

## **Justification (2)**

A forensic term, opposed to condemnation. As regards its nature, it is the judicial act of God, by which he pardons all the sins of those who believe in Christ, and accounts, accepts, and treats them as righteous in the eye of the law, i.e., as conformed to all its demands. In addition to the pardon (q.v.) of sin,

justification declares that all the claims of the law are satisfied in respect of the justified. It is the act of a judge and not of a sovereign. The law is not relaxed or set aside, but is declared to be fulfilled in the strictest sense; and so the person justified is declared to be entitled to all the advantages and rewards arising from perfect obedience to the law ( [Romans 5:1-10](#) ).

It proceeds on the imputing or crediting to the believer by God himself of the perfect righteousness, active and passive, of his Representative and Surety, Jesus Christ ( [Romans 10:3-9](#) ). Justification is not the forgiveness of a man without righteousness, but a declaration that he possesses a righteousness which perfectly and for ever satisfies the law, namely, Christ's righteousness ( [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) ; [Romans 4:6-8](#) ).

The sole condition on which this righteousness is imputed or credited to the believer is faith in or on the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is called a "condition," not because it possesses any merit, but only because it is the instrument, the only instrument by which the soul appropriates or apprehends Christ and his righteousness ( [Romans 1:17](#) ; [Romans 3:25](#) [Romans 3:26](#) ; [Romans 4:20](#) [Romans 4:22](#) ; [Philippians 3:8-11](#) ; [Galatians 2:16](#) ).

The act of faith which thus secures our justification secures also at the same time our sanctification (q.v.); and thus the doctrine of justification by faith does not lead to licentiousness ( [Romans 6:2-7](#) ). Good works, while not the ground, are the certain consequence of justification ( [6:14](#) ; [7:6](#) ). (See GALATIANS, EPISTLE TO .)

## **JUSTIFICATION**

jus-ti-fi-ka'-shun (tsedheq, verb tsadheq; Septuagint and New Testament dikaioma, dikaiosis, verb dikaioo, "justification" "to justify," in a legal sense, the declaring just or righteous. In Biblical literature, dikaioun, without denying the real righteousness of a person, is used invariably or almost invariably in a declarative or forensic sense. See Simon, HDB, II, 826; Thayer, Grimm, and Cremer under the respective words):

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## LITERATURE

### I. The Writings of Paul.

#### 1. The Universality of Sin:

In this article reference will first be made to the writings of Paul, where justification receives its classic expression, and from there as a center, the other New Testament writers, and finally the Old Testament, will be drawn in. According to Paul, justification rests on the following presuppositions:

***The universality of sin.*** All men are not only born in sin ([Ephesians 2:3](#)), but they have committed many actual transgressions, which render them liable to condemnation. Paul proves this by an appeal to the Old Testament witnesses ([Romans 3:9](#)), as well as by universal experience, both of the heathen ([Romans 1:18-32](#)) and Jews ([Romans 2:17-28; 3:9](#)).

#### 2. ***Perfection of the Law of God:***

The perfection of the Law of God and the necessity of its perfect observance, if justification is to come by it ([Romans 3:10](#)). The modern notion of God as a good-natured, more or less nonchalant ruler, to whom perfect holiness is not inexorable, was not that of Paul. If one had indeed kept the law, God could not hold him guilty ([Romans 2:13](#)), but such an obedience never existed.

Paul had no trouble with the law as such. Those who have tried to find a difference here between Galatians and Romans have failed. The reminder that the law was ordained by angels ([Galatians 3:19](#)) does not mean that it was not also given by God. It might be reckoned in a sense among the elements of the world (kosmos, [Galatians 4:3](#)), as it is an essential part of an ordered universe, but that does not at all mean that it is not also holy, right and good ([Romans 7:12](#)).

It was added, of course, on account of transgressions ([Galatians 3:19](#)), for it is only a world of intelligent, free spirits capable of sin which needs it, and its high and beautiful sanctions make the sin seem all the more sinful ([Romans 7:13](#)).

#### 3. Life, Work and Death of the Atoning Savior:

It was fundamental in Paul's thinking that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures ([1 Corinthians 15:3](#)). In due season He died for the ungodly ([Romans 5:6](#)); while we were yet sinners He died for us ([Romans 5:8](#)); we are justified in His blood ([Romans 5:9](#)), and it is through Him that we are saved from the wrath ([Romans 5:9](#)). While we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son ([Romans 5:10](#)), being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God set forth as a propitiation ([Romans](#)

3:24,25). There is no reconciliation, no justification, except through and by and for Christ.

***(1) Paul's Own Experience.***

Paul's own experience cannot be left out of the account. He lived through the doctrine, as well as found it through illumination of the Spirit in the Old Testament. It was not that he had only outwardly kept the law. He had been jealous for it, and had been blameless in every requirement of its righteousness ([Philippians 3:6](#)).

What was borne in upon him was how little such blamelessness could stand before the absolute standard of God. Just how far he was shaken with doubts of this kind we cannot say with certainty; but it seems impossible to conceive the Damascus conversion scene in the case of such an upright man and strenuous zealot without supposing a psychological preparation, without supposing doubts as to whether his fulfilling of the law enabled him to stand before God.

Now, for a Pharisaically educated man like himself, there was no way of overcoming these doubts but in a renewed struggle for his own righteousness shown in the fiery zeal of his Damascus journey, pressing on even in the blazing light of noonday. This conversion broke down his philosophy of life, his *Lebensgewissheit*, his assurance of salvation through works of the law done never so conscientiously and perfectly.

The revelation of the glorified Christ, with the assurance that He, the God-sent Messiah, was the very one whom he was persecuting, destroyed his dependence on his own righteousness, a righteousness which had led him to such shocking consequences. Although this was for him an individual experience, yet it had universal applications.

It showed him that there was an inherent weakness in the law through flesh, that is, through the whole physical, psychical and spiritual nature of man considered as sinful, as working only on this lower plane, and that the law needed bracing and illuminating by the Son, who, though sent in the likeness of the flesh of sin, yet (as an offering) for sin condemned sin and cast it out ([Romans 8:3](#)), to the end that the law might be fulfilled in those who through Him walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit ([Romans 8:4](#)).

That was the glory of the new righteousness thus revealed. If the law had been able to do that, to give life, Christ need not have come, righteousness would have been by the law ([Galatians 3:21](#)). But the facts show that the law was not thus able, neither the law written on the heart given to all, nor the law given to Moses

([Romans 1:18-3:19](#)). Therefore every mouth is stopped, and all flesh is silent before God. On the ground of law-keeping, what the modern man would call morality, our hope of salvation has been shattered. The law has spoken its judgment against us ([Galatians 3:10](#)). It cannot therefore lead us to righteousness and life, nor was that its supreme intention:

it was a pedagogue or tutor ("paidagogos") to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith ([Galatians 3:24](#); see Ihmels in RE3, 16, 483-84). What made Paul to differ from his companions in the faith was that his own bitter experience under the revelation of Christ had led him to these facts.

(2) ***The Resurrection Connected with the Death.***

It was remarked above that the ground of justification according to Paul is the work of Christ. This means especially. His death as a sacrifice, in which, as Ritschl well says (*Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, 3. Aufl., 1899, II 157), the apostles saw exercised the whole power of His redemption.

But that death cannot be separated from His resurrection, which first awakened them to a knowledge of its decisive worth for salvation, as well as finally confirmed their faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

"**The objective salvation**," says Ritschl (p. 158), "which was connected with the sacrificial death of Christ and which continued on for the church, was made secure by this, that it was asserted also as an attribute of the resurrected one," who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification ([Romans 4:25](#)).

But this last expression is not to be interpreted with literal preciseness, as though Paul intended to distinguish between the forgiveness of sins as brought about by the death, and justification, by the resurrection, for both forgiveness and justification are identified in [Romans 4:6-8](#).

It was the resurrection which gave Christians their assurance concerning Christ ([Acts 17:31](#)); by that resurrection He has been exalted to the right hand of God, where He maketh intercession for His people ([Romans 8:34](#)), which mediatorship is founded upon His death--the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world ([Revelation 13:8](#); compare Greek text).

B. *Weiss well says:*

"It was by the certainty of the exaltation of Christ to Messianic sovereignty brought about by the resurrection that Paul attained to faith in the saving significance of His death, and not conversely. Accordingly, the assurance that God cannot condemn us is owing primarily to the death of Christ, but still more to His resurrection and exaltation to God's right hand ([Romans 8:34](#)), inasmuch as these

first prove that His death was the death of the mediator of salvation, who has redeemed us from condemnation. .... The objective atonement was accomplished by the death of Christ, but the appropriation of it in justification is possible only if we believe in the saving significance of His death, and we can attain to faith in that only as it is sealed by the resurrection" (Biblical Theology of the New Testament, I, 436-37).

### **(3) Faith, Not Works, the Means of Justification.**

The means or condition of justification is faith ([Romans 3:22,25,26,28](#), etc.) which rests upon the pure grace of God and is itself, therefore, His gift ([Ephesians 2:8](#)). This making faith the only instrument of justification is not arbitrary, but because, being the receptive attitude of the soul, it is in the nature of the case the only avenue through which Divine blessing can come.

The gifts of God are not against the laws of the soul which He has made, but rather are in and through those laws. Faith is the hand outstretched to the Divine Giver, who, though He sends rain without our consent, does not give salvation except through an appropriate spiritual response.

This faith is not simply belief in historical facts, though this is presupposed as to the atoning death ([Romans 3:25](#)), and the resurrection ([Romans 10:9](#)) of Jesus, but is a real heart reception of the gift ([Romans 10:10](#)), and is therefore able to bring peace in our relation to God ([Romans 5:1](#)).

**The object of this faith** is Jesus Christ ([Romans 3:22](#), etc.), through whom only comes the gift of righteousness and the reigning in life ([Romans 5:17](#)), not Mary, not angels, not doctrine, not the church, but Jesus only. This, to be sure, does not exclude God the Father as an object of faith, as the redeeming act of Christ is itself the work of God ([2 Corinthians 5:19](#)), whose love expressed itself toward us in this way ([Romans 5:8](#)).

**Faith in the only one God** is always presupposed ([1 Corinthians 8:6](#)), but it was the apostolic custom rather to refer repentance to God and faith to Christ ([Acts 20:21](#)). But the oneness of God the Father and Christ the Son in a work of salvation is the best guaranty of the Divinity of the latter, both as an objective fact and as an inner experience of the Christian.

**The justification being by faith**, it is not by works or by love, or by both in one. It cannot be by the former, because they are lacking either in time or amount or quality, nor could they be accepted in any case until they spring from a heart renewed, for which faith is the necessary presupposition. It cannot be by the latter,

for it exists only where the Spirit has shed it abroad in the heart ([Romans 5:5](#)), the indispensable prerequisite for receiving which is faith. This does not mean that the crown of Christianity is not love, for it is ([1 Corinthians 13:13](#)); it means only that the root is faith.

Nor can love be foisted in as a partial condition of justification on the strength of the word often quoted for that purpose, "faith working through love" ([Galatians 5:6](#)).

The apostle is speaking here only of those who are already "in Christ," and he says that over against the Galatian believers bringing in a lot of legal observances, the only availing thing is not circumcision or its lack, but faith energizing through love. Here the interest is, as Ritschl says (II, 343), in the kingdom of God, but justification proper has reference to the sinner in relation to God and Christ.

See the excellent remarks of Bruce, *Paul's Conception of Christianity*, 1894, 226-27. At the same time this text reveals the tremendous ethical religious force abiding in faith, according to Paul. It reminds us of the great sentence of Luther in his preface to the Epistles to the Romans, where he says:

"Faith is a Divine work within us which changes and renews us in God according to [John 1:13](#), 'who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' This destroys the old Adam and makes new creatures of us in heart, will, disposition, and all our powers. Oh, faith is a living, active, jealous, mighty thing, inasmuch as it cannot possibly remain unproductive of good works" (Werke, Erl. Ausg., 63, 124-25).

#### **(4) *Baptism also Eliminated.***

Not only are good works and love removed as conditions or means of justification of the sinner, but baptism is also eliminated. According to Paul, it is the office of baptism not to justify, but to cleanse, that is, symbolically to set forth and seal the washing away of sin and the entrance into the new life by a dramatic act of burial, which for the subject and all witnesses would mark a never-to-be-forgotten era in the history of the believer.

"Baptism," says Weiss (I, 454), "presupposes faith in Him as the one whom the church designates as Lord, and also binds to adherence to Him which excludes every dependence upon any other, inasmuch as He has acquired a claim upon their devotion by the saving deed of His self-surrender on the cross." So important was baptism in the religious atmosphere at that time that hyperbolic expressions were used to express its cleansing and illuminating office, but these need not mislead us. We must interpret them according to the fundamental conceptions of Christianity

as a religion of the Spirit, not of magic nor of material media. Baptism pointed to a complete parting with the old life by previous renewal through faith in Christ, which renewal baptism in its turn sealed and announced in a climax of self-dedication to him, and this, while symbolically and in contemporary parlance of both Jew and Gentile called a new birth, was probably often actually so in the psychological experience of the baptized. But while justification is often attributed to faith, it is never to baptism.

### **(5) Elements of Justification.**

What are the elements of this justification? There are two:

#### (a) Forgiveness of Sins

Forgiveness of sins ([Romans 4:5-8](#); compare [Acts 13:38,39](#)). With this are connected peace and reconciliation ([Romans 5:1,9,10](#); compare [Romans 10:11](#)).

#### (b) The Declaring or Approving as Righteous

The declaring or approving as righteous or just ([Romans 3:21-30](#); [4:2-9,22](#); [5:1,9-11,16-21](#), etc.). C.F. Schmid is perfectly right when he says that Paul (and James) always uses *dikaion* in the sense of esteeming and pronouncing and treating as righteous, both according to the measure of the law ([Romans 2:13](#); [3:20](#)) and also according to grace (Biblical Theology of the New Testament, 1870, 497).

The word is a forensic one, and Godet goes so far as to say that the word is never used in all Greek literature for making righteous (Commentary on Romans, English translation, I, 157, American edition, 95).

This is shown further by the fact that it is the ungodly who are justified ([Romans 4:5](#)), and that the justification is a reckoning or imputation (*logizesthai*) of righteousness ([Romans 4:6,22](#)), not an infusing or making righteous.

The contrast of "to justify" is not "to be a sinner" but is "to accuse" or "to condemn" ([Romans 8:33,14](#)), and the contrast of "justification" is "condemnation" ([Romans 5:18](#)). Besides, it is not the infusing of a new life, of a new holiness, which is counted for righteousness, but it is faith which is so counted ([Romans 4:5](#); [Philippians 3:9](#)).

That upon which God looks when He justifies is not the righteousness He has imparted or is to impart, but the atonement He has made in Christ. It is one of the truest paradoxes of Christianity that unless a righteous life follows, there has been no justification, while the justification itself is for the sake of Christ alone through faith alone. It is a "status, rather than a character," says Stevens (The Pauline Theology, 1892, 265); "it bears the stamp of a legal rather than of an ethical



conception," and he refers to the elaborate and convincing proof of the forensic character of Paul's doctrine of justification," in Morison, *Exposition of Romans*, chapter III, 163-200.

An interesting illustration of how further study may correct a wrong impression is given by Lipsius, who, in his *Die Paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre*, 1853, maintained that righteousness or justification meant not "exclusively an objectively given external relation to God, but always at the same time a real inner condition of righteousness" (p. 10), whereas in his *Lehrbuch der evangelisch-protestantischen Dogmatik*, 1876, 3. Aufl., 1893, he makes the righteousness of God properly an "objective gift of grace, not simply in the sense in which the Old Testament just one judged his position of salvation as a gift of grace, but as a righteousness specially reckoned and adjudicated by way of grace and acknowledged before the judgment (or court, Gericht) of God ([Romans 4:6](#); compare [Romans 4:1-8,11](#); [3:23](#); [Galatians 3:6](#)).

This is always the meaning of *dikaion*, *dikaiousiai*, or *dikaiosis* in Paul. It consists in the not-reckoning of sins," etc. (p. 658). Of course justification is only a part of the process of salvation, which includes regeneration and sanctification, but these are one thing and justification is another.

#### (6) Justification Has to Do with the Individual.

Finally it is asked whether justification in Paul's mind has to do with the individual believer or with the society or Christian congregation. Ritschl (II, 217 f) and Sanday-Headlam (*The Epistle to the Rom*, 122-23) say the latter; Weiss (I, 442), the former.

It is indeed true that Paul refers to the church as purchased with Christ's blood ([Acts 20:28](#), or God's blood, according to the two oldest manuscripts and ancient authorities; compare [Ephesians 5:25](#)), and he uses the pronoun "we" as those who have received redemption, etc. ([Colossians 1:14](#); [Ephesians 2:18](#)); but it is evident on the other hand that faith is an individual matter, a thing first between man and his God, and only after a man has been united to Christ by faith can he enter into a spiritual fellowship with fellow-believers.

Therefore the subject of justification must be in the first place the individual, and only in the second place and by consequence the society. Besides, those justified are not the cleansed and sanctified members of churches, but the ungodly ([Romans 4:5](#)).

As to the argument from baptism urged by Sanday-Headlam, it must be said that Paul always conceives of baptism as taking place in the Christian community with

believers and for believers, that that for and to which they are baptized is not justification, but the death and resurrection of Christ ([Romans 6:3,4](#)), and that the righteousness of God has been manifested not through baptism but through faith in Jesus Christ unto all that believe ([Romans 3:22](#)), being justified freely, not through baptism, but through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ([Romans 3:24](#)). With Paul baptism has always a mystical significance as symbolizing and externally actualizing union with the death of the Lord, and would be both impossible and impertinent in the case of those not already believers in Christ and thus inwardly united to His society.

## **II. The Other New Testament Writings.**

So much for Paul. Let us now take a glance at the other New Testament books. It is a commonplace of theology that is called "modern" or "critical," that Paul and not Jesus is the founder of Christianity as we know it, that the doctrines of the Divinity of Christ, atonement, justification, etc., are Paul's work, and not his Master's.

There is truth in this. It was part of the humiliation of Christ as well as His pedagogical method to live, teach and act under the conditions of His time and country, on the background of Palestine of 30 AD; and it was specially His method to do His work and not His disciples', to live a life of love and light, to die for the sins of the world, and then go back to the Father that the Holy Spirit might come and lead His followers into all truth.

A full statement of the doctrines of Christianity on His part would have been premature ([John 16:12](#)), would have been pedagogically unwise, if not worthless. First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear ([Mark 4:28](#)).

It would also have been spiritually and philosophically impossible, for Christianity was not a set of teachings by Christ--but a religion springing out of His life, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession, mediatorial activity in history through the Spirit who works in His disciples and on the world through and by that life, death, etc.

The only question is whether the apostles were true to the spirit and content of His teachings in its moral and religious outlines. And especially in this matter of justification, a teaching by Christ is not to be looked for, because it is the very peculiarity of it that its middle point is the exalted Lord, who has become the mediator of salvation by His death and resurrection. Did the Pauline doctrine fit into the concrete situation made by the facts of Christ mentioned above, and was it the necessary consequence of His self-witness? Let us look into the Synoptic Gospels.

## 1. The Synoptic Gospels:

So far is it from being true, as Harnack says (What Is Christianity? 2nd edition, revised, New York, 1901, 68), that the "whole of Jesus' message may be reduced to these two heads:

God as Father, and the human soul so ennobled that it can and does unite with Him," that an essential part of His message is omitted, namely, that salvation is bound up in His (Christ's) own person. (The reader is asked to verify the references for himself, as space will not allow quotation.) See [Matthew 10:37-39](#); [16:24-27](#). Confession of Him (not simply of the Father) determines acknowledgment above ([Matthew 10:32](#)), where judgment is rendered according to our attitude to Him in His unfortunate ones ([Matthew 25:35](#)).

No sooner was His person rightly estimated than He began to unfold the necessity of His death and resurrection ([Matthew 16:21](#)). The evening before that death occurred, He brings out its significance, perpetuates the lesson in the institution of the Supper ([Mark 14:24](#)), and reenforces it after His resurrection ([Luke 24:26](#)). Paul himself could hardly have expressed the fact of the atonement through Christ's death more decisively than [Matthew 20:28](#); [26:28](#).

With this foundation, could the Christian doctrine of salvation take any other course than that it actually did take? Instead of referring men to the Father, Christ forgives sins Himself ([Matthew 9:2-6](#)), and He reckons all men as needing this forgiveness ([Matthew 6:12](#)).

While the time had not arrived for the Pauline doctrine of righteousness, Jesus prepared the way for it, negatively, in demanding a humble sense of sin ([Matthew 5:3](#)), inner fitness and perfection ([Matthew 5:6,8,20,48](#)), and positively in requiring recourse to Him by those who felt the burden of their sins ([Matthew 11:28](#)), to Him who was the rest-giver, and not simply to God the Father, a passage of which [Romans 5:1](#) is an echo. For it was specially to those to whom, as to the awakened Paul, the law brought condemnation that He came, came to heal and to save ([Mark 2:17](#); [Matthew 9:13](#); [Luke 15:7](#)).

It was for sinners and to sinners that He came ([Luke 15:2](#); [7:39](#); [19:7](#); [Matthew 11:19](#)), just as Paul understood; and the way for their salvation was not better law-keeping, but trusting prayer in the confession of sin ([Luke 18:13](#)), really equivalent to faith, the humble heart and a hunger for righteousness = (faith). See [Matthew 5:3,6](#).

He who brings most of himself, of his own pride and works, is the least likely to obtain the kingdom of heaven ([Matthew 18:3,1](#); [Mark 10:14](#)). Not only entrance,

but the final reward itself is of grace ([Matthew 19:30; 20:1-16](#)), a parable in the true spirit of Paul, and in anticipation of whose message was the promise of Paradise to the penitent robber ([Luke 23:43](#)). At the very beginning the message sounded out, "Repent ye, and believe in the gospel" ([Mark 1:15](#)), the gospel which was summed up in Christ, who would gather the people, not directly to God the Father, but to Himself ([Matthew 23:37](#)).

All this means justification through that faith in Himself, in His Divine-human manifestation ([Matthew 16:13-16](#)), of which faith He expresses Himself with anxiety in [Luke 18:8](#), and the presence of which he greeted with joy in [Matthew 8:10](#). Ihmels is right therefore in holding (RE3, XVI, 490) that Paul's proclamation was continuous with the self-witness of Jesus, which conversely pointed as a consequence to the witness of Paul.

## 2. John's Writings:

Justification by faith is not more implicit in John's Gospel than in the first three; it is only more explicit ([John 3:14-16](#)). Eternal life is the blessing secured, but this of course is only possible to one not under condemnation ([John 3:36](#)). The new Sonship of God came also in the wake of the same faith ([John 1:12](#)). The Epistles of John vary from Paul in word rather than in substance.

The atoning work of Jesus is still in the background; walking in the light is not conceivable in those under condemnation and without faith; and the confession of sins that leads to forgiveness seems only another name for the justification that brings peace ([1John 1:9,10](#); compare [2:1,2](#)).

Everything is, as with Paul ([Ephesians 2:7](#); [Titus 3:4](#)), led back to the love of God ([1John 3:1](#)), who sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins ([1John 4:10](#)).

## **3. 1 Peter and Hebrews:**

Seeberg's point that the "Pauline doctrine of justification is not found in any other New Testament writer" (History of Doctrine, I, 48) is true when you emphasize the word "doctrine." Paul gave it full scientific treatment, the others presuppose the fact, but do not unfold the doctrine.

Peter's "Repent ye, and be baptized .... in the name of Jesus Christ" ([Acts 2:38](#)) is meaningless unless faith were exercised in Christ. It is He in whom, though we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable ([1 Peter 1:8](#)), receiving the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls ([1 Peter 1:9](#)).

It is only, however, through the precious blood as of a lamb without blemish, even that of Christ (1 Peter 1:19), and is only through Him that we are believers in God (1 Peter 1:21). The familiar expression, "Come to Jesus," which simply means have faith in Jesus for justification and salvation, goes back to Peter (1 Peter 2:4).

The Epistle to the Hebrews has other interests to look after, but it does not deny faith, but rather exhorts us to draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith (10:22), which it lays at the foundation of all true religion, thinking and achievement (Hebrews 11).

The writer can give no better exhortation than to look unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith (12:2), an exhortation in the true spirit of Paul, whose gospel of faith for justification is also summed up in 4:16.

#### 4. Epistle of James:

We come lastly to the core of the matter in regard to New Testament representations of justification--the famous passage in James 2:14-26, which at first sight seems a direct blow at Paul. Here we are met by the interesting question of the date of James.

As we cannot enter into this (see JAMES, EPISTLE OF), what we say must be independent of this question. A careful look at this vigorous and most valuable letter (valuable in its own place, which is not that of Paul's letters, in comparison with which it is a "right strawy epistle," as Luther truthfully said (Erl. Ausg., 63, 115; see also pp. 156-57), in saying which he did not mean to reject it as useless (straw has most important uses), but as giving the doctrine of salvation, for which we must look to Paul) will show us that contradiction on the part of James to Paul is apparent and not real.

- (1) In this section James uses the word faith simply for intellectual belief in God, and especially in the unity of God (2:19; see also context), whereas Paul uses it for a saving trust in Christ.

As Feine well says (Theol. d. New Testament, Leipzig, 2 1911, 660-63), for Paul faith is the appropriation of the life-power of the heavenly Christ. Therefore he knows no faith which does not bring forth good works corresponding to it.

What does not come from faith is sin. For James faith is subordination of man to the heavenly Christ (2:1), or it is theoretic acknowledgment of one God (2:19).

Justification is for James a speaking just of him who is righteous, an analytical judgment. (Feine also says that James did not understand Paul, but he did not

fight him. It was left to Luther through his deep religious experience first to understand Paul's doctrine of justification.)

(2) James uses the word "works" as meaning practical morality, going back behind legalism, behind Pharisaism, to the position of the Old Testament prophets, whereas Paul uses the word as meritorious action deserving reward.

(3) When James is thinking of a deeper view, faith stands central in Christianity (1:3,6; 2:1; 5:15).

(4) Paul also on his part is as anxious as James vitally to connect Christianity and good works through faith (1 [Thessalonians 1:3](#); [Galatians 5:6](#); 1 [Corinthians 13:2](#); [Romans 2:6,7](#); see Mayor, *The Epistle of Jas*, 1892, lxxxviii; Franks, in DCG, I, 919-20; Findlay in HDB, 1-vol edition, 511).

(5) The whole argument of James is bent on preserving a real practical Christianity that is not content with words merely (2:15-16), but shows itself in deeds. He is not trying to show, as Paul, how men get rid of their guilt and become Christians, but how they prove the reality of their profession after they receive the faith.

He is not only writing to Christians, as of course Paul was, but he was writing to them as Christians ("my brethren," 2:14),

as already justified and standing on the "faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2:1), whereas Paul was thinking of men, Gentile and Jew, shivering in their guilt before the Eternal Justice, and asking, How can we get peace with God?

"There is not," says Beyschlag (*New Testament Theology*, Edinburgh, 1895, I, 367-68), "an objective conflict between the Pauline and Jacobean doctrines; both forms of teaching exist peacefully beside each other. James thought of justification in the simple and most natural sense of *justificatio justii*, as the Divine recognition of an actually righteous man, and he thought of it as the final judgment of God upon a man who is to stand in the last judgment and become a partaker of the final *soteria* ('salvation').

Paul also demands as a requisite for this last judgment and the final *soteria* right works, the love that fulfills the law and the perfected sanctification, but he (except in [Romans 2:13](#)) does not apply the expression *dikaiousythai* ('to be justified') to the final judgment of God, which recognizes this righteousness of life as actual.

He applies it rather to that first sentence of God with which He graciously receives the believing sinner returning to Him, and takes him into fellowship with Himself." Beyschlag rightly insists that James undoubtedly taught with the first apostles that whoever believes in Christ and is baptized receives the forgiveness of sins ([Acts 2:38](#); [3:19](#); [10:43](#)), and that he would not have contested the Pauline idea of

justification by grace on account of faith, insisting only that works must follow. Theologically, the chief if not the only difference is that James has not yet made the cross of Christ the center of his point of view, while the atonement was fundamental with all Paul's thinking.

See, further, JAMES, EPISTLE OF.

### III. The Old Testament.

A word in conclusion as to the Old Testament. All the New Testament writers built on the Old Testament. That there should be a cleft or contradiction between the Old Testament and what we call the New Testament would have been to them inconceivable. But they realized that that was the early dawn, while they lived in the light of day.

Abraham believed in Yahweh; and He reckoned it to him for righteousness ([Genesis 15:6](#); [Romans 4:3](#)). Who does not keep all parts of the law all the time is condemned ([Deuteronomy 27:26](#) Septuagint; [Ga 3:10](#); compare [Ps 14](#); [143:2](#); [Ro 3:20](#); see [3:9-20](#), and the references to the Old Testament in the American Standard Revised Version).

The prophets insisted upon the practical works of righteousness--"What doth Yahweh require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" ([Micah 6:8](#)). No religious attitude or services could take the place of uprightness of life.

This does not mean that the Old Testament writers understood that men were justified simply by their good deeds, for it was always believed that underneath all was the mercy and lovingkindness of God, whose forgiving grace was toward the broken and contrite spirit, the iniquities of whom were to be carried by the Servant of Yahweh, who shall justify many ([Psalms 103:8-13](#); [85:10](#); [Isaiah 57:15](#); [53:11](#), and many other passages).

## **IV. Later Development of the Doctrine.**

### **I. Apostolic and Early Church Fathers:**

A brief statement now on the development of the doctrine in the Christian church. It is humiliating to confess that the witness immediately after the apostles (the apostolic Fathers) did not reach the serene heights of Paul, or even the lower levels of his brethren. There are passages which remind one of him, but one feels at once that the atmosphere is different. Christianity is conceived as a new law rather than as a gospel of the grace of God. We cannot go into the reasons for this:

suffice it to say that in Gentile Christendom the presuppositions for that gospel failed, and the New Testament writings were not yet in the consciousness of the church to the extent that they dominated her thinking. The fine passage in Clement of Rome (97 AD, chapter xxxii:

"They all therefore (i.e. Abraham and other early saints) were glorified and magnified, not through themselves or their own works or the righteous doings which they wrought, but through His (God's) will.

And so we, having been called through His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works which we wrought in holiness of heart, but through faith, whereby the Almighty God justified all men that ever have been from the beginning; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.")

is not at all on a paragraph with his whole Epistle, as he coordinates faith with other virtues in chapter xxxv, makes hospitality and godliness the saving virtues for Lot in chapter xi, couples hospitality and faith together as equal for Rahab in chapter xii, and represents forgiveness of sins through keeping commandments and love in chapter I. Ignatius (about 110-15 AD) speaks in one place about Jesus Christ dying for us, that believing on His death we might escape death (Tral. 2), but with him the real saving things are love, concord, obedience to bishops, and the indwelling God = Christ, though he has also the excellent passage:

"None of these things is hidden from you if ye be perfect in your faith and love toward Jesus Christ, for these things are the beginning and end of life--faith is the beginning and love the end, and the two being found in unit are God, while all things else follow in their train unto true nobility" ([Ephesians 1:4](#)).

The so-called Barnabas (date uncertain) puts the death of Christ Jesus at the foundation of salvation, which is expressed by the remission of sins through His blood ([Ephesians 5](#)), the kingdom of Jesus being on the cross, so that they who set their hope on Him shall live forever ([Ephesians 6](#)), while at the time even believers are not yet justified ([Ephesians 4](#)), for which finally a whole series of works of light must be done and works of darkness avoided ([Ephesians 1:9](#)).

The Shepherd of Hermas and the Ancient Homily = 2 Clem are even more moralistic, where with whatever praise of faith we have the beginning of merit. The same legalistic tone sounds through that invaluable little roll found by Bryennios in 1873 and first published by him in Constantinople in December, 1883, The Teaching (Didache) of the Twelve Apostles.



That Catholic trend went forward till it is almost full-fledged as early as Tertullian (fl. 200 AD) and Cyprian (250 AD). See a full statement in my Cyprian, 1906, 146. And thus it continued until--as far as our outline is concerned--it struck Augustine, bishop of Hippo (396), who in a masterly and living way united, so far as they could be united, the Pauline thoughts of sin, grace, and justification with the regular Catholic legalism.

His book, *De Spiritu et Litera* (412 AD), was largely after Paul's own heart, and the Reformers hailed it with joy. But the Catholic elements he still kept, as for instance, that in justification a good concupiscence and a good-will are infused, that justification grows, that our merits must be taken into the account even though they are God's merits, that the faith which justifies is a faith which works by love, that faith is the holding true what God (and the church) says, though occasionally a deeper view of faith is seen, and that works are emphasized, as in *De fide et operibus*, in a Catholic fashion.

With profound and thoroughly Christian thoughts, Augustine had not so worked himself clear of his Catholic inheritance that he could reproduce Paul purely. He made a bridge by which we could go either back to Paul or forward to Aquinas. As Harnack well says, Augustine experienced, on the one hand, the last revival in the ancient church of the principle that "faith alone saves," and, on the other, he silenced that principle for a thousand years.

The very Catholic theologian who stood nearest to that principle overcame it (*Zeitschrift f. Theol. u. Kirche*, 1891, 177). His misunderstanding of Paul's "faith that worketh through love" had momentous consequences.

## 2. Council of Trent:

Those consequences are best seen in the decrees of the Council of Trent (Session 6, 1547), to which we now turn, and which are the definite and final crystallization of the medieval development, so far as that development was Catholic.

(1) Justification is a translation from a natural state to a state of grace. With this works prevenient grace, awakening and assisting, and with this in his man cooperates and prepares himself for justification. This cooperation has the merit of congruity, though the first call comes before any merit.

(2) Faith is an element in justification. "Receiving faith by hearing, they of free will draw near to God, believing those things to be true which have been Divinely revealed and promised." Faith as a living trust in a personal Saviour for salvation is lacking. Among the truths believed is the mercy of God and that He wishes to justify the sinner in Christ.

(3) This faith begets love to Christ and hatred to sin, which are elements also of the justifying process.

(4) Now follows justification itself, "which is not a bare remission of sins, but also sanctification and renewal of the inner man through the voluntary reception of grace and of gifts."

(5) But this renewal must take place through baptism, which, to the prepared adult, both gives and seals all the graces of salvation, forgiveness, cleansing, faith, hope and love.

(6) Justification is preserved by obeying the commandments and by good works, which also increase it.

(7) In case it is lost--and it can be lost, not by venial, but by mortal sin and by unbelief--it can be regained by the sacrament of penance.

(8) To get it, to keep or regain it, it is also necessary to believe the doctrines as thus laid down and to be laid down by this Council (see the decrees in any edition, or in Mirbt, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Papsttums*, 2. Aufl., 206-16, or in Buckley's or in Waterworth's translations, and for an admirable and objective summary see Seeberg, *History of Doctrine*, II, 433-38).

### **3. Luther:**

Recent researches in Luther's early writings have shown that almost from the beginning of his earnest study of religious questions, he mounted up to Paul's view of justification by faith alone (Loofs, *DG*, 4. Aufl., 1906, 696-98). Faith is the trust in the mercy of God through Christ, and justification is the declaring righteous for His sake, which is followed by a real making righteous. From the beginning to the end of his life as a religious teacher these are the elements of his doctrine.

Speaking of 1513-15, Loofs says (p. 697):

"Upon these equations (to justify = to forgive, grace = mercy of the non-imputing God, faith = trust in His mercy) as the regulators of his religious self-judgment, Luther's piety rests, and corresponding to them his view of Christianity, and even later" (than 1513-15); and he adds that "to reckon as righteous" (*reputari justum*) must not be understood with Luther as an opposition "to make righteous," for his "to be justified without merits" in the sense of "to forgive" (*absolvi*) is at the same time the beginning of a new life: *remissio peccati .... ipsa resurrectio*.

"His constantly and firmly held view, even more deeply understood later than in 1513-15, that 'to be justified without merit' = 'to be resurrected (to be born again)' = 'to be sanctified' is a pregnant formulation of his Christianity." So much being said, it is not necessary to draw out Luther's doctrine further, who in this respect

"rediscovered Christianity as a religion," but it will suffice to refer to the *Histories of Doctrine* (Seeberg gives a full and brilliant exposition), to Kostlin, *Luthers Theologie*, 2. Aufl., 1901 (see Index under the word "Rechtfertigung," and I, 349), and especially to Thieme, *Die sittliche Triebkraft des Glaubens: eine Untersuchung zu Luthers Theologie*, 1895, 103-314.

From Luther and the other reformers the New Testament doctrine went over to the Protestant churches without essential modification, and has remained their nominal testimony until the present. A classic expression of it, which may be taken as representing evangelical Christendom, is the 11th of the 39 Articles of Religion of the Church of England:

"We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings: wherefore that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort; as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification.

" It is true that at one time Wesley's opponents accused him of departing from this doctrine, especially on account of his famous Minute of 1770, but this was due to a radical misunderstanding of that Minute, for to the last he held staunchly Paul's doctrine (for proof see my article in *Lutheran Quarterly*, April, 1906, 171-75).

#### 4. Schleiermacher:

A new point of view was brought into modern theology by Schleiermacher, who starts from the fundamental fact of Christian experience that we have redemption and reconciliation with Christ, which fact becomes ours by union with Christ through faith.

This union brings justification with other blessings, but justification is not considered as even in thought a separate act based on Christ's death, but as part of a great whole of salvation, historically realized step by step in Christ. The trend of his teaching is to break down the distinction between justification and regeneration, as they are simply different aspects of union with Christ.

Ritschl carried forward this thought by emphasizing the grace of the heavenly Father mediated in the first instance through the Son to the Christian community, "to which God imputes the position toward him of Christ its founder," and in the second instance to individuals "as by faith in the Gospel they attach themselves to this community.

Faith is simply obedience to God and trust in the revelation of his grace in Christ." This brings sinners into fellowship with God which means eternal life, which is here and now realized, as the Fourth Gospel points out, in lordship over the world (compare Franks in DCG, I, 922-23).

The judicial or forensic aspect of justification so thoroughly in-wrought in Paul's thought is denied by Ritschl. "In whatsoever way we view the matter," he says, "the attitude of God in the act of justification cannot be conceived as that of a judge"

(Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation, English translation, 1900, 90). W.N. Clarke agrees with Schleiermacher in eliminating justification as a separate element in the work of salvation, and harks back to the Catholic view in making it dependent on the new life and subsequent to it (Christian Theology, 407-8).

No book has had as much influence in destroying the New Testament conception of justification among English-speaking readers as that of J. H. Newman, Lectures on Justification, 1838, 3rd edition, 1874, which contains some of the finest passages in religious literature (pp. 270-73, 302, 338-39), but which was so sympathetic to the Catholic view that the author had nothing essential to retract when he joined Rome in 1845.

"Whether we say we are justified by faith, or by works, or by sacraments, all these but mean this one doctrine that we are justified by grace which is given through sacraments, impetrated by faith, manifested in works" (p. 303).

### **5. Meaning and Message to the Modern Man:**

Lastly, has the New Testament conception of justification by faith any message to the modern man, or is it, as Lagarde held, dead in the Protestant churches, something which went overboard with the old doctrine of the Trinity and of Atonement?

After an able historical survey, Holl concludes (Die Rechtfertigungslehre im Licht der Geschichte d. Protestantismus, Tübingen, 1906, 40-42) that there are two principles thoroughly congenial to modern thought which favor this doctrine, namely, that of the sanctity and importance of personality, the "I" that stands face to face with God, responsible to Him alone; and second, the restoration of the Reformation-thought of an all-working God.

Whoever feels the pressure of these two principles, for him the question of justification becomes a living one. "The standard on which he must measure himself is the Absolute God, and who can stand in this judgment? Not simply on

account of single acts, but with his `I' and even with his good-willing. For that is just the curse which rests upon a man that his `I' is the thing with which alone he wills and can seek God, and that it is this very `I' which by its willfulness, vanity and self-love poisons all his willing. Accordingly, it remains true, what the Reformers said, that man is entirely corrupt, and that he can do no otherwise than to despair when the majesty of God dawns upon him" (p. 41).

There is, then, no other solution than the venture of faith that the same God who crushes our self-deceit lifts up with His sovereign grace, that we live through Him and before Him. Luther is right that religiously we can find no hold except on the Divine act of grace, which through faith in the Divine love and power working in us and for us ever makes us new in Christ.

To give up the doctrine of justification, says Holl rightly (p. 42), is to give up conscious personal religion. Holl writes as a liberal, and he quotes a stronger liberal still, Treitschke, as saying that in the 19th century it was the orthodox preachers who proclaimed this doctrine, who built better than the liberals.

Nor, says Holl in another book (*Was hat die Rechtfertigungslehre dem modernen Menschen zu sagen?* Tübingen, 1907, 26), can anyone who has experienced justification as an inner transformation be misled into moral unconcern. A moral ideal becomes his, much stronger and more compelling than worldly ethics.

The new attitude toward God constituted by justification impels to an unending movement in the service of God and man. The doctrine has not had its day. It is a part of the eternal gospel. As long as sinful man has to do with an all-holy God, the experience of Paul, Luther and Wesley becomes in a sense normative for the race.