

The Catholic-Lutheran Accord

Richard Bennett, ex-priest, October 17, 2015

Dear Friend,

While apostasy is predicted in Scripture, it still comes as a shock to see it face-to-face. The apostasy in the October 31, 1999, Roman Catholic Church and The Lutheran World Federation “The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was called “a milestone in Christian history” “the end of reformation” and other similar statements of acceptance.

The Bible believer is to remember such was foretold and he is to continue to contend for Biblical faith. The Lord Jesus Christ through the Apostle Paul commands His disciples to “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” They are likewise commanded to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” The analysis given below is simply obedience to that Biblical word.

I request that you study the analysis and make it known far and wide, and continue to stand strong in the precious Love and Truth of our All-Sufficient Lord.

In the Lord’s loving kindness and grace,

Richard Bennett

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A Denial of the Gospel and the Righteousness of Christ

In the dialogue between Evangelicals and the Roman Catholic Church here have been alarming attempts in recent times to declare Roman Catholics as “brothers and sisters in Christ” as we saw in the whole ‘Evangelicals and Catholic Together’ movement. However something more authoritative took place in 1999. “The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” (an official doctrinal statement jointly authored by representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation) was signed on October 31st, as a joint confessional agreement. That this event is important is seen in the many comments on it that imply that the Catholic Church has indeed changed and that the Vatican now accepts Reformation truths. Thus for example in the area of ecumenism it has been said that “the most significant development to date is the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, published in 1999 and signed by the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation.

The document, with a jointly signed annex attached which offered genuine clarification to the JD, included the acceptance by Rome of the sola fide formula! In the Joint Declaration it is affirmed that ‘the doctrine of justification is the measure or touchstone for the Christian faith. . .an indispensable criterion.’ The JD specifically states that both Catholics and Lutherans jointly believe that ‘whatever [works] in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it.’ It acknowledges that Lutherans hold the Reformation understanding of grace alone by faith alone (sola fide), and the imputed (alien) righteousness of God to the sinner (‘at the same time righteous and sinner’). And most significantly, the JD explicitly states that ‘the mutual condemnation of former times do not apply to the Catholic and Lutheran doctrines of justification.’”^[1]

If this were indeed true it would mean that the Catholic Church is now fundamentally changed, in that it now accepts the very principles that made the Reformation. However, because we know that the Vatican continually claims that it is “semper eadem” (always the same) and that her Popes’ teachings are “irreformable by their very nature,”^[2] we must analyze just what was jointly accepted on the 482nd anniversary of Martin Luther’s pivotal posting of the ‘95 theses’. What we will see is totally different than what many claim. In fact, the Lutherans of Lutheran World Federation have now embraced the doctrine of the Council of Trent, and in so doing have officially and formally denied the Gospel and the righteousness of Christ. Significantly, of the three Lutheran Synods in the USA; the Missouri Synod (7 million), the Wisconsin Synod (c. 0.5 million) and Evangelical

Lutheran Church of America (20 million), only the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America signed this accord with Rome.

Elite Untouchable Joint Declaration?

The Joint Declaration was the result of thirty years of Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue. This fact alone might dissuade many from daring to challenge it. The document itself is about nineteen pages in length depending on which printing one reads. Arrayed with many footnotes, a sizable appendix, the official response of the Lutheran World Federation, the Roman Catholic response, the clarifications to the document, and the added accouterment of John Paul II's comment on the Joint Declaration; the document appears very much like the robes of those who devised it: all very "haut couture" meant to stun anyone who might dare to analyze it.

In addition to the first rate showmanship with which the Joint Declaration has been presented, it appears that there is neither grub nor gnat that has not been strained out of this cleverly worded document and addenda. Dare anyone be so bold as to ask if a camel has been swallowed? Daunting circumstances notwithstanding, the Christian, committed to Scripture as his sole authority, and in the same Holy Spirit that gave the Scripture, is able to sift error from truth, discerning that which is in accord with Scripture in the Official Common Statement in which the Joint Declaration is ratified and approved by both parties.

Heretical Landmines

There are presuppositions upheld in the Joint Declaration itself which are not stated as such in the Official Common Statement. Some of these presuppositions totally negate Biblical justification as, for example, the idea that justification is by means of the sacrament of baptism. Both parties to the agreement accept such a tradition of men. This is listed under the heading called "4.4 The Justified as Sinner," the Joint Declaration states: "28. We confess together that in Baptism the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies, and truly renews the person." This heresy is in line with the teaching of the Council of Trent,

Can. 8 "If any shall say that by the said sacraments of the New Law, grace is not conferred from the work which has been worked [ex opere operato] but that faith alone in the divine promise suffices to obtain grace: let him be anathema."^[3]

Biblical truth, however, is that the believer's faith cannot be based on any physical works of men whatsoever, as true faith is in Christ Jesus' perfect life and sacrifice alone.^[4] To attempt to claim causative effects, therefore, for that which was given to testify to the Lord's grace and His finished work is "to preach another gospel."^[5]

While such deadly landmines as this permeate the Joint Declaration, this analysis is limited mainly to examining the Official Common Statement ratified by both parties.

The Joint Declaration and the Judgment of the Sovereign God

Because God is All Holy and man is dead in trespasses and sins, an immense gulf exists between the Creator and the human creature. Because of Adam's sin, mankind is born spiritually dead. God justifies His own Holiness in graciously providing the believer's rectitude by imputing to the sinner the perfect righteousness of Christ and His perfect propitiation-sacrifice. The Scriptures proclaim the Holiness and Righteousness of God in the flawless life and death of the God-man the Lord Christ Jesus. Justification in the first place has to do with God Himself, to show that He is just in justifying the sinner in Christ.

The Gospel has to do with who God is in His Holy and Righteous nature. The Gospel demonstrates that because of who God is, He alone justifies. Thus Romans 3:26 states, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." The final cause of justification is the glory of the Divine Holiness, Justice and Goodness. Thus the one who preaches any other gospel is accursed by God, as the Apostle clearly stated in Galatians chapter one.

Perversion of the Gospel is an enormous crime. It debases the perfect righteousness and sacrifice of Christ, and in so doing stands against the very nature of God's Holiness. Through the prophet

Isaiah the Lord warns, “But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.”[6]

It must be carefully observed that it is not possible for those who pervert the Gospel to continue unpunished or for God to permit His glory to be set aside. The time frame is not known; however, the certainty is inevitable. God who is Holy “shall be sanctified in righteousness.” God is God, and those who teach a false gospel may not, by a false fancy, assure themselves of uninterrupted tranquility. God is Holy by nature. He must be sanctified in judgment, for God cannot deny Himself.

The Joint Declaration’s Claim

The document alleges, ...”that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics...” and ...”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.”[7]

These statements notwithstanding, the relevant “condemnations” by the Church of Rome on those who hold to the biblical Gospel have never been revoked or recanted. The present day dogma of the Catholic Church upholds the teaching of the Council of Trent and declares that it is infallible.[8] From Sixth Session of the Council of Trent, the following curses still stand,

Canon 9. If anyone shall say that by faith alone the sinner is justified, so as to understand that nothing else is required to cooperate in the attainment of the grace of justification, and that it is in no way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will: let him be anathema.[9]

Canon 11. If anyone shall say that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity, which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Spirit and remains in them, or even that the grace by which we are justified is only the favor of God: let him be anathema.[10]

Two Important Points:

1. From a Roman Catholic perspective, as will be seen, these condemnations do in fact stand because the Joint Declaration does not contradict either.
2. From a Biblical and historical Lutheran viewpoint, however, these anathemas of Trent fall under the wrath of God.

The Contents of the Joint Declaration

The Joint Declaration consists of five main divisions with the entirety subdivided into forty-four numbered paragraphs. The fourth main division, the lengthiest of the five, is broken down into seven sections, an overview being as follows:

Preamble (7 paragraphs the Joint Declaration (JD) 1-7)

1. Biblical Message of Justification (JD 8-12)
2. The Doctrine of Justification as Ecumenical Problem (JD 13)
3. The Common Understanding of Justification (JD 14-18)
4. Explicating the Common Understanding of Justification (JD 19-39) This 20-paragraph section has seven subheadings.
 1. Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to Justification (JD 19-21)
 2. Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making Righteous (JD 22-24)
 3. Justification by Faith and through Grace (JD 25-27)
 4. The Justified as Sinner (JD 28-30)
 5. Law and Gospel (JD 31-33)
 6. Assurance of Salvation (JD 34-36)

7. The Good Works of the Justified (JD 37-39)

5. The Significance and Scope of the Consensus Reached (JD 40-44)

The Official Common Statement ratifies the Joint Declaration. This begins with three paragraphs (OCS 1-3) followed by the words, “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.” The Official Common Statement has an Annex with four sections. Finally, Section 2 has five subsections, A-E.

Stumbling at the Rock of Offence

The Joint Declaration must be analyzed in the light of Biblical truth. What was true for Israel in the Apostle Paul’s analysis applies in this instance. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed...For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.[11]

The Biblical “rock of offence” is Christ Jesus Himself, the Rock on which one believes for extrinsic justification, that is, imputed righteousness. One must remember from the outset that the issue at hand is “Justification.” Error always cloaks itself in reasonable sounding phrases and often makes use of the scheme of the evil one to twist the Scriptures. The Joint Declaration is replete with “Reformation-like” language and Scripture quotations. A characteristic vagueness and impreciseness permeates the document. Certain sentences can be read and assented to by a Biblical Christian, but when the slant of meaning is examined each is seen to be the opposite of what it first seemed to say. The conclusions arrived at are similar to the deception of Jacob in Genesis Ch. 27, “The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” “The voice” of the Joint Declaration is distinctly that of the Scriptures; “the hands,” however, are the hairy hands of Rome. The document is excelsior of doublespeak. It claims to explain a common understanding of the doctrine of justification, and then adds encumbrance upon impediment to the purely Scriptural, wholly objective, wholly juridical nature of the doctrine. There is no better way to assess the guile of the Joint Declaration in its attendant Official Common Statement than by comparing it to what the Scripture, the Word of God, declares to be truth.

Trent in New Garments

In the Joint Declaration, imputed righteousness is cleverly sidestepped for the old lie of establishing one’s own righteousness. The central point that separated the Reformation from Rome was the Biblical doctrine of extrinsic justification. A person is accepted by the All Holy God only “in the beloved” “to the praise of the glory of his grace.”[12] The doctrine of imputed righteousness struck at the very heart of the Roman Catholic insistence on one being made inherently just, i.e., just within oneself. In the Joint Declaration, the doctrine of extrinsic or imputed righteousness has been wiped out in favor of the Catholic Church doctrine of inherent righteousness. Clearly, the Joint Declaration is an attempt to do away with the biblical Gospel. Thus the Official Common Statement 2. A) reads,

“We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin’s enslaving power ” (JD 22). “Justification is forgiveness of sins and being made righteous, through which God “imparts the gift of new life in Christ” (JD 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.”

This is a convoluted mixture of the doctrines of justification and sanctification rather than merely a problem of semantics. Justification nowhere in Scripture ever means inherent righteousness (i.e.

“being made righteous”). The believer’s justification is not based on a single iota of anything in him: it is based wholly in his standing in Christ. This is the crux of the matter in the Joint Declaration. One goes the way of all flesh to the judgment of hell if he adds anything to the pure and perfect righteousness of Christ. One needs to be, “afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of Christ”[13] Justification is not “being made righteous,” but the Joint Declaration follows such statements as these with numerous Scriptural quotations and phrases cloaking its errors in the semblance of truth. It is quite like Rebecca’s word to Jacob, “Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.”[14] Thus “Rebecca took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son.”[15] In the Joint Declaration, the voice of some of the best Scripture texts on justification is heard. The conclusion, however, is similar to what Isaac discerned, “The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.”[16] The hands of the Joint Declaration are distinctly those of Rome; the material that is manipulated, however, is that of Scripture.[17]

“Being Made Righteous”

In the justifying act of God, He imputes Christ's perfect righteousness to the individual. It is a legal and one time, finished, irrevocable act which cannot be misconstrued to be a process or ongoing occurrence, such as the term “being made righteous” will allow. The simple truth of Scripture is stated Romans 3:22, “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” God’s demonstration of His own righteousness is the faithfulness of Jesus Christ in His perfect life and sacrificial death. The great news is that this absolute righteousness is by imputation “unto all and upon all them that believe.” Being “called children of God” and “a new creation” is the fruit. It is what follows on this act. “Being made righteous” here is just a rewording of the old lie of the Council of Trent in which it was officially declared, “Justification...which is not merely remission of sins, but also of the sanctification and renewal of the interior man...whereby an unjust man becomes a just man.”[18] In this final word of the Joint Declaration Official Common Statement is the age old Roman Catholic mixing of sanctification with the act of justification, returning to the age old fabrication that righteousness is supposedly within the soul, rather than to the biblical truth that by Holy God the believer is credited with the everlasting righteousness that is in Christ Jesus. “Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength...”[19]

What is proposed in the Joint Declaration as the “doctrine of justification” is deficient in two essential ways. It neither upholds the perfect standard of God’s Holiness nor does it demonstrate the perfect righteousness of Christ in life and death. In the words of the Apostle Paul, “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”[20] The Bible emphasizes and declares the righteousness of God, “the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith”[21]. This is not proclaimed nor taught in the Official Common Statement on the Joint Declaration. Destitute and sinful human beings need the perfect righteousness of Christ. This is what the Scripture clearly says is now manifest, “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested.”[22]

Manifested in Scripture, Missing in the Joint Declaration

What precisely is omitted in the Joint Declaration is “the righteousness of God without the law the righteousness which is of God by faith” of Philippians 3:9, “the righteousness of the one”, “the obedience of the one” of Romans 5:18-19[23], the righteousness of Jesus Christ “the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” of 2 Peter 1:1. The verdict act of God in declaring that a sinner is acquitted and counted righteous because of the obedience and death of Jesus Christ alone is not contained in the Joint Declaration. What is proposed in its place is a combination of some Biblical truths (such as grace alone, faith alone) with the old lying definition of “justification” being seen as a quality of the soul within the believer.

Because righteousness is of and from God, it is absolutely perfect. The one-time act of God in justifying a sinner in Christ Jesus is perfect. Because man in himself cannot be perfect, righteousness can only be communicated through imputation or reckoning. God’s provision of the perfect righteousness of Christ is acquired by faith alone. This faith, in itself, is not seen, rather it is

“the evidence of things not seen.”[24] The “righteousness of God without the law” is not to be seen on earth. The fruitfulness of such righteousness is indeed seen; nevertheless, the righteousness itself is in heavenly places in Christ.[25]

What is proposed to be “justification” in the Official Common Statement on the Joint Declaration is to be seen here on earth, and not the Scriptural, declarative justification “in heaven.” Rather justification is presented as taking place “on earth” in the believer, as for example, in Annex Para 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 15). (Emphasis added.)

The simple truth of Scripture is that God never accepts an individual as such. Rather, he is accepted only in the Beloved,[26] in the righteousness of the One, Christ Jesus, that is, in the righteousness of faith. Receiving the Holy Spirit and the renewal of hearts is the old confusion of justification with sanctification. Because the purpose of these statements is to define justification, such stupefaction is studied deceit.

The phrases, “being made righteous” and “we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit” both make room for what is to be concluded, i.e., that “justification” is within the person and a quality of the soul within the believer. Basically the Biblical truth is this: the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to the believer is an act of God in Christ.

Sophisticated Sophistry

The official statement ratifying the Joint Declaration states,

C) **Justification takes place** “by grace alone” (15 and 16), by faith alone, the person is justified “apart from works” (Rom 3:28, cf. JD 25). “Grace creates faith not only when faith begins in a person but as long as faith lasts” (Thomas Aquinas, S. Th II/II 4, 4 ad 3).

The use of the phrase “Justification takes place” rather than the Biblical concept, “to whom it shall be imputed,”[27] is studied deceit because the word “justification” is made to imply a process rather than a one-time act of the God. In Scripture justification is a one-time declarative act in which God pronounces the sinner just or righteous, as it is stated, “God...not imputing their trespasses unto them.”[28] And as the Apostle specifically states, “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”[29]

The Joint Declaration and the Official Common Statement on the Joint Declaration use the noun “justification” and carefully avoid the verb “justifies.” The Greek word “justifies” (logizomai) means to count esteem, impute, number, reason, reckon. It is a verb denoting a one-time action. The repetition of the noun “justification” in the Joint Declaration and in the Official Common Statement on the Joint Declaration conveys the concept of a quality within a person that totally contravenes the Scripture. Not mentioning “imputed righteousness” and continually speaking of “justification” is seductive sophistry.

Thus in the Official Common Statement’s endorsement of the Joint Declaration, the basis for the Gospel is given as within man rather than the perfect righteousness of the God-man, Christ Jesus. This is speaking against God and is worse than anything proposed by Israel or the Pharisees. The words of the Lord Christ Jesus therefore apply, “for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.”[30]

The Mindset of Rome in the Joint Declaration

The Roman Catholic Church cannot conceive of the act of justifying in which man remains a sinner. Catholic theology understands justifying as “justification,” something that God graciously pours into a man’s heart, displacing sin and sinfulness in the process. Biblically speaking, however, justifying righteousness is something that always resides in the person of Christ alone. The imputation of this righteousness is what makes a believer acceptable to God. As long as the

believer lives, he is in himself guilty, but in Christ He is righteous and accounted precious in God's sight.

An Astonishing Quote from Aquinas

It is a surprising thing that a section of Thomas Aquinas' teaching is affirmed in this final word confirming the conclusion of the Joint Declaration and the Official Common Statement. The question Aquinas was answering in S. Th II/II 4, 4 ad 3 is, "Whether Formless Faith Can Become Formed or Formed Faith Formless?"^[31] The abstruseness of the question itself gives one a taste of the intricacies of scholastic theology. Why quote from a most intricate question in Aquinas rather than simply giving the words of Scripture that are referred to in the brackets? The Romans 3:28 text given in brackets before the Aquinas quote states, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." The word "conclude" in this text is the Greek word "logizometha" meaning, we esteem, impute or reckon "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Had the Scripture been cited rather than the words of Aquinas, "righteousness reckoned" would have been obvious, and the sophistry exposed. The official statement, however, chose the words of Aquinas to suppress biblical truth and to uphold the concept of inherent righteousness.

The statement agreed on says,

C) Justification takes place "by grace alone" (JD 15 and 16), by faith alone, the person is justified "apart from works" (Rom 3:28, cf. JD 25). "Grace creates faith not only when faith begins in a person but as long as faith lasts" (Thomas Aquinas, S. Th II/II 4, 4 ad 3).

Biblically speaking it ought to say,

The righteousness of Christ is credited to the believer "by grace alone" and by faith alone, and thus the person is justified in Christ alone, "apart from works." As is stated by the Apostle Paul, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Rom 3:28)

Cancerous Cuisine

Earlier in the same work cited, Aquinas teaches that grace is a quality of the soul. In the "Treatise on Grace," he asks the question "Is Grace a Quality of the Soul?" In the body of his article, he cites Aristotle's physics saying, "motion is the act of the mover in the moved." Then in Reply Obj. 1, he states, "Grace, as a quality, is said to act upon the soul not after the manner of an efficient cause, but after the manner of a formal cause, as whiteness makes a thing white, and justice, just."^[32] The whole idea of grace being moral justice located inside a person, rather than Holy God imputing Christ's righteousness to each person whom He places in Christ, blatantly contradicts Biblical truth. Such teaching is a negation of consistent Biblical teaching of positional legal righteousness in Christ alone.^[33]

Complete Perfection in Christ, Not in the Individual

Endorsing the teaching of Aquinas and all such teaching in the Joint Declaration as "Justification takes place," "being made righteous," and "we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit" is quite cleverly teaching "inherent righteousness" without using those words. Such teaching opposes both the Gospel and the righteousness of Christ.

The distinction between the righteousness of faith (justification) and the righteousness of the law (i.e., sanctification) was foundational in Luther's understanding of the Gospel. After Luther, the Formula of Concord of 1577 reiterated the basic Biblical insights of double righteousness. This was bedrock of historical Lutheranism. It was recognized that if active righteousness (sanctification) were brought into the definition of the passive righteousness by faith, then both the glory of Christ and the Gospel are denied and one returns to the old lie of Satan that what is inside a man makes him right before God. "Ye shall be as gods" (Genesis 3:5).

The written Word of the Lord continually shows the believer where he or she is eternally and splendidly saved. "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."^[34] The Roman Catholic Church does not rest satisfied with Christ alone, her process

program in fact nullifies the grace of God.[35] What is literally damning in the Official Common Statement of the Joint Declaration is that an attempt has been made to masquerade the perfect righteousness of Christ as inherent righteousness. What was truly Biblical in Luther's understanding of imputed righteousness is now subsumed under Rome's idea of "inner" righteousness, the source of her power over the minds and hearts of men, which power she covets. What is most serious, the very truth of the Gospel is thus made void. The "inner" process system is a hopeless practice born of a blasphemous idea. Rather, "It is God that justifieth." [36]

The Wrath of God is Revealed

The Lord forewarned of stumbling at the Rock of offence, "unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner." [37] The Catholic Church and Lutheran World Federation in publicizing their apostasy in the Joint Declaration have to fear a revelation of something much more serious; the very wrath of God. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." [38]

The intent to continue dialogue "to reach full church community" is a conclusion mentioned in paragraph 3 of the Official Common Statement. The actual words are as follows,

"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 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 divisive force."

It is quite revealing that the stated conclusion here is one of the primary goals as defined in the Church of Rome's conditions for dialogue.

The Dart Through the Liver: Rome's Own First Basis

For the Catholic Church the first basis on which ecumenical dialogue works is not *Sola Scriptura* [39], "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35); rather it is a "community of spiritual goods." This basis is exactly the same as the premise on which the Catholic Church builds her doctrine and which is spelled out in her latest official Catechism,

Para. 80 "Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine wellspring, come together in some fashion to form one thing and move towards the same goal."

Thus, the first basis for all the dialogue with the Lutheran World Federation was the Catholic Church's own measure of "truth." The rules following on this first basis were also her own rules of engagement. Some of the rules are these:

"Each partner should seek to expound the doctrine of his own community in a constructive manner, putting aside the tendency to define by opposition.... [Interestingly, the Bible teaches much by means of contrast.] The partners will work together towards a constructive synthesis, in such a way that every legitimate contribution is made use of, in a joint research aimed at the complete assimilation of the revealed datum." [40]

The words "revealed datum" are carefully chosen. For a Bible believer, the term would mean just the Written Word; for the Catholic Church, however, the term "revealed datum" consistently refers to Scripture plus Tradition as her first basis. Proceeding from this impure base, the "constructive synthesis" rules are simply the old line of evolution, "truth" by synthesis, or relative "truth." Excluded from start to finish is the principle of *Sola Scriptura*. To the Catholic Church who by so exquisite an application of her rules of engagement has "thrust through" the Lutherans, the words of the Lord speak directly, "[You are] making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered." [41]

According to Vatican Council II Document No. 42, the final goal of the dialogue between the Lutherans and the Roman Catholic Church is that the Lutherans be brought “into that unity of the one and only Church...This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose.” For the Catholic Church, the final conclusion has not yet been attained until her stated objective is secured. Until then, “continued dialogue is required...in order to reach full church communion.” And to this, the Lutherans apparently have agreed fully--snared by thirty years of hearing her “much fair speech...till a dart strike through his liver,” as indeed it has. The Catholic Church has been clear in laying out her agenda toward all Christians who are not part of her organization. She has applied her method skillfully, relentlessly since Vatican Council II. Ought one to be surprised by the conclusions to which she and the Lutheran World Federation have come?

For those who are the Lord’s own within the Lutheran Churches, the warning of the Lord is clearly given,

“Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.”[42]

The Joint Declaration as ratified in the Official Common Statement is indeed outwardly stunning, but the message is dead men’s bones in that it attempts to cleverly establish man’s own righteousness. The words of the Lord are indeed appropriate, “I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”[43] ..

[1] http://www.apologeticsresctr.org/veritas_may_jun_04.htm 12/11/04

[2] “The Roman Pontiff ... enjoys this infallibility...For this reason his definitions are rightly said to be irreformable by their very nature...” From Vatican Council II Documents, Lumen Gentium p. 380 Austin Flannery, Ed., 1981 ed. (Northport, NY: Costello Publ. Co., 1975)

[3] Henry Denzinger, The Sources of Catholic Dogma, Tr. by Roy J Deferrari from Enchiridion Symbolorum, 30th ed. (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1957), #851. Bolding in any quotation indicates emphasis added in this work.

[4] John 6:29; Romans 2:28, 29; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Colossians 2:11; Romans 3:21-26

[5] Galatians 1:9

[6] Isaiah 5:16

[7] Annex to the official common statement part 1 page 43

[8] Catechism of the Catholic Church (Ligouri, MO: Ligouri Publications, 1994) Para. 891

[9] Denzinger, #819

[10] Ibid., #821.

[11] Romans 9:31-10:3

[12] Ephesians 1:6

[13] II Corinthians 11:3

[14] Genesis 27:8

[15] Genesis 27:15

[16] Genesis 27:22

[17] The Apocryphal books are also quoted. These are whole books added to Scripture and also include additions to existing Old Testament books of the Scripture. This was done the Roman

Catholic Church at the Council of Trent in 1546. The Catholic Church itself refers to these books as the “deuterocanonical books”, the term meaning second canon.

[18] Denzinger, #799

[19] Isaiah 45:24

[20] Romans 10:3

[21] Romans 1: 17

[22] Romans 3:21

[23] "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

[24] Hebrews 11:1

[25] Ephesians 1:3

[26] Ephesians 1:6 “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

[27] Romans 4:23-25 “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

[28] 2 Corinthians 5:19

[29] Romans 4:8

[30] Matthew 23:13

[31] Summa Theologica, Tr. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Rev. by Daniel J. Sullivan, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. (USA: Wm. Benton, Publisher, 1952) Vol. II, p. 405

[32] Ibid., p. 349

[33] Psalm 32:2, 71:15-16, 130:3; Isaiah 45:24-25, 54:17, 61:10; Jeremiah 23:6, 33:16, 51:10; Daniel 9:24; Luke 18:14; Romans 1:17, 3:21-22, 4:6, 11, 5:18-19; I Corinthians 1:30; II Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:6; Colossians 2:10, 3:3; II Peter 1:1, and elsewhere.

[34] Colossians 2:10

[35] “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” Galatians 5:4

[36] Romans 8:33

[37] 1 Peter 2:7

[38] Romans 1:18

[39] The principle of “sola Scriptura” is consistent with the very way in which the word of truth that comes from God, is to be interpreted, as Psalm 36:9 explains, “For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light we see light.” God's truth is seen in the light of God's truth. This is exactly the same as the Apostle Paul says, “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (I Corinthians 2:13). It is precisely in the light which God's truth sheds, that His truth is seen.

[40] Vat. Council II Doc., No. 42, p. 548

[41] Mark 7:13.

[42] Proverbs 7:24-27

[43] Matthew 5:20

