

# JUSTIFICATION



MATHEWS

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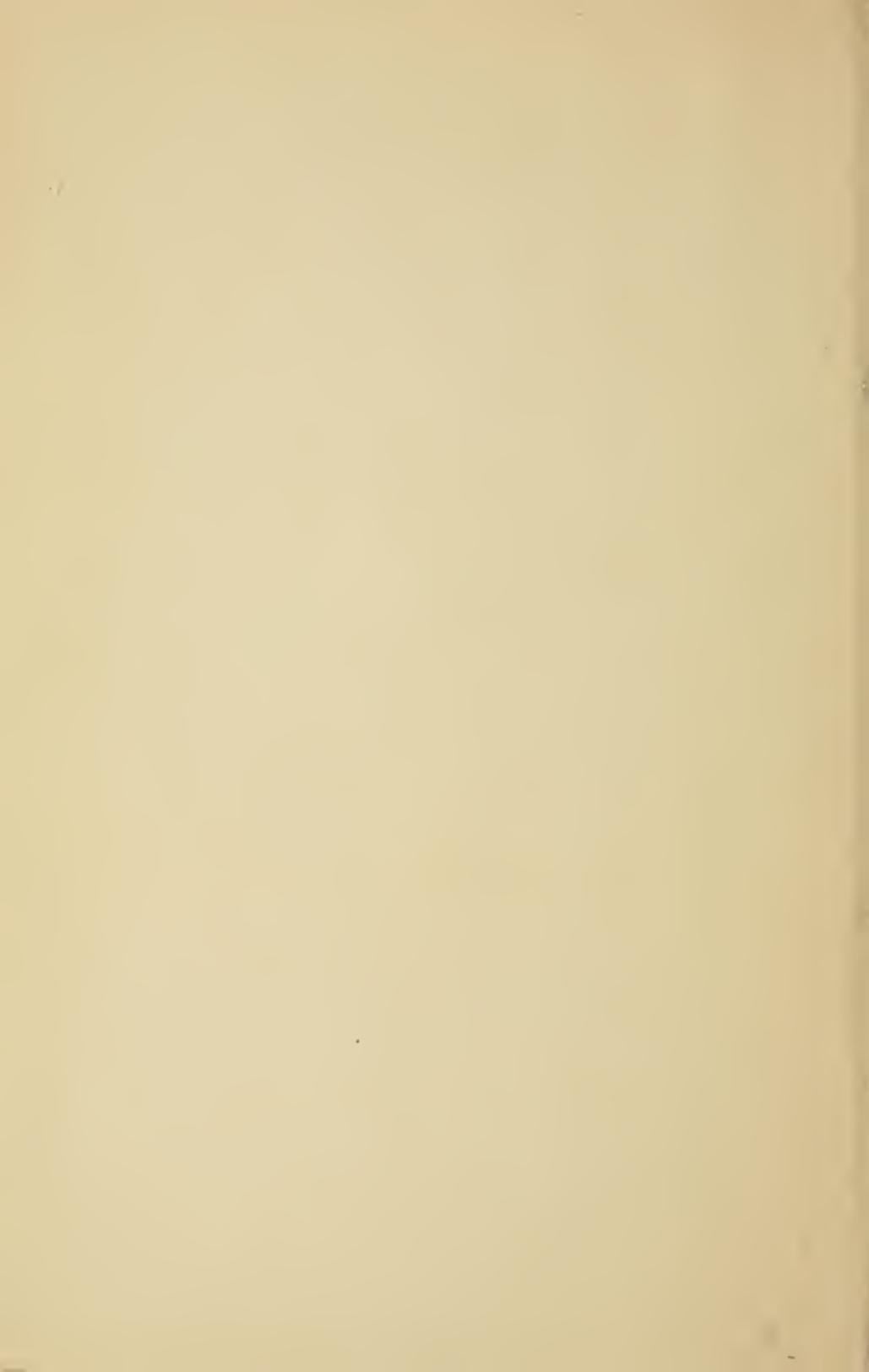


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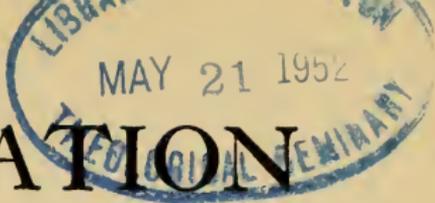
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# JUSTIFICATION



BY

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A Bishop of the  
Church of the United Brethren in Christ



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## PREFACE.

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THE purpose of this little book is not to prepare a treatise on the subject of justification, but rather to present such practical features of this important doctrine as shall be helpful to the largest number of readers. In the discussion of this fundamental truth, the nature of the atonement has been briefly considered, for the reason that there is a vital relation between it and the doctrine of divine pardon.

The accumulated literature upon this subject, from the apostolic period to the present time, abounds with a great variety of conceptions concerning the fact and nature of the atonement and the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. It is surprising how apparently honest students and sincere writers have so widely differed in their interpretation of the Word of God concerning truths taught and emphasized.

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by the writers of the New Testament. The Pauline view of justification by faith is so clearly and positively set forth in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians, as well as in other portions of the New Testament, that one is surprised at the readiness with which the ante-Nicene and post-Nicene fathers, in treating this subject, used phraseology that was ambiguous and misleading, and gravitated toward the doctrine of salvation by good works. God, however, kept his eye upon this gem of Scripture truth, and providentially raised up Luther, who grasped the pendulum and swung it back to its position where the apostolic fathers found it.

If one will take the time and pains to read carefully the vast amount of modern literature upon the atonement and divine pardon, he will be astonished and even shocked at the insidious and dangerous heresies that lie hidden in much of the theological writings of to-day. This explains, in part, why the Scripture doctrine of justification by faith is so rarely preached from our pulpits, and, also, why the modern evangelism is so ineffectual and barren of spiritual results, such as characterized the preaching of the Reformation

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and subsequent evangelistic movements. Those who do not emphasize in their teaching the fact and universality of sin will necessarily hold lightly to the necessity of the forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God through repentance and faith in Christ. Sin is more than a mistake or blunder. It has disturbed man's relations with God's moral government and placed him in the attitude and disposition of an enemy. The impenitent sinner is guilty, lost, and undone. The gulf between him and God is impassable, except it be bridged by the atonement of Jesus Christ; and even then its gracious provisions for man's personal salvation must be applied to the penitent through faith in Christ. This is the teaching of the New Testament. This is the Pauline view. It was the key-note of the powerful preaching of the early centuries; and if the preaching of the gospel shall be effectual in the future in the salvation of sinners, justification by faith in Christ, with all that it includes or implies, must be emphasized by the religious writers and teachers. Any new or modern theology that minifies the importance of this truth, or ignores it, should be watched with a jealous eye and checkmated.

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Much confusion, doubt, and perplexity result from an attempt to understand all the mysteries of redemption. This is the most unreasonable and inexcusable folly. Paul recognized its unfathomable mystery—"Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." Redemption is sure and precious because it is beyond human ken. First of all, we are to accept the Bible as the authoritative and genuine revelation of God to men. Then we should study it as it deals with great facts—the fact of God and sin, redemption and pardon, reconciliation and eternal life in Jesus Christ. We need not hope to solve all the problems of redemption, but we may know and act upon the essential facts of salvation, of which pardon is one. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "Christ died for our sins and rose for our justification." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." These are simple Scripture facts and truths which thousands of our young people need to know and believe. The religious leaders and teachers of our Church may be tempted to look upon this subject

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of justification as dry and uninteresting; but if we follow Paul's writings, we shall find how he made it pulsate with lively interest, not simply in its isolation, but in vital connection with concurrent truths. He invested it with great practical importance in connection with Christian life and experience. If we would have our young people pure and strong and happy Christians, we must give proper prominence to this subject and help them to get true conceptions of sin and pardon and personal salvation.

No attempt has been made to be original in preparing this volume, except that of statement and arrangement. What is found in standard works on theology has been gathered and put in phraseology suited for popular reading. No effort has been made to be scientific or critical in treatment. The one aim has been to instruct and, if possible, guide our people, especially the young, in respect to what we have conceived to be the Scripture doctrine of justification. The writer willingly acknowledges that the peril of this book is its meager treatment. This may be unsatisfactory to certain students, but we are persuaded that there are many young ministers, Sunday-school teachers,

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and busy laymen who may be helped by this unpretentious little volume.

In the preparation of this book there has come to the writer such a clear conception of the ground, nature, and blessed results of pardon and justification, that his own soul has been filled with holy joy in the consciousness of personal salvation. If this small book shall fulfill its intended mission and prove helpful to any one of its readers, I shall feel that my imperfect effort has not been in vain.

G. M. M.

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# JUSTIFICATION.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE RELATION OF JUSTIFICATION IN THE REDEMPTIVE SCHEME.

JUSTIFICATION is a vital part of the Christian system. The relation between this doctrine and the atonement is so intimate that the discussion of the one involves the consideration of the other. Whatever theory of the atonement men may hold, it affects their conception of the doctrine of justification.

This explains why so many different views of the nature and condition of justification are held by men. Those who hold to the substitutionary atonement recognize the demands of the moral government of God, and emphasize the necessity of the mediatorial work and death of Christ as the only adequate ground of pardon or forgiveness

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of sins consistent with the dignity of moral law. The advocates of what is called the "moral influence theory" do not believe in the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. They deny that the work of Christ has rendered God propitious towards man, and assert that the sole mission of Christ was to reveal God's love in such a way as to appeal powerfully to the human heart and lead to a renunciation of sin.

In considering, therefore, justification as a specific aspect of human salvation, the Scripture conception of redemption must be presented. The distinction between the atonement and justification must be kept clearly in view in all this discussion. The atonement refers to the provisions made for the salvation of men, while justification has reference to the particular method by which they are saved.

There are two elements in salvation which are clearly taught in the Scriptures. The first element is deliverance from legal guilt. This deliverance is impossible without the mediation of Christ. The second element in human salvation is positive, and relates to personal holiness. Moral cleansing is as essential as legal justification. Sal-

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vation is, therefore, both objective and subjective in its complete aspect.

Restoration to holiness and freedom from guilt are inseparably connected with the mediatorial work of Christ, in its effects as manifested in human experience, and, therefore, should never be separated in setting forth the complete Bible conception of salvation. Then, the Scriptures clearly and positively teach that salvation is attainable in and through Christ. There is no salvation out of Christ. Both philosophy and experience bear witness to the futility of all other schemes and processes to bring sinners into reconciliation and communion with God. The certainty and completeness of salvation in and through Christ alone, is the Pauline doctrine. It was dear to the early church, and has come down through the centuries. Hence, the prominence with which justification is set forth in the Scriptures, especially in the Pauline epistles.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, places tremendous emphasis upon justification by faith in Christ. It is the key to that epistle. The purpose of his argument in this connection is to show the necessity and important position of justification in

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the scheme of redemption. The force of his argument here is to emphasize its antecedent value. It precedes, in thought and relation, other blessings, which may be said to be concomitant results. The fundamental truth is, that nothing else can be obtained in Christ Jesus without first gaining a new standing before God, which is the result of justification. This is the first step for the sinner to take. His attitude and relation to the moral government must be changed. He must be freed from the demands of the broken law, and get from under condemnation in order to obtain actual salvation.

The proclamation and emphasis of this truth made the preaching of the early fathers effective. Luther made it the central, pivotal truth of the Reformation. It was also the central truth of the mighty Wesleyan movement. It is a fact patent in history that the preaching of justification by faith, in all the ages subsequent to the time of Paul, has been effective in salvation in proportion as it has been emphasized as the central truth in the ministry of that age. However widely theologians may differ in their conceptions of the nature of the atonement in certain aspects of it, no

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one can ignore the Scripture doctrine of justification by faith in Christ and build up a Christian system that is evangelical and powerful in the salvation of sinners.

It is helpful, in this connection, not only to emphasize the importance of justification, as taught in the Scriptures, but also to point out the relation of this doctrine to regeneration and sanctification. A certain class of theological writers holds the view that justification logically occupies a position between regeneration and sanctification. They insist that regeneration necessarily precedes justification, and that sanctification, which they define as "the capacity for good works through the Holy Ghost," succeeds it; but it is evident that such is not true, either in a logical or chronological sense. Justification must necessarily precede regeneration and sanctification, though in personal experience we may not be conscious of such distinction. Justification has relation to moral law; regeneration to spiritual life. Justification is objective; regeneration and sanctification are subjective.

In Christ, the sinner gets a new standing in God's sight, and that standing is on the platform

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of divine grace, rather than law. The sinner having once obtained a justified position in the atonement of Christ, may then have life, peace, cleansing, and all the other blessings of salvation. First of all, the sinner's relation to the moral government of God must be adjusted; then follows God's regenerating act of imparting life to the soul of the believer. Acquittal precedes the giving of life, in the order of thought and relation, if not in the order of time and fact. Reconciliation precedes cleansing. First, harmony, then fellowship with God, is the order. However, justification is not an isolated blessing. It stands indissolubly and vitally connected with other spiritual blessings. When the sinner is freed from the condemnation of the law and his guilt is canceled, the Holy Spirit imparts new life. This is the new birth, or regeneration. It accompanies pardon, but is not identical with it.

Says Bishop Merrill: "The sinner is condemned, and must be justified; he is dead, and must be made alive; and he is also polluted or filthy, and must be washed or cleansed. This washing process is distinct from the quickening process which gives life, but is not separate from

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it. No converted soul remains unwashed. Such a condition is scarcely thinkable." Let the distinction be clear. Justification is the legal side of salvation. Regeneration relates to the life element. Sanctification relates to the element of purity. Salvation includes all these three doctrines, and justification antecedes the other two. This is a vital distinction, which should be kept in mind in discussing the relation of the doctrine of justification in the scheme of redemption. The legal side of salvation comes first in order. It precedes and prepares the way for every other phase of personal salvation. The only way to interpret the significance of Christ's mission to men is to consider pardon in the light of the relation of men to moral government and divine law.

The key-phrase of the Epistle to the Romans is, *justified in Christ*. Paul presents a strong and incontrovertible argument, showing that in the scheme of salvation justification in Christ is the first step. Dr. A. T. Pierson, in his admirable little book, "In Christ Jesus," says: "We can have in Christ Jesus nothing else, unless and until we have first justification—a new standing before God. Paul is inspired to begin this epistle by

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showing that all men, Jews and Gentiles alike, are included under sin, and therefore involved in condemnation. No sinner has before him any prospect but divine wrath, until he is first freed from the law, no longer under condemnation. Hence, the first unfolding of grace in the epistles is the plain revelation of God's marvelous plan, whereby sinners get the standing of saints." This order in thought and relation has been emphasized, because of its scriptural and practical importance in human redemption and personal salvation. *Justified, regenerated, sanctified*—these are the elements and their position in the redemptive scheme.

## CHAPTER II.

### JUSTIFICATION DEFINED.

THE nature and ground of justification are so closely related that the discussion of the one necessitates the consideration of the other. This difficulty arises from the fact that, as the atonement is the ground of justification, the theory of the atonement we hold, affects our view of the nature of justification. Hence, definitions are essential to the proper discussion and clear understanding of this Scripture doctrine.

The meaning of the word "justification," as used in the Scriptures, is of great importance. This can best be reached by giving a history of the word in its various relations to law, and its applications as set forth especially in the New Testament. It is clear, therefore, that the nature of justification must be studied in the light of the terms used to express it. Primarily, "the word 'justify' means to set right or to put on a right.

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footing one whose relation, either in consequence of misunderstanding or misrepresentation, or because of misconduct, has been what it should not be. Where there has been no real wrong-doing, justification is simply vindication or declaration of innocence or rectitude; where there has been real wrong-doing, it presupposes the fulfillment of some condition by which the wrong-doing is made good or expiated. In both cases, a relation more or less abnormal is changed into one that is normal.”<sup>1</sup>

Primarily, it is a question of relationship, and not of character or conduct. It is well understood by Bible scholars, that both the Old Testament Hebrew word **קָדַשׁ** and the New Testament Greek word *δικαιουνν*, mean, to put in a right relation, not to make righteous. “In Pauline usage, *δικαιουνν* denotes the judicial act of God, whereby those who put their faith in Christ are declared righteous in his eyes, free from guilt and punishment.” This is Paul’s view, as set forth in his statement to the church at Rome and Galatia. “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteous-

Scribner’s Dictionary of the Bible, 1901.

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ness" (Rom. 4: 5, R. V). (Gal. 2: 16.) Godet, in commenting on the Book of Romans, declares that there is not a single example in the whole of classical literature where the word means, "to make righteous." He also insists that in the New Testament the usage of the word is unmistakably against that interpretation. It may be relied upon that in biblical literature the word *δικαιωνν* is used in the forensic sense, and means, "to pronounce righteous."

Justification is a court term, and means the judicial decision of the judge, acquitting the person arraigned in court of all charged against him. So far as the law is concerned, the one thus acquitted stands righteous in its sight. However, there are other phases and distinctions which can only be set forth by explaining the different synonyms used for justification, such as pardon, forgiveness, remission, and acquittal, which are used interchangeably. Generically, pardon is refraining from the exacting of penalty. Theologically, it is the discharge of the sinner at the tribunal of divine law. Pardon differs from forgiveness, which has special reference to the feeling of freedom from resentment. Pardon also differs from

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acquittal, which implies innocence. Pardon implies a disposition to overlook, and guilt remitted.

It will help the popular reader to show him the distinction between legal and evangelical justification. Legal justification refers to perfect personal obedience to the demands of a righteous law. Evangelical justification rests in the perfect obedience of Christ, the Son of God, and is conditioned on faith in him as a personal Saviour. In the first case, justification rests upon one's own personal righteousness. In the second instance, it depends upon the righteousness of another person who has satisfied the demands of the broken law. Used in its strictly forensic sense, justification refers to the judicial decision that declares the legal standing of the justified. It is not an act of mercy or forgiveness that sets him right with the law.

Applying this principle to God's act of justification, it is asserted by some theologians that those whom God, by judicial decision, declares righteous, are righteous in fact. But such a view of justification takes for granted an antecedent act of forgiveness. It also assumes the prior imputation of the righteousness of Christ, as a neces-

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sary qualification of the sinner for purely forensic justification. This is the Calvinistic view, which we fail to find supported in the teaching of the New Testament. It is, therefore, evident that true justification is not purely forensic, inasmuch as it contains the element of forgiveness. The subjects of evangelical justification are sinners. This is the positive teaching of the Scriptures. No theory of this doctrine is correct that omits or ignores the vital fact of personal guilt and its forgiveness. Saint Paul made this fact a vital one in his teaching, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ, . . ."

The terms, "forgiveness" and "justification," are used interchangeably in the Scriptures. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13: 38, 39). A conclusive proof-text is found in Romans 3: 25, 26, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to de-

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clare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Here the same things are declared in connection with the terms, "justification" and "remission."

Justification of the sinner must be considered in two aspects: first, as the gracious act of God in the exercise of his rightful sovereignty as a moral ruler; second, as the changed relationship of the sinner to the moral government. The Bible reveals the glorious fact that God is ever seeking to establish true personal relations between himself and sinful men. This is the great purpose of the scheme of redemption through Christ. In this transaction there are two parties, God the offended, and man the offender. The vital question is, Who shall dictate the conditions of peace? Shall the sinner do anything more than accept the conditions and act upon them? Certainly not. It is perfectly reasonable that God, the dishonored party, should be the one to propose the terms of reconciliation and restored friendship.

The Scriptures teach that man has disregarded

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God's authority and violated his moral law, thus making himself obnoxious in the sight of his Creator. Man has deliberately dishonored God. His will, affections, and acts are antagonistic to divine government. In Romans 1:28-32, the apostle graphically describes the extent of man's depravity and opposition, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without affection, implacable, unmerciful; who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Shall such offenders have any part in proposing the terms and manner of reconciliation? God himself must decide whether, in view of his own character and the nature of his moral government, he can, with honor to himself, and safety to his kingdom, par-

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don the sinner and, at the same time, maintain the majesty and integrity of his law. God, alone, must determine whether there are adequate grounds on which to justify the offender. "It is God that justifieth." But it should ever be kept in mind that, with God's sovereignty, he acts, in this respect, as a moral ruler possessing supreme power and authority, both to condemn our sins forever and also to forgive our transgressions. However, God can only forgive sins consistently with his justice and the interests of his moral government. He, himself, must be just in requiring a propitiation for sin, and, at the same time, be the justifier through the merits of that propitiation.

Paul solves this great problem of the granting of pardon, or justification, so as not to abrogate divine law and violate the demands of justice, by showing that in the scheme of salvation, Christ, in his sacrifice, met all the demands of the law as the sinner's substitute, thus making it possible and reasonable that the penalty of the law might be turned from the sinner to him as the Saviour. The apostle makes his argument still stronger by showing that not only the obedience and death of

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Christ were essential to satisfy the demands of divine justice, but that there could be no complete justification without the resurrection of Christ from the dead. "But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4: 24, 25). But the culmination of the apostle's argument is reached where he so clearly presents the fundamental and pivotal thought of Christ's substitute for the sinner: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3: 24-26).

Then justification has respect to particular persons. It does not have reference to that result of the atonement of Christ by which all mankind, from the guilt of Adam's sin, are in a savable state. It is a matter of personal concern and ex-

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perience, through personal faith in Christ. Since justification is the gracious act of God in the pardon of sin, it does not make the justified actually just or righteous. It only frees the sinner from the condemnation of the law, and changes his relation to the moral government. It affects no change in the interior moral condition of the sinner. Here may be seen the distinction between justification and sanctification. The first is a work done for the sinner through the death and resurrection of Christ; the other is a work done in the sinner through the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Miley well says: "Justification is complete in its own proper work. It cannot annihilate the deeds of sin, out of which guilt arises. They are eternal and unchangeable realities, and must forever be the deeds of their authors. Forgiveness abates nothing of their intrinsic demerit, but is a complete discharge from their guilt as an amenability to punishment. In such a sense of guilt, and with respect to all past sins, the forgiveness is complete. So justification sets the sinner right with God, as completely right as if he had never sinned. It is not a small blessing. With all the limitations that we pointed out, it

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is still a great blessing, great in itself and great in the privileges to which it opens the way.”

Careful distinction should always be made between the act of pardon and the person justified. A justified believer is more than a pardoned criminal. While pardon releases the soul from the exaction of the law in respect to particular sins, it does not provide for any change of relationship to the moral government of God. It is negative as to the condemnation of the person pardoned. Hence, justification, in its complete unity, includes the positive restoration of the soul to its proper place as a subject of God's moral kingdom. It is that divine acceptance of the pardoned sinner which treats the soul as if it always had been loyal. The person is not only regarded as righteous, but is also treated as such. The person thus accepted is transferred into new moral relations, and full and complete reconciliation is established.

Evangelical justification should not be confused with sanctification, as some writers have done. Sanctification is the immediate and vital fruit of justification, but it is an act of God different in its nature. Justification only lifts the

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condemnation of sin and changes the sinner's relation to moral government and law. It does not change the interior nature. That is the distinct work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. Says Pope: "As an individual sinner he is forgiven: his justification is pardon or the remission of sins; that is, the punishment is remitted. As a person ungodly, he is regarded as righteous; righteousness is imputed to him. His sin is pardoned, his person is justified. As a believer in Jesus, his faith is counted for righteousness. All these phases describe, under its negative and positive aspects, one and the selfsame blessing of the New Covenant as constituting the state of grace into which the believer has entered, and in which, as a believer, he abides." This view is confirmed by various passages in the New Testament. The first reference made in the New Testament to this doctrine is found in Luke 18:13, 14, where Jesus, himself, declared concerning the publican who prayed to God to be merciful to him a sinner, that he went down to his house justified. Jesus' teaching concerning this truth was made even more emphatic in the commission, "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in

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his name among all nations." And Paul, in Acts 13: 38, 39, takes this thought of Jesus and restates it. "Through this man [Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things."

To sum up all that has been said upon this phase of the subject, it is essential to make a distinction between legal and evangelical justification. The one is a forensic term, and has reference wholly to law; the other is a Bible expression, and includes grace as well as law. In evangelical justification, the justified are those who have been proved guilty. It follows, then, that justification is the same as pardon or forgiveness. Mr. Otterbein, the founder of our Church, held that "justification and pardon of sin are one and the same gracious gift." Dr. Richard Watson declared that they mean substantially the same thing. Alexander Campbell says, "It is called justification merely because the party thus justified is treated as though he were innocent of the guilt alleged and proved." It has also been defined to be "an act of God's free grace in which he pardoneth all our sins." Pardon is essential to the rectification of the life of the sinner before the law, thus secur-

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ing spiritual rightening. In a word, evangelical justification has reference to the establishment of normal personal relations between God and sinful men through the merits of Christ.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION.

THE Scriptures sustain the evangelical view, that Christ alone is the ground, source, and agent of personal salvation. There is a vital relation existing between the life and death of Christ and the salvation of sinners. It is vain to ignore this fundamental and important relation. The differences of human opinion and statement concerning this doctrine grow out of the interpretation and exposition of that relation.

Neither reason nor the Scriptures admit the fairness or fact of unconditional pardon. The grounds for its bestowment must be equitable, otherwise any favor extended to the transgressor of the moral law without respect to its claims and demands would destroy the integrity and majesty of the divine government, and render personal salvation a thing only in name, and rob it of the blessedness which the Bible ascribes to it. Noth-

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ing is done unless it is done right; and nothing is done right unless it is based upon the principle of justice as well as the element of mercy. There is such a thing in moral law as the principle of punitive justice. Its aim is the vindication of the broken law and the maintenance of righteousness through the punishment of the offender. This is the great end of all punishment; but when this end can be accomplished through intercession and suffering of another person, the punishment upon the transgressor may cease.

Professor Edward John Hamilton, in his recent book, "The Moral Law," holds that "the forgiveness of sin against God cannot rightly take place without a satisfaction of punitive law through the sufferings of the sinner or of a redeemer." He shows that "from the earliest times the institution of expiatory burnt offerings taught men that 'without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins,' " which found its fulfillment in Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice unto God. He then argues, with convincing force, that "from the nature of the case, the intercession of Christ could be efficacious only for those whom he properly represents—for those who

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have at least begun to participate in his life and to exhibit his character. The divine favor cannot be expected for impenitent and willful transgressors; but forgiveness is offered to all on the condition of faith and repentance. This substitutionary justice finds some analogy in human proceedings. Sometimes—not always—justice is satisfied, if a fine, incurred by one person, be paid by another. Occasionally, a substitute has been accepted to bear the whole or part of the penalty, and this especially when the intercessory expiation has been rendered by him whose duty it is to enforce the law. In that case, the purpose of the ruler or the judge to maintain the cause of righteousness cannot be questioned. The doctrine of the atonement, however, receives stronger support from its own inherent righteousness than from any human analogies.”

We know that in human affairs and government, debts are sometimes remitted without condition or equivalent, offenses are forgiven unconditionally on various grounds, such as the known ignorance of the offender, the absence of evil intention, or the impulse of sinful affection. But in the case of the sinner before God’s law, it is a

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matter of willful, deliberate transgression. No confession or pledge of future obedience will satisfy the demands of the law. Who can guarantee actual and perfect obedience? Surely sinful man cannot. Hence, he is lost, helpless, and undone. He cannot save himself by any human expedient. If he is saved at all, it must be by some method outside of what he can do. God, in his infinite wisdom, love, and mercy, has provided a method through the sufferings and death of Christ. There is no other way or ground of salvation. There is one God and one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus, our Mediator, Advocate, and Intercessor. He is our daysman, the only person in the universe qualified for this great undertaking of reconciliation and pardon. Christ, being equal with God, assumed human nature, in which he exhibited perfect righteousness and obedience, dying the death of the cross, which sacrifice was approved of God and accepted as the ground of eternal redemption for the human race. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (II. Cor. 5:19).

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Paul, clearly and positively, attributes all the phases of the process of salvation to the work of Christ. The release of the sinner from the bondage of sin is included in the term, "redemption," as used by the apostle. Christ gave himself a ransom-price for all. Reconciliation is obtained in and through him alone. Sin is a controversy between man and God. Man has transgressed the divine law and offended God. While God still loves him, His very holiness compels Him to condemn his wrong-doing. Christ, in his unique personality and priestly functions as the divine Man, became the divinely accepted Mediator, thus establishing or restoring normal personal relations between the two parties at variance, conditioned upon man's response to this divine movement in accepting the terms offered. Thus Christ puts an end to this controversy, and brings penitent sinners back into friendly relations with God.

The New Testament abounds with scripture statements confirming this view of the ground and process of reconciliation. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (I. Pet. 3:18). "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the

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law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). But the conclusive and inspiring proof-text is found in Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Pauline view of justification emphasizes Christ's death as the basis of his mediatorial work. His significant formula is, "Christ died for our sins." How Christ's death helps to affect the salvation of sinners is a question of Scripture interpretation. Paul does not present any theory about it. He simply makes a statement of the fact. He definitely says that Christ died in our behalf and on behalf of our sins. He died for our sins, that we might live. Beyond this statement of fact, the apostle does not go in his explanation of the relation between Christ's death and personal forgiveness and salvation.

Dr. J. S. Goodall, in speaking of the covenant between the Father and Christ, his Son, in the plan of human salvation, says: "The Son of God, in the covenant of grace, takes man's place and assumes obligations for him. In His person and through His ministry, the purposes of God are brought to light, and the dispensation of grace is

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presented to the world. In obedience to the Father's will, impelled by the impulses of his own heart, Christ entered upon his divine-human mission. Alike God and man, the Redeemer lived, obeying the law and suffering its penalty. Forgiveness is now offered through him, who for us 'poured out his soul unto death'; and justification, through imputed righteousness, is proclaimed to those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The atonement is the ground of pardon and the basis of divine restoration."

The only modification of the above excellent view of Christ's sacrifice as the only ground of pardon which we choose to insist upon, is that Christ's suffering was a substitute for the penalty of sin rather than the penalty itself. Without entering into a theological discussion of this phase of the nature of Christ's sufferings, we dare not pass without the statement that the sacrificial sufferings of Christ were not penal, but substitutional. For Jesus was absolutely sinless and holy. He never felt the sense of guilt. He never for a moment lost the consciousness of his innocence and perfect purity.

Bishop Merrill, in his admirable little volume

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on the "Atonement," sets forth the mystery of the mediatorial sacrifice of Christ in such clear language that his own words cannot be improved by the writer of this book: "The full reason for the necessity of the sacrifice may not be known to us; but this we know, that God would not have required it without good reason. It was certainly necessary to maintain the integrity of God's government and his authority as a ruler, while extending mercy to transgressors, and as a declaration of righteousness, and also to bring out some phase of divine character which could not have been so well revealed in any other way. But these are only parts of his reasons, while the higher motives, hidden in the depths of his being and in his relations to the moral universe, are quite beyond the reach of our thought." When we pass from this state of immaturity to the completed life beyond we shall understand more clearly the mystery of the sufferings of Christ.

Paul, in Romans 4:25, teaches that the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ are the foundation of our justification. "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." Death was the delivering over of

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Christ, our vicarious substitute, to the claims and demands of the broken law. Resurrection was the deliverance from death, and the divine sign and seal of his acceptance as our substitute and surety. This is the plain teaching of the New Testament writers concerning the relation of Christ to the scheme of pardon and salvation. The story is told of a Russian soldier whose accounts did not balance. He feared the merciless spirit of the empire, and had not hope of receiving any leniency for his wrong accounts. After repeated failures in righting his balance-sheet, he despairingly gave it up and wrote on a piece of paper, "Who can make good this deficit?" and then fell asleep. The czar, passing by the sleeping soldier, curiously read the paper, took up the pen and wrote underneath, "I, even I, Alexander." So it is with the sinner in his moral and spiritual bankruptcy. He stands helpless and undone before the broken law of God. In despair and dismay, he asks, "Who can pay my debt and relieve my bankruptcy?" There comes down from the throne of God the voice of Christ, the crucified, risen, eternal, mediatorial King, responding, "I, even I, the Lord Jesus." How precious and

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inspiring is that Scripture statement concerning the mediatorial work of Christ, as the ground of our justification, "Who died for our sins and rose for our justification."

In the Pauline epistles, Christ is especially and clearly set forth as the second Adam. The first Adam was the federal head of the race. In his fall the race lapsed into sin and unrighteousness. From him we inherited moral corruption and spiritual bankruptcy. In the redemption of the fallen race, God provided a new Adam in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, through whose sacrifice and mediation we may regain our lost estate and be restored to a saved relation and conscious fellowship with God. We are accepted in Christ the Beloved. He stands for us in the sight of God. By faith in Christ and the new birth, we are so identified with him, that his acts, in a sense, represent us for whom he stands before God. This is the fundamental truth of redemption. It is clearly taught in the New Testament that, as in the first Adam, man fell and stands condemned and alienated before God, so in Christ, the second Adam, all penitent sinners who believe in him are justified and reconciled. It would be well if

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all our communicants, and especially our young people, would apprehend and maintain the Scripture truth that the merit of Christ alone is the ground of pardon and salvation. Men in all ages of the world were counted righteous only for the merit of Christ by faith. The efficacy and influence of the atonement of Christ, and his merits in procuring pardon for the penitent sinner, reach back to the fall of man and forward to the end of time. All who lived before the advent of Jesus were justified and saved upon the ground of Christ's merits. All believers of the patriarchal and Mosaic periods were saved upon the ground of the atonement of Christ as prefigured in the typical sacrifices offered. Even in those early periods, the justification of sinners was not by works, but by faith in Christ. Paul refers to Abraham as an illustration of this truth. He saw the day of Christ and was glad. The atonement of Christ alone is clearly the ground of our pardon and salvation.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CONDITION OF JUSTIFICATION.

PERSONAL salvation is conditioned upon the personal action of its recipient. God has provided pardon and forgiveness of sin through Christ, but man must do the part required of him for its attainment. Unconditional salvation is both absurd and inadmissible. It is not in harmony with biblical teaching, neither is it consistent with man's highest welfare. Since salvation involves spiritual restoration, regard must be paid to the disposition of the recipient. It is conceded that God might confer it in pure sovereignty, without the choice or desire of the one receiving it, yet such bestowment would be a great wrong to the recipient. It is, therefore, plain that man must comply with such condition as will render salvation effectual and real.

The charge that the gospel condition of justification and salvation is hard and arbitrary is

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groundless. It is perfectly consistent with divine love and tenderness. The divine plan is reasonable and beautiful, in that its conditions have respect alike to divine claims and the needs of human character. God's right to impose terms is absolute. Man's duty and privilege is to submit to those terms. God is honored in the conditions presented. Man is ennobled by complying with them. The divine and human side are beautifully adjusted. God bestows and man accepts. The exercise of the voluntary principle upon the part of man is essential to his highest good and felicity. It is vitally related to the development of character. Without this complete submission to God's terms of salvation, spiritual renewal is truly impossible.

The Scriptures clearly and positively teach that faith is the real and only condition of justification. Proof-texts are in abundance. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). Speaking to both Jews and Gentiles, Paul says, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe

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are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13: 38, 39). The great apostle also concludes "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3: 28). In that remarkable passage in Galatians 3: 8, 9, the same writer says, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." The apostle, in writing to the Galatians, was careful to renounce all trust in human ability and merit for salvation. Christ, the sole object of saving faith, is pressed with great emphasis. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2: 16). The creed of our Church is in perfect harmony with this Scripture view. It is as follows, "We believe that penitent sinners are justified before God, only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and not by works, yet that

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good works in Christ are acceptable to God and spring out of a true and living faith.”

Faith is not only the condition, but also the instrument of justification. A more accurate and clear distinction might be stated in regard to this doctrine in its complete aspect and relations. The atonement is the sole ground of justification. Faith is the condition of justification and the instrument of regeneration. The Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration. Faith, as the active instrument, apprehends Christ as its object, by whose virtue the soul of the penitent believer is united with him and made conscious of its acceptance under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Another form of stating these distinctions may be helpful to the reader. God’s love is the originating cause of justification; Christ’s atoning sacrifice, the meritorious cause; faith, the instrumental cause; and the Holy Spirit, the efficient cause. God in Christ is the object of justifying faith. Speaking more specifically, Christ, himself, as the mediator and intercessor, is the object of such faith. Paul expresses this truth in Galatians 2:16, “We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ.”

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The faith that leads to pardon and all the concomitant blessings of justification, is what may be called appropriating faith. Historical faith, which simply includes faith in certain persons, facts, and events mentioned in the Bible as a matter of history, is not sufficient to bring the blessing of forgiveness of sins and spiritual restoration to God. Neither is there saving virtue in a faith that simply believes in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world, who died on Calvary for sinners, but which does not accept Christ as a personal Saviour. Such a faith is insufficient, because it is dead. The faith that is the condition and instrument of forgiveness and reconciliation is that which has appropriating power. It enables the believer to take salvation home to himself. It is not enough to believe that Christ died for others. We must make Christ's sacrifice for us personal, and accept him as our personal Saviour. The faith essential to the gift of pardon and salvation, is, therefore, a personal faith. "A faith which will disintegrate us from the mass, and enable us to take Christ home, in all his offices, to our own business and our own bosoms." We must be enabled to say, if we would realize the aston-

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ishing cleansing and healing efficacy there is in the gospel of God, that he is my God, of the Saviour, that he is my Saviour. We must be enabled to lay hold of the blessed promises and exclaim, "These are the gift of my Father, these are the purchase of my Saviour, these are meant for me."

Much confusion as well as serious differences have come from the interpretation and discussion of the relation of faith and works. The papal view of justification by works alone needs only to be stated. Its absurdity is patent. Paul shows the utter impossibility of sinful men rendering perfect obedience to the law of God throughout their entire life. This dogma of the Romish Church, so powerful in its grip upon that ecclesiastical body to this day, is offset by the scriptural truth as interpreted by Luther, who adopted that memorable formula, "The just shall live by faith." A more plausible view, which has many advocates, is that justification is obtained by faith and works together; but this is evidently not in harmony with the teaching of the Bible on this subject. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2: 8, 9).

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“But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:22-24).

There is a vital relation between faith and works. While there is no saving merit in personal obedience, yet it is true that “the works of faith declare the life and reality of the faith that justifies.” Justification obtained through faith in Christ is retained by a life of activity and obedience. There is such a thing as “living” faith. Referring to this principle, James says, “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” Much perplexity and discussion have resulted from the apparent opposition between Paul and James on the question of justification. Paul’s statement is, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” James declares that, “ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” These two statements are

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easily harmonized if we take them in their connection and discover the kind of justification to which each writer refers. It must be kept in mind that two distinct forms of justification are treated in this connection. Paul has reference to the forgiveness of sins; James, to that of a life of obedience approved of God. The former emphasizes faith without works; the latter lays stress upon works as the evidence of true and living faith.

Serious objections have been urged against faith as the sole condition of pardon. A few of these are noted:

1. Faith is unreasonable. But there is no antithesis between faith and reason. The capacity for faith as much lies in the human constitution as that of reason. Faith is essential in all the spheres of life, and has a legitimate place in our religions. Man is a moral being, and, as such, may have confidence in God. Nothing is more appropriate than man exercising trust in his Creator.

2. Faith, not being a matter of will is, therefore, not obligatory. But the sinner may know Christ, the true ground and object of trust. Indeed, true evangelical faith is voluntary. It in-

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cludes the willing, deliberate commitment of the soul to Christ, the object trusted. The Bible teaches that unbelief is willful and deliberate, and is, therefore, sinful. It is wicked to refuse to trust God.

3. Why make faith the condition of acceptance? The answer is, that God desires our confidence. He invites our affectionate and loyal faith in him and his promises. For God to bestow blessings upon those who distrust him would be unwise and unrighteous.

4. Since faith is so important, it must be meritorious; but it has no intrinsic value as a saving force. It is only the instrument of salvation. Christ is the source, ground, and agent of pardon, spiritual cleansing, and restoration. Faith, though essential, is only a condition of salvation.

5. On the theory of salvation by faith alone, works are of no value, and yet the Scriptures enjoin works upon men and declare that they are justified by good deeds. But this position is assumed by those who fail to apprehend the true nature of evangelical faith, as an operative principle. As we have previously suggested, what James condemns is a faith that shows its falseness by its un-

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fruitfulness. His conception of good works includes not only the idea or fact of outward morality, but also such personal activity and obedience as evidence and certify faith. Neither did Paul depreciate the importance and value of good deeds, in enforcing the exercise of personal faith as the only condition of pardon and reconciliation. The glorious doctrine of justification by faith alone is the fundamental truth taught in the Bible, and especially in the New Testament. It was the secret of the spiritual power of the early church. It was the key-note of the Reformation, and is to-day one of the great vital fundamental truths of the Word of God which should be held sacredly and proclaimed courageously by every true servant of Jesus Christ.

“Save us by grace, through faith alone,—  
A faith thou must thyself impart;  
A faith that would by works be shown,  
A faith that purifies the heart.”

Another distinction should be clearly made. Faith is not only the sole condition of justification, but it is also the *necessary* condition. There can be no pardon and acceptance without it. “He that believeth not is condemned already.” And

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so long as the sinner refuses to exercise saving faith in Christ he stands accused and unacquitted before the law of God. Jesus is the only name given under heaven whereby we may be saved. The sacrifice and life of Christ is the only merit by which a sinner accused and condemned can be delivered from guilt. Personal faith in Christ is essential to personal salvation. Without this faith, we are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Mr. Wesley, in speaking of faith as the only condition of justification, says: "We mean thereby this much, that it is the only thing, without which no one is justified; the only thing that is immediately, indispensably, absolutely requisite in order to pardon. As, on the one hand, though a man should have everything else without faith, yet he cannot be justified; so on the other hand, though he be supposed to want everything else, yet if he hath faith, he cannot but be justified."

The Scriptures emphasize the truth that there is no righteousness or salvation antecedent to the exercise of evangelical faith. Then the faith that brings pardon and salvation is specific and pe-

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cular. It consents to receive peace with God on his terms, and at the same time fixes itself on Christ as its object. It is more than belief. It is trust. Belief has respect to things. Trust has reference to persons. Belief is intellectual assent to certain truths, and consent to certain historical facts. Faith is resting on Christ and trusting in him for help. Evangelical faith lays hold of the person of Christ. It takes him as its friend, and trustfully commits the soul to Christ as its personal and all-sufficient Saviour. This kind of faith is the human condition of reconciliation with God. Such faith excludes all self-trust and gladly accepts the grounds of pardon and peace without any effort or disposition to amend them or to plead any personal merit. It may be expressed in the Scripture formula, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Dr. Miley, in describing what is distinctive of the faith which is unto justification, says: "In the approach to its exercise there is a profound sense of need. There is the sense of sin and peril; and with it the sense of utter self-helplessness. In the stress of such an exigency the soul looks to Christ and believingly apprehends in him the sal-

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vation which it so much needs. It apprehends not only the fullness of his grace, but also its freeness; not only that he is mighty to save, but also that he graciously waits to save. Here, then, is the most assuring trustworthiness. The act of trust is still wanting, but the soul is ready for it. Now, in the apprehension of Christ in his atonement, and in the fullness and freeness of his grace, the soul trustingly rests in him for the needed salvation, and thereon receives the forgiveness of sin. This is justification by faith. And such is the distinctive character of the faith which is unto justification."

This divine provision and scheme for the relief and deliverance of the awakened penitent sinner is beautiful and inspiring. It meets the necessity of the case and affords real, thorough, instant, conscious relief and release from the condemnation of sin. What riches of divine wisdom and grace are displayed in this wonderful provision! We need not be surprised at the apostle's anthem of praise and thanksgiving concerning those who are accepted in the Beloved. "In whom we have redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

## CHAPTER V.

### HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION.

It may be helpful to give here a brief history of the doctrine of justification, in order to indicate the prominence it has had in the theological conceptions of men in all the ages from Saint Paul to the present time. The great apostle's teaching concerning this doctrine, as especially set forth in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, is clear, definite, and positive. The writings of the apostolic fathers alluded to the doctrine of pardon and forgiveness of sin through the grace of God. While they did not have a firm grasp of the New Testament teaching concerning justification, yet it was never without advocates. The tendency of the fathers towards legalism, which may be defined as salvation through right conduct and works of obedience, is easily explained. Paul stoutly resisted the Pharisaic theology, which laid the emphasis upon works of obedience

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as essential to salvation. He sharply defined evangelical justification so as to leave no room for the doctrine of salvation through personal obedience.

Such writers as Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, though not opposed to the teaching of Paul, gravitated to the other extreme of blending faith and obedience in justification. But the candid student of history must admit that, after allowing for all the differences of phraseology and the influence of current errors, the fathers based their view of this doctrine upon a real harmony of the teachings of Paul and James. It is evident that they held to the scriptural truth of the justification of the believer through faith alone, which is evidenced and certified to by a holy life.

The doctrine of justification was not set forth in the church as a dogma until the Reformation. During the Middle Ages, the Augustinian view of this doctrine found many advocates. Augustine held that justification was equivalent to making righteous. This tendency of thought was carried all through the mediæval period. This fundamental error was based upon a misapprehension of the idea of justification. It made the believer

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himself righteous, instead of making the declaration of his righteousness. Thus there existed the confusion of objective and subjective righteousness; that is, sanctification and justification were blended into one and the same thing, or, rather, justification included sanctification. And yet it should be said to the credit of the schoolmen of that period that, notwithstanding this confusion and error, they faithfully held to the Scripture doctrine of the "sinner's acceptance with God on the sole ground of the Redeemer's finished work."

The dawn of the Reformation also revealed another tendency, called mysticism, which gave coloring to the doctrine of justification, as well as to all the others included in the scheme of redemption. According to Pope, "the characteristic principle of mysticism was the absorbing desire after union with God. It made Christ's internal union with the soul the secret of its righteousness. It did not entirely neglect, but it made entirely subordinate, the virtue of the atonement as reckoned to the soul for present and eternal acceptance."

The papal conception of justification before and after the Reformation, ignored the distinction between justification and sanctification. Rome held

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that justification is a process rather than an act; that it makes the believer actually righteous, and that justification, regeneration, and renewal are made one.

The Council of Trent, which was said to be the protest of Rome against Protestantism, among other things, dealt with the subject of justification. This was one of the chief questions which it sought to settle. But its failure to set at rest this much-disputed doctrine was patent. This was inevitable, as the position of Rome on this subject was at variance with the teaching of the New Testament. It was left for Luther to adopt the Pauline view of justification and clear away the theological fog and error of the church of Rome. The Council of Trent even went so far as to lay down the principle that there was a connection between the sacrament of baptism and justification. But this position underwent important modification. It is mentioned here simply to indicate how much confusion there was at that time as to the true Scripture basis of this doctrine. It is, indeed, surprising how, sometimes, theologians and schoolmen, for whom we have great respect, both for their scholarship and use-

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fulness in the development and interpretation of Christian doctrine, have amended and obscured the truths of the Bible, to the confusion and perplexity of the common people. But no gem of Scripture truth, however much it may have been buried and hidden in the debris of the theological discussions of the ages, has been entirely lost. God takes care of his truth, and in his own time and way he brings it forth out of the rubbish of human statement and dispels the clouds that obscure it, so that it shines forth again in its original simplicity and beauty. So God gave Luther a clear vision of the Scripture doctrine of justification, which he seized as a precious gem, and held it up before the thought of his age in all of its brilliancy and preciousness. Glorious, indeed, was that immortal statement, "The just shall live by faith."

The purpose of this volume will not admit of an elaborate description of all the varieties of Protestant opinion during and subsequent to the Reformation, for the differences of opinion as to both the ground and nature of justification were numerous and wide. Suffice it to say, that the general Protestant doctrine, simply stated, was that

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justification is objective, judicial, and instantaneous. Its sole ground is the atonement, and its only condition is faith in Christ.

Modern theologians in the Protestant church have long been divided into two general schools concerning the atonement and justification, to which it is vitally related. These are commonly named Calvinism and Arminianism. In Calvinism, the atonement in Christ is the ground of justification, but in a manner different from that held by the Arminians. The former holds the view of forensic justification, which means a divine declaration of righteousness. This implies that those who are thus declared righteous must be such in fact. Hence, the sinner must, first, be made righteous in order to a judicial declaration of the same. This involves the imputation of the active personal righteousness of Christ to the believer. Those who hold to the Arminian view cannot see the need of the imputation of Christ's personal righteousness, since the vicarious sacrifice of Christ forms the basis for the reception of all the blessings of a complete salvation. It, therefore, denies the imputation of the active, personal righteousness of Christ as an element in our jus-

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tification. The Arminian view, as stated at present, is that the vicarious sufferings of Christ were not the actual penalty of sin, but a substitute for penalty, in order that sin might be actually forgiven. In this sense, they held that the atonement of Christ is the real and only ground of justification. This view accords with Saint Paul's teaching. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). This is the view held by our own Church. Pardon or forgiveness of sin is purely an act of grace, which is the expression and provision of God's infinite love and mercy.

Bishop Weaver, in his book, "Christian Theology," clearly and fairly states the belief of our Church on this subject, as follows: "The righteousness reckoned to a justified person is not the imputed righteousness of Christ, but a gracious gift from God on account of the perfect righteousness of Christ. Christ had a righteousness which was peculiar to itself. It was absolute, while that of man was relative. The transfer of Christ's personal righteousness to man is impossible, and, even if it were possible, man could not use it. Because the consequences of Christ's active and

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passive obedience are reckoned to the believer, we are not thence to conclude that his personal righteousness is imputed. Justification, on the one condition of faith in Christ as the atoning sacrifice, is a work of grace. It does not come to a penitent believer as a reward of merit, but as a free and gracious gift."

The modern errors concerning the sinner's acceptance with God are palpable and numerous. Socinianism denies the divinity of Christ, but confesses that he was more than a mere man, although he did not possess a divine nature. It, therefore, rejects the vicarious atonement of Christ. This, of course, seriously affects the orthodox view of evangelical justification. Modern Unitarianism also holds the same general conception of Christ in his relation to human salvation. Universalism maintains that all souls will finally be saved, that evil is temporary, and that good is permanent and will achieve a complete and perfect triumph over all sin and iniquity. It makes Christ's nature identical with God's. It accords Christ the relationship of a Son, and ascribes to him the office of a mediator. It also holds that man, being made in the image, is therefore a child

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of God. Whatever man does or suffers, he is still God's child. Man will finally forsake evil and choose righteousness, and God, in his infinite love, will restore the penitent sinner and welcome the returning prodigal. This rejection of the doctrine of God, reconciled to man through a propitiation, is, however, not in harmony with the teaching of the Bible. Emanuel Swedenborg, in the eighteenth century, held that God is a single person. He rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, the full divinity of Christ, and the substitutionary atonement. This led him to denounce the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

This Bible doctrine has also been attacked and ignored by the rationalism of France and Germany. Especially has the modern theological thought of Germany been divided as to the fact of revelation, and, therefore, upon this fundamental truth of the inspired, revealed Word of God.

The various forms of modern mysticism, many of which are evangelical in their love and loyalty to Christ, are full of error respecting the doctrine of divine pardon and evangelical justification. However precious the biblical truth of the in-

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dwelling Christ may be, yet to hold, as many mystics do, that such a union is the formal cause of our justification, is at variance with the New Testament teaching concerning the atonement of Christ as the sole ground of pardon and salvation. Pope, with great discriminating charity, happily sums up this entire difficult subject by saying, "There are very many who in words reject the double formula of *Christ for us* and *Christ in us*, but nevertheless embrace it in fact with all their hearts. But whether accepted or rejected, it is the final truth on the whole subject of Christian righteousness."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FRUITS OF JUSTIFICATION.

IT has been thought by many Christians that justification is a dry doctrine, and that it is a topic to be studied in the schools and considered only by theologians; but this is a misapprehension. It has a practical bearing upon Christian life and experience. No one can carefully study it as set forth in the Epistle to the Romans and not be filled with inspiration and delight. The soul bounds with joy in discovering and receiving the rich concurrent blessing which justification carries with it.

Paul, in the fifth chapter of Romans, presents the glorious theme of the life of the justified. It is a joy to follow him as he unfolds the moral and spiritual results of justification in the experience of the believer. Says Professor Moule, in this connection: The apostle "lays deep, indeed, the foundations of law and atonement, but he does it

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in the manner of a man who is not drawing the plan of a refuge, but calling his reader from the tempest into what is not only a refuge, but a home. He does not discuss it in isolation. He spends his fullest, largest, and most loving expositions on its intense and vital connection with concurrent truths. He is about now to take us through a noble vestibule, into the sanctuary of a life of the accepted, the life of union, of surrender, of the Holy Ghost."

The law-aspect of justification is fundamental and antecedent in the order of thought and relation. Pardon or forgiveness is included in the first legal transaction of justification; but other blessings are the fruit of this wonderful achievement.

1. Peace is one of the fruits of justification. It results from the changed relationship between the believer and God. There is no longer any controversy between the sinner and God. Reconciliation has been effected through faith in Christ. Out of this, friendly affections spring, and by reason of it there is a changed attitude on both sides. This brings the blessing of covenant peace to the believer. All condemnation is removed, and the

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penitent believer, though not innocent, is treated for Christ's sake as if he were. This is a blessed peace. What must it be to be freed from the storm of conscious guilt and condemnation and enter into the haven of divine composure and assurance in Christ. With what exultation the apostle described this glorious blessing. "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God." Our life is in and from the Beloved, in whom we are accepted. And this life is one of peace, which flows through the soul as a river. In the possession of this divine composure and tranquillity of soul, let no Christian put a low estimate upon the fact and experience of justification, for springing from it is personal assurance experienced in and through faith in God in all the situations of life. The joy of this inward conscious comfort and peace consequent upon our access to the pardoning grace of God is exceedingly precious.

2. Life union with the Lord is another issue of justification. The apostle advances from the law-aspect of our acceptance to the life-aspect of our part in Christ's resurrection-life. "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much

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more, being reconciled shall we be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10, R. V.). We are brought into union with the risen Christ, who lives for us and in us, and we in him. We are not only accused men, transformed into friends of the law and Law-giver, but we are also quickened from a state of spiritual death through the power of the living Christ and brought in spiritual union with his mighty life. This law-aspect and life-aspect, of which we have just spoken, though distinct in the order of thought, yet are intimately related. "The justifying sacrifice procures the possibility of our regeneration into the life of Christ."

3. Liberty. Sin is slavery. It exercises merciless dominion over the sinner. But now the Lord has met the claims of sin in our justification, and has liberated us from that tyrant. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). We are not only pardoned of all our offenses, but we are also brought into perfect freedom, in which we are joyful servants of Christ. Jesus paid the ransom price for us, even his own precious blood. Hence, we are not our own, but his property. Our slavery now is consistent with the highest and

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fullest freedom. Paul counted himself a prisoner of Christ, in the sense of gladly doing his bidding; and yet the apostle was delivered from the bondage of sin and released from the sentence of condemnation. So, as a fruit of justification, we are emancipated from the dominion and power of sin, and brought into the glorious liberty of the gospel.

4. The fruit of justification is a life of holiness and good works. Paul taught the vital relation between justification by faith and holy living upon the part of the justified. "Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness." This is in harmony with the teaching of our fathers. Our Church holds fast to the standard as set forth in our Confession of Faith. We define justification before God to be by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and not by works, and we hold that "good works in Christ are acceptable to God and spring out of a true and living faith."

The Pauline doctrine of justification by faith without works does not encourage, as some would assert, indolence and license to a life of disobedience. It rather leads to obedience and holy living.

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The apostle, in the sixth chapter of Romans, shows how our acceptance through Christ's mediatorial sacrifice is in vital connection with our life in the risen Christ. The believer is not only justified in Christ, but he is still in Christ as the resurrection-life. The justified has the life of the Justifier, and being clothed with the power of this new, risen life, he goes forth under its impulsion to a career of holiness and Christian service. Justification is thus not an end, but a means to an end. We have received the ministry of reconciliation that we might walk in the newness of light. We have been released from the prison-house of sin, not to depart from God, but to honor and serve him as his free, loving children. The relationship is plain and vital. The fruit of justification, which God expects, is holiness and obedience. Since we are justified, we are to be holy, separated from sin unto God. This is its meaning and purpose. We are justified that we might be holy. Why should the sinner accept the grace of justification and then live unto himself? The fruit of the tree should be that for which it exists.

Professor Moule, in commenting upon the

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fruits of the new life of the justified in union with Christ, says: "It gives him a new power with which to live a grateful life; a power residing not in justification itself, but in what it opens up. It is the gate through which he passes to the fountain; it is the wall which ramparts the fountain, the roof which shields him as he drinks. The fountain is his justifying Lord, exalted life, his risen life, poured into the man's being by the Spirit, who is head and member one. And it is as justified, that he has access to the fountain, and drinks as deep as he will of its life, its power, its purity."

Nothing is more clearly taught in the New Testament than that Christian life is a life of faith unto good works. Jesus taught the duty and value of personal obedience and service. A life of consecration can only begin after the penitent sinner has been reconciled to God and his guilt canceled. Then his new relation and new life should be marked with the fruits of holiness and Christian activity.

5. Justification includes pardon of sins, restoration to divine fellowship and friendship, heirship with Christ, hope of the future life, and the

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complete redemption of the soul and body, together with the believer's final glorification in heaven. This gives a new phase to everything, both for time and for eternity. It changes the aspect of the present life, in that it gives us a vision of God as our father, our friend, and our beneficent lawgiver. He appears no longer as our judicial adversary. Our hearts are no longer oppressed with a sense of his displeasure and disapproval, but are now in pacific relations with him. His justice and mercy alike are revealed and maintained in our forgiveness through the merit of his Son's expiation.

This transforms the present life and gives a new meaning to our troubles and strange experiences. Before our reconciliation and peace with God, our afflictions seemed to be the signs of divine displeasure; but now the war is ended, the controversy is over, friendship is established. There is a clearer vision of God as a wise, gracious father, into whose spiritual household we have been introduced and adopted as his children. We have even the spirit of childship, which enables us to cry, "Abba, Father." Storms, misfortunes, and afflictions still come, but they are

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the test of our faith and devotion. We are now in the school of discipline which develops character and braces our hearts to a manly, heroic faith that evidences and certifies to our loyalty to Christ, who "died for our sins and rose for our justification." In such an experience, we may even rejoice in tribulations, yea, glory in them. In the assurance of our standing before God and our acceptance for Christ's sake, we are made to "glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

The future is also transformed. We are no longer estranged from God. Darkness is lifted and dispelled from our existence. Our feet are no longer in the pit and the miry clay, but rest upon a rock, while the song of anticipation and hope fills our heart. What will not God do for those for whom he was willing to die! With Jehovah on our side and the mighty life of Christ in us, what must be in store for the believer! His peace is assured, his protection is vouchsafed, and

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his destiny is glorious. He has a right to have boundless anticipations of the glories and splendor of the immortal life. If God be for us, who can be against us? If God spared not his beloved Son, what will he not freely give us? What aspirations of holiness and perfection will he not satisfy? What a rich inheritance awaits the justified in the glorified state in heaven! Such a wonderful achievement as the reconciliation of man and God, through the death of Christ, and such a display of divine love as that which led the Son of God to die for his enemies and to make provision for their pardon, restoration, cleansing, and final glorification, is sufficient to put into the mouth of the justified believer a hymn of thanksgiving and praise.

Those who apprehend this great truth in its complete aspects, and have entered into the experience of its concurrent blessings, to which attention has just been called, cannot but be stirred to the very depths of their being with holy joy. For pardon of sins, reconciliation to God, life-union with the risen One, acceptance in the Beloved, and adoption into the household of the Father, before whom we have good standing, to

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whom we sustain the relation of friendship, and to whose exhaustless grace, love, and power we have free and uninterrupted access, are great blessings. These are sufficient to arouse the profoundest emotions of the soul, command our loyalty, inspire our devotion, awaken our gratitude, stir us to holy living and joyous service, and fill us with the anticipation of the promised vision of the glory of God.

Such a change of relationship and such a standing in the boundless grace of God as the justified enjoys in Christ, illuminates the whole spiritual horizon of the believer, and gives him ground for the assurance and triumphant hope that, in the completed life beyond, he shall behold the glory of his God and share the blessedness of his immediate presence.









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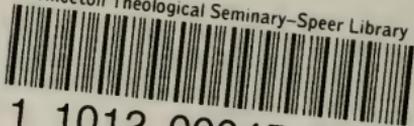
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