

# JDDJ<sup>1</sup> Annex: The theological impact of its doctored text

It used to be that you could depend on official texts to be accurate. No more.

Just as the Kolb/Wengert *Book of Concord* has at least one [major error](#), so, too, the Eerdmans edition of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*<sup>2</sup> has at least one major error.

Once again a word has been inserted into the official text that shouldn't be there. The inserted word appears at the neuralgic point: Justification as **the** criterion for doing theology:

- The official English text: "The doctrine of justification is measure or touchstone for the Christian faith."
- Eerdmans text: "The doctrine of justification is **that** measure or touchstone for the Christian faith."<sup>3</sup>

The word "that" should not be there. The back cover of the Eerdmans edition claims:

"This volume presents in English the official *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, confirmed by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church in Augsburg, Germany, in October 1999."

But that's not true! Someone altered the Annex. Probably not someone at Eerdmans. More likely someone from the ecumenical fever swamps of the LWF. Regardless of who did it, the "that" is no typo; it can only be a deliberate change in the text.

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<sup>1</sup>The official texts of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ), the *Official Common Statement*, and the *Annex* are available at the [Vatican](#) and [LWF](#) websites. The Eerdmans edition of these three documents: *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI and London: Eerdmans and CTS, 2000/2001).

The term "JDDJ" is often used as an acronym for all three documents, which obscures the interpretative authority of the *Official Common Statement* and the *Annex* over against JDDJ. In short, JDDJ is only authoritative when interpreted through the lens of the *Official Common Statement* and the *Annex*.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Dr. Dorothea Wendebourg shows how there are several versions of the historical development of JDDJ, the *Official Common Statement*, and the *Annex*, versions which "in fact to some degree totally contradict each other." See Dorothea Wendebourg, "Kampf ums Kriterium—Wie die Rechtfertigungserklärung zustande kam." *Evangelische Kommentare* 12/97, and reprinted in #4 of the series *Streit um den Entwurf* [die Texte] zur *Rechtfertigungslehre, epd-Dokumentation* (1998) 45-49, here 45.

For a comprehensive historical survey and analysis of JDDJ, see Johannes Wallmann, "Der Streit um die 'Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre,'" Beiheft 10, *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* (ZThK) (1998) 207-51, and "Die Demontage einer fast fertigen Brücke: inwiefern die 'Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre' gescheitert ist," *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift* 18 (2001) 172-88.

See also Dorothea Wendebourg, "Do the Doctrinal Condemnations Still Divide? A Perspective from Germany," Trans. Oliver K. Olson. *Lutheran Quarterly* 11 (1997) 121-25; "Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der 'Gemeinsamen Erklärung.'" Beiheft 10, *ZThK* (1998) 140-206.

For an invaluable collection of historical sources and documents representing leading theologians from many countries and points of view on JDDJ, see the tables of contents in *Streit um die Texte zur Rechtfertigungslehre* (abbreviated as *Rechtfertigung*), fascicles 1-24 ([1-17](#), [18-24](#)), published in *epd-Dokumentation* from October 1997 to December 1999.

For a succinct English summary of the irregular procedures and various drafts of JDDJ, see Mark Menacher, "[Ten Years After JDDJ](#). The Ecumenical Pelagianism Continues," *Logia* 18 (2009) 27-45, here 27-29.

<sup>3</sup> Eerdmans edition, 46. Emphasis added.

**Awkward!** To be sure, the official text is awkward: “The doctrine of justification is measure or touchstone.”<sup>4</sup> Awkward! The wording is awkward because the **Lutherans and Catholics** on the drafting committee **could not agree on “a” or “the.”** The problem was not those particular church representatives. They could not agree because **the status of justification is itself the problem.**

**Still awkward!** The added “that” in the Eerdmans text is also awkward. The “that” gives more emphasis to “measure or touchstone,” incorrectly implying that Catholics have come closer to Lutherans on justification as **the criterion.** Not true.

**JDDJ awkwardly papered over the problem.** For Lutherans justification by faith alone is “**the**” criterion by which the church stands or falls. For Catholics justification is “**a**” criterion among others. Originally JDDJ papered over this divide by claiming the doctrine of justification is “an indispensable criterion” (§18). Both sides objected to this obscure phrasing.

**Catholics objected.** The Vatican’s “Official Catholic Response” objected, noting there is “a clear difference” between Lutherans and Catholics on criterion and that for Catholics justification must be “integrated into the fundamental criterion of the ‘*regula fidei*,’” namely, the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas “rooted in the living Church and its sacramental life.”<sup>5</sup>

**Lutherans objected.** Over 160 German Lutheran professors, led by Gerhard Ebeling and Eberhard Jüngel, issued a “critical evaluation” rejecting the compromising language of JDDJ and boldly asserting the doctrine of justification as **the** criterion:

No consensus has been reached concerning the function of the doctrine of justification as criterion for the doctrine and life of the church. Even though the *JDDJ* affirms that “Lutherans emphasize the unique significance of this criterion” (#18) and that “Catholics see themselves as bound by several criteria” (#18), these statements are mutually exclusive.<sup>6</sup>

Gerhard Forde, a leader of the Lutheran team of the US Lutheran/Catholic dialogue for twenty-one years, was emphatic:

Lutherans have always insisted that justification by faith alone is *the* criterion by which all is to be judged. Since, however, Lutherans and Roman Catholics live in two different hermeneutical worlds, largely without knowing it, Roman Catholics balk at the claim that justification is the *only* criterion. There are, they claim, many other criteria in scripture to which they feel themselves beholden.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Annex ¶3. The official text, which is the German text from which the official English text is derived, is itself awkward: “Die Rechtfertigungslehre ist Maßstab oder Prüfstein des christlichen Glaubens.”

<sup>5</sup> “[Official Catholic Response](#) to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,” Clarifications, no. 2, in *Information Service*. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity 98 (1998) 93-95. Also *Origins* 28 (1998) 128-30.

<sup>6</sup> Gerhard Forde, “The Critical Response of the German Theological Professors to *The Joint Declaration on The Doctrine of Justification*,” *dialog* 38 (1999) 72; read Forde and the German scholars’ critical response [here](#). (The German scholars’ response was released on January 27, 1998.)

<sup>7</sup> Forde, *dialog*, 71. Emphasis in the text.

**The awkward Annex.** Because neither side could support JDDJ as it stands, a team of four drafted a brief *Official Common Statement* and the *Annex* to address neuralgic points of dispute, one of them being the question of criterion.<sup>8</sup> The Annex ¶13 states the following:

The doctrine of justification is measure or touchstone for the Christian faith. No teaching may contradict this criterion. In this sense, the doctrine of justification is an “indispensable criterion that constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ” (JD no. 18). As such, it has its truth and specific meaning within the overall context of the church’s fundamental Trinitarian confession of faith.<sup>9</sup>

**Lutherans: The Annex is awkward, ambiguous.** Over 250 German Protestant theologians issued a second critical evaluation, this time objecting to the added *Annex* because it “advanced Tridentine theology generally and failed specifically to resolve the objections to JDDJ raised in their first petition.”<sup>10</sup>

In a separate article Wilfred Härle, professor of systematic theology at the University of Heidelberg and vice-chair of the theological committee of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany, analyzed the *Annex* ¶13, showing that “criterion” is given its weakest meaning:

1. The claim that “no teaching may contradict this criterion” limits “criterion” to a negative function. In this sense every doctrine is a criterion.
2. The claim that the doctrine of justification “has its truth and specific meaning within the overall context of the church’s fundamental Trinitarian confession of faith” is true for every Christian doctrine.
3. To say “an indispensable criterion,” not “the” criterion, conveys the weakest meaning of “criterion,” namely, that it does not contradict.
4. “Criterion” can and ought to mean “coherence, (being in agreement with).” Something which is “the criterion” is that from which all is derived or deduced.
5. Härle concludes: For the Reformers something even more or different is meant. Because justification by faith alone is necessary for salvation, all valid Christian doctrine must be derived from it and agree with it. Everything else is human doctrine, thus adiaphoron.<sup>11</sup>

In the end, however, neither the stature of the above Lutheran theologians who objected to the *Official Common Statement* and the *Annex*, their large number, nor the cogency of their analysis mattered to LWF leaders.

With great pomp top LWF officials and second tier Vatican officials<sup>12</sup> signed the *Official Common Statement* and the *Annex* on October 31, 1999, in Augsburg.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The drafting team for the *Official Common Statement* and *Annex* included Lutherans Professor Dr. Joachim Track and Bishop Emeritus Johannes Hanselmann, and Roman Catholics Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and Professor Dr. Heinz Schütte. They reported to the Executive Committee of the LWF.

<sup>9</sup> *Annex* ¶13. The *Official Common Statement* and the *Annex* were released June 11, 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Menacher, 29. [Position Statement of German Theological Professors in Higher Education.](#)

<sup>11</sup> Wilfred Härle, “[Roma locuta](#),” *Deutsches Pfarrerblatt* 99 (1999) 407-409; reprinted in fascicle 19 of the series *Rechtfertigung, epd-Dokumentation* (1999) 11-15.

But, as the 250 German scholars note of the historic signing, the agreement states that Rome accepts only those Lutherans who agree to the interpretative lens of the *Official Common Statement* and the *Annex*:

To be sure, the *Official Common Statement* [and the *Annex*] includes “a few Lutheran formulations, for example ‘*simul justus et peccator*’ or ‘by faith alone,’ but it interprets these statements in a **Roman Catholic sense against their Reformation meaning**. The declaration of the *Official Common Statement* that the condemnations of the Council of Trent no longer apply to **the Lutheran church is only valid with the condition of this interpretation**.<sup>14</sup>

**Catholics: The Annex is awkward yet acceptable.** It may seem that Edward Cardinal Cassidy, President of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and the most senior Vatican official responsible for JDDJ, signaled a move toward Lutheranism when in a major address he spoke of justification as “the measure or touchstone.” Here the definite article “the” is insignificant because the *Annex* presents justification as a doctrine subsumed under the sacramental system of the Roman Catholic Church:

Under No. 3, the annex makes a brief reference to the question of the doctrine of justification as the measure or touchstone of the Christian faith. All that is added here to what is stated in the joint declaration is the statement that “as such, it has its truth and specific meaning within the overall context of the church’s fundamental Trinitarian confession of faith.” This recalls No. 18 of the joint declaration, which affirms: “We share the goal of confessing Christ in all things, who is to be trusted above all things as the one mediator (1 Tm. 2:5-6) through whom God in the Holy Spirit gives himself and pours out his renewing gifts.”<sup>15</sup>

In short, the *Annex* is acceptable because it rejects justification as **the** criterion.

Avery Cardinal Dulles noted that it is misleading to think that Catholics would change on these basic aspects of salvation:

**Does this mean that the Lutheran teachings may now be preached and taught in Catholic churches and seminaries, and that Lutherans will allow the Catholic positions to be taught as true in their pulpits and theological chairs? I can hardly think so.**

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<sup>12</sup> Neither Pope John Paul II nor Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and a member of the drafting team for the *Official Common Statement* and the *Annex*, participated in the signing ceremony.

<sup>13</sup> The JDDJ was included in the signing by the many references to it in the *Official Common Statement* and the *Annex*.

<sup>14</sup> See the [Position Statement of Theological Professors in Higher Education](#), #3, which goes on to note: “In relation to the ‘*simul*’ phrase and to the doctrine of concupiscence, this [limited recognition] was subsequently **confirmed and emphasized** not only by the Council for Unity [PCPCU] but also by the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.” The *Official Common Statement* #1: “The teaching of the Lutheran Churches **presented in this Declaration** does not fall under the condemnations of the Council of Trent.” Emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Cardinal Cassidy, “[The Meaning of the Joint Declaration on Justification](#),” Address, September 17, 1999, reprinted in *Origins* 29 (1999) 281-87.

Because of problems such as these, I am of the opinion that **the *Joint Declaration* tried to accomplish too much**. It would have done better to limit itself to the basic consensus of paragraph 15, which had been carefully worked out in several theological dialogues. **It went beyond the findings of the dialogues in asserting that the "remaining differences" were "acceptable."** No one should think that we have reached the end of the road.<sup>16</sup>

Dulles was right that **remaining differences are not acceptable to either side**, as the Vatican and Lutheran responses to JDDJ in 1998 and 1999 have made clear.

Nevertheless, the LWF (and the ELCA) message in 2017 for Lutheran pulpits commemorating the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation will of course be: JDDJ is a success! The remaining differences on justification between Lutherans and Catholics are acceptable!

Lutheran congregations need to not be intimidated or discouraged by the **"repressive tolerance"** of the current ecumenical movement. Gerhard Forde:

After participating in bilateral dialogue with Roman Catholics for some fifteen years now, I have come increasingly to think that the current method in ecumenical dialogue that seeks unity via theological convergence/consensus (the difference between the two seems never to have been cleared up) as a step toward some high-sounding goal like "full communion" is more or less **theologically bankrupt**. It leads ultimately to what could be called **"repressive tolerance."** ... Documents that state issues sharply and cleanly have to be edited and toned down so as not to be too offensive. As Henry Chadwick once put it, the genius of ecumenical statements lies in their **ambiguity** – the art of stating things in such a fashion that no one could possibly disagree. Imagine: theology, which has been exhorted all these long years to strive for precision, is now, apparently, to cultivate deliberately the art of ambiguity! The drive today towards what is called "visible unity" becomes, under current conditions, an **ideological crusade** which seems – wittingly or not – **only too ready to cut corners on the truth or even sacrifice it** to reach its goal.<sup>17</sup>

*JDDJ* is awkward and ambiguous. The *Annex* is awkward and ambiguous.

Moreover, in order to mitigate the awkwardness, someone from the ecumenical fever swamps of the LWF had the audacity to alter the official English text!

Think about "that" as you read the Eerdmans edition of JDDJ.

And then set it aside and celebrate the Reformation in 2017 in ways that honor both our modern friendship between Catholics and Lutherans as well as the "awkward" basic difference, **the** criterion.

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<sup>16</sup> Avery Cardinal Dulles, "[Justification: The Joint Declaration](#)," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 9 (2002) 108-119. Emphasis added.

<sup>17</sup> Gerhard Forde, "Lutheran Ecumenism: With Whom and How Much?" *A More Radical Gospel*, eds. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 171-88; here 174. Emphasis added.