

of man, that the Church grasps with the aid of faith the key to the world's greatest and most baffling problems. Out of the overshadowing darkness has "shined a great light." From man's greatest act of wickedness flows the world's redemption. Here is the supreme paradox of history, the greatest evil achieving the greatest good. Such is the amazing wisdom of the infinite God. And only in so far as we attempt to grasp something of this infinite wisdom can we expect even to begin to understand, still less to attempt to solve, the problems of God's historic action.

¹ *Article of Religion I.*

² Rev. iv. 11.

³ Jer. xxvii. 4, 5. ⁴ Jer. i. 9. ⁵ Jer. li. 24. ⁶ Jer. ix. 23, 24.

⁷ Jer. ix. 9. ⁸ Whale: *Christian Doctrine*, p. 59. ⁹ Niebuhr: *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. (Gifford Lectures) vol. I. page 148. *cf* Roms. I. 18.

¹⁰ Jo. iii. 16. ¹¹ II Cor. v. 19. ¹² Quick: *Christian Beliefs and Modern Questions* p. 38.

¹³ James. I. 17. ¹⁴ *Christus Veritas*: p. 197.

¹⁵ *op cit.* p. 60.

¹⁶ Rom. vii. 19. ¹⁷ *Nature, Man and God*. (Gifford Lectures). p. 243.

¹⁸ *op cit*: p. 397. ¹⁹ Dr. Hardman in *The Christian Doctrine of Grace*: prefers to speak of the Incarnation as the "supreme act in the operation of grace," but since our salvation and deliverance from the power of sin depends upon the Cross, it seems more correct to apply those words to the Crucifixion. See *op cit*: p. 98.

²⁰ Syngé: *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*. A Theological Commentary. p. 7.

²¹ I Cor. xv. 10. ²² I Cor. xiii. 12. ²³ *The World and God*: p. 256. ²⁴ I Cor. ii. 14.

Justification by Faith.

BY THE REV. R. J. COBB, M.A.

WE live in a day when there is a fresh need to insist upon the fundamental truths of Christian faith, and none is of more importance than the fact of the righteousness of God. As in the days following the enlightenment the Reformers found a world ready to hear the proclamation of those truths which are based upon this conception, so now in a day of seeking a New Order (with all its discussion of social conditions) there must be put forward as fundamental the recovery of those conceptions which draw their inspiration from the conviction that the whole world can only be guided aright as the foundation of life is found in God Himself: and God is 'righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works.' (Psalm cxlv. 17). But the distinctive message of the Reformation was that of declaring how man was brought into a new relationship with God and indeed 'accounted righteous by the merits of Christ alone.'

The Christian, then, is not merely a pardoned criminal, he is a righteous man, and this expresses in modern terms the foundation stone of the Reformation theology, and the secret of its power. Justification lies at the root of the Christian experience, not as the goal for Christian attainment. As Dr. J. G. Simpson has put it 'The distinction is not merely a matter of terms, but has an important bearing upon the Christian character. The provision of aids, however powerful,

for the attainment of justification must have an entirely different effect upon the daily life of the believer from the assurance of a reconciliation already fully won.' The liberating fact in the Reformation days was this realisation anew of the direct relation between God and the sinner forgiven in Christ. Luther's experience when the truth of Rom v. 1, 'Therefore being justified by faith,' came home to him was the expression of the fundamental spiritual experience of the Reformers.

In the first place, Justification is concerned with the standing of the Christian in the sight of God. It represents the new relationship which a man enters by faith in Christ. It can be viewed from the two aspects of the Divine action and the human experience, but essentially it is important to bear in mind that it has positive as well as negative aspects; it does not only consist in the forgiveness of sins, it also comprehends the fact of the imputation of righteousness. In short, it is here that we have the final answer to Job's question (a question that has occupied the hearts of men of all ages), 'How should man be just with God?' (Job. ix. 2).

The clearest New Testament example of the idea in this respect is in the chief reference to Justification in the Teaching of our Lord. The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican give us clear types of the two opposed attitudes of mind. The Pharisee—going about to establish his own righteousness—shows the attitude of a man to whom righteousness and justification is a matter for self-gratulation, but the Lord Jesus speaks the final word contradicting this in His final comment 'I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other' (Luke xviii. 14). Such an experience can only come from God Himself—He and He alone can justify.

To Justify, then, means to 'account righteous': it is to introduce a confusion of thought to allow the suggestion of 'making righteous' to enter—for the word *δικαίωω* is essentially forensic in its implications and perhaps one of the LXX. occurrences of the term will best illustrate this, 'The judges . . . shall justify the righteous (*δικαιώσωσι τὸ δίκαιον*)' (Deut. xxv. 1). It represents the judicial declaration of acquittal and freedom from guilt. This is akin to the classical use of the term where we find 'to deem right,' and 'to choose what is right,' also 'to have justice done,' as instances of its meaning.

There is, then, a difference between Justification and Sanctification—the former is the act of God, complete, final and eternal; the latter expresses the experience of men who have entered into their standing as 'justified' in the sight of God, and are day by day experiencing His sanctifying power. We may grow in holiness, we are found righteous in Christ. This distinction is suggested in the very form of the words used: our English words are derived from the Latin which confuses a distinction quite clearly involved in the Greek Testament. Righteousness (Justification) is *δικαιοσύνη*, while Holiness (Sanctification) is *ἁγιασμός*. This latter form involves the use of a suffix which implies the idea of action or a process, while the former term is the substantive formed from the adjective, and Winer held that substantives ending in—*σύνη* denote 'qualities.' (It is interesting to note that the corresponding form *ἁγιασύνη* does occur in the Bible:

it is used in the LXX. of God's Majesty, and in the New Testament only in Romans i. 4, II Cor. vii. 1, I Thess. iii. 13—all of them cases where the force is that 'quality' which might be described as 'final holiness : but the usual term involves the idea of a *process*). Justification on the other hand consists of that acceptance of the man by God, so that he stands with his sin forgiven, guilt removed, and restored to communion with God Himself.

Dr. Griffith Thomas (in his *Principles of Theology* as well as his book *Grace and Power*) draws attention to the series of questions in Romans viii. 33-35, as bringing out these three points : ' Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? ' *No guilt*. Who is he that condemneth ? ' *No condemnation*. ' Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? ' *No separation*. The New Testament conception of Justification is that of full and complete acceptance with God ; nothing short of that is contemplated in the term.

Once we have seen the force of the conception of Justification, the unique claim of Christian revelation is plain : if ' to justify ' means ' to account righteous,' such can only be the act of God Himself and only on terms which are consistent with His Nature—His Holiness and Justice, as well as His Mercy and Love. In fact, the idea of Justification is primarily related to the Justice of God, it is a forensic (a law-court) term. And it is this idea and stress on the absolute nature of Justification which brought the reformers into direct conflict with the Roman theologians. A large part of the discussions of the Tridentine Fathers was devoted expressly to the theme of Justification and the formulation of a definition which might be consistent with the Roman views of the Sacramental Nature of Grace. Their definition of the term extended to sixteen pages of which Lindsay in his *History of the Reformation* says, ' The result was that the Pope obtained what he wanted, a definition which made reconciliation with the Protestants impossible,' and ' Almost every page includes grave ambiguities.' In effect the Council of Trent made Justification to be the process of *making* a soul righteous by the infusing of virtues, and consequently dependent on the sacramental works of men. The Reformers took their stand with Paul, ' In Him all that believe are justified ' (Acts xiii. 39).

Secondly we are to consider not only the idea of Justification, but that of Justification by Faith ; having outlined the implications of Justification, we ask how the experience is entered. The Biblical answer has been plain since the time of Abraham, he ' believed in the LORD ; and He counted it to him for righteousness ' (Genesis xv. 6). It is in this instance that the establishment of a relationship between God and man on the basis of Faith first occurs in the Bible, and so it is not surprising to find the actual text quoted in the three main discussions of the subject—Romans iv. 3, Galatians iii. 6, James ii. 23. The fundamental issue, is, What does God require of man that he may be accepted in His sight ? The answer can only be, Righteousness, and to that man in himself cannot attain. But the Bible makes it equally plain that God imputes Righteousness to those who believe in Him—here lay Israel's fundamental error, and indeed the error of many professing Christians for they ' sought to establish their own righteousness, not having submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God '

(Romans x. 3-4). The righteousness of God is that very standard which God requires in man—and there is a great gulf fixed between the righteousness of man and the Righteousness of God—cf. Deuteronomy x. 12 and Micah vi. 8, while the whole Law is the translation of this requirement into statutes and ordinances. In effect these statutes and ordinances have brought man into judgment, by shewing the nature and extent of the condemnation which results from sin, and man finds himself entirely without excuse before God.

The argument of the earlier chapters of the Epistle to the Romans is precisely that this condemnation extends to all mankind, and is shewn to be deserved by the universal corruption of the race; but this universal corruption is met by a universal Redemption, and on the ground of the Redemption accomplished by Christ on the Cross free Salvation is offered to all (Rom. v. 12-21). Christ has destroyed sin in the flesh and risen again in victory (cf. Romans iv. 25 and viii. 3-4). The demand of the Law has been met (Galatians iii. 13), Christ has fulfilled the Law and His fulfilment is that which becomes the righteousness of the believer.

Faith, then, is the sole condition of receiving the Gift of God's Righteousness. But it must be born in mind that Faith is an active principle, not simply an assent to a doctrine or creed, but an actual trust in God. Sometimes the simplest definitions are the most profound, and there may be no deeper and more satisfying definition of Faith than that of the Norwegian, Hans Hauge, who taught his people, "To have Faith is to come to Christ with your sins."

Thirdly, the Protestant statement of belief continues that Justification is by Faith alone: e.g., *Article xi*, '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: Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification.' To quote Martensen, 'The evangelical principle that faith alone justifies (*sola fides justificat*) rests upon the presupposition that Christ alone justifies. It is only in virtue of the righteousness of Christ, in virtue of the new fundamental relationship with Christ, that man can be reconciled to his God; and by faith alone, as the profoundest act of susceptibility and subjectiveness on the part of the inner man of the heart, can Christ be appropriated; by faith alone can man obtain blessedness in its indissoluble completeness.' Christ alone received by faith is the Righteousness of man, in Him we not only perceive but we find perfection and are ourselves accepted (Ephesians i. 6).

The teaching of Justification by Faith alone resolves itself then into the assertion of Christ as a sufficient Saviour: for nothing we can be, or could do, can add to the full and sufficient nature of the Sacrifice He made for us on the Cross. If that sacrifice is sufficient, then the appropriation of its benefits is all that God can and will require; that appropriation is made by a simple and definite act of Faith, so Justification is by Faith alone.

It may be, and frequently is, asserted that such makes the experience of forgiveness too easy: that our absolution from sin ought to cost us something. If, however, we had any part to play in paying the price

of our sin, it would mean that the sacrifice of Christ was insufficient. God forgives as unconditionally as the creditor in the parable, 'When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both' (Luke vii. 42). It is not the amount of the debt which is in question, it is the utter bankruptcy of the debtor. Man cannot meet the demands of a Holy God for Righteousness of Life; but God in Christ has provided the way of acceptance, and that is what we mean by Justification. The entry into this experience is well put in Bonar's words:

Thy work alone, O Christ,
Can ease this weight of sin;
Thy Blood alone, O Lamb of God,
Can give me peace within.

I bless the CHRIST of God,
I rest on Love Divine;
And, with unfaltering lip and heart,
I call this Saviour mine.

To quote from the Homily: Justification is not the office of man but of God. For man cannot make himself righteous by his own works, neither in part, nor in the whole; for that were the greatest arrogancy and presumption of man that Anti-Christ could set up against God, to affirm that a man might by his own works take away and purge his own sins, and so justify himself. But Justification is the office of God only; and is not a thing which we render unto Him, but which we receive of Him; not which we give to Him, but which we take of Him, by His free mercy, and by the only merits of His most dearly beloved Son, our only Redeemer, Saviour, and Justifier, Jesus Christ.'

Trends in Present Day Theology.

By THE REV. D. W. CLEVERLEY FORD, B.D., M.Th.

IT is apparent to the most casual observer that as regards theology we are to-day in a transition period. There is no one great broad movement which marks the day. We live in a reactionary period; yet for all this, there is a tendency which it is the purpose of this article to examine. In the broadest outline it may be said that there are three schools of thought, the fundamentalist, the modernist, and the most recent outlook commonly called "dogmatic" or "conservative."

The Fundamentalist view is ancient, it is not dead, but its ascendancy was in the past before the days of Biblical Criticism, so that with the rise of that study, its field of influence is now limited. In its extreme form this view declared that every letter, every word of the Bible was dictated as it were by the Holy Ghost. Bible Study showed this extreme view to be of no practical value since there are many passages in the Old Testament which make no sense at all as they stand.