

Justification by Faith Alone?

The Reply of Patriarch Jeremiah II to the Lutheran Tübingen Theologians, Concerning the Augsburg Confession (16th cent.)

"... The same also do the ancient writers of the Church teach; for Ambrose saith: 'This is ordained of God, that he that believeth in Christ shall be saved, without works, by faith alone, freely receiving remission of sins.' — Article VI of the Augsburg Confession

From the First Reply of Constantinople to Tübingen...

[6. The New Obedience]

The sixth [article] gives the assurance that it is necessary to do good works but not to be dependent on them according to the passage: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant" [Ps 143:2]. With regard to this we say that faith precedes, and then the works follow and are necessary according to the commandment of God. The one who fulfills them, as he must, receives reward and honor in everlasting life. Indeed, good works are not separate from, but necessary for, true faith. One should not trust in works nor be boastful in a Pharisaic manner. And even if we have fulfilled everything, according to the word of the Lord, "we are unworthy servants" [Lk 17:10]. All things should be referred to the righteousness of God because those things which have been offered by us are small or nothing at all. According to Chrysostom, it has been established that God does not lead those of us who are idle into His kingdom. The Lord "opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble" [1 Pet 5:5; see Jas 4:6; Pr 3:24]. One should not boast about works. But to do and fulfill them is most necessary. For without divine works it is impossible to be saved. If, then, we will be convinced by the Lord who says, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" [Jn 13:17], it shall be to our benefit.

It is necessary to join our good works together with the mercy from above. If we excuse ourselves because of our weakness or the goodness of God and do not add something of our own, there will be no benefit to us. How can we invoke mercy for the cure of our iniquities if it, no way have we done anything to appease the Divine One? Let us hear how Chrysostom explained [the words of] Psalm 129, "Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice" [1-2]:

'From this we learn two things: that one cannot simply expect something from God if nothing from us is forthcoming,' because first it says, 'I cry,' and then follows, 'hear my voice.' Furthermore, lengthy prayer, full of tears, has more power to convince God to hearken to that which has been asked. But so no one may say that, since he is a sinner and full of thousands of evils, 'I cannot come before and pray, and call upon God, 'He takes away all doubt by saying: 'If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?' [Ps 129:3]. Here the word 'who' should be replaced by the word 'no one,' because there is no one, no one who, according to a strict account of his works, could ever attain mercy and benevolence. If you withdraw mercy and God justly imposes the penalty of the sentence and metes out punishments for sins, who will be able to bear the judgment? Of necessity all would have to submit to destruction. And we say these things not to draw down souls into carelessness, but rather to console those who have fallen into despair. Because who can boast that he has a pure heart? Or who can proclaim that he is free from sins? And what can I say of others? For if I bring Saint Paul into our midst and wish to ask of him to give an accurate account of what happened [in his case], he cannot hold his ground. For what can he say? He read the Prophets. He was a zealot with regard to the strictness of the law of the forefathers. He saw signs. Nevertheless, he had not yet ascended to

that awesome sight which he enjoyed, nor had he heard that awesome voice. Before that he was, in all things, confused.

Furthermore, was not Peter, the chief [Apostle], who after thousands of miracles and such, reproved in council for his grievous fall? If, then, He shall not judge by mercy and compassion but will pronounce an accurate judgment, then [the Lord] will find all of us guilty. Therefore, the Apostle Paul said: 'I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me' [I Cor 4:4]. And the Prophet said: 'If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?' [Ps 129:3]. And the doubling [of the word Lord,] is not simply said, but [the Prophet] was amazed at, and surprised by, the greatness of God's mercy, His boundless majesty, and the fathomless sea of His goodness. He knew, and knew clearly, that we are responsible to God for many debts, and that even the smallest of sins are deserving of great punishment. 'For with thee is forgiveness' [Ps 129:3]. This means that escape from eternal punishment does not depend on our achievements but on Thy goodness... If we do not enjoy Thy mercy, our achievements alone do not suffice to snatch us from the future wrath. But now You have mercy and justice united together, and You prefer to use the former rather than the latter. And the Lord has plainly said this through the Prophet: 'I am He who blots out your transgressions' [Is 43:25], that is, this is of me, it is of my goodness because those things which are yours, even though they are good, will never be sufficient to free you from punishment if the work of my mercy were not added. And [the Lord] also [said]: 'I will carry you' [Is 46:4]. Indeed atonement rightfully belongs to God, He who is truly merciful. Therefore, He examines sparingly. 'For Thy name's sake I have waited for Thee, O Lord' [Ps 129:5]. Because of Thy name, which is merciful, I have waited for salvation. When I was looking to matters of myself, I would again despair as in former times; but now, attending to Thy law and fulfilling Thy words, I have high expectations. Thou art He who said, 'as the heaven is distant from the earth' [Is 55:9], 'so my counsels are not as your counsels, nor are my ways as your ways' [Is 55:8]. And again: 'As the heaven is high above the earth, so the Lord has increased His mercy toward those who fear Him' [Ps 102:11]; that is, not only have I [God] saved those who accomplish [good] things, but I also have spared the sinners, and amid your iniquities I have demonstrated my guardianship.

In Ezekiel He says: 'I do not do this, except for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations' [Ezek 36:22]. [This passage] says that we are not worthy to be saved, nor did we have any hope because of what we had done, but we look forward to being saved for His name's sake. This is the hope of salvation and the sacred anchor which has been left for us, who repent in order to be granted His mercy. If we are obedient, we shall eat the good of the land [cf. Is 1:19] and we shall inherit the promise. It is necessary, therefore, to hope in God, even if myriads oppress us and drive us to despair and threaten [us with] death. For Him all things are easy; and for the impossible, He can find a way. For with Him is the fountain of redemption, the sea of salvation, the treasure of mercy which springs up eternally [see Ps 36:9-10; Mt 18:21 f]. Where there is mercy, there also is redemption, and not only a little, but much, for the sea of mercy knows no bounds. If, then, we are bound up by our sins, it is not necessary to fall again, nor to be despondent. For wherever there is mercy and charity, there is no strict reckoning of iniquities by the one who judges. Because of His great mercy and inclination toward charity, many sins are overlooked. Being such a judge, God grants mercy without ceasing and grants pardon; He is compassionate and loves mankind and imparts salvation to all who have repented and who, according to their ability, perform the good. For truly He is good and abundantly pours forth everywhere the greatness of His mercy, and from Him is that which is truly mercy; it is very clear that He will save His own people, not punish them. Let us then offer those things we have done with all exactitude and wisdom, and let us cherish everything that is from Him, who possesses untold mercy. [12]

Wisdom comes first [to indicate] that a praiseworthy life is one that is cleansed by God rather than one that is deposed. The persons who are without remorse, walking in sin, inclining toward the baser things and are gluttonous, wallowing in the slime, never look to heaven, do not wish to be pitied; for they do not realize how grievously they suffer. It is better for someone to be polluted with unclean mud than with sins. Those who have fallen in the pit of sin will perish utterly unless they cleanse their defilement not with water, but with great toil and time and sincere repentance, with tears, with wailings, and with the customary

spiritual cleansing. These are the true satisfactions, and not those made through bribes, which arouse the anger of God against those who take them. And, thus, they are subject to myriads of evil things; and every misfortune sent by God comes to them. There is no forgiveness of sins possible for such persons because zeal is directed toward their own personal gain. External filth can be dusted off very rapidly, but that which is carried around within is not readily washed away. "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, fornication, adultery," [Mt 15:19] and the like. For this reason the Prophet also said: "Create in me a clean heart, O God" [Ps 50:10]. And another: "Cleanse your heart from wickedness, O Jerusalem" [Jer 4:14]. And do you see here what pertains to us and what pertains to God? And again: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" [Mt 5:8].

Let us become cleansed as far as our minds can comprehend and as much as we are capable of becoming. How can this be done? "Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove your evils from your souls before my eyes" [Is 1:16]. He says: "Do not become like whitewashed tombs" [Mt 23:27], appearing to be guiltless; but, thus, remove [evils from your souls] as being seen by God. "Though your sins are like purple, I will make them white as snow" [Is 1:18]. Do you not see that we have to clean ourselves first, and then God will make us white as snow? For this reason no one, not even those who sink down to the lowest evil, should despair. Even if it becomes a habit for someone and he has almost arrived to the nature of evil in itself, let him not be afraid. For even colors which do not fade and have almost become one with the material, nevertheless, are transformed into the opposite condition and become white as snow. Thus, He grants us good hope. Let us seriously try as much as we can to become clean.

Let us pursue good works. Let us not seek the speck that is in the eye of another, but let us see the log that is in our own [cf. Mt 7:3]. And, thus, with the grace of God, we shall be able to attain worthily the good things to come. Therefore, the power of works is great; and even when they commit sins, God cleanses them through repentance. One should not boast of them nor depend on them, for that would be sinful; but as much as you are able, fulfill the works which are the result of faith and are necessary. For if those who have cast out demons and who have prophesied are rejected, and have not lived a comparable life, how much more [shall we be rejected] if we are negligent and do not fulfill the commandments? Christ will say to such persons: "I never knew you" [Mt 7:23; cf. Lk 13:27].

We believe correctly to glorify Him and we live the good life to glorify Him, for there is no benefit of one without the other. And furthermore, when, perchance, we praise Him rightly but do not live properly according to the commandment, then we greatly insult Him. And although we give Him the title of Master and Teacher, we, nevertheless, scorn Him and do not fear His awesome judgment. The fact that the pagan Greeks lived an impure life is no surprise, nor are they deserving of such great condemnation. However, being Christians, who participate in so many sacraments, [and] who enjoy such glory yet live impurely is much worse and intolerable and beyond all compassion.

If, as the saying goes, we were to look earnestly toward the great and infinite compassion of God and His extraordinarily great gifts, and imagine that we will be saved by grace alone in the manner of the ingrates, we cannot hope to benefit. And besides, our own deeds, even if they may approach perfection, are nothing in comparison, except that they are supplementary and demonstrate our disposition—namely, that we are thankful, that we obey the commandments and perform good and virtuous deeds so that we may not be placed into paradise like insensible creatures, which absolutely is not done but, by our preference, through the grace of God. If we prefer to incline toward sin, we shall appear insensible as paying attention to non-existing things. Indeed, we must avoid it [sin] and detest it since it places us far away from God. And when we intend to commit a sin, then we must conjecture and imagine the dread and intolerable court of Christ in which the judge is sitting on a high and elevated throne to judge those who have lived. All creation is present and trembling at His glorious appearance.

Endnotes

12. St. Basil, *On Baptism*, 2.4, PG 31.1589; cf. St. Basil, *Ascetical Works*, vol. 9, 399.

From the Second Reply of Constantinople to Tübingen...

[C.] CONCERNING JUSTIFICATION AND GOOD WORKS

[I. The Distinction between Law and Spiritual Law]

Following is the third section concerning justification by faith and good works, which shall be further explained. We do not merely say that those who obey the law shall be justified, but those who obey the spiritual law, which is understood spiritually and according to the inner man. Indeed, by "fulfilling the law of the spirit as much as we are able, we will be justified and we will not fall from grace because the Cleansing Word has passed into the depths of the soul. However, those who serve the law according to its outward expression fall totally from divine grace, for they do not know" that the completion by grace of the spiritual law cleanses the mind from every spot; nor do they know the end of the law, which is Christ. He, as the maker of all, is also the maker of the law of nature, and as He who preconceived the law, is giver both of that which is written in the letter and also of that which is in spirit or in grace. "For Christ is the end of the law" [Rom 10:4], that is to say, of the written law understood spiritually. Therefore, in Christ the Creator, who preconceived the law as lawgiver and redeemer, the law of nature, the written law, and that of grace are drawn together. The Apostle [Paul] speaks the truth when he says: "according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men" [Rom 2:16]. That is to say, just as he preached through Jesus Christ in all laws, he rebuked some and accepted others in a fitting way, giving to each his due. If, then, one is judged according to the law, he will be judged in Christ; or if he is judged outside the law, again he will be judged in Him [Christ]. The Logos, as creator, is the beginning and the mediator and the end of all that exists. Having been begotten without sin, He had stripped himself of all rule and authority [cf. Col 2:10] even though in some way He also put them on. For He, the Logos of God, who became perfect man without sin, had the characteristics of the first Adam, as at the beginning, being free from corruption and sin. For when Adam transgressed the commandment, he was condemned to give birth through suffering and in sin from which [transgression] no one is [born] without sin. And since sin thus came because of the transgression, and nature was bound by an evil bond on account of the decision, while the evil spirits invisibly are at work, because of this the Logos of God, out of merciful compassion, has set us free by becoming man. He also has commanded that one should not contemplate that which is against nature, nor work evil, but avoid it as much as possible and hold fast only to the virtues and commandments. If something evil chances to come in a human way, we must throw it off and hasten to subordinate the more wicked to the stronger good, and subject the flesh to the spirit by exercising virtue and doing good works. For as we know, human nature has been bereft of the good works, having become barren through transgression. Indeed, the voice of the crying word became the voice according to the conscience of each one who transgressed, as it were crying out of the secret recesses of the heart: prepare the way of the Lord [cf. Jer 43:3; Mk 1:3]. Therefore, the explicit and clear preparation of the divine way constituted change and correction of living and reasoning for the better, and for the cleansing of the polluted former living and reasoning. Indeed, the way of the Lord, the good, royal and glorious way, is the life of virtue. In such a life in which the Word [Logos] works the way of salvation in each one, He dwells in us through faith and carries among us through the various laws and teachings pertaining to both virtue and knowledge [cf. Eph 3:17]. Indeed, the paths of the word are the various kinds of virtues, the various ways of life according to God, and the pursuits of living according to God. The people who honestly pursue virtue according to God's will, make these paths straight. For the divine Word does not proceed in the paths which are not straight, even if the divine Word would find the way to some degree prepared. For instance, were one to fast and thus avoid the inflammatory diet of the passions and do other things which are able to contribute to the expulsion of wickedness, he would have prepared the way. But if he practices these things for the sake of vanity, or greed, or to please men, he has not provided for God to walk in his paths. For the way of the Lord is virtue, and the way of the straight path is without guile. Furthermore, as Scripture says: "the valley shall be filled." The flesh of each one, which has been inundated by the strong current of passions, is to be set right and lifted up through good works. Therefore, let us with great joy send far off every vice which rises up against virtue, "and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God" [2 Cor 10:5]. Being converted by the Holy Spirit, let us journey on the way of the Lord by directing the members of the body by His divine commandments and freed from passions of every sort, desiring the true life. Thus, surely, we shall see the salvation of God by becoming

"pure in heart" [Mt 5:8]. Through true faith and works which proclaim faith, we prepare the divine ascent [reign] of the Word.

[2. Concerning Grace and Works]

Moreover, we should especially know that grace not only of itself works in the saints the knowledge of the mysteries, but also that grace works in the worthy ones, who have powers by nature, the capability of receiving the knowledge. The one, then, needs the other; grace needs works, and works need grace. As light needs sight and sight needs light, the soul needs the body and the body needs the soul. Then, clearly, both [grace and works] are those things which lead to salvation; it is unambiguously necessary for one to have both—correct faith with [good] works, and works of virtue by faith. One must believe without hesitation. For with doubt and hesitation in faith, faith is not complete. Also, if faith has once been accepted, it is further deepened by searching to investigate it. For simplicity of the faith is stronger than rational proofs. Also, simple faith is stronger than the faith which is not simple—immeasurably stronger. For when one searches the depths of faith, it rises in waves, but it becomes tranquil when considered with a simple disposition.

[3. Idle Faith and Faithless Work]

Therefore, since it is undoubtedly and completely sure that we must believe without doubt, only this remains, that which it is necessary to seek with all one's might and is to be found by every means. What in reality is this? It is this: that we may attain salvation with all that we do. For idle faith and works without faith are both rejected in the sight of God. Let us consider what has been said in the light of the following: for God, who has shown himself to us as being of three hypostases, has also shown this most evident way to us. And, indeed, know also that faith, hope, and love [cf. I Cor 13:13], the golden threefold rainbow, when kept by us, effects salvation for us.

[4. Faith in Hope and Love]

And now we will elaborate at length: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" [Heb 11:1]. In faith, the impossible is possible; weakness becomes strength; suffering is painless; and the perishable, imperishable; and the mortal, immortal. Indeed, "this is a great mystery" [Eph 5:32]. Hope is a wealth of unthinkable riches, and without doubt it is a treasure beyond treasures. Love is the source of faith, a depth of mercy, a sea of humility, and exaltation of holy souls, a likeness to God, as far as is possible for humans. Apart from these three it is impossible to find salvation. The three greatest witnesses of the past in our midst are sufficient to confirm the matter.

[5. The Apostles on the Means of Justification]

Come thou, Peter, leader of the venerable Apostles, and thou, John, the most beloved in Christ, and thou, James the Just, the first bishop of Jerusalem, bear witness concerning what has been said. Peter in the first chapter of his Second Epistle cries out in this manner and solemnly testifies thus:

for this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these things are yours, and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these things is blind and shortsighted [2 Pet 1:5-9].

Moreover, the Son of Thunder (the Evangelist John] in the first chapter of his First Epistle says:

'that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we

walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin' [I Jn 1:5-7]. 'He who says he is the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and in it there is no cause for stumbling' [I Jn 2:9-10]. 'He who does not love [his brother] remains in death. Any one who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him' [I Jn 3:14-15].

Also, in the third chapter of the same Epistle: "but if any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need" [I Jn 3:17], etc., and [John says] many other things concerning love.

[6. Saint James on the Relation of Faith and Works]

Also, the brother of God [James] in the 2nd chapter of his Epistle agrees saying:

What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has not works, is dead. But someone will say: 'You have faith and I have works. Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.' You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder. Do you want to be shown, you foolish fellow, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son, Isaac, upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and the scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness'; and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone, as we said a short time ago. For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead [cf. Jas 2:14-24, 26].

[7. Intercorrelation of Faith, Hope, and Love for Salvation]

Let us consider whether it has not been said in vain, that apart from faith, hope, and love, it is impossible to be saved. For as we, indeed, need the eyes of our body for viewing visible things, so doubtless we have need of faith for the study of the divine things. For as knowledge of the matters comes according to the proportion of the accomplishments of the commandments, so also the knowledge of the truth comes according to the measure of the hope in Christ [cf. Jn 7:17]. And as, indeed, it is meet to worship nothing else than God, so one should not hope in any other than God alone who is the One who cares for all [cf. Mt 4: 10]. As he who has hope in man is accursed, so blessed is he who rests in God. And just as the memory of the flame does not warm the body, in the same manner faith without love does not effect the light of knowledge in the soul. Indeed, it is impossible for love to be found apart from hope. Hence, the Holy Fathers say one thing is permanent: the hope in God. All other things are not in reality, but merely thought. He who has fastened his heart on the power of faith has nothing without works. And when one has nothing, he limits everything to faith. Indeed, the power of faith is in good works. And he who has been deprived of love, has been deprived of God himself. One ought to strive in such works and also hope in Him. For if you ask yourself or another true Christian on what ground the ones being saved have hope of salvation, he would by all means say that we hope only in the mercy of God. But this is the forbearance of God. For if He would not endure evil for us, no one would be saved, since no one among men is without sin. "If even his life on the earth should be but one day on the earth" [Job 14:4-5]. Therefore, if we have the hope of salvation in the forbearance of God, this hope of salvation, indeed, is given only to those who endure the evil and not to those who bear malice. Let us then, as far as possible, be patient, piously forgiving others who have trespassed against us; and then the Heavenly Father will not only forgive us, but He will bestow upon us life everlasting in Christ.

[8. Religious Awe and Obedience Presupposed for Good Works]

Therefore, wherever religious awe of divine things and obedience to the words of the Holy Fathers are abandoned, there no good works can be built up, nor the true faith which proves itself by good works. In other words, how would we be worthy of the beatitudes, which are laid up hidden in the faith if we are persuaded only by evidence according to human reason. Why did the Gentiles "become futile in their thinking and their senseless minds darkened; and claiming to be wise, became fools?" [Rom 1:21]. Is it not because they had refused obedience to the preaching of faith and followed the dictates of this reasoning? Isaiah lamented bitterly concerning such men as being condemned. "Woe unto those who are wise in their own eyes and shrewd in their own sight!" [cf. Is 5:21]. For the Godhead, as it seems to the illustrious Athanasios, is not delivered to us by demonstration in words, but by faith and by pious and reverent use of reason. [66] And the Apostle Paul preached concerning the redemptive cross "not with eloquent wisdom" [I Cor 1:17], "but in demonstration of the spirit and power" [I Cor 2:4]; and, thus, he [Paul] tells of the "man caught up into Paradise" who heard powers "that cannot be told, [67] which man may not utter" [2 Cor 12:4]. How will one believe by reasoning the truth of the Holy Trinity, who has not simply believed?

Do you see how all the divine teachers repudiate curious reasoning and throw it all out of the household of God? For anyone who has lost what he had before seeks to find it. Yet he who has lost nothing but has kept in completeness that which he possessed from the beginning does not seek it anymore, but merely keeps well that which he possesses. We, then, have learned to keep the faith and not be seeking after many things. We, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, have lost nothing, and we seek nothing; the search after a faith [that has not been lost] is self-defeating. Therefore, just as the one who believes does not seek, likewise neither does the one who seeks believe. The one who continues to seek has not yet found, nor has he truly and steadfastly believed as he should. Where there is seeking, there is no faith; and there where faith exists, there is no need for seeking, but there is a need of the fruits of faith, which are good works. For he who is convinced by words can also be induced to adopt a different opinion. But he who is convinced by faith fortifies himself and is a confirmed believer. Therefore, we do not seek to hear the polluted words and those that are sought in faith but which do not refer to the common meanings to see if they [hearing] agree, but only to prove if they are in accord with the enunciated dogmas of the Church—even if it happens that they negate all the doctrines of philosophy. For we have not been guided to the truth by words of wisdom, nor have we been initiated to any discernable degree into the mystery of the Trinity, nor, indeed, have we learned any other doctrine from it [philosophy] than the dogmas of the faith. For the matter of philosophy, as you well know, is ontological. But the end purpose of theology is He, who is above all beings and creator of everything. It is, then, neither necessary to think of the faith as an art, nor subject to criticism that which has been approved by theologians, but to continue in those matters which the spiritual preachers have made clear. For if we would rely upon our own reasoning, we would be in danger of sinking in the chaos in which Anaxagoras fell. May Christ the King preserve us from it. [68]

[9. Saint John Chrysostom—Works Are Indispensable]

In addition, Saint Chrysostom, also, in interpreting the six days of creation in his fourth homily [*On Genesis*], proves that works are indispensable:

Therefore, I ask, let us not become careless about keeping the commandments, but let us control our thoughts, First, then, let us try to win over our neighbor with love [brotherly affection] [cf. Rom 12:9f] and according to the blessed Paul, 'outdo one another in showing honor' [Rom 12:10]. For this is, indeed, what holds together and preserves our life; and in this we are distinguished from the animals and the beasts, that we can, if we will, keep the appropriate order in us, and show great concord with our fellow men, and restrain our thoughts, and crush anger, that untamed beast, and always have before it the struggle of the awesome judgement. For it is not fitting for us to simply spend the time without purpose; but every day and hour we should have before our eyes the judgement of the Lord, and also those things which can give great assurance, and those things which emphasize punishment. And thus recalling these things in our minds, let us overcome our base passions. Let us restrain the temptations of our flesh

and 'put to death,' in the words of blessed Paul, 'What is earthly in you' [Col 3:5] that we may be able to receive the 'fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, etc.' [Gal 5:22]. For the grace of God makes us more sturdy than a diamond and in every way invincible, if we would will it. Let this be the difference between a Christian and the ungodly person: that he [the Christian] wishes to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. Let us not pride ourselves in name only, nor be conceited on account of external appearance. But even if we would possess the things, we should not be greatly conceited, but rather should we humble ourselves even more. Scripture says: 'when you have done all, say we are unworthy servants' [Lk 17:10]. If we would think thus and be concerned about our own salvation, we will be able to benefit ourselves and also rescue from the future hell those who have us for their teachers, so that when we accomplish with strictness this course of life, we may be deemed worthy of God's love for mankind in the future age. [69]

Therefore, one cannot find consolation in that [future] life, who has not in the present life cleansed himself of sins. 'For in Hades,' Scripture says, 'who will give to thee praise?' [Ps 6:5; cf. Sir 17:25]. And rightly so! For this [life] is the time of toil and of contests and of wrestling, and the future life is the time of wreaths and of rewards and of prizes [cf. I Cor 9:24]. Therefore, let us struggle as we still continue in the stadium so that in time, when it is proper, we may receive the wreath and accept the rewards of the toils with assurance. This is not merely said ... but we wish to remind you each day to remember to carry out good works so that when you have been perfected and accomplished and shine in the virtue of the manners of life, 'that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish' [Phil 2:15; Mt 5:14] and 'shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ' [Phil 2:16] we may be proud, that even when you are merely manifest, you have benefited those who associate with you and those who communicate with you in conversation by sharing in a spiritual fragrance and excellent manner of life which are characteristic of you. For just as it happens that keeping company with bad persons is injurious to those who associate with them, it is as the blessed Paul says: 'bad company ruins good morals' [I Cor 15:33].

In like manner, also, keeping company with good persons greatly benefits those who associate with them. Therefore, our Master who loves mankind has allowed the good to associate with the wicked, so that the latter will benefit some from this association and not remain continually in wickedness; but having before them a constant reminder, they will reap more benefits from their association with the good Persons. For such is the power of virtue, that even those who abandon it do greatly respect it and render great praise for it [virtue] as also do those who are evil. Let us give heed concerning matters of virtue before it is too late, and we unwittingly punish ourselves. May it not be so. Do you see that there is need for works and, indeed, for vigorous works and most excellent? Now, indeed, the discussion concerning these matters is sufficient. [70]

Endnotes

66. St. Athanasios, *To Serapion, Epistle I*, PG 25.530-676; cf. Shapland, *Letters*, p. 114.

67. *Arreton dynameon* instead of the biblical *arreta remata* (2 Cor. 12:4)

68. Anaxagoras (500-428 B.C.) in 432 B.C. was condemned to death for undermining religion by teaching theories of astronomy.

69. *Genesis, Homily 4*, PG 53.47-48.

70. *Genesis, Homily 5*, PG 53.49-50.

From *Augsburg and Constantinople, The Correspondence between the [Lutheran] Tubingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession*, by Fr. George Mastrantonis (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982), pp. 42-46, 178-186. See also "[The Ascetic Ideal and the New Testament](#)," by Father Georges Florovsky, *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue*, eds. [Fr.] John

Meyendorff and Robert Tobias (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), "Justification and Sanctification: A Conversation Between Lutheranism and Orthodoxy", by Ross [now Father Basil] Aden (*St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, v.38, #1).

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"My most merciful and all-merciful God and Lord Jesus Christ, Who of thy great love didst come down and take flesh to save all: Again, O Savior, save me by thy grace, I pray Thee. For if Thou shouldst save me for my works, this would not be a grace, but rather an obligation, not a grace or a gift. Yea, my Christ who art abundant in generosity and ineffable in mercy, Thou hast said: He that believeth in Me shall live and shall never see death. If, then, faith in Thee saveth the desperate, lo, I believe; save me, for Thou art my God and my Creator. Let my faith be reckoned in place of works, and seek not deeds which would justify me. But may my faith alone suffice instead of my deeds; may it answer for me, may it justify me, may it make me a partaker of Thine eternal glory" ("Canon to Jesus", from *The Old Orthodox Prayer Book*).