JUSTIFICATION

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UNDERSTANDING THE
CLASSIC REFORMED DOCTRINE

J. V. FESKO

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In memory of
John Juan Valero
(1947–69)

Dedicated to
John Valero Fesko Jr.
(2007–)

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PREFACE

This work is the culmination of five years of research that began in the summer of 2002. Though, in one sense, the work goes back even further. When I was in seminary in 1995 the Evangelicals and Catholics Together controversy was in full swing, and I was somewhat surprised to see debate surrounding *sola fide* surface once again in church history. In studying the sixteenth-century Reformation, I somewhat naively thought that since the doctrine of justification by faith alone was nailed down, the church would not see much debate over this subject in the future. It was several years later that I was discussing doctrinal trends with a colleague who was disenchanted with the theological debate of the day, the length of the days of creation. He told me that he had approached a number of students who were from a conservative Reformed seminary and listened to their debates over the various positions. My colleague asked these students if they had heard about the New Perspective on Paul. They blankly stared at him, revealing that they did not have the foggiest idea. He said that he could not help but think that in debating the length of the days of the creation the Reformed church was fiddling while Rome, or perhaps more fittingly Geneva, was burning. At the time I had read only one or two small monographs on the subject but decided that I should investigate the matter more thoroughly.

Initially, I had planned only on researching the New Perspective and writing several essays to crystalize my thoughts. The more I read, the

more I was drawn in, and the more I wrote. Not only did I believe it was necessary to address many points brought forward by the New Perspective, but I thought it would be helpful to flesh out the historic Reformed doctrine of justification in light of the recent challenges and questions. I also wanted to address a number of issues that were scattered about in comments in chapters in books or in academic journals. Namely, I wanted to apply the insights of biblical theology to the doctrine of justification for a full-orbed systematic-theological treatment of the subject. I additionally wanted to investigate the claims of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, especially in view of the recent ecumenical efforts in the broader church.

One of the most helpful things for the writing of this book was serving on the committee of my denomination, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, that was established to critique the teachings of the New Perspective on Paul and the Federal Vision. There were many fruitful and at times lively discussions that took place around my dining-room table that proved helpful in sorting out some of the issues in my own mind. I am grateful to the men on that committee who helped me sharpen my own thinking in many different ways. In addition to this venue, I also used the present material in a series of Sunday School lectures for the adults at my church. I am thankful for the nine months of attentive listening that I received. I also used this material as the basis for a systematics elective on the doctrine of justification that I taught at Reformed Theological Seminary–Atlanta in the fall of 2006. My thanks to John Sowell for letting me teach the course and to those students who helped me iron out some of the wrinkles in the work.

I am grateful to the many colleagues and friends who helped me by reading portions of the manuscript during various stages and offering feedback and critique: Greg Beale, Jay Collier, Brent Ferry, Dick Gaffin, James Grant, Mike Horton, John Muether, Danny Olinger, Greg Reynolds, John Sowell, Jonathan Stuckert, and Lane Tipton. I am especially indebted to those friends and colleagues who were willing to read the whole manuscript and offer helpful critique: Dave VanDrunen, Bryan Estelle, Scott Clark, and Wally King. Special thanks to Marvin Padgett and the editorial staff at P&R Publishing who worked diligently to see this manuscript to publication.

Much thanks are due to my congregation, Geneva OPC, in Woodstock, Georgia, and especially to my session, Wally King and Bud Winslow. I am appreciative of their encouragement for me to pursue this project and for the book allowance that the congregation gives me, which has made doing research profoundly easier. Grace Mullen and Em Sirinides helped me find an unpublished lecture by Cornelius Van Til in the Westminster Theological Seminary library, and also assisted me when I was on campus doing research in the falls of 2005 and 2006.

I owe a great deal of thanks to my family, my parents, in-laws, and brother and sister-in-law for their prayers and encouragement. I am, however, profoundly beholden to my wife, Anneke, who at present carries our first child, who has encouraged me at more times and in more ways than I can count. I am appreciative of her willingness to let me tiptoe off in the wee hours of the morning when I would be awakened by percolating thoughts. Thank you, Wife, for your love, care, and encouragement.

It is to the memory of my uncle and namesake, John Juan Valero, that I dedicate this book. He died on the field of battle in a hamlet in South Vietnam. He has been and always will be one of my heroes, and not simply because of his posthumous Bronze Star with a "Combat V" and Purple Heart that hang in my home. It is also to my son, John Valero Fesko Jr., that I dedicate this book. My son, I pray that by God's sovereign grace you will one day embrace the wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ and begin to plumb the depths of what it means to be justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. I pray that not only you, but that many others with the help of this work will sound out the depths of God's love in Christ. *SDG.*

ABBREVIATIONS

General Abbreviations

c.	*circa,* about
cf.	*confer,* compare
e.g.	*exempli gratia,* for example
EOC	Eastern Orthodox Church
i.e.	*id est,* that is
LXX	Septuagint
MMT	*Misqat ma'ase ha-torah*
MT	Masoretic text (of the Old Testament)
NT	New Testament
OPC	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
OT	Old Testament
PCA	Presbyterian Church in America
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
s.v.	*sub verbo,* under the word
v., vv.	verse, verses
vol.	volume

Abbreviations for Translations

*	Author's own translation
ASV	Authorized Standard Version

ESV	English Standard Version
KJV	King James Version
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version
Vul	Vulgate

Abbreviations for Periodicals, Reference Works, and Commentary Series

AB	Anchor Bible
ANE 2	James B. Pritchard. *The Ancient Near East*. Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
BAGD	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BBR	*Bulletin of Biblical Research*
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
Bib	*Biblica*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BRev	*Bible Review*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CH	*Church History*

CNTC	Calvin's New Testament Commentaries
CTJ	*Calvin Theological Journal*
CTQ	*Concordia Theological Quarterly*
CTS	Calvin Translation Society
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IJST	*International Journal of Systematic Theology*
ITQ	*Irish Theological Quarterly*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JPSTC	Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JRE	*Journal of Religious Ethics*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LC	Larger Catechism
LCC	Library of Christian Classics
LQ	*Lutheran Quarterly*
LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon.* Rev. ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996
LW	Luther's Works
MAJT	*Mid-America Journal of Theology*
NCB	New Century Bible
NIB	The New Interpreter's Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDNTT	*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology.* 4 vols. Edited by Colin Brown. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986
NIDOTTE	*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis.* 5 vols. Edited by Willem A. VanGemeren. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997

NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NPNF[1/2]	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First and Second Series
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTC	New Testament Commentary
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OTL	Old Testament Library
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
PR	*Presbyterian Review*
ProEccl	*Pro ecclesia*
RevQ	*Revue de Qumran*
RRJ	*Revival and Reformation Journal*
RTR	*Reformed Theological Review*
SC	Shorter Catechism
SEÅ	*Svensk exegetisk årsbok*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
StPatr	*Studia Patristica*
SVTQ	*St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* 10 vols. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.* 15 vols. Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–
Them	*Themelios*
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary
TWOT	*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.* 2 vols. Edited by R. Laird Harris et al. Chicago: Moody, 1980
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WCF	Westminster Confession of Faith
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of justification has always been a point of contention for the covenant community, which is especially evident in Paul's letter to the Galatian church. If a church planted by the apostle Paul could quickly depart from the gospel, which has at its root the doctrine of justification, then it is no wonder that the church has witnessed no small uproar over this doctrine throughout the years. Whether in the Augustine-Pelagius debates in the patristic era, the disputes that sparked and fueled the Reformation with Martin Luther's ninety-five theses, the contentions over the center of Paul's theology in the nineteenth century, or the current debates surrounding justification and the New Perspective on Paul, the doctrine of justification has always been a subject of contention.[1] While there has

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1. See Augustine, *Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*, ed. Thomas P. Halton et al., trans. John A. Mourant and William J. Collinge, Fathers of the Church (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1992); Pelagius, *Pelagius's Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, ed. and trans. Theodore de Bruyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); B. B. Warfield, "Augustine and the Pelagian Controversy," in *The Works of B. B. Warfield*, ed. E. D. Warfield et al., 10 vols. (1930; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 4:289–412; W. S. Babcock, "Augustine and Paul: The case of Romans 9," *StPatr* 16/2 (1985): 474–79; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, LCC 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 3.11.1ff.; Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 2 vols. (1986; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2:1–97; F. C. Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ* (1873; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003); Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. William Montgomery (1931; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); N. T. Wright, *What St. Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); Stephen Westerholm, "The New Perspective at Twenty-Five," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 2:1–38; David E. Aune, "Recent Readings of Paul Related to Justification by Faith," in *Rereading Paul Together*, ed. David E. Aune (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 188–246; R. Scott

certainly been no shortage of monographs on the subject from both Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians, there is much to commend a fresh exploration of the doctrine in the light of past and recent debate.[2]

It is certainly fair to say that there is nothing new under the sun (Eccl. 1:9), and in this regard, we may say that the same issues continue to swirl about; at the same time it is also fair to say that different issues surface in different ages. In earlier centuries, debate largely focused upon the *ordo salutis*, or the order of salvation. In current debates, many questions have arisen regarding not only the *ordo salutis* but also how justification relates to the *historia salutis*, or redemptive history. Additionally, given that in recent years we have witnessed the discovery of many new documents from the first century, we have more information about the first-century context in which the New Testament (NT) arose. Given these factors, it seems that a fresh restatement of the classic Reformed doctrine of justification is in order.

Recent monographs on the doctrine of justification have largely focused upon the *ordo salutis*.[3] While this is a necessary connection to explain, as much of the debate surrounding justification concerns the relationship of the doctrine to good works, at the same time a more thorough treatment of the doctrine is needed. As we will see, while the doctrine of justification should not be the central dogma of one's theological system, it is nevertheless helpful not only to explicate the doctrine but to also explain how the one doctrine relates to the rest of the loci of systematic theology. For example, what theological presuppositions must be explored? There are matters, therefore, that concern prolegomena. How does justification

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Clark, "How We Got Here: The Roots of the Current Controversy over Justification," in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, ed. R. Scott Clark (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 3–24; J. V. Fesko (contributor), *Justification* (Willow Grove, PA: Committee on Christian Education for the OPC, 2007); *Report of Ad Interim Study Committee on Federal Vision, New Perspective, and Auburn Avenue Theology* (Atlanta: Presbyterian Church of America, 2007); *Doctrinal Testimony regarding Recent Errors* (Dyer, IN: Mid-America Reformed Seminary, 2007).

2. E.g., James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* (1867; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991); Eberhard Jüngel, *Justification*, trans. Jeffrey F. Cayzer (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001); Hans Küng, *Justification* (1964; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004); Anthony N. S. Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002); John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002); Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (1902; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004); Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000); R. C. Sproul, *Faith Alone* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); Robert Traill, *Justification Vindicated* (1692; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2002).

3. So Buchanan, *Justification*; Sproul, *Faith Alone*; Piper, *Counted Righteous*.

relate to protology, that is, man as he was initially created, and Christology, the person and work of Christ? Related to the question of the first and last Adams is the greater question of the structure of redemptive history. Few make an effort to place justification in the *historia salutis*, or relate it to biblical theology. If Paul's soteriology is his eschatology, then this of course must have an impact upon one's understanding of redemptive history, salvation, and eschatology.[4] In this regard, we will, as Geerhardus Vos long ago maintained, employ biblical theology to serve the queen of the theological disciplines, systematic theology, to obtain a better understanding of the doctrine of justification.[5]

Other important questions surround not the grand picture of redemptive history but the narrower question of the first-century historical context. What issues, for example, did Paul face that caused him to set forth his doctrine of justification in his epistles to Galatia and Rome? Understanding justification in its historical context, however, has become a much more challenging task, as many common assumptions have been challenged by those holding to the New Perspective on Paul. Not only have many common assumptions about first-century Judaism been questioned, but many of the traditional elements of the doctrine of justification have been recast in the light of the supposed new evidence from the first century. Moreover, scholars have noted that the fields of systematic theology and biblical studies are often separated by a wide gulf. David Aune comments, "Systematic theologians are rarely acquainted with recent trends in biblical scholarship, and many biblical scholars are functionally illiterate when it comes to systematic theology."[6] In an effort, therefore, to close the gap between systematic theology and biblical studies, we will explore and interact primarily with the writings of N. T. Wright, as his work has been the most influential in the Reformed community. We will therefore enter into dialogue with Wright on matters pertaining to the historical context, the doctrine of justification proper, and the related doctrine of imputation. It is not only important, though, to interact with the latest scholarship on the doctrine of justification, but also to relate it to key elements of the *ordo salutis*.

4. See Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (1930; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994), 1–41.
5. Geerhardus Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 3–24, esp. 23–24.
6. Aune, "Recent Readings of Paul," 242.

What are the connections of justification to the believer's union with Christ, sanctification, and the final judgment? Not only does one's understanding of justification impact these doctrines, but so too one's ecclesiology. What type of impact does one's understanding of justification have for the doctrine of the church and issues such as the nature of the church, questions concerning corporate justification, missions, pastoral counseling, and the sacrament of baptism? There are also questions surrounding justification and ecumenism. Historically, it has been the doctrine of justification, among many other issues, that has separated Protestant from both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. Yet in recent years there has been a flurry of ecumenical effort at moving forward toward reunification. Are the battles between East and West, Protestant and Catholic, over? Some would say yes.[7] We will explore these issues, namely the question of justification and ecumenism.

This essay is a restatement of the classic Reformed doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone; justification is based upon the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is the sole ground and basis for the believer's declaration of righteousness both in the present and at the final judgment. Some will perhaps ask, If this is a classic restatement of the Reformed doctrine of justification, then what need is there for yet another monograph on the subject? While this essay is a restatement of the classic Reformed view, it is unique in that it does so with an eye to history, doctrinal issues including both the *ordo* and *historia salutis*, and the future, particularly the ecumenical future vis-à-vis the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches.

Before we proceed, one should note a few things regarding the nature of this essay. First, we must understand the relationship between the Scriptures and doctrinal confessions, especially the Westminster Standards. Some will undoubtedly balk at appeals to a confession of faith; the assumption is likely that appeal is no longer to the Scriptures but rather to dogmatic formulation, or church tradition. While confessions have certainly been used in such a manner, this is not the case in this essay. Rather, appeal will be made to Scripture to substantiate that the historic Reformed confessional formulations on justification are still sound and that

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7. So Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, *Is the Reformation Over?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

they reflect the teaching of Scripture. At the same time, however, reference ultimately to confessional standards does not represent an appeal to the formula but to the exegetical tradition that stands behind the formula.[8]

Second, if one examines this essay by perusing the table of contents, it is perhaps easy to mistake this work for a system of justification. This is a hasty conclusion. Rather, this essay explores the doctrine of justification by relating it to multiple aspects, such as historical theology, the *ordo* and *historia salutis*, and other loci of systematic theology. While this work certainly touches on many facets of soteriology, it is not intended to be an essay on the locus of soteriology but rather the narrower issue of one part of the *ordo salutis*, namely justification by faith alone. Relating the doctrine of justification to the other doctrines and loci with which it is connected is an effort to acknowledge the organic nature of systematic theology.

Third, at present there is debate in the Reformed community over the so-called Federal Vision, or Auburn Avenue theology. For the most part, this is a difficult movement to trace, as those associated with it disseminate much of their work through the internet rather than through traditional publishing. What one might write today is possibly retracted or modified days later. In addition to this, much of their thought on the doctrine of justification is not original but derivative, either adopting or modifying the work of others for their own formulations. We will therefore explore and interact with some of the sources to which Federal Vision advocates appeal. Moreover, others have ably critiqued the Federal Vision, and we do not want to revisit the same ground.[9] Keeping these three caveats in mind, we can move forward and begin where any study of doctrine must, with its historical development.

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8. See Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 2:63–223. Contra Paul A. Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005), 5; N. T. Wright, "The Letter to the Galatians: Exegesis and Theology," in *Between Two Horizons*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 206, 213, 215–17; John R. Franke, *The Character of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 43. Cf. Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology," 23–24; B. B. Warfield, "The Task and Method of Systematic Theology," in *The Works of B. B. Warfield*, ed. E. D. Warfield et al., 10 vols. (1932; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 9:91–108.

9. See E. Calvin Beisner, ed., *The Auburn Avenue Theology* (Fort Lauderdale: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004); Steve Wilkins and Duane Garner, *The Federal Vision* (Monroe, LA: Athanasius Press, 2004); Guy P. Waters, *The Federal Vision and Covenant Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), esp. 59–95; also see the denominational reports of the PCA, OPC, United Reformed Churches, Bible Presbyterian Churches, and the Reformed Church in the US, as well as the *Doctrinal Testimony* of Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

1

JUSTIFICATION IN CHURCH HISTORY

Robert Traill (1642–1716), who wrote about controversies in his own day, gives an excellent summary of the key issues surrounding the doctrine of justification: "The subject of the controversy is the justifying grace of God in Jesus Christ. Owned it is by both sides: and both fear it is abused, either by turning it into wantonness, hence the noise of Antinomianism, or by corrupting it with the mixture of works, hence the fears on the other side, of Arminianism."[1] Traill identifies the two sides of the spectrum, on the one hand, antinomianism, and on the other, Arminianism, neonomianism, or legalism. The doctrine of justification was neither supposed to be a license to sin, something the apostle Paul countered in his own missionary journeys (Rom. 6:1–2), nor was it supposed to be a new starting point that wiped the slate clean with Jesus as a new Moses giving a new law where salvation was based upon a combination of God's grace and one's good works, which again was something that Paul faced (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16).

1. Robert Traill, *Justification Vindicated* (1692; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2002), 5.

Between the two poles of antinomianism and neonomianism Traill identifies a third position, "Luther gave the stroke, and plucked down the foundation, and all by opening one vein, long hid before, wherein lies the touchtone of all truth and doctrine, as the only principal origin of our salvation, which is, our free justification, by faith only, in Christ the Son of God."[2] While perhaps guilty of overgeneralization, it is nevertheless fair to say that the history of the doctrine of justification has moved between these poles with the orthodox position lying in the middle, between the Scylla of antinomianism and the Charybdis of neonomianism. It is necessary to survey briefly the history of the doctrine of justification so that one may see its development to establish that justification exists between the poles of antinomianism and neonomianism. A brief survey cannot do justice to the subject of the history of the doctrine, as it has been the subject of a number of monographs; nevertheless it is helpful to reconnoiter the terrain to familiarize ourselves with the major trends and players in the development of this doctrine.[3] We will therefore survey the history of the development of justification, summarizing the characteristics that dominate each period's expression of the doctrine and identifying key issues that must be addressed in the exegetical and theological exposition.

The Patristic Era (100–600)

Early Church Fathers

The patristic era lacks a precise formulation of the doctrine of salvation, and more specifically a doctrine of justification. Louis Berkhof (1873–1957) explains that the church fathers' "representations are naturally indefinite, imperfect, and incomplete, and sometimes even erroneous and self-contradictory."[4] In the writings of the church fathers, one can find a number of significant statements that show that some had a basic concept

2. Ibid., 32.

3. See, e.g., Albrecht Ritschl, *A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, trans. John S. Black (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872); Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 2 vols. (1986; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

4. Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (1937; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991), 203. For an excellent essay on the doctrine of justification, one that proved quite helpful for many of the patristic citations in this section, see Nick Needham, "Justification in the Early Church Fathers," in *Justification in Perspective*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 25–54.

of justification by faith. In John Chrysostom's (c. 347–407) sermons on Romans, he gives a definition of justification when he answers the question "What does the word justified mean?" Chrysostom answers, "That, if there could be a trial and an examination of the things He had done for the Jews, and of what had been done on their part towards Him, the victory would be with God, and all the right on His side."[5] Chrysostom clearly recognizes that "justify" is a forensic or law-court term. One can find similar statements in the writings of Clement of Rome (d. c. 98), Justin Martyr (100–165), and Hippolytus (d. 235).[6] In addition to the recognition of the meaning of "justify," we also find scattered throughout patristic literature the term placed in antithesis with the term "condemn." For example, Gregory of Nazianzus (329–89) writes: "For where sin abounded Grace did much more abound; and if a taste condemned us, how much more does the Passion of Christ justify us?"[7]

In terms of several of the constituent elements of the doctrine of justification, one can also find the ideas that justification is the forgiveness of sins, involves the imputation of righteousness, and that it is by faith alone. In Chrysostom's homilies on Romans, we find the following where he equates the forgiveness of sins with justification: "If any then were to gainsay, they do the same as if a person who after committing great sins was unable to defend himself in court, but was condemned and going to be punished, and then being by the royal pardon forgiven, should have the effrontery after his forgiveness to boast and say that he had done no sin."[8] We see that "royal pardon" and "forgiven" are synonymous with justification.[9] We also find Justin Martyr affirming the idea of the imputation of righteousness in justification: "For the goodness and loving-kindness of God, and His boundless riches, hold righteous and sinless the man who, as Ezekiel tells, repents of sins; and reckon sinful, unrighteous, and impious the man who falls away from piety and righteousness to unrighteousness and ungodliness."[10]

5. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 6, in NPNF[1] 6:372.
6. See Clement of Rome, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 16, in ANF, 1:9; Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 51, in ANF, 1:180; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 7.22, in ANF, 5:114.
7. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations* 38.4, in NPNF[2] 7:346; see also Tertullian, *Of Patience* 7, in ANF 3:711; Athanasius, *To the Bishops of Egypt*, §19, in NPNF[2] 4:233.
8. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 7, in NPNF[1] 11:378–79.
9. Needham, "Justification in the Early Church Fathers," 31.
10. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 47, in ANF, 1:218–19; see other references in Needham, "Justification in the Early Church Fathers," 32–36.

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In addition to this, we can also find some church fathers teaching, at least substantively, justification by faith alone, though at times even the very phrase does appear in some places. Origen (c. 185–c. 254), commenting upon Luke 23:43, writes:

> A man is justified by faith. The works of the law can make no contribution to this. Where there is no faith which might justify the believer, even if there are works of the law these are not based on the foundation of faith. Even if they are good in themselves they cannot justify the one who does them, because faith is lacking, and faith is the mark of those who are justified by God.[11]

Similarly, one finds an equally clear affirmation of the centrality of faith in justification in the Western church from the pen of Clement of Rome who writes: "And we, too, not justified by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart; but by that faith through which, from the beginning, Almighty God has justified all men."[12] Though Origen and Clement do not say "faith alone," it appears that is what they intend. One can find similar statements in the writings of Tertullian (160–220), Irenaeus (c. 115–90), and Eusebius (c. 275–339).[13]

In his well-documented essay, Nick Needham comes to the conclusion that in the Fathers of the first four centuries there is a major strand of justification teaching where the meaning is forensic, a not-guilty verdict, an acquittal, a declaration of righteousness, a non-imputation of sin, and an imputation of righteousness.[14] Similarly, Louis Berkhof observes that among the early church fathers, Irenaeus and Origen in the East and Tertullian, Cyprian (200–258), and Ambrose (c. 339–97) in the West all placed strong emphasis upon the centrality of faith in salvation to the exclusion of works.[15] This is not to say, however, that every patristic expression was equally as clear on the centrality of faith.

11. Quoted in Thomas Oden, *The Justification Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 45.
12. Clement, *First Epistle 32*, in ANF, 1:13.
13. Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 5.3, in ANF, 3:433–35; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.16.2, in ANF, 1:481; Eusebius, *Church History* 1.4, in NPNF² 1:88; see Needham, "Justification in the Early Church Fathers," 33.
14. Needham, "Justification in the Early Church Fathers," 36.
15. Berkhof, *History of Christian Doctrines*, 204. See also Oden, *Justification Reader*, 44–47.

In this vein one sees the coordination of faith and works as co-instrumental in one's salvation, which is no more evident than in the development of the doctrine of baptism.[16] It was Tertullian, for example, who though he placed a strong emphasis upon faith, nevertheless argued that in baptism sins were washed away. Contrasting pagan washing rituals with Christian baptism, Tertullian argues, "Not that *in* the waters we obtain the Holy Spirit; but in the water, under (the witness of) the angel, we are cleansed, and prepared *for* the Holy Spirit."[17] As this idea of baptism gained acceptance, many early church fathers understood baptism to bring the forgiveness of sins as well as remove the guilt of original sin.[18] This is an idea that would persist through the Middle Ages and up to the present within the Roman Catholic Church (RCC).

In addition to this, it seems as though the relationship between the two testaments, or more specifically the relationship between Moses and Christ, or law and grace, had not been thoroughly established as it would later be in the Reformation. Thomas Oden makes the claim that one can find anticipations of Luther's doctrine of justification in the church fathers. Yet at times there are some questions surrounding his methodology. For example, Oden marshals only one patristic citation for the doctrine of imputation from Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215). The citation, however, is somewhat questionable, as Clement does emphasize the priority of faith, perhaps even *sola fide*, but merely quotes Romans 4:3, which is not necessarily an explicit expression of the idea of imputation on Clement's part.[19] Similarly, concerning the law-gospel hermeneutic one finds views at odds with the Reformation understanding.[20]

In the Epistle of Barnabas (c. 70–138), we read that God has abolished the old order of Moses so that "the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is without the yoke of necessity, might have a human oblation."[21] Likewise, Justin Martyr spoke of the gospel as a "new law," and Tertul-

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16. Berkhof, *History of Christian Doctrines*, 204–5.

17. Tertullian, *On Baptism* 5–6, in ANF, 3:671–72; see also Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 1:164–65.

18. Berkhof, *History of Christian Doctrines*, 205.

19. Oden, *Justification Reader*, 92; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 5.1, in ANF, 2:444–46.

20. T. F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

21. Epistle of Barnabas, 2, in ANF, 1:138. For an excellent essay on the law-gospel hermeneutic, one from which a number of citations were drawn for this section, see R. Scott Clark,

lian employed the same old law–new law categories: "And so there is incumbent on us a necessity binding us, since we have premised that a new law was predicted by the prophets, and that not such as had been already given to their fathers at the time when He led them forth from the land of Egypt, to show and prove, on the one hand, that that old law had ceased, and on the other that the promised new law is now in opera-tion."[22] Given this confusion of law and gospel, it is fair to say that for some church fathers it would be difficult to affirm a Reformation doctrine of justification because of the differing hermeneutical presuppositions. As Scott Clark observes:

> This is not an indictment of the fathers. To criticize the fathers for failing to use Luther's (or Calvin's) language is rather like criticizing Aquinas for not using Einstein's physics. The conceptual framework within which most early postapostolic Christians read the Scriptures made it difficult for them to see the forensic nature of justification. They tended to think in realistic terms rather than forensic categories. Because Christians were frequently marginalized and criticized as immoral and impious, the fathers placed great stress on piety and morality. They did not, however, always ground their parenesis in the gospel in the same way Paul did.[23]

It was during the Pelagius-Augustine debate, however, where matters pertaining to soteriology, or more specifically justification, were defined with greater precision.

The Augustine-Pelagius Debate

If the early patristic period was marked by a confusion regarding the relationship between faith and works in salvation, the debate between Augustine (354–430) and Pelagius (d. 425) brought greater clarity. One should note, though, that Augustine never addressed the topic of jus-tification in a precise way, and he never devoted a treatise, sermon, or letter to the subject.[24] Nevertheless, it is helpful to see what contribution

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"Letter and Spirit: Law and Gospel in Reformed Preaching," in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, ed. R. Scott Clark (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 331–64.

22. Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews* 6, in ANF, 3:157; Clark, "Letter and Spirit," 335.

23. Clark, "Letter and Spirit," 334.

24. David F. Wright, "Justification in Augustine," in *Justification in Perspective*, 55. For a general survey of the debate, see B. B. Warfield, "Augustine and the Pelagian Controversy," in

Augustine brings to the development of the doctrine, as Augustine plays a significant role in the sixteenth-century debates on justification.

Pelagius denied the doctrine of original sin and argued that sin was passed, not ontologically or forensically, but by imitation. Commenting on Romans 5:12, Pelagius writes: "By example or by pattern. . . . As long as they sin the same way, they likewise die."[25] This means, of course, that one could by his works merit his justification. While God's grace was helpful, it was not absolutely necessary. Augustine, on the other hand, held to a strong doctrine of original sin, which made the grace of God absolutely necessary and antecedent to the believer's good works. Augustine writes: "Grace is therefore of him who calls, and the consequent good works of him who receives grace. Good works do not produce grace but are produced by grace. Fire is not hot in order that it may burn, but because it burns. A wheel does not run nicely in order that it may be round, but because it is round."[26] Given the necessary priority of the grace of God, Augustine's formulation of justification placed a strong emphasis upon the necessity of faith to the exclusion of works.

Augustine understood that when the Scripture speaks of the "righteousness of God" (Rom. 1:17), it refers not to the righteousness by which God himself is righteous but that by which he justifies sinners.[27] This means that for Augustine, the sinner's justification is a free gift from God given through faith: "In a word, not by the law of works, but by the law of faith; not by the letter, but by the spirit; not by the merits of deeds, but by free grace."[28] So then, faith received great emphasis in Augustine's understanding of justification, though it should also be noted that his view of justification was more holistic. Justification was not merely a forensic declaration of righteousness but also the transformation of the sinner.[29] Historically some have sought to explain Augustine's views on justification by appeal to the translation of Hebrew and Greek terms into Latin.

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The Works of B. B. Warfield, ed. Ethelbert Warfield et al., 10 vols. (1930; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 10:289–412.

25. Pelagius, *Pelagius's Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Theodore de Bruyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), ad loc., 92.

26. Augustine, *To Simplician—On Various Questions*, in *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, ed. John Baillie et al., trans. John H. S. Burleigh, LCC 6 (London: SCM Press, 1953), 1.2.3 (p. 388).

27. Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter* 11, in NPNF[1] 5:87.

28. Ibid., 22, in NPNF[1] 5:93.

29. Berkhof, *History of Christian Doctrines*, 207.

Alister McGrath explains that the initial transmission of a scriptural Hebrew or Greek concept into Latin affected the development of the doctrine of justification. He notes, for example, that *dikaioun* ("to justify") was translated by the Latin term *iustificare* ("to make righteous").[30] In other words, in the translation from Greek to Latin, the forensic nature of the verb was lost and replaced by a transformative term. "Viewed theologically," writes McGrath, "this transition resulted in a shift of emphasis from *iustitia coram Deo* to *iustitia in hominibus*. This shift of emphasis and reference from God to man is inevitably accompanied by an anthropocentricity in the discussion of justification which is quite absent from the biblical material."[31] Yet one has to wonder whether he can pin the development of the doctrine in Augustine, or in the Middle Ages, on the translation of the verb alone.

There are two factors that one should consider in this matter. First, there is the common assumption that Augustine rarely if ever used the Greek NT. Some often assume that Augustine used only the Vulgate.[32] There is evidence, however, that demonstrates that Augustine used and interacted with the Greek text. Gerald Bonner explains that Augustine was known to verify his biblical references against the Greek originals; he was not satisfied with the Latin text alone. As evidence, Bonner cites a letter written by Augustine in 414 where he compared readings of Romans 5:14 in a number of different codices.[33] Hence, it seems that one cannot say that Augustine was ignorant of the Greek NT.[34]

Second, one must take into account the greater scope of Augustine's thought, particularly his realism, which seems a more likely source for his confusion of justification and sanctification.[35] The apostle Paul worked exclusively in legal or forensic categories in his doctrine of justification, whereas Augustine did not strictly do the same. Augustine understood original sin and its transmission in realistic categories, in that sin is trans-

30. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 1.16.
31. Ibid., 1:15–16.
32. So Adolf von Harnack, *The History of Dogma*, ed. T. K. Cheyne and A. B. Bruce, trans. James Millar, 5 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1898), 5:215; see also John M. Rist, "Augustine on Free Will and Predestination," *JTS* 20/2 (1969): 430–31.
33. Gerald Bonner, "Les origines africaines de la doctrine augustinienne sur la chute et le péché originel," in *God's Decree and Destiny* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987), 109.
34. Wright, "Justification in Augustine," 56–66.
35. Clark, "Letter and Spirit," 334.

mitted through natural descent. Conversely, the grace of God is infused in the sinner to counteract the effects of original sin.[36] Augustine also understood Romans 5:12 in realistic terms and, as noted above, was insistent upon reading the passage, in spite of his knowledge of the Greek codices, as a locative, *in quo omnes peccaverunt* ("in whom all sinned").[37] It seems like a reasonable possibility that his philosophical presuppositions rather than his knowledge of Greek grammar could have driven his exegesis. Moreover, in baptism, the church washes away original sin:

> For by this grace He engrafts into His body even baptized infants, who certainly have not yet become able to imitate anyone. As therefore He, in whom all are made alive, besides offering Himself as an example of righteousness to those who imitate Him, gives also to those who believe on Him the hidden grace of His Spirit, which He secretly infuses even into infants.[38]

Given these theological and philosophical commitments, it seems impossible that Augustine could construct a purely forensic understanding of justification. If we briefly look forward to the Reformation, the Reformers rejected this ontological conception of sin and grace, and returned to a forensic understanding. They looked at the sinner's legal relationship to the first and last Adams. Just as the sin of Adam is imputed to those in Adam, so too the righteousness of Christ is imputed to those who are in him. This ontological versus legal understanding of justification colors the development of the doctrine not only through the Middle Ages but well into the present day. In fact, as we will see in the chapter on the RCC, it is something that still separates Protestants from Catholics, and one might add the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Semi-Pelagianism and Later Augustinianism

If Augustine stressed man's inability to justify himself and the absolute necessity of the grace of God, and Pelagius stressed man's ability to justify himself by his own works apart from the grace of God, various theologians determined that a *via media* was the appropriate way to resolve the conflict. Semi-Pelagianism arose from certain theologians such as

36. Augustine, *On Forgiveness of Sins and Baptism*, 1.20, in NPNF[1] 5:22.
37. See Augustine, *Epistolae quas scripsit reliquo tempore (ab anno 411 ad 430)*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1841), cols. 683–84.
38. Augustine, *On Forgiveness of Sins and Baptism* 1.10, in NPNF[1] 5:18–19.

John Cassian (c. 360–c. 430), who was uneasy with Augustine's views on predestination, grace, and human free will. Semi-Pelagians argued that man was unable to perform saving good works without the assistance of divine grace. It seems that once again the popular coordination of faith and works was brought forward in semi-Pelagianism.[39] Nevertheless, the church condemned Pelagianism at the Council of Ephesus (431) and again at the Synod of Orange (529), which also rejected semi-Pelagianism. Canon five of the Synod of Orange states:

> If anyone says that not only the increase of faith but also its beginning and the very desire for faith, by which we believe in him who justifies the ungodly and come to the regeneration of holy baptism—if anyone says that this belongs to us by nature and not by a gift of grace, that is, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit amending our will and turning it from unbelief to faith and from godlessness to godliness, it is proof that he is opposed to the teaching of the apostles.[40]

So, then, the church embraced Augustine's understanding of justification, though this does not mean that the great African theologian had defined the relationship between justification and sanctification or how justification related to baptism. Moreover, the inheritors of Augustine's theological legacy did not reproduce his views with the same emphases.

Berkhof describes the elements in Augustine's soteriology that gained greater attention by subsequent theologians:

1. Participation in the grace of God is sometimes made dependent on the church and its sacraments.
2. Regeneration could be lost.
3. The doctrine of justification by faith is represented in a way that can hardly be reconciled with the doctrine of free grace.

Because Augustine did not distinguish between justification and sanctification, faith appropriated not only the forgiveness of sins but also regeneration, which enabled man to perform good works that merit eternal

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39. Berkhof, *History of Christian Doctrines*, 207–8.
40. "The Doctrinal Chapters of the Synod of Orange," in *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss, 3 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 1:693.

life. Berkhof summarizes Augustine's view by saying, "Faith justifies, not because it appropriates the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but because it works by love."[41] It is these elements that later theologians would emphasize which would bring about the resurgence, despite the rejection of the Synod of Orange, of semi-Pelagianism in the Middle Ages.

Summary

We have seen how in the patristic era there is an emphasis upon the necessity of faith in one's justification and the foundational antecedent grace of God. These are important scriptural elements of the doctrine of justification. However, we also see that elements of the *ordo salutis* were not properly distinguished and that justification and sanctification were confounded, which is especially evident in the coordination of baptism and justification as well as in the patristic realistic understanding of sin and grace. If we set up the poles of antinomianism and neonomianism, we may say that the doctrine of justification oscillated between right of center and the neonomian pole. Also, an important element of a proper biblical understanding of justification that is almost absent at this point is the doctrine of imputation. Nevertheless, the doctrine of imputation does not hinge ultimately on whether it finds expression in the early church but in Scripture.

The Middle Ages (600–1500)

Thomas Aquinas

Unfortunately, because Augustine did not distinguish between justification and sanctification, confusion of the two distinct elements of the *ordo salutis* was only intensified in the Middle Ages. A common teaching of the Middle Ages was that justification was effected by the infusion of sanctifying grace into the soul by God. It was not conceived of in legal terms of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer but rather in ontological-realistic terms. Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), for example, argues that justification is the remission of sins, the infusion of grace, and the turning of the will to God.[42]

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41. Berkhof, *History of Christian Doctrines*, 208; see also McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 1:30.
42. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 5 vols. (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1946–47), Ia2ae q. 113 a. 2.

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Once again, as Augustine before him, Thomas therefore understood justification as the process of being made just.[43] In this regard, Thomas was deeply influenced by neo-Platonism, which is evident in his doctrine of participation in the divine essence. Thomas writes:

> Nothing can act beyond its species, since the cause must always be more powerful than its effect. Now the gift of grace surpasses every capability of created nature, since it is nothing short of a partaking of the Divine Nature. And thus it is impossible that any creature should cause grace. For it is as necessary that God alone should deify, bestowing a partaking of the Divine Nature by a participated likeness, as it is impossible that anything save fire should enkindle.[44]

We see that Thomas here affirms a doctrine of divinization, or theosis, in that man is deified by the infusion of grace so he can be justified. For Thomas, therefore, justification is sanctification.[45] Thomas's understanding of justification was not, however, the only one during the Middle Ages.

John Duns Scotus

Theologians such as John Duns Scotus (1265–1308) employed the covenant concept to ensure the reliability of God's twin powers, the *potentia Dei absoluta et ordinata*, the absolute and ordained power of God. In the creation God imposed upon himself an obligation in the form of a *pactum*, or covenant.[46] Within this *pactum* God would grant a *dispositio ad gratiam* to mankind. Then God would grant saving grace to the person who met the minimum requirements of justification. All man would have to do is *facere quod in se est*, "to do what is in one's self." Richard Muller explains that man could respond to God on the basis of universal grace, not with a truly meritorious act but with one that corresponded

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43. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 1:47.

44. Aquinas, *Summa*, Ia2ae q. 112 a. 1.

45. R. Scott Clark, "*Iustitia Imputata Aliena*: Alien or Proper to Luther's Doctrine of Justification?" *CTQ* 71 (2007): 269–310; see Aquinas, *Summa*, Ia2ae 68–70. Concerning Ia2ae 68–70 the editor of the critical edition writes that this portion of the *Summa* "presents the ultimate and most exquisite refinements of its theory of divinization of man by grace through the action of the Holy Spirit" (*Summa Theologiae* Ia2ae 68–70, vol. 24, ed. Edward D. O'Connor, C.S.C. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], xiii).

46. Alister E. McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 81.

to true merit that flowed from the minimal good that was in him, or *meritum de congruo*, congruent merit. On the basis, then, of the *pactum* God would respond with the grace of justification; hence the medieval phrase, *Facientibus quod in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam*, "To those who do what is in them, God will not deny grace."[47] While justification was covenantally conceived, which was an improvement over a purely ontological conception of God's relationship to man, the maxim of *facere quod in se est* represented a return to the theology of Pelagianism.

Broader Theological Developments

In the theology of Aquinas and Duns Scotus as well as other medieval theologians, such as Gabriel Biel (c. 1420–95), we still see semi-Pelagian and even Pelagian constructs in their doctrines of justification.[48] However, we should also note that broader theological developments did pave the way for the Reformation. In the theology of Aquinas, and those committed to realism, the idea that universals have an existence separate from specific concrete entities, which drew upon the philosophy of Plato (c. 427–c. 348 B.C.) and is also known as the *via antiqua* (the "old way"), there was a greater emphasis upon seeing justification strictly in ontological terms.[49] With the turn from ontology to discussions on the will of God in the theology of those committed to nominalism, the idea that universals do not have real existence but are merely names applied to qualities found within certain individual objects and that is also known as the *via moderna* (the "modern way"), for example, in the theology of Biel and William of Ockham (c. 1288–c. 1348), we see the development of the intellectual framework in which the doctrine of justification could be considered in something other than in terms of ontology.[50] In other words, it seems that nominalism opened the door to a consideration of the forensic nature of justification, and more specifically, the doctrine of imputation. This development, combined with the renaissance of Augustinianism in the fourteenth century, such as in the theology of

47. Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 113.
48. McGrath, *Intellectual Origins*, 81–82; Heiko A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* (1963; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 146–84, esp. 175–78.
49. See Millard J. Erickson, *Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 140, s.v. "*realism.*"
50. Ibid., 116, s.v. "*nominalism.*"

Thomas Bradwardine (c. 1290–1349) and Gregory of Rimini (c. 1300–58), contributed to the intellectual development that made the Reformation possible.[51]

McGrath notes six things that one finds in late medieval Augustinian theology that likely contributed to the theology of the Reformation:

1. A strict epistemological nominalism.
2. A voluntarist, as opposed to intellectualist, understanding of the *ratio meriti* ("reckoning of merit"). Voluntarism emphasizes the role of the will contrasted with that of reason or intellect.[52]
3. The extensive use of the writings of Augustine, particularly his anti-Pelagian works.
4. A strongly pessimistic view of original sin, with the fall being identified as a watershed in the economy of salvation.
5. A strong emphasis upon the priority of God in justification, linked to a doctrine of special grace.
6. A radical doctrine of absolute double predestination.[53]

With these intellectual developments in mind, we can move forward to consider the doctrine of justification in the Reformation and post-Reformation periods. It is against this backdrop that one sees the Reformation begin to give a more precise expression and definition of the doctrine of justification.

Summary

In the Middle Ages we see the confusion of justification and sanctification, undoubtedly fueled by realistic ontological assumptions. Additionally, given the role of church tradition at this point in development of the doctrine, there were also the mixed emphases of the church fathers such

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51. Thomas Bradwardine, *De Causa Dei, Contra Pelagium et De Virtute Causarum, ad suos Mertonenses* (London, 1618); idem, "The Cause of God against the Pelagians," in *Forerunners of the Reformation*, ed. Heiko Oberman, trans. Paul L. Nyhus (London: Lutterworth, 1967); Heiko Oberman, *Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine, A Fourteenth Century Augustinian* (Utrecht: Kemink & Zoon, 1957). Also see Gregory of Rimini, *Super Primum et Secundum Sententiae* (1522; St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1955); Gordon Leff, *Gregory of Rimini* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961).

52. Erickson, *Dictionary*, 180, s.v. "*voluntarism.*"

53. McGrath, *Intellectual Origins*, 104; Heiko A. Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation* (1986; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 107.

as the old law–new law confusion that also influenced the theological discourse at the time. We may note, though, that if the resolution of the Augustine-Pelagius debate brought justification closer to right of center in the conciliar declarations of Ephesus and Orange, in the Middle Ages the doctrine drifted heavily toward the neonomian pole, though there were of course notable exceptions to this trend in such Augustinians as Bradwardine and Gregory of Rimini. There was, however, the important coordination of the doctrine of the covenant, or *pactum*, with justification, such as in the theology of Duns Scotus, which was a positive introduction of the *historia salutis*, which would be more fully developed in the Reformation and post-Reformation periods.

The Reformation and Post-Reformation (1517–1700)

The Reformation (1517–65): Luther and Calvin

With the cry of the Renaissance, *ad fontes*, "to the sources," the theologians of the Reformation studied the Scriptures in the original languages. From their study of the Scriptures, the Reformers concluded that "to justify" meant "to declare righteous," not "to make righteous." It was, of course, Martin Luther (1483–1546) and John Calvin (1509–64) who made a significant impact upon the church's understanding of justification. Luther argued that sinners cannot be righteous through their own good works, but that it is only faith in Christ that justifies the ungodly. The unrighteous are justified by faith, therefore, and it is the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to the believer. It is in the writings of Luther and Calvin where the doctrine of imputation comes to the foreground.

In the winter of 1515–16, early in his career, Luther commented on Romans 3:28, "*For we hold*, recognize and affirm, we conclude from what is said *that a man is justified*, reckoned righteous before God, whether Greek or Jew, *by faith, apart from works of the law*, without the help and necessity of the works of the Law."[54] Luther's exegetical spade work eventually was codified in early Reformation confessions such as the Augsburg Confession (1530), which explains that justification is by faith alone:

> Men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works but are freely justified for Christ's sake through faith when they believe

54. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, LW 25 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1974), 33.

that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us.[55]

The Reformed wing of the Reformation gave similar expression to its understanding of justification.

Calvin defines justification as "the acceptance with which God receives us into his favor as righteous men. And we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness."[56] Calvin largely appealed to three central texts to support his definition (Rom. 4:6–7; 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:18–21). Unlike Augustine, however, both Luther and Calvin made the important distinction, but not separation, between justification and sanctification. Luther, for example, saw the need for the law in the life of the believer after his conversion, which was informative for good works and sanctification. In Luther's 1535 commentary on Galatians, which reflects his mature thought on the doctrine of justification, Luther writes:

> The matter of the Law must be considered carefully, both as to what and as to how we ought to think about the Law; otherwise we shall either reject it altogether, after the fashion of the fanatical spirits who prompted the peasants' revolt a decade ago by saying that the freedom of the Gospel absolves men from all laws, or we shall attribute to the Law the power to justify. Both groups sin against the Law: those on the right, who want to be justified through the Law, and those on the left, who want to be altogether free of the Law. Therefore we must travel the royal road, so that we neither reject the Law altogether nor attribute more to it than we should.[57]

In the end, Luther saw a need for the law in the life of the believer so that it could guide him in his good works. Moreover, one easily sees Luther rightly recognize the two extremes of antinomianism and neonomianism.

Luther saw a necessary connection between justification and sanctification which was manifest in the importance he placed on the law:

55. Augsburg Confession 4, in Pelikan and Hotchkiss, *Creeds*, 2:60.

56. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill, LCC 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 3.11.2.

57. Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, LW 26 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), 343. Regarding the development in Luther's thought see Carl Trueman, "Simul peccator et justus: Martin Luther and Justification," in *Justification in Perspective*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 73–98, esp. 74.

Here, then, we have the Ten Commandments, a summary of divine teaching on what we are to do to make our whole life pleasing to God. They are the true fountain from which all good works must spring, the true channel through which all good works must flow. Apart from these Ten Commandments no action or life can be good or pleasing to God, no matter how great or precious it may be in the eyes of the world.[58]

So, then, Luther believed that good works were necessary for salvation, as the fruit of one's justification, not as the ground of justification. To this same end, Calvin gave expression to his famous analogy: "The sun, by its heat, quickens and fructifies the earth, by its beams brightens and illumines it. Here is a mutual and indivisible connection. Yet reason itself forbids us to transfer the peculiar qualities of the one to the other."[59] Calvin's point is the same as Luther's, though from a different angle. Justification and sanctification are necessary elements of salvation, though they are different, and one does not want to confuse the two.[60]

In this way we can see that Calvin and Luther, as well as other Reformers, could appropriate that which they believed was scriptural but at the same time depart from the church fathers when they believed they were in error. Calvin, for example, dissects Augustine's thought on justification and traces it as it comes through the Middle Ages through Peter Lombard (c. 1095–1160):

It is clear from their own writings that in using the term "grace" they are deluded. For Lombard explains that justification is given to us through Christ in two ways. First, he says, Christ's death justifies us, while love is aroused through it in our hearts and makes us righteous. Second, because through the same love, sin is extinguished by which the devil held

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58. Martin Luther, "Large Catechism," in *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 428. Luther also says: "Therefore it is not without reason that the Old Testament command was to write the Ten Commandments on every wall and corner, and even on garments. Not that we are to have them there only for display, as the Jews did, but we are to keep them incessantly before our eyes and constantly in our memory and to practice them in all our works and ways. Each of us is to make them a matter of daily practice in all circumstances, in all activities and dealings, as if they were written everywhere we look, even wherever we go or wherever we stand. Thus, both for ourselves at home and abroad among our neighbors, we will find occasion enough to practice the Ten Commandments, and no one need search far for them" ("Large Catechism," 431).

59. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.6.

60. J. V. Fesko, "Calvin on Justification and Recent Misinterpretations of His View," *MAJT* 16 (2005), 83–114.

us captive, so that he no longer has the wherewithal to condemn us. You see how he views God's grace especially in justification, in so far as we are directed through the grace of the Holy Spirit to good works. Obviously, he intended to follow Augustine's opinion, but he follows it at a distance and even departs considerably from the right imitation of it. For when Augustine says anything clearly, Lombard obscures it, and if there was anything slightly contaminated in Augustine, he corrupts it. The schools have gone continually from bad to worse until, in headlong ruin, they have plunged into a sort of Pelagianism. For that matter, Augustine's view, or at any rate his manner of stating it, we must not entirely accept. For even though he admirably deprives man of all credit for righteousness and transfers it to God's grace, he still subsumes grace under sanctification, by which we are reborn in newness of life through the Spirit.[61]

Here we see quite clearly that Calvin interacted with patristic and medieval theology, which of course illustrates the organic nature of the Reformation to earlier church history.[62] In this sense, the Reformation is certainly a continuation of theological development that began in the earliest days of the church. However, this does not mean that the Reformers adopted medieval or patristic thought wholesale. Rather, they critically adopted those trends and positions they believed were faithful to Scripture.

In addition to the critical use of patristic and medieval theology, we also see the refinement of the law-gospel hermeneutic during the Reformation and post-Reformation periods. Both Lutheran and Reformed theologians employed the law-gospel hermeneutic, namely recognizing those portions of Scripture that brought moral demands upon the believer in contrast with those that offered promised redemption. Hence, Lutherans believe that "everything that condemns sin is and belongs to the proclamation of the law."[63] By contrast, the gospel is "the kind of teaching that reveals what the human being, who has not kept the law and has been condemned by it, should believe: that Christ atoned and

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61. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.15.

62. On Calvin's use of patristic theology, see Anthony N. S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999). And, more broadly, for the use of the patristics in Reformation theology, see Irena Backus, *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 2:537–700. Likewise, we see Luther, for example, who interacted with medieval theology and was familiar with both the *via antiqua* and *via moderna*, yet carved his own path in his own theology (see Oberman, *Dawn of the Reformation*, 120; idem, *The Reformation* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994], 18–21).

63. Formula of Concord 5.3–4 in *The Book of Concord*, ed. Kolb and Wengert, 500.