

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

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A

# SERMON

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DELIVERED BEFORE THE

SYNOD OF NEW-YORK AND NEW-JERSEY,

IN POUGHKEEPSIE, N. Y.,

ON

Wednesday Evening, October 20, 1852.

BY THE

REV. JONATHAN F. STEARNS, D.D.,

III

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEWARK, NEW-JERSEY.

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PUBLISHED BY THE DIRECTION OF THE SYNOD.

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New-York:

PRINTED BY JOHN A. GRAY, 95 & 97 CLIFF STREET.

1852.

*Rev E. A. Park DD  
with the author's respects*

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## Sermon.

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"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."—ROMANS v. 1, 2.

THE basis of a vigorous and intelligent piety can be laid only in correct Christian doctrine. Those great truths which the gospel requires us to believe contain the reason and the source of all the peculiar traits of character which it requires us to possess. Displace one of them from the system, or misstate and pervert it, and you give a new turn to the entire Christian life. Neglect them wholly, and your piety withers like a tree severed from its root, or is driven by the gusts of enthusiasm like a paper kite cut loose from its string.

We hear much said contemptuously of cold, dead formulas and barren dogmas,—thereby to disparage all attempts at the accurate and scientific statement of Christian truths. The life, the life; this is the watchword! Have the life of religion in the soul, and let it actualize itself in the conduct and sentiments; and it is of little moment what may be the form of doctrine with which each man chooses to satisfy his own understanding. But all we have to say is, the life which does not correspond to revealed truth, and take its law from it, is not Christian life. Truths there may be, so volatile and so Protean, that you can bind them down to no one definite form of words; and such truths may be seen or felt or scented in the transcendental atmosphere of some ethereal dreamland; but none but "dreamland folk" will ever be satisfied to make these the basis of their faith. Men of intelligence desire to know what they believe and "whereof they affirm," and to be able to give a reason, founded in some known fact or principle, for the faith and the hope, the feeling and the law of life that is in

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them. And such men never can be satisfied with, never held under the control of a religion which has not truths capable of being stated in intelligible propositions, and as such considered and defended.

Hence, as a matter of history, we find some of the most vigorous periods of the Church's life to be those in which the most intense interest has been felt in the doctrines of our holy religion; and the grand safeguards which have operated to prevent the degenerating of Christian piety, and to restore it when degenerated, have been found in the accurate statement and defence of these same theological principles.

Well it is, therefore, that our attention should be often turned to the consideration of the great leading articles of our creed. Well it is that, on occasions like this, when ministers of the gospel come together for the transaction of ecclesiastical business, a portion of their time should be devoted to discussions relating to this important branch of Christian knowledge.

One of these grand principles you have required me to discuss before you this evening; and, while I stand up here in the place of one\* whom the great Head of the Church has called to higher services in his Church above—a man whose virtues have left so sweet a savor among all who knew him, that for me, a stranger almost, to attempt to speak of them, would be more than superfluous; whose meek and holy dignity in every act and word seemed to testify, that “in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world”—I would not forget that the truth expressed in the doctrine of *justification* is not only the strong pillar of a sound faith, justly denominated by the great Luther the “article of a standing or falling Church,” but also the foundation of all your and my hopes for immortality.

Before I proceed, let me offer one or two preliminary remarks. In distinguishing carefully what belongs to this doctrine, from what may seem more appropriately to be referred to some other article of Christian truth, it is by no means to be inferred that we reject those other portions of the system, or mean to separate this from its connection with that living whole in which

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\* Rev. Daniel H. Johnson, of Rockaway, N. J.

alone its appropriate functions can be performed. We distinguish, that we may understand; and analyze, that we may distinguish more accurately. Nor does it follow from the attempt to do this, that we condemn as heretics those who do not agree with us in our distinctions. Some difference of classification and of statement is not fatal to the saving efficacy of the truth; and often it happens that the portion of truth rejected under one form is retained under another by the persons who differ from us. And since names are not things—though they have an important influence towards the right or wrong understanding of things—we should be very careful how we make a Christian brother and fellow-soldier of the faith “*an offender for a word*.” With these remarks, I now proceed to my subject.

I have selected for my text the words of Paul contained in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the first and second verses.

Rom. v. 1, 2: “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

The apostle teaches us that our peace with God and hope of his glory are the fruit of our justification, and come to us by faith, through the work or person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In pursuance of this theme, I propose to consider, 1. What justification is; 2. On what ground men are justified; 3. In what way or by what means justification is to be obtained.

I. The first question which we have to consider is, **WHAT IS JUSTIFICATION?** The entire work of redemption comprehends two grand departments, inseparable but yet distinguishable, and both equally the product of divine grace; first, forgiveness of sin and restoration to God's favor; second, deliverance from the power and pollution of sin, and perfection in holiness—the former an objective, the latter a subjective benefit; the former relating to what Christ has done *for* us, the latter to what he has done and is doing *in* us. Each, practically, requires the other; and theoretically, they are in contact at several points; but the former only belongs properly to the apostolic doctrine of justification.

The distinct and scientific enunciation of this doctrine, as an

article of belief, is comparatively of modern date. In the early Church, no dispute arising concerning it, and the *essence* of the truth being universally admitted, terms and forms of expression were very little regarded. The word *justification* in the Latin tongue meaning, etymologically interpreted, *to make righteous*, some of the Latin fathers, as Augustine in particular, were led to apply it to that inward work by which the Spirit of God renews and makes holy the heart of the Christian. Hence, by imperceptible degrees, there crept into the Church the Romish doctrine, held for many centuries without any very definite statement, but distinctly drawn out and affirmed by the Council of Trent, that "justification is not only the remission of sins, but the infusion of inherent righteousness," the former being grounded upon the latter as "its formal cause," and both imparted in the sacrament of baptism. This, the doctors of that Church called the *first* justification. As, however, by the commission of sins after baptism, the infused grace, according to their view of the matter, might be impaired or lost, there was added a still further expedient, called a "second plank after a shipwreck,"\* by which, through the sacrament of penance accompanied with absolution, the lost favor might be recovered, though but partially, or in an inferior degree. In both cases, justification was with them a matter of degrees, and capable of being increased or diminished. Its preservation and increase, with the repairing of the wastes produced by sin, was called by many of them the *second* justification, and was supposed to be accomplished by the merit of good works, charities, priestly blessings and discipline. The abominations which gave occasion for the Reformation were soon perceived by the first Reformers to have their chief support in this perversion of the truth; and Luther, the greatest of them all, having been led by his own inward experience to the discovery both of the necessity and the existence of another and better way of salvation, passed immediately from the evil fruit to lay his strong axe at the root of the tree that bore it.

Hence was brought about the distinct statement and defence of the *Protestant doctrine*, according to which, justification con-

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\* Concil. Trident., Sess. VI., Cap. XIV. See also Du Pin, *Ecl. Hist.*, vol. vii. p. 50.

sists not at all in any change of the moral character or internal state—though these always accompany it—but solely in the change of a man's relative position towards God his righteous Governor. "It is an act whereby God, as judge, pronounces man, who is a sinner, and thereby chargeable with fault and obnoxious to punishment, *a righteous man*."\* This change of relations is a complete work, once for all, and incapable of degrees. There is room for infinite degrees in our conscious enjoyment of its benefits, but of none in the relation itself. In virtue of it, all our sins are forgiven, penal justice relinquishes for ever all its demands, and he who was before a culprit and an enemy passes at once to the condition of a friend, and is entitled to all the privileges and liberties of a beloved child of God.

The question, be it observed, is not one of *names*, as some have thought it. The application of the *term* justification to that inward work which Protestants choose to denominate *sanctification*, or renewal, were a small matter. But the question is, whether, among the blessings of the gospel, there is such a justification as I have here described; a justification wholly distinct from, and, in its grounds, independent of the degree of internal holiness which the Christian may have attained, or the amount of works and services which he may already have performed. This the Romanists deny, and the Protestants as strenuously affirm.

An attempt has been made, in recent times, to find what might be called a middle ground. An eminent leader of the Oxford school,† who, if sincere, supposed he was erecting a strong barrier between his countrymen and Rome, while he was only constructing an easy vehicle in which to glide over imperceptibly to the dominion of the Papacy, asserts that justification consists in our possession of the Divine Presence—Christ as a bright sun residing within the soul, and raying out, so as to cover with his beams the whole person. But this Divine Presence, we soon find, is a thing of degrees; and "as holy

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\* "Justificatio forenssem significationem habet, et actum illum denotat quo Deus iudex, hominem peccatorem adeoque reum culpæ et pœnæ, sed in Christum credentem, justum pronunciat." (Baier. See Schmid, *Dogmatik*, p. 342.)

† I refer to Dr. Newman, since gone over to the Romish Church. See *Lectures on Justification*, pp. 169–204.

communion conveys a more awful presence of God than holy baptism, so must it be the instrument of a higher justification.' Nay, the radiance in which God sees us clothed is nothing more than our own good works, "that renovation of the soul, and those holy deeds and sufferings" which are the *result* of the possession of Christ's presence. So that, after all, we have the doctrine of Rome, and nothing else, within the pale of a Church whose articles and homilies teach the Protestant doctrine as explicitly as language could well state it.

The falseness of these views, in all their forms, is manifest at once when we repair to the Holy Scriptures. The signification of the words *justification* and *justify*, both in the Hebrew and Greek of the original, corresponds very closely to the meaning of those words in our own language. Let me present a few specimens. In Proverbs xvii. 15, it is declared, "He that *justifieth* the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord." In Exodus xxiii. 7, God commands, "Keep thee far from a false matter, for I will not *justify* the wicked." So in the New Testament, Luke x. 29, it is said of the lawyer who tempted Christ, "he, willing to *justify* himself, said, And who is my neighbor?" In Luke xvi. 15, Christ says to the Pharisees, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts." In all these instances, the meaning of the word is the pronouncing of a favorable judgment, whether true or in pretence; and never, in a single well-ascertained instance in the whole Bible, can it fairly be interpreted, the making of a person just by change of character. Indeed, the advocates of that view have ventured to allege only a few instances, and of these, one of the most significant is judged by the best critics to be founded on an accidental error in the text.\*

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\* Newman frankly confesses that "but one passage can be produced from the New Testament, where it is used for 'making righteous,' and there the reading is doubtful." He refers to Rev. xxii. 11, where the Greek of the received text leads, "He that is righteous, let him be justified still." Griesbach, Knapp, Bretschneider, and other eminent critics, as well as our own translation, discard that reading as spurious. Other passages adduced by some are Rom. vi. 7; viii. 30; 1 Cor. vi. 11; Tit. iii. 7; and in the Hebrew, Isaiah liii. 11; Daniel xii. 3; of which the last is the only one that has much plausibility. Dr. Newman, pressed with the uniform use of the words, resorts to a subtle distinction between 'the sense of the *term*' and "the sense of the *thing*;" for which, and for a curious piece of sophistry, see Lectures on Justification, pp. 70, 71, 72.



Justification is the opposite of condemnation. The terms are borrowed from judicial proceedings; and literally interpreted imply, what in other forms is represented in the Scriptures as a just conception of our relations to God, a tribunal, a person on trial, a law by which the accused is to be tried, and a judge pronouncing decisions accordingly. To be justified is, strictly interpreted, to be pronounced just in the light of the law.

Nor can the force of this argument be evaded, by an attempt which has been made to connect with the judicial act, the *purpose* which must have accompanied it in the mind of the Judge. "It is a pronouncing righteous," says the writer already referred to, "while it proceeds to *make* righteous. As Almighty God in the beginning created the world solemnly and in form, speaking the word, not to exclude but to proclaim the deed, so does he now create the soul by the breath of his mouth, by the sacrament of his voice. The declaration of our righteousness, while it contains pardon for the past, insures holiness for the future."\* But who says it is the same word that does the one and the other? It is not true that God makes the soul of man holy by a *word*, else would the work be instantaneous and complete at once. For when he *speaks* it is *done*. True it is, doubtless, that He *who* pronounces just, proceeds to make holy. But the latter is but a consequence of the former, and belongs to a distinct divine operation, as well as to a distinct article of our faith. In conception at least, the two things are as totally distinct, as are the proceedings of the court room from those of the House of Reformation.

But the question has been raised, *how much is included or implied in the decision pronouncing a man just*. The leading benefit conferred is, unquestionably, his acquittal from the charge of sin; and since, in the case of mankind, sin is the grand obstacle in the way of justification, the remission or forgiveness of sin is the first work which that act has to accomplish. Hence the ground has been taken by some that justification *consists* merely in the forgiveness of sins; and an eminent divine of New-England, Dr. Emmons, has alleged that

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\* Lectures on Justification, p. 81.

the *terms*, as used in the Sacred Scriptures, are simply *synonymous*.\*

In opposition to this position, we affirm that the idea of justification and that of pardon are, in the common use of language, totally distinct. The words mean, as applied in common life, not only different things, but things totally incompatible. He that is pardoned cannot be justified, and he that is justified cannot be pardoned; for justification plainly implies that there is no room for pardon, and pardon proceeds on the supposition that the object of it is not capable of justification. It is only through the glorious scheme of redemption, that the two things are brought within the compass of the *same act*, and there, we insist, they are not confounded.

On no other ground can we account for the introduction of the word *justify* in connection with the subject of forgiveness. The New Testament is rich in terms and phrases conveying the latter idea, *remission of sins*, *blotting out of transgressions*, *not imputing trespasses*, and the like; and why should the very peculiar terms *justify* and *justification* be resorted to, unless something not contained in the others was designed to be taught

\* Works, Vol. V. pp. 44-5: "Justification, in a gospel sense, signifies no more nor less than the pardon or remission of sin." "Paul commonly used justification and forgiveness as synonymous terms." Emmons' view is, that sin being the only obstacle to the exercise of free benevolence towards men on the part of God, the forgiveness of sin through the atonement left nothing more to be done, except for God to bestow favors according to sovereign benevolence. And favors are bestowed just as they would have been had there been no fall of man, simply as a token of God's complacency in man's goodness, and "because it becomes him to express his approbation of their obedience and good works, by a free, gracious, unmerited and eternal reward." Vol. V. p. 87.

Accordingly we find in him such startling assertions as these: "Forgiveness is the only favor which God bestows upon men on the account of Christ." p. 55. "Though God forgives believers solely on account of the atonement of Christ, yet he does not reward them for his obedience but their own." p. 77. "He forgives them solely on the ground of Christ's atonement; but he rewards them solely on the ground of their own good works." p. 78. These bold paradoxes, corrected indeed in part by the peculiar distinctions and distribution of topics, which distinguish this truly eminent writer, have affected, it is believed, the reasonings of many, who are not aware how great is their departure from the current language and conceptions of all the old orthodox divines. It is very evident, however, that Emmons had no adequate conception of the intimate union between Christ and believers, which lies at the foundation of the whole scheme of redemption.

by them? The design doubtless was to show the peculiar way in which, under the gospel, sin is remitted. It is in the way of *justification*. And this fact broadly distinguishes the gospel plan, with its atoning Mediator, from all those theories of forgiveness which ascribe simple lenity to a God of justice.

Nor can I reconcile the Scriptural statements on this subject with the assumption that the forgiveness of sin is all the *benefit* which justification conveys to us. Sinners, it seems to me, need something more in order to place them in the happy position towards God in which the gospel places Christ's disciples. If the law of God, as given to man, is not naked *law*, but bears the character of a covenant, and the promise of life to the obedient includes blessings not deserved by simple innocence, then, of course, the remission of sin and the removal of the curse does but leave us in the same negative condition in which the law as a covenant of works at first found us—guilty of nothing, but yet entitled to nothing. Sonship with God, reigning with Christ, beholding his glory, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,—these surely are not the result of our relations to God as *creatures* merely; nor are they represented in the Scriptures as the simple product of God's sovereign benevolence, irrespective of other relations. These surely are not to be excluded from the department of *grace*.

Justification is a *finished* work, once for all, and takes place immediately, on the first act of faith; but pardon or forgiveness of sins is *not* finished in this world, but runs through the entire life, following the commission of every sin after it is *repented* of. Justification includes both the pardon of all past sins, and the promise of pardon for future sins; because it acknowledges a righteousness which cannot stand in connection with condemnation, and the removal of condemnation is pardon. But to include or imply pardon, is by no means the same as to *exclude* every thing else.

Justification has been spoken of as the opposite of *condemnation*. "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" But then it is not merely the negative, but the opposite positive. It is acquittal, it is approval, it is acceptance as entitled to God's favor. So our text evidently treats it. It gives us "*access into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in*

hope of the glory of God." So, in Titus iii. 7, it is said, that "being justified by grace, we are made *heirs* according to the hope of eternal life." In the fifth chapter of Romans, at the 18th verse, Paul denominates it "*justification of life*." And in the 17th verse he says, they who have received by means of it "the gift of righteousness, shall *reign in life* by one, Jesus Christ." And yet again, in the 21st verse, he is even more explicit, "that as sin reigned unto death, so might grace reign through righteousness unto *eternal life*, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Surely eternal life is no negative thing! And yet the grace bestowed in justification *reigns* even to this wonderful extent!

In this view of the matter, I do but follow the great body of those writers who have usually been esteemed orthodox among us, at least till recently. Edwards insists very strongly on a positive side to justification. It is not merely pardon, he says, but the declaration of a title to the promised reward.\* Explaining his view of Christ's justification, he refers to the resurrection, and says, it was then, after his mediatorial work was finished, that being raised from the dead, he was solemnly adjudged to have fulfilled all the obligations of his mission, and, in pursuance of this decision, was received up unto glory. And thus he explains the fact that we are said to be justified by Christ's *resurrection*. "The justification of the believer is no other than his being admitted to communion, in the justification of this head and surety of all believers."† Dwight and Hopkins are both equally explicit.‡ And how the old Puritan

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\* "A believer's justification implies not only the remission of sins, or acquittance from the wrath due to it, but also an admittance to a title to that glory which is the reward of righteousness." "It is the judge's accepting a person as having both a negative and positive righteousness belonging to him."—Works, Vol. V. pp. 354-5, New-York edition.

† Works, Vol. V. p. 355, New-York edition.

‡ "The justification of a sinner under the gospel consists in the three following things: *Pardoning his sins; acquitting him from the punishment which they have deserved; and entitling him to the rewards and blessings due by law to perfect obedience only.*"—Dwight's Theology, Vol. II. p. 301-2.

"The justification of a sinner consists in forgiving his sins, or acquitting him from the curse and condemnation of the law; and receiving him to favor and a title to all the blessings contained in eternal life. Though these may be considered distinctly as in some respects two, yet they are never separated, but are both always implied in the justification of a sinner."—Hopkins' System of Doctrines' Vol. II. p. 50, edition of 1811.

divines regarded the matter, a single extract from the Works of John Owen will be sufficient to show.\* "That justification," he says, "consists only in pardon of sin, is so contrary to the signification of the word, the constant use of it in the Scripture, the common notion of it amongst mankind, the sense of men in their own consciences who find themselves under an obligation unto duty, and express testimonies of the Scripture, that I somewhat wonder how it can be pretendd."

The truth is that it not only has a positive *side*, but is itself essentially a positive thing. Formally, at least, it is not the declaring a man *freed from sin*, though that, of course, as I have said, is included under it, but a pronouncing him *just* before the law. Our Standards have described it as "an act of God's free grace, *wherein* he pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous in his sight." The *act* is one; and, to define it, reference is made to its *source*, which is the free grace of God, and its *effects*, which are the remission of sins on the one hand, and acceptance as righteous on the other. That *act*, which, springing from the free grace of God, produces these two results, is justification. In virtue of it man is entitled to all the benefits included in the promise of eternal life,—to heavenly glory, to sonship with the Father, and to joint heirship with Jesus Christ, no less than to the assurance that to him "there is now no condemnation." It takes him out of the depths of sin and misery, and makes him sit with all the redeemed Church in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Ay, it translates him, not only *out* of the kingdom of Satan, but "*into* the kingdom of God's dear Son."

This certainly is a wonderful transformation, and we may well inquire with deep interest how it could be accomplished.

II. We proceed then to our second inquiry, viz., ON WHAT GROUNDS are men justified? From what has been said, it appears plainly that justification, as distinct from *mere pardon*, or the overlooking of transgressions, implies a *righteousness*, that is a full discharge of our obligations to God, as the only ground on which it can rest.

There is a righteousness of personal merits. But that requires undeviating and perpetual obedience to all God's commands.

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\* Works, Vol. V., p. 238.

This none of us can present. Glance for a moment at the character of those whom the gospel proposes to justify. They are *ungodly*, Rom. iv. 5; *under the curse*, Gal. iii. 10; *having the wrath of God abiding on them*, John iii. 36; *concluded or shut up under sin*, Gal. iii. 22; *guilty before God, their mouths stopped, having the knowledge or conviction of sin*, Rom. iii. 19, 20. And the problem is to show how *such* persons can be *justified*; not excused from penalties alone, but pronounced *righteous*, and as such accepted before God. Surely it is out of the question for them to secure that privilege by personal obedience.

In the way of it stands upon the very threshold God's attribute of justice, which he will never violate, and on which rests his entire government over his creatures. From the whole tenor of the Scriptures—its promises no less than its threatenings—we perceive that God regards justice as a principle no less sacred than benevolence. The law which overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed the old world with a flood, and built hell, is just as precious in his eyes as that which clothed the earth in beauty, and planted Paradise for the comfort and sustenance of our first parents. But the justice of God couples sin inseparably with *punishment*, and all those representations in the Sacred Scriptures, which ascribe anger, jealousy and eternal vengeance to a God of love, are but so many illustrations of the great truth, that divine justice *must* inflict penalties on the transgressors of God's law. A just God, although a Father, will not, and cannot refrain from punishing a rebel subject.

Here we part company with the Socinians and other kindred sects, who, having low ideas of justice, see no reason why sin may not be overlooked, if it only be *forsaken*. But to those who regard justice as an inviolable principle, there remains a difficulty. The problem to be solved is, how a *just* God can be also a Saviour; in other words, how "God can be just and the justifier" of those who have sinned.

For the solution of this problem we turn to that divine dispensation of *grace*, whose nature and provisions we must now attempt to unfold.

At the basis of the whole lies the grand principle of *substitution*—the just for the unjust; the Saviour who is God and man, for the guilty man who has fallen beneath the displeasure

of a just God. This principle is so essential, that the denial of it is enough to vitiate the entire doctrine of salvation. And let me observe here, that the whole theory of the gospel on this subject has its *foundation* in the Trinity and the Incarnation. Were not God, by his eternal nature, subsistent in three Persons, I see not how the incarnation were possible. And but for the incarnation, neither an adequate substitute could be found to meet the demands of the case, nor man be brought into such relations that such a substitute could avail for his benefit. The whole efficacy of Christ's redemption rests on this, that, though he suffered and obeyed *in our nature*, he *was at the same time* "over all, God blessed for ever."

Let us look now at some of the scriptural statements on this subject. I can refer only to a very few among many. In 2 Corinthians v. 21, speaking of God's reconciling man to himself by Christ, the apostle says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In Romans v. 6-8 it is said, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." In the same chapter, at the 19th verse, we are told that, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." And again, in the 10th chapter at the 4th verse, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." This righteousness of Christ, whereby his followers are made righteous, is the same which is called in other places the "righteousness of God," because God has ordained and will accept it; and "the righteousness of faith," because it is by faith that believers become partakers of it. It was in view of this, that the same apostle, in the 3d chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, verses 7-9, exclaimed, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

To express the *mode* in which the righteousness of Christ avails for our benefit, the word *imputation* has been resorted to. Thus, in our own standards, we are said to be justified "only

for the righteousness of Christ *imputed* to us." Some have conceived of a *two-fold* imputation: that of our sins to Christ on the one hand, and of his merits to us on the other. But to this conception objections have been raised. It has been thought to imply, or at least to insinuate, a kind of *transfer* of *moral qualities* from one subject to another, which is a manifest absurdity; or again, an exchange of moral position, which, when fully conceived, is shocking to every true moral sentiment. In reply, those who use the term, utterly *disclaim* such an inference; and, in confirmation of their ground, refer to the use of the corresponding words in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. The words נָשַׁב and *λογίζομαι*, like the word *impute* in our translation, mean simply to *set to one's account*, whether the thing imputed be good or evil, and whether it belonged, morally and personally, to the object of the imputation, before it was so imputed, or otherwise. It has been objected "that God never imputes to us what does not *really belong* to us, but always regards and treats us as we *are*." But this is not true; for man is a sinner, and yet God regards and treats him as if he was innocent. Man's trespasses are his own, and yet, through grace, God imputeth not his trespasses unto him. Indeed the word, in this use of it, has become so entirely incorporated into the English language and literature, even that which is not strictly theological,\* that it is now quite *too late* to object to it on any such grounds. And as for the inferences referred to, the limitations of the word have been so often and so accurately stated, that, whatever occasion may have been given by individuals in their fondness for paradoxes, it may fairly be assumed as beyond question, that, *in our established formularies*, no use of it which would warrant such inferences was ever intended. Our sins were only so imputed to Christ, that he has borne for us their penal consequences, and his sacrifice is so imputed to us, that we obtain thereby exemption from the deserved penalty. Unworthiness and worthiness, in the personal sense, culpability and innocence continue to belong to their respective subjects, just as much after the imputation as before.

The chief defence of this representation is to be found, not

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\* See Milton, as quoted in Webster's Dictionary.



so much in its logical advantages as in its close correspondence to the language of Scripture. Such statements as "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" "His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" and those passages which speak of the Christian as having Christ's righteousness and not his own, include all that is understood by the words *impute* and *imputation* in the language of our formularies; and as to the abuse that may be made of them, the theological terms require no closer limitation, nor are they a whit stronger, in any respect, than the Biblical.\*

¶ The question has been warmly discussed, whether the *obedience* of Christ, as well as his expiatory sufferings, forms any part of the grounds on which we are justified. The early Socinians alleged as an objection, that Christ, as man, was bound to obedience on his own account. But the reply was obvious. Christ did not obey the law as a *mere* man, any more than he suffered the penalty of sin, or appeared in the world, as a *mere* man. He was a divine *Person*, though he took to himself human nature; and since he took that nature, and thereby became subject to the law, *solely* on our *account*, being "made of a woman, made under the law, to *redeem* them that were under the law," Gal. iv. 45, the discharge of the obligation so incurred must plainly be set to the account for which he incurred it.

A more common objection, in recent times, is that the supposition is useless to the end of justification; for since pardon,

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\* The writer would by no means contend for the exclusive use of these and similar terms in popular addresses. Indeed, all technical terms should be used but sparingly for such purposes; but every science must have its technical terms, and if there be such a science as theology, it is better to adhere to those terms whose meaning has become fixed by long usage and the authority of standard writers, than to resort to new ones, which will require a generation at least to make their meaning equally determinate. Besides, the invention of new terms and the employment of the old ones in their popular, rather than their theological sense, in dogmatic discussions, has been so often the expedient of covert error, that an odium and suspicion are attached to it, constituting a sufficient reason for reporting to it only with caution.

it is alleged, is all that is to be accomplished, the expiation of sin, making way for pardon, leaves no room for any thing further. But if justification has, as we have seen, a positive side, and includes more than pardon, that objection of course at once falls to the ground. Nor is it true, as some have maintained, that the expiation of sin alone, restores the sinner to his unfallen condition. Our primary obligation was to obedience, and only a secondary one to the bearing of penalties. The suffering of our penalties, on the part of Christ, would no more entitle us to acceptance before the law than would the suffering of them in our *own persons*, could we ever accomplish it. The doctrine that the law is satisfied, when its penalties are borne, is in affinity with that absurd, but somewhat prevalent notion, that law offers us a free alternative, either to obey or suffer; and that our suffering under its sentence, called by way of distinction "*passive obedience*," is as really *obedience*, and, in its way, as really fulfils the law, as our conforming to the precept. So then, the culprit dying on the gallows is as really a loyal citizen as the patriot who hazards his life for his country's good! The only thing which the expiatory sacrifice of Christ does for us, *as such*, is to remove the penalty of sin. And is this all, oh, can it be, for which we, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, are indebted to our blessed Redeemer?

We need not trouble ourselves here with the old distinction between Christ's active and passive obedience. His sufferings were just as much a part of his obedience as were his active services. The only question is, whether his obedience *as such*, or only as terminating in expiatory sufferings, forms any part of the grounds of our justification.

On this point, the great body of Protestant writers, esteemed orthodox, have taken the affirmative side. The Church of England is explicit in her articles and homilies. The early Lutherans had no dispute upon it. Most of the theologians of the Reformed Church took the same ground, as did the early Puritan and Presbyterian divines generally. That truly great theologian, Jonathan Edwards, who, more than any other man, forms the connecting link between the earlier and later schools of New-England orthodoxy, as well as between the churches of New-England and the Presbyterian churches, insists in the

most explicit manner on the imputation of Christ's obedience, as well as his sacrifice. Emmons rejects the doctrine, as do many excellent men of the present day, both of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches. But Hopkins, the predecessor of Emmons, and the founder of his school, abides steadily on the old foundation, and speaks familiarly of the blood and righteousness, the atonement and obedience, the death and life of the Saviour, as the joint ground of our pardon and justification.

The defect on both sides seems to lie in a disposition to analyze too sharply a concrete whole. We except to the old view, that it is too rigid in its assignment of distinct offices to each part and aspect of the work of Christ; and to the new, that it throws aside, because it knows not how thus to distribute them, a precious portion of the Saviour's merits; thus weakening the bond which binds us to him, and making him less our substitute, and us less the offspring of his grace. In the words of Edwards, "It is to make him our Saviour but in part. It is to rob him of half his glory as a Saviour." The reduction of the whole matter to a scheme of debt and payment on the part of some, and to a rigid legal process on that of others, has made it less a living thing, less full and rich and wide-reaching, than as it lies on the pages of Scripture. These and similar representations are but approximations to the truth. They present correctly certain phases of it, and the legal scheme, especially, could not be discarded without marring the integrity of the doctrine. But yet there is far more in the gospel doctrine of justification than can ever be reduced to the forms and principles of human law, and there are forms and principles appertaining to human laws with which the doctrine of justification has nothing to do. Had this fact been always borne in mind, many of the objections which have been alleged against this doctrine would have fallen at once by their own feebleness.

True it is, doubtless, that in the Scriptures the *sufferings* of Christ, and these chiefly in their sacrificial character, are oftenest referred to, and have a prominence not belonging to any other portion of his mediatorial work. But it is equally true, that his obedience likewise is spoken of as availing for our jus-

tification, and that in such a way as hardly admits of being referred to the head of sacrifice. Indeed, in Romans<sup>24</sup> v. 18, 19, *obedience* and *righteousness* are used synonymously, and the former, as contrasted with disobedience, made the ground of our justification. "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For, as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The simple truth is, that CHRIST is our righteousness, not by one class of acts only, but by his whole mission, life, sufferings, and death; and whatever of *worthiness* there is in our incarnate Saviour, avails for his people's *justification*, as whatever of power, wisdom and holiness, avails for their protection, instruction, and sanctification.

In representing Christ's righteousness as the ground of our justification, the apostle Paul is very strenuous in excluding wholly our own merits. I need only point you to a few passages in the epistle to the Romans. Rom. iii. 28 : "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Rom. iv. 4, 6 : "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." In the 11th chapter, 6th verse, grace and works are contrasted, and shown mutually to exclude each other : "If by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work."

James might seem, at the first glance, to teach an opposite doctrine. But James was speaking of the *evidence* by which justifying faith is proved genuine—"the trying of faith," the way of showing our faith—in which view works are an essential matter; whereas Paul, speaking of the grounds of our acceptance before God, excludes them altogether in the most sweeping style.

It has been said, the works of the law here mean the ritual of the *ceremonial* law. But Paul was speaking of that law, "the doers" of which "shall be justified;" the law which says, "Thou shalt not covet;" which stops the mouths of sinners; yea, the law whose "righteousness" shall be fulfilled in us, who "walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." It is by

the deeds of *this* law that he declares, so many times over, "no flesh shall be justified in God's sight." And what could this be but the inviolable moral law of God, of which our Saviour says, heaven and earth shall sooner be destroyed than a single jot or tittle of it shall fail?

As to the *works* which he excludes, some have attempted a distinction between them and *good* works. The same apostle insists most strenuously on the necessity of *good* works in their proper place. All over his epistles, we find him speaking with commendation of "abounding in good works," being "adorned with good works," "well reported of for good works," "rich in good works," "thoroughly furnished unto all good works," "perfect in every good work." Nay, in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, the eighth, ninth, and tenth verses, in the very connection in which he excludes *all* works from the salvation which is by faith, lest those who might have performed them should boast, he adds, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto* good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." And yet it is worthy of observation, that in all these instances he never *once* speaks of these works as forming any part of the grounds of our *justification*. And as to the distinction referred to, Paul not only excludes what he denominates *dead* works, but *all* works, even the works of faithful *Abraham*—the same to which James, speaking to another point, refers as having necessary connection with the faith that justifies.

It may be said here, works are the basis of decision in the final judgment. It is true they are; but the final judgment is a *manifestation*, and works of piety and faith and holy obedience are the only true *tokens* of a saving interest in Christ. Works, it is said, are rewarded. Yes, verily; for, being genuine fruits of that same relation in virtue of which Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, God is well pleased with them *as such*, and so, *of grace*, vouchsafes a reward. But, as Luther says, "Opera, igitur, fulgent radiis fidei, et propter fidem placent."\* Or, in the beautiful language of Edwards, "That little holiness, and those faint and feeble acts of love, receive an exceeding value in the sight of God,

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\* "Works, therefore, shine with the rays of faith, and, on account of faith,

by virtue of God's beholding them as in Christ, and as it were members of one so infinitely worthy in his eyes."\*

But here again, another subterfuge is resorted to. It is said, these truly good works *God is pleased* to accept for Christ's sake, as a ground of justification. Christ, by his mediation, has introduced a new covenant with a *milder* law, a law of sincere purposes, obeying which, without strict legal uprightness, and without imputed righteousness, sin only being forgiven in virtue of Christ's death, imperfect man may go and gain heaven by his own goodness. Such was the doctrine of the old Arminian school, against whom Edwards fought so valiantly; and such the prurient theology which sometimes is found creeping stealthily within the purlieus of a Church whose creed says broadly, "*Only* for the righteousness of Christ *imputed* to us." On this point, let the Sermon on the Mount teach us a lesson. There have we the law, as *Christ* affirmed it. As to the precept of it, not Sinai itself is stricter, nor yet half so searching. And if we miss the thunders, it is only because Christ, for his disciples, has wrought out and given a perfect righteousness.

The Socinians objected to the whole scheme of imputation, that it contravened grace; since, the price being rigidly exacted and fully paid, the justified would have a claim of right to the purchased favor. But, not to repeat here what has been said before against the too rigid application of particular modes of representation, on which the chief force of the objection rests, the truth is that the plan itself, as a whole, from beginning to end, is a most wonderful exhibition of grace. Was it less a matter of grace in the Eternal Father to give forth the beloved Son to humiliation and sacrifice for the sinner's rescue, than to have rescued him, if that were possible, without any such interposition?

"Grace first contrived the way  
To save rebellious man;  
And all the steps that grace display  
That drew the wondrous plan."

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are pleasing." He adds, "*Nulla partialis causa (e. g. good works) accedit, quia fides semper est efficax vel non est fides. Ideo quicquid opera sunt aut valent, hoc sunt et valent gloria et virtute fidei.*" (See Hare's *Mission of the Comforter*, vol. II. p. 686.)

\* Works, vol. V. p. 422. The whole passage is exquisitely beautiful.

By the same sect, it was objected that this view left no room for *pardon*, on the same ground. But it leaves no room for pardon *separate* from its *own* work, simply because that work itself *includes* pardon, and subordinates it to a higher benefit.

But it is time for me to touch briefly on another topic which has an essential connection with this branch of my subject. I have presented Christ's righteousness, imputed to his followers, as the sole basis of their justification. And this, be it remembered, is not the righteousness of the *man* Christ Jesus only, but of Christ the God-man, the second Person of the glorious Trinity, incarnate for the purpose of our redemption. Now, the inquiry will be raised, why all the worthiness of this glorious Being is thus imputed; in other words, what reason is there that we, who are but dust and ashes, ay, condemned and miserable sinners, should, in virtue of his worthiness, be exalted to sit at his right hand, and reign in glory at his side, wearing a crown like his? I answer, it is in virtue of that *union* into which he, carrying out the purposes of electing love, has taken us with himself. We are *his*, we are *one* with him; therefore are we accepted for his sake.

I almost tremble as I approach this subject, for it seems too awful to be handled. And yet it is, I am constrained to believe, among the corner-stones of our faith, and as sweet and animating as it is awful. This connection is no loose or ordinary one. Less than a personal union, it is far *more* than that of any outward relation. Precisely what it consists in cannot be defined, for by its nature, and especially by the nature of one of the parties to it, it transcends human comprehension. But the doctrine concerning it runs through the entire New Testament; and without the recognition of it, the writings of Paul and John, not to speak of the other apostles and evangelists, seem to me quite unintelligible. What else means that being "in Christ," so constantly referred to? What means the beautiful comparison of the vine and its branches, John xv.? What, that strange assertion, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," John vi. 53? And those expressions of an apostle: "Christ in you the hope of glory," Col. i. 27; "Christ liveth in me," Gal. ii. 20; "Partakers of the divine nature," 2 Peter i. 4; "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," 1 Cor. v. 17;

"Members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," Eph. v. 30? If they do not set forth some connection far more close and vital than even the closest relations ever formed or subsisting between man and man, I know not how language could express such a connection. The old divines called it "the *mystic union*," and as such it has come down to us in their creeds and religious literature. Our own catechism distinctly teaches it; wherein we are told that believers in Christ "are spiritually and mystically, yet really, and inseparably, *united to Christ* as their head and husband which is done in their effectual calling."\* Christ has not come and performed a work for us merely, taken off our chains of condemnation, secured for us divine assistance, and then bid us go and win heaven by our own efforts. He has taken us into close union with his own adorable person—yea, with the Father also, through our union with himself—"I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;" and thus has made them partakers of his infinite "fulness."

Justification, be it observed, is not the only benefit which we obtain from this union. In virtue of it we receive spiritual light, strength, and vivification. "God hath given unto us,"

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\* The terms "*mystic union*," *unio mystica*, are, of course, to be taken with the limitations of meaning attached to them by the advocates of the doctrine which they designate. The signification of *mystic* is well expressed by Webster in his second definition of that word: "Sacredly obscure, or secret, remote from human comprehension." The objection often made to such a union, that it *cannot be understood*, is of no force unless we are prepared to deny the existence of every thing which we cannot fully comprehend. Unquestionably, the doctrine itself, as well as the terms, has been perverted; but the perversion has arisen from neglecting the Scriptural and theological limitations. Such bold and almost blasphemous expressions of wild pietism as "I died on the cross," "I rose and ascended to heaven," "We are Christed with Christ and Godded with God," are warranted only by the supposition that the union in question is a personal one, which the sound advocates of the doctrine explicitly deny. Of course the doctrine, as they hold it, is not at all responsible for them. The word *mystic*, in this connection, is to be defended and preserved, chiefly because it is the word by which the doctrine is known historically, and because the apostle Paul applies a corresponding word to the same subject, Eph. v. 32: "This is a great *mystery*, (*μυστήριον*), but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." We follow strictly the Scriptural representations when we say, *it is less than a personal union, and more than any known outward relation*, as may be easily shown by an examination of the passages referred to.



says the apostle John, "eternal life, and this life is *in his Son*." "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John v. 11, 12. And Paul says, "Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This indwelling of Christ, which is brought about and sustained by the Holy Ghost, is the source of our sanctification, and so of all our inherent righteousness, of which every believer, being thus united to Christ, possesses at least the germ. And thus, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," he is, by a gradual process, "changed into the same image, from glory to glory."

But my object in referring to it in this connection is, to show *why* God *imputeth to us* Christ's righteousness. It is simply because, in virtue of this union, we are Christ's and he is ours. "What is real," says President Edwards, "in the union between Christ and believers, is the foundation of what is legal." Therefore, all our justification, with its present comforts and its future glorious rewards, our reigning with Christ, our title or privilege to follow him whithersoever he goeth, and to sing for ever before God the praises of redeeming love, resolves itself into this one little formula—"Accepted in the Beloved."

III. We pass, then, to the consideration of our third question, namely, IN WHAT WAY OR BY WHAT MEANS IS JUSTIFICATION TO BE OBTAINED?

The Romanists say, as I have intimated, that it is by the *sacraments*; by baptism, in the first instance, and by penance, with its various subsidiary appliances, afterwards. Faith, which, with them, is but belief of divine revelation *in general*, and that not as communicated by the simple Word of God, but as the Church teaches it, though of itself it is no virtue, yet, accompanied with contrition, is sufficient to merit grace, of *congruity*—that is, to make it congruous with the Divine faithfulness to bestow it, *through the sacraments*; and the grace so bestowed, making the man truly pleasing to God, is the true and meritorious ground of his first justification. But *then*, faith, having been by this means "formed" or "furnished with charity," becomes *itself meritorious*, and, in connection with the good works which it produces—charities, fastings, mortifications, vigils, pilgrimages—is able, not only to repair the wastes occasioned by neglect and

sin, but even to *accumulate merits* which may avail for the benefit of others. "This," says the illustrious Hooker, "is the mystery of the man of sin; this is the maze, through which the Church of Rome doth cause her followers to tread, when they ask her the way to justification."

It may easily be conceived, to what complete subjection to priestly tyranny this system must reduce the conscience of the poor guilt-stricken sinner.

Behold the great Luther entangled in this soul-degrading net. Aroused by a series of terrific providences to a conviction of sin, and of the necessity of securing some refuge from the wrath to come, he betakes himself to a convent, he subjects himself to the most humiliating drudgeries. His long vigils, and fastings, and mortifications wear away his flesh, but do not mitigate his sense of condemnation. What heavings and tossings, yea, what spiritual death-struggles convulsed his mighty soul! Now, what a joy must have thrilled him through, as the glorious truth burst upon him, that, after all, man might be justified by a simple faith in an almighty, ever-present, freely-offering Saviour; that, without penances, without masses, without priestly absolution, not only the guilt of venial, but of the deadliest sins might be cancelled, cancelled *all at once*, as if for ever "buried in the depths of the sea;" free forgiveness, sonship with God, the privileges of a saint, obtained by simply believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. What a sensation must that announcement have made all through the convents of Europe, and among the degraded and conscience-bound thralls of the Papacy—like the great earthquake, when Paul and Silas sang praises, and, by the shock, "the foundations of the prison were shaken, and every man's bands were loosed." Can ye wonder at the strong rough tread, and hoarse outcry of the sturdy champion, as he went shouting through the land, "Men are justified by faith, ay, by faith *only*!" and thereby shook and shattered, though he could not yet wholly demolish, the most complete and strongly-buttressed system of abominations ever reared by Satan in this world of sin?

The truth that man is justified by faith only, in such a sense, that, without faith, justification can never be obtained, and with it, whatever else be wanting, it certainly will be, lies in broad and clear characters over the whole surface of the Scrip-

tures. That one declaration of our Lord, John iii. 18, "He that believeth on him is not condemned, and he that believeth not *is* condemned already," seems to decide so much beyond dispute. "The just shall live by faith," and, "without faith it is impossible to please God." Luther was right, when he said so fearlessly that, let a man be ever so great a sinner in other respects, if that were possible, yet if he had only true faith, he could not fail of justification. That is to say, he was right in his meaning, though perilous in his mode of expressing it.

But what is faith? The word is used in Scripture and in common life with more than one shade of signification. It sometimes means simple assent to the truth of a proposition. This has been distinguished as *historic faith*—*fides historica*. But this alone is not justifying faith, since the apostle James teaches us that even the devils may thus believe divine truth, and tremble still before the wrath of God.

Saving faith is a more spiritual and comprehensive thing. The word is used by the apostle John as synonymous with *receiving Christ*, John i. 12: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name." This of course implies *knowledge* of what Christ is, *approbation* of him as known, and *acceptance* of him as the Saviour on his own terms. Our Lord himself makes it synonymous with *coming* to him. John vi. 35: "He that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." And the context shows that both expressions signify the same thing with that feeding upon Christ, or eating him, "eating his flesh and drinking his blood," through which all our spiritual life is derived. He also represents it in another place as a simple *looking* to him, just as the Israelites in the desert looked to the brazen serpent. John iii. 14, 15: "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Some of the old writers have distinguished three elements in saving faith: *knowledge*, *assent*, and *trust* or *confidence*.\* An eminent Lutheran divine expresses these three elements by the following forms:†

\* *Notitia, assensus, fiducia*. The principal stress was laid upon the last. Hence it was a familiar expression of Luther and others, "*Fides est fiducia*."

† *Credere Deum, credere Deo, credere in Deum*. *Credere Deum est credere quod ipse sit Deus. Credere Deo est credere vera esse quæ loquitur. Credere in Deum*

"Believe God, believe in God, believe on God. To believe God, is to believe that he is God; to believe in God, is to believe those things are true which God says; to believe on God, is believing to love him, believing to go to him, believing to adhere to him, and be incorporated among his members." Faith in the New Testament is very nearly synonymous with what is called *trust* in the Old. It is sometimes very pertinently represented as an escape from impending evil, to a shelter or refuge. Thus in Psalm cxliii. 9: "I flee unto thee to hide me." Heb. vi. 18: "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." Again, it is expressed by the terms, "rest in the Lord," Psalm xxxvii. 7, and others of similar import. Not that the thing itself is complicated; but these are all parts or aspects of one and the same indivisible whole. It is an act in which the whole soul concentrates itself,\* and may be described as its abandonment of all other dependences—implying therefore conviction of guilt, of need, and of helplessness—and its surrender of the whole man, heart, intellect, and will, to the Saviour's disposal; withal, accepting him in return, and resting upon him with loving confidence.

The question has been raised whether faith precedes or follows *regeneration*. But from what has been said, there would seem to be scarcely room for a doubt. If it receives Christ as a Saviour, and renounces self at his feet, it must include, potentially at least, love, penitence, obedience, and all the graces of the Christian character: of course it *must* be the *product* of regenerating grace. So Protestants generally have agreed in regarding it. Luther, although so strenuous in the assertion

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est credendo amare, credendo in eum ire, credendo ei adhærere, et ejus membris incorporari. (Quenstedt. See Schmid, Dogmatik, p. 333.)

\* "Believing," says John Owen, "is an act of the heart, which, in the Scripture, compriseth all the faculties of the soul as one entire principle of moral and spiritual duties. 'With the heart, man believeth unto righteousness.'" (See Works, vol. V. p. 81.) The same thing is very finely expressed by Archdeacon Hare: "Every genuine act of faith is the act of the whole man; not of his understanding alone, not of his affections alone, not of his will alone, but of all three in their central aboriginal unity. It proceeds from the inmost depths of the soul—from beyond that firmament of consciousness whereby the waters under the firmament are divided from the waters above the firmament. It is the act of that living principle which constitutes each man's individual, continuous, immortal personality." See "Victory of Faith," pp. 87, 88.

that faith only, mere faith, and not, as the Romanists said, "faith formed with charity," was the means of justification; and notwithstanding his desire to make that truth clear led him to the adoption of some startling paradoxes, is explicit enough in asserting faith to be a holy thing, though it does not justify in virtue of its holiness. With indignation does he denounce it, as among the dreams of the schoolmen, "to make faith the body and the shell, and charity the life, the kernel, the form, and the furniture."\* He calls faith the sun, of which good works are the rays, and "a gift of the Spirit, which makes a man new perpetually."† The earlier writers generally spoke of good works as the unfailing accompaniment or consequent of true faith, but those of later days, both Lutheran and Calvinistic, have not scrupled to speak of it as containing seminally the principle of every virtue. It "works by love," not the love which is added to it, but the love which constitutes one of its essential elements. Faith is no act or exercise of the mere *natural man*, reaching forth of his own accord after salvation; otherwise, the whole doctrine of *prevenient grace* would be overthrown. Our Catechism is very explicit here. The Spirit works faith in us in our effectual calling, and thereby unites us to Christ.‡ When we feel in our hearts the feeblest emotion of true faith, we may know that the new-creating Spirit of God has been doing his work there. This is the first response which the soul makes to that divine call whereby life begins to awaken in the regions of spiritual death—the first faint pulsation of the life of God in the soul.

As to the *special object* on which saving faith fastens, there are different opinions. Some will tell you it is the atonement, and so we often hear the assertion, "My faith rests only on the

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\* See Commentary on Galatians, p. 135. Carter's edition.

† See Hare's "Mission of the Comforter," vol. ii. p. 686; a work which contains a most masterly vindication of the great Reformer from the aspersions which have been cast upon him. Luther's words are, "Nos dicimus fidem esse . . . donum Spiritus Sancti. Donatum autem, hoc donum facit personam novam perpetuo, quæ persona tum facit opera nova, non e contra opera nova faciunt personam novam." We find the same doctrine in the Smalcald Articles. Art. XIII: "Dicimus præterea ubi non sequuntur bona opera, ibi fidem esse *falsam* et non veram."

‡ See Shorter Catechism, quest. 30.

atonement." Another says it is Christ's righteousness, another his precious promises, and still another, that it is the *truths* he uttered; as if the hearty acceptance of these truths were the way of salvation. Now, in contradistinction from all these, we say, it is no other than Christ himself, the adorable Person, *God-man*. God has given us, not a *salvation* merely, but a personal Saviour. Our faith rests upon him—in all his offices and all the revealed aspects of his character—our Prophet, Priest, and King—our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.\*

Hence there is less necessity than some suppose of accurate and systematic knowledge of the *theory* of redemption, in order that the simple-minded Christian may be saved. If we have only a just view of the essential characteristics of the blessed Saviour, so as to apprehend him personally, and rest upon him, that is sufficient. So did the old patriarchs rest upon him. They had a promising God and a promised Messiah, obscurely foretold. But how little did they know—*could* they know—of the glorious truths brought to view in the Gospel of John, and the Epistles to the Hebrews and the Romans! Yet did they rest their faith on the same eternal Word of God—since incarnate, crucified, and risen—on which we rest ours. The object was the same, though the *knowledge* of that object was widely different in degree.

Hence it appears how distinguishing justification from sanctification, or imputed righteousness from inherent righteousness, does not exclude the latter, or imply their separation. There is a class of perfectionists who talk of a kind of two-

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\* It has been justly said, that faith always has for its immediate object some truth. But then it need not be an abstract truth. It may be living truth, concrete, impersonate; and this is the form in which the object is presented in the Gospel. Faith is believing in or on Christ, not merely believing what is said about him, or what he said to us, but believing in or on him as the living truth—the very God-man, heaven descended, and holy Saviour which he truly is. This faith may perhaps be so analyzed as to reduce a large part of it to the form of hearty assent to the truth of abstract propositions, but then much will necessarily be left out; we shall have only the skeleton of faith's true object; and the exercise of the understanding, being thus separated from those affections of the heart which always must attend belief in the concrete object, will be no true representation of the faith which the gospel inculcates. Whenever an abstract proposition, as for example "that Jesus is the Christ," "that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," stands for the object of faith in the New Testament, it is only as carrying along with it the concrete.

fold conversion, in the first of which we apprehend Christ for our justification, and so, being delivered from the fear of wrath, become the servants of God; the second, in which we apprehend Christ for our sanctification, and rising to perfect love, commit no more sins which they deem worthy of the name. But the truth is, that if we apprehend Christ at all, we receive him in all his *plenitude*, our Sanctifier no less than our Justifier. Genuine faith cannot sever these two things. It renounces sin in the very act of seeking forgiveness for it. It enters upon a warfare under its great Captain, in which, though the complete victory is deferred, the resistance is unto blood. "Wilt thou be made righteous?" says the profound Calvin, "thou must first possess Christ; and thou canst not possess him, but thou must be made partaker of his sanctification: because he cannot be torn in pieces. Sith, therefore, the Lord doth grant us these benefits to be enjoyed, no otherwise than in giving himself, he giveth them both together—the one never without the other. So it appeareth how true it is that we are justified, not without works, and yet not by works, because in the partaking of Christ, whereby we are justified, is no less contained sanctification than righteousness."\* The believer makes his application to the Fountain, and so all its fulness becomes his. He never puts his trust in the gift, but always in the Giver of all.

From this fact, in connection with what has been said before, we perceive that the doctrine of justification by faith, instead of encouraging sin, as some have said, affords a three-fold assurance of the holiness or subjective righteousness of the justified: first, in the nature of genuine faith, which is a holy thing, and contains the germ of all Christian virtues; second, in the character of the object on which faith fastens—a holy Saviour; and, third, in the nature of that connection between believers and him, on the basis of which his righteousness is imputed to them for their justification, viz., that vital union whereby also he dwelleth in them, and his divine life is imparted to their souls.

But it is time for us to proceed to state, in a few words, what is the true office which faith performs in our justification. Be

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\* Institutes, B. III, ch. 16, sec. 1.

it observed, then, that it is not at all in virtue of its intrinsic excellence that faith is made the one grand condition in this matter. Faith is no better than its sister virtues. It even stands lower in the scale than love. As the expression of an *obedient spirit*, it can at best express but imperfect obedience. As the germ or principle of all the Christian virtues, it may hold them all in their most feeble condition. And were it able to present them full-orbed, in one glorious constellation, yea, with all the perfection of the saint, it could not undo one sin, and, after all, would be no perfect righteousness.

Faith justifies only because it takes hold of and appropriates Christ. In strictness of speech, faith does not justify. "It is God that justifieth." Rom. viii. 33. The purpose of so doing had its origin in the free love of the great Father of mercies. Nor may we say that faith forms, in any sense, the matter or ground of our justification. That is alone the perfect righteousness of Christ. Nor yet again is the possession of faith the immediate reason on account of which that righteousness is imputed to us. That is found in our oneness with Christ. Faith justifies us *instrumentally* alone, as being the human medium, through which, by the Spirit of God, that *oneness* is established.\* It renounces self and looks to Jesus. As the eye does not see in virtue of its life, although it is a living thing, but by its visual structure, so faith, although the life of the renewed soul is in it, justifies, not in virtue of its holiness, but of its office in looking to Jesus. It is the *instrument* whereby we appropriate Christ and his righteousness, the hand which we reach out to take the heavenly gift freely offered to us in the blessed gospel. Rather, I should say, it is the appropriating *act* itself. It is the bridal of the soul, wherein she giveth herself up to her heavenly bridegroom, and taking his pledges of eternal love and faithfulness in return, begins to sing, "My beloved is mine, and I am his."

So simple, ay, so easy, and so level to the capacity of the veriest child, is the way of salvation by the gospel. I see a poor, miserable, conscience-stricken, *worn-out* sinner. He has led a hard life. The deeds of wickedness that are on record in

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\* The order of nature in this divine work, as I understand it, might be thus represented: 1. Regeneration; 2. Faith; 3. Union; 4. Imputation of righteousness; 5. Justification.



his history would appal a common man even to hear of them. His lost standing in society he has no hope of recovering; his diseased and broken constitution no medicine can now restore. Friends have all left him long ago, and, a very fugitive and vagabond upon the earth, as he is, he has yet nothing before him, over the other side of the grave, but the fearful apprehension of eternal wrath. Now what shall such a man do? Tell me, philanthropists, philosophers, what shall such a man do to be saved? The apostle Paul shall answer us. Jesus himself shall point the remedy. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth on him shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." I hear the father's house ringing with joy! and what means it? The wicked prodigal has come home again. They are taking off his filthy raiment! They are clothing him with the best robe! There, the jewel is upon his finger, the pledge of paternal love, and the song is, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." "And such," said an apostle to his fellow Christians, "such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." And how justified? Why, justified by *faith*, simple FAITH, in Him who is, by all the *worthiness* of his adorable character, "The Lord our righteousness."

But I have detained this assembly too long, and must now leave this inspiring theme just where I would fain give my tongue loose in adoring admiration and gratitude. 'Tis an amazing thought! The intellect *reels* and *totters* in its endeavors to contemplate it! That the Son of God, the second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, should have come forth from the depths of his glory, taken our nature into personal union with himself, and then, having borne our guilt and fulfilled our violated obligations, brought us into communion with his own infinite fulness; and, casting the robe of his righteousness over us, secured for us, miserable sinners, acceptance at the throne of God, simply because we are his, and he loveth us! "Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Brethren in the ministry, God has put a great honor upon

us, in not only allowing us to rejoice through Christ in the hope of glory, but also to preach to the guilty and lost world a *free salvation*. Though the truth to which our thoughts have been called at this time is, indeed, but a *part* of the great system of redeeming mercy, it is one of the most bright and steady-shining in all the beautiful constellation of Christian truths.

Let us take care that we preach it *in its simplicity*, its *completeness*, and its *unbroken force*. If I am not mistaken, it has lost, in the minds of some, and so probably in their pulpit instructions, its distinctness and relative importance. The precious doctrine of atonement, which is, after all, but a *part* of this comprehensive truth, has been suffered to overlay or absorb that which it should serve to unfold and illustrate. In some systems of divinity, held in honor, justification by faith has almost ceased to be recognized in its distinct and characteristic form. Hence, we have lost sight of many of its important adjuncts and defences, and shorn the truth of a large portion of its power.

Let us go back, and study it as they taught it, who, by the necessities of their times, were led to think most intensely upon it—to the Reformers, to the Puritans, to the early fathers of New-England, and the Presbyterian Church. Next to the Bible, we shall be likely to find its true character most fully exhibited among *them*. If I wish to study the doctrine of the *Trinity* and the *Incarnation*, I go with most satisfaction to the first five or six centuries of the Church. Then was the whole ground thoroughly canvassed, and the battle fought through, against the best weapons which the skill of Satan could furnish. Subsequent times have added very little which is not to be found *there*. So, if I would study the doctrine of man's depravity and God's renewing grace, I would not fail to take to my *aid*, at least, the discussions of Augustine and Pelagius. At the Reformation, and during the two centuries which followed, the doctrine now before us had its first full and distinct development;\* and I venture to affirm, that a candid *reader* of

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\* I do not mean to assert that the truth contained in this doctrine was not known in the Church prior to that period. Anselm of Canterbury, who flourished near the close of the eleventh century, exhibits very clearly and happily some of its most important elements, in his work entitled "*Cur Deus Homo?*"

the *works* of that period, who is disposed to receive the doctrine in any *true* form, must soon come to the conclusion, that something near the form in which they held and presented it is the only one in which it can be *maintained*.

I know it will be alleged, that great improvements have been made in the nineteenth century, and why not in theology? It has been claimed, that our own branch of the Church deserves to be held in *honor*, as having made valuable modifications of the ancient theology. But, my brethren, I must confess, I stand greatly in doubt of those modifications. Some of them, I apprehend, are but *adaptations* or *adjustments* to a superficial style of thinking among us, which is neither sound nor destined to stand the test of the more penetrating style of thinking which a better age will ere long bring into favor. I am sure we have no modifications sufficient to erect a *school* upon which will not *peril* the soundness of our foundations.

It becomes us, at this day of sharp theological speculation on the one hand, and easy latitude on the other, not to forget the words of the great LUTHER: "De hoc articulo, cedere, aut aliquid contra illum largiri aut permittere, nemo piorum potest, etiamsi cœlum et terra et omnia corruant."\* We must not fancy that we have no need of the same armory which stood him and his coadjutors in stead. The old foes to the truth are not dead yet, and new ones are continually rising. If we would raise a strong barrier against papacy and semi-papacy, against prurient philanthropy and philosophy falsely so called, this doctrine will furnish one of our best materials. And if it be true, as we have already intimated from a high authority, that this is the article, or even among the articles, of a standing or falling Church, will not that Church be *most likely* to maintain its ground *as a Church*, and secure God's favor, which does honor to the grace of the Lord Jesus, by teaching most completely and earnestly the doctrine in question? To quote

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It would be difficult to find within the same compass a more forcible presentation of the heinousness of sin as committed against God, and the utter insufficiency of all human satisfaction for it, than is to be found in Cap. xxi. Lib. 1 of that work.

\* Art. Smalc. part ii. art. 1; see Schmid, p. 305: "To give up any part of this article, or to allow any thing contrary to it, is what no pious man can do, though heaven and earth and all things fall into ruins."

again the same mighty champion of the truth: "Oportet nos, de hoc doctrina, esse certos, et minime dubitare; alioquin *actum est prorsus*; et Papa et Diabolus et omnia adversa, jus et victoriam, contra nos obtinent."\*

Armed then with this, as with all the other weapons of heavenly wisdom, let us go forth to our great work, in the name of our Master. The wonders which it *has* done may be *again* accomplished by it. As in the days of the first Reformation—as in the days of our Puritan fathers—as in the hands of that profound, gigantic, child-like man, Jonathan Edwards, who, by a long, minute *disquisition* on this theme, started the mighty movement which gave us the "*Great Awakening*"—so now let us be sure it may be made the instrument in *faithful hands*, through the Divine blessing, of breaking down many a strong castle of the foe, and preparing the way for a glorious advent of the *Holy Ghost*. Yes, we'll preach it, brethren;—we'll study it, we'll rest our hopes upon it, and we'll preach it. When inquiring minds ask us the way of life, we will tell them nothing else but "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." When we are called to the bedside of the dying Christian or the dying sinner, we'll carry it there, to animate the hopes of the one, and point the other to his only refuge from the coming wrath. We'll lean on it, in all the conflicts of our pilgrimage. When we die, we'll lay it under our pillow, and see if it will not soothe a dying head as no *medicine can*. When we land on the other side of the flood—when we come to stand before the great white throne—oh *then* it shall give us an assurance that "there is now therefore no condemnation." And when the ransomed of the Lord are all gathered round him, and we so happy, ay, so *strangely* happy, as to be among them then shall this great, glorious truth form the chief burden of our song. We'll sing it, oh, we'll sing, and *tire never* of the theme! "Worthy, oh worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us unto our God *kings* and *priests*, to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

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\* Art. Smalc, partii. art. 1; see Schmid, p. 305: "It becomes us, in respect to this doctrine, to be very sure, and by no means in doubt; otherwise it is all over with us; and the Pope and the devil, and all hostile things, will gain a complete victory against us."