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### Justification in the Old Testament

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JUSTIFICATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A Thesis presented to the  
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary

in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Divinity

by

Fred R. Lammert

Concordia Seminary,  
April 15, 1935

Approved by

Th. Engelder

J. T. Mueller

## Outline of the Thesis.

### Introduction:

Why it is written.

Testimony of Scripture and Confession.

Summary of Doctrine as found in Dogmatics.

Definitions:

Justification.

Other terms used.

Outline of Paper.

### I. Righteousness Demanded by God.

A. The justice of God which demands this righteousness.

1. His justice and righteousness.

2. God's demands. Lev. 19, 2.

B. The righteousness which is not included in this.

1. Civil righteousness, following the ceremonial law.

2. The term "righteous" man.

C. Failure of man to come up to God's standard.

### II. How man obtains the righteousness which justifies.

A. God declares man just.

1. It is an act of God.

2. It is done by grace.

B. Covenant of God.

1. Made first with the patriarchs.

2. Made with Israel.

3. Sacraments given.

4. God's grace revealed.

C. Faith Counted.

1. Abraham's faith. Gen. 15, 6.

2. It is by grace.

3. Hab. 2, 4.

D. The Sacrifices.

1. They signify the forensic act of justification.

2. Faith is necessary, not *ex opere operato*.

E. Forgiveness of Sins.

1. God offers this forgiveness.

a) In the Psalms.

b) In the Prophets.

2. Confession of sins necessary to obtain benefits.

3. It is a full and perpetual forgiveness.

4. It is by grace.

F. The Imputation of Righteousness.

1. Our sins are placed on Christ.

2. His merits are put to our credit.

3. This is done freely by grace.

4. Faith is necessary to accept it.

### Conclusion:

## JUSTIFICATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This topic needs discussion not only because of the value of such study, but also because of the large amount of opposition to the Old Testament at the present time and the immense forces that are directing their efforts to overthrow the Old Testament. On the one hand we have those opponents who because of anti-Semitic fanaticism want to reject the Old Testament from the outset, while on the other hand we meet those who wish to oppose the Old Testament by their own conjectures and thus overthrow it. The latter, negative Bible critics, try to find in the books of the Old Testament something which isn't there, but which they place there. They try to find a development of doctrine. They claim that in the early stages of the history of the people of the Old Testament the people were not fully civilized and that their beliefs were still in the early stages of development. Gradually as they became more civilized they invented new doctrines and developed them. Thus these critics try to find totemism and fetishism in the early history of the Hebrews (Gen. 29, 17; Ex. 33, 1; 1 Kings 12). This they trace later to animism, polytheism, deism and finally to monotheism. They hold that very late in the history of the Hebrews, even after the Exile, these Hebrews first came into possession of a monotheistic religion. The claim is made that only at the end of the period of development, after the Exile, did the Hebrews come into possession of the religion that was later taught and believed. It shall be the purpose of this paper to show that we must reject any such unwarranted opinion. I shall bring the evidence in regard to one doctrine, namely that of the justification of the sinner before God, which is the central doctrine of the Christian religion, to show that we cannot hold that there was a development of doctrine. Naturally the doctrine is not presented as completely and fully as in the New Testament, because Christ had not yet come. Nevertheless, the doctrine is presented in the Old Testament with sufficient clearness

for anyone to understand it. That I shall show. In presenting such evidence I shall restrict myself to the Old Testament passages.

The New Testament testifies to the fact that the Old Testament had the same Gospel, when it tells us that the Old Testament taught the way of salvation. "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10, 43). And Peter testifies (Acts 15, 11): "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they (i.e. the fathers in the Old Testament, cf. v.10)."

To this we add the testimony of the confessions. "The promise of Christ who was to come was transmitted from one patriarch to the other, and they knew and believed that God through the blessed Seed, through Christ, wished to give blessing, grace, salvation, and consolation. Therefore, since they understood that Christ would be the treasure by which our sins should be paid, they knew that our works could not pay such a great debt. Therefore they received forgiveness of sin, grace, and salvation without<sup>any</sup> merit and were saved through faith in the divine promise, the Gospel of Christ, just as the saints in the New Testament." \* "For also the patriarchs and saints in the Old Testament became righteous and were reconciled to God through faith in Christ who was to come, through whom salvation and grace were, just as we in the New Testament receive grace through faith in Christ who has been made manifest. For from the beginning all believers believed that an offering and payment for sin would be made, namely, Christ, who was promised, as Isaiah (53, 10) says:

'When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin.'" † "For from the beginning of the world no saint has been saved in any other way than through faith in the same Gospel." i.

\* Apol. IV, 57, German text. Trig. p.136. Also Apol. XII, 54, p.265.  
† Apol. XXIV, 55, German text. Trig. p. 402.  
i. Apol. XII, 73. Trig. p. 273.

Luther writes as follows: "The forgiveness of sins has been the same at all times. Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Therefore they (David and the patriarchs) were saved through faith in Christ, who was to come; but we receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith in the Lord Christ who has already been given unto us, who dies for us, and is now sitting in His glory." \* And again: "(Forgiveness) was purchased once on the cross, but the distribution takes place often, before and afterwards, from the beginning of the world to the end. For since He resolved to procure it, it was indifferent to Him whether He, through His Word, distribute it before or afterwards." †

In order to show that men were justified in the Old Testament in the same way that we are justified, it is necessary to present the doctrine of justification as it is clearly presented and taught in the New Testament.

In "Christian Dogmatics" we have this summary: "Holy Scripture quite simply describes the act of justification negatively as a 'forgiving of sins,' or a 'covering of sins,' or a 'non-imputation of sins,' and positively as the 'counting of faith for righteousness.' Subjective justification may therefore be defined as the act of God by which He removes from the believer the sentence of condemnation to which he is subject because of his sin, releases him from his guilt, and ascribes to him the merit of Christ." †. In the dogmatical section of "Popular Symbolics" we find these statements: "Justification is a judicial act of God. The sins of the world being forgiven because of the vicarious atonement of Christ, God pronounces the sinner righteous who by faith accepts this universal pardon offered in the Gospel, imputing to him the righteousness of Christ... Good works

\* St. Louis Ed. Vol. V, 553.

† St. Louis Ed. Vol. XX, 275.

1) Christian Dogmatics, Prof. J. T. Mueller, page 367.

have no bearing whatever on the sinner's justification... God forgives sins freely, pronouncing him righteous who has no righteousness of his own. The forgiveness of sins is free... Justification is not partial nor progressive, but perfect. The believers have at all times the same full and perfect forgiveness... The sinner is justified by God's grace, freely. The grace is the favor and good will of God toward the sinner gained by Christ's vicarious satisfaction. The forgiveness of sins is an unearned, unmerited, gift of grace... The righteousness of Christ, appropriated by faith constitutes our righteousness" (p.63f.). This is explained in the same way in the confessions of the church: "Concerning the righteousness of faith before God we believe, teach, and confess unanimously, in accordance with the comprehensive summary of our faith and confession presented above, that poor sinful man is justified before God, that is, absolved and declared free and exempt from all his sins, and from the sentence of well-deserved condemnation, and adopted into sonship and heirship of eternal life, without any merit or worth of our own, also without any preceding, present, or any subsequent works, out of pure grace, because of the sole merit, complete obedience, bitter suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us for righteousness." \*

Likewise our confessional writings show how this doctrine is explained by the meaning of the word "justify." "Accordingly, the word justify here means to declare righteous and free from sins, and to absolve one from eternal punishment, for the sake of Christ's righteousness, which is imputed by God to faith, etc." (i) "To be justified does not mean that a righteous man is made from a wicked man, but to be pronounced righteous in a forensic sense." (i. "To justify signifies, according to forensic usage, to acquit a guilty one and declare him righteous, but on account of the righteousness of another (namely of Christ)." (ii.

\* Formula of Concord, Th.D. III, 9. Also A.C. IV. F.C. Ep. III, 4.

† Formula of Concord, Th.D. III, 17.

(i. Apol. III, 131.

(ii. Apol. III, 184.

(ii. Apol. III, 184.

Before proceeding into the discussion of the doctrine as presented and explained in the Old Testament it is necessary that we keep several points in mind. It is significant that, whereas the New Testament uses the term justification three times (Rom. 4,25; 5,16.18), this term does not occur in the Old Testament. Yet the doctrine of justification is clearly taught in the Old Testament by a description of justification rather than by the use of this term. Justification is clearly taught in the Old Testament, since the act of justification is clearly explained. In order that this may become the clearer, I shall list the words that are used in the Old Testament to explain justification.

The verb פִּיטַי is used 41 times and <sup>in</sup> 17 of these <sup>passages</sup> it has the meaning of "to justify." The meaning of this verb can best be seen from passages such as Deut. 25, 1: "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked;" 1 Kings 8, 32 and Is. 5, 23. The righteous man is not made better, but the judge vindicates his position as satisfactory to the law. It has the meaning here of declaring, pronouncing, just. In this legal sense the verb is used in other passages, where the Lord condemns the judge who declares the wicked as just and innocent (Prov. 17, 15). The Lord Himself declares that the wicked must be condemned and that He will not declare the wicked just before men (Ex. 23, 7). In the earlier passages the verb "justify" is not used to indicate God's justification of the sinner in His sight. In Isaiah we first find it used in that sense (Is. 45, 25; 50, 8; 53, 11). From the passages mentioned above it becomes clear that the meaning of פִּיטַי is "to declare just," and therefore it is in accordance with the use of the word to discover in the passages of Isaiah the judicial act of God by which He declares the man just.

פִּיטַי means righteous, upright, virtuous, pious, good. It is a term that is applied to believers. This word will be discussed more thoroughly later under Part I.



Like  $\text{P}^{\prime}\text{T}^{\prime}\text{Y}$  the word  $\text{ר}^{\prime}\text{W}^{\prime}$ , straight, upright, righteous, is used not only of God's perfection, but also of man, referring not so much to the imputed righteousness as to the virtues of man that are his as a result of the imputed righteousness. 1 Sam. 29, 6: "Surely, as the Lord liveth, thou hast been upright." Job. 1, 8; 23, 7; Ps. 11, 7.

$\text{ר}^{\prime}\text{D}^{\prime}$ . This verb is used 70 times in the sense of "make atonement," twice in the sense of "forgive," and 8 times in the sense of "purging and cleansing." The Piel form means "to cover over" sin or guilt, i.e. to expiate the sins. Some theologians try to empty this word of its meaning in order to prove their denial of the atonement. Thus Franks says of Ritschl: "The protective covering of the offences, by the priestly actions, from the face of God, includes in general no reference to their sins, but has respect only to the fact that they are perishable men (Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung. II<sup>2</sup>, p. 204). To translate the Hebrew word Kipper (to cover) in the sense of to propitiate is a mistake (ibid. pp. 187, 220-3)." (\* But that is missing the sense of the verb. According to Gesenius we find the word used chiefly in two ways; 1. In the sense of (God as subject) covering, i.e. forgiving sin. Ps. 65, 3: "As for our transgressions, Thou wilt purge them away." Ps. 78, 38: "But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity." Ps. 79, 9; Jer. 18, 23; Deut. 21, 8; Is. 6, 7. 2. In the sense of appropriating the forgiveness of sin (man, specifically the priest or high-priest as subject), making atonement. Ex. 30, 10.16.

$\text{N}^{\prime}\text{W}^{\prime}$ , to take up, lift, is another word that indicates God's forgiving of sins. This verb is used with the dative of persons and means "to forgive or pardon." Is. 2, 9: "Therefore forgive them not." Gen. 18, 24.26; Hos. 1, 6; Is. 33, 24: "The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

$\text{N}^{\prime}\text{S}^{\prime}$ , forgive, pardon. The primary idea here is that of taking away, lifting up, as in  $\text{N}^{\prime}\text{S}^{\prime}$ . So when it is used of God's lifting or taking away sins, it denotes "forgiving." Num. 14, 19; Ex. 34, 9: "Pardon our <sup>iniquity</sup> iniquity."

(\* Franks, A History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ, p.338.

and our sin." Ps. 25, 11: "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." 1 Kings 8, 34.36; Jer. 33, 8. The LXX term is ἀφίημι, which is likewise used in the New Testament and is translated "forgive."

πιστῆν. The Hiphil form of this verb denotes: to trust, confide in, believe, accept as true, <sup>have</sup> absolute faith in something. Is. 7, 9: "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." Gen. 45, 26: "And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." Ex. 4, 1.8.9; Prov. 14,15; Ps. 106, 24. The noun from this verb we find especially in Hab. 2, 4.

חַטָּאת + עֲוֹנוֹת. These nouns are used for sin, trespasses, sinfulness, and also for the offering for the sin or trespass. There is a distinction made between sin offering and trespass offering, but the difference between the two is not apparent. Lev. 6, 17: "It is most holy, as is the sin offering, and as the trespass offering." Lev. 4, 35; 1 Sam. 6,3; 2 Kings 12, 17; Is. 53, 10: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin," These words are important, because they are used for the offering for sin and trespass, especially in Is. 53, 10, where it is used of Christ's offering for sin.

Having determined the meaning of the terms that are used in the Old Testament to explain how man is justified before God, we can now proceed and see just what the Old Testament Scriptures teach on this point.

We shall consider:

I. The righteousness Demanded by God.

- A. The justice of God which demands this righteousness.
- B. The righteousness which is not included in this.
- C. Failure of man to come up to God's standards.

II. How man receives the righteousness which justifies.

- A. God declares man just.
- B. God made a covenant.
- C. Faith is counted.
- D. The sacrifices which signify the justifying act of God.
- E. The Forgiveness of Sins.
- F. The Imputation of Righteousness.

## I. The Righteousness Demanded By God.

God dealt with the covenant people of the Old Testament according to the statutes (Ex. 18, 16) and the sentence of the Law (Deut. 17, 11). This law of God (Is. 1, 10; Jer. 31, 33 -  $\text{לִפְנֵי הַיְיָ}$ ) was to them a guide. In it God revealed Himself. In His dealings with the people of Israel God showed His attributes and characteristics.

Holiness is applied to God and it is made practically synonymous with His name (Ps. 111, 9; 99, 3). In Is. 5, 16 (God that is holy) and Lev. 19, 2 (for I the Lord your God am holy) He is distinctly called holy. In passages such as Lev. 10, 3; 22, 31-32 God's holiness is referred to in that the people must sanctify themselves before dealing with God.

The judgment of God ( $\text{מִשְׁפָּט}$ ) is called true and righteous (Ps. 19, 9). His judgments are upright and His testimonies righteous and very faithful (Ps. 119, 137, 138). In the Pentateuch the concept of God as righteous does not occur except Ex. 9, 27 (where Pharaoh calls God righteous) and Deut. 32, 4 (in the Song of Moses where God is called right and just). The reason for that can be found in the fact that the meaning of the word  $\text{צָדִיק}$  varies. If  $\text{צָדִיק}$  is used alone it simply means straight, but its use with other words has given it the meaning of just (Lev. 19, 36 - just balances etc; Deut. 25, 15 - just weight). In later books the term is applied to God more regularly as 2 Chron. 12, 6 (The Lord is righteous); Lam. 1, 18; Neh. 9, 33; Dan. 9, 14; Ps. 7, 2; 129, 4. By that time the term had been established to mean just and right.

The justice of God is established by His dealings with Israel, for that Ex. 34, 6 speaks of Him as "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." So God is also described in Num. 14, 17-20; Ps. 116, 5. The same thought occurs in the Psalms repeatedly, as in Ps. 103, 8 and Ps. 145, 8: "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy." This thought is also included in the term goodness ( $\text{טוֹב}$ ) as found in Ps. 86, 5 ("Thou, Lord, art good"); Ps. 145, 7; and Is. 63, 7. Since God is "good and upright" (Ps. 25, 8;

7577 2701, He is also just in His dealings, punishing the wicked and helping the "righteous." He is the Judge of the world, judging right and wrong. He is a "God of judgment" (Is. 30, 18 and Mal. 2, 17). His judgments are judgments of righteousness and justice (Is. 58, 2; Ps. 33, 5; 37, 28). As a righteous judge He judges properly (Jer. 11, 20; Ps. 7, 8.17; Ps. 35, 24). If God is nothing but justice and righteousness, then this righteousness must also show itself. Of God the Psalmist declares: "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; Thy judgments are a great deep" (Ps. 36, 6). So David in Ps. 19, 9 calls the Law and the commandments of God "true and righteous altogether."

Thus the Old Testament Scriptures are filled with expressions that ascribe justice and righteousness to God. Since God chose Israel to be His people (Ex. 19, 5-6), therefore He also gave them the Law: "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19, 2; Lev. 20, 7.26). The children of Israel were well informed as to God's will and as to what God wanted them to do. "Ye shall keep My statutes and My judgments; which, if a man do, he shall live in them" (Lev. 18, 5). "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this Law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen" (Deut. 27, 26). The righteous, the just and holy God demanded that men keep His Laws in order to avoid the curse of the Law. The demand was that they be holy and keep the Law perfectly, even as God had given it (Deut. 5, 32; 12, 32; Prov. 30, 6). That they were not able to do this, we shall see later.

We must be careful not to be misled by the terms. Whereas the children of Israel could not keep the moral law as God demanded it of them, they could, however, keep the civil and ceremonial laws. As members of the state they were in duty bound to keep these laws and the promises and threats connected with these were temporal. Thus an outward righteousness was possible for them. Such outward obedience of these regulations God promised to reward with peace in the land which He gave them, Deut. 7-8; Lev. 26, 3 ff. On the other hand they were threatened with punish-

ment if they did not follow these regulations, Deut. 28; Is. 3, 10-11. Yet this outward obedience, obedience to the civil and ceremonial laws, which obedience was expected of them as members of the Jewish nation, did not satisfy the demand of God that they must be holy and righteous in order to be saved. That an outward conformity to the law was not really fulfilling the law is pointed out already by Samuel: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." (1 Sam. 15, 22)

Yet some of the people are called "righteous" ( Ṣḏ ). When God is called righteous (Ps. 145, 17), it means that He is absolutely holy and just. But this term is applied to men in a different sense. Ṣḏ, in its application to men, means righteous, upright, virtuous, pious good. Noah is called righteous (Gen. 7, 1) and so is Lot (Gen. 18, 23f), but they certainly were not holy and sinless. Their sins are recorded for us (Gen. 9, 21; 19, 33). Rather the term Ṣḏ is equivalent to a "believer." Only by keeping this meaning of the term in mind will we be able to understand the references made to the "righteous" in the Psalms, e.g. Ps. 1, 6 (For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous); 11, 7; 34, 19; 37, 21; 146, 8. This word is used in the Proverbs in the same sense (Prov. 10, 25; 11, 31). The same term is found in Hab. 2, 4 (The just shall live by his faith). Ṣḏ, therefore, does not designate a person who is holy and sinless, but refers to the believer. The "righteous" person is therefore often contrasted to the wicked (1 Kings 8, 32). They are, for example, spoken of in the Psalms as such who do not retaliate (Ps. 7, 5; 38, 20), as helping others (Ps. 37, 21), as speaking truth and avoiding lies (Ps. 15, 2-3), as not becoming angry or covetous at the success of the wicked (Ps. 37, 1. 7-8), but in saying this the Psalmist is describing one who is a believer and as such is able to perform such acts by grace. Thus it is quite evident that the meaning of "righteous", as found particularly in the Psalms, does not

indicate one who has any inherent righteousness or holiness, but it refers to the believer, one who fears the Lord (Ps. 34, 7).

But some passages in the Psalms seem to indicate that God judges His people according to the righteousness within them, that He recognizes their righteousness and declares them righteous as a reward. Ps. 7, 8: "The Lord shall judge the people; judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me." Ps. 18, 21-25: "For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God.... Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight." Also Ps. 17, 3-5; 25, 21; 26, 1. Such an opinion cannot be held after studying the places more carefully. That Ps. 18, 21-25 does not speak of any inherent righteousness we see from the context (v.32) which says that God makes perfect the way and leads them. So also Ps. 7, 8 does not say that God justifies people because of any human merit, for the entire psalm speaks, not of the righteousness that justifies, but of the righteousness that a believer demonstrates in his life. Therefore also the Psalmist asks (Ps. 25, 7): "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions" and (Ps. 26, 11): "Be merciful unto me." Thus these passages use the term "righteous", not in any sense to indicate that man could be saved because of any inherent good qualities, but show that man is dependent for salvation upon the mercy of God.

Rather the Old Testament tells us that man did not come up to the standard set by God in Lev. 19, 2, but that he failed absolutely. All are sinners and none, no not one, can in the sight of God appear righteous in himself (Ps. 14, 3). It is impossible for any person to fulfill God's commandments, doing that perfectly which God has enjoined and avoiding that which God has forbidden, "for there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not" (Eccl. 7, 20). From his very beginning, from conception and birth, man is sinful (Ps. 51, 5), so "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." (Job. 14, 4) "Who can say: I have made <sup>I have made</sup>

my heart clean, I am pure from my sins?" (Prov. 20, 9) Even at best man is not good. "But we are all as an unclean thing, (says the prophet), and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Is. 64, 6). The prophet does not say, "Our sins are an abomination," but "our righteousnesses, and all of them, are as filthy rags." All that is good in man, the best, is evil and filthy, full of sin and wicked. So God declares: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8, 21). These words are not spoken of the wicked, but when God spoke these words, He had before Him the few righteous (believers), the men and women who were saved from the waters of the deluge. So man's virtues would condemn him, if he would be judged according to them at the tribunal of divine justice. Therefore the Psalmist asks the Lord: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Ps. 143, 2). The psalmist has tried to perform the demands of his Master, but he knows that before God's awful throne he would be found wanting, and not only he but every other living person in this world. Hence he asks the Lord to deal with him in grace and mercy, v. 8 and 12.

So the Old Testament shows that the righteousness demanded by the Law could not be brought forth, even by those who were called righteous. Man could, therefore, not be justified by the Law. So we must ask with Bildad: "How then can man be justified with God?" (Job. 25, 4). The answer to this we will discuss as we take up next the discussion of how man obtains the righteousness which justifies.

## II. How man obtains the righteousness which justifies.

### A. God declares man just.

Man is not justified by the law, but by a free act of God. "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength" (Is. 45, 25). God declares man righteous, who of himself is not righteous. The Lord does not count the sins, but forgives them, Ps. 130, 3-4: "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee,

that thou mayest be feared." God hates sin, but He has mercy on the sinner. Grace takes the place of anger in God. He is willing to declare the sinner just, for He speaks to him: "Come not, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Is. 1, 18). The case is brought before the tribunal of God, and, though man is blood-red with guilt, though the sins are scarlet, that is, double-dyed (as the Hebrew indicates), showing the deep-seated permanency of sin, God declares man just. His sins are made white. They are all removed and this is done a judicial act of God. The case is fully discussed and sentence passed, as the verb indicates. (\* Thus Israel was justified "in the Lord" (Is. 45, 25). For the sake of the promised Messiah they were justified, their sins forgiven, and declared just, as Isaiah says (53,11): "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." The verb פִּדְיָהוּ has the meaning of declaring just and righteous, as we saw before. It here indicates the judicial act of God by which the sinner is declared righteous. God has redeemed the sinners and freed them from sin (Is. 43,1; 62, 12). They are His redeemed. Whosoever will believe the Lord, whosoever will be willing to accept this decree of God, will receive the blessings promised (Is. 1, 19). All those who turn from their wicked ways and believe shall be justified in God's sight, for the prophet proclaims: "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins... he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him" (Ezek. 18, 21-22). It is God who removes the judgment from the sinner as we see in the case of David: "And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die" (2 Sam. 12, 13).

Having in general seen how God justifies the sinner and declares him just in His sight, we shall proceed and discuss the justification of the sinner in the sight of God, viewing it from various angles which show God's treatment of the sinner.

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(\* פִּדְיָהוּ Niph. of פָּדָה, to dispute, debate, and be convinced.



B. The Covenant of God

God took the initiative and chose to help man. This is seen in the covenant that God made. It was first made with the patriarchs. The Lord promised Abraham: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17, 7). It was repeated to Isaac (Gen. 26, 24) and to Jacob (Gen. 28, 13-15). God accepted them as His people and showered His blessings upon them. They themselves had done nothing to deserve this, but God chose them in His grace.

This covenant was later repeated and established with the children of Israel. For "Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said: Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words" (Ex. 24, 8). Therefore Moses says of the people, "for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God" (Deut. 7, 6; 14, 2). By the grace of God the children of Israel were included in this covenant. The Lord, says the Psalmist, "sheweth His word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation" (Ps. 147, 19-20). God showed His great mercy to the chosen race, as His relation to them indicates (Deut. 4, 31.33).

This covenant that God made with Israel shows God's treatment of mankind. It is but a representation of the new covenant which God makes with man through His Son. For the prophet Jeremiah records God's new covenant: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah..... I will be their God and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31, 31). God made a covenant with Israel in which He promised to restore their nation, but above all He promised to forgive their sins (v.34). Thus God's covenant with Israel shows the gracious and merciful relation of God to all sinners.

As a sign of His covenant with them the Lord gave the children of Israel certain sacraments. In the covenant with Abraham the Lord established circumcision. "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep,

between me and you and thy seed after thee: Every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Gen. 17, 10). Later the Passover was added as a second sacrament, a festival which the Israelites were to keep and to which God attached His promises (Ex. 12, 14). This sacrament, instituted in Egypt, was to be observed thereafter, also in the promised land, by them and their sons after them (Ex. 12, 24-25). It was later included in the ordinances which were given to the people (Lev. 23, 4-14). The Israelites were to observe this sacrament regularly, once a year.

These sacraments were a sign of God's blessing. God's grace was manifested (Ps. 89, 28) in that He determined to make the covenant with man, which God did out of His free grace and not because of any merit in man. The Passover was a sign of God's grace in that He passed over the children of Israel, when He smote the first-born of the Egyptians. The Passover was to be a continual reminder of this fact. It was to be a memorial festival (Ex. 12, 14). God promised His blessings to those who observed this sacrament. Likewise circumcision was a sign of God's grace, for by it they were to obtain forgiveness of sins. (\* Whosoever kept the rite of circumcision was to be blessed, while he who refused and thus broke the covenant was not to receive such blessings (Gen. 17,14).

God promised that He would <sup>keep</sup> the covenant. "My covenant will I not break" (Ps. 89, 34). This promise is frequently repeated and His promises are sure, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Is. 54, 10). This everlasting covenant (2 Sam. 23, 5) was the promise of God to His people by His grace to bless them and to save them.

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(\* Rom. 4, 11.

C. Faith Counted.

In viewing God's justifying act we observed that God made a covenant with man in which He promised grace and mercy to man. In considering the justifying act we discover that it was most simply revealed in this that God accepted man, and gave to the man, who believed in the promises of God, the needed righteousness. Faith was a requirement of justification, and it is very important that this be not overlooked.

While one could not be justified before God through the Law and through oneself, there was another way to salvation and righteousness before God. It is justification and salvation through faith. Gen. 15, 6 tells us in regard to Abraham that "he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." We notice that the later term for declaring just is not used (  $\text{פָּרַדְתָּ}$  ), but instead we have the circumlocution  $\text{נָסַף לְאֵלֶיךָ אֱמוּנָתוֹ}$ . We have a similar expression in Ps. 32, 2 and Ps. 106, 31. (cf. also 2 Sam. 19, 19). In the former passage it is used of counting iniquity. The circumlocution in Gen. 15, 6 is used to make the justifying act on the part of God the more evident, for it certainly is much easier to understand Scripture when it says that God counted, imputed, to him righteousness, than when it says that the Lord justified him. By faith he was justified, for we can be sure that Abraham was not so good and not so much better than other people that God would necessarily see something better in him, for Abraham several times denied his wife and once he even had to be reproved by a man not under God's covenant (Gen. 20, 9). Nor did God regard the good works of Abraham, but <sup>He</sup> rather disregarded them. It is true that Abraham built altars to the Lord (Gen. 12, 7; 13, 4), kept peace with Lot (13, 8-9), and had not sought his own advantage (14, 21-24). Yet God did not save him on account of these works, but by faith. Nor can we hold that the faith was a good work, since it was an act of obedience, for thus Abraham would have been justified by his good works. Therefore we cannot hold with Cremer, when he says: "Abrahams Glaube ist die gerechte

Sache, die er hat, und die ihm Gott als solche in Anrechnung bringt, die das verheissene Urteil Gottes fuer sich hat und den verheissenen Lohn empfaengt." (Quoted by Noesgen, Schrift-beweis fuer die evangelische Rechtfertigungslehre, p. 56). The confident reliance and dependence on the divine promise was not in itself anything to merit salvation, which should in the eyes of God be recognized as something worthy of recognition. But Abraham's faith was a faith in the promise of grace by God. Faith, being the acceptance of Christ and His righteousness, is, by virtue of what it has and holds, itself counted for righteousness. Abraham is justified, not "for faith's sake", but by or through faith. Faith is the means of acceptance. (Neh. 9, 8 need not destroy the meaning of believe here. There is a different relation between God and Abraham here than in Gen. 15, 6. In Gen. 15, 6 faith is counted to righteousness, and in Neh. 9, 8 God made a covenant because of the faithfulness of Abraham.)

Great importance is attached to faith, for faith is absolutely necessary in justification. It is not necessary for God's justifying act, objective justification, but it is necessary if man wants to accept this justification, subjective justification. The means of acceptance is necessary. Faith, therefore, appears as a means of salvation. Is. 7, 9: "If ye will not believe (  $\text{אֲנִי וְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל}$  ), surely ye shall not be established." Is. 28, 16 and Jonah 3, 5. When the spies returned (Num. 14, 11), God threatened to destroy Israel because of their lack of faith. Thus He shows how necessary faith is in accepting God's gracious promises.

But from the very beginning God accepted and justified those who believed in Him. Eve (Gen. 4, 1) believed the promise of God (Gen. 3, 15). Therefore also Adam and Eve were justified by faith. (\* Of Noah we are told:

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(\* In his sermon on Gen. 3, 14, 15 Luther says: "Here it is written that Adam was a Christian long before the Birth of Christ. For he had the same faith in Christ that we have. For in matters of faith, time makes no difference. Faith is of the same nature from the beginning to the end of the world. Therefore, he, through his faith, received the same that I receive. He did not see Christ with his eyes, neither did we, but he had Him in the Word; so we also have Him in the Word. The only difference is this: At that time

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6, 8). We cannot understand these words unless we keep in mind that Noah believed the words and promises of God and thus alone experienced the grace which God offers to all, but which only those experience who are willing to accept it in true faith. When Noah found grace in the eyes of God, the Lord counted also his faith unto him for righteousness, even as the faith of Abraham was counted. Again God's grace is revealed in the justification of man.

Besides Gen. 15, 6 there is another classic passage on faith in the Old Testament which we must not overlook. In Hab. 2, 4 the prophet tells us: "The just shall live by his faith." The man whose faith is based on the divine promises and prophecies, who trusts in the Messiah and expects to receive forgiveness and atonement of sins from Him, that man will experience the grace of God, by which his soul shall live. He shall live eternally and experience these blessings and the grace of God in everlasting bliss. The just shall live, not by works, but by faith. And because of this faith, he is just, righteous, in the sight of God. "He who relies on God's merciful promises in the Gospel would, and does, by this confidence, receive eternal life as a gift of God." (Kretzmann, Popular Commentary, p. 691). This verse from the prophet Habakkuk tells us that men are justified by faith, <sup>Apol.</sup> by which they believe that God is propitious, and furthermore this same faith quickens, because it produces in the heart peace and joy and eternal life." This verse is a contrast to justification by the law, for it is introduced by וְאֵלֶיךָ, and that indicates the importance of the saying. The prophet had more in mind than the fulfilment of Lev. 18,5; Deut. 6, 25; Prov. 4, 4 (righteousness by the law), for after the pompous introduction, as we have it v. 1-3, it would have been a banal expression to mention that they would be justified, if they kept the law. But the prophet is referring to the seeming contradiction, that man is not justified

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it was to come to pass, now it has come to pass. Accordingly all the Fathers were justified in the same manner, as we through the Word and through faith, and in this faith they also died." Luther, St. L. Ed. III, 85.

by the law, but by faith alone, through the grace of God. This expression of the prophet Habakkuk is so clear that St. Paul refers to it twice in the New Testament.\*

The Lord regards him who has faith. Jer. 5, 3 the prophet asks: "O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth (Hebrew, faith: אֱמוּנָה)?" By faith in the Messiah the penitent sinner will find grace in the eyes of God. And in ch. 53, 11 the prophet Isaiah says: "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." But what is meant by the knowledge of the Messiah except to know the benefits of the Messiah and the promises which are made through Him? And to know these benefits is properly and truly to believe in Christ, to believe that what which God has promised for Christ's sake He will certainly fulfill. The knowledge of the Messiah meant here is therefore an objective Genitive, hence a knowledge concerning the Messiah and a belief in the Messiah. It is a knowledge created by the Messiah whereby man accepts Him as Savior. Hence faith in the Messiah, the Righteous Servant, shall justify many, as many as believe in Him. The knowledge is no mere historical knowledge, but a living knowledge, faith by which a man accepts the Messiah and trusts in Him, even as Job exclaims (ch. 19, 25): "I know that my Redeemer liveth etc" and thereby declares that he believes, is convinced and trusts in this knowledge.

Faith therefore justifies man. Because of his faith man accepts the grace of God, the work of the Messiah. Thus faith was a prime requisite of salvation in the Old Testament, faith in the promises and prophecies of the Messiah. But the Israelites had a constant reminder of the work of the Messiah, because it was a shadow of the atonement, namely the sacrifices.

#### D. The Sacrifices.

These sacrifices of the children of Israel signified the forensic or judicial act of justification, by which God declared man, the sinner, just, by His grace. In the book of Leviticus the various offerings and

(\* Rom. 1, 17; Gal. 3, 11.)  
(\* Rom. 1, 17; Gal. 3, 11.)

sacrifices are described. Two kinds of sacrifices were prescribed, bloody and unbloody. We are interested especially in the bloody sacrifices. The idea in these bloody sacrifices was that of substitution. By transgressing the Law of God the Israelite forfeited his life and deserved to die. But the sacrificial victim became his substitute and died in the sinner's stead. Thus his sin was covered and blotted out with the blood of the sacrifice. His life was saved because the sacrificial animal died for him.

The most important sacrifice was the sin offering, as we see from Lev. 8. In this God accepted the death of the substitute. By the vicarious death of the victim the sinner was spared. Together with the sin-offering was the ceremony with the scape goat, Azazel, the Hebrew word as it occurs in Lev. 16, 8. The word occurs only in this passage and means "going away." This ceremony was to emphasize, and make still clearer, the fact that now the sins of the people were indeed removed, entirely put out of sight. It was an eloquent illustration of such words as those found Micah 7, 19; Is. 38, 17; Ps. 103, 12 ( See under Forgiveness for these passages). Moenkemoeller says of this: "And the goat was set free to signify that the sinners were now indeed free, free from the guilt and curse of their sins. While all the shedding of blood in the many sacrifices and so also in particular in the sacrifices of the Great Day of Atonement emphasized the necessity of an atoning equivalent to the unrighteousness of man that merits death, this one feature of the great day brought out in a most striking way the fact that the atonement symbolized by the death of the sacrificial victims was recognized and accepted by God as full and complete, that the justification of the sinner was perfect, in that the sins were gone and the sinner was free." (Moenkemoeller, Festivals and Sacrifices of Israel, p.22).

The sacrifice for sin therefore signified the forensic or judicial act of God in justifying the sinner. The sin and trespass offerings were wholly for expiatory purposes; they were sacrifices made especially to

21

atone for sins. It is remarkable how the truth that man is a sinful being, who needs above all else atonement for sins, is driven home in practically every phase of the prescribed worship of the Old Testament ritual.

Prominence is given to the necessity and certainty of an atonement for sin by blood. Blood was to be shed, for "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17, 11). The blood of the victim, shed for the guilty man, symbolized man's atonement with God. Man can appear before God only with the life-blood of a substitute. Man, despite his failings, is daily assured of God's favor through the blood of the atonement. In other words, we plainly see the reality of sin as the fatal factor in man's peace and the certainty of abounding grace to wash him clean from all sin.

In connection with the sacrifices we must also consider the sprinkling of the blood upon the mercy seat, the  $\text{כַּפֹּרֶת}$ . This was really the cover of the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25, 17ff; 30, 16; 31, 7). In the LXX it is called  $\epsilon\lambda\alpha\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\rho\iota\omicron\nu$  and Luther translates it "Gradenstuhl." In regard to the atonement this was the most important part of the temple. The blood of the sin offering on the great day of the atonement, once a year, was sprinkled on the cover of the ark of the covenant. (Lev. 16, 14ff. See 1 Chron. 28, 11) The two tables of the Law were in the ark, and since the Law had been broken and God made justly wroth, the high-priest sprinkled the cover of the ark with the blood of the sacrifice to signify the expiation of all Israel's sins.

The references to the sacrificial ordinances of Moses and the references in the prophets (Ezek. 45, 15.17) show a prefiguration of the atonement of Christ. Of this they were types and every Jew should have known them to be such.

The children of Israel had different sacrifices and offerings which they were to bring before the Lord. But God expected them to be brought in faith. God threatens to reject the sacrifices if they are not



made in faith. God speaking through the mouth of Asaph asks: "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" (Ps. 50, 13) Therefore David laments: "Sacrifices and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required." (Ps. 40, 6) God wants repentance and obedience rather than sacrifice. Ever since the days of Saul Israel was reminded: "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15, 22), for in Jer. 7, 23 the Lord admonishes, "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people," as He does Hos. 6, 6. Their sacrifices are condemned, because they are only "ex opere operato" acts, and are done because Israel believed that the simple performance of the sacrifice would do good. Israel therefore complains: "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?" (Is. 58, 3) But the Lord declares: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.. take thou away from me the noise of thy songs: for I will not hear the melody of thy viols" (Amos 5, 21-23).<sup>23)</sup>

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts: and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats" (Is. 1, 11, cf. Micah 6, 6-8). Why does the Lord not want to accept their sacrifices? Simply because they had not faith. The sacrifices of the believer the Lord willingly accepts. Only those ascend to the throne of glory (Ps. 24, 3-4; 26, 6; 4, 5). He who comes to God with a broken and contrite heart, who sacrifices in true faith, can be assured as is the Psalmist: "Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offerings and whole burnt offering; then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altars" (Ps. 51, 19). He alone who comes to God with a believing heart can be assured of the grace of God, the forgiveness of sins.

## E. The Forgiveness of Sins.

The possibility of obtaining righteousness with<sup>out</sup> the fulfilment of the Law is explained in the Old Testament in two ways, either by saying that the sins are forgiven, or by saying that righteousness is imputed to man. Each one describes justification completely, but each views the same act from a different point of view. In reality they coincide in the divine act of justification, for he whose sins are forgiven is righteous in the same way as he who has righteousness imputed to him. When God forgives and covers the sins of man, then man can stand before God perfectly holy and just. That which barred him is removed. For the sake of considering justification the more thoroughly the doctrine will be discussed from these two view points, forgiveness of sins and imputation of righteousness. The former will be discussed in this section and the latter in the next.

God offers man this forgiveness. In the covenant with Israel God is declared to be one "forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Ex. 34, 7). With the sacrifices of Israel the promise was made in regard to sin, that "it shall be forgiven him" (Lev. 4, 2f; 5, 6; 6, 7; Num. 15, 25f; Deut. 21, 8).

Here we recall the Hebrew words that are used to describe forgiveness:  $\text{כִּפֶּרְתִּי}$  - cover, purge;  $\text{לָקַחְתִּי$  - take away;  $\text{שָׁלַחְתִּי$  - send away.

$\text{כִּפֶּרְתִּי}$  is also used in the sense of "making atonement" and so we see the close connection between atonement and forgiveness. When God forgives sins, He justifies the sinner, but this can be viewed from different sides, as "covering the sins", or "taking away the sins", or "not counting the sins", or "not imputing the sins." Noesgen says in regard to this: "Die Rechtfertigung negativ beschrieben als ein Nichtanrechnen von Schuld ( $\text{לֹא חָשַׁבְתִּי עָוֹן}$ ) und positiv als Wegnahme der Uebertretung ( $\text{לָקַחְתִּי עָוֹן}$ ) und Bedecken der Sünde ( $\text{כִּפֶּרְתִּי עָוֹן}$ )."  $\text{לֹא חָשַׁבְתִּי עָוֹן}$

$\text{לֹא חָשַׁבְתִּי עָוֹן}$  ( $\text{לֹא חָשַׁבְתִּי עָוֹן}$ ) und positiv als Wegnahme der Uebertretung ( $\text{לָקַחְתִּי עָוֹן}$ ) und Bedecken der Sünde ( $\text{כִּפֶּרְתִּי עָוֹן}$ )."  $\text{לֹא חָשַׁבְתִּי עָוֹן}$

Noesgen, Op. cit. p. 62.

There is hardly a Psalm that does not contain a prayer for forgiveness of sins, or a confident expression of such hope because of the promise of God that He will forgive sins. David prays to the Lord: "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgression.. pardon mine iniquity.. and forgive all my sins" (Ps. 25, 7.11.18). And in the great penitential Psalm he pleads with the Lord: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to thy lovingkindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgression. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Ps. 51, 1-2). But David does not merely ask for forgiveness of sins, but he is confident that the Lord will forgive. He is confident that "with the Lord there is mercy and with Him plenteous redemption" (Ps. 130, 7). For "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sins" (Ps. 85, 2). "There is forgiveness with thee" (Ps. 130, 4). Therefore David in Psalm 130 exhorts the soul to bless the Lord "who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases" (v.3). The Lord really forgives sins as we read: "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin" (Ps. 85, 2). "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Ps. 32, 1-2). The Lord forgives, forgets, and removes sins. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103, 12; See also Ps. 65, 3; 78, 38).

Even clearer than in the Psalms do we find God's promises of forgiveness as He spoke them through the prophets. Not only do the prophets declare: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?" (Micah 7,18), but the forgiveness is spoken of as covering the sins, forgetting the sins, hiding them and not remembering them. I will but mention a few passages. The Lord speaks through Isaiah: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins... I, even I, an he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember

-25-

thy sins" (Is. 44, 22; 43, 25). Hezekiah says of the Lord: "For thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Is. 38, 7). And Jeremiah records the covenant of God, when the Lord promised: "for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31, 34).

What the writer of Ps. 32 expected by the non-imputing of the sins, that we see from the closely related Psalm (Ps. 51) in which the singer utters the prayer (v.7): "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." He expected as a result of his justification by God to be freed of guilt in spite of all the sins that he had committed and which were clinging to him. God's purifying alone can put man into a state of grace (Ps. 51, 1.14). That is possible only with those who repent and confess their sins.

While confession of sins does not obtain forgiveness, nevertheless, the confession of sins is necessary in order to obtain the promised forgiveness. Only he who is penitent will believe, and only he who believes can hope to receive the forgiveness. Says the Lord: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Is. 66, 2). "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51, 17). The Lord will have mercy on those that come to him with a broken heart and a contrite spirit (Ps. 34, 18). Only he who has a penitent and believing heart will ask for mercy and as a child of God accept God's forgiveness and grace (Ps. 86, 1-2). Therefore the prophet Joel urges true and sincere repentance. "Rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God" (Joel 2, 13).

He who does not confess his sins cannot hope to receive forgiveness, for he will not be willing to accept the forgiveness. Thus David complains that he could find no rest for his soul while he hid his sin within himself. In Psalm 32 he laments: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long" (v.3). But David, plagued by his conscience, finally was willing to admit his wrongs and confess his

sins to God, for he declares: "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord", and wonders of wonders, God's grace and great mercy revealed itself to him, for David is able to declare: "And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (v.5).

The forgiveness of sins is complete and full. In order to be justified by the forgiveness of sins, all have to be forgiven. There is no such thing as partial forgiveness, partial righteousness before God. The alternative is either justification or condemnation. And the Old Testament expressly asserts that man is justified by a complete forgiveness of his sins. The prophets say: "Thou wilt cast ALL their sins into depths of the sea" (Micah 7, 19); "thou hast cast ALL my sins behind thy back" (Is. 38, 17 - Ezek. 33, 16); and the Psalmist prays: "Forgive ALL my sins" (Ps. 25, 18) 39, 8); and praises him who "forgiveth ALL thine iniquities, who healeth ALL thy diseases" (Ps. 103, 3; 85, 3-4). The forgiveness of sins was complete. It was no partial forgiveness for Ezekiel declares: "Ye shall be clean" (Ezek. 36, 25). It does not sound like fractional forgiveness when Isaiah rejoices: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the robe of righteousness" (Is. 61, 10). And why does David pray: "Forgive ALL my sins" (Ps. 25, 18)? And again: "Deliver me from ALL my transgressions" (Ps. 39, 8)? And how can the Korathites pray: "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people, Thou hast covered ALL their sin. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: Thou hast turned Thyself from the fierceness of Thine anger" (Ps. 85, 2-3)? And David: "Bless the Lord, O my soul...who forgiveth ALL thine iniquities" (Ps. 103, 3)? And Ezekiel says: "If the wicked turn from his sin...none of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him" (Ezek. 33, 16). And Hosea: "Take with you words and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously" (Hos. 14, 2).<sup>17, 21</sup> Also Jer. 33, 8; Ps. 130, 8. The Lord forgives all sins, so that, though we are scarlet with guilt, we are made pure and white as snow (Is. 1, 18).

The justification of the sinner, being justification by faith, is furthermore constant and enduring. Even while we acknowledge our transgressions, and our sin is ever before us (Ps. 51, 3), we do not fear the judgment, because God forgives continually. We sin continually, but God forgives us continually. Ps. 32, 1-2, according to the Hebrew, says that the sin is being taken away and being covered up. Ps. 130, 3-4: "There is forgiveness (Hebrew: the forgiveness) with Thee." It is a perpetual forgiveness to cover all the sins. If God would stop forgiving, then man would be condemned. So David in Ps. 51 asks for continued forgiveness: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (v.2). And in Psalm 19 he prays: "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults" (Ps. 19, 12). So David in his psalms clearly indicates the necessity for continued forgiveness, because of continued sinning. And the Lord does grant perpetual forgiveness.

The forgiveness is by the grace of God. If justification were to be by works, then it would be, at its very best, imperfect, as even our best works are imperfect (Is. 64, 6). But David prays: "According to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness<sup>s</sup> sake, O Lord" (Ps. 25, 7). Especially in those two Psalms (32 and 51) which are filled with the forgiving grace of God and which expect the supreme results (51, 9) from God's justifying action for such as believe on Him in true faith, there we find no trace of the thought that God's saving grace shows itself also as justifying grace because of any merit which the one who prays has before God. There is no mention made that the sinner is declared just and righteous because of his trusting or because of any merit in him. In Ps. 103 David confesses his sins, but does not recount his merits. Instead he praises the mercy of God, who "hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (v.10). Apol. Art. IV; 57-59.

Ps. 32 and 51, which teach the justification of the sinner from the view point of forgiveness, do not tell us why God justifies, but it is indicated. Ps. 51, 7 refers to the cultic cleansing commanded in the Law,

which was a symbol of the justification, which God thus pointed out.

Ps. 32, 1 expects the removal of sins by covering the sins by means of an atoning sacrifice. Noesgen says in this connection: "Das an dieser Stelle sich findende seltene  $\text{𐤏𐤓𐤕}$  ist ein Synonymum des gebrauchlicheren  $\text{𐤏𐤓𐤕}$  und besagt, dass die Sünde vom Suender selber nicht gutgemacht, sonder nur durch etwas ihm Fremdes Gottes Auge entzogen werden kann" (Op. cit. p. 63). The sinner therefore does nothing to remove the sin, but something outside of the sinner must accomplish it. Ps. 51, 16 indicates how far from correct it is to assume that the offering of any sacrifice has an effect on God. God alone can create what atones and cleanses from sin (Ps. 51, 7: Wash me). There is something outside of man that moves God to forgive sins.

#### F. The Imputation of Righteousness.

When God forgives sin that is complete justification. But is it possible for God, who is a just God, to forget sins? His justice demands that punishment be inflicted. God Himself provided a substitute for man. The sins were to be borne and the law fulfilled by someone else, as the sacrifices already indicated. This is clearly taught by the prophet Isaiah, when in the 53rd chapter he teaches the imputation of sins to the Substitute and imputation of righteousness to the sinner.

The Righteous Servant, the promised Messiah, was to bear the sins of all, for the prophet says: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (v.6b). The Lord "hath made to rush upon Him" the iniquity of us all. The Hiphiel of  $\text{𐤏𐤓𐤕}$  is used in the sense of causing to land on and hence also means to lay upon. It is the Hiphiel (causative) of the verb which means "to fall upon," for the purpose of murder according to the use of the verb in Judges 8, 21 and 1 Sam. 22, 17 (would not put forth their hands to fall upon the priests of the Lord). The sin and the penalty of sin were placed upon Him with force, for they are the sins of all, of the whole world. This is to be the fulfilment of the act that was signified

by the priests (Lev. 16, 21-22), when he placed the sins of the people upon the scape-goat by placing his hand upon the head of the goat. The Messiah was not merely to be "an offering for sin" (v.10), but He was to be made sin, namely by imputation. The iniquity of us all, says the prophet, hath the Lord placed on Him. We notice that the singular is used, not iniquities, sin, but iniquity, the sin of the world. The whole sin was to be borne. The sin of the world is one and so the totality of sin was to be placed on Him. So the imputation of sins was to be general and complete, all the sins, the iniquity of all, being laid upon the "Lamb" (v.7) of God. The Messiah was to suffer because of our sins that were to be imputed to Him. "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows -- He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities" (Is. 53, 4.5). He bore, carried (  $\aleph \psi \square$  ) our griefs. They were placed upon Him and He bore them for us.

The Righteous Servant was to be a "sin offering." "Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin" (Is. 53, 10). His life was to be the  $\square \psi \aleph$  (cf. Intro.) for sin. His life was to be that offering for sin that was necessary to reconcile God. His life was to be sacrificed, because of the sins of man which were placed upon Him.

Only one sacrifice was necessary. From the foundation of the world the death of the Messiah was so present in the mind of God that He forgave sins for the sake of this death. This blood was efficacious before it was shed. The Righteous Servant was not slain from the foundation of the world, but from the foundation of the world redemption, forgiveness, has been based on His death. Isaiah, therefore, does not use the future, but the perfect. (\* Even at the time of Isaiah God forgave sins for the sake of the death of His Servant. We distinguish the atoning act from the justifying act. Atonement is a sacrificial act, while justification is a judicial act.

(\* Note the perfects: v.4:  $\aleph \psi \square$ ,  $\square \psi \square$ ; v.5:  $\square \square$ ; v.6:  $\psi \square \square$ )



As the prophet Isaiah continues in this wonderful chapter, he says: "By His knowledge shall my Righteous Servant justify many." The Messiah was to be the cause of man being declared just and righteous through a forensic act, as seen before. This was to be possible only for one reason, namely, "for He shall bear their iniquities" (v.11). Thus the imputation of the sins of man to the Messiah is the basis of justification. Man is justified because the Righteous Servant of God bears his sin. So the prophet definitely states in the last verse of this chapter: "He bore the sins of many." The "many" indicates that He bore the sins of all mankind. The word "many" is not used "exclusive", but "inclusive." The number of people whose sins He bore is not few but many.

The sins of man, says the prophet, were to be placed on the Messiah and He would bear them. So the sinner is assured of a complete reconciliation with God, inasmuch as the iniquities, which had separated between man and his God, which had hidden God's face from man (Is. 59, 2) were being imputed to and atoned for by the Substitute.

While the prophet Isaiah speaks so clearly in pointing out that man's sins are borne by his Substitute, he also indicates that the work of the Righteous Servant, the righteousness of the Messiah, was to be imputed to the sinner. When Isaiah says: "My Righteous Servant shall justify many" (v.11), he is saying that sinners shall be declared just and righteous. And where would the righteousness come from? From the Righteous Servant. Since the Messiah bears the sins of the sinner, the sinner can be declared righteous, because of the imputation of the perfect righteousness of the Messiah.

Already Elihu, when reproving Job speaks of the Messenger (Angel:  $\overline{\text{א}} \overline{\text{ל}} \overline{\text{א}} \overline{\text{ל}} \overline{\text{א}} \overline{\text{ל}}$ ) who announces and offers to man His righteousness, which avails before God (Job 33, 23). "For He will render unto man His righteousness" (Job 33, 26). This Messenger, who according to the description is the Messiah, offers ( $\overline{\text{א}} \overline{\text{ל}} \overline{\text{א}} \overline{\text{ל}}$  - Hiph. of  $\overline{\text{א}} \overline{\text{ל}} \overline{\text{א}} \overline{\text{ל}}$ ) to man His righteousness. Man then is saved by the divine righteousness which has been imputed

to him by the Messiah (Messenger). It would seem as though this passage in Job did not speak of the imputed righteousness, but a careful study as was shown before, of the context, shows that it does speak of the Messiah and the righteousness which He imputes to the sinner.

This is not the only passage in the Old Testament that speaks of imputed righteousness, but Isaiah contains several clear passages. "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength" (Margin: Surely he shall say of me, In the Lord is all righteousness and strength) (Is. 45, 24. And in ch. 61, 10 the prophet describes the process of imputation: "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." The robe of righteousness consists in the righteousness which the Messiah has acquired and which He offers the believers. It is the righteousness that the Messiah has acquired through His work. Their uncleanness (Is. 64, 6) is covered by a robe of perfect righteousness. This righteousness is spoken of as a beautiful wedding garment and an ornament with which the bride and bridegroom are adorned. So <sup>also</sup> Ps. 45 (esp. v.13) speaks of the ornaments of the bride of Christ, the church, by which are meant the imputed righteousness. It is God that adorns the believer with this righteousness. With such clear description of the imputation of righteousness it is no wonder that such a beautiful German prayer can be the prized possession of many as: "Christi Blut und Gerechtigkeit, das ist mein Schmuck und Ehrenkleid. Damit will ich vor Gott bestehen, wenn ich <sup>zum</sup> Himmel werd<sup>e</sup>ingehen," or as Count von Zinzendorf (trans. by John Wesley) expressed it "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness, My beauty are, my glorious dress."

This imputation is also clearly taught in a vision of Zechariah (Zech. 3, 3-4). The prophet sees Joshua clothed with filthy garments. His filthy garments, his iniquity, is made to pass from him and he is clothed "with a change of raiment." This change of raiment is the same robe of

righteousness of which Isaiah speaks. Man is clothed with righteousness, which is imputed to him because of the merits of the Messiah.

Jeremiah clearly shows whose righteousness is imputed to man. He prophesied of the Messiah, when he speaks of the righteous Branch (Jer. 23, 5-6), and says that His name was to be called: "The Lord our Righteousness." He is our righteousness in the sense that our own righteousness rests upon His merits. His righteousness is our righteousness. What He has merited and won is credited to us. When Jeremiah therefore calls the Messiah, "The Lord our Righteousness", he is speaking of the righteousness of the Messiah that is imputed to us, and to all men. Therefore Isaiah declares: "and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (54,17).

God imputes righteousness freely out of grace. As God freely forgives sins and does not count them, so out of this same grace and mercy He imputes to the sinner the righteousness merited by the sinner's Substitute. And free is God's offer. The prophet calls to all: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Is. 55,1-2). Even as God offers to reason together with man and declares him just (Is. 1,18)<sup>18/</sup>, so He is willing to impute this righteousness of man's Substitute to man.

This free grace can be received by everyone who is willing to accept it, by everyone who believes, for the prophet calls: "Ho, every one that thirsteth." Whoever is thirsty and is offered water need but accept it. Whoever is in need of righteousness and is freely offered this righteousness need but accept it. Therefore this doctrine can well be summed up in the words of Isaiah: "By His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify

many" (Is. 53, 11). Whosoever believes and trusts in the work of the Messiah shall thereby be declared just, not because of any merit in himself, but purely out of grace, through faith in Christ, the Son of God.

Justification by grace (sole fide, sola gratia) is the central doctrine of the old as well as of the New Testament. The Fathers were justified also as we are, not by the Law, but by the promises and faith. They knew the promise concerning Christ, that God for Christ's sake wished to remit sins, and therefore they hoped in this promise. Anyone who reads the Old Testament with this purpose in mind, to discover how men who lived before the coming of Christ were justified, will find no difficulty in determining that they too were saved by faith in the grace of God. That was the purpose of this treatise. While this treatise is by no means exhaustive on justification as presented in the Old Testament (since that would require a larger amount of time and space), yet I have aimed herein to touch upon the most pertinent points in regard to the topic. While I could not make a careful study of every passage in the Old Testament on this point, nevertheless, my discussion of the passages which are the clearest has proved the fact that salvation by faith in the grace of God, based on the merits of Christ, is the central theme also of the Old Testament, for "to Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10,43)

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