

Systematic Theology 4.4

Justification, Sanctification and Perseverance

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*Part Four: The Doctrine of the Application of the Work of Redemption — Section
4.4: Justification, Sanctification and Perseverance*

Editorial note

The text has been updated to UK English; gloss boxes have been added to explain technical terms; summaries have been included; and questions for further study have been added. We have also included a master outline with the part represented in this volume shown in bold.

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Berkhof's Systematic Theology: Master Outline

This six-part guide is designed for use at the beginning of each volume. The part represented in this volume is shown in bold.

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Justification, Sanctification and Perseverance

IX. Justification

Justification is God's judicial declaration that the sinner is righteous in Christ. It rests on Christ's perfect righteousness, received by faith, and brings forgiveness and acceptance with God.

A. THE SCRIPTURAL TERMS FOR JUSTIFICATION AND THEIR MEANING.

GLOSS Justification: God’s judicial declaration that a sinner is righteous before Him, not by inner renewal but through Christ’s righteousness.

1. THE OLD TESTAMENT TERM. The Hebrew term for “to justify” is *hitsdik*, which in the great majority of cases means “to declare judicially that one’s state is in harmony with the demands of the law, Ex. 23:7; Deut. 25:1; Prov. 17:15; Isa. 5:23. The *piel tsiddek* occasionally has the same meaning, Jer. 3:11; Ezek. 16:50,51. The meaning of these words is therefore strictly forensic or legal. Since Roman Catholics, such representatives of the moral influence theory of the atonement as John Young of Edinburgh and Horace Bushnell, and also the Unitarians and modern liberal theologians, deny the legal meaning of the term “to justify,” and ascribe to it the moral sense of “to make just or righteous,” it becomes important to take careful notice of the considerations that may be urged in favor of the legal meaning. That this is the proper denotation of the word appears (a) from the terms placed in contrast with it, as, for instance “condemnation,” Deut. 25:1; Prov. 17:15; Isa. 5:23; (b) from the correlative terms placed in juxtaposition with it and which often imply a process of judgment, Gen. 18:25; Ps. 143:2; (c) from the equivalent expressions that are sometimes used, Gen. 15:6; Ps. 32:1,2; and (d) from the fact that a passage like Prov. 17:15 would yield an impossible sense, if the word meant “to make just.” The meaning would then be: He who morally improves the life of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. There are a couple of passages, however, in which the word means more than simply “to declare righteous,” namely, Isa. 53:11; Dan. 12:3. But even in these cases the sense is not “to make good or holy,” but rather “to alter the condition so that man can be considered righteous.”

2. THE NEW TESTAMENT TERMS AND THEIR USE. Here we have:

a. The verb *dikaio-o*. This verb means in general “to declare a person to be just. Occasionally it refers to a personal declaration that one’s moral character is in conformity with the law, Matt. 12:37; Luke 7:29; Rom. 3:4. In the Epistles of Paul the soteriological meaning of the term is clearly in the foreground. It is “to declare forensically that the demands of the law as a condition of life are fully satisfied with regard to a person, Acts 13:39; Rom. 5:1,9; 8:30-33; I Cor. 6:11; Gal. 2:16; 3:11. In the case of this word, just as in that of *hitsdik*, the forensic meaning of the term is proved by the following facts: (a) in many instances it can bear no other sense, Rom. 3:20-28; 4:5-7; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:11; 5:4; (b) it is placed in antithetic relation to “condemnation” in Rom. 8:33,34; (c) equivalent and interchangeable expressions convey a judicial or legal idea, John 3:18; 5:24; Rom. 4:6,7; II Cor. 5:19; and (d) if it does not bear this meaning, there is no distinction between justification and sanctification.

b. The word *dikaios*. This word, connected with the verb just discussed, is peculiar in that it never expresses what a thing is in itself, but always what it is in relation to something else, to some standard outside of it, to which it ought to correspond. In that respect it differs from *agathos*. In classical Greek, for instance, *dikaios* is applied to a wagon, a horse, or something else to indicate that it is fit for its intended use. *Agathos* expresses the idea that a thing in itself answers to the ideal. In Scripture a man is called *dikaios* when, in the judgment of God, his relation to the law is what it ought to be, or when his life is such as is required by his judicial relation to God. This may include the idea that he is good, but only from a certain point of view, namely, that of his judicial relation to God.

c. The noun *dikaiosis*, justification. This is found in only two places in the New Testament, namely, Rom. 4:25; 5:18. It denotes the act of God’s declaring men free from guilt and acceptable to Him. The resulting state is denoted by the word *dikaiosis*.

3. The resulting idea of justification. Our word justification (from the Latin *justificare*, composed of *justus* and *facere*, and therefore meaning “to make

righteous”), just as the Holland rechtvaardigmaking, is apt to give the impression that justification denotes a change that is brought about in man, which is not the case. In the use of the English word the danger is not so great, because the people in general do not understand its derivation, and in the Holland language the danger may be averted by employing the related words rechtvaardigen and rechtvaardiging. “To justify” in the Scriptural sense of the word, is to effect an objective relation, the state of righteousness, by a judicial sentence. This can be done in a twofold way: (a) by bringing into account the actual subjective condition of a person (to justify the just or the righteous), Jas. 2:21; or (b) by imputing to a person the righteousness of another, that is, by accounting him righteous though he is inwardly unrighteous. The latter is the usual sense of justification in the New Testament.

B. THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION IN HISTORY.

GLOSS Forensic: judicial: justification concerns a person’s standing before God’s law and court.

The doctrine of justification by faith was not always clearly understood. In fact, it did not find its classical expression until the days of the Reformation. We shall briefly consider:

1. THE DOCTRINE BEFORE THE REFORMATION. Some of the earliest Church Fathers already speak of justification by faith, but it is quite evident that they had no clear understanding of it and of its relation to faith. Moreover, they did not sharply distinguish between regeneration and justification. A rather common representation was that regeneration takes place in baptism and includes the forgiveness of sins. Even Augustine does not seem to have had an accurate understanding of justification as a legal act, as distinguished from the moral process of sanctification, though it is quite evident from the whole tenor of his teachings and also from separate

statements, that he regarded the grace of God in the redemption of sinners as free, sovereign, and efficacious, and in no way dependent on any merits of men. The confounding of justification and sanctification continued into the Middle Ages and gradually acquired a more positive and doctrinal aspect. According to the prevailing teachings of the Scholastics, justification includes two elements: man's sins are forgiven, and he is made just or righteous. There was a difference of opinion as to the logical order of these two elements, some reversing the order just indicated. This was also done by Thomas Aquinas, and his view became the prevalent one in the Roman Catholic Church. Grace is infused in man, whereby he is made just, and partly on the basis of this infused grace, his sins are pardoned. This was already an approach to the evil doctrine of merit, which was gradually developed in the Middle Ages in connection with the doctrine of justification. The idea found favor ever-increasingly that man is justified in part on the basis of his own good works. The confounding of justification and sanctification also led to divergent opinions on another point. Some of the Scholastics speak of justification as an instantaneous act of God, while others describe it as a process. In the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent we find the following in Chap. XVI, Canon IX: "If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining of the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will: let him be anathema." And Canon XXIV speaks of an increase in justification and therefore conceives of it as a process: "If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof: let him be anathema."

2. THE DOCTRINE AFTER THE REFORMATION. The doctrine of justification was the great material principle of the Reformation. With respect to the nature of justification the Reformers corrected the error of confounding justification with sanctification by stressing its legal character and

representing it as an act of God's free grace, whereby He pardons our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight, but does not change us inwardly. As far as the ground of justification is concerned, they rejected the idea of Rome that this lies, at least in part, in the inherent righteousness of the regenerate and in good works, and substituted for it the doctrine that it is found only in the imputed righteousness of the Redeemer. And in connection with the means of justification they emphasized the fact that man is justified freely by that faith which receives and rests in Christ only for salvation. Moreover, they rejected the doctrine of a progressive justification, and held that it was instantaneous and complete, and did not depend for its completion on some further satisfaction for sin. They were opposed by the Socinians, who held that sinners obtain pardon and acceptance with God, through His mercy, on the ground of their own repentance and reformation. The Arminians do not all agree on the subject, but in general it may be said that they limit the scope of justification, so as to include only the forgiveness of sins on the basis of the passive obedience of Christ, and to exclude the adoption of the sinner in favor by God or the basis of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. The sinner is accounted righteous only on the basis of his faith or his life of obedience. The Neonomians in England were in general agreement with them on this point. For Schleiermacher and Ritschl justification meant little more than the sinner's becoming conscious of his mistake in thinking that God was angry with him. And in modern liberal theology we again meet with the idea that God justifies the sinner by the moral improvement of his life. This conception of it is found, for instance, in Bushnell's *Vicarious Sacrifice* and in Macintosh's *Theology as an Empirical Science*.

C. THE NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF JUSTIFICATION

GLOSS Imputation: God reckons Christ's perfect righteousness to the believer; it is a gracious legal standing, not a personal achievement.

Justification is a judicial act of God, in which He declares, on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that all the claims of the law are satisfied with respect to the sinner. It is unique in the application of the work of redemption in that it is a judicial act of God, a declaration respecting the sinner, and not an act or process of renewal, such as regeneration, conversion, and sanctification. While it has respect to the sinner, it does not change his inner life. It does not affect his condition, but his state, and in that respect differs from all the other principal parts of the order of salvation. It involves the forgiveness of sins, and restoration to divine favor. The Arminian holds that it includes only the former, and not the latter; but the Bible clearly teaches that the fruit of justification is much more than pardon. They who are justified have “peace with God,” “assurance of salvation,” Rom. 5:1-10, and an “inheritance among them that are sanctified,” Acts 26:18. The following points of difference between justification and sanctification should be carefully noted:

1. Justification removes the guilt of sin and restores the sinner to all the filial rights involved in his state as a child of God, including an eternal inheritance. Sanctification removes the pollution of sin and renews the sinner ever-increasingly in conformity with the image of God.

2. Justification takes place outside of the sinner in the tribunal of God, and does not change his inner life, though the sentence is brought home to him subjectively. Sanctification, on the other hand, takes place in the inner life of man and gradually affects his whole being.

3. Justification takes place once for all. It is not repeated, neither is it a process; it is complete at once and for all time. There is no more or less in justification; man is either fully justified, or he is not justified at all. In distinction from it sanctification is a continuous process, which is never completed in this life.

4. While the meritorious cause of both lies in the merits of Christ, there is a difference in the efficient cause. Speaking economically, God the Father declares the sinner righteous, and God the Holy Spirit sanctifies him.

D. THE ELEMENTS OF JUSTIFICATION.

GLOSS Pardon and adoption: justification includes the forgiveness of sin and restoration to God's favour as His children.

We distinguish two elements in justification, the one negative, and the other positive.

1. The negative element. There is first of all a negative element in justification, namely, the remission of sins on the ground of the atoning work of Jesus Christ. This element is based more particularly, though not exclusively, on the passive obedience of the Saviour. Calvin and some of the older Reformed theologians occasionally speak as if this were the whole of justification. This is partly due to the Old Testament representation, in which this side of justification is decidedly in the foreground, Ps. 32:1; Isa. 43:25; 44:22; Jer. 31:34, and partly to their reaction against Rome, which did not do justice to the element of grace and free pardon. In opposition to Arminianism, however, Reformed theology has always maintained that justification is more than pardon. That the forgiveness of sins is an important element in justification is evident, not only from the Old, but also from the New Testament, as appears from such passages as Rom. 4:5-8; 5:18,19; Gal. 2:17.

The pardon granted in justification applies to all sins, past, present, and future, and thus involves the removal of all guilt and of every penalty. This follows from the fact that justification does not admit of repetition, and from such passages as Rom. 5:21; 8:1,32-34; Heb. 10:14; Ps. 103:12; Isa. 44:22, which assure us that no one can lay anything to the charge of the justified man, that

he is exempt from condemnation, and that he is constituted an heir of eternal life. It is also implied in the answer to the 60th question of our Heidelberg Catechism. This conception of justification, though eminently Scriptural, is not devoid of difficulty. Believers continue to sin after they are justified, Jas. 3:2; I John 1:8, and, as Scripture examples clearly show, frequently fall into grievous sins. Hence it is no wonder that Barth likes to stress the fact that the justified man remains a sinner, though a justified sinner. Christ taught His disciples to pray daily for the forgiveness of sins, Matt. 6:12, and the Bible saints are often pleading for pardon and obtaining it, Ps. 32:5; 51:1-4; 130:3,4. Consequently it is not surprising that some felt constrained to speak of a repeated justification. The Church of Rome infers from the data to which we called attention that believers must in some way atone for sins committed after baptism, and therefore also believes in an increasing justification. Antinomians, on the other hand, desiring to honour the unlimited pardoning grace of God, maintain that the sins of believers are not accounted as such to the new man but only to the old, and that it is quite unnecessary for them to pray for the forgiveness of sins. For fear of this Antinomian position even some Reformed theologians had scruples about teaching that the future sins of believers are also pardoned in justification, and spoke of a repeated and even daily justification.[Cf. Brakel, *Redelijke Godsdienst* I, pp. 876 ff.] The usual position of Reformed theology, however, is that in justification God indeed removes the guilt, but not the culpability of sin, that is, He removes the sinner's just amenability to punishment, but not the inherent guiltiness of whatever sins he may continue to perform. The latter remains and therefore always produces in believers a feeling of guilt, of separation from God, of sorrow, of repentance, and so on. Hence they feel the need of confessing their sins, even the sins of their youth, Ps. 25:7; 51:5-9. The believer who is really conscious of his sin feels within him an urge to confess it and to seek the comforting assurance of forgiveness. Moreover, such confession and prayer is not only a subjectively felt need, but also an objective necessity. Justification is essentially an objective declaration respecting the sinner in the tribunal of God, but it is not

merely that; it is also an *actus transiens*, passing into the consciousness of the believer. The divine sentence of acquittal is brought home to the sinner and awakens the joyous consciousness of the forgiveness of sins and of favor with God. Now this consciousness of pardon and of a renewed filial relationship is often disturbed and obscured by sin, and is again quickened and strengthened by confession and prayer, and by a renewed exercise of faith.

2. THE POSITIVE ELEMENT. There is also a positive element in justification which is based more particularly on the active obedience of Christ. Naturally they who, like Piscator and the Arminians, deny the imputation of the active obedience of Christ to the sinner, thereby also deny the positive element in justification. According to them justification leaves man without any claim on life eternal, simply places him in the position of Adam before the fall, though according to the Arminians under a different law, the law of evangelical obedience, and leaves it to man to merit acceptance with God and eternal life by faith and obedience. But it is quite evident from Scripture that justification is more than mere pardon. Unto Joshua, the high priest, who stood, as the representative of Israel, with filthy garments before the Lord, Jehovah said: "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee (negative element), and I will clothe thee with rich apparel" (positive element), Zech. 3:4. According to Acts 26:18 we obtain by faith "remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified." Romans 5:1,2 teaches us that justification by faith brings not only peace with God, but also access to God and joy in the hope of glory. And according to Gal. 4:5 Christ was born under the law also "that we might receive the adoption of sons." In this positive element two parts may be distinguished:

a. The adoption of children. Believers are first of all children of God by adoption. This implies, of course, that they are not children of God by nature, as modern liberals would have us believe, for one cannot well adopt his own children. This adoption is a legal act, whereby God places the sinner in the status of a child, but does not change him inwardly any more than parents by

the mere act of adoption change the inner life of an adopted child. The change that is effected concerns the relation in which man stands to God. By virtue of their adoption believers are as it were initiated into the very family of God, come under the law of filial obedience, and at the same time become entitled to all the privileges of sonship. The sonship by adoption should be carefully distinguished from the moral sonship of believers, their sonship by regeneration and sanctification. They are not only adopted to be children of God, but are also born of God. Naturally these two cannot be separated. They are mentioned together in John 1:12; Rom. 8:15,16; Gal. 3:26,27; 4:5,6. In Rom. 8:15 the term *huiothesia* (from *huios* and *tithenai*) is used, which literally means “placing as a son,” and in classical Greek is always employed to denote an objective placing in the status of a child. The following verse contains the word *tekna* (from *tikto*, “to beget”), which designates believers as those who are begotten of God. In John 1:12 the idea of adoption is expressed by the words, “But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right (*exousian edoken*) to become children of God.” The Greek expression here used means “to give legal right.” Immediately thereafter, in the 13th verse, the writer speaks of ethical sonship by regeneration. The connection between the two is clearly brought out in Gal. 4:5,6 . . . “that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons (by adoption), God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, *Abba, Father*.” That Spirit regenerates and sanctifies us and prompts us to address God full of confidence as Father.

b. The right to eternal life. This element is virtually included in the preceding one. When sinners are adopted to be children of God, they are invested with all the legal filial rights, and become heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, Rom. 8:17. This means first of all that they become heirs of all the blessings of salvation in the present life, the most fundamental of which is described in the words, “the promise of the Spirit,” that is, the promised blessing in the form of the Spirit, Gal. 3:14; and in the slightly different phrase, “the Spirit of His Son,” Gal. 4:6. And in and with the Spirit they receive all the gifts of Christ. But this is not all; their inheritance also includes the eternal

blessings of the future life. The glory of which Paul speaks in Rom. 8:17 follows after the sufferings of the present time. According to Rom. 8:23 the redemption of the body, which is there called “the adoption,” also belongs to the future inheritance. And in the ordo salutis of Rom. 8:29,30 glorification connects up immediately with justification. Being justified by faith, believers are heirs of life eternal.

E. THE SPHERE IN WHICH JUSTIFICATION OCCURS.

GLOSS Conscience: the inward awareness of God’s verdict, through which the believer enjoys peace with God.

The question as to the sphere in which justification occurs, must be answered with discrimination. It is customary to distinguish between an active and a passive, also called an objective and a subjective, justification, each having its own sphere.

1. **ACTIVE OR OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION.** This is justification in the most fundamental sense of the word. It is basic to what is called subjective justification, and consists in a declaration which God makes respecting the sinner, and this declaration is made in the tribunal of God. This declaration is not a declaration in which God simply acquits the sinner, without taking any account of the claims of justice, but is rather a divine declaration that, in the case of the sinner under consideration, the demands of the law are met. The sinner is declared righteous in view of the fact that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. In this transaction God appears, not as an absolute Sovereign who simply sets the law aside, but as a righteous Judge, who acknowledges the infinite merits of Christ as a sufficient basis for justification, and as a gracious Father, who freely forgives and accepts the sinner. This active justification logically precedes faith and passive justification. We believe the forgiveness of sins.

2. PASSIVE OR SUBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION. Passive or subjective justification takes place in the heart or conscience of the sinner. A purely objective justification that is not brought home to the sinner would not answer the purpose. The granting of a pardon would mean nothing to a prisoner, unless the glad tidings were communicated to him and the doors of the prison were opened. Moreover, it is exactly at this point that the sinner learns to understand better than anywhere else that salvation is of free grace. When the Bible speaks of justification, it usually refers to what is known as passive justification. It should be borne in mind, however, that the two cannot be separated. The one is based on the other. The distinction is simply made to facilitate the proper understanding of the act of justification. Logically, passive justification follows faith; we are justified by faith.

F. THE TIME OF JUSTIFICATION.

GLOSS **Once for all:** God's declaration of righteousness is a completed judicial act, though its blessings are increasingly enjoyed.

Some theologians separate active and passive justification temporally. The active justification is then said to have taken place in eternity or in the resurrection of Christ, while passive justification takes place by faith and therefore, it is said, follows the other in a temporal sense. We shall consider successively justification from eternity, justification in the resurrection of Christ, and justification by faith.

1. JUSTIFICATION FROM ETERNITY. The Antinomians held that the justification of the sinner took place in eternity, or in the resurrection of Christ. They either confounded it with the eternal decree of election, or with the objective justification of Christ when He was raised from the dead. They did not properly distinguish between the divine purpose in eternity and its execution in time, nor between the work of Christ in procuring, and that of the

Holy Spirit in applying the blessings of redemption. According to this position we are justified even before we believe, though we are unconscious of it, and faith simply conveys to us the declaration of this fact. Moreover, the fact that our sins were imputed to Christ made Him personally a sinner, and the imputation of His righteousness to us makes us personally righteous, so that God can see no sin in believers at all. Some Reformed theologians also speak of justification from eternity, but at the same time refuse to subscribe to the Antinomian construction of this doctrine. The grounds on which they believe in justification from eternity deserve brief consideration.

a. Grounds for the doctrine of justification from eternity.

(1) Scripture speaks of a grace or mercy of God which is from ever-lasting, Ps. 25:6; 103:17. Now all grace or mercy that is from eternity must have as its judicial or legal basis a justification that is from eternity. But in answer to this it may be said that there are eternal mercies and lovingkindnesses of God which are not based on any justification of the sinner, as, for instance, His plan of redemption, the gift of His Son, and the willing suretyship of Christ in the *pactum salutis*.

(2) In the *pactum salutis* the guilt of the sins of the elect was transferred to Christ, and the righteousness of Christ was imputed to them. This means that the burden of sin was lifted from their shoulders and that they were justified. Now there is no doubt about it that there was a certain imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the sinner in the counsel of redemption, but not all imputation can be called justification in the Scriptural sense of the term. We must distinguish between what was merely ideal in the counsel of God and what is realized in the course of history.

(3) The sinner receives the initial grace of regeneration on the basis of the imputed righteousness of Christ. Consequently, the merits of Christ must have been imputed to him before his regeneration. But while this consideration leads to the conclusion that justification logically precedes regeneration, it

does not prove the priority of justification in a temporal sense. The sinner can receive the grace of regeneration on the basis of a justification, ideally existing in the counsel of God and certain to be realized in the life of the sinner.

(4) Children also need justification, in order to be saved, and yet it is quite impossible that they should experience justification by faith. But though it is perfectly true that children, who have not yet come to maturity, cannot experience passive justification, they can be actively justified in the tribunal of God and thus be in possession of that which is absolutely essential.

(5) Justification is an immanent act of God, and as such must be from eternity. It is hardly correct, however, to speak of justification as an *actus immanens* in God; it is rather an *actus transiens*, just as creation, incarnation, and so on. The advocates of justification from eternity feel the weight of this consideration, and therefore hasten to give us the assurance that they do not mean to teach that the elect are justified from eternity actualiter, but only in the intention of God, in the divine decree. This leads us back to the usual distinction between the counsel of God and its execution. If this justification in the intention of God warrants our speaking of a justification from eternity, then there is absolutely no reason why we should not speak of a creation from eternity as well.

b. Objections against the doctrine of justification from eternity.

(1) The Bible teaches uniformly that justification takes place by faith or out of faith. This, of course, applies to passive or subjective justification, which, however, cannot be separated temporally from active or objective justification except in the case of children. But if justification takes place by faith, it certainly does not precede faith in a temporal sense. Now it is true that the advocates of a justification from eternity also speak of a justification by faith. But in their representation this can only mean that man by faith becomes conscious of what God has done in eternity.

(2) In Rom. 8:29,30, where we find some of the *scalae* of the *ordo salutis*, justification stands between two acts of God in time, namely, calling and glorification, which begins in time but is completed in a future eternity. And these three together are the result of two others which are explicitly indicated as eternal. Dr. Kuyper is not warranted in saying that Rom. 8:30 refers to what took place with the regenerated before they were born, as even Dr. De Moor, who also believes in a justification from eternity, is quite willing to admit.[Cf. his *De Rechtvaardigmaking Van Eeuwigheid*, p. 20.]

(3) In teaching justification from eternity, the decree of God respecting the justification of the sinner, which is an *actus immanens*, is identified with justification itself, which is an *actus transiens*. This only leads to confusion. What took place in the *pactum salutis* cannot be identified with what results from it. All imputation is not yet justification. Justification is one of the fruits of Christ's redemptive work, applied to believers by the Holy Spirit. But the Spirit did not and could not apply this or any other fruit of the work of Christ from eternity.

2. JUSTIFICATION IN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. The idea that sinners are in some sense of the word justified in the resurrection of Christ was stressed by some Antinomians, is taught by those Reformed theologians who believe in a justification from eternity, and is also held by some other Reformed scholars. This view is based on the following grounds:

a. By His atoning work Christ satisfied all the demands of the law for His people. In the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead the Father publicly declared that all the requirements of the law were met for all the elect and thereby justified them. But here too careful distinction is required. Even though it be true that there was an objective justification of Christ and of the whole body of Christ in His resurrection, this should not be confounded with the justification of the sinner of which Scripture speaks. It is not true that, when Christ rendered full satisfaction to the Father for all His people, their guilt naturally terminated. A penal debt is not like a pecuniary debt in this

respect. Even after the payment of a ransom, the removal of guilt may depend on certain conditions, and does not follow as a matter of course. The elect are not personally justified in the Scriptural sense until they accept Christ by faith and thus appropriate His merits.

b. In Rom. 4:25 we read that Christ was “raised up for (dia, causal, on account of) our justification,” that is, to effect our justification. Now it is undoubtedly true that dia with the accusative is causal here. At the same time it need not be retrospective, but can also be prospective and therefore mean “with a view to our justification,” which is equivalent to saying, “in order that we may be justified.” The retrospective interpretation would be in conflict with the immediately following context, which clearly shows (1) that Paul is not thinking of the objective justification of the whole body of Christ, but of the personal justification of sinners; and (2) that he conceives of this as taking place through faith.

c. In II Cor. 5:19 we read: “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses.” From this passage the inference is drawn that the objective reconciliation of the world in Christ involves the non-imputation of sin to the sinner. But this interpretation is not correct. The evident meaning of the apostle is: God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, as appears from the fact that He does not impute to men their sins, and that He has entrusted to His servants the word of reconciliation. Notice that *me logizomenos* (present tense) refers to what is constantly going on. This cannot be conceived as a part of the objective reconciliation, for then the following clause, “and having committed to us the word of reconciliation,” would also have to be so interpreted, and this is quite impossible.

In connection with this matter it may be said that we can speak of a justification of the body of Christ as a whole in His resurrection, but this is purely objective and should not be confounded with the personal justification of the sinner.

3. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

a. The relation of faith to justification. Scripture says that we are justified *dia pisteos*, *ek pisteos*, or *pistei* (dative), Rom. 3:25,28,30; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9. The preposition *dia* stresses the fact that faith is the instrument by which we appropriate Christ and His righteousness. The preposition *ek* indicates that faith logically precedes our personal justification, so that this, as it were, originates in faith. The dative is used in an instrumental sense. Scripture never says that we are justified *dia ten pistin*, on account of faith. This means that faith is never represented as the ground of our justification. If this were the case, faith would have to be regarded as a meritorious work of man. And this would be the introduction of the doctrine of justification by works, which the apostle opposes consistently, Rom. 3:21,27,28; 4:3,4; Gal. 2:16,21; 3:11. We are told indeed that Abraham's faith was reckoned unto him for righteousness, Rom. 4:3,9,22; Gal. 3:6, but in view of the whole argument this surely cannot mean that in his case faith itself as a work took the place of the righteousness of God in Christ. The apostle does not leave it doubtful that, strictly speaking, only the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, is the ground of our justification. But faith is so thoroughly receptive in the appropriation of the merits of Christ, that it can be put figuratively for the merits of Christ which it receives. "Faith" then is equivalent to the contents of faith, that is, to the merits or the righteousness of Christ.

It is often said, however, that the teachings of James conflict with those of Paul on this point, and clearly support the doctrine of justification by works in Jas. 2:14-26. Various attempts have been made to harmonize the two. Some proceed on the assumption that both Paul and James speak of the justification of the sinner, but that James stresses the fact that a faith which does not manifest itself in good works is no true faith, and therefore is not a faith that justifies. This is undoubtedly true. The difference between the representations of Paul and James is unquestionably due partly to the nature of the adversaries with which they had to deal. Paul had to contend with legalists who sought to

base their justification, at least in part, on the works of the law. James, on the other hand, joined issue with Antinomians, who claimed to have faith, but whose faith was merely an intellectual assent to the truth (2:19), and who denied the necessity of good works. Therefore he stresses the fact that faith without works is a dead faith, and consequently not at all a faith that justifies. The faith that justifies is a faith that is fruitful in good works. But it may be objected that this does not explain the whole difficulty, since James explicitly says in verse 24 that a man is justified by works and not only by faith, and illustrates this by the example of Abraham, who was “justified by works in that he offered up Isaac” (verse 21). “Thou seest,” says he in verse 24, “that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect.” It is quite evident, however, that in this case the writer is not speaking of the justification of the sinner, for Abraham the sinner was justified long before he offered up Isaac (cf. Gen. 15), but of a further justification of the believing Abraham. True faith will manifest itself in good works, and these works will testify before men of the righteousness (that is, the righteousness of life) of him that possesses such a faith. The justification of the just by works confirms the justification by faith. If James actually meant to say in this section of his letter that Abraham and Rahab were justified with the justificatio peccatoris, on the basis of their good works, he would not only be in conflict with Paul, but would also be self-contradictory, for he explicitly says that Abraham was justified by faith.

b. Theological terms to express the relation of faith to justification. There are especially three terms that come into consideration here.

(1) Instrumental cause. This name was very generally used at first, but afterwards met with considerable opposition. The question was raised, whether it was God’s instrument or man’s. And it was said: It cannot be God’s, since the faith referred to is not God’s faith; neither can it be man’s, for justification is not a deed of man, but of God. We should bear in mind, however, (a) that according to the plain teaching of the Bible we are justified

by faith, *dia pisteos*, and that this *dia* can only be understood in an instrumental sense, Rom. 3:28; Gal. 3:8; (b) that the Bible explicitly says that God justifies the sinner by faith, and therefore represents faith as God's instrument, Rom. 3:30; and (c) that faith is also represented as the instrument of man, as the means by which he receives justification, Gal. 2:16. Faith can be regarded as the instrument of God in a twofold sense. It is a gift of God wrought in the sinner unto justification. Moreover, by working faith in the sinner, God carries the declaration of pardon into his heart or conscience. But faith is also an instrument of man by which he appropriates Christ and all His precious gifts, Rom. 4:5; Gal. 2:16. This is also the representation of the matter which we find in the Belgic Confession, [Art. XXII.] and in the Heidelberg Catechism. [Questions 60 and 61.] By faith we embrace Christ and remain in contact with Him who is our righteousness. The name "instrumental cause" is regularly used in Protestant Confessions. Yet some Reformed theologians prefer to avoid it, in order to guard themselves against the danger of giving the impression that justification is in any way dependent on faith as a work of man.

(2) Appropriating organ. This name expresses the idea that by faith the sinner appropriates the righteousness of Christ and establishes a conscious union between himself and Christ. The merits of Christ constitute the *dikaïoma*, the legal basis on which the formal declaration of God in justification rests. By faith the sinner appropriates the righteousness of the Mediator already imputed to him ideally in the *pactum salutis*; and on the basis of this he is now formally justified before God. Faith justifies in so far as it takes possession of Christ. The name "appropriating organ" includes the instrumental idea, and is therefore perfectly in harmony with the statements found in our confessional standards. It has an advantage over the more common name in that it excludes the idea that faith is in any sense the basis for justification. It can be called an appropriating organ in a twofold sense: (a) It is the organ by which we lay hold on and appropriate the merits of Christ, and accept these as the meritorious ground of our justification. As such it

logically precedes justification. (b) It is also the organ by which we consciously apprehend our justification and obtain possession of subjective justification. In this sense it logically follows justification. On the whole this name deserves preference, though it should be borne in mind that, strictly speaking, faith is the organ by which we appropriate the righteousness of Christ as the ground of our justification, rather than the organ by which we appropriate justification itself.

(3) *Conditio sine qua non*. This name, suggested by some Reformed theologians, did not meet with great favor. It expresses the idea, which is perfectly true in itself, that man is not justified apart from faith, and that faith is an indispensable condition of justification. The name expresses nothing positive, and is, moreover, liable to misunderstanding.

G. THE GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION.

GLOSS Ground: the basis on which God justifies: the perfect righteousness and atoning obedience of Jesus Christ.

One of the most important points of controversy between the Church of Rome and the Reformers, and between Reformed theology and the Arminians, concerned the ground of justification. With respect to this the Reformers taught:

1. Negatively, that this cannot be found in any virtue of man, nor in his good works. This position must also be maintained at present over against Rome and the Pelagianizing tendencies of various Churches. Rome teaches that the sinner is justified on the basis of the inherent righteousness that has been infused into his heart, and which, in turn, is the fruit of the co-operation of the human will with prevenient grace. This applies to what is called the first justification; in all following justification the good works of man come into

consideration as the formal cause or ground of justification. It is impossible, however, that the inherent righteousness of the regenerate man and his good works should constitute the ground of his justification, for (a) this righteousness is and remains during this life a very imperfect righteousness; (b) it is itself already the fruit of the righteousness of Christ and of the grace of God; and (c) even the best works of believers are polluted by sin. Moreover, Scripture teaches us very clearly that man is justified freely by the grace of God, Rom. 3:24, and that he cannot possibly be justified by the works of the law, Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; 3:11.

2. Positively, that the ground of justification can be found only in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to the sinner in justification. This is plainly taught in several passages of Scripture, such as Rom. 3:24; 5:9,19; 8:1; 10:4; I Cor. 1:30; 6:11; II Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9. In the passive obedience of Christ, who became a curse for us (Gal. 3:13) we find the ground for the forgiveness of sins; and in His active obedience, by which He merited all the gifts of grace, including eternal life, the ground for the adoption of children, by which sinners are constituted heirs of life eternal. The Arminian goes contrary to Scripture when he maintains that we are accepted in favor by God only on the ground of our faith or evangelical obedience.

H. OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION.

GLOSS Vicarious righteousness: Christ's righteousness accomplished for His people and freely credited to those who are in themselves unrighteous.

Modern liberal theology, with its rationalizing tendencies, raises several objections to the doctrine of justification as such, which deserve brief consideration.

1. Some, who still believe in salvation by grace, ostensibly object to justification in the interest of the recognition of the grace of God. Justification, it is said, is a legal transaction and as such excludes grace, while the Bible clearly teaches that the sinner is saved by grace. But it can easily be shown that justification with all its antecedents and consequents is a gracious work of God. The substitute allowed for guilty sinners, the vicarious sufferings and obedience of Christ, the imputation of His righteousness to unworthy transgressors, and God's dealing with believers as righteous, — it is all free grace from start to finish.

2. Justification is sometimes called an impious procedure, because it declares sinners to be righteous contrary to fact. But this objection does not hold, because the divine declaration is not to the effect that these sinners are righteous in themselves, but that they are clothed with the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. This righteousness wrought by Christ, is freely imputed to them. It is not the personal subjective righteousness of Christ, but His vicarious covenant righteousness, that is imputed to those who are in themselves unrighteous, and all to the glory of God.

3. It is often said this doctrine is ethically subversive, because it leads to licentiousness. But there is no truth in this whatsoever, as even the lives of the justified clearly show. In justification the sure foundation is laid for that vital spiritual union with Christ which secures our sanctification. It really leads right on to the only conditions under which we can be truly holy in principle. The man who is justified also receives the spirit of sanctification, and is the only one who can abound in good works which will glorify God.

I. DIVERGENT VIEWS OF JUSTIFICATION.

GLOSS **Fides informis:** faith without love in Roman Catholic terminology; Berkhof contrasts it with the faith that receives Christ.

1. **THE ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW.** The Roman Catholic view confounds justification and sanctification. It includes the following elements in justification (a) the expulsion of indwelling sin; (b) the positive infusion of divine grace; and (c) the forgiveness of sins. The sinner is prepared for justification by prevenient grace, without any merits on his part. This prevenient grace leads the sinner to a *fides informis*, to conviction of sin, to repentance, to a confident reliance on the grace of God in Christ, to the beginnings of a new life, and to a desire for baptism. Justification really consists in the infusion of new virtues after the pollution of sin has been removed in baptism. After the expulsion of indwelling sin, the forgiveness of sin or the removal of the guilt of sin necessarily follows. And after that the Christian advances from virtue to virtue, is able to perform meritorious works, and receives as a reward a greater measure of grace and a more perfect justification. The grace of justification can be lost, but can also be restored by the sacrament of penance.

2. **THE VIEW OF PISCATOR.** Piscator taught that only the passive obedience of Christ is imputed to the sinner in justification, unto the forgiveness of sins; and that His active obedience could not possibly be imputed to him, unto the adoption of children and an eternal inheritance, because the man Christ Jesus owed this to God for Himself. Moreover, if Christ had fulfilled the law for us, we could no more be held responsible for the keeping of the law. Piscator regarded the bearing of the penalty of sin and the keeping of the law as alternatives, of which the one excludes the other. He left the door open for regarding the sinner's own personal obedience as the only ground of his future hope. This view is very much like that of the Arminians, and is quite in line with the doctrine of Anselm in the Middle Ages.

3. **THE VIEW OF OSIANDER.** Osiander revealed a tendency to revive in the Lutheran Church the essentials of the Roman Catholic conception of justification, though with a characteristic difference. He asserted that justification does not consist in the imputation of the vicarious righteousness

of Christ to the sinner, but in the implanting of a new principle of life. According to him the righteousness by which we are justified is the eternal righteousness of God the Father, which is imparted to or infused into us by His Son Jesus Christ.

4. **THE ARMINIAN VIEW.** The Arminians hold that Christ did not render strict satisfaction to the justice of God, but yet offered a real propitiation for sin, which was graciously accepted and acted on as satisfactory by God in pardoning sin and thus justifying the sinner. While this only squares past accounts, God also makes provision for the future. He just as graciously imputes the believer's faith to him for righteousness, that faith, namely, as including the entire religious life of the believer, — his evangelical obedience. On this view faith is no more the mere instrument of the positive element of justification, but the graciously admitted ground on which it rests. Justification, then, is not a judicial but a sovereign act of God.

5. **THE BARTHIAN VIEW.** While Barth does speak of justification as a momentary act, yet he does not regard it as an act accomplished once for all, and which is then followed by sanctification. According to him justification and sanctification go hand in hand all along the line. Pauck says that according to Barth justification is not a growth or an ethical development; it occurs ever anew, whenever man has reached the point of complete despair as to the beliefs and values upon which he has built his life. Thurneysen also rejects the view that justification takes place once for all, calls it the view of Pietism, and claims that it is fatal to the doctrine of the Reformation.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: What does the verb *dikaio-o* mean in classical Greek? Is justification a creative or a declarative act? Is it possible to think of justification with respect to past sins in any other sense than that of a judicial acquittal? Should justification be thought of exclusively as something objective and external to man? What is meant in theology by the formal cause of justification? How do the Romanists and Protestants differ on this point? Is the justification of the Roman Catholics by the *fides formata* really a

justification by faith, or a justification by love under the guise of faith? What is the Antinomian doctrine of justification from eternity? Is the distinction made by Buchanan and Cunningham between active and passive justification as being actual and declarative justification correct or not? Can we say that in declarative justification (passive justification) God simply declares the sinner to be what he is? What becomes of the doctrine of justification in Schleiermacher, Ritchie, and modern liberal theology?

X. Sanctification

Sanctification is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit by which believers are increasingly freed from sin and renewed in holiness. It follows justification and bears fruit in good works.

A. THE SCRIPTURAL TERMS FOR SANCTIFICATION AND HOLINESS.

GLOSS Sanctification: being set apart for God and increasingly cleansed from sin in life and character.

1. THE OLD TESTAMENT TERMS. The Old Testament word for ‘to sanctify’ is *qadash*, a verb that is used in the *niphal*, *piel*, *hiphil*, and *hithpa’el* species. The corresponding noun is *qodesh*, while the adjective is *qadosh*. The verbal forms are derived from the nominal and adjectival forms. The original meaning of these words is uncertain. Some are of the opinion that the word *qadash* is related to *chadash*, meaning ‘to shine.’ This would be in harmony with the qualitative aspect of the Biblical idea of holiness, namely, that of purity. Others, with a greater degree of probability, derive the word from the root *qad*, meaning ‘to cut.’ This would make the idea of separation the original idea. The word would then point to aloofness, separateness, or majesty.

Though this meaning of the words ‘sanctification’ and ‘holiness’ may seem unusual to us, it is in all probability the fundamental idea expressed by them. Says Girdlestone: “The terms ‘sanctification’ and ‘holiness’ are now used so frequently to represent moral and spiritual qualities, that they hardly convey to the reader the idea of position or relationship as existing between God and some person or thing consecrated to Him; yet this appears to be the real meaning of the word.”[Old Testament Synonyms, p. 283.] Similarly, Cremer-Koegel calls attention to the fact that the idea of separation is fundamental to that of holiness. “Heiligkeit ist ein verhaeltnisbegriff.” At the same time it is admitted that the two ideas of holiness and separation do not merge, are not absorbed in each other, but that the former in a measure serves to qualify the latter.[Biblisch-Theologisches Woerterbuch (10th ed.) p. 41.]

2. THE NEW TESTAMENT TERMS.

a. The verb *hagiazō* and its various meanings. The verb *hagiazō* is a derivative of *hagios*, which like the Hebrew *qadosh* expresses primarily the idea of separation. It is used in several different senses, however, in the New Testament. We may distinguish the following: (1) It is used in a mental sense of persons or things, Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2; I Pet. 3:15. In such cases it means “to regard an object as holy,” “to ascribe holiness to it,” or “to acknowledge its holiness by word or deed.” (2) It is also employed occasionally in a ritual sense, that is, in the sense of “separating from ordinary for sacred purposes,” or of “setting aside for a certain office,” Matt. 23:17,19; John 10:36; II Tim. 2:21. (3) Again it is used to denote that operation of God by which He, especially through His Spirit, works in man the subjective quality of holiness, John 17:17; Acts 20:32; 26:18; I Cor. 1:2; I Thess. 5:23. (4) Finally, in the Epistle to the Hebrews it seems to be used in an expiatory sense, and also in the related sense of the Pauline *dikaio-o*, Heb. 9:13; 10:10,29; 13:12.[Cf. Denney, *The Death of Christ*, p. 220; Kennedy, *The Theology of the Epistles*, p. 214.]

b. The adjectives expressive of the idea of holiness. (1) *Hieros*. The word that is used least and that is also the least expressive, is the word *hieros*. It is found

only in I Cor. 9:13; II Tim. 3:15, and then not of persons but of things. It does not express moral excellence, but is expressive of the inviolable character of the thing referred to, which springs from the relation in which it stands to God. It is best translated by the English word “sacred.” (2) Hosios. The word hosios is of more frequent occurrence. It is found in Acts 2:27; 13:34,35; I Tim. 2:8; Tit. 1:8; Heb. 7:26; Rev. 15:4; 16:5, and is applied not only to things, but also to God and to Christ. It describes a person or thing as free from defilement or wickedness, or more actively (of persons) as religiously fulfilling every moral obligation. (3) Hagnos. The word hagnos occurs in II Cor. 7:11; 11:2; Phil. 4:8; I Tim. 5:22; Jas. 3:17; I Pet. 3:2; I John 3:3. The fundamental idea of the word seems to be that of freedom from impurity and defilement in an ethical sense. (4) Hagios. The really characteristic word of the New Testament, however, is hagios. Its primary meaning is that of separation in consecration and devotion to the service of God. With this is connected the idea that what is set aside from the world for God, should also separate itself from the world’s defilement and share in God’s purity. This explains the fact that hagios speedily acquired an ethical signification. The word does not always have the same meaning in the New Testament. (a) It is used to designate an external official relation, a being set aside from ordinary purposes for the service of God, as for instance, when we read of “holy prophets,” Luke 1:70, “holy apostles,” Eph. 3:5, and “holy men of God” II Pet. 1:21. (b) More often, however, it is employed in an ethical sense to describe the quality that is necessary to stand in close relation to God and to serve Him acceptably, Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22; I Pet. 1:15,16. It should be borne in mind that in treating of sanctification we use the word primarily in the latter sense. When we speak of holiness in connection with sanctification, we have in mind both an external relation and an inner subjective quality.

c. The nouns denoting sanctification and holiness. The New Testament word for sanctification is *hagiasmos*. It occurs ten times, namely, in Rom. 6:19, 22; I Cor. 1:30; I Thess. 4:3,4,7; II Thess. 2:13; I Tim. 2:15; Heb. 12:14; I Pet. 1:2. While it denotes ethical purification, it includes the idea of separation, namely, “the

separation of the spirit from all that is impure and polluting, and a renunciation of the sins towards which the desires of the flesh and of the mind lead us.” While hagioσmos denotes the work of sanctification, there are two other words that describe the result of the process, namely, hagiotes and hagioσune. The former is found in I Cor. 1:30 and Heb. 12:10; and the latter in Rom. 1:4; II Cor. 7:1, and I Thess. 3:13. These passages show that the quality of holiness or freedom from pollution and impurity is essential to God, was exhibited by Jesus Christ, and is imparted to the Christian.

B. THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION IN HISTORY.

GLOSS **Moral improvement:** outward ethical progress by natural power; Berkhof distinguishes it from the Spirit’s renewing work.

1. BEFORE THE REFORMATION. In the historical unfolding of the doctrine of sanctification, the Church concerned itself primarily with three problems: (a) the relation of the grace of God in sanctification to faith; (b) the relation of sanctification to justification; and (c) the degree of sanctification in this present life. The writings of the early Church Fathers contain very little respecting the doctrine of sanctification. A strain of moralism is quite apparent in that man was taught to depend for salvation on faith and good works. Sins committed before baptism were washed away in baptism, but for those after baptism man must provide by penance and good works. He must lead a life of virtue and thus merit the approval of the Lord. “Such dualism,” says Scott in his *The Nicene Theology*, [p. 200.] “left the domain of sanctification only indirectly related to the redemption of Christ; and this was the field in which grew up, naturally, defective conceptions of sin, legalism, Sacramentarianism, priestcraft, and all the excesses of monkish devotion.” Asceticism came to be regarded as of the greatest importance. There was also a tendency to confound justification and sanctification. Augustine was the first one to develop rather definite ideas of sanctification, and his views had a determining influence on

the Church of the Middle Ages. He did not clearly distinguish between justification and sanctification, but conceived of the latter as included in the former. Since he believed in the total corruption of human nature by the fall, he thought of sanctification as a new supernatural impartation of divine life, a new infused energy, operating exclusively within the confines of the Church and through the sacraments. While he did not lose sight of the importance of personal love to Christ as a constituent element in sanctification, he manifested a tendency to take a metaphysical view of the grace of God in sanctification, — to regard it as a deposit of God in man. He did not sufficiently stress the necessity of a constant preoccupation of faith with the redeeming Christ, as the most important factor in the transformation of the Christian's life. The tendencies apparent in the teachings of Augustine came to fruition in the theology of the Middle Ages, which is found in its most developed form in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. Justification and sanctification are not clearly distinguished, but the former is made to include the infusion of divine grace, as something substantial, into the human soul. This grace is a sort of *donum superadditum*, by which the soul is lifted to a new level or a higher order of being, and is enabled to achieve its heavenly destiny of knowing, possessing, and enjoying God. The grace is derived from the inexhaustible treasury of the merits of Christ and is imparted to believers by the sacraments. Looked at from the divine point of view, this sanctifying grace within the soul secures the remission of original sin, imparts a permanent habit of inherent righteousness, and carries within itself the potency of further development, and even of perfection. Out of it the new life develops with all its virtues. Its good work can be neutralized or destroyed by mortal sins; but the guilt contracted after baptism can be removed by the eucharist in the case of venial sins, and by the sacrament of penance in the case of mortal sins. Considered from the human point of view, the supernatural works of faith working through love have merit before God, and secure an increase of grace. Such works are impossible, however, without the continuous operation of the grace of God. The result of the whole process was known as justification rather than

as sanctification; it consisted in making man just before God. These ideas are embodied in the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent.

2. AFTER THE REFORMATION. The Reformers in speaking of sanctification emphasized the antithesis of sin and redemption rather than that of nature and supernature. They made a clear distinction between justification and sanctification, regarding the former as a legal act of divine grace, affecting the judicial status of man, and the latter, as a moral or re-creative work, changing the inner nature of man. But while they made a careful distinction between the two, they also stressed their inseparable connection. While deeply convinced that man is justified by faith alone, they also understood that the faith which justifies is not alone. Justification is at once followed by sanctification, since God sends out the Spirit of His Son into the hearts of His own as soon as they are justified, and that Spirit is the Spirit of sanctification. They did not regard the grace of sanctification as a supernatural essence infused in man through the sacraments, but as a supernatural and gracious work of the Holy Spirit, primarily through the Word and secondarily through the sacraments, by which He delivers us more and more from the power of sin and enables us to do good works. Though in no way confounding justification and sanctification, they felt the necessity of preserving the closest possible connection between the former, in which the free and forgiving grace of God is strongly emphasized, and the latter, which calls for the co-operation of man, in order to avoid the danger of work-righteousness. In Pietism and Methodism great emphasis was placed on constant fellowship with Christ as the great means of sanctification. By exalting sanctification at the expense of justification, they did not always avoid the danger of self-righteousness. Wesley did not merely distinguish justification and sanctification, but virtually separated them, and spoke of entire sanctification as a second gift of grace, following the first, of justification by faith, after a shorter or longer period. While he also spoke of sanctification as a process, he yet held that the believer should pray and look for full sanctification at once by a separate act of God. Under the influence of Rationalism and of the moralism of Kant sanctification

ceased to be regarded as a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the renewal of sinners, and was brought down to the level of a mere moral improvement by the natural powers of man. For Schleiermacher it was merely the progressive domination of the God-consciousness within us over the merely sentient and ever morally defective world-consciousness. And for Ritschl it was the moral perfection of the Christian life to which we attain by fulfilling our vocation as members of the Kingdom of God. In a great deal of modern liberal theology sanctification consists only in the ever-increasing redemption of man's lower self by the domination of his higher self. Redemption by character is one of the slogans of the present day, and the term "sanctification" has come to stand for mere moral improvement.

C. THE BIBLICAL IDEA OF HOLINESS AND SANCTIFICATION.

GLOSS Holiness: separation to God together with moral purity; it concerns both belonging to God and living for Him.

1. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. In Scripture the quality of holiness applies first of all to God, and as applied to Him its fundamental idea is that of unapproachableness. And this unapproachableness is based on the fact that God is divine and therefore absolutely distinct from the creature. Holiness in this sense is not merely an attribute to be co-ordinated with others in God. It is rather something that is predicable of everything that is found in God. He is holy in His grace as well as in His righteousness, in His love as well as in His wrath. Strictly speaking, holiness becomes an attribute only in the later ethical sense of the word. The ethical meaning of the term developed out of the majesty-meaning. This development starts with the idea that a sinful being is more keenly conscious of the majesty of God than a sinless being. The sinner becomes aware of his impurity as over against the majestic purity of God, cf.

Isa. 6. Otto speaks of holiness in the original sense as the numenous, and proposes to call the characteristic reaction to it “creature-feeling, or creature-consciousness,” a disvaluation of self into nothingness, while he speaks of the reaction to holiness in the derived ethical sense as a “feeling of absolute profaneness.” Thus the idea of holiness as majestic purity or ethical sublimity was developed. This purity is an active principle in God, that must vindicate itself and uphold its honor. This accounts for the fact that holiness is represented in Scripture also as the light of the divine glory turned into a devouring fire. Isa. 5:24; 10:17; 33:14,15. Over against the holiness of God man feels himself to be, not merely insignificant, but positively impure and sinful, and as such an object of God’s wrath. God revealed His holiness in the Old Testament in various ways. He did it in terrible judgments upon the enemies of Israel, Ex. 15:11,12. He did it also by separating unto Himself a people, which He took out of the world, Ex. 19:4-6; Ezek. 20:39-44. By taking this people out of the impure and ungodly world, He protested against that world and its sin. Moreover, He did it repeatedly in sparing His unfaithful people, because He did not want the unholy world to rejoice at what it might consider the failure of His work, Hos. 11:9.

In a derivative sense the idea of holiness is also applied to things and persons that are placed in a special relation to God. The land of Canaan, the city of Jerusalem, the temple-mount, the tabernacle and temple, the sabbaths and the solemn feasts of Israel, — they are all called holy, since they are consecrated to God and are placed within the radiance of His majestic holiness. Similarly, the prophets, the Levites, and the priests are called holy as persons that were set aside for the special service of the Lord. Israel had its sacred places, its sacred seasons, its sacred rites, and its sacred persons. This is not yet the ethical idea of holiness, however. One might be a sacred person, and yet be entirely devoid of the grace of God in his heart. In the old dispensation, as well as in the new, ethical holiness results from the renewing and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. It should be remembered, however, that even where the conception of holiness is thoroughly

spiritualized, it is always expressive of a relation. The idea of holiness is never that of moral goodness, considered in itself, but always that of ethical goodness seen in relation to God.

2. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. In passing from the Old Testament to the New we become aware of a striking difference. While in the Old Testament there is not a single attribute of God that stands out with anything like the same prominence as His holiness, in the New Testament holiness is seldom ascribed to God. Except in a few Old Testament quotations, it is done only in the writings of John, John 17:11; I John 2:20; Rev. 6:10. In all probability the explanation for this lies in the fact that in the New Testament holiness stands forth as the special characteristic of the Spirit of God, by whom believers are sanctified, are qualified for service, and are led to their eternal destiny, II Thess. 2:13; Tit. 3:5. The word *hagios* is used in connection with the Spirit of God well nigh a hundred times. The conception of holiness and sanctification, however, is no other in the New Testament than it is in the Old. In the former as well as in the latter holiness is ascribed in a derived sense to man. In the one as well as in the other ethical holiness is not mere moral rectitude, and sanctification is never mere moral improvement. These two are often confused in the present day, when people speak of salvation by character. A man may boast of great moral improvement, and yet be an utter stranger to sanctification. The Bible does not urge moral improvement pure and simple, but moral improvement in relation to God, for God's sake, and with a view to the service of God. It insists on sanctification. At this very point much ethical preaching of the present day is utterly misleading; and the corrective for it lies in the presentation of the true doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification may be defined as that gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which He delivers the justified sinner from the pollution of sin, renews his whole nature in the image of God, and enables him to perform good works.

D. THE NATURE OF SANCTIFICATION.

GLOSS Renewal: the Spirit's continuing transformation of the believer's inner life, affections, and conduct.

1. IT IS A SUPERNATURAL WORK OF GOD. Some have the mistaken notion that sanctification consists merely in the drawing out of the new life, implanted in the soul by regeneration, in a persuasive way by presenting motives to the will. But this is not true. It consists fundamentally and primarily in a divine operation in the soul, whereby the holy disposition born in regeneration is strengthened and its holy exercises are increased. It is essentially a work of God, though in so far as He employs means, man can and is expected to co-operate by the proper use of these means. Scripture clearly exhibits the supernatural character of sanctification in several ways. It describes it as a work of God, I Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20,21, as a fruit of the union of life with Jesus Christ, John 15:4; Gal. 2:20; 4:19, as a work that is wrought in man from within and which for that very reason cannot be a work of man, Eph. 3:16; Col. 1:11, and speaks of its manifestation in Christian virtues as the work of the Spirit, Gal. 5:22. It should never be represented as a merely natural process in the spiritual development of man, nor brought down to the level of a mere human achievement, as is done in a great deal of modern liberal theology.

2. IT CONSISTS OF TWO PARTS. The two parts of sanctification are represented in Scripture as:

a. The mortification of the old man, the body of sin. This Scriptural term denotes that act of God whereby the pollution and corruption of human nature that results from sin is gradually removed. It is often represented in the Bible as the crucifying of the old man, and is thus connected with the death of Christ on the cross. The old man is human nature in so far as it is controlled by

sin, Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:24. In the context of the passage of Galatians Paul contrasts the works of the flesh and the works of the Spirit, and then says: “And they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof.” This means that in their case the Spirit has gained predominance.

b. The quickening of the new man, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. While the former part of sanctification is negative in character, this is positive. It is that act of God whereby the holy disposition of the soul is strengthened, holy exercises are increased, and thus a new course of life engendered and promoted. The old structure of sin is gradually torn down, and a new structure of God is reared in its stead. These two parts of sanctification are not successive but contemporaneous. Thank God, the gradual erection of the new building need not wait until the old one is completely demolished. If it had to wait for that, it could never begin in this life. With the gradual dissolution of the old the new makes its appearance. It is like the airing of a house filled with pestiferous odors. As the old air is drawn out, the new rushes in. This positive side of sanctification is often called “a being raised together with Christ,” Rom. 6:4,5; Col. 2:12; 3:1,2. The new life to which it leads is called “a life unto God,” Rom. 6:11; Gal. 2:19.

3. IT AFFECTS THE WHOLE MAN: BODY AND SOUL; INTELLECT, AFFECTIONS AND WILL. This follows from the nature of the case, because sanctification takes place in the inner life of man, in the heart, and this cannot be changed without changing the whole organism of man. If the inner man is changed, there is bound to be change also in the periphery of life. Moreover, Scripture clearly and explicitly teaches that it affects both body and soul, I Thess. 5:23; II Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:12; I Cor. 6:15,20. The body comes into consideration here as the organ or instrument of the sinful soul, through which the sinful inclinations and habits and passions express themselves. The sanctification of the body takes place especially in the crisis of death and in the resurrection of the dead. Finally, it also appears from Scripture that

sanctification affects all the powers or faculties of the soul: the understanding, Jer. 31:34; John 6:45; — the will, Ezek. 36:25-27; Phil. 2:13; — the passions, Gal. 5:24; — and the conscience, Tit. 1:15; Heb. 9:14.

4. IT IS A WORK OF GOD IN WHICH BELIEVERS CO-OPERATE. When it is said that man takes part in the work of sanctification, this does not mean that man is an independent agent in the work, so as to make it partly the work of God and partly the work of man; but merely, that God effects the work in part through the instrumentality of man as a rational being, by requiring of him prayerful and intelligent co-operation with the Spirit. That man must co-operate with the Spirit of God follows: (a) from the repeated warnings against evils and temptations, which clearly imply that man must be active in avoiding the pitfalls of life, Rom. 12:9,16,17; I Cor. 6:9,10; Gal. 5:16-23; and (b) from the constant exhortations to holy living. These imply that the believer must be diligent in the employment of the means at his command for the moral and spiritual improvement of his life, Micah 6:8; John 15:2,8,16; Rom. 8:12,13; 12:1,2,17; Gal. 6:7,8,15.

E. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SANCTIFICATION.

GLOSS Progressive: sanctification grows through the believer's life, though it remains incomplete before glory.

1. As appears from the immediately preceding, sanctification is a work of which God and not man is the author. Only the advocates of the so-called free will can claim that it is a work of man. Nevertheless, it differs from regeneration in that man can, and is in duty bound to, strive for ever-increasing sanctification by using the means which God has placed at his disposal. This is clearly taught in Scripture, II Cor. 7:1; Col. 3:5-14; I Pet. 1:22. Consistent Antinomians lose sight of this important truth, and feel no need of

carefully avoiding sin, since this affects only the old man which is condemned to death, and not the new man which is holy with the holiness of Christ.

2. Sanctification takes place partly in the subconscious life, and as such is an immediate operation of the Holy Spirit; but also partly in the conscious life, and then depends on the use of certain means, such as the constant exercise of faith, the study of God's Word, prayer, and association with other believers.

3. Sanctification is usually a lengthy process and never reaches perfection in this life. At the same time there may be cases in which it is completed in a very short time or even in a moment, as, for instance, in cases in which regeneration and conversion are immediately followed by temporal death. If we may proceed on the assumption that the believer's sanctification is perfect immediately after death — and Scripture seems to teach this as far as the soul is concerned —, then in such cases the sanctification of the soul must be completed almost at once.

4. The sanctification of the believer must, it would seem, be completed either at the very moment of death, or immediately after death, as far as the soul is concerned, and at the resurrection in so far as it pertains to the body. This would seem to follow from that fact that, on the one hand, the Bible teaches that in the present life no one can claim freedom from sin, I Kings 8:46; Prov. 20:9; Rom. 3:10,12; Jas. 3:2; I John 1:8; and that, on the other hand, those who have gone before are entirely sanctified. It speaks of them as "the spirits of just men made perfect," Heb. 12:23, and as "without blemish," Rev. 14:5. Moreover, we are told that in the heavenly city of God there shall in no wise enter "anything unclean or he that maketh an abomination and a lie," Rev. 21:27; and that Christ at His coming will "fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory," Phil. 3:21.

F. THE AUTHOR AND MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION.

GLOSS Means of grace: the ordinary instruments God uses, especially His Word, Spirit, prayer, and the fellowship of the Church.

Sanctification is a work of the triune God, but is ascribed more particularly to the Holy Spirit in Scripture, Rom. 8:11; 15:16; I Pet. 1:2. It is particularly important in our day, with its emphasis on the necessity of approaching the study of theology anthropologically and its one-sided call to service in the kingdom of God, to stress the fact that God, and not man, is the author of sanctification. Especially in view of the Activism that is such a characteristic feature of American religious life, and which glorifies the work of man rather than the grace of God, it is necessary to stress the fact over and over again that sanctification is the fruit of justification, that the former is simply impossible without the latter, and that both are the fruits of the grace of God in the redemption of sinners. Though man is privileged to co-operate with the Spirit of God, he can do this only in virtue of the strength which the Spirit imparts to him from day to day. The spiritual development of man is not a human achievement, but a work of divine grace. Man deserves no credit whatsoever for that which he contributes to it instrumentally. In so far as sanctification takes place in the subconscious life, it is effected by the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit. But as a work in the conscious life of believers it is wrought by several means, which the Holy Spirit employs.

1. THE WORD OF GOD. In opposition to the Church of Rome it should be maintained that the principal means used by the Holy Spirit is the Word of God. The truth in itself certainly has no adequate efficiency to sanctify the believer, yet it is naturally adapted to be the means of sanctification as employed by the Holy Spirit. Scripture presents all the objective conditions for holy exercises and acts. It serves to excite spiritual activity by presenting

motives and inducements, and gives direction to it by prohibitions, exhortations, and examples, I Pet. 1:22; 2:2; II Pet. 1:4.

2. **THE SACRAMENTS.** These are the means par excellence according to the Church of Rome. Protestants regard them as subordinate to the Word of God, and sometimes even speak of them as the “visible Word.” They symbolize and seal to us the same truths that are verbally expressed in the Word of God, and may be regarded as an acted word, containing a lively representation of the truth, which the Holy Spirit makes the occasion for holy exercises. They are not only subordinate to the Word of God, but cannot exist without it, and are therefore always accompanied by it, Rom. 6:3; I Cor. 12:13; Tit. 3:5; I Pet. 3:21.

3. **PROVIDENTIAL GUIDANCE.** God’s providences, both favorable and adverse, are often powerful means of sanctification. In connection with the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word, they work on our natural affections and thus frequently deepen the impression of religious truth and force it home. It should be borne in mind that the light of God’s revelation is necessary for the interpretation of His providential guidances, Ps. 119:71; Rom. 2:4; Heb. 12:10.

G. RELATION OF SANCTIFICATION TO OTHER STAGES IN THE ORDO SALUTIS.

GLOSS **Ordo salutis:** the logical order in which the benefits of Christ’s redemption are applied to believers.

It is of considerable importance to have a correct conception of the relation between sanctification and some of the other stages in the work of redemption.

1. **TO REGENERATION.** There is both difference and similarity here. Regeneration is completed at once, for a man cannot be more or less

regenerated; he is either dead or alive spiritually. Sanctification is a process, bringing about gradual changes, so that different grades may be distinguished in the resulting holiness. Hence we are admonished to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, II Cor. 7:1. The Heidelberg Catechism also presupposes that there are degrees of holiness, when it says that even “the holiest men, when in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience.”[Q. 114.] At the same time regeneration is the beginning of sanctification. The work of renewal, begun in the former, is continued in the latter, Phil. 1:6. Strong says: “It (sanctification) is distinguished from regeneration as growth from birth, or as the strengthening of a holy disposition from the original impartation of it.”[Syst. Theol., p. 871.]

2. TO JUSTIFICATION. Justification precedes and is basic to sanctification in the covenant of grace. In the covenant of works the order of righteousness and holiness was just the reverse. Adam was created with a holy disposition and inclination to serve God, but on the basis of this holiness he had to work out the righteousness that would entitle him to eternal life. Justification is the judicial basis for sanctification. God has the right to demand of us holiness of life, but because we cannot work out this holiness for ourselves, He freely works it within us through the Holy Spirit on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to us in justification. The very fact that it is based on justification, in which the free grace of God stands out with the greatest prominence, excludes the idea that we can ever merit anything in sanctification. The Roman Catholic idea that justification enables man to perform meritorious works is contrary to Scripture. Justification as such does not effect a change in our inner being and therefore needs sanctification as its complement. It is not sufficient that the sinner stands righteous before God; he must also be holy in his inmost life. Barth has a rather unusual representation of the relation between justification and sanctification. In order to ward off all self-righteousness, he insists on it that the two always be considered jointly. They go together and should not be considered quantitatively, as if the one followed the other. Justification is not a station which one passes, an

accomplished fact on the basis of which one next proceeds to the highway of sanctification. It is not a completed fact to which one can look back with definite assurance, but occurs ever anew whenever man has reached the point of complete despair, and then goes hand in hand with sanctification. And just as man remains a sinner even after justification, so he also remains a sinner in sanctification, even his best deeds continue to be sins. Sanctification does not engender a holy disposition, and does not gradually purify man. It does not put him in possession of any personal holiness, does not make him a saint, but leaves him a sinner. It really becomes a declarative act like justification.

McConnachie, who is a very sympathetic interpreter of Barth, says:

“Justification and sanctification are, therefore, to Barth, two sides of one act of God upon men. Justification is the pardon of the sinner (*justificatio impii*), by which God declares the sinner righteous. Sanctification is the sanctification of the sinner (*sanctificatio impii*), by which God declares the sinner ‘holy’.”

However laudable the desire of Barth to destroy every vestige of work-righteousness, he certainly goes to an unwarranted extreme, in which he virtually confuses justification and sanctification, negatives the Christian life, and rules out the possibility of confident assurance.

3. TO FAITH. Faith is the mediate or instrumental cause of sanctification as well as of justification. It does not merit sanctification any more than it does justification, but it unites us to Christ and keeps us in touch with Him as the Head of the new humanity, who is the source of the new life within us, and also of our progressive sanctification, through the operation of the Holy Spirit. The consciousness of the fact that sanctification is based on justification, and is impossible on any other basis, and that the constant exercise of faith is necessary, in order to advance in the way of holiness, will guard us against all self-righteousness in our striving to advance in godliness and holiness of life. It deserves particular attention that, while even the weakest faith mediates a perfect justification, the degree of sanctification is commensurate with the strength of the Christian’s faith and the persistence with which he apprehends Christ.

H. THE IMPERFECT CHARACTER OF SANCTIFICATION IN THIS LIFE.

GLOSS **Indwelling sin:** the remaining corruption in believers, which continues to oppose the new life until final glorification.

1. SANCTIFICATION IMPERFECT IN DEGREE. When we speak of sanctification as being imperfect in this life, we do not mean to say that it is imperfect in parts, as if only a part of the holy man that originates in regeneration were affected. It is the whole, but yet undeveloped new man, that must grow into full stature. A new-born child is, barring exceptions, perfect in parts, but not yet in the degree of development for which it is intended. Just so the new man is perfect in parts, but remains in the present life imperfect in the degree of spiritual development. Believers must contend with sin as long as they live, I Kings 8:46; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; Jas. 3:2; I John 1:8.

2. DENIAL OF THIS IMPERFECTION BY THE PERFECTIONISTS.

a. The doctrine of perfectionism. Speaking generally, this doctrine is to the effect that religious perfection is attainable in the present life. It is taught in various forms by Pelagians, Roman Catholics or Semi-Pelagians, Arminians, Wesleyans, such mystical sects as the Labadists, the Quietists, the Quakers, and others, some of the Oberlin theologians, such as Mahan and Finney, and Ritschl. These all agree in maintaining that it is possible for believers in this life to attain to a state in which they comply with the requirements of the law under which they now live, or under that law as it was adjusted to their present ability and needs, and, consequently, to be free from sin. They differ, however: (1) In their view of sin, the Pelagians, in distinction from all the rest, denying the inherent corruption of man. They all agree, however, in externalizing sin. (2) In their conception of the law which believers are now obliged to fulfill, the Arminians, including the Wesleyans, differing from all

the rest in holding that this is not the original moral law, but the gospel requirements or the new law of faith and evangelical obedience. The Roman Catholics and the Oberlin theologians maintain that it is the original law, but admit that the demands of this law are adjusted to man's deteriorated powers and to his present ability. And Ritschl discards the whole idea that man is subject to an externally imposed law. He defends the autonomy of moral conduct, and holds that we are under no law but such as is evolved out of our own moral disposition in the course of activities for the fulfilment of our vocation. (3) In their idea of the sinner's dependence on the renewing grace of God for the ability to fulfill the law. All, except the Pelagians, admit that he is in some sense dependent on divine grace, in order to the attainment of perfection.

It is very significant that all the leading perfectionist theories (with the sole exception of the Pelagian, which denies the inherent corruption of man) deem it necessary to lower the standard of perfection and do not hold man responsible for a great deal that is undoubtedly demanded by the original moral law. And it is equally significant that they feel the necessity of externalizing the idea of sin, when they claim that only conscious wrongdoing can be so considered, and refuse to recognize as sin a great deal that is represented as such in Scripture.

b. Scriptural proofs adduced for the doctrine of perfectionism.

(1) The Bible commands believers to be holy and even to be perfect, I Pet. 1:16; Matt. 5:48; Jas. 1:4, and urges them to follow the example of Christ who did no sin, I Pet. 2:21 f. Such commands would be unreasonable, if it were not possible to reach sinless perfection. But the Scriptural demand to be holy and perfect holds for the unregenerate as well as for the regenerate, since the law of God demands holiness from the start and has never been revoked. If the command implies that they to whom it comes can live up to the requirement, this must be true of every man. However, only those who teach perfectionism

in the Pelagian sense can hold that view. The measure of our ability cannot be inferred from the Scriptural commandments.

(2) Holiness and perfection are often ascribed to believers in Scripture, Song of Sol. 4:7; I Cor. 2:6; II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 5:27; Heb. 5:14; Phil. 4:13; Col. 2:10. When the Bible speaks of believers as holy and perfect, however, this does not necessarily mean that they are without sin, since both words are often used in a different sense, not only in common parlance, but also in the Bible. Persons set aside for the special service of God are called holy in the Bible, irrespective of their moral condition and life. Believers can be and are called holy, because they are objectively holy in Christ, or because they are in principle subjectively sanctified by the Spirit of God. Paul in his Epistles invariably addresses his readers as saints, that is “holy ones,” and then proceeds in several cases to take them to task for their sins. And when believers are described as perfect, this means in some cases merely that they are full-grown, I Cor. 2:6; Heb. 5:14, and in others that they are fully equipped for their task, II Tim. 3:17. All this certainly does not give countenance to the theory of sinless perfection.

(3) There are, it is said, Biblical examples of saints who led perfect lives, such as Noah, Job, and Asa, Gen. 6:9; Job 1:1; I Kings 15:14. But, surely, such examples as these do not prove the point for the simple reason that they are no examples of sinless perfection. Even the most notable saints of the Bible are pictured as men who had their failings and who sinned, in some cases very grievously. This is true of Noah, Moses, Job, Abraham, and all the others. It is true that this does not necessarily prove that their lives remained sinful as long as they lived on earth, but it is a striking fact that we are not introduced to a single one who was without sin. The question of Solomon is still pertinent: “Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” Prov. 20:9. Moreover, John says: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,” I John 1:8.

(4) The apostle John declares explicitly that they who are born of God do not sin, I John 3:6,8,9; 5:18. But when John says that they who are born of God do not sin, he is contrasting the two states, represented by the old and the new man, as to their essential nature and principle. One of the essential characteristics of the new man is that he does not sin. In view of the fact that John invariably uses the present to express the idea that the one born of God does not sin, it is possible that he desires to express the idea that the child of God does not go on sinning habitually, as the devil does, I John 3:8.[Cf. Robertson, *The Minister and His Greek Testament*, p. 100.] He certainly does not mean to assert that the believer never commits an act of sin, cf. I John 1:8-10. Moreover, the Perfectionist cannot very well use these passages to prove his point, since they would prove too much for his purpose. He does not make bold to say that all believers are actually sinless, but only that they can reach a state of sinless perfection. The Johannine passages, however, would prove, on his interpretation, that all believers are without sin. And more than that, they would also prove that believers never fall from the state of grace (for this is sinning); and yet the Perfectionists are the very people who believe that even perfect Christians may fall away.

c. Objections to the theory of Perfectionism.

(1) In the light of Scripture the doctrine of Perfectionism is absolutely untenable. The Bible gives us the explicit and very definite assurance that there is no one on earth who does not sin, I Kings 8:46; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:10; Jas. 3:2; I John 1:8. In view of these clear statements of Scripture it is hard to see how any who claim to believe the Bible as the infallible Word of God can hold that it is possible for believers to lead sinless lives, and that some actually succeed in avoiding all sin.

(2) According to Scripture there is a constant warfare between the flesh and the Spirit in the lives of God's children, and even the best of them are still striving for perfection. Paul gives a very striking description of this struggle in Rom. 7:7-26, a passage which certainly refers to him in his regenerate state. In

Gal. 5:16-24 he speaks of that very same struggle as a struggle that characterizes all the children of God. And in Phil. 3:10-14 he speaks of himself, practically at the end of his career, as one who has not yet reached perfection, but is pressing on toward the goal.

(3) Confession of sin and prayer for forgiveness are continually required. Jesus taught all His disciples without any exception to pray for the forgiveness of sins and for deliverance from temptation and from the evil one, Matt. 6:12,13. And John says: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” I John 1:9. Moreover, Bible saints are constantly represented as confessing their sins, Job 9:3,20; Ps. 32:5; 130:3; 143:2; Prov. 20:9; Isa. 64:6; Dan. 9:16; Rom. 7:14.

(4) The Perfectionists themselves deem it necessary to lower the standard of the law and to externalize the idea of sin, in order to maintain their theory. Moreover, some of them have repeatedly modified the ideal to which, in their estimation, believers can attain. At first the ideal was “freedom from all sin”; then, “freedom from all conscious sin,” next, “entire consecration to God,” and, finally, “Christian assurance.” This is in itself a sufficient condemnation of their theory. We naturally do not deny that the Christian can attain to the assurance of faith.

I. SANCTIFICATION AND GOOD WORKS.

GLOSS **Good works:** acts flowing from true faith, done in obedience to God and for His glory, rather than to earn salvation.

Sanctification and good works are most intimately related. Just as the old life expresses itself in works of evil, so the new life, that originates in regeneration and is promoted and strengthened in sanctification, naturally

manifests itself in good works. These may be called the fruits of sanctification, and as such come into consideration here.

1. THE NATURE OF GOOD WORKS.

a. Good works in the specifically theological sense. When we speak of good works in connection with sanctification, we do not refer to works that are perfect, that answer perfectly to the requirements of the divine moral law, and that are of such inherent worth as to entitle one to the reward of eternal life under the conditions of the covenant of works. We do mean, however, works that are essentially different in moral quality from the actions of the unregenerate, and that are the expressions of a new and holy nature, as the principle from which they spring. These are works which God not only approves, but in a certain sense also rewards. The following are the characteristics of works that are spiritually good: (1) They are the fruits of a regenerate heart, since without this no one can have the disposition (to obey God) and the motive (to glorify God) that is required, Matt. 12:33; 7:17,18. (2) They are not only in external conformity with the law of God, but are also done in conscious obedience to the revealed will of God, that is, because they are required by God. They spring from the principle of love to God and from the desire to do His will, Deut. 6:2; I Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:12; 29:13; Matt. 15:9. (3) Whatever their proximate aim may be, their final aim is not the welfare of man, but the glory of God, which is the highest conceivable aim of man's life, I Cor. 10:31; Rom. 12:1; Col. 3:17,23.

b. Good works in a more general sense. Though the term "good works" is generally used in theology in the strict sense just indicated, it remains true that the unregenerate can also perform works that may be called good in a superficial sense of the word. They often perform works that are in outward conformity with the law of God and may be called objectively good, in distinction from flagrant transgressions of the law. Such works answer to a proximate aim that meets with the approval of God. Moreover, in virtue of the remains of the image of God in the natural man and of the light of nature, man

may be guided in his relation to other men by motives which are laudable and in so far bear the stamp of God's approval. Those good works, however, cannot be regarded as fruits of the corrupt heart of man. They find their explanation only in the common grace of God. Furthermore, we should bear in mind that, though these works can be called good in a certain sense and are so called in the Bible, Luke 6:33, they are yet essentially defective. The deeds of the unregenerate are divorced from the spiritual root of love to God. They represent no inner obedience to the law of God and no subjection to the will of the sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth. They have no spiritual aim, since they are not performed for the purpose of glorifying God, but only bear on the relations of the natural life. The real quality of the act is, of course, determined by the quality of its final aim. The ability of the unregenerate to perform good works in some sense of the word has often been denied. Barth goes one step further when he goes to the extreme of denying that believers can do good works, and asserts that all their works are sins.

2. THE MERITORIOUS CHARACTER OF GOOD WORKS. Even from the earliest ages of the Christian Church there was a tendency to ascribe a certain merit to good works, but the doctrine of merit was really developed in the Middle Ages. At the time of the Reformation it was very prominent in Roman Catholic theology and was pushed to ridiculous extremes in practical life. The Reformers at once joined issue with the Church of Rome on this point.

a. The position of Rome on the point in question. The Roman Catholic Church distinguishes between a *meritum de condigno*, which represents inherent dignity and worth, and a *meritum de congruo*, which is a sort of quasi-merit, something fit to be rewarded. The former attaches only to works done after regeneration by the aid of divine grace, and is a merit which intrinsically deserves the reward it receives from the hand of God. The latter attaches to those dispositions or works which a man may develop or do before regeneration, in virtue of a mere *prevenient* grace, and is a merit which makes it congruous or fitting for God to reward the agent by infusing grace into his

heart. Since the decisions of the Council of Trent are rather dubious on this point, there is some uncertainty, however, as to the exact position of the Church. The general idea seems to be that the ability to perform good works in the strict sense of the word springs from grace infused into the sinner's heart for the sake of Christ; and that afterwards these good works merit, that is, give man a just claim to, salvation and glory. The Church goes even farther than that, and teaches that believers can perform works of supererogation, can do more than is necessary for their own salvation and can thus lay by a store of good works, which may accrue to the benefit of others.

b. The Scriptural position on this point. Scripture clearly teaches that the good works of believers are not meritorious in the proper sense of the word. We should bear in mind, however, that the word "merit" is employed in a twofold sense, the one strict and proper, and the other loose. Strictly speaking, a meritorious work is one to which, on account of its intrinsic value and dignity, the reward is justly due from commutative justice. Loosely speaking, however, a work that is deserving of approval and to which a reward is somehow attached (by promise, agreement, or otherwise) is also sometimes called meritorious. Such works are praiseworthy and are rewarded by God. But, however this may be, they are surely not meritorious in the strict sense of the word. They do not, by their own intrinsic moral value, make God a debtor to him who performs them. In strict justice the good works of believers merit nothing. Some of the most conclusive passages of Scripture to prove the point under consideration are the following: Luke 17:9,10; Rom. 5:15-18; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-10; II Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:5. These passages clearly show that believers do not receive the inheritance of salvation because it is due to them in virtue of their good works, but only as a free gift of God. It stands to reason also that such works cannot be meritorious, for: (1) Believers owe their whole life to God and therefore cannot merit anything by giving God simply what is His due, Luke 17:9,10. (2) They cannot perform good works in their own strength, but only in the strength which God imparts to them from day to day; and in view of that fact they cannot expect the credit for these works, I Cor. 15:10; Phil. 2:13. (3)

Even the best works of believers remain imperfect in this life, and all good works together represent only a partial obedience, while the law demands perfect obedience and can be satisfied with nothing less, Isa. 64:6; Jas. 3:2. (4) Moreover, the good works of believers are out of all proportion to the eternal reward of glory. A temporal and imperfect obedience can never merit an eternal and perfect reward.

3. THE NECESSITY OF GOOD WORKS. There can be no doubt about the necessity of good works properly understood. They cannot be regarded as necessary to merit salvation, nor as a means to retain a hold on salvation, nor even as the only way along which to proceed to eternal glory, for children enter salvation without having done any good works. The Bible does not teach that no one can be saved apart from good works. At the same time good works necessarily follow from the union of believers with Christ. "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit," John 15:5. They are also necessary as required by God, Rom. 7:4; 8:12,13; Gal. 6:2, as the fruits of faith, Jas. 2:14,17,20-22, as expressions of gratitude, I Cor. 6:20, unto the assurance of faith, II Peter 1:5-10, and to the glory of God, John 15:8; I Cor. 10:31. The necessity of good works must be maintained over against the Antinomians, who claim that, since Christ not only bore the penalty of sin, but also met the positive demands of the law, the believer is free from the obligation to observe it, an error that is still with us to-day in some of the forms of dispensationalism. This is a thoroughly false position, for it is only the law as a system of penalty and as a method of salvation that is abolished in the death of Christ. The law as the standard of our moral life is a transcript of the holiness of God and is therefore of permanent validity also for the believer, though his attitude to the law has undergone a radical change. He has received the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of obedience, so that, without any constraint, he willingly obeys the law. Strong sums it up well, when he says: Christ frees us "(1) from the law as a system of curse and penalty; this He does by bearing the curse and penalty Himself . . . ; (2) from the law with its claims as a method of salvation; this He does by making His obedience and merits

ours . . . ; (3) from the law as an outward and foreign compulsion; this He does by giving us the spirit of obedience and sonship, by which the law is progressively realized within.”[Syst. Theol., p. 876.]

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: How was theocratic, related to ethical, holiness among Israel? How were the ritual purifications related to sanctification? Who is the subject of sanctification, the old man or the new, or neither of the two? Does sanctification in this life affect all parts of man equally? Where does the process of sanctification begin? Do all Christians experience a steady progress in sanctification? What is the difference between sanctification and moral improvement? Does the fact that sanctification is never complete in this life necessarily lead to the doctrine of purgatory, or to that of the continuation of sanctification after death? How did Wesley conceive of “entire sanctification”? Does Barth also ascribe holiness as an ethical quality to the believer? What Scripture proof is there that the Christian is not free from the law as a rule of life? Do Protestants in general teach that good works are not necessary? How do Roman Catholics and Protestants differ as to the necessity of good works? Is it wise to say without any qualification that good works are necessary unto salvation? If all Christians inherit eternal life, in what sense will their good works be the standard of their reward?

XI. Perseverance of the Saints

Perseverance is God’s continuing work in His people, preserving them in faith until the end. Believers may fall into sin, but God does not abandon the work of grace He has begun.

A. THE DOCTRINE OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS IN HISTORY.

GLOSS Perseverance: God's preserving grace by which those whom He regenerates are kept in faith unto salvation.

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is to the effect that they whom God has regenerated and effectually called to a state of grace, can neither totally nor finally fall away from that state, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved. This doctrine was first explicitly taught by Augustine, though he was not as consistent on this point as might have been expected of him as a strict predestinarian. With him the doctrine did not assume the form just stated. He held that the elect could not so fall away as to be finally lost, but at the same time considered it possible that some who were endowed with new life and true faith could fall from grace completely and at last suffer eternal damnation. The Church of Rome with its Semi-Pelagianism, including the doctrine of free will, denied the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and made their perseverance dependent on the uncertain obedience of man. The Reformers restored this doctrine to its rightful place. The Lutheran Church, however, makes it uncertain again by making it contingent on man's continued activity of faith, and by assuming that true believers can fall completely from grace. It is only in the Calvinistic Churches that the doctrine is maintained in a form in which it affords absolute assurance. The Canons of Dort, after calling attention to the many weaknesses and failures of the children of God, declare: "But God, who is rich in mercy, according to His unchangeable purpose of election, does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from His own people even in their grievous falls; nor suffers them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption and forfeit the state of justification, or to commit the sin unto death or against the Holy Spirit; nor does He permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge

themselves into everlasting destruction.”[V, Art. 6.] The Arminians rejected this view and made the perseverance of believers dependent on their will to believe and on their good works. Arminius himself avoided that extreme, but his followers did not hesitate to maintain their synergistic position with all its consequences. The Wesleyan Arminians followed suit as did several of the sects. The Reformed or Calvinistic Churches stand practically alone in giving a negative answer to the question, whether a Christian can completely fall from the state of grace and be finally lost.

B. STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF PERSEVERANCE.

GLOSS Preservation: God’s faithful continuance of His saving work; believers endure because He does not forsake them.

The doctrine of perseverance requires careful statement, especially in view of the fact that the term “perseverance of the saints” is liable to misunderstanding. It should be noted first of all that the doctrine is not merely to the effect that the elect will certainly be saved in the end, though Augustine has given it that form, but teaches very specifically that they who have once been regenerated and effectually called by God to a state of grace, can never completely fall from that state and thus fail to attain to eternal salvation, though they may sometimes be overcome by evil and fall in sin. It is maintained that the life of regeneration and the habits that develop out of it in the way of sanctification can never entirely disappear. Moreover, we should guard against the possible misunderstanding that this perseverance is regarded as an inherent property of the believer or as a continuous activity of man, by means of which he perseveres in the way of salvation. When Strong speaks of it as “the voluntary continuance, on the part of the Christian, in faith and well-doing,” and as “the human side or aspect of that spiritual process which, as

viewed from the divine side, we call sanctification,” — this is certainly liable to create the impression that perseverance depends on man. The Reformed, however, do not consider the perseverance of the saints as being, first of all, a disposition or activity of the believer, though they certainly believe that man co-operates in it just as he does in sanctification. They even stress the fact that the believer would fall away, if he were left to himself. It is, strictly speaking, not man but God who perseveres. Perseverance may be defined as that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which the work of divine grace that is begun in the heart, is continued and brought to completion. It is because God never forsakes His work that believers continue to stand to the very end.

C. PROOF FOR THE DOCTRINE OF PERSEVERANCE.

GLOSS **Effectual calling:** God’s powerful call that brings His people to faith and secures their salvation in Christ.

The doctrine of perseverance may be proved by certain statements of Scripture and by inference from other doctrines.

1. **DIRECT STATEMENTS OF SCRIPTURE.** There are some important passages of Scripture that come into consideration here. In John 10:27-29 we read: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out my hand. My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.” Paul says in Rom. 11:29: “For the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of.” This means that the grace of God revealed in His calling is never withdrawn, as though He repented of it. This is a general statement, though in the connection in which it is found it refers to the calling of Israel. The apostle comforts the believing Philippians with the words: “Being confident of this very thing, that

He who began a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ,” Phil. 1:6. In II Thess. 3:3 he says: “But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and guard you from the evil one.” In II Tim. 1:12 he sounds a note of rejoicing: “For I know Him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” And in 4:18 of the same Epistle he glories in the fact that the Lord will deliver him from every evil work and will save him unto His heavenly kingdom.

2. INFERENTIAL PROOFS. The doctrine of perseverance may also be proved in an inferential way.

a. From the doctrine of election. Election does not merely mean that some will be favored with certain external privileges and may be saved, if they do their duty, but that they who belong to the number of the elect shall finally be saved and can never fall short of perfect salvation. It is an election unto an end, that is, unto salvation. In working it out God endows believers with such influences of the Holy Spirit as to lead them, not only to accept Christ, but to persevere unto the end and to be saved unto the uttermost.

b. From the doctrine of the covenant of redemption. In the covenant of redemption God gave His people to His Son as the reward for the latter’s obedience and suffering. This reward was fixed from eternity and was not left contingent on any uncertain faithfulness of man. God does not go back on His promise, and therefore it is impossible that they who are reckoned as being in Christ, and as forming a part of His reward, can be separated from Him (Rom. 8:38,39), and that they who have entered the covenant as a communion of life should fall out.

c. From the efficacy of the merits and intercession of Christ. In His atoning work Christ paid the price to purchase the sinner’s pardon and acceptance. His righteousness constitutes the perfect ground for the justification of the sinner, and it is impossible that one who is justified by the payment of such a perfect and efficacious price should again fall under condemnation. Moreover, Christ

makes constant intercession for those who are given Him of the Father, and His intercessory prayer for His people is always efficacious, John 11:42; Heb. 7:25.

d. From the mystical union with Christ. They who are united to Christ by faith become partakers of His Spirit, and thus become one body with Him, pulsating with the life of the Spirit. They share in the life of Christ, and because He lives they live also. It is impossible that they should again be removed from the body, thus frustrating the divine ideal. The union is permanent, since it originates in a permanent and unchangeable cause, the free and eternal love of God.

e. From the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Dabney correctly says: “It is a low and unworthy estimate of the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and of His work in the heart, to suppose that He will begin the work now, and presently desert it; that the vital spark of heavenly birth is an ignis fatuus, burning for a short season, and then expiring in utter darkness; that the spiritual life communicated in the new birth, is a sort of spasmodic or galvanic vitality, giving the outward appearance of life in the dead soul, and then dying.” [Syst. and Polem. Theol., p. 692.] According to Scripture the believer is already in this life in possession of salvation and eternal life, John 3:36; 5:24; 6:54. Can we proceed on the assumption that eternal life will not be everlasting?

f. From the assurance of salvation. It is quite evident from Scripture that believers can in this life attain to the assurance of salvation, Heb. 3:14; 6:11; 10:22; II Pet. 1:10. This would seem to be entirely out of the question, if it were possible for believers to fall from grace at any moment. It can be enjoyed only by those who stand in the firm conviction that God will perfect the work which He has begun.

D. OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF PERSEVERANCE.

GLOSS Human freedom: the believer's real, willing response to God's grace; it is not independence from God's preserving work.

1. IT IS INCONSISTENT WITH HUMAN FREEDOM. It is said that the doctrine of perseverance is inconsistent with human freedom. But this objection proceeds on the false assumption that real freedom consists in the liberty of indifference, or the power of contrary choice in moral and spiritual matters. This is erroneous, however. True liberty consists exactly in self-determination in the direction of holiness. Man is never more free than when he moves consciously in the direction of God. And the Christian stands in that liberty through the grace of God.

2. IT LEADS TO INDOLENCE AND IMMORALITY. It is confidently asserted that the doctrine of perseverance leads to indolence, license, and even immorality. A false security is said to result from it. This is a mistaken notion, however, for, although the Bible tells us that we are kept by the grace of God, it does not encourage the idea that God keeps us without constant watchfulness, diligence, and prayer on our part. It is hard to see how a doctrine which assures the believer of a perseverance in holiness can be an incentive for sin. It would seem that the certainty of success in the active striving for sanctification would be the best possible stimulus to ever greater exertion.

3. IT IS CONTRARY TO SCRIPTURE. The doctrine is frequently declared to be contrary to Scripture. The passages adduced to prove this contention can be reduced to three classes.

a. There are warnings against apostasy which would seem to be quite uncalled for, if the believer could not fall away, Matt. 24:12; Col. 1:23; Heb. 2:1;

3:14; 6:11; I John 2:6. But these warnings regard the whole matter from the side of man and are seriously meant. They prompt self-examination, and are instrumental in keeping believers in the way of perseverance. They do not prove that any of those addressed will apostatize, but simply that the use of means is necessary to prevent them from committing this sin. Compare Acts 27:22-25 with verse 31 for an illustration of this principle.

b. There are also exhortations, urging believers to continue in the way of sanctification, which would appear to be unnecessary if there is no doubt about it that they will continue to the end. But these are usually found in connection with such warnings as those referred to under (a), and serve exactly the same purpose. They do not prove that any of the believers exhorted will not persevere, but only that God uses moral means for the accomplishment of moral ends.

c. Again, it is said that Scripture records several cases of actual apostasy, I Tim. 1:19,20; II Tim. 2:17,18; 4:10; II Peter 2:1,2; cf. also Heb. 6:4-6. But these instances do not prove the contention that real believers, in possession of true saving faith, can fall from grace, unless it be shown first that the persons indicated in these passages had true faith in Christ, and not a mere temporal faith, which is not rooted in regeneration. The Bible teaches us that there are persons who profess the true faith, and yet are not of the faith, Rom. 9-6; I John 2:19; Rev. 3:1. John says of some of them, "They went out from us," and adds by way of explanation, "but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us," I John 2:19.

E. THE DENIAL OF THIS DOCTRINE MAKES SALVATION DEPENDENT ON MAN'S WILL.

GLOSS Assurance: settled confidence in God's saving promise and His continuing faithfulness to His people.

The denial of the doctrine of perseverance virtually makes the salvation of man dependent on the human will rather than on the grace of God. This consideration will, of course, have no effect on those who share the Pelagian conception of salvation as autosoteric — and their numbers are great — but certainly ought to cause those to pause who glory in being saved by grace. The idea is that, after man is brought to a state of grace by the operation of the Holy Spirit alone, or by the joint operation of the Holy Spirit and the will of man, it rests solely with man to continue in faith or to forsake the faith, just as he sees fit. This renders the cause of man very precarious and makes it impossible for him to attain to the blessed assurance of faith. Consequently, it is of the utmost importance to maintain the doctrine of perseverance. In the words of Hovey, “It may be a source of great comfort and power, — an incentive to gratitude, a motive to self-sacrifice, and a pillar of fire in the hour of danger.”

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: What is the real question concerning perseverance: is it whether the elect, or whether the regenerate persevere? Do Augustine and the Lutherans also teach that the elect may finally be lost? How does the analogy of the natural life favor the doctrine of perseverance? Do not such passages as Heb. 6:4-6; 10:29; II Pet. 2:1 prove the possibility of falling away? How about John 15:1-6? Is the grace of perseverance something innate, necessarily given with the new nature, or is it the fruit of a special, gracious, and preserving activity of God? Does the doctrine imply that one may be living in habitual and intentional sin, and yet be in a justified state? Does it preclude the idea of lapses into sin?