

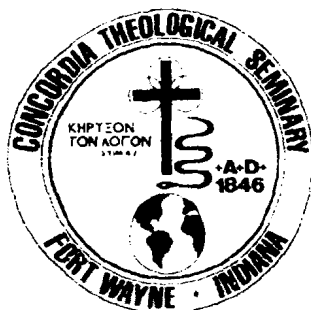
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Justification as a Doctrine of the Old Testament: A Comparative Study in Confessional and Biblical Theology

Raymond F. Surburg

Biblical theology as a separate discipline of theological studies has been dated back by some to 1787 when J.P. Gabler in an inaugural university address made the distinction between biblical and dogmatic theology.¹ In his address Gabler insisted that biblical theology should confine itself to a description of the religion of the Bible and refrain from passing any normative judgments which would involve trespassing into the domain of dogmatic theology. According to this position, Old Testament theology was to limit itself to the evidence of the Old Testament itself and the teachings of the Old Testament were not to be criticized on the basis of the New Testament or any relationship established between the two testaments.

Porteous claimed that:

Gabler's distinction was a useful one, since it did much to break the stranglehold of dogmatic theology upon the study of the O.T. and so left scholars free to look at it without preconceived ideas as to what they should find. The result was an increase of interest in O.T. and religion and a growing appreciation of the extraordinary variety of points of view to be found in the O.T.²

However, as time passed scholars who were engaged in writing Old Testament theologies became more and more interested in history and development, and this interest was pursued with pre-suppositions based on the historical-critical method. The views of Wellhausen and later of Gunkel dominated the interpretation of the Old Testament, and this in turn determined how Old Testament theologies were written.³

Dentan has given a good history of the variegated history through which Old Testament theology has passed in the last two hundred and some years.⁴ As time went on scholars became less and less interested in the theological contents of the Old Testament and instead centered on religious experience and religious psychology. Concurrent with this interest in religious

experience was the intensive study of the literature of the Old Testament, which occupied itself with the finding of sources carved out of the Biblical text itself, and relating these to each other. A great deal of effort was devoted to showing the composite character of Old Testament books. This interest, in turn, was followed after 1900 with a form-critical study of various types of literary genre and the life-situations which were held to determine their character.

Hasel recently claimed that the field of Old Testament theology has reached a point where there is little agreement on anything.⁵ By the year 1922 Old Testament theology was theologically bankrupt. Then during the 1930's the "biblical theology" movement sprang up, which influenced the presentations of the authors who wrote biblical theologies for both the Old and New Testaments. There came a new emphasis upon the Bible as a source for the contents of biblical theology. This was a tremendous improvement over the period of historicism, which dominated from 1870 to 1930.⁶

An examination of the Old Testament theologies written by Eichrodt, Knight, von Rad, Koehler, Jacobs, Vriezen, and others will reveal that the teaching of justification by faith apart from works played no part at all in their organization and understanding of the Old Testament. Connected with this omission was also the place assigned to the teachings about the Messiah in Old Testament books. The only work from this period which was an exception was the uncompleted work of Vischer, *Das Christuszeugnis des Alten Testament*, which was severely criticized by scholars committed to the historical-critical method.⁷

One of the results of the application of historical criticism to Old Testament biblical theology was the discrediting of systematic or dogmatic theology.⁸ Since the days of the Enlightenment the gap has widened between biblical and systematic or confessional theology. Biblical theologians were deemed to follow a strictly scientific and uncommitted line of thought, while systematic theologians were considered to be spinning an unscientific approach out of their heads. Confessional theology is constructed along the same lines as dogmatic.⁹

Justification by Faith: An Old Testament Doctrine

Justification by faith is not only a New Testament doctrine, but one also taught by the Old Testament. When Melancthon quoted passages from the Old Testament, he was following St.

Paul and other New Testament writers, who claimed that the Gospel was known during Old Testament times. Paul asserted that Abraham and David were justified by faith which was imputed to them. Faulkner, in his discussion of justification in the New Testament wrote: "All the N.T. writers built on the O.T. That there should be a cleft or contradiction between the O.T. and what we call the N.T. would have been to them inconceivable. But they realized that there was the early dawn, while they lived in the light of the day."¹⁰

Since both the Lutheran Confessions and the New Testament find the Gospel — Christ as Redeemer and Savior and justification by faith without the works of the law — in the Old Testament, how does it come about that most modern Old Testament theologies find neither Christ nor justification by faith in the Old Testament? The answer to this query is that, as a result of the adoption of the historical-critical method (with its various components, such as a radical kind of literary criticism, form criticism, content criticism, and tradition and redaction criticisms), writers of biblical theologies have repudiated the hermeneutics utilized by Luther and the Reformers as reflected in the Lutheran Confessions.¹¹ Consequently a new view of the central teaching of the Old Testament has been proposed which is radically different from the scriptural understanding arrived at by the hermeneutics in vogue among Protestants before the Age of Rationalism (the so-called Enlightenment).

Bultmann once asked the question: Can one approach biblical interpretation without presuppositions? Honest scholars have answered in the negative. A Bible-believer, who is conformed to the mind of Christ, will come to the interpretation of God's word, the Bible, with certain confessed principles. These are as follows: (1) The unity of the canonical Scriptures (which do not include the Apocrypha). As Ramm stated in the first edition of his *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, "The Bible is the Word of God and therefore it must contain only one system of theology."¹² (2) The transcendence of Holy Writ. Berkhof has called attention to this principle when he wrote: "Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the prophets occasionally transcended their historical and dispensational limitations and spoke in forms that pointed to . . . the future."¹³ Peter would seem to support this position in 1 Peter 1: 10-12. (3) The analogy of Scripture. This analogy is a principle which Jesus, Paul, Peter, John, James, and the author of Hebrews utilized. To reject these basic hermeneutical principles is to disagree with Christ, the Son of God, and His inspired apostles.¹⁴

There should not be any real conflict between biblical theology and systematic or dogmatic theology, of which confessional theology is a branch. A sound confessional theology which is true to the teachings of the entire Scriptures will have no problem in finding justification by faith without the works of the law in the Old Testament. The literature of Lutheranism that deals with the doctrine of justification by faith usually limits itself to the New Testament. The passages usually cited are mostly from the writings of St. Paul. The New Testament, of course, is the place where the doctrine of justification shines forth in its brightest light. Most presentations do not discuss the doctrine as found in the Old Testament except to refer to the passages which Paul used from the Old Testament. The Lutheran Confessions in their discussion of justification refer to verses from Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk.¹⁵ In the vast literature dealing with justification the monographs dealing with the Old Testament doctrine of justification are not numerous. Many doctrinal books briefly refer to the fact that the doctrine is found in the Old Testament but dismiss their treatment of it with a sentence or two. Some discussions of justification do not even acknowledge that the doctrine was revealed to the saints who lived prior to Christ's incarnation, vicarious death, and resurrection.

However, there is acknowledgement by both Lutherans and Reformed (Calvinists and Arminians) that justification is taught by the Old Testament writers.¹⁶ Thus R. F. Weidner wrote: "The Old Testament presents in its facts the New Testament doctrine of justification. From the beginning of the history of man, faith in God's promise was the condition of acceptance with God and the bond of man's entire fellowship with God (Abel, Enoch and Abraham, Heb. 11)."¹⁷ Joseph Stump devoted one page out of thirteen to justification in the Old Testament.¹⁸ Franz Pieper asserted in his *Christian Dogmatics*: "In the Old Testament all prophets taught the article of justification by faith, and all children of God believed in it."¹⁹ J. T. Mueller in his discussion of "The Doctrine of Justification the Central Doctrine of the Christian Religion" asserted: "All its teachings [i.e., of the Bible] either point forward to it (*articuli antecedentes*), Luke 24: 25-27, or back to it (*articuli consequentes*), Rev. 5: 9-14. It is the paramount theme of the Old Testament, Is. 53: 4-6, and of the New Testament, 2 Cor. 5: 19-21."²⁰ Those who believe that the Old Testament did teach justification by faith give as proof Peter's statement in the house of Cornelius: "To him give all the prophets witness that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall

receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:32). Paul also in explaining and proving the doctrine of justification to the people in Rome and to the congregations in the Roman province of Galatia advanced arguments and proofs from Genesis 15:6 and Psalm 32. According to Melanchthon the Old Testament also knows of no other way of salvation, of being justified before God, than through faith in the atoning death of Christ. Melanchthon's definition of the Gospel in the Old Testament as the promise of justification for the sake of the coming Messiah makes this very clear (Ap. IV, 5). Further on in the Apology the same reformer wrote (Ap. XII, 53):

As repeated continually throughout Scripture; first it was given to Adam, later to the patriarchs, then illumined by the prophets, and finally proclaimed and revealed by Christ among the Jews and spread by the apostles throughout the world.

Again in the Apology Melanchthon asserted that there has been only one way for man to be justified before God (Ap. XXIV, 55):

In the Old Testament as in the New, the saints had to be justified by faith in the promises of the forgiveness of sins given for Christ's sake. Since the beginning of the world, all the saints have had to believe that Christ would be an offering and the satisfaction for sin, as Is. 53: 10 teaches, "When He makes Himself an offering for sin.

In a number of passages in the Apology Melanchthon used Acts 10: 43: "To Him all the prophets bear witness," because it is the New Testament's witness to the Christological content of the Old Testament (cf. Ap. IV, 83, 273; Apol. XII, 65-71; Apol. XX, 2).

The Doctrine of Justification as Found in the Old Testament Itself

If by justification we mean "man's acceptance with God, or being regarded and treated as righteous in His sight — as the object of His favour, and not of His wrath, and not of His curse,"²¹ then this truth is exhibited in the Old Testament. It is a truth, to be sure, more clearly and fully revealed in the New Testament. In this sense one might agree with Lewis Chafer when he wrote "that the doctrine of justification is anticipated in the Old Testament, but more fully revealed in the New Testament,"²² or agree with Leon Morris' assertion that "first of all we must notice that there is no formal statement of the doctrine in the Old Testament, and if we look for a complete enunciation of this truth we shall be disappointed But the essence of the doctrine is

there nevertheless."²³ The Biblical doctrine of justification is taught both indirectly and directly. If the doctrine of justification were not the heart and center of the Old Testament, the implication would have to be that there is a different plan of salvation in the Old Testament than in the New. The New Testament doctrine of salvation is impossible apart from the vicarious suffering of Christ (2 Cor. 5: 18-21).

If Christ and His atoning death are not revealed or predicted in the Old Testament, then the doctrine of justification by faith cannot be the central teaching of the Old Testament. Franz Delitzsch would be an example of a scholar who did not find the Messiah the center of the Old Testament. Thus he wrote:

In order to estimate this, we must free ourselves from the prejudice that the center of the Old Testament proclamation lies in the prophecy of the Messiah. Is the Messiah, then, anywhere set forth as the Redeemer of the world? The Redeemer of the world is Yahweh; the Parousia of Yahweh is the center of the Old Testament proclamation of salvation.²⁴

The church historian Karl Holl has asserted that Luther read the Pauline Gospel into the Psalms and that the Reformer did violence to the Old Testament by reading his Christological views into the Old Testament, whose center Holl claimed was the preaching of righteousness.²⁵ Holl, therefore, cannot find justification in the Old Testament. Delitzsch and Holl are just two of a host of Biblical scholars who cannot find Christ in the Old Testament or reinterpret the significant Old Testament Messianic passages so as to remove the Messianic hope from much of Old Testament revelation.²⁶ Those who deny Christ in the Old Testament and with it the doctrine of justification are contradicting the New Testament; they contravene Christ, Paul, Peter, John, Stephen and the writer of Hebrews. Many scholars who have adopted the historical-critical method charge those who find Christ predicted in the Old Testament with lacking a historical understanding of Old Testament revelation and with exegetical obtuseness.

Christology as the Foundation of Justification

Kinder has correctly emphasized the importance of Christology for justification. Thus he wrote to show how Article IV of the Augsburg Confession was dependent on Article III: "It is for today's Lutheran theology important to make clear again, how the Lutheran doctrine of justification can only be properly understood from Christology."²⁷ The doctrine of justification of

sinners had its origin immediately after the fall of Eve and Adam. By heeding Satan and disobeying God's will, they became subject to death in all of its forms; spiritual, temporal and eternal. By one act of disobedience they forfeited God's divine favor and incurred God's wrath. The relationship between Eve and Adam and God was changed. Not only were mankind's first parents ashamed but they were afraid of God. They dreaded the penalty because it would be a manifestation of God's displeasure and God's wrath.

When Adam and Eve were summoned before God as Judge, they expected to hear that the justice and holiness of God would require their Creator to pronounce condemnation. But in Eden God, while He pronounced a curse on the Serpent and his seed, showed His great mercy and grace by announcing the ultimate deliverance of mankind in Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her Seed. He will crush your head and you shall bruise His heel." Critical scholarship interprets "the seed of the woman" as referring simply to Eve's descendants, thus translating the Hebrew word *zarah* (which can be either a singular, Gen. 4:25, or a collective) as a plural.²⁸

Genesis 3:15, "the Protevangelium," was the hope of cursed mankind, which was to be redeemed from the curse of the law and restored to the favor of God.²⁹ Westermann's objection that Genesis 3:15 cannot announce the Gospel because it appears in a series of curses, simply reflects the bias of an anti-Scriptural form-criticism; one of its major accomplishments has been to discredit Holy Writ.³⁰ No, Genesis 3:15 was an announcement of God's mercy and, while it was made in general terms and later Messianic prophecies would give more and more specific information on many points, "yet it contained enough to lay a solid foundation for faith and hope towards God, and it was the first beam of Gospel light which dawned on a fallen world."³¹ A reading of Luther reveals that the reformer would not grant any difference whatever between Adam and Eve's faith and that of New Testament Christians with regard to the way of salvation. Walther, Pieper, and others followed Luther's interpretation of the Protogospel. C.F.W. Walther wrote: "This Protevangelium, this First Gospel in Genesis, was the fountain from which the believers of the Old Testament drew their comfort. It was important for them to know: "there is one coming who will not only tell us what we must do to get to heaven. No, the Messiah will do all Himself to bring us there."³² Quenstedt took the same position as Luther, as may be seen from the following quotation:

Substantially the same Gospel which today is preached in the whole world stood in full vigor and freshness and was promulgated also in the Old Testament, and indeed from the earliest times of the fallen human family, through which the grace of God, the remission of sins, and one and the same salvation in Christ, the Redeemer of the world, was announced and offered to all; and all in the Old Testament, as many as were justified and saved, were justified and saved by faith in the merit of Christ, which benefited before it existed [*quod profuit, antiquam fuit*].³³

That the Gospel was made know to man's first parents, that Law and Gospel began in the garden of Eden and that the patriarchs comforted themselves by the promise given Eve, Article V of the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord declares.³⁴ Luther expressed the view that Eve understood the nature of the protoevangelium, because when she gave birth to Cain, she exclaimed: "I have begotten a man, the LORD," and thus she expressed her faith that the Redeemer was to be not only man but God also.³⁵

The object of faith in the earliest times of the human race was the same as now, namely, God in His revealed character "as just and the justifier of him that believeth," with this difference, that the Savior was then promised as coming but since the incarnation as having come. In Hebrews 1-10 the superiority of Christ is emphasized. Faith in Christ is absolutely necessary for salvation. Old Testament worthies are then mentioned in chapter 11 who had true saving faith. Abel is cited first by the writer of Hebrews. "By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice," and through it he was attested as being righteous. Kretzmann contends that Abel's sacrifice was accepted by God, not because of the material of his sacrifice, but because he had faith, because he believed in the coming of the Messiah. It was on account of this faith, also, that God testified of him that he was righteous (Gen. 4:3-5; Matt. 23:35).³⁶ Some have held that Abel's offering of an animal, which was killed and thus was a type of the sacrifice of Christ, is what made Abel's sacrifice acceptable.³⁷ Neither the Old or New Testament gives direct support to this interpretation.

Enoch by faith was translated to heaven so that he did not see death, and he was not found because God took him. But before his translation, Enoch was given the testimony that he was well-pleasing to God. Very little is said about Enoch in Holy Writ (cf. Gen. 5:22-24; Jude 14-15). Since the earliest days the descendants of Adam trusted in the promise given Eve in Genesis 3:15. They trusted in the mercy of the coming Messiah, and Adam and Eve

taught the promise to their offspring. Thus Enoch had learned the true way of salvation, had come to a faith which was accepted by God, and Enoch was considered righteous.

Noah is the third antediluvian mentioned in Hebrews 11 as having been justified by faith. Of Noah it is reported that he found grace in the eyes of the Lord, that he was a preacher of righteousness, and that he became an heir of righteousness (Gen. 6:8,9; 2 Peter 2:5; Heb. 11:7).

In the Patriarchal Age Scripture cites the case of Abraham. Abraham is specifically referred to by Paul in Romans and Galatians as a patriarch who believed what God had promised him, especially the promise that through him the nations of the earth were to be blessed. Relative to Genesis 12:3, critical scholarship has removed the specific Messianic promise by translating the verse, "In thee all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves," rendering the niph'al (*nibreku*), normally the passive in Hebrew, as a reflexive.³⁸ It is significant to note that the Septuagint, the Peshitta, and the Vulgate render the Hebrew *nibreku* as a passive ("be blessed"). In Galatians 3:16 Paul states categorically that the word "seed" (in Hebrew *zarah*) is not used in its collective sense but refers to one individual, namely, Christ. Jesus said of Abraham: "He rejoiced to see My day and he saw it" (John 8:56). Thus Abraham knew about Christ, and because of his faith in Christ, God declared him righteous. His faith, says Moses in Genesis 15:6, "was accounted to him for righteousness." From what the Scripture in Genesis, Galatians, and Hebrews teaches about Abraham, a number of important truths about the doctrine of justification may be asserted: (1) Abraham and each Old Testament saint who had the same faith had something placed to his account which he did not possess before, namely, the righteousness needed to be accepted before God and not condemned eternally. (2) The imputing of the righteousness (*tsedekah*) that Abraham needed was credited to him long before he was circumcized or the Jewish law was given at Mt. Sinai. (3) Abraham was justified through faith, because justification was bestowed upon him through a simple trust in God's promise of the Messiah through whom the nations were to be blessed. (4) Abraham's faith in Yahweh's promise moved the patriarch to leave Ur of the Chaldees and head for a land God would show him.³⁹ Abraham's son Isaac and the latter's son Jacob were given the same promises that were given the "Father of the Hebrews." Jacob gave evidence of his faith in his blessing to Judah in Genesis 49:8-12, where Shiloh is spoken of as the Ruler to whom the nations would render obedience.

After the patriarchal period the next era in the history of the doctrine of justification in the Old Testament was the period that began with Moses and continued until the death and resurrection of Christ. With Moses a new economy began, which was characterized by two facts: First, the Mosaic economy consisted of a system of religion and government, designed especially for the Hebrews till the coming of Christ. Secondly, God intended the ceremonial and political laws as a preparation of a better economy, which began with God the Father sending His Son Jesus in the fullness of time. During the economy given by Moses the descendants of Abraham were placed under tutors and governors until the time appointed by God. The Law was a schoolmaster to bring the people of the Old Testament era to Christ, that they might be justified by faith. The Law was added to the Promise, which was given at least four hundred years before the Law.

The moral law, promulgated amid the thunderings of Sinai, impressed the Hebrews with a sense of Yahweh's holiness and justice. There was no hope for any Jew to be just before God, for the Law thundered: "Cursed is every person who does not continue to do all things written in the Law." The Law was given to be obeyed and when failure to keep its requirements occurred, the Law could only accuse. The Law can only bring about the conviction of sin. That the Law could not justify Paul proclaimed to the Jews in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:39).

However, Yahweh at the same time as He gave many new laws made provision for the forgiveness of sins by the institution of the sacrificial system, according to which innocent animals had to give their lives for sins of omission as well as commission. Without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sins for the Hebrews. The yearly passover lamb symbolically pointed forward to the Lamb of God (1 Cor. 5:6) "slain from before the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). The ceremonial law thus became a schoolmaster (*paidagogos*) to bring the Old Testament people to Christ. The sin offerings, trespass offerings, and burnt offerings were of a propitiatory character. The offering of these was no longer necessary when Christ fulfilled the Law and suffered the punishment people before and after Calvary had deserved. The offerings of the Old Testament brought daily were types of the great sacrifice of Christ, a sacrifice by which He has forever sanctified those who are sanctified. But though the sin offerings of the Old Testament only typified the sacrifice of Christ, they thereby actually pointed to the objective expiation of

sins to be wrought by Christ. These Old Testament sacrifices were “prophetic acts” which foretold the reconciliation of the world to be effected by Christ.⁴⁰ Quenstedt has pointed out a double usage of the Old Testament sacrifices. They had an *usus legalis*, reminding the people of their sin, and an *usus evangelicus*, prefiguring the sacrifice of Christ.⁴¹

In addition to Abraham, Paul also gave the example of David as an outstanding case of a person who was justified by faith. Paul appealed to the penitential Psalm 32, and used its opening verses to show that Israel’s greatest king was justified because Yahweh forgave David his great sins of adultery and murder. When Nathan by telling a parable convinced David of his terrible sins and David sincerely repented and threw himself upon God’s mercy, God forgave him his sins. Having confessed his iniquities and having received forgiveness, David could exclaim: “Oh, the blessings of the man to whom the Lord does not impute his sins, whose sins are forgiven.” Here David speaks of non-imputation of sin as a parallel to the forgiveness of sins.

The teachings of Psalm 32:1-2 agree entirely with Genesis 15:6. The felicitations of that man who does not trust in his own efforts to fulfill the demands of the Law, but relies upon the imputation of God’s righteousness are described in Psalm 32. In this Davidic psalm the righteousness of God is represented as the object of God’s imputation, which is identical with the imputation by faith of righteousness. David brings out clearly and effectively the thought that all merit is absent as a cause of God forgiving his sins. So it may be asserted that, just as at the beginning of Hebrew history one way of salvation is taught, so during the golden age of the Hebrew nation the same way of salvation was explicated which is not proclaimed through the Gospel. The essential features of the doctrine of justification are found in embryo in various psalm verses, especially the seven penitential psalms, in selected passages in Isaiah, and in numerous Messianic promises which helped to make clearer and clearer, as time passed on, the nature of the sacrifice which the innocent Lamb of God, the Messiah, would offer for the sins of mankind.

The Doctrine of Justification in Isaiah

In Isaiah 1:16 Yahweh called upon the gross sinners of Judah and Jerusalem: “Wash yourselves! Purify yourselves. Remove the wickedness of your doings from before mine eyes.” In the Law God taught: “Cursed is everyone who does not do all the things contained in the law.” “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Despite

serious violations of the law, Yahweh made this gracious statement: "Oh come, let us reason with one another, says the LORD. Though your sins have become scarlet cloth, they will turn white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they will become white as wool" (Is. 1:18, Beck). Such was the remarkable announcement of God to His people; though they are laden with guilt and therefore subject to punishment, He is willing to forgive them and impute to them a righteousness not their own.⁴² While the word "justify" does not occur in this passage, the concept of justification is there; for Yahweh declares the guilty innocent, clean, holy, and righteous in His sight. Paul in Romans 4:5 reflects the theological view of Isaiah. The Old Testament believers were declared righteous and their sins forgiven by virtue of what the Lamb of God was to achieve for them and all mankind. The forgiveness of sins results in salvation when people repent of their sins and put their faith in what Christ suffered for them and accomplished on their behalf. Isaiah 1:16-22 is used in the Apology to stress the necessity that the repentance produced by the preaching of the Law be followed by faith in the Messiah (144; 258).

Isaiah, who is sometimes called the Evangelist of the Old Testament and whose book is sometimes called the Fifth Gospel, contributed many important prophecies to the collection which in the course of time gave a detailed description of the person and activities of God's Messiah. Isaiah 52:13-53:12 contains the remarkable "Fourth Servant Song." While it is true that God chose Israel as "His servant" to carry out a great mission on His behalf, namely, as a light in the darkness of the polytheistic and idolatrous Near Eastern world, Israel failed in its mission. However, it was foretold in four different passages that another Servant of God, a person, the Messiah would carry out Yahweh's purposes for mankind. In the four Servant Songs the Messiah's work as prophet and priest is depicted. The fourth song especially contains a description of the substitutionary work of the Messiah. Verse 12 of Isaiah 53 is one of the clearest Old Testament texts with regard to justification by faith. The rendering of the Revised Standard Version is significant: "He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities." The substitutionary death of Christ is stressed in a number of verses of Isaiah 53.⁴³ It is difficult to see how these words could apply to any other person, whether the Jewish people or any Old Testament worthy, except Christ,

the God-man, Immanuel. The New Testament clearly identifies the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 with Jesus of Nazareth. Melancthon wrote in the Apology: "There is no need for proofs to anyone who knows that Christ was given to us to be a propitiation for our sins. Isaiah expressed (53:6), 'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all' " (Apol XX: 5). Isaiah 53 says of all men, Jew and Gentile: "We have all gone stray like lost sheep." Because of this straying from God's required path as set forth in the law, Yahweh placed on the Messiah the iniquities of all men. By the Suffering Servant's substitutionary suffering and death, the ungodly are declared righteous. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to all sinners. This imputation is known as objective or general or world justification.

The Apology in the article on the mass speaks of the propitiatory sacrificial death of Christ, of which there has been only one (Article XXIV). Quoting Hebrews 10:10, "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," Melancthon then wrote: "Isaiah interprets the law to mean that the death of Christ is a real satisfaction for our sins, as the ceremonies of the law were not; therefore he says (53:10), "When he makes himself an offering for sins, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days" (XXIV, 23). The word used here (*asam*) means a victim sacrificed for transgression. In the Old Testament this meant that a victim was to be offered to reconcile God and make satisfaction for our sins, so that men might know that God does not want our own righteousness but the merits of another (namely, of Christ) to reconcile him to us." A little further on Melancthon states: "Isaiah and Paul mean that Christ became a sacrificial victim or trespass offering to reconcile God by his merits instead of ours" (XXIV, 23).

Justification by Faith in Jeremiah

A hundred year's after Isaiah's time lived the prophet Jeremiah. One of the more remarkable Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament is Jeremiah 23:5-6, where the Messiah is described as a "righteous King." Jeremiah predicted: "Behold, the days are coming, saith the Lord, that I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and he shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved and Israel dwell safely. And this is His name whereby He shall be called, "The Lord is Our Righteousness." Jeremiah here has the spiritual Israel in view. The Messiah, also called the Branch in other prophetic passages (Is. 4:2; 11:1; Zech. 3:8; 6:12), is the

Messiah who would exercise a rule that would be characterized by spiritual justice; and He would exercise righteousness according to unquestionable standards, although this might appear unusual in the eyes of men.

The Messiah, as announced to Judah by Jeremiah, would bring salvation to Judah and permit Israel to dwell securely — both Judah and Israel referring to the true people of God. It is no wonder that this righteous Ruler would be called “Yahweh Is Our Righteousness.” He is so named because, through His atonement, His righteousness is bestowed on all true believers.⁴⁴ The righteous King of this prophecy will execute judgment and justice. The verb “execute” in connection with “judgment” occurs seven times in Jeremiah (5:1; 7:5; 9:24; 22:3, 15; 33:15); in every one of these verses the word “established” might be substituted in the opinion of Laetsch.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Laetsch argued, the prophet does not merely repeat what he had said before, that the King is to be a righteous ruler personally in His actions, but rather a new thought is added. As King, the Messiah will make, create, and establish a new norm, a new righteousness, because of which He is called “Our Righteousness.”⁴⁶ This righteousness is not to be identified with the righteousness of the law, which asserts: “Do this, and you shall live. Fail to do it, and you shall die!” It is the righteousness which the Messiah earned by his vicarious suffering and death, as described in Isaiah 53:11. By fulfilling the demands of the mandatory and punitive justice of God, the Messiah became our righteousness.⁴⁷

Since God calls the righteous Branch “Yahweh Is Our Righteousness,” it is a righteousness procured for all times by the Righteous Branch. According to Hebrew 9:15, the one sacrifice of Christ has sanctified all who are to be saved. Hebrews declares: “And he is the mediator of a new covenant. By dying He paid the ransom to free people from the sins under the first covenant, and those who are to get the everlasting inheritance promised to them” (Beck). Because of the righteousness which the Messiah was to earn and which Christ did earn, the word “salvation” is often linked up with the word “righteousness” (cf. Ps. 71:15; 132:9; Is. 45:8; 51:5-6, 8; 59:16-17; Zech. 9:9). Article III of the Epitome of the Formula of Concord quotes Jeremiah 23:6 as well as 1 Corinthians 1:30 and 2 Corinthians 5:21 as Scriptural proofs for the truth “that poor sinners are justified before God and saved solely by faith in Christ so that Christ alone is our righteousness.”⁴⁸

The Relationship of Habakkuk 2:4 to Justification by Faith

Another sixth century prophet who has a text that has been understood as associated with justification by faith is Habakkuk 2:4, where the statement is found: "Look at the puffed-up fellow whose life is preserved. But the righteous man shall live by his faith" (Beck). This verse is quoted by Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:37-38. A number of Old Testament scholars, both critical and conservative, have claimed that Paul put more into the second half of the verse than he should have.⁴⁹ The New English Bible renders Habakkuk 2:4: "The reckless will be unsure of himself, while the righteous man will live by being faithful." The Berkeley Version translates 2:4: "the righteous shall live by his faith." In a footnote it justifies rendering the Hebrew *'emunah* not by "faithfulness," but by "faith," on the ground that Paul understood it that way when he cited the verse. An examination of the following translations will show that they render *'emunah* as "faith": JPSA, King James, Luther, New American Standard, NIV, American Standard, Beck, Swedish (1900), Danish, Norwegian, Dutch, Spanish, Italian. In commenting on this verse P.E. Kretzmann wrote: " 'The just shall live by his faith,' that is, he who believes in God's merciful promises in the Gospel would, and does, by his confidence, receive eternal life as a gift of God."⁵⁰ In his comments on Romans 1:18 Arndt remarked: "This passage [Habakkuk 2:4] strongly asserts that it is through faith that one obtains life."⁵¹

Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted three times in the Lutheran Confessions. In the Apology the verse is used in Article IV, "Justification," between a New Testament text (Acts 15:9) and another Old Testament passage (Is. 53:11) as a scripture which teaches justification by faith. Concerning Habakkuk 2:4 Melancthon wrote: "Here the writer says first that men are righteous by the faith that believes that God is propitious; and he adds that his faith quickens because it brings forth peace, joy, and eternal life" (Apol. 121, 100). In Article XII, "Penitence," Melancthon asserted, "there are therefore two parts here, contrition and faith. Because there is no peace for the conscience except by faith, therefore faith alone quickens, according to the word (Hab. 2:4), "The righteous shall live by his faith" (Article XII, 47).⁵² Speaking of Christ's righteousness as availing before God and being revealed in the Gospel, the Formula of Concord cites as proof for this belief the following scriptures: Romans 5:19; 1 John 1:7; and Habakkuk 2:4 (Article III, "Righteousness," 57).

The Prophecy of the Seventy Heptads

One of the most remarkable and also most difficult Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament is Daniel 9:24-27. Although conservative scholars differ as to how these four verses are to be understood, they all agree that it is a prophecy about the Messiah, the Anointed One. Verse 24 contains statements which are significant for the doctrine of justification. Leupold renders verse 24: "Seventy heptads are determined over the people and over the holy city, to restrain the transgression and to seal up sin and to make reconciliation for iniquity; to bring in everlasting righteousness and seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy."⁵² In this remarkable prophecy Gabriel was announcing to Daniel the ushering in of the Messianic kingdom. The righteousness which the Messiah was to bring in was to be produced by covering up sin and by making reconciliation for sin. Leupold believes that Daniel speaks the language of St. Paul in 9:24: "This righteousness, or the Messiah who accomplishes it, was the treasure above all treasures that was most eagerly longed for by the Old Testaments saints."⁵⁴

Conclusion

In Psalm 143:2 the psalmist prayed: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man be justified." Here we come face to face with the ultimate question in religion, and the conclusion is that it is impossible for any man to have confidence in his standing before God on the ground of his own deeds. The only satisfactory solution to man's problem of sin is justification by faith, a doctrine taught in both the Old and New Testaments.

FOOTNOTES

1. John Philip Gabler, "Concerning the Correct Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology." Concerning this address cf. J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), p.27.
2. Alan Richardson, *A Dictionary of Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), p. 237. Quoted from the article by Norman Porteous, "Old Testament Theology."
3. *Ibid.*
4. Robert C. Dentan, *Preface to Old Testament Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1963), pp. 24-83. Cf. also Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), pp. 13-90.
5. Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (revised edition; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 9.

6. Payne, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.
7. Wilhelm Vischer, *Das Christuszeugnis des Alten Testaments* (Zuerich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1943, 2 volumes).
8. "Dogmatics, Dogmatic Theology," Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
9. *Ibid.*
10. John Alfred Faulkner, "Justification," in James Orr, general editor, *The International Standard Biblical Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1939), III, 1786.
11. Richard R. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), pp. 26-28.
12. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Wild and Company, 1956), p. 91.
13. L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), p. 152.
14. C.F.W. Walther, *Die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche: Die wahre sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden* (St. Louis: Concordia Verlag, 1891), pp. 100-104.
15. Cf. Theodore Tappert, *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), pp. 639-641.
16. James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification. An Outline of Its History in the Church and of Its Exposition from Scripture* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1867), pp. 17-45, deals with Old Testament doctrine.
17. Revere Franklin Weidner, *Pneumatology or The Doctrine of the Work of the Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1915), p. 147.
18. Joseph Stump, *The Christian Faith* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), pp. 230-231.
19. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*. Translated by Walter F. Albrecht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), II, p. 516.
20. John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), pp. 372-373.
21. Buchanan, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
22. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), II, p. 273.
23. Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 238.
24. Franz Delitzsch, *Biblischer Kommentar ueber die Psalmen* (Leipzig: Dorffling und Francke, 1867), pp. 451-452.
25. Karl Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* (Tuebingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1948), II, pp. 549ff. Reference is to the 7th edition.
26. Claus Westermann, *The Old Testament and Jesus Christ* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1968), pp. 9-19. Rudolph Bultmann, "Prophecy and Fulfillment," Claus Westermann, editor, *Essays in Old Testament Hermeneutics* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), pp. 50-73.
27. Ernst Kindner, "Christus und die Rechtfertigungsglaube," *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, (January, 1952), p. 17. For a similar view cf. Pieper, *op. cit.*, II, p. 514.
28. Cf. the following translations: *The New English Bible* (Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, 1970), p. 4 (Gen. 3:15); Theophile Meek, *The Bible. An American Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), p. 7 (Gen. 3:15).
29. Cf. C.F.W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), p. 70.

30. Claus Westermann, *Genesis Accounts of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 33.
31. Buchanan, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
32. Walther, *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*, p. 70.
33. Johann Andreas Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-Polemica sive Systema Theologicum*, II, p. 1013, as translated by Pieper, *op. cit.*, III, p. 214.
34. Theodore Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, p. 562.
35. Martin Luther, *Die Bibel oder die ganze Heilige Schrift des alten und neuen Testaments* (New York: Amerikanische Bibel-Gesellschaft, 1906), p. 4.
36. P.E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, no date), *New Testament*, II, p. 480.
37. Buchanan, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
38. Ephraim Speiser, *The Anchor Bible, Genesis* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1960).
39. L.M. Pedersen, "Justification," in Merrill C. Tenney, general editor, *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), III, 769-770.
40. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics, op. cit.*, II, pp. 378-379.
41. Quenstedt, *op. cit.*, II, p. 943f. Quoted also in Joh. Gulielmus Baier, *Compendium Theologiae Positivae*, curavit C. Walther (St. Louis: Concordia Verlag, 1869), III, p. 108.
42. Walter A. Maier, "Vagaries of Tendential Exegesis as Illustrated by the Interpretation of Is. 1, 18," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 3 (March, 1932), 175-179.
43. Ed. Preuss, *Die Rechtfertigung des Suenders vor Gott* (Berlin: Verlag von Gustav Schlawitz, 1871), p. 23.
44. Theo. Laetsch, *Bible Commentary, Jeremiah* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952), p. 191.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*
48. Tappert, p. 472.
49. David Kerr, "Habakkuk," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), pp. 876-877.
50. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary, Old Testament*, p. 691.
51. William Arndt, *Notes on Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Mimeo Company, no date), p. 5.
52. Tappert, p. 188.
53. H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1949), p. 410.
54. Leupold, *op. cit.*, p. 414.