

# Present Truth

A magazine dedicated  
to the restoration  
of New Testament Christianity  
in this generation

*Sola Gratia*      Solely by Grace  
*Solo Christo*     Solely by Christ  
*Sola Fide*        Solely by Faith

JULY 1976  
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## THE PRIMACY OF JUSTIFICATION

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# Present Truth

**Present Truth** is a magazine dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity and committed to upholding the great Reformation principle of justification by faith.

Editor: Robert D. Brinsmead

Publishing Editor: Norman Jarnes

**Publishers:** A group of Christian scholars and businessmen without denominational sponsorship who have united to uphold the objective gospel amid the present deluge of religious subjectivism. Multitudes are being caught up in the popular and frantic effort to find satisfaction in some sort of religious experience. *Present Truth* is a voice in this barren wilderness of groveling internalism, a voice which boldly proclaims those great principles upon which the Reformation was founded—namely:

1. *Sola gratia.* God's saving activity outside of us in the person of Jesus Christ is the sole *ground* of our salvation.
2. *Solo Christo.* Christ's doing and dying on our behalf is the sole *basis* of our acceptance and continued fellowship with God.
3. *Sola fide.* The Holy Spirit's gift of faith through the hearing of this objective, historical gospel is the sole *means* whereby Christ's substitutionary life and death are imputed to us for justification unto life eternal. He who is thus justified by faith and filled with God's Spirit will glory only in Christ's cross and make God's saving work in Christ the central affirmation of his Christian witness. Though he will be careful to obey God and please Him in all things, he will continue to repent rather than glory in the feeble attainments of his own Spirit-filled life.
4. *Sola Scriptura.* The Bible and the Bible only is the Christian's objective and infallible rule of faith and practice, alone sufficient that he may "be established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12).

*Present Truth* is not only committed to the task of upholding these founding principles of the Reformation, but it believes that we today must allow these principles to call all that we do and all that we teach into question. These principles call all traditions into question and all statements about the truth into question—even the ones set forth in this magazine. Our vision is a new Reformation that will recover what the Reformers bequeathed us and complete the restoration they so nobly began.

*Present Truth* is committed to the time-honored verities of the Christian faith—such as the Trinity, deity of Christ, virgin birth, blood atonement, bodily resurrection and ascension, second coming, final judgment, justification by faith alone, sanctification through the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, and glorification at Christ's soon return. The *Present Truth* ministry receives no denominational support. It is made possible through contributions from those who are dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity and committed to upholding the great Reformation principle of justification by faith. Your contributions are appreciated. All gifts are tax deductible in the U.S.A.

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**To Contributors:** Since truth is above the preferences and prejudices of any denomination, the editors welcome contributions from anyone and will judge them on their merit alone. If you wish a manuscript returned, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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# Letters

Address Letters to *Present Truth*,  
P.O. Box 1311, Fallbrook,  
California 92028.

## “What Is the Gospel?”

Sir / I have been receiving encouragement, enlightenment and refreshment through the pages of *Present Truth*. Although I do not share your misunderstanding of the dispensational hermeneutic and occasionally find your words toward Pentecostal brethren a bit harsh, I do think you are providing a clear declaration and explanation of the objectivity—the outside-of-me-ness—of the work of our Lord in His death and resurrection.

In this regard I found Geoffrey J. Paxton's article, “What Is the Gospel?” (May, 1976) forceful and lucid. However, I would like to share with you an “editing” thought or so:

First, I was disappointed that consideration was not given to the apostle Paul's concise definition of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-11). A brief exposition of this passage would have fit well under point 2 (p. 8), “The Gospel Concerns a Past, Historical Event.”

On page 10 Paxton writes, “The power of God is the gospel. The gospel and the power of God are identical.” This statement is imprecise. The power of God is *not* the gospel. The power of God is broader than and is not limited to the gospel. There is the power of God in preservation and the power of God in witness, for example. Neither of these activities of God's power is the gospel. What the apostle meant (Rom. 1:16) and what Paxton should have written is, “The power of God for salvation is the gospel. The gospel and the power of God for salvation are identical.”

Dale Younce  
Baptist Minister  
Alabama

Sir / This correspondent did read Paxton's article, “What Is the Gospel?” and has only this to say: this man labored to bring forth a mountain and got only a mouse! Why did he not just quote 1 Corinthians 15:1-10, because by God's own definition “this is the gospel”? Then, quite to the dismay of brother Paxton, the divine Author spends the next 48 verses telling us

what the gospel does. Actually, one could insist that the gospel includes only 4 verses (1 Cor. 15:1-4), then 54 verses reveal to a reader what the gospel does. So the gospel is to the result of that gospel as 4 is to 54!

E. Finkenbinder  
Baptist Minister  
Ohio

Sir / Your latest magazine, “Nothing But the Gospel,” was greatly rewarding. I wholeheartedly agree that the gospel is *not* “asking Jesus into your heart.” Thank you for proclaiming “justification by faith alone,” which to me is a life or death issue.

David Adams  
College Student  
Florida

Sir / The May issue of *Present Truth* is great. The article, “What Is the Gospel?” has such an appeal that I have to read it over and over.

James Warnshuis  
New York

Sir / Thank you for your material on “TULIP” in the May, 1976, issue of *Present Truth* (p. 13). I have a friend who is literally caught up in hyper-Calvinism. To her the central thing seems to no longer be Christ but election.

Mrs. A. Y. Balt  
Oklahoma

## “New Testament Eschatology”

Sir / I have appreciated your magazines more of late, especially the issue on “New Testament Eschatology” (April, 1976). I agree with the truth brought out in all the articles that Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises.

I am the pastor of a Mennonite church and have found your articles sound. They are meeting a need in my ministry.

Fred Gingerich  
Mennonite Minister  
Kansas

Sir / Your April, 1976, issue on “New Testament Eschatology” is the best I have read, having received *Present Truth* for the past 18 months. I found, somewhat to my surprise, that I agreed with most of it. I value *Present Truth*, for even when you are in error you challenge me to think clearly, to dig deeper, and to beware of accepting things at face value.

Stephen Hayes  
South Africa

Sir / I am writing to express my disappointment in your publication. Even though your magazine is antidispen-sational, I have read your articles on issues dealing with Reformed theology, which I have really enjoyed. We need more preaching about the sovereignty of God and the awfulness of sin, the kind of preaching which was seen in the writings of Calvin, Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards. However, these men of the Reformed faith did not understand God's program concerning Israel, the church and the kingdom.

I do want to point out a very serious issue. Your April, 1976, issue of *Present Truth* on “New Testament Eschatology” contained a dedication to Dr. George E. Ladd which stated, “Dr. Ladd is an evangelical scholar committed to the established verities of the Christian faith, yet a man who has the grace to combine Christian conservatism with openness to new currents of biblical thought.”—p. 2. How can you say this? In *The Battle for the Bible*, by Harold Lindsell (Zondervan, 1976), it was pointed out that neither Fuller Seminary nor Dr. Ladd hold to the doctrine of inerrancy any more. I suggest that if you buy Ladd's view of the future, print articles by men who are believers in inerrancy but at the same time believe Ladd's view. Berk-hof, Allis, J. Barton Payne and Hodge all are Reformed and have written on eschatology from an inerrant viewpoint. If you continue to condone Ladd and others who hold to an errant Bible, you will sooner or later turn out like Fuller Seminary—a whitewashed tomb! Why not print good articles on

eschatology by Walvoord, Chafer, McClain, Pentecost and Feinberg? At least print ones by men who hold to the inerrancy of the Bible.

As far as Ladd's eschatology goes, I suggest that you read a copy of Walvoord's *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation* (Zondervan) when it comes off the press this August. If you disagree with dispensational eschatology, which I gather you do, at least stand up for the inerrant Word of God like the real Reformers did.

D. E. Sutter, Th.D.  
New Jersey

Sir / Your April, 1976, issue on "New Testament Eschatology" is one of the clearest presentations of eschatology I have seen and a great blessing because of its Christ-honoring position. I truly appreciate your scholarly work and dedication to *sola Scriptura*.

Jay Armstrong  
California

Sir / One of the most refreshing things to happen to me for some time was to be able to read the introduction to the April, 1976, magazine entitled, "An Introductory Word." Specifically I refer to the sentence, "Yet we also think there are areas where we need to plow new ground, that we need to be challenged to rethink vital portions of the faith."—p. 4.

Howard Hallett  
Minnesota

Sir / I believe your April, 1976, issue of *Present Truth* to be one of the best publications concerning eschatology which I have encountered. Recently, I've been compelled to find new fellowship when I could no longer say Amen to typical dispensational sensationalism about our Lord's second coming. I've experienced the extreme intolerance of a church which sees fit to take church discipline on a member who even speaks of the central importance of Christ's finished work with regard to eschatology.

Meade H. Baker  
Virginia

Sir / Coming from basically legal and law-oriented backgrounds, my wife and I must continually remind ourselves of the all-important principle of justification by faith. Your publication plays a major part in aiding us to that end. We were especially thankful for your recent special issue on "New Testament Eschatology" and the way that you again prove Christ to be the

emphasis and reason behind all of God's plans for mankind.

Bill McDonald  
Arkansas

Sir / I suppose some would classify me as a charismatic Presbyterian, but I personally prefer to think of myself as simply a believer—a member in the body of Christ. Labels really do tend to be devious, emphasizing as they do our differences rather than the great truths that bind us all together.

I wince occasionally as I read some of your strong words directed against the charismatic movement, but I understand how the activities of some of our brothers and sisters of Pentecostal persuasion would give you cause for alarm. Thrill-seeking and experience-based Christianity are a frightfully dangerous business, and I commend you in your efforts to call everyone (both "Hallelujahs" and "Straights"! ) to the great fundamental doctrines set forth in Scripture. We must be grounded in the Person and finished work of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible.

I am grateful to be part of a group of believers who are both rooted in the Scriptures and open to the working of the Holy Spirit. We hope we are open to any manifestation the Spirit may choose, including the supernatural ones, but religious fireworks are by no means our objective. Our objective is to know Christ and to make Him known.

I have found *Present Truth* to be an extremely valuable aid in my own personal growth and understanding. I especially thank you for the incredible special issue on "New Testament Eschatology." It is really magnificent.

Cay Kosik  
Tennessee

#### "The Old Testament"

Sir / Sincerest commendations are in order for Graeme Goldsworthy's lucid and true-to-Scripture contribution, "The Kingdom of God and the Old Testament," in your February, 1976, issue of *Present Truth*. The entire issue is up to the standards of excellence which I have noted in the past, but this is the nonpareil! My own graduate studies in this area (I wrote my master's thesis on this subject) lend my humble support to the affirmations which he has stated so well. He has kindly but definitely removed the ground from under the feet of chiliasm and clarified to my mind at last why millennialism and Pentecostalism have been constant traveling partners through 20 centuries of Christian history—they

both derive from a common error, a misunderstanding of the Bible doctrine of the grace of God.

I do not always agree with your articles—the deathbed confession story of a few issues back came across to me as a nauseating reminder of Catholic extreme unction with the priest in absentia; but I believe unreservedly in your sincerity and your dedication to the cause announced on the cover of *Present Truth*. Just remember to imitate Luther and Calvin only insofar as they imitated Christ.

Terry M. Balke  
Bible School Dean  
Michigan

Sir / I was greatly impressed with the substance of your February, 1976, issue on "The Old Testament." I have long admired the work of John Bright, and this made the lead article of special interest to me. But all the articles are useful.

Lyle Vander Werff  
Professor of Religion  
Iowa

#### Dispensationalism

Sir / In spite of all the good your publication is accomplishing, there is a disturbing feature I would like to call to your attention: your tendency to make covenant theology and Calvinism synonymous. I want to point out that Calvin and other Reformers knew nothing of a systemized covenant theology as we have it today. Dispensationalism did not spring onto the religious scene any more recently than did the covenant system of today.

I believe in your work, but please stop trying to alienate dispensationalists as though we are a lot of Arminian sinless-perfectionists adverse to Reformed thought. I happen to be Calvinistic and dispensational at the same time, unthinkable as you may find that to be.

Joe Higginbotham  
West Virginia

Sir / I thank God I was delivered from "Scofieldism" more than 20 years ago. Your teaching on justification by faith is just what I received in the small seminary I attended in Canada several years ago.

D. G. Milligan  
Alabama

Sir / I have followed your magazine with interest for several years. Its strong Lutheran position has been impressive, and even more impressive

has been the number of fundamentalists who have sent you letters of praise. It is good to see them come to the proper place in theology to see that Christ's justification is not by works but, as Ephesians makes abundantly clear, is a free gift.

I agree wholeheartedly that dispensationalism is a deception and an error which ought to be put down at all costs. Even the most liberal theologian could not do as much damage to the gospel as have our dispensationalist friends. Bultmann might make some effort at taking the so-called myths out of the Word, but that in itself is not nearly so rotten as tearing it into bits and pieces so that it loses its very core. In fact, when you think of it, Bultmann does one kind of tearing down while the dispensationalists do another.

Richard Lang  
Minister  
Oregon

#### **"The Gospel and Christian Behavior"**

Sir / I must commend you on the fine tract, "The Gospel and Christian Behavior" (The Australian Forum: Topic 8). It was a quick help in reviewing my own preaching. You surely didn't pull any punches! I look forward to more articles on justification by faith and its proclamation through preaching. Also, I hope for more on the proper law/gospel distinction.

Paul H. Lainén  
Lutheran Minister  
Illinois

Sir / "The Gospel and Christian Behavior" was the most confusing, say-nothing article I have ever read.

W. J. Fenz  
California

Sir / I found your forum on "The Gospel and Christian Behavior" very enjoyable. You were so right that good preaching will separate the "is" and the "ought" and show their proper relationship to each other.

I am a student at a Baptist college. Your insights are much needed among the theology faculty here.

Mark E. Day  
Missouri

Sir / The forum, "The Gospel and Christian Behavior," is excellent. Having been reared in biblical truth as expressed in the Heidelberg Catechism, I appreciate your emphasis upon

the law. It is so lacking in today's Protestantism.

Henry L. Schram  
Michigan

#### **"The Victorious Life"**

Sir / I have read your pamphlet entitled "How to Live the Victorious Life" and want to extend to you my most heartfelt thanks and appreciation for helping me to see what has been missing in my spiritual armor—the great foundational truth of justification.

For many years (since 1967) I have been strong on the preaching of "sanctification," which in our present day goes under many titles: "The Key to Triumphant Living," "The Saving Life of Christ," "The Faith-Rest Life," "The Deeper Life," "The Spirit-filled Life." But all the while that I have been preaching it, I have been aware that something was missing. What it was I did not know until I read your little booklet.

During the years that I have been preaching on "The Deeper Life" I have found that my consciousness of the "lostness of humanity" and the Christ experience of the cross whereby men become sons of God has been less and less. I have even found it difficult to preach on the subject of "salvation." When I would try, it seemed that I would almost have a mental block. So after a time I just resigned myself to the fact that maybe God did not want me to preach on that subject, that the thrust of my ministry was to be on sanctification and not justification.

This gave me no peace, however, because in the depth of my heart I could not see any wisdom in preaching a sanctification which had no connection with justification. I could not reconcile what I was preaching with an almost total absence of any compassion for those outside of the Christ experience.

The coming of your pamphlet into my life has provided the correction that has been so long needed in my theological foundation, and I will always be deeply indebted to you for it. When one has been guilty of error for so long, it takes a while to make the psychological adjustment, but I thank God that I have begun the trip.

Please find room to print this letter, for I know that many ministers are making this same mistake today. We are building on the subjective while leaving behind the great objective truth of the Christ experience of the cross and the justification that is ours thereby. This is like building the superstructure while leaving off the founda-

tion. Ultimate collapse is the inevitable consequence.

George Bradley  
Baptist Minister  
California

Sir / Your booklet, "How to Live the Victorious Life," has been the clearest statement I have ever come across on the nature of and relation between justification and sanctification. It has helped me "no end" in seeing where the error is in the present "charismatic movement."

William E. McDowell  
Minister  
Canada

Sir / Your "How to Live the Victorious Life" is an exciting exception to the majority of "deeper life" treatises. I am wearied with gimmickry, sloganism, hip Scripture paraphrases, and slick surface treatments of the problems attending sanctification. Thank you.

Mrs. Judy Eadie  
Canada

Sir / "How to Live the Victorious Life" explains so clearly what my Reformed home, church and school have taught me. There are many paradoxes in the Bible. Mr. Brinsmead has helped me understand better the Pauline one in my life—"That which I would I do not. . . ."

Walter A. DeJong  
Michigan

#### **Freed**

Sir / I'm thankful for your publications, which have pointed me to the Word and to what true justification is. I've been exposed to some people caught in the charismatic movement—lovely people who do love their Lord but are in bondage because of listening to man's doctrine instead of the Word alone. They almost led me into bondage, trying to convince me that I needed a "second baptism"; and I felt badly because I couldn't feel this "baptism" of the Spirit. I was striving for that feeling. Oh, what bondage—depending on one's feelings!

Your publications pointed me back to the Word and true justification and true freedom. I pray that I will keep my eyes on Christ and His finished work for me and witness to this gift of grace. And I pray that your publications will reach others and set them free from the bondage of man's "isms," pointing them to the Word alone.

Joyce Elgin  
Washington



## Editorial Introduction

In this issue of *Present Truth* the articles deal with the formal and material principles of the Reformation—the supremacy of the objective, written Word of God over religious man, and the primacy of justification by God over religious experience.

If we frequently refer to errors which threaten the purity of biblical faith, it is not because we fear the ark will fall unless we undergird it with our feeble hands. The triumph of truth is a forgone conclusion because of Calvary. But even error is useful to a degree. Zwingli put it well in his famous letter to Francis, king of France:

Of all things produced by this tempestuous epoch, there is nothing more useful, most pious king, than dangerous falsehood! For one thing, it is only the good seed of the harvest which the author of evil, the devil, is always attempting to choke (Matt. 13:24 f.); for another, the divine husbandman of souls uses wickedness and unbelief to nurture and increase faith and virtue, like the Spartans, who

when they had captured a town with much sweat and blood, forbade its utter destruction in order that they might have somewhere to exercise their soldiers in close combat. In the same way, the Lord God allows us too to be threatened in unexpected ways in order that we may be proved usable before him. For how can we learn bravery or temperance except where there is the stress of danger or ample scope for self-indulgence? And so too, now that the truth has begun to raise its head, it shines all the more brightly and boldly by reason of falsehood. For as falsehood attacks her on every side, shooting out its poisonous upon her, she is forced to rouse herself and to wipe away the poisonous stains and to protect her members. In this way the mask of falsehood and the dear face of truth are the more clearly revealed and illuminated.—*Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. 24, p. 245.

Come, let us reason together.

R.D.B.



# Justification: The Article of the Reformation

William C. Robinson

An address delivered at Columbia Theological Seminary on October 24, 1975, by Dr. William C. Robinson, Professor Emeritus.

**Editorial Note:** Dr. Robinson was a teacher at Columbia Theological Seminary for over forty years. Recently Eerdmans published his excellent little book entitled *The Reformation: A Rediscovery of Grace*. We take this opportunity to urge the reader to get this outstanding book if he has not already obtained it. It has the very rare gift of being scholarly and incisive on the one hand and very readable and inspirational on the other. It stresses the unity in all streams of Reformation thought and the common heritage held in the best of the Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican and other evangelical branches of the church. The sections on Word and Spirit are a reading must.

Dr. Robinson sent us a copy of his recent address at CTS, giving us permission to publish it. We hope it will prompt many of our readers to obtain his above-named book.

Justification, the cardinal principle of the Reformation, is the heart of the Reformed or Presbyterian faith as truly as it is of the evangelical or Lutheran doctrine. For Calvin, justification is the principal hinge by which religion

is supported. In the third book of his *Institutes*, Calvin devotes one chapter to the illumination of the Spirit, the following chapter to faith, eight chapters to the life of faith, then eight to justification by faith, one to liberty of conscience, another to prayer, and all these before he devotes three chapters to predestination. The Canons of Dort were a good answer to the liberalism then sweeping the Netherlands. But when these are distilled into "the five points of Calvinism" in the TULIP acrostic—that is, total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saint—and then taken out of context, they can lead to erroneous inferences and focus the Reformed faith upon the Augustinian element in Calvin to the neglect of the Lutheran insight.

After all, Calvin died half a century before the Synod of Dort, but he was a disciple of Luther and a patriarch of the Reformation. This was especially true in his stress on the forgiveness of sins and justification by the mercy

## As chickens are covered under the wings of the hen, so we should shroud ourselves and our sin under the covering of the flesh of Christ, who is our pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night.

of God on the ground of the righteousness of God wrought by the doing and dying of Jesus Christ in our stead. Accordingly, we claim the great struggle which monk Martin made to win a gracious God as a true part of the heritage of those Reformed by the Word of God.

Our whole history shows that we need Luther to balance Augustine, justification to meliorate predestination, the forgiveness of sins to soften TULIP, and Christ our righteousness to rejoice our hearts when we contemplate God in His majesty, the King in His beauty. We need a theology that is Christocentric as well as Theocentric—that is, God who has given Himself for us and to us in Christ. The sovereign God is the God of biblical revelation, the God of grace, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—the Christ who promises, “Him who comes to me I will in no wise cast out.”

### Christ Is Our Righteousness

In the first Reformation tract ever penned for the English, Luther's colleague, Johann von Bugenhagen, declared that our one doctrine is, *Christ is our righteousness*. This represents the fruit of Luther's agonizing struggle to find a gracious God. As a young student Martin vowed to become a monk, for he feared that only thus could he do enough to make God gracious to him, the sinner. He observed the rules of his order with a strictness that won for his monastery high acclaim. He went to confession for hours at a time. He faithfully partook of the seven sacraments of the medieval church. He sought to climb to heaven on her three ladders of mystical piety, scholastic theology and practical devotion. But try as he could, Luther found no assurance in him-

self that his heart was pure enough to merit God's acceptance. Sin beset him behind and before. With Paul he cried, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?”

Then the Holy Spirit opened to Luther the meaning of Romans 1:16, 17 so that he was enabled to see that what he could not do for himself, that Christ had done for him. He could never stand before God on the basis of anything wrought in him, but only on that which had been done for him in Jesus' keeping the law perfectly as our Representative and His bearing our sins in His own body on the tree as our Substitute. Since Christ is God the Son, this work of His, accomplished in His incarnate life and sacrificial death, is *the righteousness of God* provided for and offered to sinners. Luther on Romans 4:24 expresses it thus: “Christ's death not only signifies, but also accomplishes the remission of sins as a most sufficient satisfaction.” And “whoever believes in Him has rendered satisfaction through Christ alone” (Luther on John 3:16). For in the whole gospel nothing else does Christ do but take us out of ourselves and put us under His wings “that we may trust wholly in His satisfaction and merit.” As chickens are covered under the wings of the hen, so we should shroud ourselves and our sin under the covering of the flesh of Christ, who is our pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night.

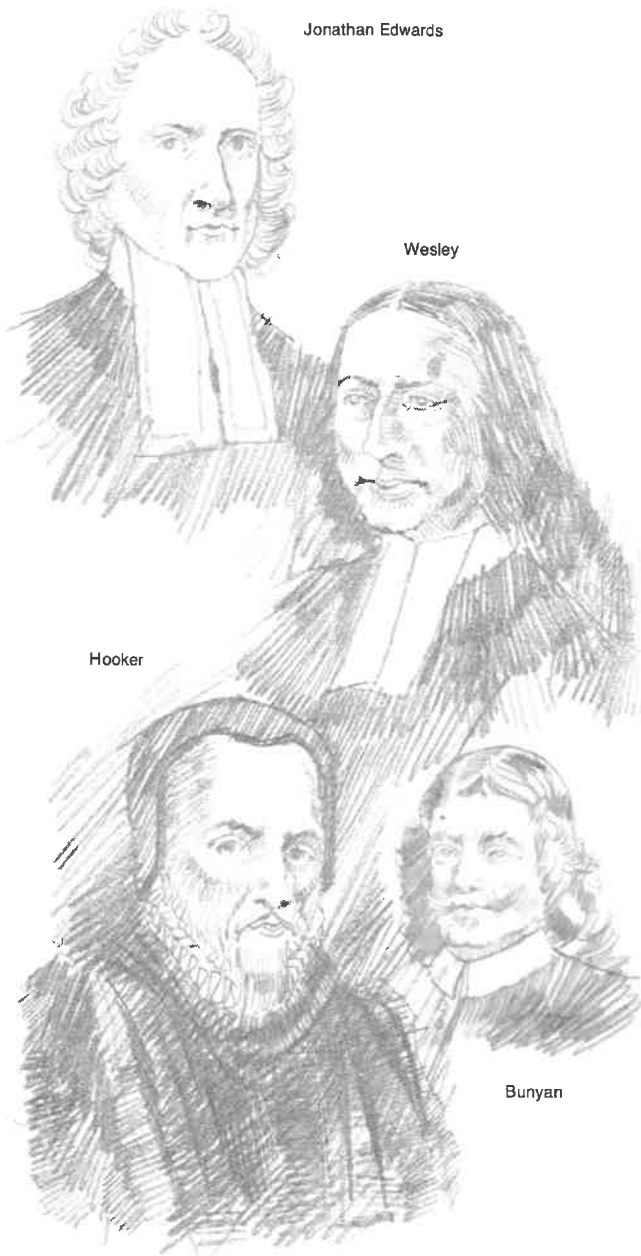
Luther writes:

Whence, then, is our defense? Nowhere save from Christ and in Christ. For if there shall come some reproof, against the heart which believes in Christ, testifying against him for some evil deed, then it turns away from itself, and turns to Christ (*ad Christum*) and says: But He made satisfaction. He is the Righteous One. This is my defense. He died for me. He made His righteousness to be mine, and made my sins to be His own. Because if He made my sin His own, then I can have it now no longer, and I am free. If, moreover, He has made His righteousness mine, I am righteous with the same righteousness as He is. But my sin cannot swallow Him up, but is swallowed up in the infinite abyss of His righteousness since He is God, blessed forever. And so, God is greater than our heart. Greater, infinitely greater is the defender than the accuser. God is the defender, the heart is the accuser. What, is that the proportion? So, even so it is. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Nobody. Why? Because it is Jesus Christ, who also is God, who died, nay rather who is risen again. If God be for us, then who can be against us.—WA 56; 204, 14.

When the Church of England took up the torch of the Reformation, “The Homily of Salvation” in her *Homilies of 1562* affirmed:

Christ is now the righteousness of all that truly believe in Him . . . Three things must go together in our justification: upon God's part His great mercy and grace; upon Christ's part, justice, that is the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption by the offering of His body and the shedding of His blood with the fulfillment of the law perfectly





who is full of sin,] being found in Christ through faith and having his sin in hatred through repentance, him God beholds with a gracious eye and accepts him in Jesus Christ as perfectly righteous as if he had fulfilled all that is commanded in the holy law of God.

Indeed, this objective basis for our justification has been recognized by the true evangelicals of every denomination. In his *Grace Abounding for the Chief of Sinners* John Bunyan, “the bishop of the Baptists,” tells us how in a woeful state of mind “this sentence fell upon my soul: Thy righteousness is in heaven. And I saw that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, the same yesterday, today and forever.”

Or come to the Northampton, Massachusetts Congregational Church in November, 1734. According to Jonathan Edwards, it was while he was defending in the pulpit the doctrine of justification by faith alone that “God’s work wonderfully brake forth among us and souls began to flock to Christ in whose righteousness alone they hoped to be justified.” This then was the doctrine of the Great Awakening, which saved America from paganism and first gave the thirteen Colonies a sense of unity.

In England a young minister was so moved by an account of these remarkable conversions that he sought a further work of grace for his own life. John Wesley writes of a reading of Luther on Romans in a Moravian Society, May 24, 1738:

While Luther was describing the change God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed, I felt that I did trust in Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins and saved me from the law of sin and death.

Later, in his sermon on “The Lord Our Righteousness,” Wesley professed to agree with Calvin on this doctrine—namely, “that the righteousness of Christ, both His active and passive righteousness, is the meritorious cause of our justification, and has procured at God’s hand that, upon our believing, we should be accounted righteous by Him.” Accordingly, he sings:

Jesu, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress:  
Midst flaming worlds in these array’d,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.

and thoroughly; and upon our part true and lively faith in Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours but God working in us . . . Justification is not a thing which we render unto Him, but which we receive of Him; not which we give to Him, but which we take of Him, by His free mercy, and by the merits of His most dearly beloved Son, our only Redeemer, Saviour and Justifier, Jesus Christ.

And ere the Reformation century ended, Bishop Richard Hooker—“the judicious Hooker”—added his weighty words on *Justification*:

Christ has merited righteousness for as many as are found in Him. And in Him God finds us, if we be believers; for by believing we are incorporated into Christ. [Even the man

As his end drew near, the dying evangelist cried, “There is no way into the holiest but by the blood of Jesus.”

Philippians 3:9 reads, “. . . and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God upon faith.” B. B. Warfield expounds this as teaching “the alien righteousness.”

## **We are never acceptable merely in ourselves. We are accepted only in Christ.**

Justification by faith is not to be set in contradiction to justification by works. It is set in contradiction only to justification by our own works. It is justification by Christ's works. The whole question, accordingly, is whether we can hope to be received into God's favor on the ground of what we do ourselves, or only on the ground of what Christ does for us. If we expect to be received on the ground of what we do ourselves—this is called justification by works. If on the ground of what Christ has done for us—that is what is meant by justification by faith. Justification by faith means, that is to say, that we look to Christ and to Him alone for salvation and come to God pleading Christ's death and righteousness as ground of our hope to be received into His favor.

“God in Christ does it all.” We are never acceptable merely in ourselves. We are accepted only in Christ.

A recent confirmation of this objective basis for our justification comes from an unexpected source. A prominent Roman Catholic scholar, Hans Kung (*Justification*), finds objective justification in Christ, in His perfect obedience, in His crucifixion for our sins, in His resurrection for our justification. Then he names faith as our subjective justification—that is, as our Amen, our acceptance of what God has done for us in Christ, our

**In justification the law points us to Christ as the only righteousness acceptable to God. In sanctification Christ points us to the law as, by the memory of all His benefits, He calls our hearts to the grateful obedience of faith.**

approval of God's way of saving us sinners.

Columbia Theological Seminary existed for almost a century in Columbia, South Carolina. In Elmwood Cemetery, Columbia, there is a lot bearing the words “Columbia Seminary.” Above, facing the entrance, is a monument carrying the inscription, “Christ Is Our Righteousness.” This is the faith which Columbia has taught through the years. By God's grace, may she ever proclaim Christ our righteousness!

### **The Law and the Gospel, or the Gospel and the Law?**

How does the righteousness which Christ wrought out for us become ours? “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). By His Word God calls us sinners to Christ. In this call the Holy Spirit uses both the law and the gospel. In which order do they come? Fifty-five years ago Dr. John D. “Jack” Davis told us that the men of old Princeton who went into the Midwest often held a two-weeks' meeting in each place. The first week they preached the law, and the second the gospel. The results were sound conversions and strong churches. On the other hand, Karl Barth, following the Heidelberg Catechism, put the gospel first and the law second (cf. his *Evangelium and Gesetz*). Yet a study of Romans shows that these differences are not necessarily divisive. Properly understood, they are complementary.

After an introduction (Rom. 1:1-17) the apostle shows by the law of nature and the law of Moses that all—Gentiles and Jews—have sinned and continue to come short of the glory of God. As the Spirit applies the law to our consciences, He exposes our guilt, convincing us that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight. By the law comes the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:19, 20)—or, “What the law does is to make man



know that he has sinned" (TEV). Galatians 3:24 describes the law as a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ that we may be justified by faith in Him (see also 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

After this use of the law in bringing sinners to know their need for Christ, Romans sets forth the gospel from 3:21 through chapter 11. From the great exposition of the righteousness God has provided in Christ, the apostle returns to the application thereof in the life—that is, he moves from the gospel to the law. From gospel to law is also the order of his thought in Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. Here the indicative lays the foundation for the imperative. By all that God has done for us in Christ, the gospel calls us to the obedience of faith. Grace evokes gratitude. Our Lord said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15; cf. 14:21, 23; 15:10; 1 John 5:3). It is by the hearing of faith that we receive the Spirit (Gal. 3:2), who causes us to delight in the law of God after the inward man (Rom. 7:22). In justification the law points us to Christ as the only righteousness acceptable to God. In sanctification Christ points us to the law as, by the memory of all His benefits, He calls our hearts to the grateful obedience of faith. Thus we conclude that in justification the order is generally first the law and then the gospel, while in sanctification the order is rather the gospel and then the law. Yet Walther, a wise Lutheran patriarch, advised that every sermon ought to have some of the law to humble the proud and some of the gospel to comfort the depressed.

## The Life of Faith

God justifies everyone who puts his trust in Christ and continues to believe in Him—that is, as we constantly believe, God constantly justifies. This is particularly evident in such a text as Acts 13:39, where a present participle is used with a present verb, indicating an action in progress which is simultaneous with the action of the principal verb: "Through this One is the forgiveness of sins, and by Him everyone who believes and keeps on believing is justified."

The Greek verb *pisteuo* is used both in the aorist tense, denoting punctiliar action (e.g., Gal. 2:16; Acts 19:2, 4; 16:31), and even more often in the present tense, indicating continuous or linear action. The apostles used the aorist of punctiliar action when they answered the Philippian jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," for only instantaneous decision could save him from his own drawn sword. But in Romans 1:16, 17 the gospel is God's saving power to everyone who is believing, who has faith. For therein is revealed the righteousness of God from a way that starts in faith to one that ends in faith, for the just shall live by faith. In Romans 3:22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ is upon all who are believing. Romans 4:5 says, "To him who is not working but is believing upon Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness." The apostle confesses, "I am living by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). Near the end of his life he

declares, "I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7).

We are to walk in faith (2 Cor. 5:7)—that is, to walk in Christ (Col. 2:6). For if we continue grounded and steadfast in the faith, not moved away from the hope of the gospel, we shall be presented holy and unreplicable before God (Col. 1:22, 23). Likewise, the Epistle to the Hebrews testifies that we become partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm to the end (Heb. 3:6, 14). According to 1 Peter 1:7-9, the proof of our faith is that it may be found unto glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

As we turn to the Gospels, John 3:15, 16 (NEB) declares that everyone who has faith in Christ shall have everlasting life. Jesus' parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3f) teaches that it is only the good soil which yields a hundredfold or sixtyfold or thirtyfold that is pleasing to the divine Sower. In the Lord's Prayer we pray for forgiveness as often as we pray for our daily bread.

Then in the golden chain of salvation, Romans 8:30, justification spans our Christian life all the way from calling or conversion to glorification: "Whom He called, them He justified; whom He justified, them He also glorified." Here justification, our standing before God, is coterminous with sanctification, our being conformed to the image of God's Son, in Romans 8:29. In 1 Corinthians 1:30 the apostle mentions Christ as our righteousness or justification before he names Him as our sanctification. But in 1 Corinthians 6:11 the order is reversed: "You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Accordingly, Luther taught that to accept justification by faith in Christ is our whole work for the whole Christian life. We never learn this too well. For the forgiveness of sins is a continuous divine work until we die. Christ saves us perpetually (*Luther's Works*, American ed. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955- ), Vol. 34, pp. 164, 167, 190). Likewise Calvin, commenting on Romans 4:3, observes that God reckoned faith as righteousness, not at the time Abraham was serving idols, but after he had for many years excelled in holiness of life. Thus Calvin concludes that we must have this blessedness of righteousness by faith in Christ not just once, but must hold it through life (*Institutes*, Bk.3, chap. 14, sec. 11). Further treating of the church, Calvin says that God brings us into fellowship with Himself by forgiving our sins and keeps us there by daily forgiving them (*Institutes*, Bk. 4, chap. 1, secs. 20, 21).

The atonement accomplished by Christ is a once-for-all event (Heb. 10:10-14), but His heavenly intercession on the basis thereof is continuous, and our laying hold of its benefits—our laying hold of Him who loved us and died for us—needs to be repeated every day and every hour. Like the manna, it needs to be gathered daily.

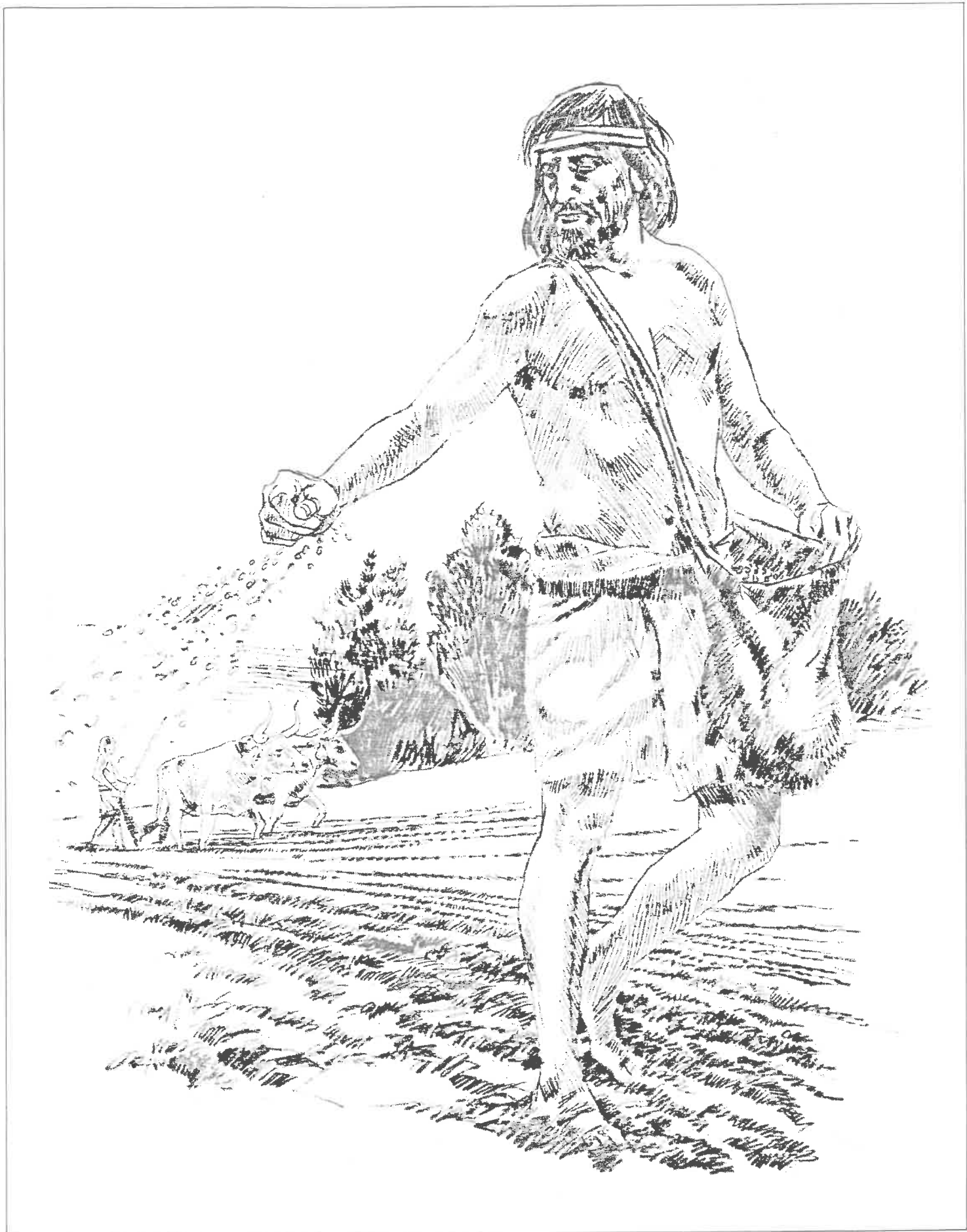
The great biblical example of faith is Abraham. This patriarch was called to step out on the promises of God

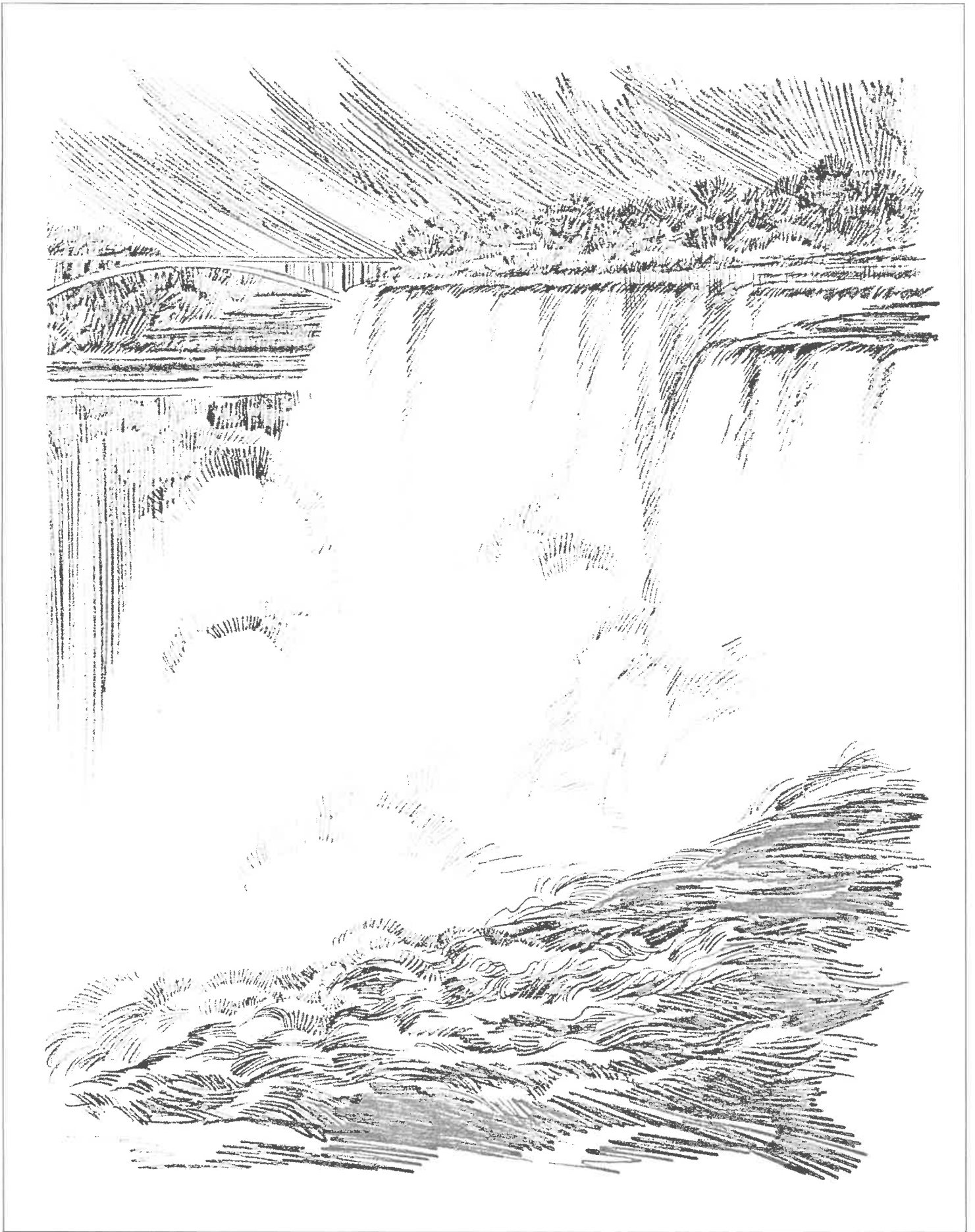
**God justifies everyone who puts his trust in Christ and continues to believe in Him—that is, as we constantly believe, God constantly justifies.**

**To accept justification by faith in Christ is our whole work for the whole Christian life. We never learn this too well.**

(Gen. 12). "He went out, not knowing whither he went," and God brought him into Canaan, the promised land. Yet he had to continue a life of faith, awaiting the fulfillment of the promise of an heir until both he and Sarah were far beyond the age of parenthood. Even after God miraculously gave them Isaac, Abraham was required to offer the son of promise as a sacrifice, believing that God would raise Isaac from the dead and so fulfill His promise (Heb. 11:17-19). Accordingly, it is written both of Abraham and Sarah, "These all died in faith" (Heb. 11:13).

In the history of Columbia Theological Seminary our man of faith was Dr. George Howe. When this institution was barely getting started with Dr. Thomas Goulding, we desperately needed a scholar trained in biblical learning and familiar with theological curricula. An Abbott scholar trained under Dr. Moses Stuart of Andover was in Charleston for his health. But the year was 1830—the year of nullification in South Carolina. The scholar was from Massachusetts, and it was feared that he could not fit into our Southern situation. At the urging of two of his classmates, however, Howe was invited to preach to the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia. In his sermon Howe compared faith to the compass needle. As





**When I cross the roaring  
Niagara, I want the strongest  
possible bridge of steel and  
concrete under me. But what  
is crossing Niagara Falls  
compared with stepping from  
time into eternity?**

the tripod is moved, the needle oscillates. But let the table be leveled and quiet, and the needle returns in a steady point to the magnetic north. So the cares and troubles of life shake the faith even of the true believer. But let the storms clear a bit, and faith settles down into a firm point toward God in Christ. Dr. Moses Waddell of Athens exclaimed in a stage whisper, "Magnificent!" George Howe was called for a year, and then permanently. A few years later he was elected to a chair at Union, New York, but declined the flattering promotion and gave his life of faith to over fifty-two years of service as professor in Columbia. Near the end of his life he was asked if he still trusted in Jesus. He replied, "Yes, what would I do did I not trust in Him?" Howe lived a life of faith and died in faith.

The other Sunday there was a celebration of the founding of Thornwell Orphanage. Dr. William Plumer Jacobs earnestly sought to establish a home for little ones bereaved of parents and also a college for the education of the young people of that section. But he described himself as too feeble and lamented that his faith was too weak. Yet Luther has declared that even weak faith prevails, and our Lord said, "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed . . ." So today Thornwell Orphanage and Presbyterian College are living memorials to the dynamic faith in this frail Christian pastor.

In Georgia, north of Rome, the lofty structures of Berry Schools attest the life of faith of the "little lady of possum trot"—Miss Martha Berry.

Since this is a theological seminary, may I suggest that every minister needs the whole "faith which is believed," *fides quae creditur*, to support the "faith with which it is believed," *fides qua creditur*, for the whole of the living and dying of himself and the members of his flock. If some article in the faith is difficult for you or does not seem necessary, do not brush it aside and reject it. If for the moment you cannot fully accept it, hold it in suspended judgment.

When I cross the roaring Niagara, I want the strongest possible bridge of steel and concrete under me. But what is crossing Niagara Falls compared with stepping from time into eternity? Therefore let me meet eternity undergirded not with a minimum but with a maximum faith. So let us heed the exhortation of Jude to build ourselves up on our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keeping ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. "For these are the words of the First and the Last, the One who died and lived again . . . : Only be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:8, 10).

**Existential theology leaves men as they exist in the world totally bankrupt and without hope.**

**In Kierkegaard's existential theology a man's ideas, experiences and formulations became determinative. There was no authority of Scripture to shape the man's thoughts.**

# Why Existential Theology Is Bankrupt

**Jon Zens**

It is true to say that an existentialist perspective has permeated the human disciplines.<sup>1</sup> Whether this fact is acclaimed or lamented will depend upon the outlook of

the onlooker. It is my opinion that the dominance of existentialism as an evaluative starting point—especially as applied to the discipline of theology—is tragic, and I hope to suggestively demonstrate that existential theology leaves men as they exist in the world totally bankrupt and without hope. This bankruptcy emerges in the following points.

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This article was originally presented as a lecture-discussion to students at Vanderbilt University in March, 1976, in connection with a Free University of Nashville course, "Existence with Purpose," and as part of the evangelical outreach of Nashville Reformed Baptist Church, where Mr. Zens (B.A. Covenant College; M. Div., Westminster Seminary) is pastor.

<sup>1</sup>Albert William Levi, "Existentialism and the Alienation of Man," *Phenomenology and Existentialism* (Baltimore: 1967), p. 264. "We must recognize it as the essential evaluative concept for personal orientation and social criticism in the modern world."





**Existential Theology Elevates Philosophical Presuppositions and, in So Doing, Makes the Bible Subject to Philosophical Criteria.**

Existentialism began as a philosophical motif with Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). His conclusions concerning Christ, faith and life did not result from his serious exegesis of biblical texts. Instead, the primacy fell upon his personal, subjective experience, which he then brought to the Scriptures.

The material content of Kierkegaard's view of the various attitudes of life . . . is mainly derived from ideas and attitudes of

life which Kierkegaard himself had experienced and derived from his immediate environment . . . The origin of these ideas is inwardly bound up with the person of Kierkegaard.<sup>2</sup>

The point to be seen here is that a *man's* ideas, experiences and formulations became determinative. There was no authority of Scripture to shape the man's thoughts.

When later theologians committed their reflections to writing, they acknowledged that these formulations were largely determined by an existential orientation. So Bultmann says:

<sup>2</sup>Zuidema, *Kierkegaard*, trans. David Freeman (Philadelphia: 1960), pp. 28, 50.

**In existential theology the Bible is not viewed as a special, original, constitutive, authoritative starting point of truth. It is not viewed as standing above the disciplines so that it first shapes our reflections, but it rather becomes subordinated and subject to philosophical (existential) presuppositions.**

The concept of "existence" must be the methodological starting-point of theology . . . my work grew out of my dependence on Heidegger's existential analysis of man in my effort to explicate existence in faith in a theological or conceptual way.<sup>3</sup>

In the preface to his commentary on Romans, Karl Barth states his indebtedness to Kierkegaard.<sup>4</sup>

Existentialism must therefore be viewed as a conceptual analysis by men acting in autonomy. It "has arisen as a direct consequence of . . . the fate of man in the modern world."<sup>5</sup> Existentialism appeared as a result of autonomous self-evaluation. This evaluation is then brought to the various disciplines and imposed as the presuppositional framework in which research is carried out.

When applied to the discipline of theology, the exegesis of Scripture and content of faith ultimately arise out of an existential foundation "derived from the tradition of secular thought."<sup>6</sup>

We must say that in existential theology the Bible is not viewed as a special, original, constitutive, authoritative starting point of truth. It is not viewed as standing above the disciplines so that it first shapes our reflections, but it rather becomes subordinated and subject to philosophical (existential) presuppositions.

<sup>3</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, *Existence and Faith* (London: 1961), p. 92.

<sup>4</sup>Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: 1957), pp. 4, 10, 11.

<sup>5</sup>Levi, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

<sup>6</sup>John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology* (New York: 1965), pp. 8, 10.

**Subjecting the Bible to Existential Presuppositions Results in the Conclusion That the New Testament World View Is "Mythical."**

The evangelical position has always been that the Bible is a God-inspired, special-redemptive revelation which accurately relates and truthfully conveys events in the long history of redemption. But existential theology sees the "history" as couched in a "mythical" world view attached to the first century outlook. This outlook must now be regarded as "obsolete" and "incredible" by our age. D.F. Strauss, laying the foundation for Bultmann almost 100 years earlier, thus states that "the fundamental ideas and opinions in these early writings fail to be commensurate with a more advanced civilization."<sup>7</sup> For him and for those who later elaborated upon his ideas, the orthodox position is "a presupposition which is inadmissible from our point of view."<sup>8</sup>

**Historical Relativism.** The written documents comprising the New Testament, say the existentialist theologians, "must be seen in the perspective of the current mythical presentations of that time."<sup>9</sup> Thus each generation, they say, must discover the *kerygma* (message) and strip away the mythical form which clouds that message.<sup>10</sup> Since "modern man no longer thinks in terms of myths, the *kerygma* must be "interpreted in a way that corresponds to our present time and space"—namely, the existential framework.<sup>11</sup> Just as the New Testament authors "presented the gospel in terms of the accepted ideas of their time" (that is, a mythical world view), so "we ought to be able to present the biblical message in terms of a modern world view" (that is, existentialism).<sup>12</sup>

However, it must be asked whether the assumption that the New Testament writers spoke *only* to their age is correct. This must be challenged by several considerations.

1. This position fails to do justice to the *covenant-community nature* of the documents themselves. Both the Old and New Testaments came into being in connection with the historic-redemptive process of the covenant peoples—Israel and the church. The old community had a specific corpus of documents which came into existence in the development of her history. Thus the early documents of Moses were not scrapped as time elapsed. Rather, they were always the touchstone of Israelite duty and the basis for their solidarity as a com-

<sup>7</sup>D.F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (London: 1846), Vol. 1, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>9</sup>Gotthold Hasenhuettl, "What Does Bultmann Mean by 'Demythologizing'?" *Concilium*, Apr., 1966, p. 28.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 29, 31.

<sup>12</sup>Avery Dulles, S.J., "Official Church Teaching and Historical Relativity," *Spirit, Faith and Church* (Philadelphia: 1970), p. 59.



munity. The Old Testament documents were relevant to the community as long as the "old covenant" was in effect. With the inauguration of the "new covenant," a new community was initiated, and a new corpus of documents arose which were (and are) relevant to the church "until He comes." The New Testament documents, therefore, are not directed to that era primarily, but to the new covenant community for all ages until the consummation. The history of redemption shows that the documents themselves are normative for the community while the covenant is in force. The existential theologians, however, have driven a wedge between the documents ("the form") and the message ("the *kerygma*") within the form. This they must do by disre-

garding redemptive history.

2. To say that the documents are restricted to their age negates the *prophetic* character of the documents. Redemptive history reveals that the writers often speak to others in the future. The whole Old Testament economy is viewed as speaking to those in the Messianic age: ". . . to whom it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us they did minister the things which are now reported" (1 Peter 1:10-12). Likewise, the new covenant revelation speaks beyond its first century milieu. It contemplates the entire span of the gospel age: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then the end shall

come" (Matt. 24:14). So while the New Testament was inscripturated within a specific cultural environment, this does not cancel the fact that it speaks clearly (not mythically) to every succeeding age.

3. Existential theology, in assigning certain New Testament teachings to the realm of "myth," fails to deal honestly with *theological constants* revealed in the covenant documents. These truths transcend any one generation. In fact, they shape our whole conception of reality. They are organically related, one upon the other, as the purpose of God in Christ became manifest in history and inscripturated in the covenant documents. It is not the contemporary, mythical world view which is presupposed and presented in the New Testament, but the foundation of Old Testament cosmology (cf. Matt. 19:4-6; Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24-27). Bultmann thinks that to view the earth as the scene of action for "supernatural powers, of God and his angels, of Satan and his demons," is "mythical."<sup>13</sup> But there is nothing peculiar to the first century in this view, for it also permeates the Old Testament revelation. And looking forward, the interaction of these supernatural powers characterizes the entire church age and cannot be restricted to an "incredible" first century conception.

**Doctrinal Rejectionism.** Coming to the Bible with existential presuppositions and, with these, concluding that the New Testament world view is "mythical," existential theologians then have a rationale by which they may relegate certain doctrines to the arena of "mythical images."<sup>14</sup> The existential theologian feels that such teachings must be recast "to eliminate what in his view is a *false scandal* and to reach a factual interpretation which suits our present age."<sup>15</sup> But such elimination is in reality rejection of biblical teaching.

Among the teachings to be "eliminated" is the concept that "God himself . . . comes as judge of the living and the dead and raises some to life and others to perdition."<sup>16</sup> We focus on "last things" here because this topic is so determinative of what men believe in other theological loci. If there is indeed to be a day in history when all men will appear before the Son of God—a day when the cursed "go away into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" and the "righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:14-46)—then the existential theologians (and those who follow their teachings) are in trouble. You do not find modern theologians emphasizing a minute ("every deed"), ethical ("good or bad"), judicial ("cursed, blessed") and final ("everlasting") reckoning of mankind.<sup>17</sup> Instead, a blissful, universal

**Men need the gospel — not a message mutilated by existential presuppositions, not a message stripped of its "mythical" New Testament form, but the message of hope in Christ Jesus, who sealed the new covenant with His blood and inspired His apostles and prophets as they penned the normative new covenant documents (Eph. 2:20).**

salvation for all men is posited.<sup>18</sup>

Such turning away from New Testament teaching—under the banner of "demythologizing" and in the name of removing "false scandal"—avoids the essential nature of the covenant documents. In the old dispensation the Israelites were not at liberty to pick and choose among the commandments, to veer to the left or right, or to add or subtract (cf. Rev. 22:18, 19). The covenant documents were "authoritative treaty words,"<sup>19</sup> not raw "data to be analyzed by sinful men as David Kelsey suggests."<sup>20</sup> Thus existential theology is guilty of taking the Scriptures for less than what they are—the constitutive words from God to the covenant community.<sup>21</sup> Before these documents of the covenant Suzerain the covenant servants are to be subject, receptive, and thereby analogical in their thinking and living. They live by these documents (Matt. 4:4). What is right in their own autonomous thinking is rejected. They desire to think God's thoughts after Him.

<sup>18</sup>Carl E. Braaten, "The Episcopal and Petrine Office as Expressions of Unity," *Spirit, Faith and Church*, p. 97; Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Church and the Eschatological Kingdom," *ibid.*, pp. 111, 112, 114.

<sup>19</sup>Meredith Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids: 1972), p. 75.

<sup>20</sup>David Kelsey, "Appeals to Scripture in Theology," *The Journal of Religion*, Jan., 1968, p. 17.

<sup>21</sup>Kline, *op. cit.*, pp. 87, 88.

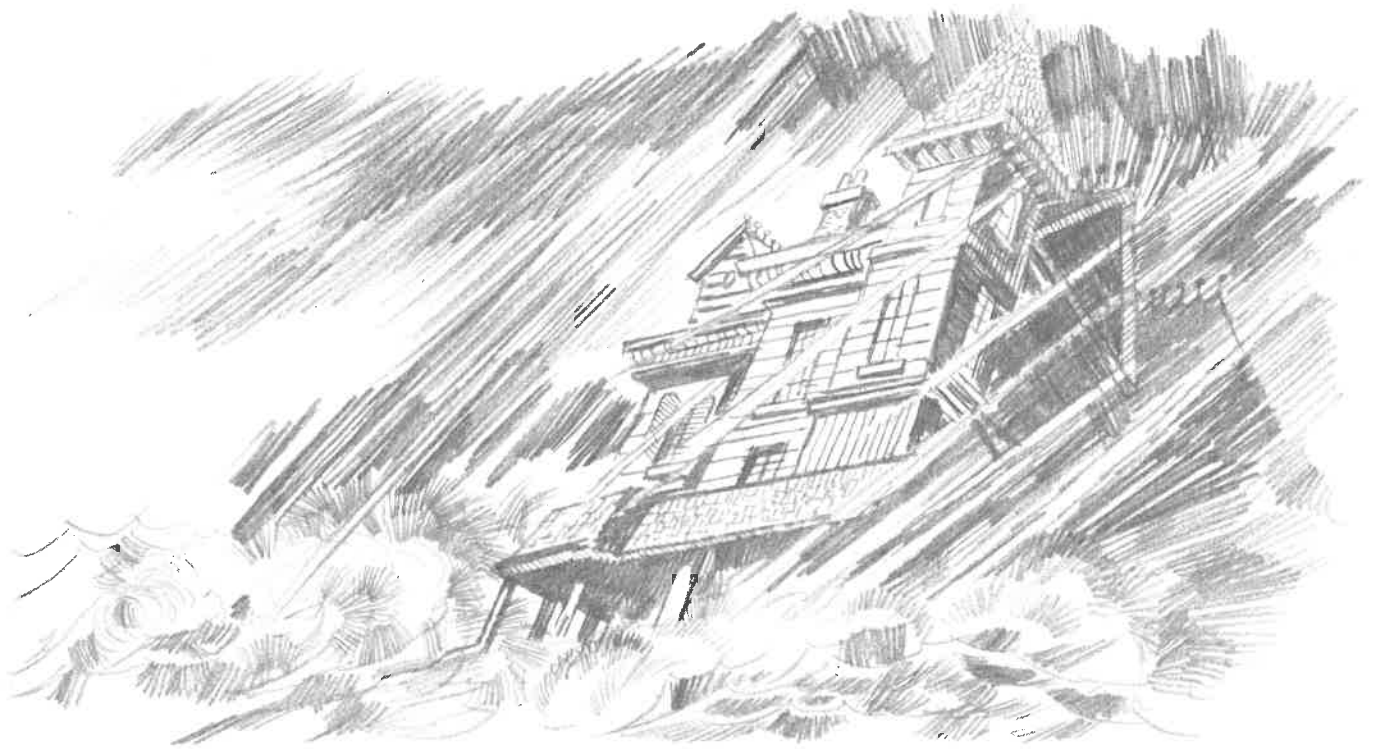
<sup>13</sup>Hasenhuettl, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>14</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>*ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>16</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>Leon Morris, *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment* (London: 1960), pp. 51, 54.



## Conclusion

Without doubt there is a general spirit of "angst" among the men of our age. Existentialism has flourished in this atmosphere. Because absolutes have been swept away, "a more irrational world than the one in which we presently live could hardly be conceived."<sup>22</sup> Such circumstances have brought upon men "a catastrophic disorientation and blindness for the normative fundamentals of life."<sup>23</sup> It is no wonder, then, that "the majority of patients" in contact with the discipline of psychoanalysis "are bewildered about their destiny and confused about who they are and where they are going"<sup>24</sup>

In this sort of societal context, men need the *gospel* —not a message mutilated by existential presuppositions, not a message stripped of its "mythical" New Testament form, but the message of hope in Christ Jesus, who sealed the new covenant with His blood and

inspired His apostles and prophets as they penned the normative new covenant documents (Eph. 2:20).

John Macquarrie notes three potential dangers whenever a contemporary philosophical motif (like existentialism) is made the interpretative criteria of the biblical message:

1. Distortion can result when elements congenial to the philosophy are overemphasized.
2. Ideas foreign to Christianity may slip in under the guise of Christian terminology.
3. The Christian faith may be outrightly accommodated to the prevailing philosophical fashion of the age.<sup>25</sup>

Although Macquarrie would not agree, I believe that all three dangers have materialized in the absorption of theology by existentialism. Paul did not adjust the gospel to the philosophical motifs of Athens. On the contrary, he challenged the Athenians with the special-redemptive motifs of creation, fall and redemption (Acts 17:18-34). Paul did not discover Christianity in the "heathen" practices at Lystra. He confronted the people

<sup>22</sup>Albert Ellis & Robert A. Harper, *A Guide to Rational Living in an Irrational World* (Englewood Cliffs: 1961), p. 183.

<sup>23</sup>P.E.S. Smith, "The Evangelizing Church Amidst Growing Secularism," *International Reformed Bulletin*, Oct., 1968, p. 34.

<sup>24</sup>Edith Weigert, "Sympathy, Empathy and Freedom in Therapy," *Modern Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York: 1962), p. 156.

<sup>25</sup>Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

of Lystra with the cosmology revealed in the old covenant documents—which was not a “mythical” first century world view (Acts 14:11-18). It is a tragic observation, but the history of the church shows that often the gospel must be dephilosophized. In existential theology the gospel has been absorbed by philosophical presuppositions. It is thus rendered a bankrupt theology, for the gospel is stripped of its simplicity, and the “angst” of souls will go on uncured.

Anthropologically, existential theology is bankrupt. It has made man’s dilemma ontological—that is, relating to his “being a man.” His existence is threatened by “being in the world.” However, the biblical presentation reveals that man’s needs arise out of his ethical existence—that is, *being a sinner*. He is in this state alienated from God, from creation, from his neighbor, and often from his own self-image. This alienation is not present because he is a man in the world, but because he is a sinner before God. He faces the future under the dark cloud of “the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God . . . when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ” (Rom. 2:5, 16). Existential theology has no “good news” for the *real* needs of the sinner, for it has missed the actual status of men now and has eliminated the judgment day of the future.

Existential theology is spiritually bankrupt. It leaves men building on sand. Bultmann can give us no more assurance than this: “All the results of science are relative, and no world-view of yesterday or today or tomorrow is definitive . . . Faith is security where no security can be seen.”<sup>26</sup> In a very practical setting, a chaplain in Vietnam confessed:

This concept of the ministry, I believe, can only be portrayed descriptively. For I, along with some others, can no longer articulate theological propositions about a prime mover. In the face of expectations that are in some way related to a divine plan for the world or for individuals, we stand mute. We must admit, I think, that we live without any workable philosophy of life, in the formal and technical sense of that phrase. If anything . . . we are probably existentialist, albeit Christian. Our feelings and reactions to life situations exist without a central organizing tendency or theoretical concept which ties them all into a neat package.<sup>27</sup>

How this ministerial confession differs from the boldness, hope, assurance and conviction found in apostolic preaching! Being based on faulty presuppositions, existential theology must always leave men groping in their existence and not growing in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>26</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: 1958), pp. 37, 40.

<sup>27</sup>Carl A. Avel, “A Chaplain’s Ministry in Viet-Nam,” *Navy Chaplain’s Bulletin*, Summer, 1970. Commander Avel was Director of the Orientation Course in Viet-nam, 1967-1968.

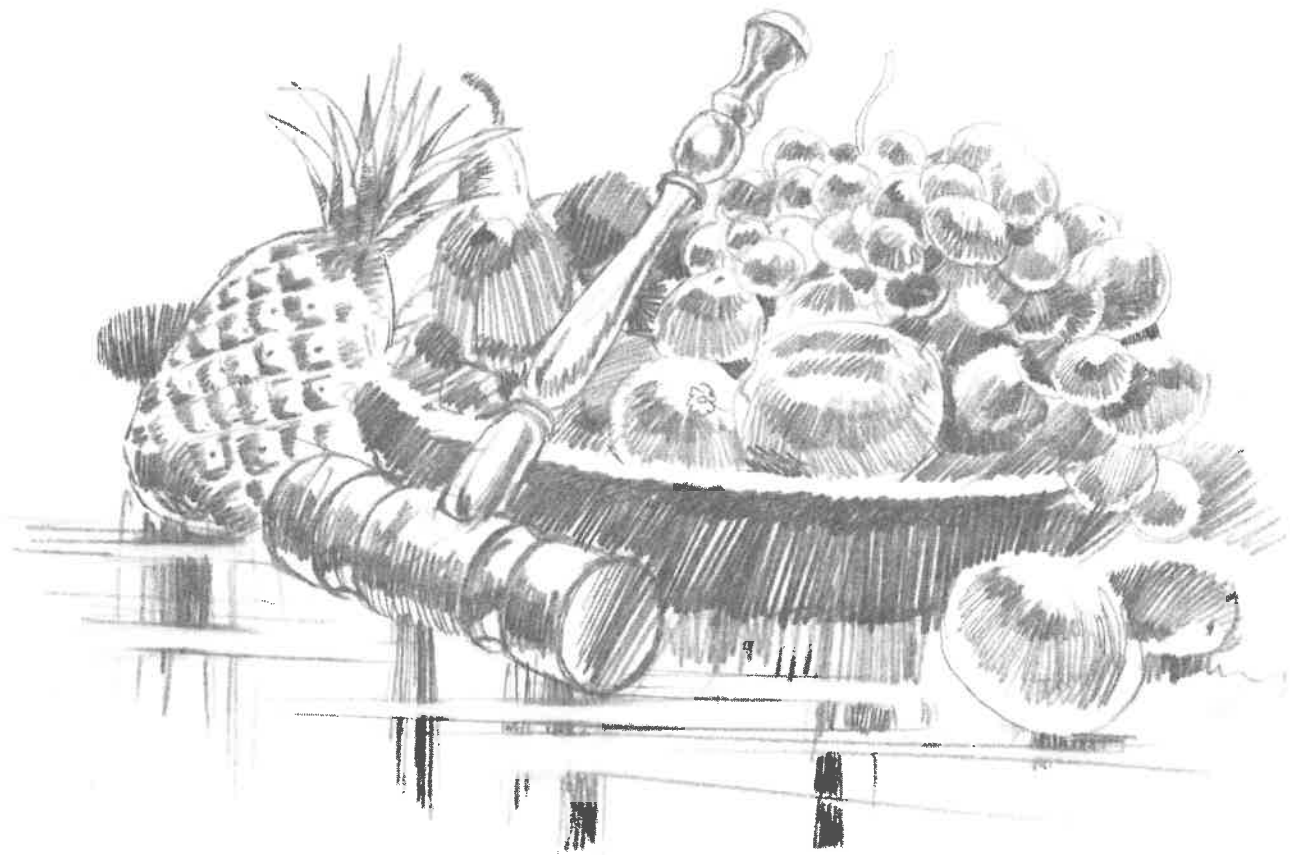
Even though existential theology is *bankrupt*, sinners each day all over the world are being called to Jesus, “in whom are hid all the *treasures* of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3).

Beware lest any man ruin you through philosophy and empty deceit, after the tradition of men, after the elements of the world, and not after Christ (Col. 2:8).

**It is a tragic observation, but the history of the church shows that often the gospel must be dephilosophized.**

**Existential theology has no “good news” for the *real* needs of the sinner, for it has missed the actual status of men now and has eliminated the judgment day of the future.**

**Existential theology must always leave men groping in their existence and not growing in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.**



# The Legal and Moral Aspects of Salvation

Robert D. Brinsmead

## Part 1

The Protestant Reformation was born out of the conviction that *justification* was a legal word and a forensic transaction. The Reformers did not devalue man's moral renewal, but they were careful not to include the moral change in justification itself. To be sure, justification opened the door to the new life in the Spirit and bore the fruit of transformation of character, but the *root* was not confused with the *fruit*.

Perhaps Protestant scholasticism (orthodoxy), which followed the Reformation, did tend to emphasize forensic justification in a way that seemed to devalue moral renewal. Instead of opening the door to a vital heart religion and highlighting the fruit of moral renewal, its dry objectivism tended to depersonalize and devitalize Christianity.

We realize that it is easy to distort the picture through such a brief generalization or be guilty of blaming the great teachers of the church for the problem when much of the cause for any dry sterility lay with the carnal hearers. Human nature always thinks it more convenient to assent to theological propositions than to submit to the renewing power of the Holy Spirit.

Pietism and Methodism did not wish to deny the Reformation insights into the Pauline doctrine of justification, but wanted to plead for a vital heart religion as well as to protest against justification without personal holiness. Wesley insisted that it was vain to talk about salvation by imputed righteousness while the heart remained a stranger to the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. He too believed that justification was a change



in legal standing, but he insisted that this must be accompanied by a vital change in the moral state. Of course, in this respect he was not saying anything new or anything that was not already in the great Protestant heritage, but his emphasis on a vital heart experience did infuse a new moral fervor into the Protestant movement.

To say that a moral transformation in man must accompany justification is quite true to the best in the Protestant heritage. But as we will now see, the emphasis today on the inner life of the believer has gone beyond having a place beneath the umbrella of justification (as in the theology of the Reformers) or even beside justification (as in the theology of the Wesleyans). In one way or another the moral aspects of redemption (new birth, regeneration, sanctification, new life in the Spirit, etc.) have actually supplanted the legal aspects of redemption (substitution, imputation, justification, etc.). This repudiation of justification (sometimes overt and conscious and sometimes covert and unconscious) takes the following forms:

**Form 1.** The moral aspects of redemption are elevated above the legal aspects of redemption. Legal justification appears rather abstract and unreal. Moral renewal seems to be more concrete and real. After all, is not the essence of Christianity fellowship with God and loving our fellow men? So why not get down to the real business of living the Christian life and let the modern Pharisees (theologians) worry about the legal niceties of justification? So the argument goes.

**Form 2.** Justification is said to be a real moral renewal and inner transformation. The legal and the moral are seen to be two aspects of the one reality. The man who is morally renewed is right with God, not by virtue of some "abstract legal fiction of imputed righteousness," but by virtue of the fact that he is indeed a new man in whom God's Spirit dwells. He is therefore legally right with God because he is morally right with God.

**Form 3.** While Form 1 elevates the moral above the legal and Form 2 completely identifies the legal and the moral, Form 3 is more bold. Those who advocate this



position propose that we do away with the legal aspects of redemption altogether. In this line of thought "legal" is made to appear guilty by association with "legalism" and is damned with it.

## Justification Scholastically Remodeled

Let us take some concrete illustrations of how modern scholars have tried to reshape the doctrine of justification.

### W. Wrede

W. Wrede in *Paul* ([1907], p. 123) represents many who have argued that Paul's doctrine of justification was only his polemic against the Judaizers. "In fact," he says, "the whole Pauline religion can be expounded without a word being said about the doctrine, unless it be in the part devoted to the law."

### Albert Schweitzer

Albert Schweitzer (*The Mysticism of St. Paul* [1931], p. 225) contends that justification is only a "subsidiary" doctrine in Pauline teaching. The main thing to Schweitzer is the mystical experience of union with Christ.

### E. Andrews

E. Andrews (*The Meaning of Christ for Paul* [1949], p. 65) expresses the feeling of many when he says that justification is a "judicial and inferior notion" compared with the much higher and finer idea of *imparted righteousness*.

### H.J. Schoeps

H.J. Schoeps (*Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* [1955]) has even written an entire book on Pauline theology in which a section on justification is conspicuous by its absence.

### W. Sanday and A.C. Headlan

W. Sanday and A.C. Headlan, in their great commentary on *Romans* ([1896], p. 36), conceded that when God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5) and treats him "as though" he were righteous, this means that the Christian life is made to have its beginning in fiction.

### Vincent Taylor

More recently, Vincent Taylor, bending over backwards to deny "legal fiction," says that justification comes about by an actual imparted righteousness. "Righteousness can be no more imputed to a sinner than bravery to a coward or wisdom to a fool. If through faith a man is accounted righteous, it must be because,

in a reputable sense of the word, he is righteous, and not because another is righteous in his stead."—*Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, p. 57. Taylor, who follows very closely the fathers of Trent at this point, says that by justification God "does for us what we cannot do for ourselves and thus creates in us a righteous mind for which we can claim no credit."—*Ibid.*, p. 60. This author is not just elevating the moral aspect (i.e., renewal) above the legal (as Andrews does, for instance), but he says that justification is renewal.

### N.H. Snaith

N.H. Snaith (*The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, p. 165) goes even further and says that God does not require righteousness at all—either imputed or imparted—for justification. God, being sovereign, is not subject to any legal conditions, argues Snaith. Thus he cuts salvation loose from any legal categories altogether.

### John Oman

John Oman (*Grace and Personality*, p. 206) also excludes the legal element from justification altogether. Says he, "We are justified because by faith we enter the world of a gracious God, out of which the old hard legal requirements, with the old hard boundaries of our personality and the old self-regarding claim of rights, have disappeared, a world which is the household of our Father where order and power and ultimate reality are of love and not of law."

### W. Fearon

W. Fearon (*Reconciliation and Reality*, p. 154) sees the essence of justification in the changed nature of the believer. Says he, "It has not always been seen that no man can be justified before God unless his nature is so changed that the assent of God is the assent of reality."

### N. Berdyaev

N. Berdyaev (*Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 351) sees justification as "a juridical notion created by the limitations of human thought, which were incapable of accepting the divine truth of Christianity." The central truth, he declares, is "that of transfiguration not justification."—*Ibid.*, p. 176.

### Karl Holl

Back in 1917 Lutheran scholar Karl Holl voiced his rejection of the idea of a "declarative justification" whereby the sinner is justified solely on the basis of the work of Christ. Holl blamed this teaching on Melancthon, but he argued that Luther understood justification as a real transformation of man as sinner to man as righteous. Holl advanced the idea of *analytical*

*justification*—meaning that God justifies the believer because God, being eternal, sees what Christ's renewing power will eventually make him. If the believer is not altogether righteous now, he will be one day, because the renewing life of Christ is already at work in him and holds the promise of a righteous character. Justification "on account of Christ" is abandoned in favor of justification "on account of the beginning of the new creation" (see Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, pp. 241, 242, and G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Justification*, pp. 15, 16).

### James Stewart

More recently, Holl's theory of justification is reflected by James Stewart (*A Man in Christ*, p. 257), who describes justification in the following way: "His [the believer's ] position may not have altered much, but his direction has been changed completely; and it is by direction, not position, that God judges. Once the sinner had his back to Christ; now his face is Christward. This is faith, and it holds the potency of a glorious future. This is what God sees; and seeing it, God declares the man righteous. God 'justifies' him. Is this a 'legal fiction'? The question answers itself. There is nothing fictitious about it whatever. It is the deepest and most genuine of realities."<sup>1</sup> This is a clear statement of *analytical justification*, or justification on account of the renewal within man.

### W. Beck

W. Beck, U.S. Lutheran scholar, wrote an article in the *Christian News* (Dec. 1, 1975) on "What Does Dikaioo [Justify] Mean?" He argues that *to justify* means *to make righteous* as well as *to declare righteous*. He says that the thing wrong with the Roman Catholic concept is not its definition of "*make righteous*," but its synergistic means. Like Holl, he too argues that he represents Luther's real position. He utterly repudiates the idea of justification by an "outside" righteousness by bringing in the usual objection of legal fiction. Interestingly, he links his theory of justification by a real, inward infusion of righteousness to the Lutheran view of the Supper. He says that when God says the believer "*is*" righteous, he "*is*" righteous, just as when Christ says, "This *is* my body," it "*is*" His body.

These are just a few samples of the way in which modern scholars have been consciously reshaping and reinterpreting the doctrine of justification. How far has this process gone, and how general is this different understanding of justification within the Protestant movement?

As far back as 1881, English Roman Catholic

scholar Henry Oxenham made this startling claim: "What Luther puts forward as the *articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiae* [the article of the standing or falling Church], is in reality maintained by no theologian of name at the present day, either in his own country or in ours."—*The Catholic Doctrine of Atonement*, p. 37. While Oxenham is obviously overstating his case in claiming the defection of all Protestant scholars from the original Protestant doctrine of justification, yet he could not have made such a statement unless defection was at least the general picture.

In our present century, Lutheran dogmatician Francis Piper goes a long way in agreeing with Oxenham when he says:

Most modern Protestant theologians have adopted the Roman view of the doctrine of justification, as Doellinger pointed out in his lectures on the reunion of the Christian Church (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1872, p. 352). And recently Joseph Pohle wrote in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, VIII, p. 576: "The strict orthodoxy of the Old Lutherans, e.g., in the Kingdom of Saxony and the State of Missouri, alone continues to cling tenaciously to a system which otherwise would have slowly fallen into oblivion." The Christian doctrine of justification has not, of course, vanished from the earth to the extent indicated by Pohle. The so-called Missourians are not restricted to the State of Missouri and to Saxony; they are found in all States of the Union, in Canada, in South America, and on all continents. Furthermore, the doctrine of justification by faith, without the deeds of the Law, is preached by very many outside the Missouri Synod and the Saxon Free Church. And all Christians in the whole world believe this doctrine, also the Christians who are held captive in the external organization of the Papacy. But it is a fact that modern Protestant theology, which by the denial of Inspiration has surrendered the Scripture principle and develops doctrine from "experience" and other subjective sources, has discarded the Christian doctrine of justification.—Francis Piper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 2, p. 555.

Paul Tillich was able to make this comment about American Protestantism in 1953:

For the kind of Protestantism which has developed in America is not so much an expression of the Reformation, but has more to do with the so-called Evangelical Radicals. There are the Lutheran and Calvinist groups, and they are strong, but they have adapted themselves to an astonishing degree to the climate of American Protestantism. This climate has been made not by them but by the sectarian movements. Thus, when I came to America twenty years ago, the theology of the Reformation was almost unknown in Union Theological Seminary =New York+, because of the different traditions, and the reduction of the Protestant tradition nearer to the non-Reformation traditions.—Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, pp. 225, 226.

Tillich even suggested that the Protestant era is at an

<sup>1</sup>This statement by Stewart is quoted with approval in Sakae Kubo's book, *Acquitted! Message from the Cross* (1975), pp. 13, 14.

**“Most modern Protestant theologians have adopted the Roman view of the doctrine of justification. . . . it is a fact that modern Protestant theology, which by the denial of Inspiration has surrendered the Scripture principle and develops doctrine from ‘experience’ and other subjective sources, has discarded the Christian doctrine of justification.”—Francis Piper.**

**The more liberal wing of the Christian movement has moved away from the concept of forensic justification as preached by the Reformers, and it generally *knows* it. The more conservative wing of the church has also moved away from the Reformation doctrine, but in the main *does not know* it.**

end (*ibid.*, p. 225). He also remarked that the Reformation doctrine of justification makes no sense at all to modern religious man.<sup>2</sup>

### **Justification Evangelically Remodeled**

Thus far we have dealt mainly with the statements of scholars who have more consciously and deliberately abandoned the way in which all the Reformers unitedly understood the doctrine of justification. But the drift away from the Reformation emphasis has not all been via a conscious departure. For instance, Herman Ridderbos pinpoints the evolution with these incisive comments:

While in Luther and Calvin all the emphasis fell on the redemptive event that took place with Christ's death and resurrection, later under the influence of pietism, mysticism, and moralism, the emphasis shifted to the process of individual appropriation of the salvation given in Christ and to its mystical and moral effect in the life of believers. Accordingly, in the history of the interpretation of the epistles of Paul the center of gravity shifted more and more from the forensic to the pneumatic and ethical aspects of his preaching, and there arose an entirely different conception of the structures that lay at the foundation of this preaching.—Herman Ridderbos, *Paul, An Outline of His Theology*, p. 14.

We say again, this drift away from the objective stance of the Reformation has not all been planned and deliberate. Most of it has probably been unconscious simply because human nature naturally gravitates to focus more on itself and what can be done in itself than upon what God has done outside of itself in Jesus Christ.

Roman Catholic scholar Louis Bouyer (*The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, pp. 186-197) sees Protestant revivalism as doing more than anything else to move Protestants away from the theology of the Reformation to a closer compatibility with Roman Catholicism. Others implicate Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard and the modern existential climate as most influential in causing theological thought to be based on subjective experience and orientated toward theological subjectivism. It probably depends on whether one's vision is more in the conservative or liberal stream as to which he thinks is most influential—revivalism or existentialism.

One main difference is this: the more liberal wing of the Christian movement has moved away from the concept of forensic justification as preached by the Reformers, and it generally *knows* it. The more conservative wing of the church has also moved away from

<sup>2</sup>We do not quote Tillich to approve of his own radical departure from orthodox Christianity, but he is cited here simply as a historian of Christian thought. At least Tillich was well acquainted with Reformation literature and theology—which is more than can be said of some of his critics.

the Reformation doctrine, but in the main *does not know* it.

The fact is that the popular evangelicalism of today does not really have a doctrine of justification. If the doctrine is assented to, it is given such poor treatment and such scant attention that it is really damned into oblivion. The moral change of the new birth experience has either supplanted justification or is understood to be the essence of justification anyhow. The modern evangelical thrust is generally based on the appeal to "Let Christ come into your heart." In this type of emphasis, salvation is not really based on God's righteousness historically revealed and transacted in the Christ event, but on the subjective religious experience called "Christ in the heart"—which can mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people.

The great legal and juridical processes of redemption generally do not mean much, if anything, in the current religious scene. The moral and vital aspects of redemption dominate so overwhelmingly that the legal aspects are either subordinated or lost in the preoccupation with religious experience.

### **The Issues at Stake**

Because we contend for the restoration of forensic justification to the primary place in soteriology, some will doubtless interpret this as an attempt to devalue the renewal of man. That too was Rome's argument against the Reformers, yet it was her fundamental error. It is not those who contend for the primacy of the legal aspects of redemption who really devalue sanctification, but the opposite is true. In this article we will try to reason from cause to effect and show that those who ignore the primacy of forensic justification remove the true foundation of moral renewal.

The most terrible consequence of ignoring the legal aspects of redemption is that one really ends up making the cross of Christ of none effect. If we could be saved simply by inviting Christ to come into our hearts to effect a moral transformation, then we must say with Luther that Christ labored foolishly and suffered in vain if God could save us simply by an inward transformation. Or are we going to say that what happened at Calvary was merely a moral influence to inspire us to deal with sin in the existential situation?

The Bible is clear that God's righteousness did something in the Christ event. Sin was dealt with, Satan was defeated, death was destroyed, and redemption was accomplished. And this mighty action of God, which transcends every other action for all eternity, was not a work done in us (moral), but was a work done outside of us in the Person of Christ (legal). As the old theologians used to say, the atonement was the satisfaction which Christ gave to the divine law on our behalf. It was the fulfilling of the terms of the legal covenant by our Repre-

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**It is not those who contend for the primacy of the legal aspects of redemption who really devalue sanctification, but the opposite is true. Those who ignore the primacy of forensic justification remove the only true foundation of moral renewal.**



sentative in order that God could forgive sinners without sacrificing the honor of divine justice. Our justification is great because it is founded on such a great work—a work far greater and infinitely more glorious than our moral renewal—as great as that is.

Everybody ought to know that the Reformers were the great destroyers of legalism in the church. But they uprooted legalism by teaching a legal justification based on the legal doctrine of atonement. They proclaimed that Christ both fulfilled and satisfied the claims of God's law on our behalf. If sinners can be justified solely by faith in the satisfaction that Christ gave to the law, and if the life and blood of the Lord of glory are the price of their justification, then it is forever certain that they cannot be justified by anything done by them nor by anything done in them. Legalism is damnable, not because it is *legal* (lawful, righteous), but because it is *illegal* (unlawful, unrighteous). Legalism offers to the law less than it requires. When the sinner sees Calvary and understands that this is exactly what the law requires for justification, he will not presume to offer anything less to the law.

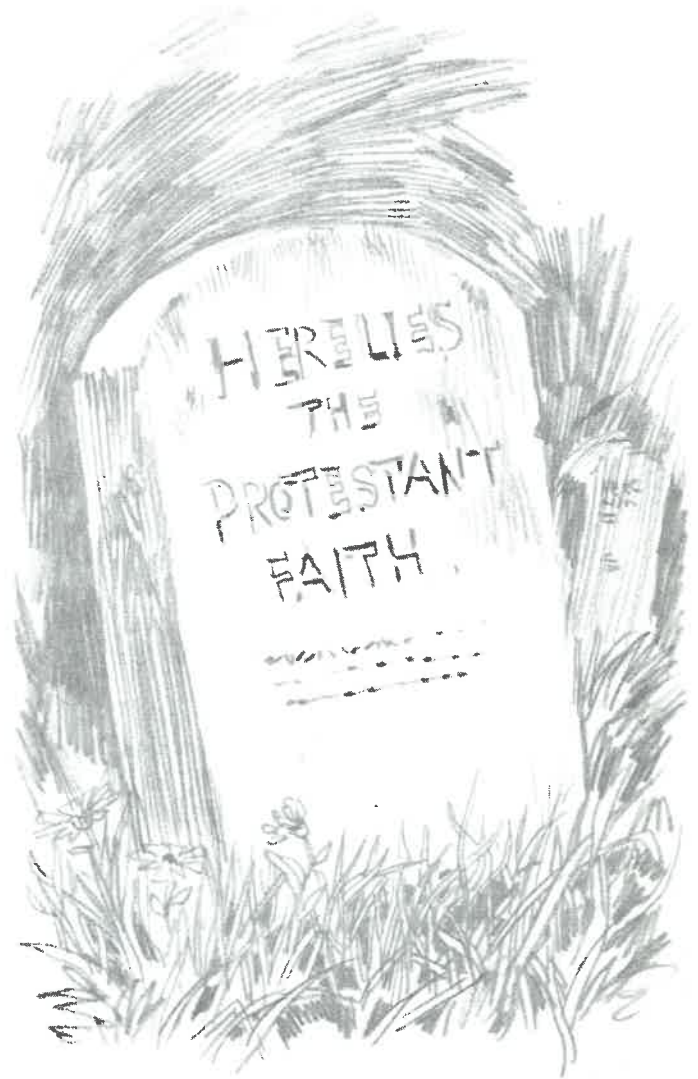
It can be demonstrated doctrinally and historically that the legal view of the atonement and justification

**It can be demonstrated doctrinally and historically that the legal view of the atonement and justification kills legalism and is the only basis of moral renewal.**

**If the legal aspects of redemption are lost, the doctrine of justification is lost. And if justification is lost, all true Christian doctrine is lost, and nothing remains but darkness and ignorance of God.**

kills legalism and is the only basis of moral renewal. On the other hand, the moral influence theory of the atonement and the moral renewal view of justification lead inevitably to legalism because they ground salvation on some phase of the human experience—whether that experience is said to be faith, new birth, new life in the Spirit, or the new obedience of the believer. “But this is really to rob the soul of the objective ground of righteousness and confuses spiritual acceptance with spiritual attainments.”—W.H. Griffith Thomas, *The Principles of Theology: An Introduction to the Thirty-nine Articles*, p. 188. When that takes place, this comment about the life of Pusey is applicable: “The absence of joy in his religious life was only the inevitable effect of his conception of God’s method of saving men; in parting with the Lutheran truth concerning justification he parted with the springs of gladness.”—*Ibid.*, p. 193.

The two aspects of salvation—the legal and the moral—must be maintained in soteriology as strenuously as we maintain the two natures of Christ in Christology. Both distinction and harmony must be upheld. True and original Protestantism affirmed both the legal and the moral aspects of salvation. It refused to subordinate the legal to the moral, but affirmed the primacy of the legal in three major areas:



1. In the matter of sin the primary problem was seen as *guilt* (legal) rather than *pollution* (moral).
2. In the nature of the atonement the primary work was satisfaction to the law (legal) and not just a demonstration to change man’s idea about God (moral).
3. In the application of redemption justification (legal) must precede and be the foundation of sanctification (moral).

Much is at stake here. If the legal aspects of redemption are lost, the doctrine of justification is lost. And (as Luther often warned) if justification is lost, all true Christian doctrine is lost, and nothing remains but darkness and ignorance of God. We are faced here with a situation which could spell the absolute demise of Protestantism and the triumph of the opposite stream of religious thought. Or to put this another way, we face the rejection of revealed religion in favor of the religion based on the religious insights of human nature.

*(To be continued)*

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