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## Evangelical Review of Theology

*Articles and book reviews selected from publications  
worldwide for an international readership,  
interpreting the Christian faith for contemporary  
living.*

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Evangelical Christians are increasingly recognizing the priority of spiritual and moral renewal in the life of the Church for sustained world evangelization and the restraint of evil in society. God desires that His people be salt and light pointing beyond their own existence to the reign of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and to His Kingdom which is present in the world but yet is still to come in His glory and power.

It is not the size of the Church that determines its influence but rather the quality of its spiritual life and moral power. Servanthood in the world begins with sonship in God's family. Through suffering God is refining His people for faithful proclamation and service. In spite of the persecution of Christian communities, restriction of religious freedom, jails overflowing with prisoners of conscience, Christ is fulfilling His promise, "I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it." But it is on the rock of the truth of the Gospel and the open confession of His "Peters" that the Church becomes both the sign and the agent of the Kingdom. Recent developments in China and Uganda give testimony to the fulfilment of this promise.

The World Evangelical Fellowship consultation at Amerongen, Holland 21st–25th April 1981 called for an intensive study on the nature and mission of the Church in the local setting and in new frontiers for missions and it endorsed the study programme already under way on the Christian response to human need. A working conference on a broad basis of evangelical sponsorship in June 1983 will be but one event in the ongoing planning towards the year 2000.

The articles in this issue of ERT, drawn from east and west, north and south, reflect this emerging renewal of emphasis on the centrality of the Church in the work of the Kingdom in the world.

## **Justification by Faith in 1 & 2 Corinthians**

**Ronald Y.-K. Fung**

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*Faithful exegesis of the biblical text and valid principles of interpretation are essential to any discussion on the evangelical understanding of the authority of the Bible as sola scriptura. In the first article in this section Professor Ronald Fung gives us a classical model of the grammatico-historical approach to the exegesis of Paul's understanding of justification by faith in the Corinthian letters. In an age of allegorizing, demythologizing and proof texting apart from context, Dr. Fung's exact textual scholarship is a challenge to all of us to accept the discipline of careful exegesis. In this study of four passages, the author concludes that for Paul justification is a fundamental aspect of the believer's union with Christ, is logically prior to reconciliation and is inseparable from sanctification.*

*In the second article on the concept of truth in the inerrancy debate, Professor Norman Geisler discusses the implication of two different theories of truth for our understanding of the nature and extent of the Bible's authority. While the recent debate on inerrancy has been an issue among North American evangelicals, it has important implications in the Third*

*World where the wider issues of hermeneutics in determining the boundary between valid contextualisation and false syncretism is the most critical factor in the theological debate.*

*In the previous issue of ERT, Dr. Carson assessed recent trends in hermeneutics; in the next issue Dr. Gerhard Meier of Tübingen offers his alternative to the historical-critical method.*

(Editor)

Justification by faith has, traditionally, been held to be the centre of Paul's theology. In modern times, however, the view has been gaining ground which regards this doctrine as being of merely subsidiary significance to Paul. The most notable exponents of this new appraisal of its status in the apostle's thought include Carl von Weizsäcker,<sup>1</sup> William Wrede,<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm Heitmüller<sup>3</sup> and Albert Schweitzer.<sup>4</sup> In their down-grading of the doctrine these scholars have been followed in more recent years by H. J. Schoeps<sup>5</sup> and, in the English-speaking world, by C. H. Buck, Jr.,<sup>6</sup> Krister Stendahl,<sup>7</sup> W. D. Davies<sup>8</sup> and E. P. Sanders.<sup>9</sup>

On the other side, the fundamental significance and centrality of justification by faith in Paul's thought has been maintained by scholars like J. Gresham Machen,<sup>10</sup> H. D. Wendland,<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Weizsäcker, *The Apostolic Age of the Christian Church* (2 vols.; E.T., London, Williams & Norgate, 1894–95), 1.141, 165–166, 373–374.

<sup>2</sup> Wrede, *Paul* (E.T., London, Philip Green, 1907), 123, 147, 177–178.

<sup>3</sup> Heitmüller, *Luthers Stellung in der Religionsgeschichte des Christentums* (Marburg, N. G. Elwert, 1917), 19.

<sup>4</sup> Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (E.T., 1931; reprinted, London, Adam & Charles Black, 1967), 220–226.

<sup>5</sup> H. J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (E.T., Philadelphia, Westminster, 1961), 123, 196, 206.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Henry Buck, Jr., "The Date of Galatians," *JBL* 70 (1951), 113–122, esp. 121–122.

<sup>7</sup> Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *HTR* 56 (1963), 199–215, esp. 204 (= *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (London, SCM, 1977), 78–96 (84)).

<sup>8</sup> W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (2nd ed.; London, SPCK, 1955), 221–223.

<sup>9</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London, SCM, 1977), 438–441, 490–495, 502–508 (cf. 452–463).

Particularly reminiscent in some ways of the theory of W. Wrede is the view of Georg Strecker as expressed in his recent essay, "Befreiung und Rechtfertigung: Zur Stellung der Rechtfertigungslehre in der Theologie des Paulus," in *Rechtfertigung. Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann zum 70. Geburtstag*, eds. Johannes Friedrich, Wolfgang Pöhlmann and Peter Stuhlmacher (Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) and Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 479–508.

<sup>10</sup> Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1921), 278–279.

<sup>11</sup> H. D. Wendland, *Die Mitre der paulinischen Botschaft* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1935), esp. 6, 48.

J. I. Packer,<sup>12</sup> Karl Kertelge,<sup>13</sup> Hans Conzelmann,<sup>14</sup> Günther Bornkamm,<sup>15</sup> Ernst Käsemann<sup>16</sup> and, last but not least, F. F. Bruce. Professor Bruce regards as properly given the emphasis which Bornkamm and Käsemann place on the centrality of Paul's doctrine of justification to his whole concept of the gospel, not only in polemical situations; against the view of Buck and Wrede, Bruce maintains that "the essence of justification by faith was probably implicit in the logic of his (i.e. Paul's) conversion."<sup>17</sup> At the same time, Professor Bruce holds that crucial as the doctrine of justification by faith is to Paul's understanding of the gospel, it does not exhaust that gospel:

Paul sets his doctrine of justification, together with his other doctrines, in the context of the new creation that has come into being with Christ. That the acquittal of the day of judgment is pronounced here and now on those who put their faith in Jesus is part and parcel of the truth that for them "the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun" ([2 Cor. 5, 17](#), NEB).<sup>18</sup>

This estimate of the status of justification in Paul is similar to the view of Herman N. Ridderbos, who, whilst affirming that the doctrine "unmistakably belongs to the very heart of Paul's preaching," judges that it nevertheless is but one aspect, although a very central aspect, of the great redemption accomplished by Christ, and that the perspective of *Heilsgeschichte* "alone can illuminate the many facets and interrelations of his preaching."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> J. I. Packer, *NBD* (1962), 684a–685a, s.v. "Justification".

<sup>13</sup> Kertelge, *"Rechtfertigung" bei Paulus* (2d. ed.; Münster, Aschendorff, 1971), 286, 295–304, 306.

<sup>14</sup> Conzelmann, "Current Problems in Pauline Research," *Int* 22 (1968), 171–186, esp. 175–178, 186; idem, "Die Rechtfertigungslehre des Paulus. Theologie oder Anthropologie?" *EvT* 28 (1968), 389–404, esp. 394–397, 404.

<sup>15</sup> Bornkamm, *Paul* (E.T., London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1971), 115–117, 152, 249.

<sup>16</sup> Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul* (E.T., London, SCM, 1971), 70 n. 27, 71–73, 76, 80, 164.

<sup>17</sup> F. F. Bruce, "Galatian Problems. 4. The Date of the Epistle," *BJRL* 54 (1971–72), 250–267, esp. 261–264 (quotation from 262). See also his *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (TNTC; London, Tyndale, 1963), 35–37; and "Some Thoughts on Paul and Paulinism," *Vox Evangelica* 7 (1971), 5–16, esp. 10. In John Reumann, "The Gospel of the Righteousness of God. Pauline Interpretation in [Rom. 3:21–31](#)," *Int* 20 (1966), 432–452, Bruce (*Romans*, 35–36) is erroneously cited (446 n. 45) as having stated that justification was merely a polemical doctrine deriving from disputes with the Judaizers.

<sup>18</sup> Bruce, *Romans*, 40. Cf. idem, "The Epistles of Paul," in *PCB*, 927–939, esp. 934a (§810c).

<sup>19</sup> See Ridderbos, *Paul and Jesus* (E.T., Philadelphia, Presbyterian & Reformed, 1958), 63–65; cf. idem, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (E.T., Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1975), 161–162, 166–167, 173–174. See also Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption* (Th. D. thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1969; printed by Westminster Student Service, 1971), 143, cf. 1–15. On the subject of *Heilsgeschichte* in Paul, cf. F. F. Bruce, "Salvation History in the New Testament," in *Man and His Salvation. Studies in Memory of S. G. F. Brandon*, eds. E. J. Sharpe and J. R. Hinnells (Manchester, University Press, 1973), 75–90, esp. 82–85.

With this all-too-brief introduction to the modern debate on the status of justification by faith in Paul's thought<sup>20</sup> as background, we offer in the following pages a study of the doctrine as it finds expression in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Since the fact that the doctrine is set forth in detail only in Galatians and Romans might seem to lend support to the claim that the doctrine is of merely polemical significance, it is important not to overlook Paul's teaching on the subject in his other epistles. Here we shall confine our attention to the other two *Haupt-briefe*, where four passages are to be considered.

## I. 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18–31

In dealing with the report received from Chloe's people that there were quarrels among the Corinthians, Paul exposes the root cause of the divisions as basically twofold: the Corinthian converts had a wrong conception both of wisdom ([1:18–2:16](#)) and of the Christian ministry ([3:1–4:13](#)). The passage before us sets forth the contrast between God's wisdom and the wisdom of the world, first in terms of the message of the cross ([1:18–25](#)) and then in terms of God's choice of the Corinthian community ([1:26–31](#)).

The word of the cross is described from two points of view: to those who are on the way to ruin, it is folly; but to those who are on the way to salvation, it is the power of God (verse [18](#), cf. NEB). By implication, it is also weakness to the former category of people and wisdom to the latter. This word of the cross, which proclaims Christ crucified, is a stumbling block (because it speaks of apparent weakness) to Jews in their demand for signs, and folly to Greeks in their quest for wisdom; but to those whom God has called, both Jew and Greek, Christ as proclaimed by the apostles is God's power and God's wisdom (verses [23–24](#)). What the former category of people regard as "wisdom" is of no avail in the matter of salvation, as Scripture attests (verses [19–20a](#)); for secular wisdom cannot attain to the knowledge of God, while salvation is attained through faith in the preached word, and it is exactly by thus accomplishing through the gospel what secular wisdom had been unable to accomplish that God has exposed the latter as folly (verses [20b–21](#)). The ultimate explanation of all this paradox lies in the fact that the cross is God's act: what to human wisdom is unintelligible (τὸ ἀνοήτως) and to human notions of power bespeaks weakness (τὸ ἀσθενές, cf. [2 Cor. 13:4](#)) is wiser and stronger than men with all their wisdom and might (verse [25](#)).

Clinching the argument of the preceding verses, and especially the comprehensive principle of verse [25](#), Paul now appeals to the Corinthians' own experience of God's call (verses [26–28](#)). The threefold ἐξελέξατο ὁ θεός emphasizes that the community in its outwardly feeble condition has been the object of God's election, while the καταισχύνη-καταργήσῃ emphasis underlines the fact that God has set aside human wisdom, power and distinction as totally ineffective and inoperative as means of salvation. God's ultimate purpose in this mode of operation is that all flesh should be prevented from boasting before him (verse [29](#)), and it is in accordance with this that the Corinthian Christians on their part (ὁμεῖς) have been chosen by God, from whom they have their being (i.e. as God's children) by virtue of their incorporation in Christ Jesus (verse [30](#), cf. RSV).

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<sup>20</sup> For a fuller account reference may perhaps be allowed to the author's unpublished Ph.D. thesis, "The Relationship between Righteousness and Faith in the Thought of Paul, as expressed in the Letters to the Galatians and the Romans" (2 vols.; Manchester University, 1975), 1.1–18, with corresponding notes in 2.1–6. Cf. idem, "The Status of Justification by Faith in Paul's Thought: A Brief Survey of a Modern Debate" (forthcoming).

To believers, God has made Christ to be true wisdom which embraces three aspects: both δικαιοσύνη and ἁγιασμός, and also ἀπολύτρωσις. While the fact that ἡγιασμένοις in [1:2](#) refers not to the Corinthians' holiness in character or conduct but to their having been set apart to be God's holy people (cf. κλητοὺς ἁγίους) might seem to create a presumption in favour of ἁγιασμός having in [1:30](#) a relational, not ethical, meaning, it has been observed that "the term ἁγιασμός is always distinguished from ἅγιος and ἁγιάζειν by the emphasis on the moral element,"<sup>21</sup> and there seems to be no compelling reason why we should deviate from this sense here. Perhaps we shall not go far astray if we take ἁγιασμός here to denote the process of sanctification, but with primary emphasis on its commencement. But ἁγιασμός would be repeating the same idea as δικαιοσύνη if the latter were understood in the sense of ethical righteousness; hence it is preferable to take δικαιοσύνη in the sense of forensic righteousness, i.e. the status of being in the right with God. As for ἀπολύτρωσις, which has been variously interpreted, it is probably best (in view of ἐγενήθη, which clearly points to the historic act of Christ, and of the fact that in [Romans 3:24](#) believers are said to be justified διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως which is in Christ Jesus) to understand the term here of the believers' deliverance through the death of Christ on the cross, which thus furnishes the ground both for justification and sanctification and sets the other terms "in the only context in which they can be rightly understood."<sup>22</sup> On this interpretation, we have in justification (an act) and sanctification (considered as the commencement of a process) not so much two successive stages of Christian experience as two coincident facets or aspects of the one act of redemption accomplished by Christ and, correspondingly, of the believer's one experience of incorporation in and union with Christ.

Finally, picking up the ὅπως of verse [29](#), Paul states that the divine purpose in Christ's becoming the believers' wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption is the same as the ultimate goal of God's dealing as he does with the world and with the church, viz. the destruction of all καύχησις and his own glorification (verse [31](#)).

Scholars have correctly observed that there is a parallel between Paul's polemic against secular wisdom in this passage and his polemic against justification by works elsewhere in his epistles: both secular wisdom and justification by works are characteristic of man in

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<sup>21</sup> O. Procksch, *TDNT* 1 (1964), 113, s.v. ἁγιασμός.

<sup>22</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New York, Harper & Row, 1968), 61. Cf. P. Stuhlmacher, "Achtzehn Thesen zur paulinischen Kreuzestheologie," in *Rechtfertigung. Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann* (see n. 9 above), 509–523, esp. 512–513. For redemption as the basis of sanctification, cf. O. Procksch, *TDNT* 1 (1964), 113, s.v. ἁγιασμός. For ἀπολύτρωσις in the sense of initial redemption, cf. F. Büchsel, *TDNT* 4 (1967), 353, s.v. ἀπολύτρωσις.

One may note with F. Hahn, "Taufe und Rechtfertigung: Ein Beitrag zur paulinischen Theologie in ihrer Vor- und Nachgeschichte," in *Rechtfertigung. Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann*, 95–124, that the three concepts (δικαιοσύνη, ἁγιασμός, ἀπολύτρωσις) in "umgekehrter Reihenfolge so auffällig den Taufaussagen in 1 Kor 6,11b entsprechen," without entirely subscribing to his conclusion that [1 Cor. 1:30b](#) has "die Funktion einer christologischen Korrespondenzformel zu der Tauftradition, die in 1 Kor 6,11 zitiert wird" (107, 108).

independence of God, and both have been done away in Christ.<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that Paul actually defines true wisdom *in terms of* justification as well as sanctification and redemption (verse [30](#)). Since even in polemicizing against the Corinthians' false estimate of secular wisdom Paul thus uses the juridical category of justification to clarify his meaning, it is impossible to maintain that justification by faith is something merely occasional and secondary for Paul, something which he employs only when engaged in argument with Jewish legalists; certainly our passage tends rather to support the conclusion that "however much Paul's doctrine of the law is polemic in character, it ... contains his central thoughts."<sup>24</sup>

To this we may add two other conclusions to be drawn from our study of the passage: (1) Righteousness (or justification) is attainable by faith: it is to those who believe (verse [21b](#)), i.e. respond positively to the proclamation of Christ crucified (verse [23](#)) in the word of the cross (verse [18](#)), to those whom God has called and chosen (verses [26–28](#)), that Christ became true wisdom which embraces justification, sanctification and redemption. And the twofold emphasis (a) on the exclusion of boasting on the basis of secular wisdom, power or distinction and (b) on the Lord as the sole ground of boasting implies that righteousness is by faith alone, apart from any merit on man's part. (2) Justification and sanctification (the latter viewed as the commencement of a process) appear to be alike based on redemption, and are closely connected as two coincident aspects of this redemption (verse [30b](#)) and, correspondingly, of the believer's incorporation in Christ (verse [30a](#)).

## II. 1 CORINTHIANS 6:11

One of the matters Paul had to deal with in 1 Corinthians was that some Christians were bringing their disputes before heathen judges ([6:1–11](#)). Against such a practice of law-suits, one of the arguments Paul employs is that they should live as those who have been redeemed, with their past put behind them (verses [9–11](#)). In the verse before us, Paul flatly declares that some among the Corinthian believers had been such as could never inherit the kingdom of God, but he immediately follows this with a triple *ἀλλά*, which sharply contrasts their present state and their seamy past.

In *ἀπελούσασθε* we probably have not the middle used for the passive so that the sense is "you were washed," but a genuine middle with some such sense as "you got (or allowed) yourselves (to be) washed." It suggests that baptism is in mind; but, as C. K. Barrett observes, the use of the non-technical word instead of the more technical *ἐβαπτίσθητε* shows that Paul attaches importance to the inward meaning rather than the outward circumstances of the rite.<sup>25</sup> The reference, it would seem, is to a spiritual cleansing from sin which is "sacramentally signified in baptism."<sup>26</sup> The two succeeding aorist verbs probably refer to the same event of baptism as is reflected in *ἀπελούσασθε*. *Ἠγιάσθητε* represents the Corinthians' sanctification as a definite act; in contrast to [1:30](#), here "sanctification is not

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. G. Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* (E.T., London, SCM, 1969), 29; A. Schlatter, *Der Glaube im Neuen Testament* (Sth ed.; Stuttgart, Calwer, 1963), 388.

<sup>24</sup> R. Bultmann, *Existence and Faith. Shorter Writings of Rudolph Bultmann* (E.T., London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1961), 137.

<sup>25</sup> Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 141.

<sup>26</sup> F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians* (NCB; London, Oliphants, 1971), 62.

moral action on the part of man, but a divinely effected state.”<sup>27</sup> But if the word ἀγιάζειν itself does not here signify practical holiness on the part of the Corinthians, yet in view of the paraenetic nature of the context we may believe that Paul thinks at the same time of the ethical consequences which result from their state of being consecrated to God.<sup>28</sup> And since, in point of fact, being relationally consecrated to God means being separated to holiness of life, consecration (in the relational sense) may be regarded as but the commencement of sanctification (considered as a process of ethical transformation).

To the acts of cleansing and sanctification Paul adds ἐδικαιώθητε. It has been suggested that [1 Corinthians 6:11](#) is to be regarded as a statement of early Christian baptismal instruction, which understood justification, not yet in the Pauline sense of justification by faith, but as forgiveness of sins on the ground of Christ’s atoning death.<sup>29</sup> But it is hard to think that Paul could speak of justification in a sense that is unrelated to its characteristic meaning. It has also been maintained, in view of the position of ἐδικαιώθητε (coming after the other two verbs), that it has a causative sense,<sup>30</sup> but this is not a necessary conclusion. We are probably not intended to take the three verbs in any chronological order at all (cf. the order in [1:30](#)), since the aorists are best taken as denoting coincidental action; and the order of the verbs is perhaps best explained in terms of the apostle’s sequence of thought, as O. Pfleiderer suggested: in contrast to the Corinthians’ sinful past, the sanctifying effect of their conversion is described first in negative and then in positive terms (ἀπελούσασθε, ἡγιασθητε), and ἐδικαιώθητε is added “because it was a necessary part of the full statement of the effects of God’s favour.”<sup>31</sup>

The two prepositional phrases which follow are naturally (especially in view of the threefold ἀλλά) to be taken as qualifying all three verbs, and are thus related to the baptismal event as a whole. If here Paul apparently presents the three coincident actions as occurring at baptism, this may be due to the fact that since “baptism is the visible sign of visible incorporation into the visible church”<sup>32</sup> it can be more effectively appealed to than faith as marking the believers’ decisive break with the past. Hence, although formally Paul’s statement is a reference to baptism, yet substantially it is really a description of what, in strict analysis, lies behind baptism, viz. the believers’ (in this case, the Corinthians’) conversion-experience.<sup>33</sup> On this showing, ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι κτλ. indicates the work of God in Jesus Christ which is the basis of the work of grace experienced by the Corinthian Christians,

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<sup>27</sup> O. Procksch, *TDNT* 1 (1964), 112, s.v. ἀγιάζω.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Kertelge, *Rechtfertigung*, 243–244.

<sup>29</sup> So Kertelge, *Rechtfertigung*, 244; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; E.T., London, SCM, 1971), 1.136; F. Hahn, “Taufe und Rechtfertigung”, 105–107 with n. 47. Cf. also Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 471–472, where the verb in [1 Corinthians 6:11](#) (as also in [Romans 5:9](#) and [8:30](#)) is considered as referring to “being cleansed of or forgiven for past transgressions” and thus being equivalent to “sanctified”.

<sup>30</sup> H. Braun, *Gerichtsgedanke und Rechtfertigungslehre bei Paulus* (Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs, 1930), 83. Cf. BAG 197a, s.v. δικαιόω 3c.

<sup>31</sup> O. Pfleiderer, *Paulinism* (2 vols.; E.T., London, Williams & Norgate, 1891), 1.180.

<sup>32</sup> Hans Küng, *Justification* (E.T., London, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1964), 245.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 142.

while ἐν τῷ πνεύματι κτλ. reflects the work of the Spirit who brings the believer into relation with Christ (cf. [1 Cor. 12:3, 13](#)) and both separates him to God (cf. [2 Thess. 2:13](#)) and leads him in the life of progressive sanctification (cf. [2 Cor. 3:18](#); [Rom. 8:13–14](#); [Gal. 5:17–18, 22–25](#)). If this be the case, then we have in the three verbs of our text not three steps or stages of Christian experience, but different aspects of the Spirit’s action or, to state it from the recipient’s standpoint, of the believer’s union with Christ.

Thus we find presented here in juxtaposition cleansing, sanctification and justification as different aspects of a single act of grace at the outset of the Christian life, as coincident facts of the believer’s one experience of union with Christ. Since faith is implied both in ἀπελούσασθε and in the confession of the name of the Lord in baptism (cf. [Rom. 10:10](#)), it is implied that justification is by faith. The phrase ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι κτλ. also implies that justification is based on the work of Christ. On all these points, there is complete consistency between this passage and what we have found in [1:18–31](#).

### III. 2 CORINTHIANS 3:4–11

Following on the introduction ([1:1–11](#)) and an explanation of Paul’s recent conduct towards the Corinthians ([1:12–2:13](#)), the third main section of 2 Corinthians is in large part a sustained exposition of the ministry as exercised by Paul and his colleagues ([2:14–7:4](#)). In the verses before us, Paul describes himself and his colleagues as ministers of the new covenant and begins to contrast the ministry of this new covenant with that of the old, the contrast being carried further and completed in the following verses ([3:12–18](#)), which stress the openness of the new ministry over against the veiledness of the old.

At the beginning of our passage, Paul explains that the confidence which he and his colleagues have before God ([3:1–3](#)) comes through the enabling of Christ (verse [4](#)). This thought is expanded in both its negative and its positive aspect (verses [5–6](#)): self-competence on the part of the workers is ruled out; their adequacy is from God—it is he who has made them adequate to be ministers of a new covenant. The reference is to Jeremiah’s prophecy of a new covenant ([Jer. 31:31–34](#)) which is now fulfilled in Christ; that Paul here “but not in Romans refers to a new covenant is due to the fact that he is dealing with Judaizers.”<sup>34</sup> Paul brings out the essential difference between the new covenant and the old by the phrase οὐ γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεύματος, which contrasts not the letter of the law and the spirit of the law, but the law of God and the Spirit of God:<sup>35</sup> the law as γράμμα, i.e. a written code “carved in letters on stone” (verse [7a](#)), only exacts obedience to its demands without imparting the power to fulfil them and pronounces the death-sentence on all transgressors (cf. [Deut. 27:26](#); [30:17–18](#); [Gal. 3:10](#); [Rom. 7:5, 9–11](#)); it is the Spirit—not the law (cf. [Gal. 3:21](#))—who imparts life. The crucial difference that Paul brings out in verse

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<sup>34</sup> Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC; London, Adam & Charles Black, 1973), 112. On this identification of Paul’s opponents cf. *ibid.*, 28–30; *idem*, “Cephas and Corinth,” in *Abraham unser Vater. Festschrift für Otto Michel*, eds. Otto Betz, Martin Hengel and Peter Schmidt (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1963), 1–12, esp. 11–12; *idem*, “Paul’s Opponents in 2 Corinthians,” *NTS* 17 (1970–71), 233–254. Cf. also F. F. Bruce, “Paul and Jerusalem,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968), 3–25, esp. 12–13; *1 & 2 Corinthians*, 174.

<sup>35</sup> So, correctly, e.g. G. Schrenk, *TDNT* 1 (1964), 766–767, s.v. γράμμα. On πνεῦμα as a reference to the Holy Spirit, cf. Karl Prümm, “Röm 1–11 und 2 Kor 3,” *Biblica* 31 (1950), 164–203, esp. 184.

[6](#), then, is this: under the old order of legal observance, an external code dispenses death; under the new order of divine grace, the Spirit gives life.

The contrast stated in the simple terms of verse [6](#) is expounded (verses [7–18](#)) in a midrash on [Exodus 34:29–35](#). In the first part of this Christian midrash (verses [7–11](#)) Paul shows the superiority of the new ministry to the old by reference to its greater glory, and this for three reasons, the second of which is explanatory of the first. (a) If even the old ministry, which, based as it was on a covenant “engraved letter by letter upon stone” (NEB), is a ministry (or service) of death as dispensing death (τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἀποκτείνει), had a glorious inauguration (ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ), so much so that the Israelites could not gaze steadily on Moses’ face because of its brightness, fading as this was (verse [7](#)),<sup>36</sup> much more must the ministry that is marked by the Spirit be invested with glory (verse [8](#)). (b) That the old ministry is a ministry of death is due to the fact that it is a ministry of condemnation—the law being both the criterion of judgment (cf. [Rom. 2:12–13](#)) and the instrument of condemnation (cf. [Rom. 3:19–20](#)); but if even the ministry of condemnation was glorious, much more will the ministry of δικαιοσύνη abound in glory (verse [9](#)).

The Greek term here is most commonly understood to mean forensic righteousness, i.e. the righteous status conferred in justification; and the antithesis between δικαιοσύνη and κατὰκρισις puts it beyond reasonable doubt that the former term at least includes the idea of justification. Two considerations, however, suggest that something more is here involved. First, the strict counterpart of κατὰκρισις is not δικαιοσύνη but δικαίωσις, as in [Romans 5:18](#); and while δικαιοσύνη certainly could mean the righteousness conferred in justification (cf. [Gal. 2:21](#)), yet the fact that Paul uses δικαιοσύνη instead of δικαίωσις when the latter would have been the obvious word to use to convey the idea of justification in opposition to condemnation, at least opens the possibility that he intends to convey more than the idea of justification here. Second, the “ministry of death” and the “ministry of the Spirit” in verses [7a](#) and [8a](#) become in verse [9](#) the “ministry of condemnation” and the “ministry of δικαιοσύνη” respectively. Since not only are the two statements parallel to each other but there is a logical connection between verses [7a](#) and [9a](#) (the “ministry of death” is lethal in its effect because it is a “ministry of condemnation”; condemnation leads to death), it is reasonable to assume that some logical connection similarly exists between verses [8](#) and [9b](#), i.e. between the “ministry of the Spirit” and the “ministry of δικαιοσύνη”. Now if by analogy we may say that the new ministry is a ministry of δικαιοσύνη because it is a “ministry of the Spirit,” then, since the Spirit is life-giving (ζωοποιεῖ, verse [6b](#)), δικαιοσύνη will assume the meaning of righteousness of life. For these two reasons, we submit that δικαιοσύνη in verse [9](#) is to be understood as embracing both forensic and ethical righteousness: as antithetical to κατὰκρισις it has the meaning of justification; at the same time, being logically connected with the Spirit it acquires the sense of righteousness of life, for the Spirit is not only the source of life (cf. [Gal. 5:25a](#)) but also the regulative principle of the believer’s conduct (cf. [Gal. 5:25b](#), [17–18](#), [22–23](#); [Rom. 8:13–14](#)) and the power by which the believer is enabled to fulfil the righteous requirement of the law ([Rom. 8:4](#)).

A third reason for the greater splendour of the new ministry is its permanence, over against the transitoriness of the old (verses [10–11](#)): the old ministry has, as it were, been faded into non-glory (καὶ ... οὐ δεδόξασται), as something which only once had glory (τὸ δεδοξασμένον), by the far superior glory of the new ministry. Now if that which was being

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<sup>36</sup> In speaking of the δόξα of Moses’ face Paul follows the Septuagint ([Exod. 34:29–30](#)), but the thought of the glory as fading from Moses’ face seems to have been an inference from [Exod. 34:33–34](#). Cf. F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, 191; Barrett, *Second Corinthians*, 114–116.

done away (τὸ καταργούμενον)—viz. the entire order which had its basis in, and was characterized by, the law, and thus the old covenant and the old ministry together<sup>37</sup>—was accompanied by glory (διὰ δόξης), much more must the new order, the order which remains (τὸ μένον), continue in a state of glory (ἐν δόξῃ).

Without following Paul into the second half of his midrash (3:12–18), we may make two observations by way of conclusion. (1) If the old ministry is said to be a ministry of condemnation and death because it is based on a covenant epitomized by the law as a written code, the logical inference to be drawn is that there can be no justification on the basis of the law. In the words τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἀποκτείνει (verse 6b) alone we have a clear and succinct statement of the impossibility of justification by works of the law. The very choice of γράμμα to refer to the law is well calculated to emphasize the negative value of the law. (2) The contrast between the old order and the new is the contrast between the old covenant and the new, which in turn means the contrast between the ministry of condemnation and death and the ministry of righteousness and the Spirit; in other words, if the old order is characterized by condemnation and death the new order is marked by righteousness and the life-giving Spirit. Whether δικαιοσύνη be taken to mean forensic righteousness alone or, as we suggest, both forensic and ethical righteousness, it is clear that the idea of justification occupies an essential place in Paul's understanding of the gospel. Even when due allowance has been made for the polemical orientation in what Paul says here, the very fact that he can characterize the entire gospel dispensation as a dispensation of righteousness must mean that justification, as an aspect of that righteousness, is of crucial importance to the gospel as Paul conceived it. If our interpretation of the term δικαιοσύνη here is correct, then we see that justification and sanctification are firmly linked together as the most essential blessings of the new order.

#### IV. 2 CORINTHIANS 5:18–21

This paragraph (cf. NEB) is part of Paul's sustained exposition of the apostolic ministry (2:14–7:4). In its narrower context, it concludes a section (5:11–21) in which Paul enunciates the love of God as a motivating principle of all Christian conduct and therefore of apostolic service as well (verses 11–15), announces the new creation that has come in Christ (verses 16–17), and speaks of the ministry of reconciliation that has been committed to him and his colleagues (verses 18–21).

All that is involved in the new order (τὰ πάντα, verse 18)<sup>38</sup> is, like the original creation, God's handiwork. That a man can become a new creation in Christ is due to the fact that God

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<sup>37</sup> Pace C. E. B. Cranfield, "St. Paul and the Law," in *New Testament Issues*, ed. Richard Batey (London, SCM, 1970), 148–172, who refers τὸ καταργούμενον exclusively "to the ministry of Moses at the giving of the law" (160). It is true that in verses 7–9 the explicit contrast is between the two ministries, but having spoken of "ministers of a new covenant" (verse 6), Paul immediately passes on to contrast the two ministries of the old and new covenants respectively; and the old ministry itself is said to be "carved in letters on stone" (verse 7a)—words more suitable as a description of the old covenant. Since ministry is based on covenant, the two stand or fall together. Cf. J. Behm, *TDNT* 2 (1964), 130, s.v. διαθήκη; G. Delling, *TDNT* 1 (1964), 454, s.v. καταργέω.

<sup>38</sup> The existence of the new order is implied in verse 17, though its primary reference is to the individual man in Christ.

has, on his own initiative, completed the work of reconciling men to himself through Christ. On the basis of this finished work God has also given to Paul and his colleagues (ἡμῖν), as recipients of the benefits of his reconciling work (ἡμᾶς), the ministry of reconciliation. In verses [19–21](#) Paul further explains what he has said in verse [18](#). The salient features may be noted as follows.

(1) In Christ God was engaged in reconciling (ἦν ... καταλλάσσων) the world to himself (verse [19a](#)). Though Paul's primary concern is doubtless with the world of men (as the next phrase shows), God's work of reconciliation in Christ is represented as cosmic in its effect (cf. [Col. 1:20](#)). Here "the very universality of the expression ... is consistent only with an objective reconciliation ... it means that God is putting away His own condemnation and wrath."<sup>39</sup>

(2) God was reconciling a world to himself by not counting men's (αὐτῶν) trespasses against them. This already points to the thought of verse [21](#). What is suggested by Paul's words here is the idea of an objective general justification of mankind on the ground of Christ's atoning death.<sup>40</sup> From the juxtaposition of justification and reconciliation here (and again in verses [20–21](#)) some have concluded that the two are one and the same thing.<sup>41</sup> Reconciliation is not, however, really described as justification; rather, justification is conceived of as providing the logical foundation for reconciliation. As Barrett explains, "since transgressions no longer counted against men (cf. [Exod. 29:10](#)) the way was open for reconciliation."<sup>42</sup>

(3) Since the "saving facts must be proclaimed in order that they may become saving reality for individuals,"<sup>43</sup> God also deposited in Paul and his colleagues (θέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν) the word or message of reconciliation (verse [19c](#)), which is "not the conciliatory and reconciling word but the proclamation of the already accomplished reconciliation."<sup>44</sup> It follows (οὖν, verse [20a](#)) from this divine commissioning that Paul and his colleagues are ambassadors ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ—Christ's representatives acting in his place:<sup>45</sup> as they proclaim the message of reconciliation, God is in fact exhorting through them.<sup>46</sup> There is thus a complete unity of action and purpose between God and Christ (cf. verse [20b](#)).

(4) The apostolic messenger's entreaty is an invitation to be reconciled to God (verse [20b](#)), i.e. to accept the reconciliation which he offers, which is objectively complete but has

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<sup>39</sup> J. Denney, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1894), 215.

<sup>40</sup> A. B. Bruce, *St. Paul's Conception of Christianity* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), 159.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. e.g. Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville, Abingdon, 1968), 149; Bultmann, *Theology*, 1.285–286.

<sup>42</sup> Barrett, *Second Corinthians*, 177.

<sup>43</sup> G. Friedrich, *TDNT* 3 (1965), 710, s.v. κηρύσσω.

<sup>44</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 1.287.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 (1968), 683, s.v. πρεσβεύω; H. Riesenfeld, *TDNT* 8 (1972), 513, s.v. ὑπέρ.

<sup>46</sup> On the rendering "exhort" as preferable to "appeal" (RSV, NEB) and "entreat" (NASB), see O. Schmitz, *TDNT* 5 (1967), 795, s.v. παρακαλέω.

to be appropriated by personal response to become subjectively true for the individual. This invitation to faith is not, however, the entire content of the message of reconciliation: the latter contains also a declaration of the ground on which the appeal can be made. That ground is supplied in (the asyndetic) verse [21](#). The main clause (verse [21a](#)) states that God made Christ, who came to no personal, practical acquaintance with sin either inwardly in conscience (cf. [1 John 3:5](#)) or outwardly in action (cf. [1 Pet. 2:22](#)),<sup>47</sup> to be sin for our sake. Although a sacrificial allusion cannot be ruled out as impossible, ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν probably means that God made Christ the object of his wrath and condemnation as he bore our sins and submitted to death;<sup>48</sup> this is the most natural interpretation, especially in view of the close similarity between the present verse and [Galatians 3:13](#), where Christ is said to have redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. God's intention in making Christ our sin-bearer—ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν probably includes both the idea of "for our sake" (RSV, NEB) and that of "on our behalf" (RV, NASB)<sup>49</sup>—is that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ (verse [21b](#)). It is by analogy with the preceding statement that God made Christ ἁμαρτίαν, and for the sake of parallelism in construction, that believers are now said to become δικαιοσύνη; "Paul has chosen this exceptional wording in order to emphasize the 'sweet exchange' whereby sinners are given a righteous status before God through the righteous one who absorbed their sin (and its judgment) in himself."<sup>50</sup> The last phrase, ἐν αὐτῷ, indicates that justification takes place in the sphere of Christ, i.e. through identification with Christ in his death and resurrection.

Thus we have in verse [21b](#) a positive statement (of which verse [19b](#) is a negative counterpart and anticipation) of justification in Christ.<sup>51</sup> Since (as noted earlier) verse [21](#) provides the ground for the appeal of verse [20](#) to be reconciled to God, it is clear that Christ's death as sinbearer is the objective basis for reconciliation; but it is also the objective basis for our justification (verse [21b](#)). This raises again (cf. verse [19b](#)) the question of the

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, 210–211.

<sup>48</sup> So e.g. H. Braun, *TDNT* 6 (1968), 464, s.v. ποιέω; H. Reisenfeld, *TDNT* 8 (1972), 510, s.v. ὑπέρ; Bultmann, *Theology*, 1.277.

<sup>49</sup> So, correctly, Otto Kuss, *Der Römerbrief* (2 vols.; Regensburg, Friedrich Pustet, 1963), 125. Cf. H. Riesenfeld, *TDNT* 8 (1972), 510, s.v. ὑπέρ.

<sup>50</sup> F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, 211.

<sup>51</sup> This is how most interpreters see it. For other interpretations, cf. e.g. (1) G. Schrenk, *TDNT* 2 (1964), 208–209, s.v. δικαιοσύνη; (2) Charles Archibald Anderson Scott, *Christianity According to St. Paul* (1927; reprinted, Cambridge, The University Press, 1966), 60 n. 1; Edgar Johnson Goodspeed, "Some Greek Notes," *JBL* 73 (1954), 84–92, esp. 88; (3) Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (E.T., London, SCM, 1969), 169; (4) Karl Kertelge, *Rechtfertigung*, 104–106; (5) J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul* (Cambridge, The University Press, 1972), 159–161. A criticism which applies to each of these views, all of which agree in giving δικαιοσύνη a sense other than that of forensic righteousness, is that they take insufficient account of the fact that the language of verse 21b is largely conditioned by that of the preceding clause: since Christ's being made sin cannot be understood except in a forensic sense, our becoming God's righteousness in him is (in view of the parallel structure) most reasonably interpreted in a forensic sense, or in terms of a relationship.

exact relationship between justification and reconciliation implied here. Barrett seems to suggest that the two are synonymous: “Reconciliation,” he writes, “if located within God’s court and expressed in forensic terms, becomes justification.”<sup>52</sup> The two are doubtless parallel to each other to the extent that both are based on Christ’s death, but they are not exactly identical in content: the conferment of a righteous status on the believer and restoration to God’s favour are as a matter of fact indissolubly linked together but are nevertheless conceptually distinct. The logical relationship between the two has been correctly stated by Barrett himself when (in commenting on verse [19b](#)) he saw the not-counting of transgressions as opening the way for justification. Justification, in other words, is the logical basis for reconciliation. Since justification takes place “in Christ,” faith is implied as the means of identification with him; it is also implied in the response to the call to “be reconciled with God,” which is an invitation to faith. When by faith a man appropriates the reconciliation proffered in the word of reconciliation, he is at the same time justified. As F. Büchsel puts it, “The God who reconciles us to Himself is always at the same time the God who judges us. For this reason reconciliation *includes* justification both in [2 Cor. 5:21](#) ... and in v. [19](#).”<sup>53</sup>

Justification and reconciliation are thus inseparably linked together as different but coincident aspects of faith in Christ, though logically justification is the foundation for, and therefore prior to, reconciliation. Since reconciliation is itself that which makes the “new creation” of verse [17](#) possible, it follows that justification is the logical basis for the new creation as well, and thus the ἐν αὐτῷ of verse [21b](#) links up with the ἐν Χριστῷ of verse [17a](#): by faith-union with Christ the believer is justified, he is reconciled to God, and he becomes a new creation. These do not happen in successive stages, but as coincident aspects of the single experience of faith-union with Christ. Nevertheless, the logical relationships between them are such that justification appears to be the most fundamental aspect of this union.

We may sum up by saying that, according to this passage, (1) justification is by faith in Christ and on the basis of his death; (2) it is coincident with, but logically prior to, reconciliation; (3) it is the most fundamental aspect of the believer’s union with Christ and appears to be Paul’s first step in analyzing its meaning.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

On the basis of the foregoing study of the four Corinthians passages (I) [1 Corinthians 1:18–31](#), (II) [1 Corinthians 6:11](#), (III) [2 Corinthians 3:4–11](#), (IV) [2 Corinthians 5:18–21](#), we offer the following observations by way of summary and conclusion:

- (1) Justification can never be attained on the basis of the law (III).
- (2) Justification is by faith in Christ alone and on the basis of his atoning death (I, II, IV). This is not expressly stated but clearly implied.
- (3) Justification stands at the beginning of the Christian life coincidentally with sanctification (and cleansing) as an aspect of the believer’s incorporation in Christ (I, II); it is also coincident with reconciliation, but logically precedes it as its basis, and thus appears to be the most fundamental aspect of union with Christ and Paul’s first step in analysing its meaning (IV).

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<sup>52</sup> Barrett, *Second Corinthians*, 176.

<sup>53</sup> F. Büchsel, *TDNT* 1 (1964), 257, s.v. καταλλάσσω (italics supplied).

(4) Justification and sanctification are conjoined as coincident aspects of redemption in Christ (I) and as the fundamental blessings of the new order (III). Justification is an essential aspect of that true wisdom which Christ has become for believers (I); it is also an essential aspect of that δικαιοσύνη which characterizes the entire new dispensation (III).

(5) The fact that Paul freely employs the concept of justification even in contexts where the legalistic point of view is not discussed at all (I, II, IV; the first passage is particularly important in this regard) strongly argues that it cannot fairly be regarded as a purely polemical doctrine born of, and intended for use in, debate with Jews and Jewish Christian legalists only. In the light of the previous two observations ((3), (4)), it is much rather to be considered as of central significance to Paul.

(6) Justification by faith does not exhaust the content of Paul's gospel: like reconciliation and sanctification, and coincident with these, justification is one aspect of redemption in Christ. At the same time, it is not just one aspect like any other, but rather stands out as the most fundamental aspect of that redemption and of the believer's incorporation in Christ; it is the first step in Paul's analysis of the meaning of union with Christ, which in fact is the central motif and probably the best summarizing concept of Pauline soteriology.<sup>54</sup>

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# The Concept of Truth in the Inerrancy Debate

Norman L. Geisler

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How is it that evangelicals on both sides of the inerrancy debate can claim the Bible is wholly true and yet one side believes that there can be minor mistakes of history or science affirmed by the biblical authors,<sup>1</sup> while the other side denies that there are any mistakes

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<sup>54</sup> The teaching of justification by faith as expressed in the Corinthian letters will be found to be endorsed and more fully and systematically developed in Galatians and (especially) Romans.

<sup>1</sup> LaSor admits that "those portions where one passage is clearly in disagreement with another (such as the thousands in Kings compared to the ten thousands in Chronicles) cannot be explained as 'textual corruptions' " because otherwise "we could never again use the canons of criticism to support any text against the conjectural reading of liberal critics" (William S. LaSor, "Life under Tension," *Theological News and Notes* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1976), p.7) This means, according to LaSor, that clear contradictions (such as four thousand stalls in [2 Chron. 9:25](#) and forty thousand stalls in [1 Kings 4:26](#)) should be accepted as part of the autographs.