

THE SPRINGFIELDER

Vol. XXVII

Summer, 1963

No. 2

THE SPRINGFIELDER is published quarterly by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

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Contents

Page

EDITORIALS

Lutheranism—Whither?	3
The Use of the Laity	5
The Church on the Campus	6
“THE FUTURE REUNITED CHURCH” AND “THE ANCIENT UNDIVIDED CHURCH”	8
Hermann Sasse, Immanuel Theological Seminary, North Adelaide, Australia	
THE COURSE OF CHRISTIAN HUMANISM	22
Lewis W. Spitz, Stanford University	
THE TERM “JUSTIFY” IN THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS	36
Lorman Petersen, Department of Exegetical Theology	
BOOKS REVIEWS	49
BOOKS RECEIVED	59

Clergy changes of address reported to Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, will also cover mailing change of *The Springfielder*. Other changes of address should be sent to the Business Manager of *The Springfielder*, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

Address communications to the Editor, Erich H. Heintzen, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

Business correspondence should be addressed to Arleigh Lutz, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

The Term "Justify" in the Epistle to the Romans

LORMAN PETERSEN

THE doctrine of justification will be the topic of theological discussion at the Lutheran World Federation Assembly this summer in Helsinki, July 30 to August 11, 1963. A special study document, "On Justification," written by Dr. Warren Quanbeck, has been distributed for discussion by the Commission on Theology of LWF. No attempt is made here to review Dr. Quanbeck's efforts. The study document is mentioned merely to point up the relevance of the subject. The pamphlet brings forth certain questions and propositions which need answers. In the present discussion the issue is not only what justification is but what the doctrine means for the Christian and for the churches in the modern world.

The over-all theme of the meeting is: *Christ Yesterday, Today, Forever*. "The emphasis is on TODAY," says the pamphlet. "Justification is always, like Christ, a present event happening to us now. It is not gone by, not only hoped for in the future, but it is actual fact now." Just what is meant by this statement will occupy a major share of the discussion at Helsinki. Stewart Herman writes in the Introduction of the pamphlet: "Normative for man's true relation to his fellowman is his relation to God. Therefore, Helsinki asks, what does 'justification by grace through faith' mean to us today? Professor Quanbeck, of Luther Seminary at St. Paul, Minnesota, attempts to bring the fundamental concept of the 16th century Reformation up to date."

Quanbeck leads off with a statement about the difficulties of understanding and communicating this doctrine in our day. He intimates that four difficulties, in particular, make it difficult to comprehend justification and make it relevant today. First, "the continuing theological debate with the church of Rome," i.e., what is the righteousness of God and the function of faith. Secondly, a set of difficulties has been raised for us by the development of literary and historical study of the Bible, "that is, while the Reformers believed that Justification is the theme that dominated the Bible, research has shown that Justification is but one image used by the biblical writers." Quanbeck then asks, "Is it not possible that insistence upon the centrality of Justification is an example of the way controversy shapes and perhaps warps the theological thinking? Can we continue to assert that the article of Justification is the *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae*, when in the earliest period of the church's life it was possible to proclaim the Gospel without reference to it?"¹

"A third difficulty is that caused by the erosion of theological terms in our time. . . . Our theological expressions are like coins which have been circulated so long that they have been worn smooth

and can hardly be recognized. This leads to confusion, for it is very difficult to distinguish genuine from counterfeit coins. . . . Words like *faith, justification, righteousness, sin, vocation*, have all undergone this process of reduction or inflation. Substitutes can be found for some of them, but others have no replacements." Then he states significantly, "The only alternative is the rehabilitation of theological terminology, a process which is slow, difficult and unpredictable." With this sentiment one must agree. Bible translators and modern interpreters have often created a counterfeit coin of questionable value when attempting to substitute or rephrase key biblical concepts. It is easier and less confusing to rehabilitate an old term than to substitute a new one, particularly from a pedagogical viewpoint. A third difficulty to which Quancebeck alludes is closely related to this erosion of language, namely, the change in the climate of our culture. ". . . The change of spiritual climate leaves many of us strangers to the thought and confusions of the Reformation."²

A review of Paul's use of the term "justify" in the Epistle to the Romans is in order. One of the prime objectives of the church today is to re-load the ancient term "justify" with the powerful powder and power St. Paul placed into the term. Regardless of the way anyone, ancient or modern, has used the term "justify," it should be given the meaning it has in the Scriptures if the church's proclamation is to be biblical. We may have to pause to explain our terms at times in our communication of the Gospel even if St. Paul seems not have had this difficulty in the ancient world or the Reformers in theirs.

Use of the Word "Justify" Today

Winston's Dictionary gives the first meaning of *justify*: "to show or prove to be right; warrant; vindicate; make right." The word is derived from Latin *justus*, just, and *facere*, do. The second meaning given is "to pronounce free from blame; exonerate. *Theol.*, to declare blameless of sin on the ground of Christ's righteousness. In printing the word is used to form an even surface or true line." The noun "justification" is "the act of justifying or state of being justified." Second meaning: "an acceptable excuse; defense." All will agree that in America today the latter use is most common. People say, "he was justified in making this decision." This meaning can also be found in the New Testament. The young lawyer, Luke writes, desired "to justify himself" (Luke 10:29). We say, "the teacher certainly was justified in punishing this boy because he deserved it for a long time."

Using Werner Elert as his source, Schultz claims that during the days of the Reformers the term "justify" meant to "punish" or even "execute." In those days, he says,

the very phrase 'justification by faith' was itself an explanation and not something which required further explanation . . . The modern meaning of justification as excusing or vindicating

or proving innocence does not appear in the legal terminology of the 16th century . . . 'Justification' means that a criminal has been brought to justice . . . Luther carries this picture of courtroom justification over into his description of the justification of the sinner before God. The criminal is put to death; the sinner is not put to death himself, for he has been justified in Christ. . . . The substitutionary atonement of Christ under the Law becomes our justification without Law . . . it is common in our time to think of Christ's death as the cause of our justification; as a legal penalty which makes God's judgment of forgiveness over us possible. Christ's death and our justification thus stand in a cause-and-effect relation . . . That is, in itself, not objectionable but when it is accompanied by a reduction of the sixteenth century concept of forensic justification to the narrow limits of declaratory justification, it has cut us off from some of the central analogies of the Christian faith. Luther could preach sermon after sermon, he could explain the second article of the creed without once referring to justification.³

As we shall see later, the last point is well taken but the teaching that God saves in Christ is central, no matter what picture Paul, Luther, or the theologian today decides to use. Paul, however, chooses to use "justify" as his main concept, and it is our task to explain what he means in our day. Here we should imitate the Reformers. "The Reformers did not take their understanding of justification from the law books but from the New Testament."⁴

The Concept "Justify" in Romans

It is helpful for the understanding of the term "justify" to learn that Paul uses the word on both sides of the argument in his greatest epistle, the Epistle to the Romans.⁵ He speaks of "justification by faith" and of "justification by works" in the letter. "Not the hearers of the Law but the doers of the Law shall be justified," he says, in a context of Law (cf. 2:7-11).⁶ On the other hand, he says, "therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). In both statements the word "justify" *taken by itself* means the same—a verdict of approval or a favorable judgment is pronounced upon the person involved. Of course, justification by works is always hypothetical and never possible in human life, but it remains theoretically true.⁷

The idea of rendering judgment becomes thematic throughout Paul's entire discussion of Law and Gospel in Romans. Man judges God when he did not *see fit* to acknowledge God, and God judged man when He *gave him over (paredooken)* to his sinful passions. God judges all men according to their works (Rom. 2:6). God renders a judgment on man's life, something of a "justification" of every man—eternal life for those who have done well, wrath to those who have not (Rom. 2:7-8). Then follows the significant statement: "It is not the hearers of the law who are righteous be-

fore God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:13). This first appearance of "justify" in Romans occurs in a discussion of judgment and law. Let us assume for a moment that a man could actually fulfill the law unto complete holiness before God. In what sense would he be righteous? Does he become more righteous work by work as he walks the treadmill of works until his holiness is complete? Can a man ever *become* or *make himself* righteous? Even if he completed the last final work for glory, would he be holy before God? Must not someone determine whether he is righteous or not? *If God is the Judge* he would not be righteous *before Him* until God Himself said so, until He rendered His perfect judgment or divine opinion. Paul is not teaching salvation by works here, as it may appear on the surface, but is maintaining the basic principle of judgment and law which is the basic, fundamental common denominator of either "justification by works" or "justification by faith." "To justify," then, basically means to render a judgment of guilty or not guilty.

This idea is clear from Rom. 2:26: "So, if a man who is uncircumcized keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?" The term Paul uses is closely related to "justify," namely, *logizomai*, "to reckon," or "regard or count as." Paul is speaking of the true Israelite in God's sight. If a non-Jew does the will of God through faith, he is really a true son of Abraham even though he is not a son of Abraham. In other words, he is accorded something he does not possess, he is regarded as someone he really is not. For this reason, we believe, Paul uses the term *dikaioo*, "justify," instead of *krinoo*, "to judge," in order to bring out this nicety of Christian theology. Ordinarily we think of judgment as a negative concept; it is a decision against a man, especially if we speak of divine judgment. But properly speaking, judgment may be "not guilty" as well as "guilty." Thus *dikaioo* (instead of *krinoo*) indicates that in justification God the Judge always judges a man not guilty or acquits the guilty rather than the innocent. This is exactly what Paul means by justification—acquittal of a sinner, because only sinners are justified. God cannot acquit a holy man because there is no such person. A righteous man can only live by faith (Rom. 5:18; Rom. 1:17).

Man Not Justified by Works

Paul's use of the term "justify," therefore, makes it impossible for a man to justify himself, or be justified by works. This would be a misuse of the biblical term. This is the grand deception of being justified by works, that a man renders his own judgment of his own merit and worth before God only to discover at the end that God does not render such a verdict of acquittal on the man's life. First, because justification always has God as its subject. It is always a verdict rendered independent of man. Paul says it is "God who justifies the ungodly" (Rom. 4:5). And in his concluding arguments in Romans, chapter eight, Paul asks: "It is God who justifies; who is to condemn?" (Rom. 8:33). Even in the favorite

quote from Paul, "therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," the verb is passive—man is always acted upon.⁸ Secondly, when Paul surveys all the possibilities of man saving himself both among the Jews and Gentiles (which comprises his argument in the first three chapters of Romans), he must conclude that no man can be justified by works for the simple fact that no man has sufficient works. If the Jew could not do it with all his advantages and his lengthy head start, who can? Thus he says that the verdict in God's universal courtroom is, "Every mouth is stopped (that is, if anyone opposes God's verdict) and the whole world is held accountable to God. For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law" (Rom. 3:19-20).

Justification and the Righteousness of God

Some have expressed surprise that in a letter which is supposed to be about justification, Paul does not use the word in its two thematic statements, but uses the term "righteousness of God" instead. In Rom. 1:17 he writes: "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith," and in 3:21, where he switches in the discussion from the Law to the Gospel: "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law . . . the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe." But this is not so surprising when one remembers that the Greek word for righteousness is *dikaiosyne* which is from the root verb *dikaioo*, to justify.⁹ It is only in English that the two words seem farther apart.

Furthermore, "righteousness of God" is basically an Old Testament term. It refers to God's act of saving sinners through justification by faith in Christ. Paul says this righteousness is witnessed by the law and the prophets (Rom. 3:21). For example, Psalm 98:2 says, "The Lord hath made known his salvation; *his righteousness* hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen." Murray says in his new commentary that all four important concepts of Rom. 1:16-17 are in this verse from Psalm 98: "Power, righteousness, salvation, revelation."¹⁰ In Romans Paul says that in both Testaments when this righteousness was revealed to a person he was justified. Three times Paul emphasizes this fact and one sees the connection between righteousness and justify: "He who through faith is righteous shall live" (Rom. 1:17);¹¹ "the righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ" (3:22); and, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness" (3:25). Thus to have this righteousness of God is to be saved by God, to be justified in His sight.

Justify and the Cross

Paul speaks of Justification and the Cross in the same breath. The Cross of Christ answers the question how a righteous and holy God can acquit a sinner, especially when we see also that the justified man still has a sinful nature after he is justified (Rom. 7:21-24). When God justifies the sinner, he does not overlook sin; he

deals with it. He does not act as if man were not a sinner. Those who regard God as an old "grandfather" who winks at all his children's sins and graciously turns his face the other way are denying the integrity of God, especially his holiness. It is a sort of a new idolatry. No, in justification God formulated a method which involves both his essential holiness and his love for sinners. By making Christ our Substitute in the Atonement He at the same time satisfies His justice and saves the sinner. Therefore if one would let God be God it is out of the question to speculate whether or not God, in either the Old or New Testament, can or does forgive sins without the Cross.

In this connection a Christian is also thankful for God's holiness and justice. He knows from Scripture that God placed his and every man's sin on Christ and judged Christ for *every* sin; no sin is excluded—past, present or future. He knows God would not have raised Christ from the dead if full salvation had not been complete, for Paul says: "It will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:24-25).¹²

The Apostle states the position of the Cross in the mighty, majestic section, Rom. 3:21-28, where he ties all these concepts together. Key statements are: "They are justified by his grace as a gift"; "through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus"; "whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood." It culminates in 4:26: "Who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" where the Resurrection is brought into the picture (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). Leon Morris says, "The Scripture is clear that the wrath of God is visited upon sinners or else that the Son of God dies for them. . . . Either we die or He dies. But God commendeth His own love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. 5:8."¹³ In all this Paul's use of "justify" retains its usual meaning—God renders a judgment of acquittal or freedom on the sinner. Because of the Cross and the Resurrection, the word "justify" can have no other meaning.

Justifying the Ungodly

In chapter five of Romans Paul makes the astounding statement, "Christ died for the ungodly" (v.6). He also says it another way: "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (v.7). Then he uses the word "reconciled" in a similar sentence: "While we were yet sinners (enemies) we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (v.10). But the most pointed expression of this concept is found in Rom. 4:5, where the Apostle specifically says that God justifies ungodly men: "And to him who does not work but trusts him who *justifies the ungodly*, his faith is reckoned as righteousness." This means that justification is universal, because all men are by nature ungodly. But God has pronounced absolute upon the entire human race (1 John 2:2). Salvation is pres-

ent for all men; God has acquitted them all in Christ, even though not all men will accept and many more may never hear the Good News (Rom. 10:14-17). "As one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act (Christ's) of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men" (Rom. 5:12,18).

The fact that God justifies the ungodly must mean that man cannot be justified by works, and that "justify" means to acquit a sinner, a guilty man. Or to reverse the thought, if God did not justify the ungodly the alternative logically would be that man justifies himself by works and then there would be no justification by faith.

This universal or objective justification is realized in a man when he comes to faith. Then it becomes personal justification. Universal justification, the pronouncement of all men righteous in Christ, is of utmost importance for personal or subjective justification. If God had not justified all men, that is, the ungodly (there is no other type of person for God to justify), the individual sinner might doubt that he is included among the "all men." This does not mean that universal and subjective justification are two separate acts of God—one is simply the application of the other to the believer.

God Justifies Through Baptism

Sinners appropriate by faith their justification or salvation through Baptism. Listen to the Apostle in Romans, chapter 6: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (6:3). When Paul speaks of man's receiving God's act of justification, he introduces Baptism, very easily and naturally, without explanation. He speaks of receiving faith through the Word later in chapter ten. To misunderstand justification is to misunderstand Baptism and to misconstrue Baptism is to misconstrue justification. God justifies through Baptism. Have we ever noted how Paul ties Christ, salvation, justification and Baptism together in the familiar passage in Titus, chapter 3? He says: "He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life."

It is significant, then, that our Lord has commissioned us Christians to "teach all nations, baptizing them." Universal justification and Baptism furnish us with the greatest of motives to preach the Gospel to all men. All of God's love, all of God's saving work in Christ is of no avail to the individual sinner if he does not hear the Gospel or is not baptized and through its power brought to faith. Unless the Gospel is given to all men in Word and Sacrament, the Gospel is just as vain as if Christ had not risen (1 Cor. 15:17). It is never enough just to possess the Gospel. To possess it is not only to cherish it but to preach it (Rom. 10-14-17).

To Justify Is to Forgive

Justification is nothing else than forgiveness. St. Paul quotes the familiar psalm of David, saying, "So David pronounces a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works." Again: "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered (Rom. 4:6-7). Justification, then, is also the act of *imputation* of righteousness. In fact, here Paul speaks of forgiveness both negatively and positively—the non-imputation of sin and the imputation of righteousness. The merits of Christ are imputed to the sinner, that is, an alien righteousness is given him, just as his sins are not imputed or counted against him (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19). The Lutheran Confessions use justification and forgiveness interchangeably.

The second matter in a mediator is, that his merits have been presented as those which make satisfaction for others, which are bestowed by divine imputation on others, in order that through these, just as by their own merits, they may be accounted righteous. As when any friend pays a debt for a friend, the debtor is freed by the merit of another, as though it were by his own. Thus the merits of Christ are bestowed upon us.¹⁴

Justification by Faith

When Paul the Apostle states that a man is justified by *faith* he is by this term *faith* also describing "justify." The concept "by faith" is just as vital to the understanding of the doctrine of justification as the term "justify." Even learned theologians teach various views of justification by faith because of the way they understand the concept "faith." Paul places the two terms together and one is meaningless without the other. If one is understood in the wrong way, both are wrong. One of the most ancient Christians, Abraham, was justified by faith. It is written, "Abraham *believed*," and his faith is immediately bound by the words, "it was *reckoned to him as righteousness*" (Rom. 4:3).

What exactly did the Apostle mean by the phrase, *by faith*? In Romans the phrase means one of two things, if not at times both. First, that justification is *without works*. He says this so often, it hardly needs documentation. The classic statement of the general principle is Rom. 3:27-28.

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On the principle of works? No, but on the principle of faith. For we hold that a man is justified by faith *apart from works of law*.

Secondly, faith for Paul is mainly the instrument or means by which the sinner accepts God's forgiveness or justifying act. Rom. 1:16-17: "It is the power of God unto salvation *to everyone who believes*"; it is revealed "*through faith for faith*." Rom. 3:22, 25: "The righteousness of God *through faith* in Jesus Christ *for all*

who believe"; "whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith."

Faith is also faith in Christ and appropriates Christ's work on the cross, the basis of justification or forgiveness. The righteousness of Christ is always intended for faith. All those, but only those, who believe receive it. This is what the Reformers meant when they stressed *sola fide*—not that good works are unwanted by God, but that they must be excluded entirely from influencing God's act of justifying the sinner. If God justifies sinners before they believe or even exist, and if justification is without works, as God justified Abraham before he was circumcised, then the only role faith can possibly play in justification is to receive the forgiveness God offers through Gospel and Sacrament.

Quanbeck scorns three counterfeits of faith in the Helsinki study document:

The first counterfeit suggests that faith is essentially an act of the intellect . . . faith is here transformed into dialectics. . . . A second counterfeit of faith sees it as man's concentration on the good life . . . it makes the best of both worlds, acknowledging the triumph of Pauline Christianity and at the same time satisfying the instincts of the natural man who has suspected all along that God does not give something for nothing. . . . A third counterfeit of faith calls for a focusing of man's dynamic powers on some object. Faith is man's ability to concentrate his psychic powers and thus bring the spiritual and material world under his control . . . peace of mind, the healing of disease, the mastery of fellows, success in business.¹⁵

None of these views is what Paul means by faith. While Quanbeck's later statement on faith, "Faith is *man's response* to the God who speaks to him in Jesus Christ,"¹⁶ is a questionable formulation, other words of his cover the lapse: "It is trust in God's mercy and faithfulness as He makes them known to us in the cross. . . . Faith is saving not because it is possessed of inherent powers, but because it is the hand out-stretched to receive the gift of life."¹⁷

This view of justification does not lend credence to those modern formulations which say that justification is peripheral (another name for sanctification), or which disregard the Atonement and the wrath of God and simply express the teaching in an individual's own philosophical or anthropological presuppositions. This is making this classic doctrine "relevant to our modern world" in reverse.¹⁸

In Summary

All these considerations help us to a proper understanding of the term "justify" in Romans. It is a declarative act of God, independent of man, by which He renders a decision of forgiveness on an evil-doer. It is a judicial term, a forensic act. The word "forensic" gets its meaning from the ancient Roman *forum* where

much debate and discussion took place, particularly in the courts of law. The term thus always involves the mental process of judgment. Through this act the sinner stands righteous in God's sight. St. Paul has a whole series of terms in the opening chapters of Romans which have this common denominator: "righteous before God," (*dikaioi para Theoo*, 2:12); "uncircumcision reckoned for circumcision," (*logizomai*, 2:26); "whose sins are forgiven," (*aphiemi*, 2:7); "whose sins are covered," (*apokalyptoo*, 2:7); "whose sin is not counted," (*logizomai*, 2:8); "saved from wrath," (*soosoo*, 5:9); "reconciled to God," (*katalassoo*, 5:10); and the numerous uses of *dikaioo*, "to justify." "Justify" never means "to make righteous" or "to become righteous" in the usual sense of these words.¹⁹ Leon Morris says, "The verb is essentially a forensic one in its biblical usage, and it denotes basically a sentence of acquittal."²⁰ Rudolf Bultmann says that Paul teaches a forensic justification and that the word "justify" expresses relationship rather than quality. He also speaks of the old English term "rightwise" (Anglo-Saxon, *rihtwis* and *rihtwisness*) as forerunners of "justify" and "righteousness."²¹ Dr. Henry Hamann of Australia speaks of "justify" as follows:

If the forgiveness of sins is justification, then justification is first and foremost a declaring righteous. As little as the pronouncement of forgiveness is subjectively in the one forgiven, so little is justification a process in the one justified. As forgiveness comes to a man from one outside of himself, so justification takes place outside of man. If outside of man, then in God. So justification is as *actus forensis*. This is the conclusion to which the identification of justification with forgiveness leads.²²

Quanbeck also says, "Justification is indeed a declarative act of God by which the sinner is forgiven."²³ The Lutheran Confessions repeat the statement again and again. Justification by faith, then, is the righteous and loving God's pronouncement of forgiveness upon the sinner for Christ's sake and man's acceptance of this forgiveness by faith, by believing the promises of the Gospel. The Lutheran *Small Catechism* spells out the term very simply: "We confess that we receive forgiveness of sins and are justified before God, not by our works, but by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith." This definition does not omit the justified life which follows but rather implies it. Here we may think of the way both Paul and James treat the same doctrine of justification. There is always the danger that in our eagerness to define justification by faith without works that one may separate justification from what we usually call sanctification. To avoid this we believe that any definition of justification by faith according to the Scriptures (and the Lutheran Confessions) must include these seven items: 1) God 2) justifies 3) sinners 4) by grace 5) for Christ's sake 6) through faith alone 7) for a new life here on earth and in heaven.

Many people have misunderstood justification, so it appears, when they cease to remember that God declares not a holy innocent person righteous but a guilty sinner righteous. He says to the sinner because of Christ, "Not guilty as charged." At this point one hears objections of "unethical," "unjust," "unworthy of God," "mechanical," etc. But this is God's doing—it is not unjust because God Himself does it (Rom. 3:26). This is not just a Lutheran doctrine but a Scriptural doctrine. It is justification according to Romans.

Two things, however, should be kept in mind when defining "justify" and "justification," in Romans. First, it is not just "pious fiction," or a mere theory. Justification of the sinner does not occur in a vacuum; it gets into the sinner. In a sense justification is also regeneration.²⁴ Paul ties the idea of justification to other great terms. For example, in Romans 8:30 he writes: "Those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified." In 1 Cor. 6:11 he says, "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." In Romans 5:9 he connects salvation with justification: "Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God." In Rom. 6:3 he places Baptism and justification together: "Do you know not that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Cf. Titus 3:5-7).

Secondly, this doctrine is a marvelous comfort and power in modern man's life as in former ages. Modern man knows that his predicament of sin is real and condemning. He realizes after two wars that he cannot escape the evils of his environment and have peace of mind except through rescue from without. Justification means not only forgiveness but the gift of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13). It means power at the draw-bar of Christian life when and where man needs it most. Justification by faith makes a man a member of the Body of Christ. Not only is he in union with Christ who rules all things in the interest of His church²⁵ but also in fellowship with all of Christ's own who supply untold strength in this Christian fellowship. Because the justified person knows the true and living God he does not worship the present-day gods of materialism and nationalism. He can live in the world, and overcome it, rather than submit to it. Above all, he can face the future with head up and heart full of comfort and confidence. He is not afraid of God's judgment because he has already faced it and has received a verdict of acquittal. He has met the great Judge and has found only love and deliverance as Israel did of old. Although he is in this world *simul justus et peccator* he knows that ultimate deliverance, even of the body (Rom. 8:23), is certain. He is beset on every hand by both crass and subtle temptations such as generations in the past have not faced, and he is more than a conqueror through Christ. He can say as the Apostle did in his day in a world much like our own:

Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. . . . There is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. . . . Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 5:20; 8:1,33-39).

In this full sense, justification is always. It is not only in the past, nor only hoped for, but it is also an event continually taking place in our lives and reforming them for Christ.

FOOTNOTES

1. Warren A. Quanbeck, *Christ Yesterday, Today, Forever; A Study Document on Justification*. Prepared under the auspices of the Commission on Theology for the Lutheran World Federation Assembly in Helsinki, July 30-August 11, 1963. New York: National Lutheran Council, 1962, p. 8.
2. *Ibid.*, p.10.
3. Robert Schultz, "Justification in the 16th and the 20th Centuries," *The Cresset* (October, 1957), pp. 8-10 *passim*.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 9. See my study "Justification the *Leitmotif* of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession," Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1940.
5. It is instructive to note that for understanding justification in Romans Paul uses a series of terms all with the root *dik-* in Greek; *dikaios* (righteous, or righteous person); *dikaioosyne* (righteousness); *dikaiosis* (justification); *dikaiooma* (judgment, also decree, law); *dikaioos* (ad-verb, meaning righteously); *dikaiokrisia* (righteous judgment); *adikia* (unholiness, unrighteousness); besides *dikaiooo* (to justify).
6. Cf. Rom. 3:20: "For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law." In Gal. 2:16 the two phrases "justify by works" and "justify by faith" stand side by side.
7. Is this what our Lord meant by His statement to the wealthy questioner: "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" (Matt. 19:21)?
8. Even in the every-day use of the term today the verb is generally used in the passive sense. We may say, "The general in these circumstances was justified in withdrawing his troops." This statement is our judgment rendered on the general's actions. Also, if we speak of self-justification the passive idea is apparent.
9. Note how Paul uses the compound *dikaiokrisia*, "righteous judgment," in Rom. 2:5, revealing how closely related the terms judgment and justify are for him.
10. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), Vol. I, pp. 29-30.
11. This rendering of Rom. 1:17 in RSV is very acceptable but perhaps when one considers the context of Hab. 2:4 in the Old Testament and Paul's purpose (to teach that salvation is "faith all the way," i.e., *ek pisteos eis pistin*) in introducing this quotation in his thematic verse, the better rendering would be the general "the righteous man lives by faith."

12. The phrase "for our justification" (both KJV and RSV) is really "because of our justification" in Greek. We understand Paul's greatly condensed statement in this way: Our Lord's Atonement was perfect; it was an all-sufficient sacrifice. Because of this the righteous God pronounced all men's sins forgiven. To substantiate and proclaim this fact, God raised Christ from the dead. Here we see the close relationship between justification and other basic doctrines like the Person of Christ and the Resurrection. This is also why the Resurrection was thematic for Apostolic preaching. Another thought: God also rendered here a verdict on Christ's Atonement. In a sense our Lord was judged or "justified" through the Resurrection. Cf. Rom. 3:4, "That thou mayest be justified in thy words."
13. Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), p. 185. This is truly a worthwhile volume on the atonement and justification, one of the best treatments of the subject in the form of study of key words to appear for many years.
14. *Triglot Concordia*, Apology, Art. XXI, p. 347. Cf. AC, Art. IV, p. 45; FC, Art. III, pp. 4, 7.
15. Quanbeck, *op. cit.*, pp. 27f. *passim*.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 28 (section 60).
17. *Ibid.*, p. 29 (section 62).
18. For example C. H. Dodd, who believes that "justify" means to "vindicate" or "give redress to" a person who has been wronged. "God's righteousness is revealed in 'justification' of those who are the victims of evil." He says a God angry with sin is "foreign to biblical usage," and interprets faith in terms of regeneration without having Christ's Atonement as its object. The term "vindicate" may be used to describe justification but not the way Dodd uses it. Cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, *The Moffat New Testament Commentary* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938), pp. 10-13.
19. The expression which has come into our religious vocabulary in recent years "to be right with God" expresses the concept of justification appropriately. The expression includes the forensic act of God as well as the righteous life which follows. But unless this is understood or stated when using the expression, it can also be misleading. Godet says in his *Commentary on Romans*, "as to *dikaioo*, there is not an example in the whole of classic literature where it signifies to *make just*," p. 157.
20. Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 226, 260.
21. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I, Translated by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1951), pp. 253, 272, 274.
22. Henry P. Hamann, *Justification by Faith in Modern Theology* (St. Louis: School for Graduate Studies, Concordia Seminary, 1957), p. 5.
23. Quanbeck, *op. cit.*, p. 34 (section 80).
24. Cf. Apology, Art. IV.
25. Ephesians 1:22-23.