of their salvation when they rely on the promise of God's grace and the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ.

12. The tradition of the ***Reformed Churches*** comes closest to the Lutheran understanding of justification. Both Luther and Calvin saw the doctrine of justification as the "main article" of theology. There are, however, certain nuances within this basic consensus. Calvin's soteriology emphasizes the indissoluble interrelation of justification and sanctification with regard to a person's rebirth through faith, i.e. people are justified for the sake of sanctification. Emphasizing God's glory corresponds to an emphasis on the sanctification of human beings. Any synergetic misconception, i.e. the idea that people can or must cooperate with God, is to be excluded with a view to God's eternal predestination.

22. While among the churches of the Anabaptist tradition (***Mennonites and Baptists***) the doctrine of justification was based on Reformed doctrine, the doctrine of those churches has developed its own unique character. For both Baptists and Mennonites, it is important that justification and sanctification are inseparably intertwined, i.e. the imputation of the righteousness of Christ through faith in Christ, and the spirit-driven renewal of each human being. Any justification without a dimension of sanctification would be just as questionable as a sanctification that sought to render the forgiveness of sins superfluous. God does not extend God's grace without human participation, as each person is to accept the gift of grace through their free will. This is made possible by God's prevenient grace. Although they are founded in the same tradition and agree on the basic understanding of the message of justification, Baptists and Mennonites have developed their own nuanced views on the matter: while Baptists primarily emphasize

the necessity to evangelize and the responsibility of each individual before God, Mennonites stress the responsibility of the community as a whole before God. Mennonites thus focus more strongly on discipleship, while Baptists place greater emphasis on personal salvation.

23. Beginning with the Reformation, the ***Anabaptist–Mennonite tradition*** emphasized justification solely by grace through faith—to the exclusion of any justification by works. The tradition concurred with the other Reformation churches that the doctrine of justification constituted the foundation of the Protestant faith. This particular tradition, however, emphasized the connection between justification and sanctification more strongly, reflecting its view of the dangers presented by a "fruitless" faith. Confession and action, faith and works are fully inseparable, while good works are not simply the fruit of faith but the visible expression of faith as love for God and one's neighbor (Rom 10; Gal 5). People are called to follow the path to salvation themselves. This is the only way in which one's own will can follow the will of God, and the broken communion between God and human beings can be restored. The Christ event liberates human will from its complete imprisonment in sin, and, through the reception of God's word, the divine spirit frees the spirit within.

24. The term "justification" is seldom used within the ***Baptist tradition***. Instead, one speaks more frequently of the reconciliation between God and human and of the salvation of the world through Jesus Christ. According to this tradition, faith always also involves active trust, i.e. people cooperate with justification, although not in the sense of earning merit. Since the late nineteenth century, a theology has predominated among Baptists that has strongly emphasized the human freedom to decide—with divine grace and human freedom linked closely together. Since faith entails a personal decision, Baptist doctrine does not view baptism as a means of bringing about faith, but instead as one of affirming and confirming faith.

25. From a ***Methodist perspective***, justification is understood as the reestablishment of the proper relationship between God and sinners through Christ's ministry of reconciliation. This can only occur through faith. Christ's righteousness is granted and imputed to people by God's action, while the Holy Spirit enables them to trust in God. Methodists thus view justification through faith in Jesus Christ as determining one's entire Christian life through God's actions and the personal reception on the part of each individual. One can thus say that while the Method-

ist churches are in fact deeply connected with the Lutheran tradition, one cannot overlook their emphasis on God's saving action not only becoming visible in the forgiveness of sins and acceptance of sinners, but also in the transformation and re-creation of the justified, who are liberated from the power of sin in the process of sanctification. The prevenient grace that is active in each individual allows one to embrace God's action. Methodists today still maintain the tension, unresolved from the days of John Wesley, between the continued practice of child baptism and the deliberate emphasis on faith as a personal experience. These two elements still need to be placed in theological correlation.

26. The ***Old Catholics*** also maintain an intermediate position of this kind. From the Old Catholic perspective, justification is a momentary event, while sanctification is a long-term process. Justification is a divine action, but one in which human beings cooperate, which not only saves from the penalty for sin, but from sin itself. Good works are seen as a consequence of faith, thus avoiding their characterization as a means of acquiring merit. The Old Catholics thus see themselves tied to both the Roman Catholic tradition and the aims of the Protestant Reformation. From an Old Catholic point of view, it is important that with respect to people God always remains the active one. Human action is not to be seen as secondary to divine action, but instead to be taken seriously in its own right as the independent action of the created. Justification is a singular act of God, but one that must be received by human beings time and again. Sanctification is, by contrast, a continuous act. "Good works" are not grounds for merit but instead the direct manifestation of sanctification itself. Such works are not able to determine one's final destiny, but can temper this destiny in accordance with God's free and just will. The Old Catholics adhere to the doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator.* Justification and sanctification are not only a doctrine, but the message itself, which everyone who upholds the name of Christ must accept in their own personal decision for faith. In the end, justification is the "divinization" of humans, i.e. overcoming limitations as human beings and as part of that which has been created. The application of Christ's works of salvation is a "synergetic work," i.e. God brings about everything as creator and savior, while the human also brings about everything as the created and saved. Justification and sanctification occur in cooperation between God and human.

27. The traditions, terminology and theological style of Western doctrines of justification are not familiar to ***Orthodox theology***. Orthodox Christianity focuses on human salvation (*soteria*), which constitutes an act of God's

immeasurable love and reconciling grace. This process begins with the creation of humanity and is fulfilled with Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, whereby his entire life and works are salvific. Orthodox Christianity thus focuses on the church fathers' words to the effect that "God became human so that humans can become divine." God's saving work in Christ brings about reconciliation between human beings and God, and their reestablishment in the image of God, their liberation from the bondage of sin and death. It opens up the possibility of growing increasingly similar to God by cooperating, of one's own free will, with divine grace. One basic Orthodox tenet is that salvation depends entirely on the grace of the Triune God. Grace means that God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is active in God's relationship with human beings. The salvation in Jesus Christ that occurred once for all people at all times is accorded to them in faith, to the inclusion of works, through the work of the Holy Spirit. This occurs in worship centered on the Word and sacraments. Salvation is transmitted to the believers within the community of the body of Christ and not through each individual's relationship with God. No person is saved alone. Orthodox theology understands human participation in attaining salvation as free human cooperation with God, but not in the sense of an equally shared participation of God and human beings. Salvation comes from God alone, but people play an active role in their reception of salvation. God brings about salvation in people but not without them. This synergism means that people are God's coworkers but not their own co-saviors. God wants people to desire their own salvation. He strengthens their will, but they still remain free to decide for themselves whether to become God's coworkers or not. Salvation is not forced on anyone.

28. In summary, we may establish that there is a broad consensus in the understanding of the doctrine of justification. Many traditions, however, emphasize human free will and the need of sanctification to a greater degree than do Lutherans, and hence accentuate the ethical consequences of justification. None of the traditions represented view good works as a condition for justification, but rather as its consequence. Differences do, however, exist in terminology and theological style. The fact that some of these traditions rarely use the term "justification," but instead prefer "salvation" or "reconciliation," is connected to the fact that justification is viewed from a different perspective, and is assigned a different status in theology and in faith than it is in the Lutheran tradition.

29. In light of its findings, DÖSTA is favorable to the recommendation to prepare an even more comprehensive common declaration on a range

of topics concerning human justification. This should take place in the course of official, multilateral discussions at the international level, taking the views of other traditions into account. In a first step toward this goal, the signatories of the *JDDJ* invited the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the World Methodist Council to a consultation in November 2001, at Columbus, Ohio, USA. Further Christian traditions have yet to be introduced to these discussions.

III. The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification from the Perspective of Other Christian Traditions

III.1. The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification as an Historical Event

30. The *JDDJ* between the Roman Catholic Church and the LWF and the supplementary *OCS* have been recognized as an historical event and ecumenical milestone by the spokespersons of all the Christian traditions represented in DÖSTA.

31. The general synod of the Evangelical Reformed Church views both documents as a convergence in the understanding of justification between Reformed Christians and Catholics as well, thus providing an opportunity to join together with Catholics in proclaiming the message of God's liberating grace. The church leadership of the SELK addressed the *JDDJ* and the *OCS* in two separate statements, both of which—the second more strongly than the first—positively acknowledged the dialogue as such, despite numerous objections regarding content. In its "open letter" to the signatories, Germany's Baptist leadership described the *OCS* as a great step along the path toward Christian unity. In September 2003, the World Methodist Council announced its intent formally to affirm the *JDDJ*. The agreement between Catholics and Lutherans in this matter was also emphatically welcomed by the representatives in DÖSTA of other Christian traditions that have, however, yet to react to it officially.

32. Both the contents of this agreement and its very existence are thus of an ecumenical relevance that goes well beyond the two confessions involved. The success attained in finding a "consensus in basic truths" in the question of human justification, which had been of central importance in the separation of Lutheran and Roman Catholic Christianity since the sixteenth century, provides encouragement for other Protestant and

Catholic churches as well as Orthodox Christians to continue to work optimistically toward overcoming the differences that continue to exist.

III.2. The Basic Consensus

33. The theological basis for the "differentiated consensus" among Catholics and Lutherans is laid out in paragraphs 15–17 of the *JDDJ*. It is of great importance that this "common understanding of justification" has also been recognized as conforming to the faiths of the other church traditions represented in DÖSTA.

34. The representatives of the Orthodox traditions stated that they regard the newly resolved controversy over the doctrine of justification to be a primarily Western problem, which they had difficulty understanding. This is particularly true of the view of the doctrine of justification as a criterion for the church's teaching and practice. Furthermore, they see no fundamental contradiction between the views on the doctrine of justification shared by Catholics and Lutherans in the *JDDJ*, and the teachings of their own churches.

35. The reactions on the part of the Old Lutherans and the Reformed churches were rather restrained. The Old Lutherans were, however, able to concur with the centrally important paragraph 15 of the *JDDJ* and with paragraph 2C of the *OCS Annex*, in which both parties agreed that justification occurs "by faith alone." The Old Lutherans also recognize that many central theological matters of dispute have been drawn into a "certain consensus." Representatives of the Reformed tradition welcomed the common statement that people are fully dependent on divine grace as a commonly recognized basis for an understanding regarding the substance of faith.

36. The "consensus in basic truths" with regard to the doctrine of justification thus goes well beyond the ranks of the Lutherans and Catholics involved in the process. While the Methodists, for example, are preparing to affirm the content of the *JDDJ* (see para. 31, above), the Reformed churches are not currently entertaining such a step.[8] Instead one must

[8] On 23 July 2006, in Seoul, South Korea, the World Methodist Council and its member churches affirmed "their fundamental doctrinal agreement with" with the *JDDJ.* The Official Common Affirmation declared, "The present achievement and commitment are viewed by Catholics, Lutherans, and Methodists as part of their pursuit of the full communion and common witness to the world which is the will of Christ and for all Christians." See p. 75 in this publication.

note that the *JDDJ* itself does not seek an ecumenical consensus beyond that of its signatories.

37. The particular proximity of Methodist doctrine to the *JDDJ* stems from the fact that the Methodists, as a result of their own theological tradition, were not able to take any particular side in the dispute between the conventional Roman Catholic and Lutheran doctrines of justification. The Methodists instead appreciate valid points of both traditions. Similarly, this holds true for the Baptists. While both Baptists and Methodists grew out of the Reformation in Great Britain and identify strongly as Protestants, they cannot abide by certain features of Reformation theology that they consider to be overly extreme. The Catholic-Lutheran attempt to find common ground in the *JDDJ* is thus quite compatible with these traditions.

38. Methodists, Baptists and Mennonites share a strong pastoral emphasis in their theology. For them, a "perfectly" phrased ***doctrine*** of justification is less important than a proclamation and living fulfillment of the ***message*** of justification that calls people to faith and devotion to Christ. Founded in a similar tradition, the Reformed churches have criticized the *JDDJ* for not differentiating between the doctrine and message of justification, and thus neglecting an important ecumenical commonality, i.e. the possibility and necessity to listen to the message of justification together despite any doctrinal differences.

39. The Old Catholics also maintain that justification and sanctification are not a mere "doctrine" but represent the Christian message of salvation itself. In the dispute over the correct understanding of justification between Lutherans and Catholics, the Old Catholics have taken an intermediary position. While they do not refute Roman Catholic doctrine, they are equally open to the views of the Reformation.

III.3. Methodology

40. The text of the *JDDJ* constitutes a summary of many years of ecumenical dialogue, generally pursuing a method of discourse known as "differentiated consensus." The method does not attempt to reach a comprehensive consensus with dialogue partners to culminate in the issuance of identical statements with regard to each and every point of doctrine. Such a goal would represent an attempt at defining unity in faith as a type of uniformity. The method of differentiated consensus is based on

the belief that unity in faith can only be experienced in a diversity in which the remaining differences between confessions and traditions are no longer a church dividing force.

41. A differentiated consensus therefore combines two elements: the statement of a general agreement with regard to a previously controversial doctrine; and the explanation of how remaining doctrinal differences do not preclude each other's validity or cast doubt on the agreement in general. This process first requires an examination as to whether the doctrine of one party does not in fact exclude the concerns of the other party. If this is not the case, one must then ask whether the central matters and concerns that are of importance to one party can also be upheld in the doctrine of the other party. Those involved in preparing such a differentiated consensus must therefore know precisely which concerns are inherent in the traditionally controversial doctrine, whether these concerns can in fact be shared, and whether the "remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis" (*JDDJ* no. 40) would be compatible with such shared concerns. The paragraphs of the *JDDJ* which set forth a common understanding thus avoided using terms specific to only one of the two traditions, attempting to use instead a terminology developed by both parties together. The two parties' separate explanations in the second part of each section do not only serve to clarify any remaining differences, but also in each case to translate commonalties into the terminology familiar to the respective tradition.

42. The method of differentiated consensus as used in the *JDDJ* thus serves to differentiate between the underlying basis of faith and its expression—or between the historically developed form of the doctrine and its theological substance. This method was generally met with approval by the DÖSTA membership. Only the Old Lutherans criticized the method for dealing insufficiently with the fundamental decisions underlying the doctrinal condemnations, and for not upholding the precedence of Holy Scripture over church doctrine.

III.4. Topics of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification from the Perspective of Other Traditions

43. In the following, we will treat those topics of the *JDDJ* in which other church traditions differ—without casting doubt on their general agreement with the basic consensus.

a. The Status of Justification in Soteriology

44. In our multilateral theological discussions, disagreement with the *JDDJ* arose in one area in particular: the theological status of the terminology specific to justification. The term "justification" does not occupy as prominent a position in all church traditions as it does in the Lutheran tradition, as seen both in the doctrinal disputes of the sixteenth century and indeed in the *JDDJ* itself. In the soteriology of other traditions, one may, instead of justification, speak of reconciliation, rebirth, conversion, sanctification, renewal, liberation, or divinization. This holds in particular for the Orthodox tradition, which seeks to maintain the theology of the early church, but also for Baptists and Mennonites who are rooted in the Reformation and emphasize the testimony of the Bible in their doctrine. Together, they point to the fact that the Holy Scripture is, as a whole, much more diverse with regard to the justification event than the *JDDJ* would indicate.

45. The *JDDJ* also takes into account the diversity of themes, terms, narratives and viewpoints in which the Bible addresses God's acts of salvation. The section on the "biblical message of justification" begins by quoting John 3:16, in which the term "justification" is not used as a biblical summary of the gospel (*JDDJ* no. 8). The centrality of this verse to the soteriology of both the Orthodox and Baptist traditions precipitates the ecumenical task of specifying more closely the relationship between Pauline and Johannine soteriology, comparing, for example, Romans 1:16f. with John 3:16. The *JDDJ* establishes that the good news summarized in John 3:16 is represented differently in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Even in Paul's letters, the gift of salvation is not always described in the same way (*JDDJ* no. 9). The particular prominence of the term "justification" among other descriptions (*JDDJ* no. 9) is an exegetical judgment, the relevance of which would need to be worked out in ecumenical cooperation with regard to the hermeneutics of the Bible as a whole and to church doctrine. One of the most important ways Lutherans and Catholics could enrich the other church traditions would be the understanding of how the message of justification "directs us in a special way towards the heart of the New Testament witness" (*JDDJ* no. 17).

46. This would be necessary for other church traditions to be able to understand how the doctrine of justification, according to common Lutheran and Roman Catholic conviction, "is more than just one part of Christian doctrine" but is instead an "indispensable criterion that constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ" (*JDDJ* no. 18). This was a

particularly controversial point during the preparations for the signing of the *JDDJ*, as Lutherans traditionally view the doctrine of justification as the sole criterion and not, like Catholics, as one among many (see para. 15, above). Reformed theologians have even criticized that, despite explanations to the contrary, the *Declaration* treats the doctrine of justification as a finite aspect of doctrine, and thus as part of the framework of interpretation of the Council of Trent. There have, however, also been Lutheran voices that see an advantage, in terms of a better understanding, in linking the doctrine of justification to Christology. This point of contention has yet to be debated sufficiently; to determine the status and function of the doctrine of justification in order to avoid either a one-sided overemphasis or a complete dismissal of the particular importance of its witness remains a matter for future bilateral and multilateral ecumenical discussions.

b. God's Grace and Human Cooperation

47. Among the topics presented within the *JDDJ* as "explications" of a common understanding of justification, the first of these, involving the matters of justification "by grace alone" (*sola gratia*) and of human cooperation (*JDDJ* nos. 19–21), was a particularly frequent topic of discussion in the DÖSTA dialogue. Lutherans and Catholics together confess that human beings are as sinners "incapable of turning by themselves to God to seek deliverance, of meriting their justification before God, or of attaining salvation by their own abilities" (*JDDJ* no. 19). Within this context, Catholics teach that people "cooperate" in their justification through their consent to God's justifying action, while Lutherans teach that one can only receive "mere passive" justification.

48. With regard to the appropriation of the divine life in Christ, the Orthodox tradition speaks of a "synergy" between divine grace and the human will of the believer, without however denying the absolute priority of grace, as it is indeed God's grace that enables the human will to conform to divine will. The Old Catholics agree inasmuch as they deem the transmission or appropriation of salvation to be "synergetic" in character—not, however, the act of salvation itself. In agreement with the Orthodox, they explain that people are never completely passive in acts of faith; as faith is not God's work alone, but that of human beings as well, of the human freedom that is granted by grace. In this sense, people cooperate with God in the appropriation of salvation, and are moved by God to act themselves—and not just to remain idle (following Augustine's *aguntur ut agant, non ut ipsi nihil agant* in *De correptione et gratia* 2,4).

49. Similarly, many Anabaptists during the Reformation (whose closest successors today are the Mennonites) were convinced that God's prevenient grace (*gratia praeveniens*) enabled people to accept the gift of faith of their own free will. People are able to work together with God, but only once upon the path of Christian discipleship between rebirth and fulfillment—while continually requiring their sins to be forgiven.

50. Today, Baptists are often concerned that an emphasis on human passivity could render one's free decision for faith pointless and unnecessary. During the first two and a half centuries of their history, a considerable number of Baptists continued to teach converts of the irresistibility of grace and human passivity. Other Baptists, by contrast, supported the view that God granted people the freedom to accept or reject God's grace. The nineteenth-century Baptist revivalist movements chiefly supported this approach. It is therefore significant for Baptists today to read in the *JDDJ* that Lutherans equally do not deny "that a person can reject the working of grace" and that they are fully involved personally in their faith (*JDDJ* no. 21). Baptists, however, reject out of hand any merit-based human cooperation in their justification.

51. Together with the Lutherans, Methodists teach that "a person can only receive … justification" (*JDDJ* no. 21); they disagree however with the addition of "mere passive" before justification. Instead, they speak of God's prevenient grace (*gratia praeveniens*), which allows people to embrace God's action. Just like the Anabaptist Balthasar Hubmaier before him, the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, liked to quote Augustine: "He who created you without your help does not justify you without your help. He thus created the ignorant and justifies the willing" (*Sermo* 169:11,13). Nobody is justified without the will to be justified.

52. The Old Lutherans, by contrast, emphasize human passivity in justification. They do not see faith as a human attitude but instead as a divine decision. Full personal human participation in justification does not only start with the human response to the gospel in faith, but begins even earlier with the gospel itself when it addresses humanity.

c. Forgiveness of Sins and Sanctification

53. In the *JDDJ*, Lutherans and Catholics agree that in their justification, people are made righteous and their sins are forgiven, as they are united in faith with Christ, who is both the forgiveness of sins and the saving presence of God (*JDDJ* no. 22).

54. The Old Lutherans disapprove of this tying together of statements which, according to the dialectics of law and gospel, should not be placed on an equal footing. They criticize that the forensic aspect of justification, i.e. that God justifies the godless for the sake of Christ, is almost entirely neglected.

55. The Baptist confessional tradition, on the other hand, agrees with the *JDDJ*'s integrative understanding. Since its very beginnings, this tradition has emphasized the connection between the imputation of Christ's righteousness and spirit driven renewal, justification and sanctification, the forgiveness of sins and new life, faith and works. Methodism also underscores the link between justification and sanctification. Following the Reformation tradition, it sees justification as the forgiveness of sins through the imputation of Christ's righteousness, always tied, however, to the intrinsic change that is sanctification, which leads to "Christian perfection."

56. The Anabaptists of the Reformation era and their successors, the Mennonites, adopted the Reformers' belief in justification alone by grace through faith, while nonetheless emphasizing the sanctification that must be directly connected with this. Good works are not simply the consequence of faith, but also a visible expression of faith. In the dialogues between Mennonites and Lutherans in the 1980s and 1990s, the two parties adhered to the same conviction: "We receive salvation without works, but the absence of works reveals the absence of faith." Unlike other churches, this close connection between faith and good works has led the Mennonites to reject any political use of force.

57. Old Catholic doctrine also expressly connects God's declaring and making people righteous and justification and sanctification. Good works are not essential as a means of earning merit but are instead the consequence of faith; they do not merely symbolize justification but are its direct result.

d. *Simul Iustus et Peccator*

58. In the *JDDJ*, Catholics and Lutherans together confess that the justified "are continuously exposed to the power of sin still pressing its attacks," and must thus ask God daily for forgiveness to be called again and again to conversion and penance (*JDDJ* no. 28). This confession is compatible with the Lutheran view of the justified remaining sinners (*simul iustus et peccator*) and maintaining their selfish desires, while Catholics perceive in the justified an inclination (concupiscence) to contradict God that

does not constitute "sin in an authentic sense" (*JDDJ* nos. 29 and 30; *OCS Annex* 2B).

59. The Old Lutherans view the text of the *JDDJ* as an unacceptable "deflation" of the concept of sin, as it does not take into consideration the all-encompassing nature of being a sinner and being justified. Even Christians are continuously accused by God's law.

60. The traditional Methodist doctrine of "Christian perfection," dating back to John Wesley, views only willful sin to be "actual" sin, not unlike the Catholic concept of sin. From this, Wesley drew the conclusion that it must be possible, through spiritual growth, for Christians to stop sinning. Today's Methodists are aware of the limits and dangers of this doctrine, partly as the result of the influence of Lutheran theology. They remain, however, reserved with regard to the Lutheran concept of *simul iustus et peccator*, at least in its interpretation as a twofold statement of one's entire nature (i.e. not only partly righteous and partly sinful, but entirely righteous and entirely sinful), which departs from the statement in Gal 5:17, in which the "flesh" (one's old sinful nature) and the "spirit" (God's new creation in us) struggle with one another. Methodists see Christians, as long as they walk the earth, to be at the same time righteous and yet prone to temptation.

61. In their dialogue with the Lutherans, the Mennonites in Germany stated that they now recognize *simul iustus et peccator*, which had been rejected by Menno Simons and other Anabaptists of the Reformation era. A considerable number of Mennonites adhere to this position to this day. While they do not deny that the baptized are also in continual need of forgiveness, they wish to differentiate with complete clarity between the old, unsaved life and the new life derived from the spirit. Many Baptists harbor similar reservations with regard to *simul iustus et peccator*, criticizing it as non-scriptural, as the relationship between the righteous and sin is not in fact described in Romans 7, upon which Luther originally based this concept, but in Romans 8, which speaks of life in the Spirit.

62. Old Catholics share the Roman Catholic concept of sin, according to which human sin only occurs when a person willingly chooses it (cf. *JDDJ* no. 30). The Old Catholics nevertheless affirm the Lutheran view of *simul iustus et peccator* as well, reflecting the continually unfolding nature of sanctification alongside the momentary act of justification. Old Catholics emphasize that *simul iustus et peccator* is not to be understood ontologically but within the context of the history of salvation.

III.5. *Additional topics from Other Traditions*

63. In the course of its discussions, DÖSTA came across further topics that had not been treated in depth, or at all, in the *JDDJ*, but which are in fact noteworthy for their close relation to the doctrine of justification, as seen in some of the traditions. We are convinced that a closer look at these topics can considerably enrich one's understanding of Christian salvation and justification.

a. Divinization (*Theosis*)

64. Following the tradition of the Greek church fathers and liturgies of the early church, the term "divinization" (*theosis*) is central to Orthodox soteriology, taking the position commonly represented by "justification" in Western theology.

65. "Divinization" is understood to mean a unity between God and human, not based in nature but in grace, a partaking in divine energy that is fulfilled in transfiguration and the victory over death. Divinization is the eschatological goal of human beings, who are at first created by God to be similar to God, i.e. are determined to rise to God through virtue, but who are not able to reach this goal due to their sin. God's becoming human in Christ did, however, divinize human nature so that people who take part in the Eucharist also take part in the divinity of Christ, and can thus once again reach the goal of divinization. Since salvation consists in the reestablishment of one's similarity to God, it is seen in the Eastern churches not as a juridical but as a therapeutic process, a healing of broken humanity.

66. Future multilateral ecumenical discussion should delve deeper into the compatibility of the doctrine of justification with the doctrine of *theosis*. There is undoubtedly a close connectedness between an "effective" understanding of justification—i.e. the concept of justification as rebirth, renewal, the process of making righteous, or sanctification—and the concept of human divinization. According to the *JDDJ*, justification, seen as a process of making righteous, is to be understood as the forgiveness of sin in the sense of sins not being counted against someone, with the effective and forensic dimensions of justification closely related (cf. *JDDJ* no. 22). Hence, the question arises of whether justification, as understood in the forensic sense, and divinization actually contradict each other. It is to be expected that using the method of differentiated consensus, the juridical and therapeutic concepts of the salvation event can indeed coexist.

b. Faith and Baptism

67. According to *JDDJ* no. 16, the understanding of justification shared by Lutherans and Catholics is that we receive salvation in Christ and therefore justification "***in faith***." The two parties to the *JDDJ*, however, also confess that "by the action of the Holy Spirit ***in baptism***, they [sinners who believe] are granted the gift of salvation" (*JDDJ* no. 25), and that "***in baptism*** the Holy Spirit … justifies" (*JDDJ* no. 28). One relevant question, however, that of the relationship between faith and baptism in justification, remains unanswered in the *JDDJ*. Especially among Baptists and Mennonites, this has led to the impression that the sacrament of baptism is being overemphasized in relation to God's Word and faith. These churches, which reject child baptism and only baptize those who have attained the age of accountability and who personally confess their own faith, do not see baptism as an act that ***brings about*** faith but rather as an ***affirmation and confirmation*** of faith. This question, unanswered in the *JD*, would have to be discussed with Baptists in order to move towards a common understanding.

c. Justification and Community

68. Mennonite, Old Catholic and Orthodox representatives have stressed that justification not only constitutes the experience of an individual, as it would seem in the *JDDJ*, but is an ecclesiological event as well. Orthodox Christians emphasize that divinization takes place within the community of the church, especially in the course of the Divine Liturgy. According to the Old Catholics, justification through Christ has "real presence" in the sacraments and thus also in the church as a "mark of salvation." Moreover, the Pauline message of justification does not chiefly focus on how individuals can be saved, but instead on how God collects God's people from among Jews and Gentiles to bring about the coming of God's kingdom.

69. Mennonites interpret justification as a social event, as it makes it possible for people to reconcile with each other. Mennonites also point to the Pauline doctrine of justification, which is not restricted to the reestablishment of communion between God and humans, but also involves community among people. The reconciliation of people of differing background, which is made possible by justification, becomes a reality within the communion of Jesus. This community is characterized by a messianic lifestyle and thus not only ***teaches*** an ethic of discipleship, but symbolically ***embodies*** such an ethic as well.

d. Salvation at the Final Judgment

70. The Old Lutherans expressly welcomed the mention of final judgment in Annex 2E of the *OCS*. They criticized, however, the lack of clarity concerning how God's justification of sinners here and now relates to God's final judgment. There is no mention of who or what saves us in God's final judgment. This is connected with an insufficient treatment of law and gospel, which also led to a lack of light being shed on the underlying reason for the assurance of salvation.

e. The Character of the Message of Justification in the Context of the Bible as a Whole

71. The Reformed representatives were the most vocal in criticizing the *JDDJ* for seemingly supporting the problematic standpoint that the doctrine of justification was the advantage of the New Testament over the Old Testament, and thus implicitly also that of Christians in comparison with Jews. Since, however, the gospel of the justification of sinners is also well attested to in the Old Testament, the presence of justification theology all throughout the Bible must be more strongly emphasized in future studies.

III.6. Conclusion

72. This summary of other Christian traditions' positions with regard to the *JDDJ* allows us to respond to the question posed in the introduction to this study of whether the consensus among Lutherans and Catholics can be expanded to other Christian traditions. We have not only seen that many churches have welcomed the signing of the *JDDJ* as a positive step, but that the representatives of these other traditions have recognized that their faiths are in fact in agreement with the "consensus in basic truths" of the doctrine of justification as set forth in the *JDDJ*. Often, these representatives have pointed out that their own traditions had already attempted to harmonize the different concerns posed in Roman Catholic and Lutheran theology. An overwhelming majority of DÖSTA commission members have also stated their approval of the method of "differentiated consensus" as used in the *JDDJ*, recognizing its advantages in terms of ecumenical cooperation.

73. It has also become quite clear that while most other traditions are able to accept the basic concerns of the *JDDJ*, they could not however adopt the precise wording of the *Declaration*. While not necessarily differing

in substance, the Lutheran-Catholic text often places its emphasis on other places than other Christian traditions. This includes a wide range of topics such as the specific use of justification terminology in Christian doctrine; the relationship between divine grace and human cooperation; the connection between the forgiveness of sins and sanctification; and the status of the justified as sinners. There was a strong tendency in soteriology to add other terms and concepts to justification terminology; to focus more strongly on the cooperation of human will in justification as made possible through God's grace; to underline the necessity of sanctification and good works; and to emphasize the reality of the new life granted by the Holy Spirit, especially in view of the sins of the justified. A multilateral ecumenical discussion moving past these beginnings would, conversely, provide these other traditions with the opportunity to hear from the Roman Catholics and Lutherans why and in what sense justification in particular is considered to be "an indispensable criterion" in the teaching and practice of the church; why and in what sense human "cooperation" in justification and human "passivity" are not mutually exclusive; why and in what sense the justification event is both forensic and effective; and why and in what sense one can speak of the justified as being sinners.

74. The multilateral discussion of DÖSTA, furthermore, brought to attention a number of areas that, according to the views of these other Christian traditions, are connected to the topic of justification, but which had not been treated sufficiently or at all in the *JD*. The various representatives saw a need for improvement in different areas: the Orthodox, Old Catholic, and Mennonite representatives in relating the justification event to the community of believers; the Baptists and Mennonites in a clarification of the relationship between faith and baptism; the Orthodox in the inclusion of the early church's view of the divinization (*theosis*) of human beings; the Old Lutherans in relating justification here and now with human salvation upon final judgment; and the Reformed representatives in the appropriate inclusion of the message of justification in the Old Testament. Taking these concerns into account would not only serve to expand on the *JDDJ*, but would also considerably enrich Roman Catholic and Lutheran theology.

IV. The Biblical Witness of Justification and Salvation as a Common Source and Norm

75. The message and doctrine of justification of believers takes on a concise form in the Pauline letters. The apostle to the nations did not,

however, stand alone, but in all his conflicts (Gal 2:11-14) was assured of a fundamental agreement with Peter and the other apostles (Gal 2:1-10, 15f.; cf. Acts 15:7-11). Paul invokes the Holy Scriptures of Israel (Rom 1:2; 1:17; 3:21; 4:3ff.; Gal 3:6ff. etc.), our Old Testament. He views, most importantly, the theology of justification as the exposition of the gospel of Jesus' mission, death and resurrection (Rom 1:16f.; 3:21-31; 4:25; 5:6ff. etc.). He set standards (Eph 2:11-22; 2 Tim 1:8f.; Titus 3:5) with his proclamation that people were not justified by law but by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 2:16; Rom 3:28; cf. Acts 13:38f.). It is the common goal of Christians—time and again reading the writings of the Old and New Testaments in order to reach the source of their faith—to view Paul's doctrine of justification in the context of the entire Bible, and thus to recognize its specific significance. The question thus arises as to how the doctrine of justification unfolds its critical and constructive potency in accepting, understanding more deeply and better fulfilling God's gospel as proclaimed by Jesus in the Holy Spirit.

IV.1. *The Unity of Scripture*

76. The Old Testament plays a substantial role in the biblical witness to God's righteousness and the justification of the faithful. The apostle Paul saw a need to develop the gospel of justification from a faith in Jesus Christ that was continually tied into the Holy Scriptures of Israel. He emphasizes those passages which best elucidate the connection between righteousness and faith. The promise to Abraham, for example, that he would be a blessing for all nations (Gen 12:1ff.) is anchored in his faith: "And [Abraham] believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6; cf. Rom 4:3, 9; Gal 3:6). Paul also sees the saving power of faith upheld in the prophetic writings, which speak of the fidelity of the righteous (Hab 2:4; cf. Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11) and the promise of Zion's eternal existence (Isa 28:16; cf. Isa 7:9; Rom 9:33; 10:11). The interpretation of the message of justification must therefore take into account Old Testament testimony to God's goodness and righteousness.

77. The dialectic developed in Lutheranism of "law and gospel" would be misunderstood from the very start if it were to be perceived as representing in its duality the relationship between the two testaments of the one Bible. This concept in fact relates to the revelation of wrath and the revelation of the God's righteousness, which brings about salvation to overcome this wrath. In the justification theology of his Letter to the Romans, Paul

bases this on the testimony of the law and the prophets (Rom 1:16-3:26). Beginning with Calvin, the Reformed tradition has time and again viewed the unity of the two testaments in the context of covenant theology, with Paul setting forth the scriptural reason for the hope of Israel and the nations as a reflection of God's keeping of God's promises (Rom 9-11). Catholic theology views the unity of the Old and New Testaments as part of the history of God and human salvation, with its goal of translating into reality the blessing of Abraham for all nations (Gen 12) through Jesus Christ, as Paul writes in Gal 3 and Rom 4. In Orthodox theology, the unity of Scripture is seen within the framework of the inseparable link between creation and salvation, in which Adam's sin is transformed into salvation through the obedience of Jesus, the son of God and the last Adam, as Paul proclaims in Rom 5 and 8 with a strong pneumatological emphasis on God's salvation acts, which are related to the church in the Letter to the Ephesians. None of these interpretations (which are in fact much richer in content than what can be provided here) are mutual exclusive; they all involve a view of biblical testimony as a whole, as it is characteristically understood in the church.

IV.2. The Old Testament

78. In all of its diversity, the Old Testament is characterized throughout by the one God who is to be loved "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut 6:4f.), who reveals Godself as the creator of the world and lord of history who chooses Israel and remains loyal to God's covenant despite the disloyalty of God's people. The testimony of God's love and righteousness, God's grace and mercy provide a basis for the entire Old Testament. God reveals himself to Moses as Yahweh in the burning bush (Ex 3:14); upon Sinai, God explains God's own revelation with the words: Yahweh is "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6). This revelation is repeated with variation in numerous important passages throughout the Pentateuch (Num 14:17-18; Deut 4:24, 31; 5:9f.; cf. Ex 20:2-6). While God's mercy and righteousness form two opposing poles, God allows God's grace and love to predominate despite the sin of God's people. This fundamental insight of belief resonates time and again in the prayers of God's people: "But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ps 86:15; cf. the leitmotif of this fundamental insight throughout the psalms, in praise of grace: Ps 103:8, 17f.; 111:4, 112:4; 116:5; 145:8). The "Pauline" Psalm 130:4, 7 also fits into this series with

its awareness of sin and its emphasis on forgiveness, as do the psalms of repentance 51:6f. and 143:2, which Paul used in the context of the message of justification. God's love for God's chosen people is expressed quite vividly in these prayers.

79. Israel's faith in God's goodness extends to great depths as hope for God's mercy in the midst of experiences of guilt and injustice, hate and violence, sin and death (cf. Ps 36). God's goodness demonstrates its power in saving those who are lost. This is exemplified in Exodus, both looking back on the liberation from Egypt as remembered by Israel during Passover (Ex 12), and in looking forward to a new exodus from the world of death into God's new world, as the prophets proclaim (Isa 40; Jer 31; Ezra 20). God's wrath erupts in the face of misery and suffering. Without it, grace would come cheap. God judges sinners both inside and outside the people of God. Nonetheless, God's final word is not one of destruction but one of love. "I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath," God promises, according to the prophet Hosea (Hos 11:9).

80. In the Old Testament, the hope for repentance, forgiveness and salvation comes in the form of a hope for God's righteousness. Petitioning God to show God's justice is the framework for confession in the psalm of repentance "Against you, you alone, have I sinned" (Ps 51), but also the insight that only God's grace can provide a way out. God's righteousness is recognized as God's goodness, and God's goodness as God's righteousness. The psalmist's words "In your righteousness deliver me" (Ps 71:2) appeals to God's mercy in full light of human weakness. God's love and God's righteousness thereby represent a conflict in the Old Testament that cannot be resolved through a decision for one or the other. God would not be God if God were not fully independent and free in God's choice of action. God nevertheless continues to extend God's grace and love to God's chosen people—out of love. Israel comes to know God's righteousness as a stay of punishment, as a call for repentance and as salvation in face of judgment.

IV.3. The New Testament

81. The life and teachings of Jesus Christ are of decisive importance in the correct understanding of the justification of sinners. One, however, rarely finds the term "justification" in the gospels. Of greatest importance in this regard is the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican: in

contrast to the Pharisee, who sees no need for repentance, Jesus views the tax collector as going home "justified" after simply confessing and praying, "God, be merciful to me, a Sinner!" (Lk 18:9-14). But the proclamation of the kingdom of God is the scope of a new understanding of God's righteousness, upon which the justification of believers depends. Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God as the embodiment of peace, righteousness and bliss (Lk 6:20f. par. Mt 5:3-12). He is aware of the sins of Israel and the world (Jn 3:19ff.). Sin demands God's judgment (Mt 25) but, even more so, God's love (Lk 15). Jesus looks for the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10:6; 15:24; cf. Mk 6:34 parr.) and forgives sin due to faith (Mk 2:1-10). He says to the sick who ask him for help: "Your faith has made you well" (Mk 5:34 parr.; 10:52 par.; Lk 17:19). The Gospel of Matthew emphasizes that Jesus sees the coming of God's kingdom as the realization of righteousness, for which the "poor in spirit" "hunger and thirst" (Mt 5:3-12). Jesus fulfills righteousness (Mt 3:15) by proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of heaven—through his words and deeds and, in the end, through his suffering. The kingdom of heaven and its righteousness is what Jesus' apostles should seek first and "all these things will be given to you as well" (Mt 6:33).

82. Jesus is the son of man who "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45 par.). He suffers and is righteous, praying on the cross for his executioners: "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34). The church recognizes that his death came about "for our sins" (1 Cor 15:3; cf. Gal 1:4) and that Jesus sacrificed himself out of love "for me" (Gal 2:20), "for us" (1 Jn 3:16), "for the church" (Eph 5:25), and "for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn 2:2). His singular death on the cross brought salvation "once and for all" (Rom 6:10; Heb 9:26; 1 Pet 3:18) and in abundance (Rom 5:12-21). Justification is the expression of God's righteousness as God brings about salvation through the sacrifice of atonement in Jesus' death (Rom 3:21-26). This righteousness is pure mercy since Jesus' mission and sacrifice in his death express God's love for the enemy (Rom 5:1-11; 8:31-39) in which he reconciles the people to Godself (2 Cor 5:18f.).

83. More than just dying, Jesus was resurrected "for us" (Rom 8:34), "handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25). Raised up, he intercedes for us at the right hand of God (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; cf. 1 Jn 2:1). Jesus' resurrection provides hope for the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:20-28). The church is commissioned by Jesus to make disciples of all nations throughout the world

(Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:15; Gal 1:13-17), "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19f.). This mission includes the power of forgiving sin (Jn 20:23), with the goal of "faith in God" (1 Thess 1:8), including faith in Jesus as the son of God (Rom 1:3f.) "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom 10:9).

84. The gospel of the "power of God for … everyone who has faith" (Rom 1:16) takes on its most focused form in Paul's doctrine of justification. "Justification" refers to declaring and making those righteous who confess their sins before God, as they come to faith through the gospel. "There may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Rom 10:4, New International Version). Justification includes the forgiveness of sin (Rom 3:25; 4:6f.) but also much more: life "in Christ" (Gal 2:20f.); "sharing his sufferings" (Phil 3:10; cf. Rom. 6:6); remaining in God's grace (Rom 5:1f.); and the call to serve righteousness (Rom 6:18). The doctrine of justification must not be reduced to the sentence of a divine judge. Justification is based on a faith that is not only conversion but also confirmation, not only confidence but also confession.

85. The "deeds of the law," that are excluded from justification (Rom 3:20, 28; Gal 2:16; 3:2) are those deeds done to fulfill the commandments in the belief that the law is necessary and sufficient for salvation. The law cannot, however, bring about salvation; the law reveals sin and proclaims the coming of the Messiah (Gal 3:19-25; Rom 3:21f.; 5:20f.). Acts anchored in the law are excluded from justification for those who place their faith in them, who place their trust in the wages that they have earned (Rom 4:4), agreeing only then, due to their own failings (Rom 2:17-29) and to the power of sin (Rom 7), with Ecclesiastes 7:20 and the psalms (Ps 14:1-3; 53:2-4; 130:3) in that "There is no one who is righteous, not even one" (Rom 3:10). Those who seek "righteousness through the law" seek to establish their "own righteousness" (Rom 10:3; Phil 3:9). Faith, by contrast, justifies because it affects the life of those who confess: "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). This faith is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, through whom "God's love has been poured into our hearts" (Rom 5:5). This is "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). Love is therefore the fulfillment of the law (Gal 5:13f.; Rom 13:8ff.), which is not overthrown but in fact upheld by faith (Rom 3:31).

86. In his justification theology, Paul adopts the language of justice and righteousness due to its roots in the Old Testament. Justice is of great cultural importance; according to the testimony of the Old Testament, it is God's will to connect justice and righteousness. The road to salvation goes through judgment, and judgment serves to complete salvation. Paul provides the theological basis for the "judicial" side of the doctrine of justification. Justification comes by grace in Christ Jesus (Rom 3:24); it is brought about by the Holy Spirit: "When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:16; cf. Gal. 4:4ff.). The emphasis on God's righteousness adds depth to talk of God's love and mercy since, with regard to sin, this acknowledges that God forgives, but not without condemnation, just as he saves sinners, but not without judging them. The justification of believers, understood as a revelation of God's righteousness, displays a deep, objective agreement with mission of Jesus, who has come to the sick as a "physician" (Mk 2:17 par.) and as the son of man "to seek out and save the lost" (Lk 19:10).

87. The Pauline message of justification is anchored in the mission of proclaiming the son of God, he who was crucified and who has risen, to all peoples (Gal 1:13-17). This elucidates both the ecclesiastical dimension of the justification event, in which the church was founded as the community of believers. In this church, all are one in Christ, whether "Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female" (Gal 3:26ff.). The justification of believers is a prerequisite to Paul's mission to the nations, and is the consequence of his belief that the Gentiles also had a place among the eschatological people of God. The doctrine of justification unfolds its constructive power by strengthening this mission and the church community, and is thus more than just a measure of correct doctrine; it is the expression of the universal dimension of the Christian message of salvation, that all nations are saved in Christ.

88. Already in the early Christian era, Paul's doctrine of justification was controversial, as some wrongfully saw in it the danger of relativizing sin (Rom. 6:1, 15). James saw reason to emphasize that a faith based only in confession, without works of love, could not serve to justify (Jas 2:14-26). The Epistle to the Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles reveal how the Pauline message of justification could be expanded to new situations and areas of consideration. Just as the Epistle to the Galatians ties together the unity of the church and the community of the apostles with a common faith in Jesus Christ and his justifying power (Gal 2:1-21), the letter to the Ephesians sees in the Church the destruction of the wall which separates

Jews and Christians (Eph 2:11-22). And just as the Epistle to the Romans traces the salvation of Jews and Gentiles back to God's revelation in the gospel (Rom 1:16f.), Timothy is reminded of the same salvation event, which is explicitly linked to God's eternal intent to save humankind: He "saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began" (2 Tim 1:8). In the Epistle to Titus, this mercy—similarly to Rom 6—is linked to baptism and the reception of the Spirit: "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:4f.).

89. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus promises eternal life to those who are "born of water and Spirit" (Jn 3:3ff.) "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). In the Gospel of John, belief in Jesus is a form of belief in God (Jn 12:44). Eternal life is the "glorification" of believers by him who glorifies God and who is glorified by God (Jn 17). This is present in the gift of sharing in the love between the father and the son in the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:23-26). Jesus promises that the Spirit will come as a consoler: "And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned" (Jn 16:9-11).

90. The First Epistle of John tackles the critical quandary that even baptized Christians "whose sins are forgiven on account of his name" (1 Jn 2:12), are not free of sin: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 Jn 1:10). Those who sin show that they have not yet truly recognized God and Christ (1 Jn 3:6). While on the one hand: "Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous" (1 Jn 3:7), on the other, "Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8). God's faithfulness is decisive (1 Jn 1:9), God who is "light" and in whom "there is no darkness at all" (1 Jn 1:5). Jesus Christ was therefore "revealed to take away sins" (1 Jn 3:5) and "to destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8). Sinful Christians can, however, say: "But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn 2:1f.). Christians are

called to love by him (1 Jn 2:7-11), as love is the way to know God (1 Jn 2:3-6) and the expression of faith (1 Jn 5:1-8), a faith that recognizes that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8, 16).

91. The First Epistle of Peter, which encourages Christians to believe despite a hostile environment (1 Pet 1:1f.), speaks of a divine grace (1 Pet 5:12) that is closely related to Paul's teachings, without however using the vocabulary of justification. The epistle begins with an extended eulogy, beginning with the words: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet 1:3ff.). The concept of charisma and the ecclesiology that is based on this theology of election is also closely related to Paul: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Pet 2:9f.).

92. All of these observations lead to the conclusion that even in passages of the New Testament in which human salvation is not explicitly proclaimed in the language of justification, there is a considerable degree of conformity among the central messages: that salvation is God's grace; that it is extended through Jesus Christ; that it is faith that saves; that salvation consists in the offer of God's eternal life through the Holy Spirit; and that God's love is God's greatest righteousness and that all God's righteousness is pure love. A closer look into the New Testament shows that the message of justification need not be expressed in the language of the doctrine of justification, but that it attains particular contours in this language, as it shows "in Christ" how God's grace and righteousness are intertwined and how salvation can be brought about in an imperfect world.

93. One must not overlook, when comparing the different perspectives in which the message of justification unfolds in the texts of the New Testament, that Paul himself used a wide range of imagery to speak of the present condition and the future fulfillment of salvation. He speaks of "peace with God" (Rom 5:1), of "reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18-21; Rom 5:11), of being "saved" (Rom 5:9f.; 8:24; 1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 2:15), of "redemption" (Rom 3:24), of "liberation" (Gal 5:1-13; Rom 6:7), of "sanctification" (1 Cor 1:2, 30; 2 Cor 1:1), of the reception

of the Spirit (Gal 3:21-4), and of life "in Christ" and the "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). While all of these themes have their own meaning, in combination, they strengthen one's understanding of salvation.

94. A summary of the biblical witness to justification and salvation can only be based on the understanding that the God of both testaments is one and the same, i.e. the God of Israel is the father of Jesus Christ. God's nature is most prominently characterized as mercy, grace, forbearance and great faithfulness. God's unconditional devotion to humankind beckons us to open up to God's words and deeds in freedom and with responsibility. At the same time, God is not unmoved by the human response to God's actions. God's righteousness judges human behavior, exacts consequences and urges believers to remain steadfast in their faith.

95. Jesus Christ, in accordance with God's will, served to reveal the character of his father. He was aware of his mission as a "physician to the sick," as a shepherd searching for his flock, and as the son of man who, as savior, took the sins of the people upon himself in a suffering righteousness, to be affirmed by God on the cross and in his resurrection. These acts of salvation form the basis of the Pauline message of justification, which proclaims the forgiveness of sins, life in Christ, and the discipleship of Christ. Paul's rejection of the "works of law" are not an attack on all human deeds, but rather a rejection of the human pretension to being able to justify themselves through their own strength while invoking these "works of law." People remain dependent on the underlying initiative of a loving God revealed in Jesus Christ.

96. The inclusion of this wide spectrum of biblical terms and imagery with regard to the acts of salvation, provides a great opportunity in ecumenical dialogue to integrate the characteristics of the different Christian traditions—from the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis* to the Methodist theology of sanctification and Reformed covenant theology—into a combined ecumenical soteriology. Expansion on these themes can furthermore open up new perspectives in urgent efforts to reframe the message of justification for our times.

V. The Message of Justification in Today's World

97. Recent attempts to convey the message of the justification of sinners to people in today's world have revealed concerns common to different Chris-

tian churches in their proclamation of the gospel. DÖSTA has thus grappled with the variety of approaches in spreading this message today, anchored in the ecumenically unanimous recognition of the existential relevance of the message of justification. Without attempting to provide a full summary of previous ecumenical discussion, we will, in the following, seek to explore new perspectives in continuing and deepening these efforts.

V.1. Challenges in the Conveyance of the Message of Justification

98. In 1963, during the Lutheran World Federation's Assembly in Helsinki, there was still no consensus as to whether it was possible to adopt the message of justification for today's world. It seemed that controversy over the existence of God and doubt regarding the meaning of human existence predominated, and thus would need to be used as a point of departure when addressing the religious perceptions of human beings today. Herein today's situation is fundamentally different from that of the sixteenth century when the undisputed basis for any view on religion consisted in the acceptance of God's existence and works, and in people's anticipation of and preparation for God's judgment of their lives.

99. The way in which sixteenth-century people received the message of justification was strongly influenced by their concern for their salvation in the face of their own sinful natures. God's judgment was seen primarily as a moment of individual responsibility for one's own life. Even the possibility of easing this judgment on behalf of the already departed (through indulgences) was subject to individual action that could only be substituted for by the particular efforts of others. Thus, the positions taken at first by the Reformers in their treatment of previous religious convictions and practices came well within the area of individual piety. Religious people's sensitivities and questions have since changed in areas of particular importance, especially the understanding of sin and the human relationship with God.

100. The following can be noted with a view to the experience of the sinfulness and guilt of human existence today: Many people, when reflecting on their lives, experience themselves as being woven into the respective situational context of their actions. Individual existence in sin no longer constitutes the sole point of reference for the message of justification, although even today people have an understanding of the traditional religious concept of personal sin.

101. A good many efforts to renew the message of justification for today's world have been based in the belief that the fundaments of Pauline thought and the views of the sixteenth century no longer apply, as the result of a changed human relationship with God. Do not people now question the existence of God in the face of natural disaster, war and famine? It is no longer people who face the judgment of God, but rather God who is facing judgment with regard to the suffering of so many innocents throughout the ages. The trust of believers in the universal impact of God's works of grace has diminished. Does God grant God's grace arbitrarily? Does God save one life, only to destroy another? Or, is there a connection between one's behavior and one's well-being? Especially in the light of situations of great affliction that at least seem to be completely undeserved, many people now take another view of any connectedness between one's actions and one's well-being.

102. One should, however, take into account Dietrich Bonhoeffer's valuable warning not to "cheapen" grace in the process of reframing the message of justification to fit the understanding and experience of people today. According to Bonhoeffer, this is in fact the case when one views grace as a general "principle" of God's action. One must be careful when explaining the message of justification to mean, in its essence, that God accepts everyone as they happen to be, that this does not just become a psychologically effective form of self-affirmation. Instead, the central message of justification is that by focusing on Christ, we are delivered from ourselves. The justified discover the basis of their existence in Christ–outside of their own selves.

103. In addition to the matter of how people's yearning for salvation today can be reconciled with the message of the justification of sinners, we must ask another more fundamental question: Can one in fact reconcile God's judgment of human beings with their life experience, all within the same context of understanding? Or, must not an adaptation of the message of justification also express the inscrutability of God in God's actions affecting us? The concern behind this question is addressed when one establishes that one can never earn God's grace alone and through the experience of sin. God has mercy on people by means of God's free grace, granted purely as a gift.

104. The failure to find a new language of justification during the 1960s can now be seen as the beginning of a phase of intensified work on the fundaments of the Christian hope for salvation. And yet, a clear awareness has prevailed of

the wide variety of contexts around the world in which people experience affliction in their lives. The crises, both internal and external, from which one would seek salvation, differ among rich and poor countries, where people have to worry about their daily water and bread.

105. This search for new forms of language and ways of communicating the message of justification must now take these difficulties into account, while building on the above observations on religious experience and the sensitivities of people today in all of their varying contexts.

V.2. New Approaches to Communicating the Message of Justification

106. Christians of a variety of traditions bear witness together to the Christ event as the historical moment in which people's abysmal sinfulness is revealed as is the unearned mercy of God. This singular event provides a continual point of reference for each and every view of one's own life before God. One's personal faith in Jesus Christ is the only hope before this judgment, in view of human forlornness in sin, and only God's grace can liberate one from this judgment. Based on this understanding, we will now provide examples of how the message of justification can be communicated to people today.

107. ***Becoming aware of responsibility before God***: Numerous factors have led to the strong influence of forensic concepts of justification in characterizations of the justification event from the sixteenth century to today. Human experience continues to provide grounds for this today, just as court verdicts—whatever their outcome—have a decisive influence on one's further life in society. Those accused cannot influence the decision and must passively accept the final verdict of the highest court involved, whether they like it or not. The Christian belief in God's final judgment encourages the use of court metaphors for justification. Even the adherents of other religions are familiar with the expectation that a judgment will be made beyond the scope of this world. Most people have some sort of sense that they will, at some point, have to answer to a higher authority. The message of justification thus helps people to become aware of their responsibility before God.

108. ***Freedom from the need to justify oneself***: But even those who do not feel as compelled by this question of guilt and atonement find that elements of their experience provide them with an understanding of

the message of forensic justification. Human existence is influenced by their struggle for self-justification, as each individual is dependent on the recognition of others and lives in a responsibility for others. Their wish and their duty to justify their behavior do not weaken if they deny or ignore God. Wherever people are no longer aware of divine judgment, a form of human judgment takes its place, whether this might be an actual judicial court, the opinions of one's community, or the court of public opinion. The Christian message of justification can build on these experiences by placing people before God, thus leading to their existential independence from the judgment of other people, relieving them from their struggle for self-improvement and self-assertion, and liberating them from the need to justify themselves.

109. ***Change in personal behavior***: Even today, people have their own ideas of what has traditionally been known as personal sin. An abstract view of a distance to God is, in this respect, less relevant than a concrete look at the consequences of enmity in human relationships. Normally, one can come to an agreement in dialogue to overcome the effects of jealous or resentful words or deeds. In today's world, when the negative consequences of one's actions become evident, there is often a general consensus concerning the moral evaluation of one's actions. Ethics thus correspond with the message of justification, as God's directive to lead a life of love proves to be relevant both in the course of one's life and before God's eschatological judgment. The message of justification is not a license to act solely with reference to oneself with no regard for the rights of others to live. It corresponds to the basic belief of people of faith that they should live a life of love as disciples of Jesus, justified by God and enabled by the Holy Spirit.

110. ***Liberation from the transpersonal power of sin***: For many events in a person's life, it is unlikely to believe that all deeds and attitudes occur in the context of one's exclusively personal responsibility. One is often caught up in processes not caused by oneself. It therefore becomes necessary to disconnect the concept of sin from the errant view of its individual nature, and to place it in its social context. Within the theological tradition, there is the concept of pre-personal evil, with variations throughout the contexts of human experience. The liberation theology of Africa and Latin America speaks of sin that has evolved into structures that lead to poverty, hunger and a lack of freedom. Liberation theology in Western Europe and North America focuses more on figures of negativity in relationships, which lead to a loss of self-esteem,

lethargy and loneliness. The phenomenon of existential angst, into which people see themselves placed as free beings, has been observed in the theory and practice of psychotherapy. All of these approaches to an understanding of pre-personal sin draw one's attention to phenomena of evil that cannot be changed solely through individual repentance. Instead, they continue to affect people's life experience beginning with birth, and influence the free personal actions of individuals. Healing is possible by overcoming individualization on the way towards the community of sinners saved in Christ.

111. ***Hope for justice***: The human yearning for justice runs deep. One must and should differentiate between justice and injustice, good and evil—especially in the name of all victims of hate and violence, negligence and oppression. As human beings we cannot guarantee perfect justice—neither in our personal lives nor in social and political spheres. Some people react to this with resignation, others with inhumane harshness directed at themselves and others and even others turn cynical. The Christian message of justification, however, provides hope for the righteousness of God (see para. 92 above), to be perfected in the kingdom of God, while already granted to believers here and now. Having received forgiveness, one can focus more closely on the hidden forms of evil. One can concentrate actions on serving one's neighbors in more concrete ways. With a heart that beats with those who experience injustice, believers can pray for their salvation, even if they have no other recourse to action. God does not countenance injustice but works towards the triumph of righteousness, freeing people to confess their own guilt before their neighbors and before God and to forgive others.

112. ***Enabling reconciliation between victims and perpetrators***: The message of justification also shows God as seeking human salvation through God's representative, enabling people to learn to represent him among themselves. In the relationship between God and people, God makes himself into a representative for those who suffer injury, injustice, or who lack in relationships, just as he represents those who themselves have done wrong. God encourages victims and judges their perpetrators, as one who represents the victims by making their victimhood clearly visible, but God also represents their perpetrators by making it possible for them to atone in a process of reconciliation. In this doubly representative role, by disentangling the two parties, God brings about the reconciliation that the world needs. This becomes apparent when one reads the psalms of lamentation with their curses against enemies.

This depicts a nearly perfect form of therapeutic reconciliation, in which God acts as a surrogate for the accused and makes possible the victims' warrantable outbreak of anger, which they need to heal, without setting off another cycle of violence. Justification, in this case, becomes relevant in a pastoral and socio-ethical sense in that the relationship between God and humans is essential for the successful reconciliation between people.

113. ***Overcoming pressure to perform***: The message of justification instructs us that success and meaning in our lives as a whole are not left to blind chance but instead are promised and granted to us as a gift from a God who loves us. Indeed, the success of our lives as a whole does not depend on our own performance. Even those who are not able to succeed in an often merciless struggle and boundless competition are promised something that they cannot achieve on their own. It is a fundamental part of the human experience that we cannot create or purchase the things that matter most in our lives, but that they are granted to us as gifts. Our existence, our health, our families' and children's happiness, none of this is our own doing.

114. ***Basis of human dignity***: The absolute value of human life is the fruit of the Judeo-Christian message. This is not achieved through a constitution or by society, nor is it brought about by reason or awareness, but is instead an unconditional and inalienable reality, beyond human accessibility. Believers call this God. The elimination of this basis for humanity would strip us of any basis for the absolute validity of human dignity and human rights. This would also eliminate any compelling reason for why society must not deny value and dignity to those who themselves behave in an inhumane and degrading manner.

115. ***The recognition of a person independent of their actions***: The message of justification differentiates between the person and their actions. A person is not the sum total of his or her actions, whether good or bad. Individuals are always more than what they do or fail to do. Even when people have nothing, or nothing more to contribute, they still maintain their intrinsic value. Sick people are not just sick people who only mean hardship for themselves and others; "criminals" are not defined exclusively by their deeds and misdeeds. Or in general, even those for whom much or everything has gone wrong, and who are therefore not able clearly to see any chance for their own salvation, are beneficiaries of the promise that addresses sinners in particular. We can affirm ourselves

because God affirms us, regardless of our bank accounts and report cards, regardless of our professional success and social recognition.

116. ***Consolation for those who suffer***: Many today doubt God's righteousness and goodness in light of undeserved suffering. One should, however, not blame God for the acts of human beings. This is underlined further by a closer look at people's long-term negative influence. The message of justification attains new relevance with regard to the basic sense of powerlessness that many have in light of catastrophic global conditions, as it liberates people from their sole worry for the lives of others within God's creation, and teaches us to trust in God's ways that transcend death.

117. ***Motivation for personal action***: Already during New Testament times, the message of justification was wrongly suspected of diminishing efforts to change things for the better. It can, however, help people to escape from the specter of the desperation that results from their powerlessness, when they become aware that even our actions are subject to the promise of justification. This means that we may do all that we can even if we are able to see that we will not succeed in a given situation and that we will not meet our goals. It is in fact because we are allowed to make mistakes that we are able to act in the first place. If perfection, wholeness and redemption were required of us, we would be unable to do anything. But because we know that not everything is asked of us, and that our mistakes will also be forgiven, we can feel free to do all that is in our power, and do it as well as we can within our limited capabilities. The message of justification does not lead to passivity, but liberates us to act. Our knowledge of ***God's acceptance*** grants us the freedom to take on responsibility and to work for the people and the world around us. The message of justification will reach its goal if we, in this way, bear testimony to the good news of the gospel, filling it with life, so that we and all of creation can be ***transformed in Christ***.

Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

by
The Lutheran World Federation
and the Roman Catholic Church

Preamble

1. The doctrine of justification was of central importance for the Lutheran Reformation of the sixteenth century. It was held to be the "first and chief article"[1] and at the same time the "ruler and judge over all other Christian doctrines."[2] The doctrine of justification was particularly asserted and defended in its Reformation shape and special valuation over against the Roman Catholic Church and theology of that time, which in turn asserted and defended a doctrine of justification of a different character. From the Reformation perspective, justification was the crux of all the disputes. Doctrinal condemnations were put forward both in the Lutheran Confessions[3] and by the Roman Catholic Church's Council of Trent. These condemnations are still valid today and thus have a church-dividing effect.

2. For the Lutheran tradition, the doctrine of justification has retained its special status. Consequently it has also from the beginning occupied an important place in the official Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue.

3. Special attention should be drawn to the following reports: "The Gospel and the Church" (1972)[4] and "Church and Justification" (1994)[5] by the Lu-

[1] The Smalcald Articles, II,1; Book of Concord, 292.

[2] "Rector et judex super omnia genera doctrinarum"—Weimar Edition of Luther's Works (WA), 39,I,205.

[3] It should be noted that some Lutheran churches include only the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism among their binding confessions. These texts contain no condemnations about justification in relation to the Roman Catholic Church.

[4] Report of the Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Commission, published in *Growth in Agreement* (New York and Geneva, 1984), pp. 168-89.

[5] Published by the Lutheran World Federation (Geneva, 1994).

theran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission, "Justification by Faith" (1983)[6] of the Lutheran–Roman Catholic dialogue in the United States and "The Condemnations of the Reformation Era—Do They Still Divide?" (1986)[7] by the Ecumenical Working Group of Protestant and Catholic theologians in Germany. Some of these dialogue reports have been officially received by the churches. An important example of such reception is the binding response of the United Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Germany to the "Condemnations" study, made in 1994 at the highest possible level of ecclesiastical recognition together with the other churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany.[8]

4. In their discussion of the doctrine of justification, all the dialogue reports as well as the responses show a high degree of agreement in their approaches and conclusions. The time has therefore come to take stock and to summarize the results of the dialogues on justification so that our churches may be informed about the overall results of this dialogue with the necessary accuracy and brevity, and thereby be enabled to make binding decisions.

5. The present *Joint Declaration* has this intention: namely, to show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church[9] are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ. It does not cover all that either church teaches about justification; it does encompass a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations.

6. Our *Declaration* is not a new, independent presentation alongside the dialogue reports and documents to date, let alone a replacement of them.

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[6] *Lutheran and Catholics in Dialogue*, VII (Minneapolis, 1985).

[7] Minneapolis, 1990.

[8] "Gemeinsame Stellungnahme der Arnoldshainer Konferenz, der Vereinigten Kirche und des Deutschen Nationalkomitees des Lutherischen Weltbundes zum Dokument 'Lehrverurteilungen – kirchentrennend?' " *Ökumenische Rundschau* 44 (1995): 99-102; See also the position papers which underlie this resolution, in *Lehrverurteilungen im Gespräch, Die ersten offiziellen Stellungnahmen aus den evangelischen Kirchen in Deutschland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993).

[9] The word "church" is used in this *Declaration* to reflect the self-understandings of the participating churches, without intending to resolve all the ecclesiological issues related to this term.

Rather, as the appendix of Sources shows, it makes repeated reference to them and their arguments.

7. Like the dialogues themselves, this *Joint Declaration* rests on the conviction that in overcoming the earlier controversial questions and doctrinal condemnations, the churches neither take the condemnations lightly nor do they disavow their own past. On the contrary, this *Declaration* is shaped by the conviction that in their respective histories our churches have come to new insights. Developments have taken place that not only make possible but also require the churches to examine the divisive questions and condemnations and see them in a new light.

1. Biblical Message of Justification

8. Our common way of listening to the word of God in Scripture has led to such new insights. Together we hear the gospel that "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). This good news is set forth in Holy Scripture in various ways. In the Old Testament we listen to God's word about human sinfulness (Ps 51:1-5; Dan 9:5f; Eccl/Qo 8:9f; Ezra 9:6f) and human disobedience (Gen 3:1-19; Neh 9:16f,26) as well as of God's "righteousness" (Isa 46:13; 51:5-8; 56:1 [cf. 53:11]; Jer 9:24) and "judgment" (Eccl/Qo 12:14; Ps 9:5f; 76:7-9).

9. In the New Testament diverse treatments of "righteousness" and "justification" are found in the writings of Matthew (5:10; 6:33; 21:32), John (16:8-11), Hebrews (5:3; 10:37f), and James (2:14-26).[10] In Paul's letters also, the gift of salvation is described in various ways, among others: "for freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1-13; cf. Rom 6:7), "reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:18-21; cf. Rom 5:11), "peace with God" (Rom 5:1), "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17), "alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 6:11, 23), or "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (cf. 1 Cor 1:2; 30; 2 Cor 1:1). Chief among these is the "justification" of sinful human beings by God's grace through faith

[10] Cf. "Malta Report," paras. 26-30; "Justification by Faith," paras. 122-47. At the request of the US dialogue on justification, the non-Pauline New Testament texts were addressed in *Righteousness in the New Testament*, by John Reumann, with responses by Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Jerome D. Quinn (Philadelphia and New York, 1982), pp. 124-80. The results of this study were summarized in the dialogue report "Justification by Faith" in paras. 139-42.

(Rom 3:23-25), which came into particular prominence in the Reformation period.

10. Paul sets forth the gospel as the power of God for salvation of the person who has fallen under the power of sin, as the message that proclaims that "the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith" (Rom 1:16f) and that grants "justification" (Rom 3:21-31). He proclaims Christ as "our righteousness" (1 Cor 1:30), applying to the risen Lord what Jeremiah proclaimed about God himself (Jer 23:6). In Christ's death and resurrection all dimensions of his saving work have their roots for he is "our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25). All human beings are in need of God's righteousness, "since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23; cf. Rom 1:18-3:20; 11:32; Gal 3:22). In Galatians (3:6) and Romans (4:3-9), Paul understands Abraham's faith (Gen 15:6) as faith in the God who justifies the sinner (Rom 4:5) and calls upon the testimony of the Old Testament to undergird his gospel that this righteousness will be reckoned to all who, like Abraham, trust in God's promise. "For the righteous will live by faith" (Hab 2:4; cf. Gal 3:11; Rom 1:17). In Paul's letters, God's righteousness is also God's power for those who have faith (Rom 1:16f; 2 Cor 5:21). In Christ he makes it our righteousness (2 Cor 5:21). Justification becomes ours through Christ Jesus "whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith" (Rom 3:25; see 3:21-28). "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works" (Eph 2:8f).

11. Justification is the forgiveness of sins (cf. Rom 3:23-25; Acts 13:39; Lk 18:14), liberation from the dominating power of sin and death (Rom 5:12-21) and from the curse of the law (Gal 3:10-14). It is acceptance into communion with God—already now, but then fully in God's coming kingdom (Rom 5:1f). It unites with Christ and with his death and resurrection (Rom 6:5). It occurs in the reception of the Holy Spirit in baptism and incorporation into the one body (Rom 8:1f, 9f; 1 Cor 12:12f). All this is from God alone, for Christ's sake, by grace, through faith in "the gospel of God's Son" (Rom 1:1-3).

12. The justified live by faith that comes from the Word of Christ (Rom 10:17) and is active through love (Gal 5:6), the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22f). But since the justified are assailed from within and without by powers and desires (Rom 8:35-39; Gal 5:16-21) and fall into sin (1 Jn 1:8, 10), they must constantly hear God's promises anew, confess their sins (1

Jn 1:9), participate in Christ's body and blood, and be exhorted to live righteously in accord with the will of God. That is why the Apostle says to the justified: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:12f). But the good news remains: "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1), and in whom Christ lives (Gal 2:20). Christ's "act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all" (Rom 5:18).

2. The Doctrine of Justification as Ecumenical Problem

13. Opposing interpretations and applications of the biblical message of justification were a principal cause of the division of the Western church in the sixteenth century and led as well to doctrinal condemnations. A common understanding of justification is therefore fundamental and indispensable to overcoming that division. By appropriating insights of recent biblical studies and drawing on modern investigations of the history of theology and dogma, the post-Vatican II ecumenical dialogue has led to a notable convergence concerning justification, with the result that this *Joint Declaration* is able to formulate a consensus on basic truths concerning the doctrine of justification. In light of this consensus, the corresponding doctrinal condemnations of the sixteenth century do not apply to today's partner.

3. The Common Understanding of Justification

14. The Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church have together listened to the good news proclaimed in Holy Scripture. This common listening, together with the theological conversations of recent years, has led to a shared understanding of justification. This encompasses a consensus in the basic truths; the differing explications in particular statements are compatible with it.

15. In faith we together hold the conviction that justification is the work of the triune God. The Father sent his Son into the world to save sinners. The foundation and presupposition of justification is the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father. Together we confess: By grace alone,

in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.[11]

16. All people are called by God to salvation in Christ. Through Christ alone are we justified, when we receive this salvation in faith. Faith is itself God's gift through the Holy Spirit who works through Word and Sacrament in the community of believers and who, at the same time, leads believers into that renewal of life which God will bring to completion in eternal life.

17. We also share the conviction that the message of justification directs us in a special way towards the heart of the New Testament witness to God's saving action in Christ: it tells us that because we are sinners our new life is solely due to the forgiving and renewing mercy that God imparts as a gift and we receive in faith, and never can merit in any way.

18. Therefore the doctrine of justification, which takes up this message and explicates it, is more than just one part of Christian doctrine. It stands in an essential relation to all truths of faith, which are to be seen as internally related to each other. It is an indispensable criterion that constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ. When Lutherans emphasize the unique significance of this criterion, they do not deny the interrelation and significance of all truths of faith. When Catholics see themselves as bound by several criteria, they do not deny the special function of the message of justification. Lutherans and Catholics share the goal of confessing Christ in all things, who alone is to be trusted above all things as the one Mediator (1 Tim 2:5f) through whom God in the Holy Spirit gives himself and pours out his renewing gifts. (See Sources for section 3.)

4. Explicating the Common Understanding of Justification

4.1. Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to Justification

19. We confess together that all persons depend completely on the saving grace of God for their salvation. The freedom they possess in relation to

[11] "All Under One Christ," para. 14, in *Growth in Agreement*, 241-47.

persons and the things of this world is no freedom in relation to salvation, for as sinners they stand under God's judgment and are incapable of turning by themselves to God to seek deliverance, of meriting their justification before God, or of attaining salvation by their own abilities. Justification takes place solely by God's grace. Because Catholics and Lutherans confess this together, it is true that:

20. When Catholics say that persons "cooperate" in preparing for and accepting justification by consenting to God's justifying action, they see such personal consent as itself an effect of grace, not as an action arising from innate human abilities.

21. According to Lutheran teaching, human beings are incapable of cooperating in their salvation because as sinners they actively oppose God and his saving action. Lutherans do not deny that a person can reject the working of grace. When they emphasize that a person can only receive (mere passive) justification, they mean thereby to exclude any possibility of contributing to one's own justification, but do not deny that believers are fully involved personally in their faith, which is effected by God's Word. (See Sources for 4.1.)

4.2. *Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making Righteous*

22. We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin's enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ. When persons come by faith to share in Christ, God no longer imputes to them their sin and through the Holy Spirit effects in them an active love. These two aspects of God's gracious action are not to be separated, for persons are by faith united with Christ, who in his person is our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30): both the forgiveness of sin and the saving presence of God himself. Because Catholics and Lutherans confess this together, it is true to say that:

23. When Lutherans emphasize that the righteousness of Christ is our righteousness, their intention is above all to insist that the sinner is granted righteousness before God in Christ through the declaration of forgiveness and that only in union with Christ is one's life renewed. When they stress that God's grace is forgiving love ("the favor of God"),[12] they do

[12] Cf. WA 8:106; American Edition 32:227.

not thereby deny the renewal of the Christian's life. They intend rather to express that justification remains free from human cooperation and is not dependent on the life-renewing effects of grace in human beings.

24. When Catholics emphasize the renewal of the interior person through the reception of grace imparted as a gift to the believer,[13] they wish to insist that God's forgiving grace always brings with it a gift of new life, which in the Holy Spirit becomes effective in active love. They do not thereby deny that God's gift of grace in justification remains independent of human cooperation. (See Sources for section 4.2.)

4.3. Justification by Faith and through Grace

25. We confess together that sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism, they are granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis for the whole Christian life. They place their trust in God's gracious promise by justifying faith, which includes hope in God and love for him. Such a faith is active in love and thus the Christian cannot and should not remain without works. But whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it.

26. According to Lutheran understanding, God justifies sinners in faith alone (*sola fide*). In faith they place their trust wholly in their Creator and Redeemer and thus live in communion with him. God himself effects faith as he brings forth such trust by his creative word. Because God's act is a new creation, it affects all dimensions of the person and leads to a life in hope and love. In the doctrine of "justification by faith alone," a distinction but not a separation is made between justification itself and the renewal of one's way of life that necessarily follows from justification and without which faith does not exist. Thereby the basis is indicated from which the renewal of life proceeds, for it comes forth from the love of God imparted to the person in justification. Justification and renewal are joined in Christ, who is present in faith.

27. The Catholic understanding also sees faith as fundamental in justification. For without faith, no justification can take place. Persons are justified through baptism as hearers of the word and believers in it. The justification of sinners is forgiveness of sins and being made righteous

[13] Cf. Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum* … (hereafter DS) 1528.

by justifying grace, which makes us children of God. In justification the righteous receive from Christ faith, hope, and love and are thereby taken into communion with him.[14] This new personal relation to God is grounded totally on God's graciousness and remains constantly dependent on the salvific and creative working of this gracious God, who remains true to himself, so that one can rely upon him. Thus justifying grace never becomes a human possession to which one could appeal over against God. While Catholic teaching emphasizes the renewal of life by justifying grace, this renewal in faith, hope, and love is always dependent on God's unfathomable grace and contributes nothing to justification about which one could boast before God (Rom 3:27). (See Sources for section 4.3.)

4.4. *The Justified as Sinner*

28. We confess together that in baptism the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies, and truly renews the person. But the justified must all through life constantly look to God's unconditional justifying grace. They also are continuously exposed to the power of sin still pressing its attacks (cf. Rom 6:12-14) and are not exempt from a lifelong struggle against the contradiction to God within the selfish desires of the old Adam (see Gal 5:16; Rom 7:7-10). The justified also must ask God daily for forgiveness as in the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:12; 1 Jn 1:9), are ever again called to conversion and penance, and are ever again granted forgiveness.

29. Lutherans understand this condition of the Christian as a being "at the same time righteous and sinner." Believers are totally righteous, in that God forgives their sins through Word and Sacrament and grants the righteousness of Christ, which they appropriate in faith. In Christ, they are made just before God. Looking at themselves through the law, however, they recognize that they remain also totally sinners. Sin still lives in them (1 Jn 1:8; Rom 7:17, 20), for they repeatedly turn to false gods and do not love God with that undivided love which God requires as their Creator (Deut 6:5; Mt 22:36-40 par.). This contradiction to God is as such truly sin. Nevertheless, the enslaving power of sin is broken on the basis of the merit of Christ. It no longer is a sin that "rules" the Christian for it is itself "ruled" by Christ with whom the justified are bound in faith. In this life, then, Christians can in part lead a just life. Despite sin, the Christian is no longer separated from God because in the

[14] Cf. DS 1530.

daily return to baptism the person who has been born anew by baptism and the Holy Spirit has this sin forgiven. Thus this sin no longer brings damnation and eternal death.[15] Thus, when Lutherans say that justified persons are also sinners and that their opposition to God is truly sin, they do not deny that, despite this sin, they are not separated from God and that this sin is a "ruled" sin. In these affirmations, they are in agreement with Roman Catholics, despite the difference in understanding sin in the justified.

30. Catholics hold that the grace of Jesus Christ imparted in baptism takes away all that is sin "in the proper sense" and that is "worthy of damnation" (Rom 8:1).[16] There does, however, remain in the person an inclination (concupiscence) which comes from sin and presses toward sin. Since, according to Catholic conviction, human sins always involve a personal element and since this element is lacking in this inclination, Catholics do not see this inclination as sin in an authentic sense. They do not thereby deny that this inclination does not correspond to God's original design for humanity and that it is objectively in contradiction to God and remains one's enemy in lifelong struggle. Grateful for deliverance by Christ, they underscore that this inclination in contradiction to God does not merit the punishment of eternal death[17] and does not separate the justified person from God. But when individuals voluntarily separate themselves from God, it is not enough to return to observing the commandments, for they must receive pardon and peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation through the word of forgiveness imparted to them in virtue of God's reconciling work in Christ. (See Sources for section 4.4.)

4.5. Law and Gospel

31. We confess together that persons are justified by faith in the gospel "apart from works prescribed by the law" (Rom 3:28). Christ has fulfilled the law and by his death and resurrection has overcome it as a way to salvation. We also confess that God's commandments retain their validity for the justified and that Christ has by his teaching and example expressed God's will, which is a standard for the conduct of the justified also.

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[15] Cf. Apology II, 38-45; Book of Concord, 105f.

[16] Cf. DS 1515.

[17] Cf. DS 1515.

32. Lutherans state that the distinction and right ordering of law and gospel are essential for the understanding of justification. In its theological use, the law is demand and accusation. Throughout their lives, all persons, Christians also, in that they are sinners, stand under this accusation which uncovers their sin so that, in faith in the gospel, they will turn unreservedly to the mercy of God in Christ, which alone justifies them.

33. Because the law as a way to salvation has been fulfilled and overcome through the gospel, Catholics can say that Christ is not a lawgiver in the manner of Moses. When Catholics emphasize that the righteous are bound to observe God's commandments, they do not thereby deny that through Jesus Christ God has mercifully promised to his children the grace of eternal life.[18] (See Sources for section 4.5.)

4.6. Assurance of Salvation

34. We confess together that the faithful can rely on the mercy and promises of God. In spite of their own weakness and the manifold threats to their faith, on the strength of Christ's death and resurrection they can build on the effective promise of God's grace in Word and Sacrament and so be sure of this grace.

35. This was emphasized in a particular way by the Reformers: in the midst of temptation, believers should not look to themselves but look solely to Christ and trust only him. In trust in God's promise they are assured of their salvation, but are never secure looking at themselves.

36. Catholics can share the concern of the Reformers to ground faith in the objective reality of Christ's promise, to look away from one's own experience, and to trust in Christ's forgiving word alone (cf. Mt 16:19; 18:18). With the Second Vatican Council, Catholics state: to have faith is to entrust oneself totally to God,[19] who liberates us from the darkness of sin and death and awakens us to eternal life.[20] In this sense, one cannot believe in God and at the same time consider the divine promise untrustworthy. No one may doubt God's mercy and Christ's merit. Every person, however, may be concerned about his salvation when he looks

[18] Cf. DS 1545.

[19] Cf. *Dei Verbum* (Vatican II) (hereafter *DV*) 5.

[20] Cf. *DV* 5.

upon his own weaknesses and shortcomings. Recognizing his own failures, however, the believer may yet be certain that God intends his salvation. (See Sources for section 4.6.)

4.7. The Good Works of the Justified

37. We confess together that good works—a Christian life lived in faith, hope and love—follow justification and are its fruits. When the justified live in Christ and act in the grace they receive, they bring forth, in biblical terms, good fruit. Since Christians struggle against sin their entire lives, this consequence of justification is also for them an obligation they must fulfill. Thus both Jesus and the apostolic Scriptures admonish Christians to bring forth the works of love.

38. According to Catholic understanding, good works, made possible by grace and the working of the Holy Spirit, contribute to growth in grace, so that the righteousness that comes from God is preserved and communion with Christ is deepened. When Catholics affirm the "meritorious" character of good works, they wish to say that, according to the biblical witness, a reward in heaven is promised to these works. Their intention is to emphasize the responsibility of persons for their actions, not to contest the character of those works as gifts, or far less to deny that justification always remains the unmerited gift of grace.

39. The concept of a preservation of grace and a growth in grace and faith is also held by Lutherans. They do emphasize that righteousness as acceptance by God and sharing in the righteousness of Christ is always complete. At the same time, they state that there can be growth in its effects in Christian living. When they view the good works of Christians as the fruits and signs of justification and not as one's own "merits," they nevertheless also understand eternal life in accord with the New Testament as unmerited "reward" in the sense of the fulfillment of God's promise to the believer. (See Sources for section 4.7.)

5. The Significance and Scope of the Consensus Reached

40. The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this *Declaration* shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics. In light of this

consensus the remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification described in paras. 18 to 39 are acceptable. Therefore the Lutheran and the Catholic explications of justification are in their difference open to one another and do not destroy the consensus regarding the basic truths.

41. Thus the doctrinal condemnations of the sixteenth century, in so far as they relate to the doctrine of justification, appear in a new light: The teaching of the Lutheran churches presented in this *Declaration* does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this *Declaration*.

42. Nothing is thereby taken away from the seriousness of the condemnations related to the doctrine of justification. Some were not simply pointless. They remain for us "salutary warnings" to which we must attend in our teaching and practice.[21]

43. Our consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification must come to influence the life and teachings of our churches. Here it must prove itself. In this respect, questions of varying importance still need further clarification. These include, among other topics, the relationship between the Word of God and church doctrine, as well as ecclesiology, ecclesial authority, church unity, ministry, the sacraments, and the relation between justification and social ethics. We are convinced that the consensus we have reached offers a solid basis for this clarification. The Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church will continue to strive together to deepen this common understanding of justification and to make it bear fruit in the life and teaching of the churches.

44. We give thanks to the Lord for this decisive step forward on the way to overcoming the division of the church. We ask the Holy Spirit to lead us further toward that visible unity which is Christ's will.

[21] "Condemnations of the Reformation Era," 27.

Sources for the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

In parts 3 and 4 of the *Joint Declaration* formulations from different Lutheran-Catholic dialogues are referred to. They are the following documents:

"All Under One Christ." Statement on the Augsburg Confession by the Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission, 1980. In *Growth in Agreement.* Edited by Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer. New York/Ramsey, N.J., Geneva, 1984, 241-47.

Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum* ..., 32nd to 36th edition (hereafter DS).

Denzinger-Hünermann. *Enchiridion symbolorum* ..., since the 37th edition (hereafter DH).

"Evaluation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Study 'Lehrverurteilungen – kirchentrennend?' " Vatican, 1992, unpublished document (hereafter PCPCU).

"Justification by Faith." In *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue,* VII. Minneapolis, 1985 (hereafter USA).

"Position Paper of the Joint Committee of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany and the LWF German National Committee regarding the document 'The Condemnations of the Reformation Era. Do They Still Divide?' " In *Lehrverurteilungen im Gespräch.* Göttingen, 1993 (hereafter VELKD).

"The Condemnations of the Reformation Era. Do they Still Divide?" Edited by Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg. Minneapolis, 1990 (hereafter LV:E)

For 3: The Common Understanding of Justification (paras. 17 and 18) (LV: E 68f; VELKD 95)

- "... a faith centered and forensically conceived picture of justification is of major importance for Paul and, in a sense, for the Bible as a whole, although it is by no means the only biblical or Pauline way of representing God's saving work" (USA, no. 146).
- "Catholics as well as Lutherans can acknowledge the need to test the practices, structures, and theologies of the church by the extent to which they help or hinder 'the proclamation of God's free and merciful promises in Christ Jesus which can be rightly received only through faith' (para. 28)" (USA, no. 153).

Regarding the "fundamental affirmation" (USA, no. 157; cf. 4) it is said:

- "This affirmation, like the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone, serves as a criterion for judging all church practices, structures, and traditions precisely because its counterpart is 'Christ alone' (*solus Christus*). He alone is to be ultimately trusted as the one Mediator through whom God in the Holy Spirit pours out his saving gifts. All of us in this dialogue affirm that all Christian teachings, practices, and offices should so function as to foster 'the obedience of faith' (Rom. 1:5) in God's saving ac-

tion in Christ Jesus alone through the Holy Spirit, for the salvation of the faithful and the praise and honor of the heavenly Father" (USA, no. 160).

- "For that reason, the doctrine of justification—and, above all, its biblical foundation—will always retain a special function in the church. That function is continually to remind Christians that we sinners live solely from the forgiving love of God, which we merely allow to be bestowed on us, but which we in no way—in however modified a form—'earn' or are able to tie down to any preconditions or postconditions. The doctrine of justification therefore becomes the touchstone for testing at all times whether a particular interpretation of our relationship to God can claim the name of 'Christian.' At the same time, it becomes the touchstone for the church, for testing at all times whether its proclamation and its praxis correspond to what has been given to it by its Lord" (LV:E 69).
- "An agreement on the fact that the doctrine of justification is significant not only as one doctrinal component within the whole of our church's teaching, but also as the touchstone for testing the whole doctrine and practice of our churches, is—from a Lutheran point of view—fundamental progress in the ecumenical dialogue between our churches. It cannot be welcomed enough" (VELKD 95, 20-26; cf. 157).
- "For Lutherans and Catholics, the doctrine of justification has a different status in the hierarchy of truth; but both sides agree that the doctrine of justification has its specific function in the fact that it is 'the touchstone for testing at all times whether a particular interpretation of our relationship to God can claim the name of "Christian." At the same time it becomes the touchstone for the church, for testing at all times whether its proclamation and its praxis correspond to what has been given to it by its Lord' (LV:E 69). The criteriological significance of the doctrine of justification for sacramentology, ecclesiology and ethical teachings still deserves to be studied further" (PCPCU 96).

For 4.1: Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to Justification (paras 19-21) (LV:E 42ff, 46; VELKD 77-81, 83f)

- "Those in whom sin reigns can do nothing to merit justification, which is the free gift of God's grace. Even the beginnings of justification, for example, repentance, prayer for grace, and desire for forgiveness, must be God's work in us" (USA, no. 156.3).
- "*Both* are concerned to make it clear that ... human beings cannot ... cast a sideways glance at their own endeavors ... But a response is not a 'work.' The response of faith is itself brought about through the uncoercible word of promise which comes to human beings from outside themselves. There can be '*co*operation' only in the sense that in faith the heart is involved, when the Word touches it and creates faith" (LV:E 46f).
- "Where, however, Lutheran teaching construes the relation of God to his human creatures in justification with such emphasis on the divine 'monergism' or the sole efficacy of Christ in such a way, that the person's willing acceptance of God's grace—which is itself a gift of God—has no essential role in justification, then the Tridentine canons 4, 5, 6 and 9 still constitute a notable doctrinal difference on justification" (PCPCU 22).

- "The strict emphasis on the passivity of human beings concerning their justification never meant, on the Lutheran side, to contest the full personal participation in believing; rather it meant to exclude any cooperation in the event of justification itself. Justification is the work of Christ alone, the work of grace alone" (VELKD 84, 3-8).

For 4.2: Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making Righteous (paras. 22-24) (USA, nos. 98-101; LV:E 47ff; VELKD 84ff; cf. also the quotations for 4.3)

- "By justification we are both declared and made righteous. Justification, therefore, is not a legal fiction. God, in justifying, effects what he promises; he forgives sin and makes us truly righteous" (USA, no. 156, 5).
- "Protestant theology does not overlook what Catholic doctrine stresses: the creative and renewing character of God's love; nor does it maintain … God's impotence toward a sin which is 'merely' forgiven in justification but which is not truly abolished in its power to divide the sinner from God" (LV:E 49).
- "The Lutheran doctrine has never understood the 'crediting of Christ's justification' as without effect on the life of the faithful, because Christ's word achieves what it promises. Accordingly the Lutheran doctrine understands grace as God's favor, but nevertheless as effective power … 'for where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation' " (VELKD 86, 15-23).
- "Catholic doctrine does not overlook what Protestant theology stresses: the personal character of grace, and its link with the Word; nor does it maintain ... grace as an objective 'possession' (even if a conferred possession) on the part of the human being—something over which he can dispose" (LV:E 49).

For 4.3: Justification by Faith and through Grace (paras. 25-27) (USA, nos. 105ff; LV:E 49-53; VELKD 87-90)

- "If we translate from one language to another, then Protestant talk about justification through faith corresponds to Catholic talk about justification through grace; and on the other hand, Protestant doctrine understands substantially under the one word 'faith' what Catholic doctrine (following 1 Cor. 13:13) sums up in the triad of 'faith, hope, and love' " (LV:E 52).
- "We emphasize that faith in the sense of the first commandment always means love to God and hope in him and is expressed in the love to the neighbour" (VELKD 89,8-11).
- "Catholics … teach as do Lutherans, that nothing prior to the free gift of faith merits justification and that all of God's saving gifts come through Christ alone" (USA, no. 105).
- "The Reformers … understood faith as the forgiveness and fellowship with Christ effected by the word of promise itself. This is the ground for the new being, through which the flesh is dead to sin and the new man or woman in Christ has life (*sola fide per Christum*). But even if this faith necessarily makes the human being new, the Christian builds his confidence, not on his own new life, but solely on God's gracious promise. Acceptance in Christ is sufficient, if 'faith' is understood as 'trust in the promise' (*fides promissionis*)" (LV:E 50).

- Cf. The Council of Trent, Session 6, Chap. 7: "Consequently, in the process of justification, together with the forgiveness of sins a person receives, through Jesus Christ into whom he is grafted, all these infused at the same time: faith, hope and charity" (DH 1530).
- "According to Protestant interpretation, the faith that clings unconditionally to God's promise in Word and Sacrament is sufficient for righteousness before God, so that the renewal of the human being, without which there can be no faith, does not in itself make any contribution to justification" (LV:E 52).
- "As Lutherans we maintain the distinction between justification and sanctification, of faith and works, which however implies no separation" (VELKD 89,6-8).
- "Catholic doctrine knows itself to be at one with the Protestant concern in emphasizing that the renewal of the human being does not 'contribute' to justification, and is certainly not a contribution to which he could make any appeal before God. Nevertheless it feels compelled to stress the renewal of the human being through justifying grace, for the sake of acknowledging God's newly creating power; although this renewal in faith, hope, and love is certainly nothing but a response to God's unfathomable grace" (LV:E 52f).
- "Insofar as the Catholic doctrine stresses that grace is personal and linked with the Word, that renewal ... is certainly nothing but a response effected by God's word itself, and that the renewal of the human being does not contribute to justification, and is certainly not a contribution to which a person could make any appeal before God, our objection … no longer applies" (VELKD 89,12-21).

For 4.4: The Justified as Sinner (paras. 28-30) (USA, nos. 102ff; LV:E 44ff; VELKD 81ff)

- "For however just and holy, they fall from time to time into the sins that are those of daily existence. What is more, the Spirit's action does not exempt believers from the lifelong struggle against sinful tendencies. Concupiscence and other effects of original and personal sin, according to Catholic doctrine, remain in the justified, who therefore must pray daily to God for forgiveness" (USA, no. 102).
- "The doctrines laid down at Trent and by the Reformers are at one in maintaining that original sin, and also the concupiscence that remains, are in contradiction to God … object of the lifelong struggle against sin … . [A]fter baptism, concupiscence in the person justified no longer cuts that person off from God; in Tridentine language, it is 'no longer sin in the real sense'; in Lutheran phraseology, it is *peccatum regnatum*, 'controlled sin' " (LV:E 46).
- "The question is how to speak of sin with regard to the justified without limiting the reality of salvation. While Lutherans express this tension with the term 'controlled sin' (*peccatum regnatum*) which expresses the teaching of the Christian as 'being justified and sinner at the same time' (*simul iustus et peccator*), Roman Catholics think the reality of salvation can only be maintained by denying the sinful character of concupiscence. With regard to this question a considerable rapprochement is reached if LV:E calls the concupiscence that remains in the justified a 'contradiction to God' and thus qualifies it as sin" (VELKD 82,29-39).

For 4.5: Law and Gospel (paras. 31-33)

- According to Pauline teaching this topic concerns the Jewish law as means of salvation. This law was fulfilled and overcome in Christ. This statement and the consequences from it have to be understood on this basis.
- With reference to Canons 19f of the Council of Trent, the VELKD (89,28-36) says as follows: "The ten commandments of course apply to Christians as stated in many places of the confessions… . If Canon 20 stresses that a person … is bound to keep the commandments of God, this canon does not strike to us; if however Canon 20 affirms that faith has salvific power only on condition of keeping the commandments this applies to us. Concerning the reference of the Canon regarding the commandments of the church, there is no difference between us if these commandments are only expressions of the commandments of God; otherwise it would apply to us."
- The last paragraph is related factually to 4.3, but emphasizes the "convicting function" of the law which is important to Lutheran thinking.

For 4.6: Assurance of Salvation (paras. 34-36) (LV:E 53-56; VELKD 90ff)

- "The question is: How can, and how may, human beings live before God in spite of their weakness, and with that weakness?" (LV:E 53).
- "The foundation and the point of departure [of the Reformers is] … the reliability and sufficiency of God's promise, and the power of Christ's death and resurrection; human weakness, and the threat to faith and salvation which that involves" (LV:E 56).
- The Council of Trent also emphasizes that "it is necessary to believe that sins are not forgiven, nor have they ever been forgiven, save freely by the divine mercy on account of Christ"; and that we must not doubt "the mercy of God, the merit of Christ and the power and efficacy of the sacraments; so it is possible for anyone, while he regards himself and his own weakness and lack of dispositions, to be anxious and fearful about his own state of grace" (Council of Trent, Session 6, chapter 9, DH 1534).
- "Luther and his followers go a step farther. They urge that the uncertainty should not merely be endured. We should avert our eyes from it and take seriously, practically, and personally the objective efficacy of the absolution pronounced in the sacrament of penance, which comes 'from outside.' … Since Jesus said, 'Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Matt. 16:19), the believer … would declare Christ to be a liar ... if he did not rely with a rock-like assurance on the forgiveness of God uttered in the absolution … . This reliance can itself be subjectively uncertain—that the assurance of forgiveness is not a security of forgiveness (*securitas*); but this must not be turned into yet another problem, so to speak: the believer should turn his eyes away from it, and should look only to Christ's word of forgiveness" (LV:E 53f).
- "Today Catholics can appreciate the Reformer's efforts to ground faith in the objective reality of Christ's promise, 'whatsoever you loose on earth …' and to focus believers on the specific word of absolution from sins. … Luther's original concern to teach

people to look away from their experience, and to rely on Christ alone and his word of forgiveness [is not to be condemned]" (PCPCU 24).

- A mutual condemnation regarding the understanding of the assurance of salvation "can even less provide grounds for mutual objection today—particularly if we start from the foundation of a biblically renewed concept of faith. For a person can certainly lose or renounce faith, and self-commitment to God and his word of promise. But if he believes in this sense, he *cannot at the same time* believe that God is unreliable in his word of promise. In this sense it is true today also that—in Luther's words—faith *is* the assurance of salvation" (LV:E 56).
- With reference to the concept of faith of Vatican II, see Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, no. 5: " 'The obedience of faith' … must be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God, offering 'the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals,' and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him."
- "The Lutheran distinction between the certitude (*certitudo*) of faith, which looks alone to Christ, and earthly security (*securitas*), which is based on the human being, has not been dealt with clearly enough in the LV. The question whether a Christian "has believed fully and completely" (LV:E 53) does not arise for the Lutheran understanding, since faith never reflects on itself, but depends completely on God, whose grace is bestowed through word and sacrament, thus from outside (*extra nos*)" (VELKD 92,2-9).

For 4.7: The Good Works of the Justified (paras. 37-39) (LV:E 66ff, VELKD 90ff)

- "But the Council excludes the possibility of earning *grace*—that is, justification—(can. 2: DS 1552) and bases the earning or merit of *eternal life* on the gift of grace itself, through membership in Christ (can. 32: DS 1582). Good works are 'merits' as a *gift*. Although the Reformers attack 'Godless trust' in one's own works, the Council explicitly excludes any notion of a claim or any false security (cap. 16: DS 1548f). It is evident ... that the Council wishes to establish a link with Augustine, who introduced the concept of merit, in order to express the responsibility of human beings, in spite of the 'bestowed' character of good works" (LV:E 66).
- If we understand the language of "cause" in Canon 24 in more personal terms, as it is done in chapter 16 of the Decree on Justification, where the idea of communion with Christ is foundational, then we can describe the Catholic doctrine on merit as it is done in the first sentence of the second paragraph of 4.7: growth in grace, perseverance in righteousness received from God and a deeper communion with Christ.
- "Many antitheses could be overcome if the misleading word 'merit' were simply to be viewed and thought about in connection with the true sense of the biblical term 'wage' or reward" (LV:E 67).
- "The Lutheran confessions stress that the justified person is responsible not to lose the grace received but to live in it … . Thus the confessions can speak of a preservation of

grace and a growth in it. If righteousness in Canon 24 is understood in the sense that it affects human beings, then it does not strike to us. But if 'righteousness' in Canon 24 refers to the Christian's acceptance by God, it strikes to us; for this righteousness is always perfect; compared with it the works of Christians are only 'fruits' and 'signs' " (VELKD 94,2-14).

- "Concerning Canon 26, we refer to the Apology where eternal life is described as reward: '… We grant that eternal life is a reward because it is something that is owed—not because of our merits but because of the promise' " (VELKD 94,20-24).

Official Common Statement

by
The Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church

1. On the basis of the agreements reached in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (*JD*), the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church declare together: "The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this *Declaration* shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics" (*JD* no. 40). On the basis of this consensus the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church declare together: "The teaching of the Lutheran Churches presented in the *Declaration* does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this *Declaration*" (*JD* no. 41).

2. With reference to the Resolution on the Joint Declaration by the Council of the Lutheran World Federation of 16 June 1998 and the response to the Joint Declaration by the Catholic Church of 25 June 1998 and to the questions raised by both of them, the annexed statement (called "Annex") further substantiates the consensus reached in the *Joint Declaration*; thus it becomes clear that the earlier mutual doctrinal condemnations do not apply to the teaching of the dialogue partners as presented in the *Joint Declaration*.

3. The two partners in dialogue are committed to continued and deepened study of the biblical foundations of the doctrine of justification. They will also seek further common understanding of the doctrine of justification, also beyond what is dealt with in the *Joint Declaration* and the annexed substantiating statement. Based on the consensus reached, continued dialogue is required specifically on the issues mentioned especially in the *Joint Declaration* itself (*JD* no. 43) as requiring further clarification in order to reach full church communion, a unity in diversity, in which remaining differences would be "reconciled" and no longer have a divi-

sive force. Lutherans and Catholics will continue their efforts ecumenically in their common witness to interpret the message of justification in language relevant for human beings today, and with reference both to individual and social concerns of our times.

By this act of signing
The Catholic Church and The Lutheran World Federation
confirm
the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification
in its entirety.

Annex to the Official Common Statement

1. The following elucidations underline the consensus reached in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JD)* regarding basic truths of justification; thus it becomes clear that the mutual condemnations of former times do not apply to the Catholic and Lutheran doctrines of justification as they are presented in the *Joint Declaration*.

2. "Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works" (*JD* no. 15).

   A "We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin's enslaving power …" (*JD* no. 22). Justification is forgiveness of sins and being made righteous, through which God "imparts the gift of new life in Christ" (*JD* no. 22). "Since we are justified by faith we have peace with God" (Rom 5:1). We are "called children of God; and that is what we are" (1 Jn 3:1). We are truly and inwardly renewed by the action of the Holy Spirit, remaining always dependent on his work in us. "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Cor 5:17). The justified do not remain sinners in this sense. Yet we would be wrong were we to say that we are without sin (1 Jn l:8-10, cf. *JD* no. 28). "(A)ll of us make many mistakes" (Jas 3:2). "Who is aware of his unwitting sins? Cleanse me of many secret faults" (Ps 19:12). And when we pray, we can only say, like the tax collector, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Lk 18:13). This is expressed in a variety of ways in our liturgies. Together we hear the exhortation "Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions" (Rom 6:12). This recalls to us the persisting danger which comes from the power of sin and its action in Christians. To this extent, Lutherans and Catholics can together understand the Christian as *simul justus et peccator,* despite their different approaches to this subject as expressed in *JD* nos. 29-30.

B The concept of "concupiscence" is used in different senses on the Catholic and Lutheran sides. In the Lutheran Confessional writings "concupiscence" is understood as the self-seeking desire of the human being, which in light of the law, spiritually understood, is regarded as sin. In the Catholic understanding concupiscence is an inclination, remaining in human beings even after baptism, which comes from sin and presses towards sin. Despite the differences involved here, it can be recognized from a Lutheran perspective that desire can become the opening through which sin attacks. Due to the power of sin the entire human being carries the tendency to oppose God. This tendency, according to both Lutheran and Catholic conception, "does not correspond to God's original design for humanity" (*JD* no. 30). Sin has a personal character and, as such, leads to separation from God. It is the selfish desire of the old person and the lack of trust and love toward God. The reality of salvation in baptism and the peril from the power of sin can be expressed in such a way that, on the one hand, the forgiveness of sins and renewal of humanity in Christ by baptism is emphasised and, on the other hand, it can be seen that the justified also "are continuously exposed to the power of sin still pressing its attacks (cf. Rom 6:12-14) and are not exempt from a lifelong struggle against the contradiction to God ... " (*JD* no. 28).

C Justification takes place "by grace alone" (*JD* nos. 15 and 16), by faith alone, the person is justified "apart from works" (Rom 3:28, cf. *JD* no. 25). "Grace creates faith not only when faith begins in a person but as long as faith lasts" (Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II/II 4, 4 ad 3). The working of God's grace does not exclude human action: God effects everything, the willing and the achievement, therefore, we are called to strive (cf. Phil 2:12 ff). "As soon as the Holy Spirit has initiated his work of regeneration and renewal in us through the Word and the holy sacraments, it is certain that we can and must cooperate by the power of the Holy Spirit ..." (The Formula of Concord [FC], SD II,64f; BSLK 897,37ff).

D Grace as fellowship of the justified with God in faith, hope, and love is always received from the salvific and creative work of God (cf. *JD* no. 27). But it is nevertheless the responsibility of the justified not to waste this grace but to live in it. The exhortation to do good works is the exhortation to practice the faith (cf. BSLK 197,45*).* The good works of the justified "should be done in order to confirm their

call, that is, lest they fall from their call by sinning again" (Apol. XX,13, BSLK 316,18-24; with reference to 2 Pet. 1:10. Cf. also FC SD IV,33; BSLK 948,9-23). In this sense Lutherans and Catholics can understand together what is said about the "preservation of grace" in *JD* nos. 38 and 39. Certainly, "whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it" (*JD* no. 25).

E By justification we are unconditionally brought into communion with God. This includes the promise of eternal life; "(I)f we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Rom 6:5; cf. Jn 3:36; Rom 8:17). In the final judgment, the justified will be judged also on their works (cf. Mt 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom 2:16; 14:12; 1 Cor 3:8; 2 Cor 5:10, etc.). We face a judgment in which God's gracious sentence will approve anything in our life and action that corresponds to his will. However, everything in our life that is wrong will be uncovered and will not enter eternal life. The Formula of Concord also states: "It is God's will and express command that believers should do good works which the Holy Spirit works in them, and God is willing to be pleased with them for Christ's sake and he promises to reward them gloriously in this and in the future life" (FC SD IV,38). Any reward is a reward of grace, on which we have no claim.

3. The doctrine of justification is measure or touchstone for the Christian faith. No teaching may contradict this criterion. In this sense, the doctrine of justification is an "indispensable criterion that constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ" (*JD* no. 18). As such, it has its truth and specific meaning within the overall context of the Church's fundamental Trinitarian confession of faith. We "share the goal of confessing Christ in all things, who is to be trusted above all things as the one Mediator (1 Tim 2:5f) through whom God in the Holy Spirit gives himself and pours out his renewing gifts" (*JD* no. 18).

4. The Response of the Catholic Church does not intend to put in question the authority of Lutheran Synods or of the Lutheran World Federation. The Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation began the dialogue and have taken it forward as partners with equal rights (*par cum pari*). Notwithstanding different conceptions of authority in the church, each partner respects the other partner's ordered process of reaching doctrinal decisions.

Methodist Statement

The World Methodist Council and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

1. After official approval of the Lutheran World Federation and of the Roman Catholic Church, the "Official Common Statement by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church" was signed by the two partners on 31 October 1999, thereby confirming the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. Articulating their common understanding of basic truths of the doctrine of justification by God's grace through faith in Christ, this substantial agreement between Roman Catholics and Lutherans expresses a far reaching consensus in regard to the theological controversy which was a major cause of the split in Western churches in the sixteenth century.

2. We, the Churches joined together in the World Methodist Council, welcome this agreement with great joy. We declare that the common understanding of justification as it is outlined in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (*JDDJ* 15-17) corresponds to Methodist doctrine. We are especially grateful for the trinitarian approach by which God's work in salvation is explained in these paragraphs: […][1]

3. We agree also with what Lutherans and Roman Catholics say together about some of the crucial issues in the doctrine of justification which were disputed between them since the time of Reformation (cf. *JDDJ* 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 37). Moreover, we accept the explanations which Lutherans and Catholics respectively give in paragraphs 20-21, 23-24, 26-27, 29-30, 32-33, 35-36, and 38-39 concerning their respective positions on these issues, and we do not consider these diverse emphases sufficient cause for division between either party and Methodists.

4. The Methodist Movement has always understood itself as deeply indebted to the biblical teaching on justification as it was understood by Luther and the other Reformers and then again by the Wesleys. But it has also always embraced elements of the doctrine of justification which belong to the Catholic tradition of the early church both East and West. This gave its own doctrine of justification its distinctive profile. Set in

[1] For paragraphs omitted here, please see *JDDJ* nos. 15–17, pp. 51-52 in this publication.

relation to "the remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis" which are not reckoned to impair the "consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification" between Lutherans and Catholics (*JDDJ* 40), the Methodist teaching may be described thus:

4.1 According to John Wesley the doctrine of original sin is an essential Christian doctrine. The corruption of human nature cannot be cured by ourselves. The destructive effects of the Fall are countered by the universal availability of prevenient grace (Sermon 85, On Working Out Our Own Salvation, III.4). That people are able to respond to God's call is due only to God's prior work. According to Wesley, the grace of God "assists" but does not "force" the human response (Sermon 63, The General Spread of the Gospel, 11). By God's grace believers are commissioned and empowered to tell people that God has reconciled the world to himself and to entreat them on behalf of Jesus Christ to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20).

4.2 The deep connection between forgiveness of sins and making righteous, between justification and sanctification, has always been crucial for the Methodist understanding of the biblical doctrine of justification. John Wesley saw in salvation a twofold action of God's grace: "By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin and restored to the favor of God; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, restored to the image of God" (Sermon 85, II.1). The redemptive acceptance into communion with God and the creative renewal of our lives are entirely the work of God's grace.

4.3 Salvation "depends on faith in order that the promise may rest on grace" (Romans 4:16) – this Pauline phrase could well be the motto of the Methodist movement. It started as a missionary movement after the Wesley brothers and their friends experienced the liberating Gospel of salvation by faith alone. It is only through God's grace that human beings are saved by faith alone. By faith we commit ourselves to the saving, redeeming, healing and renewing work of God's grace and love in our lives. Therefore genuine Christian faith is always "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). Neither faith nor love are the achievement of human efforts, but by God's call to faith and by the outpouring of God's love we as human beings are included in the reality of God's salvation.

4.4 In Methodist teaching, preaching, liturgy and hymnody, a theology of grace includes not only the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins but also the promise that we are liberated from the power of sin. Methodist theology has tried to take seriously Paul's assertion: "Now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life" (Romans 6:22). This was the reason why Wesley developed the doctrine of "Christian perfection" or "entire sanctification" (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23), which he considered to be at the heart of Methodist teaching. This doctrine found different interpretations during the history of the Methodist movement. However, in Methodist teaching five things always remained clear:

a) "Entire sanctification" or "Christian perfection" is nothing else than "loving God with all your heart and all your soul and with all your mind" and "your neighbour as yourself" (cf. Matthew 22:37-39; 1 John 2:5).

b) "Christian perfection" is not the absolute perfection which belongs to God alone; and it "does not imply an exemption either from ignorance, or mistake, or infirmities, or temptations" (Wesley's Sermon 40, Christian Perfection, I.9).

c) Even if our whole being is filled with the love of God which has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5), this will always remain God's gift and the work of God's grace and never our human merit or achievement.

d) The hope of conquering sin should never lead us to deny or disregard the danger of backsliding and being caught by the power of sin. Thus 1 John 1:6-9 states: "If we say that we have fellowship with God while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

e) Those who are justified and sanctified by God's grace will struggle with temptation and sin during their whole lives. But

in this struggle they are strengthened by the promise of the gospel that in Christ God has broken the power of sin. Even if "the contradiction to God within the selfish desires of the old Adam" (JDDJ 28) remains in the lives of the justified, God's grace "reigns through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:21).

4.5 For Methodists both the law and the gospel are expressions of God's word and God's will. For guidance in the way of life and good (cf. Deuteronomy 30:15-20), God in his love gave the law, which is summarized in the commandment to love God and our neighbours. As human beings we are not able to follow this way on our own. Because we have all failed to do God's will, the law now serves to accuse and convict us of sin (cf. Romans 3:21). God saves us and gives us life through the love revealed and expressed in the life and the death of Jesus Christ. Although the law no longer has any power to condemn those who believe in Jesus Christ, it remains as summarized in the love commandment an indispensable guide to God's will.

4.6 Assurance of faith and assurance of salvation have always belonged to the core of Methodist preaching. Such assurance is not seen as the certainty of possession but as the reliability of a relationship which is founded in God's love. This relationship is lived by using the "means of grace", especially searching the Scriptures and receiving the Lord's Supper. These are outward signs, ordained by God, through which he conveys his grace to us. To be assured by the witness of the Holy Spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:16) is the source of peace and joy in the lives of those who come to believe in Jesus Christ. In Wesleyan terminology, both "holiness" and "happiness" are gifts of God's grace.

4.7 "Faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6) is seen as the root of all good which results from the lives of those who believe in Jesus Christ. Works of piety and works of mercy are fruits of the Spirit in the lives of those who follow Jesus. Such works also help the believers to live their lives in communion with God and to be "co-workers with God" (1 Corinthians 3:7) in the field of God's mission and in ministry to the poor and to those who need the love of God most. But all such works are the work of God's grace; or, as John Wesley in his sermon on "Working Out Our Own Salvation" (Philip-

pians 2:12) puts it: "God works, therefore you *can* work. God works, therefore you *must* work" (Sermon 85, III. 2).

5. As Methodists we are grateful that on the basis of such an agreement as this, Lutheran and Methodist Churches in some countries have recognized one another as belonging to the one Church of Jesus Christ and have declared full communion of pulpit and altar. It is our deep hope that in the near future we shall also be able to enter into closer relationship with Lutherans in other places and with the Roman Catholic Church in accordance with this declaration of our common understanding of the doctrine of justification.

Official Common Affirmation

In this Statement the World Methodist Council and its member churches affirm their fundamental doctrinal agreement with the teaching expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification signed at Augsburg on 31 October 1999 on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church.

The signing partners of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification join together in welcoming the above Statement of the World Methodist Council and its member churches, which declares and demonstrates Methodist agreement with the consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification as expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.

Building on their shared affirmation of basic truths of the doctrine of justification, the three parties commit themselves to strive together for the deepening of their common understanding of justification in theological study, teaching and preaching.

The present achievement and commitment are viewed by Catholics, Lutherans and Methodists as part of their pursuit of the full communion and common witness to the world which is the will of Christ for all Christians.

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