

SEVENTEENTH EVENING LECTURE.

(February 6, 1885.)

In 1529, Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, instituted a colloquy at Marburg between Luther and his followers and fellow combatants in the Reformation, on the one hand, and Zwingli and some of his followers, on the other. At first it seemed that the desired object of brotherly and ecclesiastical union could really be attained; for the Swiss made one concession after the other. But the movement was brought to a halt at the discussion of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. For the sake of peace the Swiss, indeed, offered to speak like Luther concerning the Substantial presence of the true body and the true blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, only they would understand by that a *spiritual* presence. Spite of this the Swiss desired with great earnestness — Zwingli even with tears in his eyes — that brotherly and ecclesiastical fellowship be not refused them on account of this single difference.

What did Luther do on this occasion? He had soon noticed that the Swiss were not acting quite honestly. That his Suspicion was not without foundation was revealed, you know, six months later, when Zwingli overthrew the entire agreement and denied all concessions which he had made at Marburg. Accordingly, Luther said to Zwingli: "Yours is a different spirit from ours." This winged word, this memorable, world-renowned dictum of Luther, struck the heart of Zwingli and his followers with the force of lightning. Zwingli speaks of the effect in a letter to his friend Dr. Propst, pastor at Bremen. He relates that whenever he repeated those words of Luther to himself, — and he

did that often, — he felt their consuming force. Why? He and his friends knew they were beaten; they felt that they stood revealed and had to uncover their insincere aim of setting up a mere external union.

What was Luther's meaning when he uttered those words: "Yours is a different spirit from ours"? Unquestionably this: "If you poor mortals were merely caught in an error because of your human weakness, we could, yea, we would have to, regard you as weak, erring brethren, but still as our brethren, because you would surely be soon rid of this single error of yours. But that is not the case; the difference between you and us is this, that yours is a different spirit."

What spirit did Luther find lacking in the Swiss? Unquestionably the spirit to which the Lord refers when He says, Matt. 18,3: "Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Indeed, my friends, that is the spirit which Zwingli and his followers lacked and which those who follow in his footsteps in our day are still lacking. It is the spirit of childlike simplicity which takes the Father in heaven by His words. The spirit of the Zwinglian, Calvinist, and unionistic churches is nothing else than the rationalistic spirit, the spirit of doubt and uncertainty which, like unenlightened, unregenerate Nicodemus, queries before every mystery of the Holy Scriptures: "How can these things be?" John 3, 9. That passes my comprehension; that is contrary to my reason. When people of this character make concessions, they give you no assurance of reliability. This is plainly shown by their entering into union with people who teach doctrines contrary to their own. Moreover, as a rule, they betray that they are ashamed of their religion themselves and are unwilling to admit with their mouths as much as they are forced to admit in their hearts.

On the other hand, the spirit of Luther and of the entire genuine Lutheran Church is the spirit of childlike simplicity, the spirit of faith, the spirit that submits to the Word of God and takes human reason captive under the wisdom from on high. It is the spirit that finds expression in one of our glorious hymns, in these words: —What Thou hast spoken true must be; Thou art almighty, and with Thee Impossible is nothing. Let no one who is unable to confess these words with the pious poet call himself a Lutheran; he belongs to the fanatical sects.

The characteristic mark of our Church is unquestioned submission to the divine Word, while our sectarian teachers are continually tossed about like the waves of the sea and betray the fact that they are not founded upon the rock of the Word of God. Now, every Church which lacks this spirit of childlike simplicity, even when professing the truth with the mouth, is not to be trusted. That is indeed a terrible charge, but from what I have stated in my previous remarks you know that it is not without foundation. Let me offer you a few additional proofs.

The Protestant churches, so called, which are outside of the pale of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, know nothing of the true way to forgiveness of sin by means of the Word and, in general, through the means of grace. This is evident, in particular, from their rejection of absolution as pronounced by the minister from the pulpit, or in general and private confession. These so-called Protestant churches assert that of all Protestant churches the Lutheran has really been reformed least; for, they say, it still retains much of the leaven of the Romish Church. For proof they cite the gown worn by our ministers when officiating, the wafers used by us instead of ordinary bread at Communion, the crucifix and the lights on our altars, the liturgical chanting of our ministers at the altar, signing persons with the holy cross, and bowing the head at the mention of the name of Jesus. All these matters are innocent ceremonies, on which our Church does not condition man's salvation here or hereafter, but which it will not permit to be pronounced sin. For no creature has the right to declare something a sin which God has not declared such. Anything that God has neither commanded nor forbidden is a matter of liberty. But the aforementioned churches go a step farther when they assert that the worst papistic leaven and the most abominable remnant of the Papacy in the Lutheran Church is absolution.

Their charge is grounded, first, in their ignorance of what we really teach concerning absolution. They have made an absolute caricature of our doctrine. They are not conscientious enough to investigate the meaning we connect with absolution. They are not so honest to inquire of us what we mean by absolution, but behind our backs they slander us, calling us papists, who would lead our poor people back to Rome. As a rule, these people imagine we teach that by the rite of ordination a minister becomes endowed with a certain mysterious power, which enables him to forgive sin. They imagine we teach that absolution is a privilege of the minister, so that, while sins are forgiven

when an ordained minister pronounces these words: “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” these words would be without effect when pronounced by a layman.

Now, everybody knows that such is not our doctrine, but that it is the doctrine of the papists. They could get the information even from our Small Catechism that our doctrine is entirely different; for it states, in the Fifth Chief Part, concerning the Office of the Keys, that the power to forgive sins has been given to the *Church* on earth; for it says: “The Office of the Keys is the *peculiar church power* which Christ has given to His *Church* on earth, to forgive the sins of penitent sinners unto them and to retain the sins of the impenitent so long as they do not repent.” Mark this phrase: “peculiar church power”! It means that the power has been given, not to the preachers, but to the Church. The preachers are not the Church, but only servants [ministers] of the Church. If they are Christians, they belong to the Church, but not if they are not Christians. In that case they are mere hewers of wood and drawers of water for the sanctuary like the Gibeonites in the Old Testament. If they are Christians, they are joint owners with others of the Office of the Keys; however, the keys do not belong to the preachers exclusively, but to the Church, to every individual member of the Church. The humblest day-laborer possesses them just as well as the most highly esteemed general superintendent. Our Church has plainly stated this fact, among other things, in a remarkable story told by Augustine. We read in the *Smalcald Articles* (Mueller, p. 341; *Trigl. Conc.*, p 523) : “In a case of necessity even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another, as Augustine narrates the story of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the catechumen, who after baptism then absolved the baptizer.”

Once upon a time two persons were traveling in a ship, one of them a converted Christian, the other a pagan. They formed an acquaintance. The Christian proclaimed the Gospel to his new acquaintance, and by the operation of the Holy Spirit the pagan became a believing Christian. Suddenly a fearful tempest arose. Death was staring the passengers in the face, as everybody despaired of being saved. The former pagan’s one supreme wish was that he might receive Holy Baptism before going down into the water, while the Christian was craving for absolution. In this predicament the Christian proposed to the pagan a plan by which both their wishes could be fulfilled: he would baptize the pagan, and the pagan, having been made a Christian, would then absolve the Christian. The plan was carried out, and when they had safely

weathered the storm by the protecting providence of God and reached land, the bishop to whom their doings on board ship were reported did not pronounce them invalid, but both the baptism and the absolution were acknowledged to be valid.

On what doctrinal basis does the Lutheran practise of absolution rest? On the following facts: —

1. Christ, the Son of God, took upon Himself by imputation all sins of every sinner, counting them as His own. Accordingly, John the Baptist, pointing to Christ, says: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1, 29.

2. By His life in abject poverty, by His suffering, crucifixion, and death, Christ has wiped out the record of the world’s sin and procured remission of all sins. No man living, from Adam to the last human being that will be born, is excepted from this plan. For St. Paul writes, 2 Cor. 5, 21 “God hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Even Isaiah, chap. 53, 5: “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” And even in an Old Testament prophecy still earlier than that of Isaiah we hear the Messiah wail: “I restored that which I took not away.” Ps. 69, 4.

3. By raising His Son Jesus Christ from the dead, God the Father confirmed, and put the stamp of approval on, the work of reconciliation and redemption which Christ finished on the cross. For by the resurrection of Christ He has, in the presence of heaven and earth, angels and men, declared: “As My Son has cried on the cross, ‘It is finished,’ so do I announce, It is finished indeed! Ye sinners are redeemed. Forgiveness of sins is prepared for everybody; it is ready; it must not first be acquired by you.”

4. By His command to preach the Gospel to every creature, Christ commanded at the same time to preach forgiveness of sins to all men, hence to bring to them the glad tidings: “All that is necessary for your salvation has been accomplished. When asking, What must we do to be saved? do but remember that all has been done. There is nothing more to do. You are only to believe all that has been done for you, and you will be relieved.”

5. Christ did not only issue a general command to His apostles and their successors in office to preach the Gospel, hence the forgiveness of sin, but to

minister to each individual who desires it this comfort: “You are reconciled to God.” For if forgiveness of sins has been procured for all, it has been procured for each individual. If I may offer it to all, I may offer it to each individual. Not only *may* I do this, I am *ordered* to do it. If I fail to do it, I am a servant of Moses and not a servant of Christ.

6. Now that forgiveness of sin has been procured, as stated, not only has a minister a special commission to proclaim it, but every Christian, male or female, adult or child, is commissioned to do this. Even a child’s absolution is just as certain as the absolution of St. Peter, yea, as the absolution of Christ would be, were He again to stand visibly before men and say: “Thy sins are forgiven thee.” There is no difference; for, mark you! it is not a question of what man must do, but what has been done by Christ.

Suppose an entire city in a rebellious uprising had formed a conspiracy against its sovereign lord, had slain the king’s son, and all the citizens had forfeited their lives. Suppose the king’s son to advance beyond the limits of the parable to which I am referring — had come to intercede for the rebels and had induced his father to pardon the rebels, to issue a signed manifesto of amnesty, which the son would undertake to announce to the rebels, either personally or by messengers, assuring his father that the rebels would then again become good and grateful citizens and loyal subjects. Suppose the king would yield to his son and, while remaining quietly in his castle, would send out messengers to read in every street the document of amnesty, crying to the rebel citizens, “You have been pardoned!” — to those very citizens who a few days ago had tremblingly viewed themselves as beaten and expected soon to be executed. What would you think of these rebels if they were to say to the messengers: “We do not believe you; the king will have to come himself and make the announcement to make us believe it”? That would be unparalleled impudence. In the case assumed no one would be so reckless; every one would be glad when the messengers approached him with the royal document, signed and sealed, and would read the proclamation: “Herewith I pardon all rebels. I want them to accept this pardon and become good citizens, as they used to be.”

Suppose, furthermore, the messengers did not reach every place, but others who had heard of the pardon were to go into every nook and corner and spread the news, — their announcement would be just as much a decree of pardon as what the messengers were proclaiming. For the pardon would be valid, not because of a special authority of the messengers for offering it, but because the

pardon had been decreed, engrossed, and sealed, because, in a word, it had been confirmed and promulgated in the king's name and by his order.

Now, the case of all mankind is identical with that of those rebels. We are the rebels; our heavenly Father is the King from whom we have revolted, and the Son of God has done everything that was necessary to induce our heavenly King to pardon us. A Lutheran minister, when announcing the forgiveness of sins, or absolving a sinner, does nothing else than communicate to him the intelligence that Christ has interceded for him in his sorry plight and that God has restored him to favor. Moreover, the Lutheran minister does this by order of Christ.

If some one commissions me to tell So-and-so that he has forgiven him, and I execute the commission, the forgiveness is just as valid and effective as if the party himself were to deliver it. Or suppose you had a friend in Germany who had grievously offended you and you would learn that he was suffering great remorse over his action, being full of unrest and worry over his sins, which were torturing him and causing him to fear that God would not receive him into His grace — would you, in a case like this, have to go to Germany to see your friend? Why, you could either write him a letter or ask some acquaintance of yours who is going to Germany to tell your friend that you have forgiven him long ago and that he should no longer worry about the wrong he had done you, because you are fully reconciled to him. Your friend would certainly accept the information as reliable. That is what happens at absolution.

I ask you now, Is there any papistic element in this Lutheran rite? Surely not. For here is the doctrine of the papists for comparison: When a priest absolves, this power of forgiving sins has been vested in him by virtue of his priestly ordination and his having been anointed with chrism. On the part of the person receiving absolution the power, or efficacy, of absolution lies in his contrition, confession, and satisfaction. The papists declare that the requisites of a valid and salutary absolution are: 1. *confessio oris* (oral confession); 2. *contritio cordis* (heartfelt contrition); 3. *satisfactio operis* (compensation for wrong done by the performance of some good work).

In the first place, there must be full, or plenary, confession. In the opinion of the papists any omission in confession renders the entire confession and absolution invalid and ineffectual.

In the second place, the person making confession must feel a perfect contrition and heartfelt remorse, otherwise the keys will fail to open heaven to him.

In the third place, the person confessing must render the satisfaction prescribed by the priest.

There is nothing of these features in our confession. We say that the power, or efficacy, of absolution is not derived from the ordination or consecration of the minister; in fact, it is not in any respect derived from the minister, but 1) from the perfect reconciliation and redemption of Christ; 2) from the command of Christ to preach the Gospel to all men, which means nothing else than to absolve all men, to assure them of the forgiveness of their sins.

To substantiate what I have said, let me offer you a few testimonies from the confessions of our Church and from Luther's writings.

In the *Augsburg Confession*, Art. 25 (Mueller, p. 43 f.; *Triglot Conc.*, p. 69): "The people are most carefully taught concerning faith in the absolution, about which formerly there was profound silence. Our people are taught that they should highly prize the absolution as being the voice of God and pronounced by God's command. The power of the keys is set forth in its beauty, and they are reminded what great consolations it brings to anxious consciences; also, that God requires faith to believe such absolution as a voice sounding from heaven and that such faith in Christ truly obtains and receives the forgiveness of sins. Aforetime satisfactions were immoderately extolled; of faith and the merit Of Christ and the righteousness of faith no mention was made."

The Augsburg Confession wants us to regard absolution, not as the word of a human being who happens to pronounce the same, but as the word of God forgiving men's sins. This is usually understood to mean that the words of absolution are taken from the Bible and in that sense are the Word of God. But the meaning is that the announcement by a minister to a poor sinner, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," are tantamount to God's pronouncing those words. For the minister absolves, not because he is a peculiar personage possessing extraordinary power, but because God has commanded that in His name and in His stead men's sins be forgiven them. It makes no difference whether God or a minister makes the announcement. Accordingly, our Confession tells us to

believe firmly that what the minister says at absolution is what the almighty God Himself, who determines this matter, is saying to me.

But the objection is raised, How can a minister forgive sins? That is the same perverse and foolish objection which the Pharisees raised when they said about Christ: "This man blasphemeth." Matt. 9, 3. They imagined that Jesus was attempting something that was impossible. When the objectors are told that man forgives sin in God's stead, they want to know how that is possible. Of course, absolution would be invalid if God had not commanded it. But God has commanded it, just as I can instruct some one to make a communication in my place to an enemy of mine, informing him that I am reconciled to him. At absolution we say nothing but what has happened. That is the precious truth that forgiveness of sins has been acquired. If we would only truly believe in absolution, with what joy would we attend church whenever it is pronounced!

But few, very few, there are, even among Lutherans, who truly believe in absolution. That is the curse of false teaching. By incorrect preaching men are deprived of their most precious treasures. The fanatics admit that absolution is taught in the Bible, but the Bible statements must not be taken as they read. That is a teaching worthy of the devil's reward. For we must surely take the Bible as it reads. Are we to get its meaning by reading between the lines? God will call every one to account who treats His Word in such scurrilous fashion. A true Lutheran relies on God's Word and is unconcerned even though the whole world were to ridicule and despise him for it. He does not consider the world an authority in religious matters; he rests his faith on higher authority. Agreeably with the Augsburg Confession he regards absolution as an announcement in God's stead and by God's command.

Many unionists claim untruthfully that they subscribe to the Augsburg Confession. If they really did, they would not, on reading the above statement concerning absolution, cry: "Away with that papistic book!" They never did examine the Confessions of our Church, nor did they investigate our doctrine of absolution.

The Augsburg Confession states that its adherents teach with great diligence how comforting and necessary the Power of the Keys is to persons whose conscience has become alarmed. Among the fanatical sects many spend their lives in a state of despair because they do not "feel" what they would like to feel and finally pass away in their despair and are lost. If they would only

know our doctrine of firm faith in absolution! They would approach God and say: "Heavenly Father, I have been absolved according to Thy command by So-and-so. I know that Thou art ever truthful and canst not deceive me." God would answer them: "That is right; I am never proved a liar; I keep my promises." But the people must be taught how to arrive at this assurance.

To the statement of the Augsburg Confession that God requires faith in absolution, as if it were His own voice speaking to the sinner from heaven, the objection may be raised by some of you: "Is a godless person, then, to believe that he has been absolved?" Indeed, that is what God requires, and the person is in duty bound to believe this or lose the salvation of his soul. A different question would be whether he can believe it; for his conscience will denounce his attempt to believe it by casting up to him that he does not intend to come to God because he is living, and proposes to continue living, in sin, without any regard for God. Nevertheless, he ought to believe it. Ought God to require that we do not believe what He says? God has commanded to preach the Gospel to the whole world. This Gospel men are to believe. When absolution is pronounced to a person, the Gospel is brought to that individual; for the Gospel is nothing else than absolution.

The Augsburg Confession charges the papists with suppressing absolution by their doctrine of confession, which they regard as the chief matter. When a Catholic layman has confessed and received absolution, the idea that he must now believe himself reconciled with God never enters his mind. He is only concerned about having made a clean breast of everything. If he omitted something in his confession because he wished to escape a great and onerous satisfaction that would be imposed on him, he departs from the confessional with the tormenting reflection that all has been to no purpose. We tell the poor sinner to come and receive absolution, to believe that he has been forgiven when the words are pronounced, even though he were coming to confession fresh from committing the most heinous crime. We tell him that God requires of him nothing but that he accept what Christ by His meritorious life, suffering, and death has procured for him.

Even in the Lutheran Church this teaching was formerly greatly neglected. Poor sinners were admonished that they must feel a genuine contrition, that they must be really crushed, and that they must frame really good resolutions. But they were not told to come even if they could hardly crawl, even if they had to confess themselves the worst sinners, and to believe that the door of

grace was open to them and that they need only accept what was offered them. If these latter facts were emphasized, there would be more Christians. For these facts do not make men secure, but quicken them to faith and a renewal of their lives. They begin to feel the great love that God has shown them and to rejoice because of His own free grace. He has taken from them all their sins and adorned them with the garment of Christ's righteousness.

In the *Apology*, Art. XII, § 39 (Mueller, p. 166; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 261), we read: "The Power of the Keys administers and presents the Gospel through absolution, which proclaims peace to me and is the true voice of the Gospel." This was the assurance our forefathers had: The Gospel announces absolution to us; for it is practically an epitome of the Gospel, an extract drawn from it, which treats of faith and Christian justification. Its quintessence is the single statement: "In Christ's stead I forgive thee all thy sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

In his *Church Postil*, Luther says (St. L. Ed. XII, 1586): "This, then, is the benefit of the suffering and resurrection of Christ, that these acts were performed, not in His own, but in our behalf, in order that He might bruise under His heel the devil and all my sins which He bore in His body on Good Friday. Now the devil flees at the mere mention of Christ's name. Now, then, if you want to make use of these great treasures, behold, He has made a present of them to you. Only accord Him this much honor that you accept them gratefully." Luther means to say: You need not kneel down and pray that He make you a present of these treasures. He has already given you all.

In the same book, Luther says (St. L. Ed. XT, 1104) : "It is not of our doing, neither can it be merited by our works; everything has been given and is being offered to you. All you have to do is to open your mouth, or rather your heart, hold still, and let Him fill it. Ps. 81, 11.

In his *Large Catechism*, in the exposition of the Fifth Petition, § 88, Luther says (Mueller, p. 485; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 723). "Therefore there is here again great need to call upon God and to pray: Dear Father, forgive us our trespasses. Not as though He did not forgive sin without and even before our prayer (for He has given us the Gospel, in which is pure forgiveness before we prayed or ever thought of it). But this is to the intent that we may recognize and accept such forgiveness."

This is a remarkable passage. We are not to think that the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer proves that to obtain forgiveness we must first pray for it.

The object of this petition is not to show that there is no forgiveness until we pray for it, but to remind us of the fact that it lies ready for us and that this fact is to strengthen our faith. In a similar manner Luther says regarding our prayer at meat: “God gives daily bread, even without our prayer, to all wicked men; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to know it and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.” (Mueller, 371; *Trigl. Conc.*, p. 547.)

In his *House Postil*, Luther says (St. L. Ed. XIII a, 978 ff.): “After our dear Lord Christ has thus addressed the paralytic and forgiven him his sins, the scribes start up and charge Him with blaspheming God by pretending to forgive sins. Now, here is an essential point of great importance, which we are to note diligently. For we observe in all fanatics and the whole rabble of sectarians this error, that they fail to understand how sins are forgiven. Ask the Pope and all his divines, and you will find that they cannot tell you what absolution accomplishes. *The entire Papacy is built up on the teaching that grace is infused into men by some secret operation* and that it is obtained by contrition, confession, and satisfaction. If you ask them what absolution and the Keys effect, they tell you that it is an external ordinance observed in the Church. Accordingly, they do not base the forgiveness of sins on God’s Word and on faith, on which they must be based, but on our contrition, confession, and satisfaction. But this is an altogether fictitious teaching, by which people are misled and pointed the wrong way.”

The Gospel pericope for the 19th Sunday after Trinity, as you know, treats of the absolution of the paralytic by Christ, which drew from the Pharisees the angry question: “Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Luke 5, 21. Christ shows them that as the Son of Man He has absolved the paralytic, and, moved by the Holy Ghost, the people “marveled and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.” Matt. 9, 8. Why did Matthew embody this exclamation of the people in his Gospel? Because it was a statement which the Holy Spirit had stirred them up to make. Christ does not say: “Oh no; God did not give this power to *men*, as He gave it to Me,” but He assures us that this power was indeed given to *men*. The Lord Christ does not intend to walk about in the world in visible, human form, proclaiming to men the forgiveness of their sins, but He has commanded His Christians to do this. Yea, He has ordained a peculiar office, the incumbents of which have nothing else to do than to keep on saying to men what Christ said to the paralytic. We are to proclaim this truth to all our fellow-men. Why?

Because everything necessary to our salvation has been accomplished, and any person believing this believes, not us, but God, and, believing, he has what the absolution declares.

Luther's remarks about the basis on which the Papacy is built up might be amplified by including the sects; for they all, without exception, teach that forgiveness of sins must be obtained by praying, struggling, and wrestling with God until one feels the soothing sensation that grace has been infused into him. However, that is a sheer delusion; for grace cannot be infused into men, since it is the disposition of God outside of ourselves, in heaven. It can only be proclaimed to us. True rest, therefore, can be given us only through the Word, either when we hear it preached or when we read it. From every chapter of the Bible we can get absolution; for there is not a chapter but tells us that our sins have been forgiven. Every little passage which states that God will be merciful is an absolution. That is why Luther says that an evangelical minister cannot open his mouth without pronouncing absolution. It is really so. Mark you, I am speaking of a genuinely evangelical minister. A legalistic preacher cannot do this; he preaches people into despair and hell, while an evangelical preacher lifts even the greatest sinner out of hell. Of course, when sinners talk like the rebels of whom I spoke and who, on hearing that their king had pardoned them, refused his grace and wanted to murder his Son, to hang him, they will, as a natural consequence, go to the gallows, not because grace has not been offered them, but because they would not accept it.

Some, when reading a letter of indulgence issued by the Pope, say: "Of course, sins must also be repented of; moreover, one must go to confession and render the satisfaction imposed by the priest; otherwise the letter of indulgence will be of no benefit." And these ignorant, deluded men will claim that the Pope is not so bad because he demands three requisites for absolution: contrition, confession, and absolution. But this is a horrible, infernal, diabolical blindness; for the Pope's practise subverts the entire Gospel. According to the Pope's teaching the sinner seeking absolution must do three things, and what is worst, faith is not one of these requisites. The people are told merely to be contrite, crushed, and to confess. If their contrition is not perfect, the priests will remit somewhat of the penitential rigor and be satisfied with attrition.* They admit indeed that for a plenary absolution from all sins it is better to have contrition. Moreover, as a rule, the priests are so accommodating as to impose on the people only a really trifling satisfaction,

such as reciting ten Paternosters or putting a contribution into the alms-box, etc. By putting in a small contribution, the people imagine they have settled their account. Or they may be told to eat fish on a day on which they usually eat meat. All this is nothing but a diabolical humbug, wrought upon the people by reckless spirits, bent on leading the people astray.

However, my time is up. I believe, the subject is of sufficient importance to justify our taking it up once more, for the purpose of examining a few beautiful testimonies. Then we shall study more particularly these words in our thesis: “until they feel that God has received them into grace.” This important part of our thesis has not been fully treated as yet. A proper indoctrination is needed by you more than by pastors in Germany; for you are living in the land of sects. Our poor people are observing the great show of sanctity which the sectarians display and are easily misled by it. For they imagine, to really save their souls they must join the strictest sect; that would insure their salvation. Alas! can the sects save any one? There is but one Savior; a person who does not trust Him completely to bring him into heaven alone, verily, will not enter heaven. For Jesus Christ alone is the Door to heaven.

* [*Smalcald Articles* Part III, Art. III, § 16: “Since no one could know how great the contrition ought to be in order to be sufficient before God, they gave this consolation: ‘He who could not have contrition, at least ought to have attrition,’ which I may call half a contrition or the beginning of contrition; for they themselves have understood neither of these terms, nor do they understand them now, as little as I. Such attrition was reckoned as contrition when a person went to confession”. (Mueller, p319; *Trigl. Conc.*,p 483).]