

Preface

Have you ever wondered what Jesus taught was the means to be saved? What was Jesus' Gospel if you summarized only Jesus' words on salvation?

Bonhoeffer's Claims

In 1937, the famous Lutheran Pastor named Dietrich Bonhoeffer did just that. He summarized the gospel only relying upon Jesus' words. He ignored all other sources. Do you know what Bonhoeffer found in *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937)(reprint Simon & Schuster: 1995)?

Bonhoeffer claims to have discovered Jesus taught a Gospel of Costly Grace. Bonhoeffer says we have somehow been misled to accept an opposite gospel. The message of what Bonhoeffer first coined as the gospel of cheap grace.¹

Bonhoeffer threw down quite a challenge. The response? Essentially, because Bonhoeffer died as a martyr at Nazi hands, he is often spoken about with great respect. Yet, his critique of modern Christian doctrine is largely ignored.

In fact, some believers even read *Cost of Discipleship* but still do not somehow realize Bonhoeffer is calling for a new reformation. It is not for lack of bluntness. Bonhoeffer in one passage said we had developed a "Christianity without Christ." (*Id.* at 59.) He says our salvation doctrine emphasizes belief to the neglect of Jesus' repeatedly-stated requirement of repentance and that a Christian observe all Jesus' teachings and commands.

Bonhoeffer argued that Jesus always insisted such costs were *necessary* for salvation-sake of a disciple. Bonhoeffer said we have shifted *away* from what Jesus taught. If

1. For a summary of Bonhoeffer's arguments, see page 234 *et seq.*, and pages 127-132.

Christ returned and preached today the same gospel He preached 2000 years ago, Bonhoeffer said most in the church would dismiss His words on doctrinal grounds. (*Id.*, at 35.)

Bonhoeffer says we have employed disparaging labels for what Jesus taught, making social pressure to conform to cheap grace doctrine more important than Jesus' words. As a result, Bonhoeffer said "if Jesus Himself — alone with His word — could come in our midst at sermon time," a significantly large group would "reject" His message. (*Id.*, at 35.)

What more could Bonhoeffer do to get our attention? He was saying we had developed within the mainstream a false doctrine on salvation.

Thus, this book charts out a course to test Bonhoeffer's claims. He offered up proofs. He explained them in pastoral style. He set forth Jesus' teachings, parables and similes.

However, Bonhoeffer unfortunately has failed so far. Bonhoeffer assumed using Jesus' plain-speaking passages would be enough for Christians to reject the gospel of cheap grace. Bonhoeffer assumed Christians would simply recognize the Master's voice and follow it. However, Bonhoeffer overlooked the bewitching and beguiling effort of Satan, just like Satan worked in the garden.

A Change In Approach From Bonhoeffer's Method

What will be different here from Bonhoeffer's approach?

First, we will systematically identify all of Jesus' direct statements and parabolic statements on salvation.

For example, it is a direct statement when Jesus says "all those who obey My Teaching should never ever die." (John 8:51.) It is a direct teaching when Jesus says "every tree without good fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire." (Matt. 7:19.) It is a direct statement when Jesus says you have two choices: you can go to "heaven-maimed" or "hell-whole." (Mark 9:42-47.)

The reason to focus on direct statements is they are all powerful tools to assist in unlocking any alleged ambiguity in a parable. For example, some misconstrue parables to wrong conclusions. We know they are wrong conclusions by comparing them to Jesus' direct statements on salvation. Thus, we can detect and expose such error by familiarizing ourselves with Jesus' direct statements pertinent to salvation. Hence, direct statements by Jesus have a priority, for they serve as building-blocks to understand parables.

This relationship between direct statements and parables is mentioned by Mark in his gospel. The Gospel of Mark notes Jesus gave direct statements to His disciples to clarify meanings of parables which He spoke to a general audience. At the end of a group of parables (4:33), Mark writes: "With many such parables he spoke the word to them [*i.e.*, the crowds] as much as they could understand." Then in verse 34 Mark adds: "He did not speak to them without a parable, but ***privately to his own disciples he explained everything.***"

Therefore, these direct statements represent Jesus' plain explanation of His principles to His disciples. Accordingly, we will prioritize Jesus' direct statements as spelling out clearly the terms of salvation. These passages are clear enough on their own, and need no or little elucidation. However, they help elucidate the parables if we had any doubt about the parables.

My Beliefs

As you read, please remember always that I am directing you to follow Christ, and His teaching. I love the Lord Jesus Christ, and pray I would always be willing to do and follow anything and everything He asks. I believe in His resurrection; Jesus died for our sins; He is Lord and Messiah; divine (God-from-true-God) and one with the Father as Son of God; and He will return to Judge the Living and the Dead.

The question in this book is not about the *facts* regarding Jesus, which I assume every reader accepts. The question is whether if you accept these facts means you now “sit back, relax and enjoy your salvation,” as J. Vernon McGee insists is true.² Or is something else certainly required, just as William Tyndale — the great English Reformer — said?

A Parade of Witnesses Includes Tyndale and Shockingly The (Mature) Luther Too

The Lutheran pastor Bonhoeffer was not alone in attacking cheap grace. He had many predecessors. The earliest rebuttals to cheap grace included Apostles Matthew,³ Peter,⁴ and John,⁵ as well as James⁶ and Jude.⁷ There also was Tertullian (207 A.D.)⁸ and Augustine (413 AD).⁹

Furthermore, as we discuss below at page vi *et seq.*, there were many who attacked cheap grace among the leading Protestant Reformers. This included William Tyndale, Erasmus, and Melancthon (Luther’s closest confidant). To the surprise of many, we can even say Luther radically but quietly changed his salvation-doctrine by 1541. At that point, he too rejected faith alone as sufficient for believers.¹⁰ (Calvin too criticized faith alone doctrine sometimes.)¹¹

2. See J. Vernon McGee, *How You Can Have the Assurance of Salvation* (Pasadena: 1976) at 12.

3. See page 518 *et seq.*

4. See page 500 *et seq.*, and page 521 *et seq.*

5. On Apostle John, see page 14 *et seq.*, and page 417 *et seq.*

6. See page 492, page 522-23.

7. See page 537 *et seq.*

8. See page 538.

9. See page 538 *et seq.*

10. See page xiii *infra*.

11. See page 232, page 236 *et seq.*, and 470.

Among the many other predecessors who shared Bonhoeffer's view were John Locke, Jeremy Taylor and Menno Simons of the Netherlands. There was also William Paley,¹² John Wesley,¹³ and Charles Finney.¹⁴ Finally, there was Kierkegaard and Bonhoeffer himself. Thus, the road tread here has been covered before. Yet, this time, we hope by examining all counter-arguments and speaking clearly, the debate can finally end.

*Encouragement From Tyndale: His
Stunning Reversal On Faith Alone*

The English Reformation began principally with William Tyndale (1494-1536) — a scholar in ancient Greek, trained at Oxford and Cambridge. He became proficient too in Hebrew to perform his translation work on the 'Old Testament.' Tyndale died a martyr, strangled and then burned at the stake. He was the first to publish the New Testament in English. At the time of his first English translation of the New Testament in 1526, Tyndale had already firmly converted to Luther's doctrine of Faith Alone.

In fact, in 1528, Tyndale had publicly endorsed justification by *faith alone* after his meeting Luther in 1524. Yet, beginning in 1530 and continuing until his death in 1536, Tyndale made a stunning reversal on faith alone doctrine. When he did so, Tyndale was at the height of his Bible translation work, and was still only age 34.

What was this change? Tyndale adopted what the first reformer — a Dutchman named Erasmus (1466-1536) of Oxford¹⁵ — had christened in 1530 as *duplex iustitia*. In English, this means *double justification*. Tyndale's elabora-

12. See page 515 *et seq.*

13. See page 73 *et seq.*

14. See page 42 *et seq.*

tion on Erasmus' doctrine lived on in the minds of famous men such as John Locke, Jeremy Taylor, George Horne, William Paley, and Charles Finney.

Recognition Of Tyndale's Stunning Rejection Of Faith Alone

There is absolutely no disagreement among the leading scholars about Tyndale's final views on salvation. Cross, for example, explains: "Increasingly in his last years....[Tyndale was] moving away from the doctrine of *faith alone*, [and] emphasized the covenant [and] *works*...."¹⁶

Another evangelical scholar admits Tyndale "certainly did not" remain "loyal" to Luther's "doctrine on justification."¹⁷ Tyndale's later doctrine was "overthrowing the whole basis of the [German] Reformation: which is to say justification by *faith alone*."¹⁸ Tyndale's lessons are clearly

15. Erasmus' work *Handbook of A Christian Soldier* was released in English in 1503, and found an Oxford scholar, William Tyndale, as one of its earliest avid readers. Erasmus in a series of books heroically battled errors by the Catholic Church, including its doctrine of Mary; its traditions not found in Scripture, etc. Erasmus, one of the best scholars of Europe in ancient Greek and Latin, was subjected to persecution and indictment by the Inquisition. One can still hear the unmistakable bitterness in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* article "Erasmus" about this very first reformer. (Luther emerged only in 1517.) In 1516, Erasmus published the New Testament for the first time in Greek with his own Latin translation. This violated Catholic prohibitions which claimed the Latin Vulgate had become the official text. The Erasmus Greek text was the one Luther used to translate the Bible into German in 1522. Erasmus also gave the English-speaking world the first quasi-translation of the New Testament entitled *Paraphrases of the New Testament* in 1516. The *Paraphrases* were amplified and revised in reprints in 1519, 1522, 1527, and 1535. (Tyndale's English New Testament first appeared in 1526.) As a result, Roman Catholic officials in Spain brought articles of indictment against Erasmus to bring him before the Inquisitor but the process ended in deadlock. (Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain* (MacMillan: 1907) at 414.) Upon Erasmus' death, "his works were [placed]...on the Index of prohibited books" by the Roman Catholic Church. (Johann J. Herzog, *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (1909) at 166.)

recognized as reflecting Erasmus' doctrine of 'double justification.' Tyndale is described pejoratively, accordingly, as allowing "works a decisive role in salvation," which made the "theology of Tyndale...legalistic."¹⁹ Claire Cross concludes the idea of "double justification" is "the position which Tyndale eventually reached."²⁰

Tyndale's Biography

There is no doubt of the spiritual journey that preceded Tyndale's stunning reversal on salvation doctrine. In 1524, he went to Germany, and met with Luther. When Tyndale came back, he published in English in 1528 Luther's sermon *Justification by Faith*. Tyndale did so by putting his own name to it, with some original embellishments. It was entitled *Parable of the Wicked Mammon*. Luther and Tyndale were obviously collaborating at this juncture.

Doctrine of Double Justification

Something happened to Tyndale by 1530. He had second thoughts on Luther's doctrine. He developed ideas which ultimately led him to reject as dangerous Luther's youthful ideas on faith alone. Tyndale endorsed in substance what Erasmus had first proposed in 1530 — the doctrine of *double justification*.²¹ It was Erasmus' solution to reconcile Paul's Gospel of faith alone to Jesus' Gospel. It was ingenious, to

16. Claire Cross, *Church and People: England, 1450-1660* (Blackwell Publishing, 1999) at 45.

17. Paul D. L. Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church: Theological Resources in Historical Perspective* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002) at 16.

18. David Broughton Knox, *The Doctrine of Faith in the Reign of Henry VIII* (London, 1961) at 6.

19. Carl R. Trueman, *Luther's Legacy: Salvation and English Reformers, 1525-1556* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1994) at 55.

20. Claire Cross, *supra*, at 45.

say the least. One can affirm, as Bonhoeffer does too, that “faith alone justifies,” but then append, as Bonhoeffer does, “but love perfects.” (Bonhoeffer, *Testament* (1995) at 251.)

As elaborated by Tyndale, this doctrine teaches that justification begins by faith alone for the non-Christian, but thereafter further justification requires obedience, works and stern repentance for a Christian to remain justified. The way William Tyndale put it was that faith alone initiates your salvation and brings salvation, but “if thou wilt not go back again, but continue in grace, and come to that salvation and glorious resurrection of Christ ***thou must work and join works to faith in will and deed too....***” (William Tyndale, *The Works of the English Reformers: William Tyndale and John Frith* (Ebenezer Palmer: 1831) at 8.)

Double Justification: Best Set Forth By John Locke

John Locke provided one of the clearest statements of Tyndale’s doctrine — an elaboration and tightening up of what Erasmus first dubbed as *double justification*. Locke said Paul in Romans 8:13 implies that from those who “are actually under the covenant of grace, ***good works are strictly required***, under the ***penalty of the loss of eternal life***.” What then of Paul’s ‘faith, not works’ (Eph. 2:8-9) doctrine? John Locke says grace initiates without works, but once in grace, works are required. “Thus, grace and works [coexist], without

21. Erasmus’ commentaries on the Psalms were partially devoted to this theme of double justification. They were published as an ongoing series of commentaries between 1528-31. In these commentaries, Erasmus explained that there is a synergy between faith and works. The bones are faith while the flesh is good works “which are inseparable from faith and love.” This is not based on human merit, but God’s desire to save those who ask for salvation. See Erasmus, *Exposition on the Psalms* (Univ. Toronto Press, 2003) at 9. In his treatment of Psalm 22 (started late 1529), he calls this doctrine *duplex iustitia*, or *double justification*. There Erasmus explains the idea of *duplex iustitia*: “Righteousness is of two kinds, the first being the innocence to which we are restored through faith and baptism and the second the righteousness of faith ***working*** through love,” citing Galatians 5:6.

any difficulty.” Locke says this solves the “*perplexity and seeming contradiction*” within Paul’s doctrine. Locke says that without this solution, many are led to a “mistake concerning the kingdom of God.” Locke then summed up by saying what initiates by faith translates us into the kingdom, and into the “way of eternal life” but thereafter we are only “sure to attain” it if we have “persevered in that life which the Gospel required, viz., faith and *obedience*.”²²

Biography of Tyndale. Early in his career, Tyndale endorsed with one qualification Luther’s core doctrine on *Justification by Faith* in a book entitled *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* (1528). This book is a sermon of Luther on justification delivered in the mouth of Tyndale. However, it also contains Tyndale’s explanations and qualifications.

These gave the “matter... a perfectly original” meaning.²³

Thus, in *Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, Tyndale echoes all of Luther’s youthful salvation principles, such as justification by faith alone and the lack of any need to strive to do good works for salvation-sake. Tyndale added just one significant qualifier to Luther. Tyndale merely insisted *repentance* is a distinct means of how a Christian remains forgiven of later sin. Tyndale writes in the *Parable*: “So that if through fragility we fall a thousand times in a day, *yet if we do repent again*, we have always mercy laid up for us in store in Jesus Christ our Lord.”²⁴ Luther originally had said the same thing,

22. *The Works of John Locke* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1828) Vol. VIII at 415 (emphasis added.) Calvin tried to spin double justification to mean something quite different. He claimed there is one justification before God and one before man. Thus, before God it is always faith alone. (*Institutes* iii.11.2.) Obviously, Calvin’s interpretation is not what Tyndale nor Erasmus was saying.

23. F. L. Clarke, *The Life of William Tyndale* (W. Swan Sonnenschein, 1883) at 77-78.

24. William Tyndale, John Frith, Thomas Russell, *The Works of the English Reformers: William Tyndale and John Frith* (Ebenezer Palmer 1831) at 90.

but without “*if we do repent again.*”²⁵ This was purposeful by Luther. The youthful Luther taught contrition was irrelevant to forgiveness. (Luther, *Sermon on Indulgences*, 1517.) Faith alone was all that was required to receive God’s forgiveness at all times, according to the young Luther.

Hence, one can see at this juncture, Tyndale was drawing a very fine and single line *against* Luther’s doctrine. Tyndale was insisting ongoing justification, distinct from initial justification, depended on repentance from sin. As time progressed, and as Tyndale was engaged in more and more translation, this single line of difference ended in the rejection of Luther’s ideas of faith alone as dangerous for at least a believer.

After Tyndale’s first English New Testament was printed in 1526 when he was age 30, Tyndale embarked on translating the ‘Old Testament’ in 1530. Tyndale’s commentaries on Moses’ writings at this juncture put him at complete odds with the youthful Luther. (As we shall see, Tyndale was firmly on Jesus’ side. See Matt. 5:19.) Rather than any idea of the Law receding into oblivion, or of separate covenants, Tyndale’s view now was that the “Old Testament and New Testament comprised one covenant, and a covenant was understood as a contract.” In this, “God had revealed what man can and cannot do.” Thus, while “justification by faith” was the solvent for sin, still “the justice perceived by Moses set the forgiven sinner into a path of unswerving obedience.”²⁶ The “Old and New” make “one gospel.”²⁷

25. Luther’s statement was “[N]o sin will separate us from the Lamb, even though we commit fornication and murder a thousand times a day.”

Martin Luther, *Luther Works*, I Letters (American Ed.) Vol. 48 at 282.

26. William A. Clebsch, *England’s Earliest Protestants, 1520-1535* (Yale University Press, 1964) at 201,203 (paraphrasing Tyndale).

27. William Tyndale, *Tyndale’s Old Testament* (Ed. David Daniell) (Yale University Press, 1992) at xxiii (describing Tyndale’s doctrine).

In 1534, in Tyndale's *Preface to the New Testament*, the break with Luther's early ideas was final and irreparable. Yet, this divorce was based on reading Jesus' words in Matthew in their superior right over anyone else's doctrine. Tyndale, now age 38, was at his most mature in knowledge of Biblical languages, with the best training of that day — from Oxford and Cambridge. He was also at the height of his mental faculties. Yet, undoubtedly, Tyndale was also a verifiable reformer and a hero of unquestioned stature against the errors of Catholicism. But now in the *Preface to the New Testament*, Tyndale began bit by bit to allow Jesus' words to demolish faith alone doctrine.

Tyndale began by saying that God's mercies only apply to those who "meek" themselves before God and "keep His Laws."²⁸ Tyndale in the very next sentence then vigorously denounced faith alone doctrine: "Now if any man, that submitteth *not* himself to keep the commandments, do think that he hath *faith* in God, the same man's faith is vain, *worldly, damnable, devilish, and plain presumption*, as is above said, and is *no faith that can justify*, or be accepted before God. And that is it that James meaneth in his epistle. For "how can a man believe" [and be justified without works]." (Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises, id.*, at 470.)

Tyndale goes on to explain: "Now read all the scripture, and see where God sent any to preach *mercy* to any, *save unto them only that repent, and turn to God with all their hearts, to keep his commandments*. Unto the disobedient, that will not turn, is threatened wrath, vengeance and damnation, according to all the terrible acts and fearful examples of

28. After explaining the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, Tyndale concludes: "The general covenant, wherein all other are comprehended and included is this: If *we meek ourselves* to God, to *keep all his laws*, after the example of Christ, *then* God hath bound himself to us, to keep and make good all the *mercies in Christ* throughout all scriptures." (Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scripture, by William Tyndale, Martyr, 1536* (Henry Walter ed., The Parker Society, Cambridge, 1848) at 470.)

the Bible.” Tyndale then says some *read the promises* of salvation for faith *out-of-context* of the entire covenant of God. “Moreover, where thou findest a promise, and no covenant expressed therewith, *there must thou understand a covenant; that we, when we be received to grace, know it to be our duty to keep the law.*” *Id.*, at 471.

Tyndale then severely warns those guilty of reading the promises of God about grace out-of-context — without the conditions of obedience. Tyndale is alarmed at the contrary doctrine (faith alone), saying: “This have I said, most dear reader, to warn thee, lest thou shouldest be *deceived*, and shouldest not only read the scriptures *in vain* and to *no profit*, but also unto thy *greater damnation.*”²⁹

Tyndale insisted: “For God offereth mercy upon *the condition that he [the listener] will mend his living.*”³⁰ Tyndale then gives the same series of discussions of Jesus’ words that you will read in this book *Jesus’ Words on Salvation*.

For example, Tyndale says the Parable of the Unprofitable Servant proves those Christians who “live [obediently] thereafter” according to the commands receive life, but servants who do not do so but are unprofitable “shall *lose the grace* of true knowledge, and be binded again...” Tyndale goes on: “And [in] Luke xii [:47]), the servant that knoweth his master’s will, and prepareth not himself, shall be beaten with many stripes, that is, shall have *greater damnation.*” Tyndale thereupon keeps beating the stick on faith alone’s head: “And Matt, vii [:26-27], all that hear the word of God, and do not thereafter, build on sand: that is, as the foundation laid on sand cannot resist violence of water, but is undermined and *overthrown*, even so the *faith of them that have no lust nor love to the law of God*, builded upon the sand of their *own imaginations*, and not on the rock of God’s word, according to his covenants, turneth to desperation in time of

29.*Id.* at 471.

30.*Id.* at 472.

tribulation, and when God cometh to judge.”³¹ Tyndale goes on and on, traversing much the same ground you will be reading in this book.

Interestingly, Tyndale was even a terrible ‘legalist’ by today’s standards when he satirized those who justified moving the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday!³²

Tyndale for all his intellectual honesty was also spiritually honest. Tyndale’s 1530 work *The Practyse of Prelates* condemned King Henry’s divorce. King Henry’s bitter anger thereafter caught up with Tyndale. By liege of the authorities at Brussels, Tyndale was strangled and then burned at the stake in 1536.

Yet, the lesson in all this is that a brilliant reformer — one fully cognizant of every argument of Luther and who had become a friend and collaborator of Luther’s (so much so Tyndale penned Luther’s ideas on justification as his own in 1528) — did in fact by 1530-1534 completely reject Luther’s youthful faith alone ideas.

Tyndale Causes Luther To Quietly Abandon Faith Alone

Did Tyndale turn Luther around to accept double justification, and abandon faith alone as justification of a believer? Yes, he did.

31. *Id.* at 472-73.

32. Tyndale responded to More’s defense of Catholic Sunday-Sabbath practice, saying “a great matter, we be lords over the Saboth; and may yet change it into the Monday, or any other day, as we see need; or may make every tenth day holy day only, if we see cause why. We may make two every week, if it were expedient, and one not enough to teach the people.” *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue... by William Tyndale, Martyr, 1536* (H. Walter ed., The Parker Society, Cambridge, 1850) at 97. Tyndale says the Roman Catholic change in 363 A.D. from Saturday to Sunday was solely to spite the Jews. Tyndale writes: “Neither was there **any cause to change it from the Saturday**, than to put difference between us and the Jews; and lest we should become servants unto the day, after their superstition.” He means this was the Catholic reasoning which Tyndale was satirizing.

Let's remember that Luther and Tyndale became associates in 1524 when Tyndale visited Luther in Germany. Tyndale could easily impress Luther as a man of greater learning in Greek and Hebrew than Luther himself. Their common bond was unique, and could provide a deep linkage few men will ever share. They were co-venturers in Bible translation, battling Catholic errors. This shared partnership of purpose and outlook would presumably have become solidified in 1524 when the two men met. In fact, one might think Luther regarded their intimacy as entirely special because he knew Tyndale was at least his equal, if not his superior, in learning. Luther would know better than anyone that Tyndale proved his friendship and solidarity. This was proven to Luther by Tyndale publishing as his own work Luther's sermon entitled *Justification by Faith*. It was entitled *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* (1528). No doubt Luther welcomed this spreading of the 'gospel.' Hence, the bond of respect by Luther for Tyndale must have been tremendous.

Could that tremendous respect have moved Luther to himself change his own doctrine on faith alone? It most certainly appears to be the **best explanation** for what happened to Luther in mid-1531 to the end of his life. The evidence can be found in four primary places: (1) the *Catechisms* of 1531; (2) Luther's revolution on his view of the Mosaic Law in 1537; (3) the Lutheran agreement proposed at the *Regensburg Diet of 1541*; and (4) the actions of Luther's close aid, Melancthon, in 1548 after Luther's death, where he led the Lutheran Church to accept *double justification* as official doctrine from 1556 to 1580. (It was overturned in 1580.)

i. The Catechisms (1531) and the Antinomian Theses (1537)

If one examines carefully the change by Luther in the 1531 *Catechisms* (and thereafter), you can see Tyndale must have similarly influenced even Luther himself to accept *double justification*. The *Catechisms* written by Luther are all about a Christian's duty to obey the Ten Commandments and repentance as the means for forgiveness. (This is a salvation

doctrine because without forgiveness, how could a Christian otherwise be saved?) You cannot find the word justification in the *Shorter Catechism*. You hear no mention of salvation by faith alone for the non-believer. Hence, Luther's Catechisms are a precise reflection of what a believer in *double justification* would present as the believer's *path* for forgiveness and salvation with God. It is as if Tyndale were writing the *Catechisms* for Luther.

Evangelicals who have discovered this change in the *Catechisms* condemn Luther for it. For example, Miles Stanford said in the *Catechisms* the "Lutheran Church" turned into "legalism" by adopting an "unscriptural application of 'the law as the rule of life' for the believer."³³ Likewise, Pastor Dwight Oswald regards Luther's *Catechism* as having made Luther a heretic. Oswald says Luther in the *Catechism* is so at odds with Paul's doctrines that even Luther must be deemed lost and responsible for having led countless numbers to perish in hell.³⁴ Similarly, Calvinists at Calvin College skewer Luther's 1531 edition of his catechism for departing from the faith he previously taught so boldly.³⁵

Yet, Luther at some point prior to his death in 1546 insisted his followers put greater stock in his *Catechisms* over anything he wrote previously. Luther's biographer states: "Luther said that he would be glad to have all his works per-

33. Quoted in Bob Nyberg's *Covenant Theology Versus Dispensationalism A Matter of Law Versus Grace*, reprinted online at <http://4himnet.com/bnyberg/dispensationalism01.html>.

34. See Pastor Dwight Oswald, "Martin Luther's Sacramental Gospel," *Earnestly Contending For The Faith* (Nov-Dec. 1997). See also, *Lutheran Heresy* at <http://www.jesus-is-savior.com>.

35. Calvinists thereby find the 1531 *Catechism* defective spiritually: "It gives undue importance to the sacraments by making them co-ordinate parts with the three great divisions; and elevates private confession and absolution almost to the dignity of a third sacrament [*i.e.*, salvific]." (Calvin College at <http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/hcc7/hm/ii.v.xiv.htm>.)

ish except the reply to Erasmus and the *Catechism*.”³⁶ Why would Luther say this unless he himself felt some particular doctrines had changed for the better in the *Catechisms*?

Furthermore, the mature Luther likewise in his *Antinomian Theses* (1537) demonstrates he rejected his own earlier view of the Mosaic Law. In 1537, Luther favored precisely what Tyndale had come to teach about the Law from 1530 onward.

Prior to Tyndale’s 1530 revolution on the Mosaic Law still applying to a Christian, Luther in a sermon entitled *How Christians Should Regard Moses* given August 27, 1525 wrote this disavowal of any need to follow any part of the Mosaic Law:³⁷

The sectarian spirits want to saddle us with Moses and all the commandments. We will just skip that. We will regard Moses as a teacher, **but we will not regard him as our lawgiver — unless he agrees with both the New Testament and the natural law.**

So, then, we will neither observe nor accept Moses. Moses is dead. His rule ended when Christ came. He is of no further service....**[E]ven the Ten Commandments do not pertain to us.**

Luther even in mid-1531 still held the same view — just before Tyndale’s English treatises would arrive in German. Luther gave this speech in early 1531:

The scholastics think that the judicial and ceremonial laws of Moses were **abolished** by the coming of Christ, but not the moral law. They

36. Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: The Life of Martin Luther* (Abingdon Classics, 1990) at 263.

37. Martin Luther, “How Christians Should Regard Moses,” *Luther’s Works: Word and Sacrament I* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960) Vol. 35 at 161-174.

are blind. When Paul declares that we are delivered from the curse of the Law **he means the whole Law**, particularly the moral law which more than the other laws accuses, curses, and condemns the conscience. The Ten Commandments have no right to condemn that conscience in which Jesus dwells, for Jesus has taken from the Ten Commandments the **right** and power to curse us.³⁸

Then Luther experienced just as dramatic a reversal on the Law as took place for Tyndale in 1530. First, if you look at Luther's *Catechisms* of late 1531-early 1532, you can see that the *Longer* and *Shorter Catechism* are both dominated by an exposition on each of the Ten Commandments. Even the Sabbath appears, albeit moved to Sunday.³⁹

Why this emphasis on the Law for a believer?

Five years later, Luther's rationale would be clearly explained in his *Antinomian Theses* (1537).⁴⁰ In this and the *Smalcald Articles* (1537), Luther says a Christian can spiritually die and become like a non-Christian for violation of the Ten Commandments. (Tyndale's *Double Justification* doctrine.) Luther's new teachings startled his faithful pupils. In *Antinomian Theses*, Luther echoes Tyndale's new ideas on the Mosaic Law as well, saying: "To abolish the Law is therefore to abolish the truth of God."⁴¹ Leaving the young Luther's abandonment of the Mosaic Law out-to-dry, the

38. Martin Luther, *Epistle on Galatians* 4:25 (delivered 1531, printed 1535), reprint at <http://www.biblehelpsonline.com/martinluther/galatians/galatians4.htm> (last accessed 2005).

39. Here is the only difference between Tyndale and Luther at this point in their lives. Tyndale said it was wrong to move Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Luther said a one-in-seven principle is all that matters.

40. Martin Luther, *Don't Tell Me That! From Martin Luther's Antinomian Theses* (Lutheran Press: 2004).

41. Martin Luther, *Antinomian Theses* (1537), reprinted as *Don't Tell Me That From Martin Luther's Antinomian Theses* (Minneapolis: Lutheran Press, 2004) at 33-34.

mature Luther said anyone who would “discard the Law [given Moses] would effectively put an end to our obedience to God.” (*Don’t Tell Me That (Antinomian Theses)*, *id.* at 32.) Yet, as we saw above, the young Luther earlier said in 1525 that Paul “abolished the Sabbath” and declared all the Law “abolished,” even the moral law.

What can explain the mature Luther’s reversal on salvation doctrine (done without fanfare) and the Mosaic Law (done with some fanfare)? Tyndale. Only a man of that character and influence over Luther can explain the sudden and major shift made by Luther. This earthquake in Luther’s thinking followed in *precise synchronization* the fundamental shift in Tyndale’s thinking which preceded shortly before each of Luther’s major shifts.

ii. The Regensburg Diet of 1541 Proves Luther’s Switch

The story of the Regensburg (aka Regensberg) Colloquy (Diet) of 1541 proves that Luther materially changed his doctrine on salvation. To this conference Luther sent as his agents only two men: Bucer and Melancthon. What they proposed and obtained agreement on from the Roman negotiator was Tyndale’s doctrine of *double justification*.

Could Luther conceivably be surprised at this?

First, let’s look at Martin Bucer (1491-1551). He was a Lutheran pastor and a very early supporter of Luther — starting in 1518. During the 1530s, while still a Lutheran pastor, Bucer wrote several works to defend *double justification*.⁴² He used that term, first coined by Erasmus.

Let’s next look at the second agent Luther sent to Regensburg—Melancthon. He was the perpetual right-hand man of Luther at Wittenberg. Philip Melancthon (1497-1560) was a Professor of Greek and second only to Erasmus in excellence in Greek translation in all of Europe.⁴³ He was also a Latin scholar. Most important of all, Melancthon was indubitably Luther’s closest aid since the early days of the movement until Luther’s death. In 1521, with unmistakable

zeal, Melancthon advanced justification by faith alone vigorously in a commentary on Romans.⁴⁴ This work was the first systematic commentary by the Lutheran party to defend their doctrines. Clearly, Melancthon was a knowledgeable, faithful zealous Lutheran reformer.

In fact, Luther and Melancthon were inseparable partners, working side-by-side constantly at Wittenberg until Luther's death in 1546. When Luther died, his final directions were given at his death-bed to Melancthon. "On the death of Luther, Philip Melancthon...was placed *at the head of the Lutheran church.*" (R. Adam, *The Religious World*: 358.) No matter what change in doctrine Melancthon went through, Luther never once criticized this man. Luther obviously knew Melancthon was of superior knowledge and intellect to himself.

Yet to the shock of many around Luther, in 1536, Melancthon left behind his firm hold on faith alone. He now deemed it only saved the non-believer. The believer was under the obligation of obedience and works for salvation's sake. He had adopted double justification. This is first men-

42. Martin Bucer was a personal follower of Luther in 1518, later excommunicated by Rome. In 1522, Bucer became a pastor in the Palatinate. By the 1530s, he advocated "double justification." As McGrath explains, "The most significant exposition of justification within the early reformed church is due to Martin Bucer...Bucer develops a doctrine of *double justification.*" (Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: 1998) at 221.) Bucer's double justification was identical to Tyndale's. McGrath summarizes it: "Although man's primary justification takes place on the basis of faith alone (*sola fide*), his secondary justification takes place on the basis of *works.*" *Id.* Thus, there is "an initial justification by faith, and a subsequent *justification by works.*" *Id.*, at 222.

43. In 1518 Melancthon was offered, on Reuchlin's recommendation, a professorship of Greek at Wittenberg. "I know of no one among the Germans who is superior to him," wrote Reuchlin to the Elector of Saxony, "save only Erasmus Roterodamus, and he is a dutchman."

44. Melancthon in his 1521 exposition on Romans entitled *Loci communes rerum theologicarum* clearly taught faith alone. This was the first systematic summary of Luther's doctrine.

tioned in a 1536 letter about pastor Cordatus of Niemeck. Melancthon writes: “*New obedience* is necessary by necessity of order of the cause and effect; also by necessity of duty or command; also by necessity of *retaining faith*, and *avoiding punishments*, temporal and *eternal*.” Then Melancthon says of Cordatus, having heard this teaching, he “stirs up against me the city, the surrounding countries, and the court itself, because, in explaining the controversy concerning *justification*, I said that *renewed obedience was necessary to salvation*.”⁴⁵

Words could not be clearer than that Melancthon adopted Tyndale’s and Bucer’s doctrine of *double justification*. This was no temporary change in heart. In 1552, Melancthon urged his pupil George Major to publish a book entitled *On the Necessity of Good Works* (1552). This book insisted good works are necessary for the *salvation* of the believer. Faith alone justification is only true for the non-believer. (Again, this is *double justification* doctrine.) Melancthon used the controversy from this book to convene a Synod to resolve the issue. Using that forum, in 1556 the Lutheran Synod resolved the point in favor of *double justification* which stood firm until 1580. See page xxviii *infra*.

Thus, as of 1539, the double justification views of both Bucer and Melancthon were open for all to see.

What was Luther’s response to Melancthon’s change in outlook? Luther “was anxious to avoid any rupture or discord with Melancthon” and “knew also how to keep silence....”⁴⁶ Yet, Luther did more than that. In 1539, Luther chose Melancthon to work out a rapprochement with Catho-

45. John Scott, Joseph Milner, Isaac Milner, *The History of the Church of Christ: Intended as a Continuation of the Work* (R.B. Seely and W. Burnside, 1829) at 125, citing *Epistles [of Melancthon]*, vi at 438: item, 403. See also this letter in John Fletcher, *The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher* (B. Waugh & T. Mason, 1833) at 515, quoting from Richard Baxter, *Confession of Faith* (London: 1655) at 330, 334.

46. Julius Köstlin, *Life of Luther* (Scribner’s 1893) at 501.

lic on a variety of doctrines, including justification. On behalf of Luther, Melancthon obtained agreement in a 1539 conference from the papal representatives on this double justification doctrine.⁴⁷ Then Luther's friend and co-pastor Martin Bucer drew up the list of agreed points in what later became known as the Regensburg Book "with its important article on justification."⁴⁸

This *Regensburg Book* was to be used in preparation for a scheduled conference in April 1541 at Regensburg. This book reflected the prior oral agreements between Melancthon and the Roman party, including on double justification. As McGrath says, the double-justification wording was no surprise because Bucer must have written it. He was a strong public advocate of double justification among Lutherans.

Next, we move ahead two years. These negotiations from 1539 were ready to reach a final stage of approval on all points. Two months prior to the conference, on February 13, 1541, Luther had "in his hands the *Regensburg Book*."⁴⁹ This is the same book which in material part was written by Luther's friend Bucer.

Could this idea of double justification have been written into the *Regensburg Book* by the Catholic side? Only the naive would think so. First, the entire idea originated with Protestants. It was never a Catholic notion. Double justifica-

47. "In 1539, Herzog George of Saxony and his chancellor, George von Karlowitz, convened a colloquy in Leipzig to discuss the differences between *Melancthon's confession* and Roman doctrine. Although they found common ground concerning *justification and good works*, the participants failed to achieve overall consensus." (Michael Stephen Springer, *Restoring Christ's Church: John A Lasco and the Forma AC Ratio* (Ashgate Publishing, 2007) at 21.) The meetings continued on other issues in November 1540, with Melancthon alone representing Luther, and Eck alone representing the Catholic Church. *Id.* The contentious issues then were the mass and sacraments. *Id.*, at 22.

48. Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: 1998) at 222.

49. "Conference of Regensburg," *Wikipedia*.

tion was first proposed by the anti-Catholic reformer Erasmus, then by Tyndale and then finally by Bucer — one of the drafters of the Regensburg Book — the very book we are trying to determine who originated its language on double justification.

The second proof this language originated with Bucer-Luther is that a Catholic would not have invented double justification doctrine. To Catholics, justification is solely by baptism, which for a baby neither involves faith nor works. See Footnote 53 on page xxv. To Catholics, a sacrament saves. They claim justification needs neither faith nor works as long as the Church dispensed baptism to you.

Thus, it is obvious that Luther, Melancthon and Bucer must have thought double justification was close enough that it could be the basis for reconciliation with the Catholic church. Hence, the proposal at Regensburg on double justification was of a totally Protestant origin: it was a doctrine first formulated by the anti-Catholic reformer Erasmus in 1530, then advanced by the reformer Tyndale in 1530, and pushed by the Lutherans Bucer and Melancthon in the mid-1530s. That's why the language appears in the Regensburg Book in the first place, before the congress was even held.

Next, the Regensburg Diet began on April 5, 1541. Luther's representatives were Melancthon and Martin Bucer who, as noted already, were both open advocates of double justification.

To this conference, the Landgrave of Hesse also appointed Johannes Pistorius to represent the Protestant side. He “stood loyal to Melancthon.”⁵⁰

After a series of negotiations, on May 2, 1541 both Melancthon on behalf of Luther and the representatives of the Pope announced an agreement on justification doctrine at Regensburg. “The participants at Regensberg Colloquy

50. See “Johannes Pistorius,” *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (1911), *supra*, at 74. This says “he stood loyal to Melancthon.”

forged [agreement on] *a double justification* formula....”⁵¹ They agreed on “double justification,” saying a sinner is only justified by a “living and effectual faith” rather than a dead faith, *i.e.*, one lacking works (hence requiring secondary justification of a Christian).⁵² Mere faith alone was discarded.

Tyndale’s salvation doctrine had triumphed!

However, it is often uncritically implied that Luther rejected on *principle* what Melancthon brought back from Regensburg. Typically, we read “Luther was [not] satisfied” with the article on *justification*, but the specifics are always sketchy. The truth is that before rejecting it, Luther in a letter defended the justification article to the Elector who was angry that it had abandoned faith alone. (Scott, 1828: 277, 281.) The Elector vented his anger particularly at Melancthon. Luther told the Elector not to be too hard on him. Luther said the justification article would only go into effect if all the other points in the conference were accepted by the Catholic church. (Scott: 281.) Luther encouraged him to let the issue alone because the conference would prove embarrassing to Catholicism, and weaken it. Luther then conceded faith alone was still an important principle, but many historians do not realize Luther was speaking of *initial* justification of an *unbeliever*, where this was still true. Luther was being coy with the Elector by not explaining how salvation for the Christian *believer* would be seen in a new light. (*E.g.*, Scott: 278.)

51. Joseph A. Burgess & Jeffrey Gros, *Building Unity: Ecumenical Dialogues with Roman Catholic Participation in the United States* (Paulist Press, 1989) at 234.

52. See James M. Kittelson, *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career* (Fortress Press, 2003) at 278. The actual text was two sentences: “It is secure and wholesome teaching that the sinner is justified by a *living* [not dead] and *effectual* faith, for through such faith we will be acceptable to God and accepted for the sake of Christ. A living faith, therefore, appropriates the mercy in Christ and believes that the righteousness which is in Christ will be freely reckoned for nothing and also receives the promise of the Holy Spirit.” (See “Diet of Regensburg,” *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) (bracketed text: mine).

In fact, to think Luther truly objected to secondary justification of the believer simply makes no sense.

First, Melancthon and Bucer were long-time confidants of Luther. They were no renegades. Second, Luther had to know in advance their *open* and *notorious* views on double justification. In fact, the only thing that makes sense is they were chosen particularly because of their shared view on that issue. Third, there was far too much preparation for this meeting to suggest Luther had not understood the *Regensburg Book* in advance. There had been two years of negotiation on the point of justification. Also, Luther's friend Bucer wrote much of the *Regensburg Book*. Finally, and most important, the language on double justification was a Protestant idea from beginning to end, and was never a Catholic concept.

Thus, it begs all credulity to believe that Luther had not authorized the *double justification* agreement reached by his agents at the 1541 conference. In fact, Luther's agreement with that doctrine is the only explanation why Luther chose these two men in the first place. Luther knew these two men, more than any of his other allies, sincerely believed and could defend the doctrine of double justification to the Catholics. It would take a lot to convince Catholics that justification was not by means of the sacrament of baptism.

Consequently, Luther must have given Melancthon permission in 1541 to accept *double justification* at Regensburg. It is not shocking therefore to consider the possibility that Luther himself had changed his salvation doctrine. Unmistakably, double justification was previously endorsed by Tyndale — someone in whom Luther was reposing great trust. Thus, it would not be at all surprising that Luther too had shifted in Tyndale's direction.

So, if it was not *principle* that led Luther to reject the Regensburg agreement *after the fact*, what other reason than principle could explain Luther's decision?

Timing of events plays a key role in proving what forces operated upon Luther. A deputation from the conference arrived at Wittenberg on June 9th to see Luther's reac-

tions to the final agreements on several points. Luther acknowledged to them that he previously had seen the article on justification. (Scott: 287.) Luther said he was willing to accept it even though it used Paul's words in Galatians in a manner that he would not utilize. (*Id.*) Luther said that, however, he would do nothing to interfere with the acceptance of the articles. (Scott: 288.) For this, Lutherans praised Luther for his "prudence" and "temper" on this occasion. (Scott: 288.) Then before that deputation returned to Regensburg, Cardinal Caraffa (later a pope) told his Catholic negotiator, Contarini, that he had "betrayed the cause of the church, especially on the question of justification." (Scott: 289.) For Catholics, justification would always be by baptism.⁵³ "Before the deputation [to Luther] had returned, the Roman party had destroyed all hope of union."⁵⁴ Luther and everyone else had learned that the Roman higher authorities rejected the Tyndalian compromise on justification.

Thus, Luther now knew before the deputation returned that he would be sticking his neck out unnecessarily if he himself continued to openly defend *double justification*. Only at this juncture did Luther then "demand... that even the articles agreed upon should be rejected."⁵⁵ Consequently,

53. Most Protestants misapprehend Catholicism as teaching justification by works. Instead, baptism is what matters. In 1545, the Roman Catholic church convened the Council of Trent to restate Catholic positions against Protestant doctrines. Its final decree was that baptism is the sole instrument of justification. See *Canones et decreta concilii Tridentini* (Leipzig, 1860) at 28 (decree VI:vii). A translation appears in C. F. Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (London, S.P.C.K., 1966) at 213ff. Thus, in Catholicism *faith* plays no role in justification. Nor do *works of obedience* by a baby play any role. Rather, the sacrament of baptism on a faithless baby who has done no good works makes a baby supposedly justified.

54. "Conference of Regensburg," *Wikipedia*.

only after Luther knew the Roman rejection of the justification article did Luther call back his agents' agreement on justification and every other agreement.

Moreover, how do those who portray Luther's decision was based upon principle explain away the fact Luther had the Regensburg Book long before the 1541 Conference began? They disingenuously claim Luther only belatedly "had become fully acquainted with the contents" of the "Regensburg Book" after his agents reached the accord at Regensburg.⁵⁶ How naive!

Justification was the key issue going into the conference. Are we to believe Luther did not read the Regensburg Book on that point ahead of time? Or that when he did so, he did not understand its *two* sentences on justification? And even though his friend and ally Bucer obviously is the person who drew up this language months in advance, are we to think Bucer never discussed and worked over the language with Luther? Only the gullible could ever believe such nonsense.

Thus, what instead explains Luther pulling back if it was not on principle?

We must remember what risk Luther had of being lynched by his own troops and lose support of his Elector if the word spread of his change in such a core doctrine. As Dr. Samworth says, the agreement reached by Melancthon (Luther's closest aid) at Regensburg on May 2, 1541 "**rejects** the Protestant concepts of sola fide or **faith alone**...." (More correctly, it rejects it as true for the believer; it maintains faith alone is true for the non-believer.) Yet, we already established, Luther must have approved this dramatic change in

55. "Conference of Regensburg," *Wikipedia*. Others put it this way: "At the last minute both parties backed away from their tentative rapprochement...." Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2001) at 79.

56. "Conference of Regensburg," *Wikipedia*. The *Liber Ratisbonensis* can be found in *Melanthonis Opera, Corpus Reformatorum* 4:190-238.

advance. Luther must have accepted Tyndale's case for *double justification*. But when Melancthon returned, the heat from Luther's other less-informed supporters would obviously make it difficult — nay perhaps impossible — for Luther to come out in the open. Why bother doing so when the higher-ups in the Roman party already announced their rejection on the justification clause? Thus, Luther's decision to reject the 1541 agreement after the Roman party withdrew its concurrence must have had to do with politics, not principle.

In other words, Luther had created his own hornet's nest where the Queen can no longer leave without the hive stinging her to death. If he backed down, he could legitimately fear that his own troops would oust their old Master, treating him as a traitor. The Elector had in fact declared those feelings to Luther about Melancthon's acceptance of the article on justification during the Regensburg conference itself. (Scott, 1828:278-279.) This is not a unique example of Luther's coyness. Indeed, it similarly explains Luther's obscurely placed reversal of his previously vociferous position on the alleged bondage of the human will.⁵⁷

Thus, we have not mistaken what transformation has taken place in Luther's mind on salvation under Tyndale's obvious influence. Luther made strenuous efforts to escape the trap of his own devices prior to his death in 1546. Luther did so in 1541 by seeking to re-connect with Catholicism on this one key issue. It ended in frustration because the Catho-

57. See Thomas Yardley How, *A Vindication of the Protestant Episcopal Church: In a Series of Letters* (Eastburn, Kirk, & Co, 1816) at 397, quoting Erasmus, 1528, *Epistolae*, book xx, ep. 63. See the language of that 1527 Lutheran confession in Richard Watson & Nathan Bangs, *A Biblical and Theological Dictionary: Explanatory of the History, Manners and Customs of the Jews* (Carlton & Porter, 1832) at 646. Melancthon later expanded this into a doctrine of synergy of man's free will cooperating with God's energy. "Synergism," *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* (1911) at 224. Before his death, Melancthon fully renounced the whole idea of bondage of the will. See Watson & Bangs, *supra*, at 647.

lic were the first to express dissatisfaction with the justification clause. Luther thereby left it to Melancthon to make the effort after Luther died to fix the justification doctrine of the Lutheran church. We shall see that double justification later triumphed for over twenty-years within the Lutheran church.

iii. Two Years After Luther Dies, Closest Aids Successfully Push Double Justification As Official Lutheran Doctrine

Luther died in 1546. Melancthon — true to his master Luther — advanced double justification in 1548. It was an effort that met with success despite vociferous faith-alone opposition within the Lutheran church. What explains such a dramatic reversal? The highest leaders of the Lutheran church must have known Luther’s true view had come to accept double justification. That is the best explanation why for 24 years ***double justification*** became, at Melancthon’s instigation, the ***official Lutheran doctrine***. This was from 1556 to 1580. Only the *Book of Concord* of 1580 finally repealed this revolutionary switch. It unraveled Melancthon’s efforts which taught faith alone does not maintain justification. The *Book of Concord* reversed Melancthon’s principle effectuated in 1556 despite his being the closest confidant of the deceased Luther.

This account begins in 1548. Upon Luther’s death, Melancthon was the new head of the Lutheran church. And in Europe, his role was bigger: “After Luther’s death he became the theological leader of the German Reformation.” He was Luther’s closest aid and confidant. Melancthon led a group of Luther’s closest aids to meet in 1548 at Leipzig. They openly endorsed *double justification*. They chose one of their number — George Major (1502-74), a Lutheran theology professor at Wittenberg — to publish a book entitled *On the Necessity of Good Works* (1552). He clearly wrote that “no one will be saved...without good works.”⁵⁸

A furious response came from a vocal minority within the Lutheran church. These were obviously less intimate with Luther’s change of heart. They were adamant on faith alone

as sufficient to save even a believer. They called Major the “devil” and “godless” and his work a “mark of the Anti-christ.”⁵⁹ Melancthon too was called a “turncoat.” Flacius, one of his students, denounced Melancthon as a heretic.⁶⁰

To resolve the dispute, the Lutheran Synod of 1556 convened. Its final decrees firmly endorsed *double justification*. It said in evangelism to non-believers, they would still teach justification by faith alone. But the necessity of works for believers for salvation is true as both an abstract and legal matter. (*Double Justification*.) Yet, the Synod ruled that when the Christian believer would be told in a sermon that “works were necessary,” the pastor should omit “for salvation” to avoid giving canon-fodder to the Catholics to criticize Lutheranism. Hence, this is precisely the doctrine of *double justification*, simply truncated for political, not spiritual reasons.⁶¹

This ruling stood within Lutheranism until 1580 when the *Book of Concord* wiped it out. The *Book of Concord* said faith alone was the doctrine of justification applicable to both the believer and unbeliever.

iv. The Enormous Implication About The Leading Reformers

Thus, Tyndale had changed Luther’s mind on the most fundamental of issues: faith alone’s salvific effect for a believer. And if Tyndale truly did so — the case that this hap-

58. Melancthon gathered trusted members of the Lutheran leadership in 1548 to meet at Leipzig where they agreed on the salvific necessity of good works for believers as a truth “conformable to the truths in the [four] gospels.” (Johann Lorenz Mosheim & George Gleig, *An Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern: From the Birth of Christ to the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century* (London: 1811) Vol. IV at 312.) See also Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom* (1919) at 276.

59. Many in the Lutheran camp called Major and the others involved of the “devil.” Flacius called Major “godless.” Wigand said this idea was the “pillar of popery and a mark of Antichrist.” (See Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom* (1919) at 276.)

60. Patrick W. Carey, *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Theologians* (Greenwood Press, 2000) at 359.

pened is very strong — then this means the four leading minds of the early reformation — Erasmus, Tyndale, Luther, and Melancthon — had each come to conclude *double justification* was the correct salvation formula. It would be five if you include the father of the reformation in the Netherlands — Menno Simons.⁶² Double justification doctrine says a non-believer must believe to be saved (faith alone), but a Christian must repent of sin, do good works and obey Christ or otherwise perish everlastingly (double justification).

Tyndale Is A Respectable Hero For Those Who Dissent From ‘Faith Alone’ As Cheap Grace

Even if we were not convinced about Luther conforming to Tyndale’s idea, then, if nothing else, we can affirm Tyndale’s ideas were accepted by the Lutheran party who represented Lutheranism at the Regensburg Diet of 1541. We can also say Tyndale’s double justification doctrine became the official doctrine on salvation of the Lutheran Church from

61. Here is Schaff’s synopsis: “A synod, held at Eisenach in 1556, decided in seven theses that Major’s proposition was *true only in abstracto and in foro legis*, but not *in foro evangelii*, and *should be avoided as liable to be misunderstood* in a popish sense. Christ delivered us from the curse of the law, and faith alone is necessary both for justification and salvation, which are identical. The theses were subscribed by Amsdorf, Strigel, Horlin, Hugel, Stossel, and even by Menius (although the fifth was directed against him). But now there arose a controversy on *the admission of the abstract and legal necessity of good works*, which was defended by Flacius, Wigand, and Morlin; opposed by Amsdorf and Aurifaber as semi-popish. **The former view** [*i.e.*, the abstract and legal necessity of good works for salvation] **prevailed**. Melancthon felt that the necessity of *good works for salvation* might imply their meritoriousness, and hence proposed to drop the words *for salvation*, and to be contented with the assertion that good works are necessary because God commanded them, and man is bound to obey his Creator. This *middle course* was adopted by the Wittenberg Professors and by the Diet of Princes at Frankfort (1558) [*i.e.*, the majority ruling], but was rejected by the strict Lutherans [*i.e.*, the defeated minority].” (Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes* (Harper: 1919) at 276.)

1556 to 1580. We can also affirm double justification was held by the highest Lutheran official next to Luther: Melancthon. That's enough to conclude even a good Lutheran and a pre-eminent Greek scholar, like Melancthon, can recognize Tyndale's doctrine is more correct than faith alone doctrine.

Moreover, even if we could not cite Luther as an ally, we do not need to feel we are at a great loss. Tyndale was his own man and is a great ally anyway. By himself, Tyndale can stand up to anyone, including Luther, when it comes to defending the truth of what Jesus *truly* taught. Tyndale was a great figure in the Reformation all by himself. He thus becomes *a hero for those who believe modern salvation doctrine misses Jesus' points*. Tyndale was *the* Reformation in England! Tyndale for a time was Luther's pupil, but it appears quite clearly that Luther in the end, true to Christ, let Tyndale lead him later to follow Christ's words on salvation.

Why did Luther and others like Melancthon accept this input from Tyndale? Because both Luther and Melancthon knew Tyndale was an independent thinker with deep knowledge of Scripture in its original language. Both men

62. "The first wave of Reformation, initiated by Martin Luther, did not come to the Netherlands." ("History of Religion in the Netherlands," *Wikipedia*.) Instead, the reformation in the Netherlands started with the Anabaptists, principally Menno Simons (1496-1561). He was the founder of the Mennonites. In 1556 he wrote a treatise in favor of double justification, entitled *Van het rechte Christen geloove*. He criticized the (pre-1541) Lutheran idea that "faith is alone necessary to salvation." Instead, Menno contended the "faith that justifies is a faith that 'worketh by love'" — taken from Erasmus. See Hardwick:281-82. In English, one can find Menno's work *A Foundation and Plain Instruction of the Saving Doctrine of Our Lord Jesus*. Two snippets give the direction of his thought: "Namely, that no one can... glory in the grace of God, the forgiveness of sin, or the merits of Christ, unless he has truly repented. It is not enough to say, we are Abraham's children, that is, that we profess to be Christians and be esteemed as the followers of Christ. But *we must do the works of Abraham*, that is, we must walk as all the true children of God are commanded to walk." *Id.* at 23. "True faith that is acceptable to God is not *dead faith*....It works and wills righteousness.... 'Every tree that does not bring forth good fruit is...is accursed and consumed by fire.'" (Matt. 3:21.)" *Id.* at 28-29.

also knew that Tyndale was honest and full of integrity. Thus, no amount of friendship would permit Tyndale to cower to any monolithic “Reformation.” His integrity instead required that he even question Luther’s doctrine. Tyndale’s only Lord was Christ. And to our dear Lord, brother Tyndale was true!

Perhaps it was also Tyndale’s single hearted devotion to the *words* of the Master that could influence Luther and Melancthon to both regret their prior writings. Someone with monumental influence like Tyndale was necessary to move men like Luther and Melancthon to such a stunning change of previously published doctrine.

Hence, Tyndale is a spiritual hero in every respect. He upheld Christ’s doctrine on salvation against both the pressure of German reformers and Catholic counter-

reformers. He did not resist Luther’s deductions precipitously. He had fully comprehended them. In fact, Tyndale had clearly accepted them in the *Parable of the Wicked Mammon* (1528). Nor had Tyndale cavalierly rejected Luther’s youthful faith alone idea as

sufficient to save believers. Instead, he had the fullest knowledge possible of both New and ‘Old Testaments.’ How else can 82% of the English in the King James Bible of 1611 be the words of William Tyndale from 1534? Nor was Tyndale any personal enemy of Luther. Rather, they were friends after 1524. Tyndale travelled specifically to Wittenberg to see Luther that year. This led to an intimate association with Luther’s ideas on justification. Tyndale published in 1528 Luther’s sermon on justification by faith. Tyndale even put it under his own name with minor embellishments!



Tyndale’s last words: ‘Lord open the eyes of the king.’

Thus, with an educational background and experience unparalleled by any Bible student before or since, and with unimpeachable evangelical credentials, **Tyndale elected to hold the pure line of Jesus' words against all comers.** He rejected faith alone doctrine for the believer. In all of this mess of men mangling God's word, Tyndale stands head and shoulders above them all. For this he lost his life in this world, but he gained it for the next.

“[Jesus] said to the Judeans who had believed in Him, ‘If you obey [meno, continue in] my teaching, then you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. [The Judeans said they are not slaves. Jesus responded.] Whosoever practices sin is a slave to it.’” Jn 8:30-34

Hence, let's examine Jesus' doctrine with the very same courage that Tyndale had. Let's be willing to put all our reputation in this world at stake if that is what it costs to accept all of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Yet, just because the story of Tyndale and his impact is an encouraging story does not mean this book is about his or Luther's doctrine. Instead, this book is about what Jesus taught. What obviously impelled Tyndale to submit to the doctrine of double justification had mostly to do with his belief that Jesus' words are more important than anyone else's words. Thus, we intend to follow his more mature realization that he had to emphasize Jesus' words to determine doctrine. He must have realized Jesus said He was our “**Sole Teacher.**” (Matt. 23:10.) Jesus **alone** is the source of truth.

Therefore, we start with a clean slate. We are open to find whatever Jesus taught on salvation, even if it were not exactly double justification. Even if it were faith alone, we would accept that too.

**Tyndale's 1534 New Testament:
why did Tyndale at first accept but
then by 1534 reject faith alone
doctrine?**



Hall of Fame of Dissenters from Faith Alone



William Tyndale
1494-1536

“Any many that submitteth not himself to keep the commandments [yet] do think he hath faith in God, the same man’s faith is vain, damnable, devlish, and plain presumption...and is no faith that can justify.” (*Doctrinal Treatises.*)



Philipp Melancthon
1497-1560

Successor to Luther as head of Lutheran church in 1546

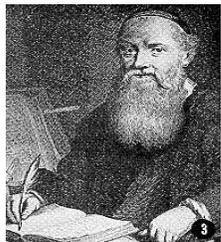
“New obedience... is necessity of duty or command: also by necessity of retaining faith...and avoiding punishments...eternal...[C]oncerning justification, renewed obedience [is] necessary to salvation.” (1536, *Letters of PM* #403.)



Georg Major

1502-1574, ordained by Martin Luther in 1537, Professor & Pastor

At Melancthon’s request, in 1552, he wrote a book entitled *On The Necessity of Good Works* in which he wrote: “No one will be saved without good works.” The controversy that ensued was used by Melancthon to rectify Lutheran justification doctrine which stood firm until 1580.



Menno Simons
1496-1561

Founder of reformation in the Netherlands

“No one can glory in the grace of God, in the forgiveness of sins, and the merits of Christ unless he has truly repented. It is not enough to say we are Abraham’s children, that is we profess to be Christians...but we must do the works of Abraham, that is, we must walk as all the true children of God are commanded to walk. True faith...is not dead faith.” (1556)