

A large teal circle is centered in the upper half of the cover, containing the title and subtitle text.

# **SOLA FIDE**

**THE REFORMED DOCTRINE  
OF JUSTIFICATION**

A silhouette of a mountain range is visible in the lower half of the cover, rendered in a darker shade of teal than the background.

**J. I. PACKER**



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# **Sola Fide: The Reformed Doctrine of Justification**

**by J. I. Packer**

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## **Chapter I: The Doctrine Upon Which the Church Stands or Falls**

"The confession of divine justification touches man's life at its heart, at the point of its relationship to God. It defines the preaching of the Church, the existence and progress of the life of faith, the root of human security, and man's perspective for the future."<sup>1</sup> So wrote G. C. Berkouwer of the doctrine of justification by faith set forth by Paul and reapprehended with decisive clarity at the Reformation; and in so writing he showed himself a true heir of the Reformers. For his

statement is no more, just as it is no less, than a straightforward spelling out of what Luther had meant when he called justification by faith *articulus stands aut cadentis ecclesiae*—the point of belief which determines (not politically or financially, but theologically and spiritually) whether the Church stands or falls.

With Luther, the Reformers saw all Scripture as being, in the last analysis, either law or gospel—meaning by "law" all that exposes our ruin through sin and by "gospel" everything that displays our restoration by grace through faith—and the heart of the biblical gospel was to them God's free gift of righteousness and justification. Here was the sum and substance of that *sola Fide—sola Gratia—solo Christo—sola Scriptura—soli Deo gloria* which was the sustained theme of their proclamation, polemics, praises and prayers. And to their minds (note well!) proclamation, polemics, praise, and prayer belonged together, just as did the five Latin slogans linked above as epitomizing their message. Justification by faith, by grace, by Christ, through Scripture, to the glory of God was to them a single topic, just as a fugue with several voices is a single piece. This justification was to them not a theological speculation but a religious reality, apprehended through prayer by revelation from God via the Bible. It was a gift given as part of God's total work of love in saving us, a work which leads us to know God and ourselves as both really are—something which the unbelieving world does not know. And to declare and defend God's justification publicly as the only way of life for any man was at once an act of confessing their faith, of glorifying their God by proclaiming his wonderful work, and of urging others to approach him in penitent and hopeful trust just as they did themselves.

So, where Rome had taught a piecemeal salvation, to be gained by stages through working a sacramental treadmill, the Reformers now proclaimed a unitary salvation, to be received in its entirety here and now by self-abandoning faith in God's promise, and in the God and the Christ of that promise, as set forth in the pages of the Bible. Thus the rediscovery of the gospel brought a rediscovery of evangelism,

the task of summoning non-believers to faith. Rome had said, God's grace is great, for through Christ's cross and his Church salvation is possible for all who will work and suffer for it; so come to church, and toil! But the Reformers said, God's grace is greater, for through Christ's cross and his Spirit salvation, full and free, with its unlimited guarantee of eternal joy, is given once and forever to all who believe; so come to Christ, and trust and take!

It was this conflict with the mediaeval message that occasioned the fivefold "only" in the slogans quoted above. Salvation, said the Reformers, is by faith (man's total trust) *only*, without our being obliged to work for it; it is by grace (God's free favor) *only*, without our having to earn or deserve it first; it is by Christ the God-man *only*, without there being need or room for any other mediatorial agent, whether priest, saint, or virgin; it is by Scripture *only*, without regard to such unbiblical and unfounded extras as the doctrines of purgatory and of pilgrimages, the relic-cult and papal indulgences as devices for shortening one's stay there; and praise for salvation is due to God *only*, without any credit for his acceptance of us being taken to ourselves. The Reformers made these points against unreformed Rome, but they were well aware that in making them they were fighting over again Paul's battle in Romans and Galatians against works, and in Colossians against unauthentic traditions, and the battle fought in Hebrews against trust in any priesthood or mediation other than that of Christ. And (note again!) they were equally well aware that the gospel of the five "onlies" would always be contrary to natural human thinking, upsetting to natural human pride, and an object of hostility to Satan, so that destructive interpretations of justification by faith in terms of justification by works (as by the Judaizers of Paul's day, and the Pelagians of Augustine's, and the Church of Rome both before and after the Reformation, and the Arminians within the Reformed fold, and Bishop Bull among later Anglicans) were only to be expected. So Luther anticipated that after his death the truth of justification would come under fresh attack and theology would develop in a way tending to submerge it once more in error and incomprehension;

and throughout the century following Luther's death Reformed theologians, with Socinian and other rationalists in their eye, were constantly stressing how radically opposed to each other are the "gospel mystery" of justification and the religion of the natural man. For justification by works is, in truth, the natural religion of mankind, and has been since the Fall, so that, as Robert Traill, the Scottish Puritan, wrote in 1692, "all the ignorant people that know nothing of either law or gospel," "all proud secure sinners," "all formalists," and "all the zealous devout people secure sinners, in a natural religion," line up together as "utter enemies to the gospel." That trio of theological relatives—Pelagianism, Arminianism, and Romanism—appear to Traill as bastard offspring of natural religion fertilized by the gospel. So he continued: "The principles of Arminianism are the natural dictates of a carnal mind, which is enmity both to the law of God, and to the gospel of Christ; and, next to the dead sea of Popery (into which also this stream runs), have, since Pelagius to this day, been the greatest plague of the Church of Christ, and it is like will be till his second coming.<sup>2</sup>—a point of view entirely in line with that of Luther and his reforming contemporaries a century and a half before. And all study of non-Christian faiths since the time of Luther and Traill has confirmed their biblically based conviction that salvation by self-effort is a principle that the fallen human mind takes for granted.

It has been common since Melancthon to speak of justification by faith as the *material* principle of the Reformation, corresponding to biblical authority as its *formal* principle. That is right. Of all the Reformers' many biblical elucidations, the rediscovery of justification as a present reality, and of the nature of the faith which secures it, was undoubtedly the most formative and fundamental. For the doctrine of justification by faith is like Atlas. It bears a whole world on its shoulders, the entire evangelical knowledge of God the Saviour. The doctrines of election, of effectual calling, regeneration, and repentance, of adoption, of prayer, of the Church, the ministry, and the sacraments, are all to be interpreted and understood in the light of justification by faith, for this is how the Bible views them.

Thus, we are taught that God elected men from eternity in order that in due time they might be justified through faith in Christ (Rom. 8:29f.). He renews their hearts under the Word, and draws them to Christ by effectual calling, in order that he might justify them upon their believing. Their adoption as God's sons follows upon their justification; it is, indeed, no more than the positive outworking of God's justifying sentence. Their practice of prayer, of daily repentance, and of good works springs from their knowledge of justifying grace (cf. Luke 18:9-14; Eph. 2:8-10). The Church is to be thought of as the congregation of the faithful, the fellowship of justified sinners, and the preaching of the Word and ministration of the sacraments are to be understood as means of grace because through them God evokes and sustains the faith that justifies. A right view of these things is possible only where there is a proper grasp of justification; so that, when justification falls, true knowledge of God's grace in human life falls with it. When Atlas loses his footing, everything that rested on his shoulders collapses too.

## **Chapter II: The Need, Meaning and Means of Justification**

A study of the expositions of justification in the works of the Reformers and the church confessions produced under their leadership in Germany, France, Switzerland, the Low Countries, and Britain reveals such unanimity that the material may be generalized about as a single whole. The main points stressed are these:

- 1. *The need of justification.*** The biblical frame of reference, within which alone justification can be understood and apart from which it remains, in the strictest sense, unintelligible, is created, said the Reformers, by two realities: human sin, which is universal, and divine judgment, which is inescapable. The basic fact is that the God

who made us intends to take account of us, measuring us by his own standards, and from his imminent inquisition nothing can shield us. All stand naked and open before the searcher of hearts, and all must prepare to meet their God. But that being so, all hope is gone; for, being morally and spiritually perverse throughout, we are forced to recognize that in God's eyes we are hopelessly and helplessly guilty, justly subject to his condemning sentence and to that judicial rejection which the Bible calls his *wrath*. The pride which prompts us to rail at this judgment as unjust is itself part of the perversity which makes it just. Anyone who knows anything of his own inner corruption and of the holiness of his Judge will find Luther's question, "How may I find a gracious God?," rising in his heart unbidden—but to this question the unaided human mind can find no answer. To persons convicted of sin, efforts for self-justification appear as the abortive products of self-ignorance; those who have become realistic about themselves see clearly that there is no road that way. Luther in the monastery sought perfect *contritio* (sorrow for sin, out of love for God), without which, so the theology of his day told him, there was no forgiveness. No man ever worked harder than Luther to make himself love God, but he could not do it. When, later, Luther said that Romans was written to "magnify sin,"<sup>3</sup> a what he meant was that Romans aims to induce a realistic awareness of moral and spiritual inability, and so create the self-despair which is the anteroom of faith in Christ.

When the Reformers insisted that the law must prepare for the gospel, this was what they meant. Conviction of sin, springing from God-given self-knowledge, is, they said, a necessary precondition for understanding justification, for it alone makes faith possible. The Augsburg Confession of 1531 states: ". . . this whole doctrine [of justification] must be related to the conflict of an alarmed conscience, and without that conflict it cannot be grasped. So persons lacking this experience, and profane men, are bad judges of this matter."<sup>4</sup> Calvin makes the same point in *Institutio* III.xii, a chapter on the theme that justification must be studied in the solemnizing light of God's judgment-seat.<sup>5</sup> And John Owens



preserves this perspective when at the start of his classic treatise, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith* (1677), he writes:

The first inquiry . . . is after the proper relief of the conscience of a sinner pressed and perplexed with a sense of the guilt of sin. For justification is the way and means, whereby such a person doth obtain acceptance before God... And nothing is pleadable in this cause, but what a man would speak unto his own conscience in that state, or into the conscience of another, when he is anxious under that inquiry.

And again:

It is the practical direction of the consciences of men, in their application unto God by Jesus Christ, for deliverance from the curse due unto the apostate state, and peace with him, with the influence of the way thereof unto universal gospel obedience, that is alone to be designed in the handling of this doctrine. And therefore, unto him that would treat of it in a due manner, it is required that he . . . not dare to propose that unto others which he doth not abide by himself, in the most intimate recesses of his mind, under his nearest approaches unto God, in his surprisals with dangers, in deep afflictions, in his preparations for death, and most humble contemplations of the infinite distance between God and him. Other notions . . . not seasoned with these ingredients are insipid and useless.<sup>6</sup>

Luther would have graduated Owen *summa cum laude* for that.

**2. *The meaning of justification.*** What justification is, said the Reformers, must be learned from Paul, its great New Testament expositor, who sees it clearly and precisely as a judicial act of God pardoning and forgiving our sins, accepting us as righteous, and instating us as his sons. Following Augustine, who studied the Bible in Latin and was partly misled by the fact that *justificare*, the Latin for Paul's *dikaiou'n*, naturally means "make righteous," the

Mediaevals had defined justification as pardon plus inner renewal, as the Council of Trent was also to do; but the Reformers saw that the Pauline meaning of *dikaion* is strictly forensic. So Calvin defines justification as acceptance, whereby God receives us into his favour and regards us as righteous; and we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ."<sup>7</sup> Justification is decisive for eternity, being in effect the judgment of the last day brought forward. Its source is God's grace, his initiative in free and sovereign love, and its ground is the merit and satisfaction—that is, the obedient sin-bearing death—of Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Son.<sup>8</sup>

Behind Calvin's phrase, "the imputation of the righteousness of Christ." lies the characteristic "Christ-and-his-people" Christology which was the center of reference—the hub of the wheel, we might say—of the Reformers' entire doctrine of grace. The concern of this Christology, as of the New Testament Christology which molded it, is soteriological, and its key-thought is participation through exchange. This idea is spelled out as follows. The Son of God came down from heaven in order to bring us to share with him the glory to which he has now returned. By incarnation he entered into solidarity with us, becoming through his Father's appointment the last Adam, the second head of the race, acting on our behalf in relation to God. As man, he submitted to the great and decisive exchange set forth in II Corinthians 5:21: "For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." "This," said Luther, "is that mystery which is rich in divine grace to sinners, wherein by a wonderful exchange our sins are no longer ours but Christ's, and the righteousness of Christ is not Christ's but ours. He has emptied himself of his righteousness that he might clothe us with it, and fill us with it; and he has taken our evils upon himself that he might deliver us from them. So that now the righteousness of Christ is ours not only objectively (as they term it) but formally also"—that is, it is not only an ontological reality, "there" for our benefit in some general sense, but actually imparts to us the "form," *i.e.*, the characteristic, of being righteous in God's sight.<sup>9</sup> Our sins

were reckoned (imputed) to Christ, so that he bore God's judgment on them, and in virtue of this his righteousness is reckoned ours, so that we are pardoned, accepted, and given a righteous man's status for his sake. Christians in themselves are sinners who never fully meet the law's demands; nonetheless, says Luther, "they are righteous because they believe in Christ, whose righteousness covers them and is imputed to them.<sup>10</sup> On this basis, despite all the shortcomings of which they are conscious, believers may be sure of eternal salvation, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And this, said the Reformers, is what it means to know Christ; for we do not know him, however much else we may know about him, till we see him as Christ *pro nobis*, dying, rising, and reigning for us as our gracious Saviour.

The Reformers were explicit in grounding our justification on Christ's penal substitution for us under the punitive wrath of God. According to Anselm, whose view had been standard in the West for four centuries before the Reformers, Christ's death was a satisfaction for our sins offered to God as an alternative to the punishment of our persons. The Reformers assumed this formula, but added two emphases which went beyond Anselm—first, that the Son's offering was made at the Father's bidding; second, that Christ's death made satisfaction precisely by being the punishment of our sins in his person.<sup>11</sup> Satisfaction, in other words, was by substitution; vicarious sin-bearing by the Son of God is the ground of our justification and hope. In saying this, the Reformers were not offering a speculative rationale of Christ's work of reconciliation, but simply expounding and confessing the scriptural reality of it. They did not discuss, as later generations were to do, why, or indeed whether, God must judge sin retributively as a basis of pardoning it, or how vicarious punishment can be shown to be meaningful and moral, or any of the other questions which the Socinian critique of the Reformed doctrine was to raise; their concern was just to enter fully into biblical thinking on this matter, and to relay it as clearly and precisely as possible. Luther, commenting on Galatians 3:13, "Christ redeemed

us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us," states penal substitution like this:

We are sinners and thieves, and therefore guilty of death and everlasting damnation. But Christ took all our sins upon him, and for them died upon the cross . . . all the prophets did foresee in spirit, that Christ should become the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, blasphemer, etc. that ever was for he being made a sacrifice, for the sins of the whole world, is now an innocent person and without sins . . . our most merciful Father, seeing us to be oppressed overwhelmed with the curse of the law, and so to be holden under the same that we could never be delivered from it by our own power, sent his only Son into the world and laid upon him all the sins of all men, saying: Be thou Peter that denier; Paul that persecutor, blasphemer and cruel oppressor; David that adulterer; that sinner which did eat the apple in Paradise; that thief which hanged upon the cross; and, briefly, be thou the person which hath committed the sins of all men; see therefore that thou pay and satisfy for them. Here now cometh the law and saith: I find him a sinner, and that such a one as hath taken upon him the sins of all men, and I see no sins but in him; therefore let him die upon the cross. And so he setteth upon him and killeth him. By this means the whole world is purged and cleansed from all sins, and so delivered from death and all evils.<sup>12</sup>

Calvin speaks less vivid and dramatically, but to the same effect:

Because the curse caused by our guilt was awaiting us at God's heavenly judgment seat, . . . Christ's condemnation before Pontius Pilate . . . is recorded, so that we might know that the penalty to which we were subject had been inflicted on this righteous man . . . when he was arraigned before a judgment-seat, accused and put under pressure by testimony, and sentenced to death by the words of a judge, we know by these records that this role was that of (*personam sustinuit*) of a guilty

wrongdoer . . . we see the role of the sinner and criminal represented in Christ, yet from his shining innocence it becomes obvious that he was burdened with the misdoing of others rather than his own. . . . This is our acquittal, that the guilt which exposed us to punishment was transferred to the head of God's Son. .

At every point he substituted himself in our place (*in vicem nostram ubique se supposuerit*) to pay the price of our redemption.<sup>13</sup>

This is the characteristic doctrine of the Reformation concerning the death of Christ. It was an act of obedient substitution on his part, an acceptance in his own person of the penalty due to us, in virtue of which the holy Judge declares guilty sinners immune from punishment and righteous in his sight. The great exchange is no legal fiction, no arbitrary pretense, no mere word-game, on God's part, but a costly achievement. The divinely established solidarity between Christ and his people was such that he was in truth "made sin" for us, and "bore in his soul the dreadful torments of a condemned and lost man"<sup>14</sup> so that in our souls the joy of knowing God's forgiveness and favor might reign forever. This, to the Reformers, was the heart and height of the work of divine grace, not to be wrangled over, but to be trusted and adored.

**3. *The means of justification.*** Justification, said the Reformers, is by faith *only*. Why so? Not because there are no "good works" in the believer's life (on the contrary, faith works by love untiringly and the knowledge of justification is the supreme ethical dynamic),<sup>15</sup> but because Christ's vicarious righteousness is the *only* ground of justification, and it is *only* by faith that we lay hold of Christ, for his righteousness to become ours. Faith is a conscious acknowledgment of our own unrighteousness and ungodliness and on that basis a looking to Christ as our righteousness, a clasping of him as the ring clasps the jewel (so Luther), a receiving of him as an empty vessel receives treasure (so Calvin), and a reverent, resolute reliance on the

biblical promise of life through him for all who believe. Faith is our act, but not our work; it is an instrument of reception without being a means of merit; it is the work in us of the Holy Spirit, who both evokes it and through it ingrafts us into Christ in such a sense that we know at once the personal relationship of sinner to Saviour and disciple to Master and with that the dynamic relationship of resurrection life, communicated through the Spirit's indwelling. So faith takes, and rejoices, and hopes, and loves, and triumphs.

One of the unhealthiest features of Protestant theology today is its preoccupation with faith: faith, that is, viewed man-centeredly as a state of existential commitment. Inevitably, this preoccupation diverts thought away from faith's object, even when this is clearly conceived—as too often in modern theology it is not. Though the Reformers said much about faith, even to the point of calling their message of justification "the doctrine of faith," their interest was not of the modern kind. It was not subject-centered but object-centered, not psychological but theological, not anthropocentric but Christocentric. The Reformers saw faith as a relationship, not to oneself, as did Tillich, but to the living Christ of the Bible, and they fed faith in themselves and in others by concentrating on that Christ as the Saviour and Lord by whom our whole life must be determined.

M. Stibbs echoed the Reformers' "object-centered" account of faith with precision when he wrote:

The faith of the individual must be seen as having no value in itself, but as discovering value wholly and solely through movement towards and committal to Christ. It must be seen as simply a means of finding all one's hope outside oneself in the person and work of another; and not in any sense an originating cause or objective ground of justification. For true faith is active only in the man who is wholly occupied with Christ; its practice means that every blessing is received from another. For this reason faith is exclusive and intolerant of company; it is only truly present when any and every contribution towards his

salvation on the part of the believer or on the part of the Church is absolutely and unequivocally shut out. Justification must be seen and received as a blessing dependent wholly and exclusively on Christ alone, on what he is and what he has done—a blessing enjoyed simply through being joined directly to him, through finding one's all in him, through drawing one's all from him, without the interposition of any other mediator or mediating channel whatever.<sup>16</sup>

### **Chapter III: The Constant Threat of Displacing the Cross with Self- Justification**

To the Reformers' doctrine of justification by faith alone Reformed theology has held down the centuries, maintaining it to be both scriptural in substance and life-giving in effect.<sup>17</sup> This tenacity has, however, involved constant conflict, as it still does. Two things have long threatened the truth as stated: first, the intruding of works as the ground of justification; second, the displacing of the cross as the ground of justification. Both are familiar weeds in the church's garden; both express in very obvious ways the craving for self-justification which lurks (often in disguise!) in the fallen human heart. Something may be said about each.

First, *the intruding of works*. This happens the moment we look to anything in ourselves, whether of nature or of grace, whether to acts of faith or to deeds of repentance, as a basis for pardon and acceptance. Reformed theology had to fight this tendency in both Romanism and Arminianism. The Council of Trent (1547, session VI) defined justification as inner renewal plus pardon and acceptance, the renewal being the basis of the pardon, and went on to affirm that the "sole formal cause" (*unica formalis causa*) of justification, in

both its aspects, was God's righteousness imparted through baptism as its instrumental cause.<sup>18</sup> "Formal cause" means that which gives a thing its quality; so the thesis is that the ground of our being pardoned and accepted by infused grace is our having been made genuinely righteous in ourselves. (This links up with the Roman idea that "concupiscence" in the regenerate is not sin till it is yielded to.<sup>19</sup>) In reply, a host of Reformed divines, continental and British, episcopal and non-episcopal, drew out at length the Reformers' contention, discussed above, that the "sole formal cause" of justification is not God's righteousness imparted, but Christ's righteousness imputed. The same point was pressed against the seventeenth-century Arminians, who held that faith is "counted for righteousness" because it is in itself actual personal righteousness, being obedience to the gospel viewed as God's new law, and being also an act of self-determination that is in no sense determined by God. The argument against both Romans and Arminians was that by finding the ground of justification in the believer himself they contradicted the Scriptures; nourished pride, and a spirit of self-sufficiency and self-reliance in religion, so encouraging self-ignorance; destroyed assurance by making final salvation depend upon ourselves rather than on God; obscured the nature of faith as self-renouncing trust; and robbed both God's grace and God's Son of the full glory that was their due. It is not enough, declared the Reformed writers, to say that without Christ our justification could not be; one must go on to say that it is on the ground of his obedience as our substitutionary sin-bearer, and that alone, that righteousness is reckoned to us, and sin cancelled. The Westminster Confession (XI.i) has both Romanism and Arminianism in its eye when it declares, with classic precision and balance:

Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to them as their righteousness;



but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves; it is the gift of God.

Second, *the displacing of the cross* as the ground of justification. This happens when the correlation between Christ's sin-bearing and our pardon is lost sight of. It can occur, and has occurred, in various ways. The truth of biblical teaching may be queried, in which case one may say (for instance) that though judicial notions meant much to Paul, because of his rabbinic conditioning, and to the Reformers, in whose culture legal concepts were dominant, they are really unfit for expressing God's forgiveness, and the idea that our heavenly Father's pardon had to be paid for by the blood of Christ is in any case monstrous. Or the objective reality of God's wrath against sin may be specifically denied, and the cross be construed in terms other than penal substitution. But in every case where the correlation breaks, the effect is to shut us up to supposing that God, after all, pardons and accepts us for something in ourselves—our repentance, or the righteousness of which it is the promise. So we return by a new route to the idea that the ground of justification is, after all, our own works, actual or potential. The history of the older rationalism and liberalism over two centuries shows many instances of this.

A third disruptive notion, more recently launched, is *the eliminating of faith* as the means of justification. This happens in universalism, which affirms that through God's love in creation and redemption all men have been redeemed and justified already, and the only question is whether they yet know it. So justification is before faith and apart from it, and faith is no more than discovery of this fact. Clearly, neither on this view nor on those noted in the two previous paragraphs can faith be given its biblical significance as the means whereby a sinner lays hold of Christ, and from being under wrath comes to be under grace.

Justification by faith only, as Reformed Christians know, is a "gospel mystery," a revealed secret of God which is a wonder of grace, transcending human wisdom and indeed contradicting it. No wonder, then, if again and again, it is misunderstood, or objected to, or twisted out of shape! But, as we have seen, to those who know anything of God's holiness and their own sinfulness the doctrine is in truth a lifeline and a doxology, a paean of praise and a song of triumph—as it was to the judicious Richard Hooker, with whose majestic and poignant declaration of it we close.

Christ hath merited righteousness for as many as are found in him. In him God findeth us, if we be faithful; for by faith we are incorporated into him. Then, although in ourselves we be altogether sinful and unrighteous, yet even the man who in himself is impious, full of iniquity, full of sin; him being found in Christ by faith, and having his sin in hatred through repentance; him God beholdeth with a gracious eye, putteth away his sin by not imputing it, taketh quite away the punishment due thereto, by pardoning it; and accepteth him in Jesus Christ, as perfectly righteous, as if he had fulfilled all that is commanded him in the law: shall I say, more perfectly righteous than if himself had fulfilled the whole law? I must take heed what I say; but the Apostle saith, "God made him which knew no sin, to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Such we are in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God himself. Let it be counted folly, or phrensy, or fury, or whatsoever. It is our wisdom, and our comfort; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned, and God bath suffered; that God bath made himself the sin of men, and that men are made the righteousness of God.<sup>20</sup>

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## ENDNOTES

1. C. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Justification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), p. 17.
2. Traill, *Works* (Glasgow, 1975), I. 321.
3. "The sum of this epistle is to pull down, and pluck and destroy, all the wisdom and righteousness of the flesh . . . and to implant and magnify sin." "For God wills to save us, not by our own righteousness and wisdom, but by one from without . . . which comes from heaven. Thus it is by all means necessary to learn this external and foreign righteousness: for which reason our own internal righteousness must be first removed." Luther, *Works*, ed. J. C. F. Knaske and others (Weimar, 1883), LVI. 157, 158; from the Lectures on Romans (1515-16).
4. Tora haec doctrina ad illud certamen perterrefactae conscientiae referenda est, nec sine illo certamine intelligi poteste. Quare male judicant de ea re homines imperiti et prophani (*Augsburg Confession*, XX).
5. The chapter is entitled: "That we may be thoroughly convinced of free (*gratuita*) justification, we must lift up our mind to God's judgment-seat (tribunal)
6. Owen, *Works*, ed. W. H. Goold (reprinted, London: Banner of Truth, 1867), V. 7, 4.
7. Calvin, *Inst.* III. xi. 2.
8. The title of *Inst.* II. xvii is: "It is right and proper to say that Christ *merited* God's grace and salvation for us." So Anglican Article XI affirms: "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the *merit* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings." And the Holy Communion service of the Book of Common Prayer complements this statement when it speaks of Christ as having made (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and *satisfaction* for the sins of the whole world."
9. Luther, *Works*, V. 608; from the Commentary on the Psalms (1519-21).
10. Luther, *Works*, LVI. 347. Elsewhere Luther speaks of the Christian as *simul justus et peccator*—simultaneously righteous

- through Christ and a sinner in himself—and as *semper peccator, semper penitens, semper justice* (*ibid.*, p. 442).
11. Thus what is satisfied is God's *law*, not just his *honor*; and the analogy for the transaction shifts from compensation, or damages in a civil suit, to the retributive infliction of penalty in a criminal court.
  12. Luther, *Galatians*, 1535, ed. from the 1575 English translation by Philip S. Watson (London: James Clarke, 1953), pp. 269-71. Galatians was Luther's favorite epistle, and he was pleased with his commentary on it. When the complete Latin edition of his works was being prepared two years before his death, he said: "If they took my advice, they'd print only the books containing doctrine, like Galatians" (*ibid.*, p. 5). Gustaf Aukn in chapter VI of *Christus Victor* (London: SPCK, 1931) was right to stress the dynamism of divine victory in Luther's account of the work of Christ, but wrong to ignore the penal substitution in terms of which that work is basically defined. Christ's victory, according to Luther, consisted precisely in the fact that he effectively purged our sins as our substitute on the cross, so freeing us from Satan's power by overcoming God's curse; if Luther's whole treatment of Gal. 3:13 (pp. 268-82) is read, this becomes very plain.
  13. Calvin, *Inst.* II. xvi. 5, 7. An excellent book on Calvin's doctrine of the cross is Paul Van Buren, *Christ in Our Place: the substitutionary character of Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957). Van Buren notes that "there is no trace of a substitutionary understanding of the trial before Pilate in either [Peter] Lombard or Aquinas," the two most standard mediaeval theologians (*ibid.*, p. 46, n. 2).
  14. *Inst.* II. xvi. 10.
  15. Cf. Westminster Confession XI. 11: "faith ... the alone instrument of justification . . . is . . . not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith but worketh by love."
  16. A. M. Stibbs, "Justification by Faith: the Reinstatement of the Doctrine Today," *Evangelical Quarterly*, July, 1952, p. 166.

17. Among major Reformed treatments of justification (in English) may be mentioned, Owen, *op. cit.*; Jonathan Edwards, "Justification By Faith Alone," *Works*, ed. E. Hickman (reprinted, London: Banner of Truth, 1974), pp. 622-54; J. Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* (reprinted, London: Banner of Truth, 1961); Berkouwer, *op. cit.*; C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (London: Nelson, 1874), III, 114-212.
18. See the decrees of Trent, Session VI.vii. This doctrine is immediately applied in the unhappy canon 9: "If any say that the sinner is justified through faith alone, in the sense that nothing else is necessary that cooperates to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not necessary for the sinner to prepare himself, by means of his own will, let him be anathema."
19. Cf. the remarkable statement of Session V.v: "Concupiscence, which the Apostle sometimes calls sin, the holy Council declares that the Catholic Church has never understood to be called sin in the sense that it is truly and properly sin in those born again, but in the sense that it is of sin and inclines to sin. Should anyone be of a contrary opinion, let him be anathema."
20. Hooker, "A learned discourse of Justification," *Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1865), II. 606. Note how heavily Hooker's statement underlines Calvin's basic perspective, that our union with Christ is the foundation of the imputing of his righteousness to us. Owen underlines the same point with equal emphasis. "The foundation of the imputation is union. Hereof there are many grounds and causes . . . but that which we have immediate respect unto, as the foundation of this imputation, is that whereby the Lord Christ and believers do actually *coalesce into one mystical person*. This is by the Holy Spirit inhabiting in him as the head of the church in all fulness, and in all believers according to their measure, whereby they become members of his mystical body. That there is such a union between Christ and believers is the faith of the catholic church and hath been so in all ages. Those who seem in our days to deny it, or question it, either know not what they say, or their minds are influenced by their doctrine who deny the divine persons of the Son and of the

Spirit (i.e., the Socinians). Upon supposition of this union, reason will grant the imputation pleaded for to be reasonable; at least, there is such a peculiar ground for it as is not to be exemplified in any things natural or political among men" (*Works*, V. 209).