

THE RELATION OF GOOD WORKS TO
JUSTIFICATION
IN THE WESTMINSTER STANDARDS

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the faculty of Westminster Theological
Seminary on October 1 and 2, 1976.

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I. THE EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

A. The Romanist View of Justification.

Prior to the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church had no well articulated doctrine of justification. The Reformation forced the Roman church to formulate its position, and this was done by the Sixth Session of the Council of Trent. The key to the Romanist view lay in the meritoriousness of good works as the ground of pardon and acceptance with God, and as warranting the title to eternal life. The Roman view does not exclude the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ. It even regards this grace as necessary to justification. But what Christ has done for us must be supplemented by what man does. Therefore justification is grounded partly in what Christ has done for us and partly in what we can do for ourselves with the realization that what we can do for ourselves we can only do with the help of divine grace.

B. The Evangelical Reaction.

The Reformation began as a reaction to what was going on in the day-to-day life of the church. The later theological formulations of the doctrine of justification were made on the background of the formulations of the Council of Trent. In the formulations of Protestant doctrine, the teaching of the Apostle Paul, especially in Romans and Galatians, figured in a prominent way because what Paul said was particularly relevant to the errors of the Roman church. A doctrine of justification by works was ascribed to Rome over against which the Reformation sought to articulate a doctrine of justification by faith. To make the point unambiguously clear Luther insisted on justification by faith alone as the very heart of evangelicalism and the article of Christian doctrine by which the church stands or falls. Luther's insistence on justification by faith alone has exerted immense influence on the subsequent history of the doctrine of justification in evangelical circles as a whole, but also in confessionally Reformed circles as well.

Rome counter-attacked in a variety of ways but a major thrust was to point to the danger of libertinism as a result of justification by faith alone. Evangelicals answered by asserting that good works are the fruit of faith and justification. Good works are inevitable where there is true faith, for

in true faith the Holy Spirit is invariably present and active in the process of sanctification. Therefore good works serve as evidence that justification has taken place on the basis of faith alone.

It is in this context that attention is given to the Epistle of James. Roman Catholics have appealed to James 2 as supporting their doctrine of justification by works. Evangelicals have handled this argument in various ways but there is an overall consensus that the justification of which James speaks is not that of Paul. Paul is speaking of justification in a soteric, forensic sense, whereas James is speaking of justification in a demonstrative sense. Strictly speaking, a demonstrative sense would yield the thought that James appeals to Abraham as an example of one who by his works showed himself to be intrinsically righteous. This sense would seem more readily to call into question rather than to support the doctrine of justification on the ground of an alien righteousness imputed. However, the intrinsic righteousness is thought of as evidence of a prior soteric and forensic justification. James is not thought to mention soteric justification with so many words except that in the popular mind there is a subtle shift whereby James is understood to be saying that Abraham by his works showed himself to be justified. This combination of forensic and demonstrative senses for δικαιώω appears to be, however, without any linguistic support. Δικαιώω can mean either "show to be just" (demonstrative sense) or "justify" (forensic sense), but it cannot mean "show to be justified" or "shown to be declared just" (which is neither the demonstrative nor the forensic sense of the verb). (I am at this point making use of the four-fold analysis of background usage from the Old Testament given by John Murray in The Epistle to the Romans, I [London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1960], pp. 336-338).

In any case, the faith which justifies is conceived of commonly by the evangelical mind as being alone. This appears when the question is asked, "What does a man have to do to be saved?" The standard answer is that he does not have to do anything; all one has to do is believe. Not works of any kind, but faith alone is the one condition of salvation.

It is somewhat difficult to pin down precisely what this faith-alone is. (In what follows, faith as alone, in the sense described in this paragraph, will be referred to by means of the hyphenated form, faith-alone.) It is faith wholly abstracted from work or action, and yet it is an "act" of trust or commitment. We could think of it as a wholly internal, as a mental act of pure faith. It is conceived of as instantaneous, as for example, when one says that the "instant" a man believes he is justified. But the purer the conception of faith the closer it approaches timelessness (in the sense of "without duration"), for there is often a reluctance to think of a temporal succession of faith and justification, or of saving faith as lasting so many minutes or seconds before it effects justification.

The usual pattern of justification in relation to good works which emerges in evangelicalism is on the following order: through preaching a man is brought to exercise saving faith in the sense of faith-alone; the instant he believes, he is justified and is often informed of this fact with the assurance that he cannot be "unjustified;" he may or may not be informed at this point that he is expected to repent and do good, but in any case good works are the inevitable fruit of faith and justification and as such serve to authenticate what has happened. What is crucial is the sequence: faith-alone; justification; good works. Apart from the question of the nature of the temporal sequence of faith and justification, there is at least an order of priority sometimes called a logical order. There would appear to be, however, in addition, a necessary temporal sequence of justification followed by good works.

C. The Analogy between Romanism and Evangelicalism.

There are obvious and notable differences between Romanism and Evangelicalism and these have most frequently occupied the attention of theologians writing on justification. Much less attention has been given to the rather striking parallels between the two positions. Because these are significant for our further purposes we may profitably review them at this point. We can isolate four respects in which the evangelical view is analogous to the Romish view as it came to expression in the Council of Trent.

1. A twofold conception of faith.

The Council of Trent speaks of faith in two distinct senses. There is first an unformed faith (*fides informis*) by which a man believes what the church teaches and consents to be baptized. There is also a faith formed by love (*fides caritate formata*) for which the catechumen prays and which he receives in his baptism. Faith in this latter sense is productive of good works; it is a working faith in the sense of Galatians 5:6 ("faith working through love"). Evangelicalism evidences this same pattern. Justifying faith, or "initial faith" as it is sometimes called, is faith-alone, faith in the purity of its conception corresponding to the Romanist unformed faith. "Subsequent faith," after justification, is productive of good works. It is faith in the fulness of its conception analogous to the Romanist faith formed by love.

2. A twofold conception of justification.

According to the Council of Trent, unformed faith coupled with baptism as the "sacrament of faith," justifies. This is first justification and must be followed by second justification

at the end of history on the ground of condign merit, or the intrinsic meritoriousness of good works. The evangelical pattern focusses its attention almost exclusively on initial (or first) justification by faith-alone. Here the "alone" takes on the added sense of without baptism as an instrumental cause. For evangelicalism, faith without baptism is the instrumental cause of justification. There is not a radical breach with Rome's twofold structure, but a practical discounting of the second part of it. However, evangelicalism is at some point forced to take account of the final judgment. Judgment is an obviously forensic category and implies some kind of subsequent justification. Problems emerge concerning the way the final judgment, as a genuine judgment and not merely an affirmation of a previous judgment, is to be related to the act of justification. The problems are most keenly felt in the attempt to take account of the way the Bible introduces works as a criterion in relation to the final judgment (e.g., Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:29; II Cor. 5:10).

3. The lack of assurance.

In Romanism, because works are the ground of second justification, there can be no assurance of grace and salvation because one never knows whether he will be found in mortal sin at the moment of death. In Evangelicalism, works are not offered as the ground of justification in view of the judgment to come, but they are called in as evidence of justification in possession. As such they become the ground of assurance of grace and salvation. But the good works are not of uniform quality; they are stained with sin, and not infrequently they serve to conceal a deeper hypocrisy. In the beginning Protestantism differentiated itself from Romanism by teaching that believers could have what the Westminster Confession of Faith later called "an infallible assurance of faith" (XVIII/2). It is startling to see how in the 17th century the problem of assurance had begun to assume the proportions that it had for Luther before the Reformation. To be sure, self-examination was not for the purpose of finding the basis for a future justification but for finding the evidence of a past justification. But the experiential impact of both doctrines is virtually identical.

4. Legalistic bondage.

The only kind of assurance Rome could offer its adherents, apart from the possibility of a supernatural revelation of salvation was the moral certainty that by following the teachings of the church, one could hope to attain to eternal life. Rome assisted by outlining in detail the procedures to be followed. So it was that the legalistic bondage of the ecclesiastical system supplanted the liberty of divine law. Built into Evangelicalism's insistence upon faith-alone was an underlying

antinomianism. Law was perceived as a threat to gospel. Yet at the same time, evidence was needed as a basis of assurance. The result was a tendency on the part of the church to set up standards of behavior for its people.

Adolph Küberle describes the phenomenon as follows:

Gleichwohl ist festzustellen, dass sich auch in das evangelische Christentum, besonders in seiner pietistischen Ausprägung, erstaunlich viel gesetzliches Wesen eingenistet hat. Obwohl man voll Überzeugung bekennt, dass Christus allein unsere Gerechtigkeit ist, setzt man die christliche Existenz dann doch wieder gleich mit ganz bestimmten Verhaltensweisen, die die Echtheit des Christenseins dartun sollen.

Rechtfertigung, Glaube und neues Leben
(Glütersloh: Glütersloher Verlagshaus/Gerd Mohn, 1965), p. 52

Küberle mentions among other things the regulation of styles of clothing, the length of hair, theater attendance, smoking and use of strong drink. He shows how pervasive the legalism is with the example of students who mistrust a professor who does not use "existential" in every second sentence, and the example of Lutherans who cannot give Adolf Schlatter a hearing because he was born in the traditionally Reformed town of St. Gallen.

A corresponding legalistic bondage would not be difficult to document in American fundamentalism; but with it is coupled the boast of freedom from law. The bondage is also found among Reformed people where the reading of certain types of literature and adherence to certain patterns of devotional life, or certain models of evangelism, evidence one to be truly converted, or truly Reformed. There is the recent example of a minister who disciplined as non-Christian those who failed to attend his services twice on the Sabbath.

The substitution of legalistic bondage for the freedom of law among Evangelicals has its kinship with the ecclesiastical and hierarchical legalism of Rome.

D. Rome, or Reformed!

In the light of the analogy between Rome and Reformation at significant points relative to the doctrine of justification one may begin to wonder how much of a Reformation there was in the 16th century or whether there was really a Reformation at all. Of course there was a Reformation. The dominant purpose

of the Reformers was to direct men away from their own achievement, to Christ and to him alone. The meaning of sola fide was sola gratia, and grace was grace because of solus Christus.

But in the subsequent relating of good works to justification as evidence of a justifying verdict, an experiential focus was introduced which tended to draw men away from the foundation in Jesus Christ and back into the sphere of achievement however graciously conceived. The resultant lack of assurance stimulated an even more intensive concern with the self and the marks of a true Christian. The more the believer is drawn into the vortex of despair, the more remote becomes the joy of the Reformation. Works may be spoken of as evidence of justification, but there is a discernible shift away from evidence in the sense of testimony to redemption, to evidence in the sense of ground of assurance. To say that works are the ground of assurance of justification is only a hair's breadth away from saying that they are the ground of justification. The practical impact and significance of the two doctrines are the same.

In some segments of Evangelicalism, the danger of a joyless Protestantism has been overcome by giving exclusive attention to initial justification and the sufficiency of Christ to save. But the question of the place of good works cannot be postponed indefinitely. There are those among the converted who suspect that there is more to Christian living than evangelism in the sense of getting others to make the same decisive plunge they have made themselves. Hence the questions currently occupying fundamentalists have unavoidably surfaced: What is the relation of our evangelism to social responsibility? Is social action optional or necessary? In either case, it is an addendum to evangelism, and the resultant problematics is characteristically pre-Reformational Romanist: What are the implications of benefits in the realm of grace for responsibilities in the realm of nature?

The genuine and viable alternative to the Romanist conception of justification in relation to good works appears only in the Reformed faith. This is so ultimately because it was only in the Reformed faith and in Reformed theology that the doctrine of the covenant of grace began to have the structural significance that it has in Scripture. The covenantal perspective on the faith took deep root in the Calvinistic wing of the Reformation. Though the root was sent down quickly and deeply, the plant has not yet borne the inevitable fruit with either the same rapidity or with the same vigor. The development of a covenantal perspective on justification will enable us to distinguish clearly not only between what is of Rome and what is of the Reformation, but also between the Reformed conception and that of Lutheranism and Arminianism in the classic sense, as well

as that of Baptist, Arminian, or Dispensational Fundamentalism, or any combination thereof, on the contemporary scene. Only by developing a consistently Reformed view can we further set off the Reformation from liberal or modernist views of the older or newer kind. The intention is not to isolate the Reformed faith as an oddity, but to insist that the Reformed faith is the Reformation come into its own.

In the two sections to follow, attention will be focussed on the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as representative Reformed documents from the middle of the 17th century. The purpose is to appreciate the distinctive thrust of the teaching of the standards which serves to set the Reformed conception off from the common evangelical view previously described.

II. JUSTIFYING FAITH AS OBEDIENT FAITH

A. The Affirmation of Faith Alone.

From a cursory reading of the Westminster standards one might gain the impression initially that the same conception of faith in relation to justification and good works is entertained as is found in evangelicalism. There are three statements in particular found in the Standards that lend credence to this conclusion:

- a. "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness is the alone instrument of justification." CF XI/2.
- b. Justification is on the ground of the obedience of Christ imputed "and received by faith alone." LC 70. The same statement is found in SC 33.
- c. "and requiring nothing of them for their justification but faith." LC 71.

This language would appear to yield the evangelical sequence of faith-alone, justification, and good works, and there are doubtless many who sincerely subscribe to the Reformed standards with this perspective in mind. For example, G. I. Williamson in commenting on the section of the Confession where the first statement (a, above) appears, writes, "This means that at the instant we begin to trust in Christ we are then and there declared to be legally without sin, guilt, or future punishment. This declaration cannot depend upon anything done by the sinner. Faith which is not 'doing' but only dependence upon what Christ has done

instantaneously results in complete and eternal justification, provided it be true faith. If it is true faith it will also produce good works which are the sure evidence thereof." (The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes [Phila.: P. and R. Pub. Co., 1964], p. 105.) From an entirely different theological perspective George S. Hendry comments on the same portion of the Confession that works are not the condition but the consequences of justification. "We are justified by faith alone, but when we are justified our faith will not remain alone." (The Westminster Confession for Today [Richmond: John Knox, 1960], p. 135.) In both of these quotations the twofold nature of faith is clearly marked.

The above quoted statements from the Standards must, however, be viewed in the wider context of the Standards themselves and not merely in the context of current evangelical understanding. It becomes clear that "faith alone" in the Standards does not mean that faith is in point of fact alone at any point including the moment of entrance upon what the Confession calls "the state of justification" (XI/5). According to the Confession it is not faith-alone that justifies, but faith in the full-orbed biblical sense as captured in the Confession's own definition of faith.

We shall observe first, in this segment (II) that the Westminster standards do not view faith as alone; that rather, the Standards give no place to the Romanist conception of unformed faith. With this possible misconception removed, we are in a position to understand in a positive way what is taught in the statements cited above. This will be our concern in the following segment (III).

B. The Definition of Faith.

The Confession defines saving faith for us in Chapter XIV. Having noted how this faith is generated and nurtured in Section 1, the Confession in Section 2 says:

By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virute of the covenant of grace.

The briefer definitions offered in the catechisms restrict themselves to "the principal acts" but present essentially the same doctrine. (LC 72 and SC 86) The Larger Catechism also points out that saving faith is not mere assent to the truth of the promise of the gospel.

Strictly speaking, the three definitions offered in the Confession and catechisms do not say what faith is in and of itself, but rather they tell us what faith does. To the extent that we have a definition, it is in terms of what faith does. The principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ. In sum, it is trusting in Christ, or trust in Christ. But these principal acts of saving faith are obviously intended to be of a piece with what could be called the peripheral acts of saving faith, namely, yielding obedience to commands, trembling at threatenings, and embracing the promises. Yielding obedience is of a piece with receiving and resting upon Christ. They are found together. If faith is receiving Christ, it is also obeying his commands. This conception is far removed from Williamson's "Faith which is not 'doing' but only dependence upon what Christ has done."

There is no faith-alone in abstraction from acts of faith. The Confession not only has action indissolubly tied to faith, but defines faith in terms of action. This is the justifying faith which is as a saving grace wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit (LC 72).

Of particular significance is the fact that the actions of faith are not construed as evidence of the presence of true faith. They do function as evidence in that they are the visible side of faith. But they do not come after faith, as the result of faith, pointing back to a faith-alone which resides elsewhere. Not even the language of LC 32 is to be read in that way: "holy obedience, as the evidence of the truth of their faith." The evidence does not come after faith but with faith, by the Holy Spirit given "to work in them that faith with all other saving graces; and to enable them unto all holy obedience." The coupling of faith and obedience in this way is striking.

Further, faith is not construed as a virtually timeless (without duration), instantaneous act preceding justification which is then followed by some other kind of faith which takes time. There is a unity of conception with a multiplicity of aspects. What the Confession is speaking to is the nature of saving faith, the saving grace which is called in LC 72, "justifying faith."

By now it is clear that the Westminster definition of

justifying faith has nothing in common with the Roman Catholic notion of unformed faith, nor is the Westminster definition made up of a combination of the Romanist notions of unformed faith together with faith formed by love. The faith which rests in Christ for justification and salvation is never anything less than an obedient faith. All of its action can be summed up as a grand expression of trust in Christ. The actions of faith are gathered like so many rays of light and are focussed upon the Redeemer. This is the full-orbed, biblical obedience of faith to which Paul calls the Gentiles (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Paul does not call the Gentiles to faith-alone, but demands total capitulation to the sovereign, gracious, and benevolent Lordship of Jesus Christ.

C. Faith is Not Alone.

What we have observed concerning the fulness of the Westminster definition of faith is introduced into the article on justification to forestall, as it were, any misconception in the direction of a supposed faith-alone. The misconception is possible because of the statement previously noted that faith "is the alone instrument of justification." For that reason the Confession goes on to add immediately, within the same section (2, of Ch. XI) that faith is not alone in the person justified.

It has been argued that the sense of the Confession at this point is to the effect that faith is not alone in the person who has been justified. This interpretation as such, is of course true in itself; but the Confession is saying more than this. The Confession is not conceding ground to the sequence of faith-alone, justification, good works. The insertion of the gloss, "Who has been," is purely gratuitous. It results not in the obviously intended qualification of what has preceded, but in a simple addendum. With as much right and with more accuracy one could insist on the gloss, "who is to be" justified. The sense of the passage is simply that justifying faith is not alone in the person who is justified by the faith which is the alone instrument of justification.

In support of this interpretation we can appeal to the standard Reformed commentaries on the Confession of both A.A. Hodge and Robert Shaw. Hodge writes, "Consequently orthodox theologians have always acknowledged that while faith alone justifies, a faith which is alone, or unassociated with other graces and fruitless in good works, will not justify" (A Commentary on the Confession of Faith [Phila.: Pres. Bd. of Pub., 1869], p. 253). Hodge does not say "has been justified," but "will not justify." The citation is of value not only for the authority of the writer but also for his testimony to what is the commonly held view of orthodox theologians. Robert Shaw

writes to the same effect, "The faith that justifies [not "has justified," N.S.] is a living and active principle, which works by love, purifies the heart, and excites to universal obedience. It is accompanied with every Christian grace, and productive of good works" (An Exposition of the Confession of Faith of the Westminster Assembly of Divines [9th ed.; London: Blackie and Son, 1861], p. 133).

Again we see how clearly and how deliberately the Westminster divines set their view of justifying faith off from the Romanist notion of ~~un~~formed faith, and from a similar view of faith as a purely mental, instantaneous "act." It is precisely for this purpose that the second half of XI/2 was written. It is all the more significant, therefore, that just at this point the Westminster divines introduced James 2:17,22, and 26, as well as Galatians 5:6 as proof texts. It cannot be insisted upon too strongly that if James 2 uses δικαιώω in a purely demonstrative sense, there is no reference in the passage to the subject of soteric justification. But only if James is speaking of soteric justification is the appeal of the Westminster divines to James 2 at this juncture warranted. They obviously understood James to be talking about soteric justification and to be contrasting two kinds of faith: there is a faith-alone which does not justify because it is inert, it is dead; and there is a faith which does justify because it is a working faith. The Divines further ~~equates~~ James' conception of justifying faith with Paul's conception of justifying faith by introducing Galatians 5:6. In his study of Galatians, J. G. Machen makes a similar equation when he writes, "The solution of the whole problem is provided by Paul himself in a single phrase. . . 'Faith working through love' is the key to an understanding both of Paul and of James. The faith about which Paul has been speaking is not the idle faith which James condemns, but a faith that works" (Machen's Notes on Galatians, ed. John H. Skilton [Phila.: P. and R., 1972] p.220). Machen's thought concerning Paul's view of faith in Galatians is that the faith which justifies is not faith-alone, but working faith.

The matter can be stated in another way. Justifying faith, according to LC 32, appears in the context of "all other saving graces." The proof text given by the Westminster Assembly is Galatians 5:22, 23, where faith is embedded among the fruits of the Spirit which include love, kindness, goodness, and self-control. They, therefore, understood the faith to be saving, or justifying faith. Because faith appears with all these other gifts, it is obviously not alone. Faith-alone does not justify. James says it is dead. This is what the Confession affirms precisely in the context of its affirmation that faith is the alone instrument of justification. Therefore we must conclude that the point of CF XI/2 is not that faith is alone, and as such is

the instrument of justification, but rather that faith in the fulness of the biblical conception, faith as defined by the Confession itself, is the alone instrument, or the only instrument of justification.

When the catechisms teach that the obedience and satisfaction of Christ as the ground of our justification are "received by faith alone," they are repeating what the Confession says of faith as the alone instrument. Therefore they are not to be understood as saying that the faith which receives the righteousness of Christ is faith-alone. On the contrary, it is faith as described by the Confession in the full biblical sense and it is this faith alone, therefore even to the exclusion of faith-alone, which receives the righteousness of Christ and thus justifies.

D. Repentance Joined to Faith.

What the Confession says specifically about the faith that justifies, positively in its definition of faith and negatively in the exclusion of faith that is alone, is further developed in terms of what is said of repentance. As with faith, the Confession defines repentance in terms of what it does:

By it, a sinner, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature, and righteous law of God; and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for, and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments. (CF XV/2)

The last clause appears in LC 76 as "purposing and endeavoring constantly to walk with him in all the ways of new obedience," and in SC 87, "with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience."

The Confession also teaches in Section 3, "Although repentance be not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God's free grace in Christ; yet it is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it." Here the Confession unambiguously teaches that repentance is in no sense the ground of our acceptance with God. It is not the ground of our justification. But no less unambiguously does the Confession teach that there is no pardon, no forgiveness of sins without repentance. Without repentance, a man remains under the wrath and curse of God.

But pardon or forgiveness of sins is integral to justification according to the Confession. CF XI/1 teaches that God justifies "by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous." LC 70 says that "justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which he pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in his sight." SC 33 includes pardon in the same way as a constitutive element of justification. Forgiveness is so integral to justification, that the temptation of Reformed students is to follow the lead of John Calvin who defined justification exclusively in terms of pardon.

If forgiveness is constitutive for justification and repentance is indispensable for forgiveness, it follows that repentance is indispensable for justification. Again we must remind ourselves of how the Confession defines repentance. In line with the Confession, Reformed theologians and pastors insist that repentance cannot be reduced to grief over sin, or mere mental anguish. This, alone, is sorrow unto death. The grief must be such that a man actually turns from sin and endeavors to walk in all the ways of new obedience. Not the intention to turn--repentance can no more be conceived of as a purely mental, inward act, than can faith. As there is no faith-alone, there is no repentance-alone. In speaking this way, the Confession is fully in line with the way repentance is represented in Scripture; and the Confession also accurately represents Scripture when it speaks of the necessity of repentance. Repentance is not represented as a mere duty, as another demand of the law with no gospel light. Repentance is always unto forgiveness, and for that reason the preaching of biblical repentance is not a legalistic requirement but a gospel appeal. It is the appeal of Ezekiel, "Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11).

The force of the Confession's teaching may not be avoided, or voided, by resort to some distinction between "initial repentance" which is unto "initial pardon," to be followed by "subsequent repentance" which is unto "subsequent pardon." "Initial repentance," or "unformed repentance" or "repentance-alone" would be as much without form or substance as faith-alone; it would be indistinguishable from faith-alone, and would therefore preserve the sequence: faith/repentance-alone; justification; repentance/good works. But the Confession knows nothing of such a gutless instantaneous or timeless repentance; and the repentance which it does describe cannot be construed as coming after justification. The very heading of Chapter XV is not simply "Repentance," but "Repentance Unto Life." The language of Section 2 quoted above shows that what is in view

is repentance unto justification and salvātion. The sinner begins to sense the danger and the evil of sin; he apprehends the mercy of God in Christ; and he turns from his sin unto God. This language is appropriate and necessary for those who are within the sphere of the covenant. The Westminster Assembly's selection of proof-texts make this clear. But it is also language appropriate to those who are for the first time entering into the sphere of the covenant. For that reason, Section 3, on the indispensable necessity of repentance, offers both Luke 13:3, 5, and Acts 17:30, 31 as proof texts. The latter verses refer to the command to repent which under the New Covenant goes out to the Gentiles. The Confession is saying that the same repentance which is necessary for entrance into the sphere of covenant blessing and privilege is also necessary for maintaining one's standing in covenant grace. As such it corresponds to the faith which is necessary not only for entrance into the state of justification, but for maintaining one's standing in that state. As A. A. Hodge comments, "And as they ~~came~~, in the first instance, to God in the exercise of repentance and faith in Christ, so must they always continue to return to him after every partial wandering and loss of his sensible favour in the exercise of the same repentance and faith; and thus only can they hope to have his pardon sensibly renewed to them." (Op. cit., p. 257).

In the previous paragraph reference has been made to the correspondence between repentance and faith. But repentance and faith do not simply correspond; they are intertwined and interwoven in the application of redemption. This interrelation is admirably represented by John Murray:

The question has been discussed: which is prior, faith or repentance? It is an unnecessary question and the insistence that one is prior to the other is futile. There is no priority. The faith that is unto salvation is a penitent faith and the repentance that is unto life is a believing repentance. (Redemption--Accomplished and Applied [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955], p. 140.)

He then quotes the Shorter Catechism definition of repentance and adds:

The interdependence of faith and repentance can be readily seen when we remember that faith is faith in Christ for salvation from sin. But if faith is directed to salvation from sin, there must be hatred of sin and the desire to be saved from it. Such hatred of sin involves repentance which essentially consists in turning from sin unto God. Again, if we remember that repentance is turning from sin unto God, the turning to God implies faith

in the mercy of God as revealed in Christ. It is impossible to disentangle faith and repentance. Saving faith is permeated with repentance and repentance is permeated with faith. (Ibid.)

More briefly, but to the same effect is the statement of A.A. Hodge:

Repentance is the natural and instant sequence of the grace of regeneration. It also embraces an element of faith in Christ, and that faith is, as we have seen, the instrument of justification. He that repents believes. He that does not repent does not believe. (Op. cit., p. 292)

Both Murray and Hodge, each in his own way, make clear that faith-alone does not justify and therefore does not save. Coupled with this faith there must be repentance, a turning from sin and an endeavoring to walk in all the ways of new obedience. Murray says expressly, "We see, therefore, that the emphasis which the Scripture places upon faith as the condition of salvation is not to be construed as if faith were the only condition." (Op. cit., p. 143). Neither the Larger nor the Shorter Catechisms teach otherwise:

That we may escape the wrath and curse of God due to us by reason of the transgression of the law, he requireth of us repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and the diligent use of the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation. (LC 153). To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requireth of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption. (SC 85).

Escape from the wrath and curse of God due to us by reason of the transgression of the law obviously brings us into the sphere of justification. The obedience and satisfaction of Christ whereby he fully discharged the debt of all those that are justified and made a proper, real, and full satisfaction to the Father's justice in their behalf (CF XI/3), is imputed to believers in their justification (CF XI/1) for no other reason than that they might escape the wrath and curse of God due to them because of their sin. What is necessary for this justification is not faith-alone, but faith and repentance. But the catechisms say more. There is also required the diligent use of the outward means of grace. This clause, too, must begin to function not only in the teaching but also in the practice of the Church of Jesus Christ. To insist on faith-alone for justification is a serious impoverishment, indeed, a contravention of the teaching of the Westminster standards.

Appendix: By way of illustration of the point made in the previous section (Section D) reference may be made to the evangelistic booklet, "A New Life." No publication date is provided but copies may be obtained from C. John Miller, 415 Walnut Street, Jenkintown, Pa. 19046. It is my understanding that the booklet was authored by Professor Miller with the assistance of students from Westminster Seminary, and its use is promoted by Professor Miller.

The booklet is heavily dependent upon the fundamentalist evangelistic methodologies promoted by Campus Crusade and the James D. Kennedy Program of Evangelism both for format and content. Nevertheless, the Reformed consciousness asserts itself in the section directly related to the doctrine of justification.

In answer to the question, "Suppose you were to die tonight and appear before a Holy God--what would you say if He asked: Why should I let you into My heaven?" (p. 9), the answer given is Fact Five: "You receive the Lord Jesus Christ into your life by turning in sorrow from your sins and trusting Him as your own personal Savior" (p. 10). The answer is faith (receiving the Lord Jesus), but this faith is defined not as faith-alone, but as repentance--which, incidentally, comes first--and trust. Repentance is described not as a mental attitude but as "a turning from our sins to the living God through Jesus Christ." Point 2 is "Trust in Christ Jesus alone." It would be clearly inappropriate to have attached the word "alone" to "faith" or "trust;" therefore it is attached where it is indeed most appropriate, to the name of Jesus Christ. As Warfield put it, "It is not faith that saves, but faith in Jesus Christ....It is not, strictly speaking, even faith in Christ that saves, but Christ saves through faith." (Biblical and Theological Studies, ed. Samuel G. Craig [Phila.: P. and R., 1952], p. 425.)

At a later point the booklet proceeds further: "How does this New Life continue? The same way it began, with prayer and faith." (p. 13) Again it is not faith-alone, but prayer and faith. After some remarks on prayer, a series of directions derived from the Word are given. These show again that the faith with which the New Life began and continues is not faith-alone, but active faith. The directions include hating and turning from old lust, selfishness, anger and lying (the negative side of faith/repentance) and loving God and other believers, expressing this in deeds of kindness and compassion (the positive side of faith/repentance). Another direction calls for meeting publicly and privately together with other believers for worship in a church where the Bible is believed and taught (There are five directions altogether given on p. 14). Thus the booklet gives, in effect, an accounting of LC 153 and SC 85 which require for justification, repentance toward God (this comes first in the series), faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and the diligent use of the outward means of grace.

E. Good Works Joined to Repentance and Faith.

Repentance as the Confession and catechisms conceive of it is of a piece with doing good. Doing good takes time, but the Standards know of no timeless repentance any more than they know of a timeless faith. Repentance is defined in terms of doing good. What does it mean to turn from sin unto God, or to propose and endeavor to walk with God in all the ways of his commandments (CF XV/2), except to cease from evil and to begin doing good? It is appropriate to the subject of repentance that the Confession follows Chapter XV with a chapter on the subject of good works. Repentance passes over imperceptibly into doing good works.

Because repentance and doing good are indissolubly tied together on the one hand, and faith and repentance are indissolubly tied together on the other, there is an indissoluble conjunction between faith and ~~doing good works~~. Again it becomes clear that the Confession and catechisms are not hospitable to a conception of faith-alone which justifies, followed by a different conception of faith as comprehending repentance and obedience. There is no warrant in the Confession for isolating a conception of faith-alone from the full biblical sense of repentant and obedient faith.

On the contrary, the Standards suggest that even faith itself, in its specific identity must be viewed as a good work. As we have already seen, it is defined as an act, more specifically as a series of acts. These acts are good; they are certainly not bad. More pointedly the catechisms view faith as obedience to the first commandment. Among the duties required in the first commandment are "the knowing and acknowledging of God to be the only true God, and our God" (LC 104; cf. SC 46). What is required is true, saving faith; for the true God, and our God, is, as the preface to the commandments states, Jehovah, our covenant God who saves (LC 101). He is the God and Father of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. LC 104 gives even more specific instruction when further on in the list of duties required by the first commandment are "believing him; trusting, hoping, delighting, rejoicing in him; being zealous for him; calling upon him, giving all praise and thanks, and yielding all obedience and submission to him with the whole man." Here faith and obedience are linked as part of a unified response to the first commandment. In line with this, the Shorter Catechism places its definition of saving faith, along with repentance, not among the questions having to do with the ordo salutis, but some fifty questions later under the general heading of "the duty which God requir^{eth} of man, [which] is obedience to his revealed will" (SC 39, 86, 87). The Confession speaks of believers quite

naturally as those who "sincerely obey the Gospel" (CF III/8) echoing the Pauline formula, the obedience of faith.

Neither A. A. Hodge nor Shaw hesitate to speak of faith as a work. Hodge argues in agreement with the Confession that "faith itself, the act of believing" cannot be imputed as the righteous ground of our justification. The reason is not because faith is not a work and therefore does not even come up for consideration as a ground. Rather, says Hodge, "Because faith is 'a work,' and Paul asserts that justification on the ground of works is impossible" (Op. cit., pp 252f.). In the same way, Shaw argues that faith is not imputed for justification. "And in confirmation of this, we observe, that faith, as an act performed by us, is as much a work of obedience to the law as any other; and, therefore, to be justified by an act of faith, would be to be justified by a work. But this is contrary to the express declarations of Scripture, which exclude all sorts of works from the affair of justification" (Op. cit., p. 128).

F. The Obedience of Faith.

In addition to the definition of faith coupled to the express rejection of a faith-alone concept, and the linking of repentance with faith, there are other ways in which the Westminster Standards make clear that justifying faith is not to be thought of as faith-alone. Of major significance is the way in which calling is related to faith. We may make use of the usual distinction between the call of the gospel (external calling) and effectual calling (internal calling) looking first at the former.

For the sake of convenience, we can use the analysis offered by Charles Hodge: "This external call includes (1.) a declaration of the plan of salvation. (2.) The promise of God to save all who accede to the terms of that plan. (3.) Command, exhortation, and invitation to all to accept of the offered mercy. (4.) An exhibition of the reasons which should constrain men to repent and believe, and thus escape from the wrath to come" (Systematic Theology [Rpt.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952], II, 641f.). Taking 3 and 4 together we note that "the gracious invitations" (p. 642) are not to faith-alone, but to repentance and faith. The gospel is nothing less than the whole counsel of God. The Scripture as a whole and in all its parts is a declaration of the will of God giving us what is necessary unto salvation (CF I/1). The Scriptures teach "what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man" (SC 1). If

gospel proclamation is the proclamation of the whole counsel of God, and not simply of the fundamentals of the faith, then gospel proclamation requires laying out before men the duty God requires of them, not faith-alone, but faith, repentance, and new obedience. The Bible is a rule of faith and practice. To teach only "faith" is to give less than the full gospel story. It is, in effect, to cultivate the response of a people who will honor God with their lips while their hearts remain far from him.

The gospel is to be proclaimed to people with the same intention with which they are to read the word of God, that it might become effectual to salvation. To reach this goal, the Shorter Catechism (90) teaches that we must "receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practise it in our lives." The Larger Catechism says we are to read the word "with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them" (LC 157). The answer to LC 160 is similar but fuller than that of SC 90. Again, we note that the reading of the word with a view to obedience to its commands does not come after justification and after salvation, but in order that salvation might be effected. It is impossible to insert a faith-alone concept into the catechisms at this juncture.

The same point is further reinforced by what both Confession and catechisms say of the requirements for adult baptism. Baptism is to be administered to none "till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him" (LC 166; CF XXVIII/4, "profess faith in and obedience unto Christ;" SC 95 uses the same words quoted from LC 166). Very frequently the inquiry by the elders made before baptism of adults concerning changed patterns of life is put in the framework of evidence of true faith. This line of inquiry has its own validity, but the evidential service of obedience is not what is in view in the quoted passages from the Standards. There is one profession to be made of both faith and obedience; obedience is not subordinated to faith as evidence. The profession is one of total commitment of the whole man, body, soul, mind, and strength, to Christ in response to preaching which does, or ought to, call for such a response. When one considers that the profession is the audible expression of the heart with a view to the sign and seal of ingrafting into Christ and the appropriation of the benefits of saving grace, one can easily see how faith coupled with obedience to Christ is what is called for in order to salvation and therefore in order to justification.

How could it be otherwise? What is the ungodly man who is to be justified asked to do in order to be saved? We can say he must believe, but not with the assumption that he

may continue unrepentant and disobedient until such time as he believes and has been justified. How can a sinner be asked to believe in Christ without simultaneously being asked to follow Christ and obey his commands? Reformed evangelism has found the bane of fundamentalism to lie in offering Christ as Savior, and only secondarily as Lord. But how can Jesus be preached as both Savior and Lord without some indication of what that Lordship entails?

Justification of the ungodly cannot mean the priority of pure ungodliness to justification. It is the ungodly man who believes who is justified. But are we to ask of this ungodly man only faith on the assumption that whereas he can do nothing to save himself, he can at least believe? This would be to cast him back on his own resources without a glimmer of gospel or hope. Faith is no easier a response on the part of the ungodly man than is repentance or obedience. A demand for total capitulation to Christ no more jeopardizes grace than does the demand for faith. For that reason, Reformed standards, like the Westminster Confession of Faith and the catechisms, are not embarrassed to ask, not only for profession of faith, but also for profession of obedience for admission to baptism and for admission to the church as the body of Christ. The church does not wait to ask for a profession of obedience until after the believer is in the church, as a kind of certification of standing.

The doctrine of the Westminster standards is no different when viewed from the perspective of effectual calling. From the answers to the question, "What is effectual calling?", in the catechisms (LC 67 and SC 31) one might gain the impression that effectual calling simply enables a sinner to believe. The impression is mistaken not only in terms of these answers themselves, but more especially in the light of the corresponding affirmation of the Confession. Of effectual calling the Confession asserts (X/1):

All those whom God hath predestined unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.

One is struck first of all with the comprehensiveness of the conception of calling. It is nothing less than the transference of the whole man from a state of sin and death outside of Christ, to a state of grace and salvation in Christ to whom he is united in his effectual calling (SC 30). The consequences of effectual calling are therefore not limited to the mind, but extend to the will. He who is effectually called not only savingly understands (faith), but is also determined to that which is good (obedience). This happens in the one, unified act of effectual calling.

The same point concerning effectual calling is made in at least three other connections indicating how central the thought is. "When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, He freeth him from his natural bondage under sin; and, by His grace alone, enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good" (CF IX/4). Conversion is a total transformation of the whole man. The correlation of faith and obedience is asserted when the Confession says that Christ applies the redemption he purchased for the elect by "effectually persuading them by His Spirit to believe and obey" (CF VIII/8). The observations on the significance of baptism are also relevant. Baptism is "a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life" (CF XXVIII/1). These observations on the significance of baptism for effectual calling correspond to what was already noted of the relation between the external call and the prerequisites for the administration of baptism to adults.

In the Westminster standards, the topic of effectual calling embraces what later theology thought of as regeneration in the narrow sense; but there is in the Confession no doctrine of regeneration thought of simply as the enablement of faith. That is why faith is not represented as appearing alone in the Confession but always in the context of all the fruits of regeneration. It is a major point of John Murray's teaching on regeneration that the grace of regeneration is inseparable from its fruits (Op. cit., pp. 124-129). "The regenerate person cannot live in sin and be unconverted" (p. 128). But this teaching carries with it the implication that the fruits themselves cannot be isolated from one another. Therefore Professor Murray summarized his conclusion with these words: "There are numerous other considerations derived from the Scripture which confirm this great truth that regeneration is such a radical, pervasive, and efficacious transformation that it immediately registers itself in the conscious activity

of the person concerned in the exercises of faith and repentance and new obedience" (pp. 128f., italics added by N.S.). One can sense immediately how utterly impoverished is the fundamentalist conception of faith-alone, and why Murray immediately adds, "Far too frequently the conception entertained of conversion is so superficial and beggarly that it completely fails to take account of the momentous change of which conversion is the fruit" (p. 129). In terms of what Professor Murray says at this point, if the order of salvation is: regeneration; faith; and justification, then the order of salvation is: regeneration; faith/repentance/new obedience; justification.

Indeed, this is what the Confession says. The order in which the chapters appear in the Confession is not without significance. The chapter on effectual calling is immediately followed by the chapter on justification. Two more chapters intervene (on adoption, and sanctification) before the Confession takes up saving faith. Chapter XI, Of Justification, begins "Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth." Does God not justify the ungodly? Indeed He does (Romans 4:5). But He does not justify the ungodly in their ungodliness. Paul teaches in the same epistle, "Whom He called, these He also justified" (Rom. 8:30). To be called is to be transformed; it is to be freed from natural bondage to sin (CF IX/4) so that one not only believes but is determined to what is good. God justifies the ungodly man whom He ushers into a state of grace and salvation "not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone" (CF XI/1). Both sides of the truth are necessary in order to do full justice to the Confession's teaching on justification: not on account of faith, repentance, and obedience; but not without faith, repentance, and obedience.

G. The Necessity of Good Works.

There is one final respect in which the Confession makes clear that faith never, at any point, stands alone, which, because of its far-reaching significance, cannot be bypassed. What is in view here is the various ways in which the Confession brings before our consciousness that good works are necessary for salvation.

We may look, first of all, at the requirements for worthy participation in the Lord's Supper. We could at this point reiterate what was observed in connection with the observance of baptism and the prerequisite of a profession of faith and obedience. Baptism signs and seals our ingrafting into Christ and participation in his benefits including justification and salvation itself. Thus, faith and new obedience are in order to justification and salvation. There is a similar correspondence between the requirements for communion and the significance of communion. "It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's supper, that they examine themselves of their

knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience" (SC 97). The exhortation of the Shorter Catechism is reinforced with the warning of the Larger Catechism: "Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's supper, may and ought to be kept from that sacrament, by the power which Christ hath left in his church, until they receive instruction, and manifest their reformation" (LC 173). The catechisms are saying that no less is necessary for maintenance of union and communion with Christ than was required for entrance into that union. At the same time, no more is required. Why these requirements are made is stated in so many words by the Confession: all ignorant and ungodly persons are "unfit to enjoy communion with him" and are therefore unworthy of the Lord's table (CF XXIX/8). When we realize that communion with Christ is at the heart of our salvation and is the foundation of the imputation of Christ's righteousness for justification, it becomes abundantly clear that the Westminster Standards hold ungodly persons unfit to be justified apart from the transformation wrought in effectual calling. The sacrament is designed to strengthen and increase godliness: "A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his church...to strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces; to oblige them to obedience...." (LC 162). To say that there is no communion with Christ without godliness is simply to say there is no salvation without good works.

This consideration of discipline in connection with the Lord's Supper leads directly to a consideration of the ends of discipline in the church as such. To the officers of the church are committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven "by virtue whereof, they have power, respectively, to retain and remit sins; to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word, and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the Gospel; and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require" (CF XXX/2). What makes this passage so relevant is the obviously forensic, judicial context in which the power of the keys is exercised, bringing us directly into the sphere of justification. What is at stake is entrance into the kingdom of heaven. That is nothing less than salvation itself. The criterion is not faith-alone, or a bare profession of faith, but godliness. The ungodly are not "justified" by the courts of the church in their ungodliness, but only as they turn from ungodliness and return to the ways of covenant faith and obedience. The whole process of discipline in the church is rendered nugatory if it bears no analogy to the rule of Christ, his judgment, and justifying verdict. Again the Confession at this point makes nothing of works as evidence of faith; faith as such is not even mentioned, though it is, as we have seen, indissolubly tied to good works. There are no good works without it.

If we bring together at this point what we have observed concerning the word, or the external call of the gospel, the

sacraments, both Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and now concerning discipline, one consistent picture emerges with respect to the Confession's teaching on the means of grace and marks of the true church. It is simply that in order to reach the heavenly city, we must enter upon the path of faith, repentance, and obedience to Christ; and we must stay on that path in order to reach the goal which is our justification and eternal life. Because of the faithfulness of our covenant God, we know and we are fully assured ~~that~~ the goal is not only attainable but ours already. In entering upon that path, the children of God are justified, adopted, and sanctified. They are saved. That path marked out by the law of God is pure grace; it is the way of life, for Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Jesus is to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption (I Corinthians 1:30). Our Savior who purchased redemption for us by his death and resurrection, by the life-giving power of the Spirit sets us on that path, uniting us to himself, and because he does not forsake the work of his hands, he leads with encouragement and correction, carrying the weak ones in his arms, searching out the straying ones, never losing a single one for whom he died, but bringing every last one of them safely to the Father's home. In every aspect of its ministry, whether by word, or by sacrament, or by discipline, the church inculcates the truth that faith-alone does not save; it will not justify. As the Lord of the church testifies, it is the righteous, who will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:43).

This witness, too, has found an indelible place in the Confession and catechisms of the church. The Confession affirms that at death "the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies" (CF XXXII/1). On the day of judgment, "the righteous go into everlasting life" (CF XXXIII/2). The wicked have nothing before them but hell, eternal torments, and everlasting destruction. To the same effect is the teaching of the Larger Catechism, 85 and 90. The Shorter Catechism, 37 and 38, speaks more simply of the benefits which believers receive at death and at the resurrection.

It might appear that what the Confession and catechisms say of the glorious destiny of the righteous it says of those who are forensically righteous, or righteous by virtue of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, whereas the wicked are truly and properly, that is, intrinsically wicked. This interpretation is true as far as it goes; but the proof texts offered by the Westminster Divines show that by just men they had in view not simply those who are imputatively just, but godly men. A text used at a number of points, but also in connection with CF XXXIII/2, is Matthew 25:31-46, where the righteous are those who have served Christ in loyal self-abandonment. Even more significant is John 5:28, 29, where it is said that at the general resurrection

they that have done good will come forth unto the resurrection of life whereas they that have done evil will come forth unto the resurrection of damnation. This text is used to support the Confession's teaching that "the bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonor: the bodies of the just, by His Spirit, unto honour; and be made conformable to His own glorious body" (CF XXXII/3). The "just" of the Confession are referred to in the proof text as "those who have done good." They are not simply forensically just, but are covenantally loyal and obedient servants of Jesus Christ.

The Confession is not teaching perfectionism, any more than it denies that the unregenerate do "things which God commands," and which are "of good use both to themselves and others" (CF XVI/7). But it does draw the same visible line of demarcation present throughout both testaments between the people of God who are following the leading of Christ, and the people of Satan whose obvious allegiance is to the Prince of Darkness. The Westminster Divines had learned to sing Psalm 1 with understanding. The Lord does know the way of the righteous. They will stand in the day of judgment, whereas the way of the wicked will perish.

The necessity of good works for salvation is not an element of Reformed teaching that has received a great deal of attention perhaps because of embarrassment in view of the great emphasis on justification by faith alone, or perhaps because of the difficulty of propounding the doctrine without being misunderstood as lapsing back into Romanism. The classic theologians differentiated their position from Rome, made the necessary qualifications in cases where good works (like the psychological act of faith) were impossible (e.g., infants who die in infancy), yet insisted on the necessity of good works for salvation. Heinrich Heppe describes the Reformed view:

Of course no one by good works can merit righteousness and the prospect of eternal life. So good works are necessary for attaining to salvation not "by the necessity of merit" or "of efficient cause." But of course good works are necessary as the God-appointed road, on which by grace we are to attain to the possession of eternal life. This naturally can hold not for those elect who die at an age of minority or at the beginning of their rebirth, but only for those who have time and opportunity for good works. (Reformed Dogmatics, trans. G.T. Thomson [London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1950], pp. 579f.)

Echoing the judgment of Heppe, Herman Bavinck writes:

Zij hadden er geen bezwaar in, om de goede werken noodzakelijk ter zaligheid te noemen, mits daarbij niet gedacht werd aan eene necessitas causalitatis

vel meriti vel efficientiae, maar aan eene necessitas praesentiae, medii et viae ad salutem aeternam obtinendam. (Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, Vol. IV [4th ed.; Kampen: Kok, 1930], p. 240.)

From among the citations of classic authors given by Heppe, we may note that of Van Mastricht: "The Reformed--deny the necessity of good works for obtaining the right to eternal life. Indeed if done with this intention they say that in consequence they are actually evil and pernicious. But they declare that they are necessary by divine prescript for receiving possession of life, as conditions without which God refuses to bestow salvation upon us" (Op. cit., p. 580).

The necessity of good works for salvation is taught in the Heidelberg Catechism. Question 36 says that we must do good works because Christ renews us and we must show ourselves thankful, glorifying God and winning others to Christ. The next question asserts that those who do not turn from an unthankful and impenitent life will by no means be saved. Similarly the Westminster Confession teaches that God will by no means clear the guilty but that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (II/1). More pointedly, CF XIII/1 teaches that without the practice of holiness "no man shall see the Lord" (cf. CF XVI/2).

When we realize that salvation is nothing if it does not include escape from the wrath and curse of God due to us because of our sin, we can see that salvation includes justification. In fact, the two terms are frequently interchangeable. In the course of ministry pastors almost never speak of the need to be justified; they speak usually of the need to be saved. If then good works are necessary for salvation according to standard Reformed teaching, they are also necessary for justification. The forensic moment in salvation is inescapable.

But how is the Reformed teaching on the necessity of good works for salvation (justification) to be squared with the insistence on salvation (justification) by faith alone? When the question is broached in theological discussion resort is usually made to a distinction between salvation (justification) in present possession as a result of conversion and the exercise of faith-alone, and the eschatological salvation (justification) into which believers will enter on the Day of Judgment, and for which works are, indeed, necessary. In order further to safeguard grace, it is argued that faith-alone saves (justifies), but if it is true faith it will inevitably bear fruit in the shape of repentance and good works. Thus the good works will be there when they are needed for salvation. If the good works are not there, one may conclude that the faith-alone was not genuine. It is common to speak of disobedient persons who must not be true believers, but only rarely does one hear of believers who have fallen into disobedience.

See 2nd pp
p 27

There are at least four observations that can be made with respect to this argument.

See last pp
p 26

First, in the argument the characteristically Roman Catholic pattern of thought appears in an even more virulent form than noted at the beginning in Part I. It has become all the more obvious that we have to do with a first justification (salvation) at conversion and a second justification (salvation) at the Day of Judgment. Even more striking is the fact that the works do not serve simply as assurance with respect to second justification, but must be present as necessary to justification. We are even nearer to conceiving of works as a reason, or cause, if not ground, in us for acceptance. The element of grace is preserved by insisting that they flow inevitably from the grace of faith. The Council of Trent said the same, but without the "inevitably."

Second, the "inevitably" points to a rationalistic deductivism characteristic of supralapsarian Calvinism. This type of thinking cannot do justice to the exhortations of Scripture to obedience or the warnings against disobedience. Preaching with these themes is experienced as an Arminian threat to sovereign grace. The language of Scripture itself is frequently handled in a mechanical fashion because true believers will produce good works and do not need to be exhorted and warned; and those who are not true believers cannot be exhorted and warned but have to come first to true faith. A passage like Matthew 7:21 where our Lord warns, "Not every one who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father, who is in heaven," when subjected to theological analysis, is simply received for information: that happens to be the way it is. To do more with it would jeopardize faith-alone. But Jesus is not merely stating a theological proposition; he is exhorting his followers to the holiness without which they will not see the Lord (CF XIII/1; Hebrews 12:14). Rationalistic, deductivistic Calvinism cannot do justice to covenant responsibility.

Third, just in terms of the argument, it is deceptive and untrue to seek to win people to Christianity by proclaiming to sinners that they can be saved by faith-alone. It is deceptive to win a man to faith-alone, assure him that he is now justified and saved by faith, then to tell him that he must repent and obey Christ in order to be saved. He may well ask whether he was saved or not when he simply believed. The very question, which is pointedly cultivated by some Reformed evangelists, reminds us of how the characteristic two-fold structure of Romanism fails to give room to assurance of salvation.

Fourth, the argument really exposes the fallacy of faith-alone as requisite to salvation. If there are no good works, the argument is that the faith was not genuine. But that is just the point: faith-alone does not justify. The argument says that a faith which is not a working faith not only is not

genuine faith, but never was genuine faith. To exhort people to exercise such faith-alone unto justification is misrepresentation of the gospel. It is only basic honesty to tell men right from the start that "This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27).

The Confession of Faith and catechisms cannot be interpreted as holding forth the Roman Catholic theory of a dual justification. Some method must be found of bringing together what is said of faith as the alone instrument of justification and what is said of holiness without which no man will see the Lord without compromise of either truth. The Confession itself suggests a way to the resolution when it speaks of "the state of justification" (CF XI/5). The state of justification has a beginning and it has a consummation, but we are made attentive to what is happening between, and what is happening between is the covenant life of the people of God. It is in terms of the characteristically Reformed doctrine of the covenant that full justice can be done to all that the Westminster Standards teach concerning the relationship between good works and justification by faith.

III. OBEDIENT FAITH AS THE WAY OF JUSTIFICATION

A. The Unanswered Question

We may proceed from this point on the assumption that the Confession knows nothing of a faith-alone after the pattern of the Roman Catholic unformed faith or similar to a common fundamentalist view. Repentant and actively obedient faith is what justifies and it is to faith in this full-orbed biblical sense that men are called when the gospel is preached to them and into which they are ushered by the sovereign grace of the Spirit in their effectual calling. This constitutes a basic challenge to the sequence: faith-alone; justification; good works.

But the question remains, how are we to do full justice to the previously cited language of the Confession when it says that faith is the alone instrument of justification, or of the catechisms when they say that faith alone receives the righteousness of Christ? What does it mean to say that nothing is required of them for their justification but faith? The question may be framed in the language of the Larger Catechism itself in order to bring out the sharpness of it. Is it not flatly contradictory for the Catechism to assert that nothing is required for our justification but faith (LC 71) and at the same time to assert that faith, repentance, and the use of the ~~means~~ of grace are necessary to escape the wrath and curse of God due to us because of our sin (LC 153)? What are we actually confessing?

There are at least two answers that can be given to this question, and these will be considered in turn. On the background of the answers to these questions it will be possible to develop the Reformed doctrine of justification with greater precision and clarity.

B. Resolution by Analogy

The first answer will make use of an analogy that was put forward by John Davenant (1572-1641) and adopted by James Ussher (1582-1656). These men are representatives of classical Anglicanism, and are men of unquestioned Reformed persuasion. Davenant was a representative of the English Church to the Synod of Dort,

and Ussher worked for the union of Anglicans and Presbyterians. C. F. Allison, in his The Rise of Moralism (London: SPCK, 1966), cites Davenant and Ussher as representative of Anglican orthodoxy prior to the rise of neo-nomianism whose chief exponent was Jeremy Taylor.

To say that faith is the alone instrument of justification is like saying that the eye is the alone instrument of vision. It is true that the eye alone sees, but it sees only as a functioning part of the body, and only in organic conjunction with bodily life. An eye which is alone does not see; it is dead. To put it another way, there is no priority of a seeing eye to the body in which the eye functions as a living member. We can say either that the eye sees, or that the man sees; but the man does not see without an eye, and the eye does not see without the whole man.

Similarly faith alone justifies, but not faith-alone. Faith is the alone instrument of justification, but not a faith which is alone, only a faith which is of a piece with the renovation and new life of the whole man. To use another analogy, faith-alone would be like the grin of the Cheshire cat.

The analogy is most helpful. It does justice to both aspects of the teaching of the Standards. The concept of unformed faith is countered so that there is no faith-alone, and at the same time the uniqueness of faith as the alone instrument of justification is preserved. The analogy also sets aside the priority of faith-alone to faith in the full, biblical sense. There is but one saving or justifying faith.

There are, nevertheless, certain difficulties that remain. We have previously noted the rôle of repentance with respect to forgiveness, and therefore with respect to justification. The analogy does not seem to take account of this, except perhaps in the sense that a man needs two eyes. In terms of the analogy no allowance seems to be made for what would appear to be the instrumental rôle of repentance. Further, with respect to the holiness without which no man will see the Lord, allowance is made for a "necessity of presence," but when the Confession and Scripture introduce good deeds into the sphere of judgment as a criterion, we are carried beyond a necessity of presence to what Ravinck called a "necessitas medii et viae ad salutem aeternam obtinendam." It is, of course, true, however, that

the body is not simply present to the eye, but the eye and the body function together in the process of vision.

Perhaps a more significant objection is raised by Allison himself when he says, "There is, however, a difficulty implicit in the illustration which is not adequately disposed of in the works either of Davenant or Ussher. If the faith that justifies is accompanied by good works as the body is connected with the eye in seeing, this implies a body of good works present before justification and not, therefore, a consequence of justification (Op. cit., pp. 22f.). Allison, in other words, places Davenant and Ussher on the side of the faith-alone, justification, good works sequence, and notes quite rightly that the analogy is one which does not allow for the maintenance of this sequence. His proposed resolution of the problem reintroduces a kind of dual justification, now in terms of act and state: "Perhaps we may assume that (since Ussher considers justification a state as well as an act) faith and works, in this situation, refer to faith by which we are continuously justified and works which are the companion instrument of sanctification" (Ibid., p. 23). With this the intent of the analogy with respect to works is reduced simply to necessitas praesentiae. As we shall see, however, Allison has put his finger on a sensitive point when he observes that the good works precede justification in terms of the analogy. A thesis which Allison does not consider is whether the view of faith in Davenant and Ussher does not itself account for the rise of the neo-nomianism which he deplures.

C. Resolution by Proof Texts

There is yet another answer to the question posed at the beginning of this section which will prove even more fruitful. The Confession and catechisms function in the church as subordinate standards. They are not norma normans, but norma normata. A Confession is only as strong and meaningful as the Scripture which supports it or which it represents. In order to understand what we are confessing in the clauses in question we can profitably look at the proof texts supplied by the Westminster Divines. These texts are, in canonical order: John 1:12; Acts 10:43; Romans 3:24, 25, 28; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; and Philippians 3:9. If, in order to clarify and concentrate on the main issue, we discount

the texts which do not specifically exclude works, we are left with three texts which form the strongest support for the word "alone." There are, perhaps, other texts not mentioned by the Westminster Divines that could be added, but they would not add anything of substance to what is taught in Romans 3:28, Galatians 2:16, and Philippians 3:9. Romans 3:28 and Galatians 2:16 in particular were prominent in Luther's development of the doctrine of justification and continue to be mainstays in the Protestant polemic against Rome.

Paul teaches that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law; he is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus. Therefore Paul desires to be found in Christ, not having a righteousness of his own derived from the Law but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.

What is the point of these texts? What is Paul teaching?

A key to the answer is given in Galatians 1 where Paul expresses amazement that the Galatians have so quickly deserted the gospel of the grace of Christ for a different gospel, which is really no gospel at all (vss. 6, 7). Paul is contrasting two utterly different and mutually exclusive gospels. One is the gospel, the other is an anti-gospel. The true gospel is the gospel of sovereign grace. This gospel teaches that the man upon whom God sets his love is by the power of the Spirit ingrafted into Christ and for Christ's sake alone is justified and saved. The anti-gospel is the gospel of meritorious self-righteousness in terms of which forgiveness and acceptability to God are grounded in what a man is able to do for himself, not only without the help of God but even with the help of God. In these verses Paul is setting over against one another two methods of justification, the method of grace and the method of merit, the method of God-righteousness and the method of self-righteousness. These methods are mutually exclusive; they have nothing to do with each other.

The method of grace is summarized in the word faith. Why is justification by faith? The answer Paul gives is, that it might be by grace (Romans 4:16). Faith means no more and no less than grace exclusively. Frequently Paul stresses that justification is a matter of grace. We are justified as a gift by his grace (Rom. 3:24).

In Romans 5 Paul speaks repeatedly of the gift of righteousness. He speaks of the free gift, of the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of Jesus Christ (vs. 15). In Ephesians 2:8, 9, Paul sets the gift of grace over against works: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." Titus 3:5 and 7 say that we are not saved on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness; on the contrary, we are "justified by His grace." Paul renounces self-righteousness; he desires the righteousness which comes from God (Phil. 3:9). Faith is, therefore, simply another way of saying grace as far as justification is concerned. The justification by faith of Romans 3:28 is the justification by grace of Romans 3:24.

But if faith means simply grace, why does not Paul speak of grace only? Why does he introduce the word faith at all? The answer would seem to be in order to point out in the face of legalistic Judaism and over against it that the subjective attitude of the man who is justified by God is not one of reliance in whole or in part upon his own accomplishment, but rather one of exclusive orientation to and dependence upon Jesus Christ and his righteousness. It must not be assumed that Paul intends to give a comprehensive definition of the doctrine of justification such as one ought to find in a theology textbook. He is writing a valuable polemic that must find its way into the theological handbooks, but it is a polemic with a well-defined error (the anti-gospel) as its target. Just in that context the word faith serves Paul with accuracy and precision--to let the grace of justification appear in all of its distinctiveness over against legalistic justification.

We are not to assume that the Judaizers abjured grace! Grace was their boast, the grace of Law (Rom. 2:23). To no other nation had God given the Law but to the Jews only. That is grace. The mistake lay in thinking that what God had provided by grace was a program in terms of which a man could merit forgiveness, acceptance with God, and the title to eternal life. Only Jews could be thus justified; only Jews were the objects of God's grace by subjection to the Law. So argued Paul's opponents in Galatia.

To counter this, Paul insists on grace, to be sure, but the grace of faith. Faith is the one word which shines out of the history of redemption at its very root (Gen. 15:6) which totally demolishes the argument of the Judaizers. Faith by its very definition is the rejection of self-righteousness, and an active resting upon Christ in obedience to his gracious call. Paul responded to the Jewish argument that justification was by Law that it might be by grace, by saying that justification was by faith that it might be by grace. The Jews were not really the champions of God-righteousness but of self-righteousness. Their gospel was an anti-gospel.

In our study of Romans 3:28 and Galatians 2:16, we may not suppress the fact that Paul does not use the word alone with faith although Luther inserted the word into his translation. There is no warrant in the text for a concept of faith-alone. The saving, justifying faith of which Paul speaks is, as Machen pointed out, an active, working faith (Gal. 5:6). Nevertheless, Machen also argues for the legitimacy of the use of the word alone as an interpretation of what Paul is saying in Galatians 2:16. "Luther, therefore, was quite justified in holding this passage to teach the doctrine of justification by faith alone" (Machen, *Op. cit.*, p. 148). It is clear from his argument that he does not contradict what he said of faith in connection with Galatians 5:6, however. Machen is no representative of the common fundamentalist conception of faith-alone. Machen writes that in Galatians 2:16 Paul introduces an exception to a general proposition. "Here the phrase introduces an exception to the general proposition, 'A man is not justified at all'; and Paul means to say, 'A man is not justified at all except through faith in Christ Jesus.' But the general proposition is not actually expressed in what precedes; it is merely implied in the specific instance of it that, 'a man is not justified by the works of the law.' Luther, therefore, was quite justified in holding this passage to teach the doctrine of justification by faith alone" (*Ibid.*, pp. 147f.). Alone, for Machen, means that Paul is opting for one method of justification, by faith, to the exclusion of all others but especially to the exclusion of the method of works. It is not that faith all alone, in isolation from works, justifies, nor, indeed, as Machen earlier pointed out (p. 147) that works supplemented with faith justified; but rather that the method of grace

excludes the method of merit. Whether this is what Luther meant is another question to which we must return.

If at this point we look again at the language of the Confession and catechisms, we can understand the meaning in terms of the proof texts. When the Confession says that faith is the alone instrument of justification it is saying that the only viable method of justification, the only gospel method of justification, is by God's grace through faith to the exclusion of the instrumentality of meritorious accomplishment or works righteousness. Faith in the full biblical sense of faith working by love is the alone instrument, not works which can be weighed and measured and offered to God on a quid pro quo basis. When the Catechisms use the word alone ("received by faith alone"), the alone is to be understood as Machen understood it and argued for its validity in connection with Galatians 2:16. The righteousness of Christ is not ours because we deserve it, but only by grace. It is received by faith alone.

In terms of the analogy previously considered we would have to say that "the eye alone sees" means that there is no other organ of vision than the eye which functions in the context of a living body.

When Paul sets faith against works, he is setting grace against merit. He is setting God-righteousness against self-righteousness whether that is thought of in the Roman Catholic sense of infused or inwrought righteousness or in the Pelagian sense of wrought-out righteousness. The diametrical opposition of God-righteousness and self-righteousness obtains not simply or only if we say that God justifies the ungodly. It also holds when we say, as we must, that God justifies the ungodly man who is transformed by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. It holds when we say that God justifies the ungodly man who believes, who repents of his sin turning from it, and who begins to walk in the ways of righteousness and godliness in this present age (Titus 2:12). Precisely here salvation and justification are not a matter of self-righteousness but of God-righteousness. It is precisely the righteous man who lives not by his achievement but by faith (Romans 1:17).

There is no need, therefore, to insist on a concept of faith-alone in order to preserve

the graciousness of grace. Not the works of faith but the works of the Law jeopardize grace. We must insist on faith, and that means we must insist on faith and the method of faith alone. Faith-alone does not guarantee grace, but only faith alone. Jesus alone guarantees grace. In point of fact, it is possible to take one more step and argue that faith-alone really threatens grace.

D. The Lingering Legalism of the Reformation

"Faith alone," the sola fide of the Reformation, was doubtless intended as a formula to preserve the graciousness of justification; but when it is transformed into the concept of faith-alone it begins to undermine what the Reformation was all about. This is so because of the virtually unchallenged assumption of the priority of faith to justification. If we assume the priority of faith to justification and then associate repentance and new obedience with faith, we have both faith and good works prior to justification. This is the "difficulty" Allison found in Davenant and Ussher as noted previously. But why is this a "difficulty"? Allison does not say explicitly, probably because it seems so obvious that if good works are prior to justification, and especially if they are necessary to justification, then it is just a short step--perhaps a step already taken--to viewing repentance and good works as the ground or at least in some sense the cause of the justifying verdict. Justification would then be, contrary to the Catechism, on account of something wrought in us or done by us (LC 70). To obviate the difficulty it becomes imperative to insist on faith-alone as prior to justification.

It is useful at this point to pause and consider the dilemma characteristic of preaching in the Puritan mode of the Calvinistic Reformation. Puritanism is opposed to the "easy believe-ism" of fundamentalism in which Jesus is proffered as Savior but only at a later point, after conversion, as Lord. Repentance is the inevitable fruit of faith, coming after justification, as the evidence of true faith and of true conversion. One would assume, therefore, that preaching ought to aim to evoke true faith-alone in order to justification; but that would be just easy believe-ism. Repentance must also be preached. Though theologically it

is the fruit of faith coming after justification, practically it is demanded first in connection with the Law-work. When the Law has done its work true repentance and faith are forthcoming, and repentance is the evidence of true faith as its fruit.

Though it is rightly argued that repentance and faith are so intertwined that there is no priority, in fact there are two priorities: the priority of faith to repentance-as-evidence; and the priority of repentance as the result of Law-work, to faith. This is the dilemma of the Puritan conception which does not paralyze Puritan preaching only because in practice the Law-work comes first. There is a distinctively legalistic cast to the preaching in which duty is laid out in great detail with the warning that when there is no performance there is no true faith or true conversion. Hope lies in the knowledge that God regenerates and saves the elect; one hopes that he is among the elect and waits for the experience of regeneration. On a broader scale, one waits and prays for seasons of revival.

We have here the contours of Reformed piety as it comes to expression, for example, in certain parts of the Netherlands today, especially near the Rijn delta and in the Veluwe, east of Amsterdam. The adherents of this "heavy" Calvinism avidly read the English Puritans in translation as well as the "experimental," or experiential (bevindelijke) writings of their own Dutch oude schrijvers (old writers). The pietistic passivity (lijdelijkheid) is poignantly illustrated by the experience of a godly Dutch woman, the wife of a Christian man and the mother of a grown family of children active in the church, who told this writer that she had been going to church for 60 years but had no assurance of grace or salvation. She continued to listen to two sermons on Sunday and to tape recorded sermons during the week with the hope that one day she might be converted.

How is repentance to be preached as the Confession requires (CF XV/1), and how is the holiness without which no man shall see the Lord (CF XIII/1) to be insisted on without lapsing into the legalistic moralism of Puritanism, or Neo-nomianism, or Romanism, or even Pelagianism?

The answer begins to emerge with the realization that the assumption of the priority

of faith to justification is a Roman Catholic motif, a hold-over from pre-Reformation Romanism which is tied directly to the Romanist notion of merit.

In the Roman Catholic scheme as we noted at the outset, faith formed by love, or faith plus works, is the ground of justification on the Day of Judgment. Luther broke with this scheme when he insisted that faith alone justified, and it justified not as the ground of our forgiveness and acceptance but as the instrument by which we receive the righteousness of Christ. It is startling to realize how close Trent came to supplementing its own conception with Luther's conception by inserting a first justification prior to a second justification. Luther's faith alone was the functional equivalent of unformed faith. Coupled with baptism which Rome pointedly called the sacrament of faith (Council of Trent, 6th Session, Ch. VII), this faith justified. For both Luther and Rome, baptism was the laver of regeneration. The significant point is that in introducing the concept of unformed faith, Rome did not cease to think of this faith as meritorious. Faith formed by love yielded condign merit; such faith/works were intrinsically worthy of the reward of justification. Unformed faith yielded congruent merit; though not intrinsically worthy of justification, it was fitting or appropriate that God should justify (first justification) one who believed. He did so in baptism which removed sin thereby establishing forgiveness. But congruent merit is still merit. It is merit which precedes the grace of justification.

Luther broke with the Roman doctrine, a break which is obvious with respect to Rome's second justification, but he did not break with the basic structure of the Roman doctrine, or with the structure that found formal expression in the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent. Specifically he did not break with the priority of faith to justification. What Luther means by "faith alone" is evident from his commentary on Galatians 2:16:

Do not let yourself be swayed here by the wicked gloss of the sophists, who say that faith justifies only when love and good works are added to it. With this pernicious gloss they have darkened and distorted some of the finest texts of this sort. When a man hears that he

should believe in Christ, but that faith does not justify unless this 'form,' that is, love, is added, then he quickly falls from faith and thinks to himself: 'If faith does not justify without love, then faith is vain and useless, and love alone justifies; or unless faith is formed and adorned by love, it is nothing.'

(Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Vol. 26 [St. Louis: Concordia, 1963], p. 138).

Faith alone means for Luther faith that is not formed by love, or unformed faith. This is, in effect, faith-alone. Machen was in error in thinking that he meant the same thing by "faith alone" that Luther meant.

To establish his point, and to maintain the grace of justification, it became essential for Luther to affirm and re-affirm in every possible way that he meant faith-alone justifies. He was not against good works. "We concede that good works and love must also be taught; but this must be in its proper time and place, that is, when the question has to do with works, apart from this chief doctrine [i.e., justification]" (Ibid., p. 137). Luther's "apartheid" is reinforced with these words: "So since we are now dealing with the topic of justification, we reject and condemn works; for this topic will not allow of any discussion of good works. On this issue, therefore, we simply cut off all laws and all works of the law" (Ibid.) It would be a work of supererogation to multiply similar quotations. The intensity to which this doctrine of faith-alone had taken hold of Luther reaches its epitome in his willingness to add to the words of Scripture by inserting "alone" into his translation of Romans 3:28 (allein durch den Glauben) and his willingness to take from the words of Scripture by consigning James to the status of deuterocanonicity as an "epistle of straw".

Though we can respect and honor Luther's intention to be true to the principle of grace alone, in point of fact, his conception of faith-alone opened the door to the introduction of the Romanist concept of congruent merit into the Reformation. In the space of a century, congruent merit developed into the condign merit of Remonstrant Arminianism with its doctrine of evangelical obedience as the ground of justification.

It is not our objective to follow this later doctrinal development in detail. If we turn to the Reformed wing of the Reformation we can say that, in general, the theologians followed the path set by the Lutheran Reformation. Faith retained its priority as the sole condition or qualification in us necessary for justification. This priority obviously had to be hedged by numerous safeguards. Faith was dissociated in every way from works. Some would go so far as to say that faith is not a work although it is obviously response to the command to believe. Faith is described as something passive, or something negative. Justifying faith is reduced in time to a moment, to an instant; the "instant" a man believes he is justified. But what continued to be the trump card in the Reformed hand even after the Lutherans discarded it, was the doctrine of election and regeneration. Regeneration simply enabled faith, and therefore faith itself was not response to sufficient grace, but wholly the gift of grace. Here the Reformed distinguished their view from the Pelagianizing and semi-Pelagianizing view of Rome.

Faith-alone, in the sense of complete isolation from works, now utterly denatured and detemporized, virtually reduced to nothing, and preceded by a denatured conception of regeneration, then became the indispensable symbol for the preservation of the Reformation's doctrine of grace. But it remained the one qualification in man (LC 72 refers to it as a saving grace wrought in the heart of a sinner) prior to justification which rendered it fitting and appropriate that God should justify him. The old Romanist notion of congruent merit now masquerades in the Reformed faith as grace.

The Romanizing tendency of the doctrine of faith-alone soon began to show its true colors in Lutheranism with the emergence of Melancthonian synergism. In the Reformed wing, the same colors became visible in the development of Arminianism where faith was made prior not only to justification but even to regeneration. As we have noted, faith coupled with evangelical obedience then became the ground of justification, a view which also appeared in more consciously Calvinistic theologians as Neo-nomianism. But where faith was preserved as instrument only, its priority to justification assumed such proportions that it was necessary to exclude infant children from

justification because they were not physically capable of believing. It is no mere accident of history that the fundamentalist champions of faith-alone are by-and-large Arminian Baptists. The Arminianizing Lutherans did not exclude children from the grace of justification as Rome had not (but note the curious Baptist ring of the title of Ch. V, of Trent's decrees on justification: The Necessity of Repentance for Justification in Adults, and Whence it Proceeds), but neither did they sacrifice the priority of faith. The result was the wondrous theological invention of infant faith.

There are other Baptists who have conscientiously sought to distance themselves from Arminianism and who identify themselves as Calvinists. These Reformed Baptists are seeking to find their way back to the Reformation by insisting on election and regeneration as prior to faith. Nevertheless, the residual pull of the doctrine of congruent merit is evident in the doctrine of preparationism in which the evangelist and the evangelee trade off contributions in the assistance offered to the Holy Spirit leading up to the new birth. Trent also addressed itself to "The Necessity of Preparation" and "The Manner of Preparation" (in the titles to Chapter V and VI, respectively). It is striking how, whether we have to do with the active Arminianism of fundamentalism or the passive Arminianism of the Reformed Baptists, the gospel of grace has to do not so much with the story of the Bible and what Christ has done, but with the unregenerate or regenerate man and his experience of faith. Gospel preaching is not so much a matter of making Christ known with a view to faith and repentance, but of getting people to believe by various means including the use of selected texts from the Bible that have proved "useful" under certain circumstances.

Probably the saddest phenomenon of all occurs among the Reformed who are not Baptists, but who preserve Baptist models and patterns of thought in order to be able to hold on to the doctrine of faith-alone. Little practical significance is then attached to the difference between the children of the covenant and those outside the covenant. Their disobedience is regarded as evidence of a lack of true faith and of the need for conversion. They are not taught

to think of themselves as integral to the membership of the church until they have made profession of faith and join.

But all of this is comprehensible in the light of the way in which Reformed theologians usually set out the ordo salutis (the order of the application of redemption). The order which we find in a standard text like that of Charles Hodge is: Calling; Regeneration; Faith; Justification; Sanctification. The model is obviously (Reformed) Baptist. What is described is the experience of an adult without reference to his standing in the covenant. The experience of covenant children, or of deaf-mutes, or of imbeciles is either handled as an addendum or not at all. What are we to make of the historical fact that in the heyday of Hodge under the impact of the Finney-type of revivalism, the number of infant baptisms in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. dropped dramatically? Why did the Christian school movement gain momentum in the Netherlands where Kuyper reasserted the historic Reformed doctrine of the covenant, while at the same time in Scotland, the Free Church people handed over their schools to the state? Why has the Reformed Baptist movement found so much more affinity among Presbyterians than among Reformed people of continental background? The fact is that in the Netherlands, in the past 80 years, the orthodox Reformed churches have been full, while in Scotland the Reformed churches are empty with the exception of the Outer Hebrides. What accounts for the phenomenon? Are we to write off Dutch Christianity as composed largely of unbelieving hypocrites?

Why, at this late date, is there so much confusion concerning precisely what authentically Reformed evangelism is? Will the question be answered by sifting methodologies of evangelism in the course of endless seminars and conferences; or is it perhaps time that we begin to ask whether we have been trying to carry the Reformed waters of life in various styles of buckets hewn from Arminian wood grown in the forest of Romanism. We should not be surprised by the success of Arminian evangelists who labor in a way consistent with their basic principles; but neither should we be surprised by the meager results of Reformed evangelists who labor in a way inconsistent with their basic principles. We must be careful not to depreciate the results of Arminian evangelism

or question the authenticity of this or that conversion. But the historical question is worth looking into whether the net impact of Arminian evangelism with its outbreaks of revivals and dependence on charismatic (in the broad sense) leadership doesn't present us with phenomena described in the Bible in terms of seed sown on rocky soil.

The current frustration over the results of Reformed evangelism today warn us that the time is at hand for asking deep and searching questions on the most basic level. Has our message really been one of pure and sovereign, life-transforming, joyous, super-abounding grace? That is, after all, what the Reformed faith is all about.

E. The Covenant Method of Justification

Returning now to the statements of the Confession and catechisms that faith is the alone instrument of justification, that the obedience of Christ is received by faith alone, and that nothing is required of us for our justification but faith, we can see that this language is designed to fence off the Protestant (Reformed) principle of grace from the error of Rome. It excludes any and all ground in us as meriting or warranting the justifying verdict of God. LC 73 nails additional pickets to the fence. In the Roman scheme, the congruent merit of faith prior to first justification was transformed by this justification into the condign merit of faith, in that faith was formed by love leading to second justification. LC 73 says that neither faith itself, nor the graces which accompany it, nor the fruits which flow from it are the ground of justification. Faith and what attends it do not function causally ("So good works are necessary for attaining to salvation not 'by the necessity of merit' or 'of efficient cause.' Heppé Op. cit., p. 579). The role of faith is different, and the word which LC 73 uses to describe its rôle is, as in CF XI/2, the word instrument.

The Confession and catechisms not only exclude the specifically Roman notion of condign merit, but also the corresponding teaching in Remonstrant Arminianism of faith coupled with evangelical obedience and the teaching of Neo-nomianism.

But if the principle asserted is the principle of grace, and grace alone, then the Confession and catechisms must also be understood as excluding the doctrine of congruent merit whether in the specifically Romanist form or in the form found in Protestantism of faith-alone. When LC 71 says "requiring nothing of them for their justification but faith," the exception (but faith) is not an exception to grace (requiring nothing of them). To say that a sinner does not have to do anything to be saved except believe can and frequently does obscure pure and sovereign grace because no matter how much it is denatured and detemporalized faith is never entirely excluded as a qualification in us which warrants justification. Even when we insist that this faith is a gift, it is still a qualification in us; we are made intrinsically suitable objects for justification. Rome would not disagree. But we may also note in passing that if it is the gift-character of faith that accounts for its justifying power, there is no reason why love, or humility, or some other virtue, should not serve as instrument. The Christian has no virtue that he has not received as a gift.

We should not look for reasons why faith in distinction from all other virtues justifies. For example, we should not argue that faith justifies because it is the way in which we receive Christ or embrace Christ, or because it is the way we abandon ourselves to Christ, even though these things are true in themselves. To do so focusses upon the quality of faith so that it becomes for something wrought in us that we are justified. Warfield pointed us in the right direction when he wrote, "The saving power resides exclusively, not in the act of faith or the attitude of faith or in the nature of faith, but in the object of faith" (Op. cit., p. 425).

Whether the Confession and Catechism have chosen the very best language to express the Reformed principle of grace is another matter. Specifically the question here has to do with the use of the word "instrument." It is a shortened form of "instrumental cause" and has its background in the philosophy and logic of Aristotle. Rome was only consistent with its synthesis of revelation and Greek philosophy when it set out the doctrine of justification in terms of a series of causes: the final cause is the glory of God; the efficient cause is the

mercy of God; the meritorious cause is the passion and death of Christ; the instrumental cause is the sacrament of faith, baptism; and the formal cause is the justice of God (Council of Trent, 6th Session, Ch. VII). But it was a sad development that the Reformed theologians so often followed Rome and made use of the same causal scheme as a framework for their doctrine of justification.

Instrument suggests not only the priority of faith, but also faith wielded as a tool by man to secure justification. The element of human contribution is difficult to escape even when we insist that faith is a gift. The gospel is not the good news that God gives us the tools with which we can save ourselves. That is the way the Jews thought of the Law as an instrument of justification. There is nothing really different in substituting one instrument for another. Paul condemned all self-righteousness, all ground in us as meriting justification.

As Professor Murray pointed out (in private conversation with this writer) there is a distinct liability attached to the word instrument. If that liability cannot otherwise be avoided, it will be necessary to abandon the term. But the loss is not serious, because instrument is not a biblical term. We cannot think of the Confession and catechisms as binding us to Greek philosophy rather than to the Bible; the Standards do not intend to jeopardize the sola gratia or the solus Christus of the Reformation. As long as the word is in the doctrinal standards it will have to be construed as pointing us to the biblical method of justification, to grace alone, and to Jesus Christ who is our only comfort in life and in death.

We are now at the point where it becomes imperative to deal explicitly with the question of the priority of faith to justification. Earlier we saw that this priority was taken over uncritically from Romanism. Nevertheless, biblical support was also offered for the priority. Faith is related to justification in terms of several Greek constructions, among them ἐκ πίστεως, διὰ πίστεως, or simply πίστει. These are usually translated "by faith" or "through faith." Both the Greek and the English seem to suggest the priority of faith to justification. Justification

"by faith" is thought to mean that one first believes and then is justified. As Professor Murray states the argument:

It would surely seem impossible to avoid the conclusion that justification is upon the event of faith or through the instrumentality of faith. God justifies the ungodly who believe in Jesus, in a word, believers. And that is simply to say that faith is presupposed in justification, is the precondition of justification, not because we are justified on the ground of faith or for the reason that we are justified because of faith but only for the reason that faith is God's appointed instrument through which he dispenses this grace. (Op. cit., p. 103).

"By faith" is simply assumed to imply priority; but the question may be raised whether the assumption is derived from an analysis of the biblical language or results from the impact of Aristotelian presuppositions in the dogmatic structure.

The expression, "by faith," appears nowhere more frequently than it does in Hebrews 11, a chapter which bears directly on the subject of justification by virtue of the introduction at the end of Chapter 10. A study of any of the verses makes clear that faith is not an instantaneous act that is over and done with prior to what is described in the verse as done by faith. "By faith" has in view a resting in God over a period of time which qualifies what is done not as self-righteousness but as unto God. The specific precedence of faith does not come into view. Faith is rather the leading and qualifying aspect of whole-souled response to the revelation of grace.

When Christ is said to dwell in our hearts through faith (Ephesians 3:17), the thought is not of an instantaneous act of faith followed by the inception of indwelling. Rather, Christ is viewed as indwelling, and faith is descriptive of the stance of the man in whom Christ dwells. He is not a self-righteous man, but one who by the grace of God looks to God for his sole sufficiency.

In Galatians 2:20, Paul says that he lives by faith. Again, the thought is not that Paul has come to life as a result of an instantaneous act

that now belongs wholly to the past. Rather, having been raised to life by the grace of God, how else can he live except in terms of perpetual and exclusive faithful obedience to Christ who died for him and now lives in him? The priority of faith is no more required at this point than it is in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, or Hebrews 10:30 where the Scripture reiterates the teaching of the Old Testament that the just shall live by faith. Faith is not a precondition for living but tells us how the just man lives. He lives not by the works of the Law, but by faith.

With this perspective we can do justice to Paul's teaching in Colossians 2:12 where Paul says that in baptism we were raised up with Christ through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead. The resurrection in view here is what is otherwise called the new creation or regeneration and comes at the point of transition from wrath to grace. According to Reformed theology regeneration precedes faith, as resurrection to life must precede living. Yet Paul says that the resurrection is through faith. If we are required to say that faith is therefore instrumentally prior to ^{regeneration} ~~faith~~ we are on Arminian ground. Jack Cottrell has recently published an article in which he points to this verse as the Achilles heel of Reformed theology. He argues that regeneration does flow from faith because "through faith" requires the priority of faith (Grace Unlimited, ed. Clark H. Pinnock [Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975], p. 68). There is no answer to this argument unless we are prepared to understand faith as following upon resurrection and as descriptive of the man who is raised up by God--not one who has sought to raise himself but who is the beneficiary of the life-giving Spirit in the way of faith. Resurrection by faith means resurrection by grace. The word faith proves grace, for it is not the man who works for it who comes alive, but the man who is looking to Christ, who is alive.

"By faith" in this biblical sense has found its way into the Westminster Confession and catechisms at various points and in a variety of connections. It is useful to observe several of them. CF XXIX/7 on the Lord's Supper teaches that "Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death." LC 170 says that

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the body and blood of Christ are "spiritually present to the faith of the receiver," and that "by faith they receive and apply unto themselves Christ crucified." Similar language is also found in LC 174 and SC 96. It is impossible to think in terms of an instantaneous act of faith prior to feeding upon Christ. Christ is present to faith. Faith describes the stance of the communicant, and the mode of his communion with Christ. We could say: not by works, because the elements are not transformed by the power of a priest; but by faith which is grace, for Christ does come with all his benefits to those who are looking to him in faith.

Bearing more directly on the subject of justification is WCF III/6 where we learn that they who are elected "are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified and kept by his power through faith unto salvation." The faith to which they are called is here not to be understood as an instantaneous act prior to justification, but as a standing in the grace of orientation to the mercy of God. Faith describes the "how" of Christian existence from the point of calling to the consummation of salvation. "Through faith" is here clearly not a precondition of something else. In the same way, LC 167 speaks of one who has been baptized as endeavoring to live by faith--not to come alive by an act of faith, but to live before God as a covenantally loyal servant of God. LC 155 speaks of hearts that are established in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation (Cf. SC 89).

LC 80 holds that "such as truly believe in Christ, and endeavor to walk in all good conscience before him, may, without extraordinary revelation, by faith grounded upon the truth of God's promises... be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and shall persevere therein unto salvation." This language is most illuminating. Not only is faith seen in the full biblical sense comprehending obedience over a span of time, but "by faith" clearly means that living in this posture of orientation to the Lord and his service one can and does enjoy full assurance: not a simple act of faith-alone as a precondition of assurance, but life in the freedom of obedience to Christ as the fertile ground in which assurance is cultivated. Again there is

nothing to be done in order to gain assurance, but assurance belongs already to all who love the Lord and walk in the ways of righteousness.

Attention to the way in which "by faith" functions both in Scripture and Confession delivers us from the automatic assumption that faith must be prior to justification. With that assumption cleared away, we are in a position to appreciate the contours of the Reformed, or covenantal method of justification which is the Pauline method of grace.

Here we need only follow the path laid out by the Westminster Confession. In distinction from the Baptist model offered by Hodge of calling, regeneration, faith, justification and sanctification, the Confession offers a covenantal model of grace and response. Having set out the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in Chapter VIII, the Confession points to the way in which God applies this grace sovereignly, effectually calling men into union with Christ (Ch. X) where they are justified (Ch. XI), adopted (Ch. XII) and sanctified (Ch. XIII). But as man was made for union and communion with God in the first creation, so in the new creation that communion is restored so that man comes to life in Christ in loyal allegiance to his Maker and Benefactor. The response by man wrought by grace is one of faith (Ch. XIV), repentance (Ch. XV), and obedience (Ch. XVI). The ones who are justified are not the ones who simply have the word of God to make of it what they can, but the ones who love the Lord with heart, soul, mind, and strength. Their justification and salvation is not in the way of meritorious achievement, but in the way of faith; for by grace, theirs are the benefits purchased by Christ for them. There is no priority of faith to justification because they are not justified for anything wrought in them; they are justified because God has sovereignly incorporated them into Christ where they enjoy all that Christ has to offer. Cf. XI/1: "Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth." They enter into a state, or a life, of justification with the solid confidence that Christ who has purchased their redemption by his cross and resurrection will carry them safely through the Day of Judgment. The priority belongs to grace, and faith is the response, not the anemic faith-alone of fundamentalism, but full-orbed obedient faith, because Christ gives them a whole new life, faith with all its attendant graces.

Justification is by faith. That is to say, justification is by grace; but there is no other grace than covenant grace administered in terms of the new covenant. Therefore justification must be in accordance with the covenant method involving grace and response. At one in the same moment God not only incorporates the sinner into Christ so that he is justified and saved but also makes him participant in the life of Christ. The state of justification, adoption, and sanctification runs parallel to the exercise of faith, repentance and obedience. To say that justification is by faith is not to say that the sinner has done the one thing he must do in order to be saved, but it is to say that the transformed sinner is not counting on anything that he is or that he has done for his salvation, but he is resting only on Jesus.

Because the priority belongs to grace and not to faith-alone in a covenantal methodology the infants do not have to be excluded from justification until such time as they are mature enough to believe, nor do the deaf-mutes have to be excluded because they cannot hear the message or confess with the mouth, nor do the imbeciles have to be excluded because they are not intelligent enough to understand the gospel. Nor do these cases represent embarrassing exceptions to the rule. God regenerates and saves whom He wills. There are no conditions in man that can thwart sovereign grace or that can warrant sovereign grace. These people, too, can be incorporated into Christ and be justified, and the word calls forth from them the covenantal response of faith, repentance, and obedience in the course of maturity or as far as the circumstances allow. Even those who are beyond the outward means of grace are taken up into the life of the covenant of grace (CF X/3).

Paul lives his early years in rebellion against the God of his fathers, but God was pleased sovereignly to restore him to the ways of righteousness and faith. He was a child of the covenant and as he undertakes to write on the great theme of justification in his letter to the Romans, he calls to mind the covenantal structure of the redemption he proclaimed. He speaks first of the gospel of God proclaimed by the prophets concerning Jesus and the resurrection. This is covenant grace. He then sees his own ministry in terms of cultivating covenant response, no mere faith-alone, but the obedience of faith among the Gentiles. The Son of God has come to

give life by his resurrection and it is the righteous, they who yield the obedience of faith, who live by faith. They are justified on the foundation of the redemptive accomplishment of Christ and in the way of the obedience of faith (grace and response).

When Paul is confronted by the question of the Philippian jailer, "What must I do to be saved?", Paul responds, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." Paul is not an Arminian, directing this man away from a multiplicity of good deeds to the one thing he can do to be regenerated and saved. Nor is he calling the man to a simple act of faith-alone that will leave the rest of his life untouched. Fundamentalist propaganda has only served to emasculate the vigor and the power of the command to believe. Paul is calling this man from the dominion of Satan which is death, to new life in the sphere of the covenant of grace. Paul's apostleship is to bring about the obedience of faith among the Gentiles. Because Paul is calling this man to covenant life, it is no embarrassment for the Reformed faith as it is for fundamentalism that Paul should add, "you shall be saved, you and your household." This is precisely what we would expect from a minister of God imbued with a covenant consciousness and preaching justification according to the covenant of grace.

What do we say to a sinner on his knees asking what he must do to be saved? We can say with Paul and Silas, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But it just might be more appropriate to say, Why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name (Acts 22:16). Deny yourself; take up your cross and follow Christ (Matthew 16:24). The command to believe, the command to repent and be baptized, and the command to follow Christ doing as he commanded are not ultimately different answers. The New Testament never asks for obedience as though one could thereby merit forgiveness. It is never for anything in us that we are justified and saved. It is not even for our faith that we are saved. To ask for obedience is not a fundamentally different thing than to ask for faith, though faith and obedience may be distinguished as descriptive of a single total response from different perspectives. To call men to obedience to Christ does, indeed, carry with it the risk that people will think of this obedience as meritorious. But again, abusus non tollit usum.

The remedy is not to tone down or minimize the commands of Christ, but to expound more perfectly the biblical concept of faith and the sole-sufficiency of Christ. When the danger of self-righteousness threatens, it will be necessary, with Paul, to accent faith as the abandonment of merit. When the danger of life-service threatens, it will be necessary, with James, to warn that faith which does not work, does not justify.

Evangelistic preaching is, therefore, not to be conceived of narrowly as specifically directed to eliciting a single, instantaneous "act" of faith-alone by which a man will be justified, and from which all else will inevitably flow. All of the church's proclamation is evangelistic because it makes known the basic truth that God is the Savior and in Jesus, the Son of God, we have our sole-sufficiency. Jesus is God our Savior. He is the way, the truth, and the life. All proclamation calls men to that way, to the faith that leads to eternal life. Those who have confessed Christ and are walking in the way (i.e., following in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham. Romans 4:12) are taught how to keep walking and they are lovingly and tenderly encouraged to do so. This, also, is evangelism because it is instruction in righteousness (II Timothy 3:16, 17) which binds men to Christ. When a child of God wanders from the faith, he is not to be shot on the spot as though he had bolted from a chain gang. He is rather to be sought out and returned to the loving care of the Great Shepherd of the Sheep. He is to be brought back to the ninety-and-nine who are not, as the hymn says, in the safety of the fold, but out in the wilderness (Luke 15:4). The sheep who are in the wilderness can bank on their Shepherd (faith), even in the valley of the shadow of death and in the presence of their enemies. All their needs will be met, and they move on, immersed in the goodness and mercy of God, with the firm knowledge and sure confidence that they are going to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Psalm 23 is a *gospel* song.

It is really necessary at this point to work out more fully the practical implications of a covenant method of justification for the conduct of a Reformed ministry. The task is as vast as it is rewarding, but it would take us beyond our immediate purpose which is to observe the relation between good works and justification by faith in the Westminster standards.

The Westminster standards force us to realize that the Reformed faith is not a variety of fundamentalism; it is not five points of Calvinism appended to five points of fundamentalism. The Reformed faith has its own genius, its own unity, its own coherence, and its own integrity. Only in terms of the Reformed conception are we able to maintain the purity of the Protestant principle of grace against the heretical and soul-destroying synergism of Rome. Only the Reformed faith is able to give full scope to the ethical demands of the Bible without lapsing into legalism that undermines grace.

For this reason we can look only to the Reformed faith for a viable and meaningful alternative to the modern Theologies of Revolution and Liberation, an alternative which will be more than the non-answer of retreat into a pietistic ghetto of world abandonment or the patch-work answer of social responsibility added to "the gospel." The Reformed faith launches a frontal assault upon the Kingdom of Darkness wherever it manifests itself, exposing unrighteousness and ungodliness, warning men of the wrath to come, and calling them to the Redeemer in the full scope of their existence so that the salvation to come becomes visible even now. The gospel, precisely in the fulness of its demand, is powerful unto salvation. Because God gives us what He demands, we dare not demand less than He has promised to give. The Reformed faith brings gospel to a lost world because it brings the nations to the obedience of faith, teaching them, following the Great Commission, to observe all that Christ has commanded. We have the promise:

He shall come down like rain upon the
mown grass: as showers that water the earth.
In his days shall the righteous flourish; and
abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.
He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and
from the river unto the ends of the earth.
(Psalm 72:6-8)

Labor in the service of Christ is not a burden, nor is it in vain because the gospel assures us that the just shall live by faith.

July 6, 1982

Dear John,

By now you have probably had chance to look over the famous October study paper. Sometime I'd like to have your reaction or impressions. Please don't take time to write, however, for there are many more important things to which you should be attending.

I did want to make one remark, however, and that relates to some observations about the views of G.I. Williamson toward the beginning of the paper. If I had any idea that the paper would be circulated far and wide, I would not have put that material in, or at least would have said it differently. I corresponded with G.I. about it, and apologized, the more so in that he expressed agreement with the points I was trying to make. Even after seeing the October paper, G.I. continued to support my continuance at WThS, and communicated his views to the board. I just wanted to clarify the matter for your sake.

In fact, I consider Williamson to be one of the most able pastor/teachers available in the Reformed world today. As I compose this letter, the thought occurs to me that he would like to return to the US. That is what I have heard. In the event that you don't have another viable candidate at Bethany (i.e., if the church does not call Pete, or if he turns it down), you may want to keep Williamson's name in mind.

We are heading for Maine for two weeks on Thursday. You may be there at the present moment. If so, I hope you are having good weather, and save some for us!

With best regards,

Norman