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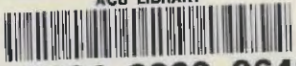
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A History of the Interpretation of the Relationship of Faith and Works

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A HISTORY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF THE
RELATIONSHIP OF FAITH AND WORKS



BY
ROBERT KERRY OGLESBY

A HISTORY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP
OF FAITH AND WORKS

A thesis
Presented to
the Department of Bible and Religious Education
Abilene Christian College

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Master of Arts

by
Robert Kerry Oglesby
May 1956

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the time that Paul said, "The just shall live by faith," and James said, "Faith without works is dead," there has been the problem of the relationship of faith and works. As usual, theologians have discussed the matter from the standpoint of which element had priority in the Christian life. The ordinary Christian, who sometimes sees the whole of the picture more clearly than the theologian with special interest, has understood that both were necessary for the life of the faithful Christian. One thing is clear, and that is, that one must not suppose that he can in any manner earn his own salvation by good works. Salvation must be a free gift from God, which is gratefully accepted through faith. Any other way of approaching God for salvation would be presumptuous on man's part. Pride in human works could only lead to man's downfall; however, it is also true that the faith of a converted man must express itself in works to show that it is a real faith. James said, "I will show my faith by my works," and this continues to be the test of faith's sincerity. Saving faith brings one's life into agreement with the Gospel.¹

¹J. W. C. Wand, The Greek Doctors (London: The Faith Press, LTD., 1950), p. 23.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study is not to give the entirety of what each Christian thinker has said on either "faith" or "works"; rather, this thesis will be concerned with the relationship of these two factors as it has been discussed by major Christian thinkers. After analyzing the historical interpretations of faith and works, an effort will be made to evaluate these interpretations in the light of New Testament teaching.

Importance of the study. One of the most prominent doctrines to be found in the New Testament is that of "Justification by Faith." This doctrine also seems to have been one of those most quickly obscured in the history of doctrinal developments. Almost immediately after the time of inspired writers, men began to write and teach a different doctrine. These writers gave lip-service to Paul's elaboration of this great thesis, but they failed to retain its powerful force. Justification by faith was slowly covered over through the years by a thick layer of works-righteousness, until it was only faintly visible in the teaching and practice of the historic Roman Church. Ultimately, an effort was made in the Protestant Reformation to return to Paul's statement of the doctrine of justification by faith. It is highly important therefore, that a study be made to determine the success

with which theologians have met in interpreting the relationship of faith and works through the course of history. It is also important to show the reasons for many of the erroneous interpretations which have been made, and to illustrate their impact on church history.

II. SOURCES OF MATERIAL

As much as possible, the original sources have been used in the following study of major Christian thinkers. In some cases, such material was not available, due to the fact that some of the original works have not yet been translated. For the most part, however, the original works of the men cited have been consulted before accepting the conclusions drawn from secondary sources. The Biblical quotations which are not quoted from secondary sources, are cited from the American Standard Version.

III. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

In this study, the interpretations of major Christian thinkers have been traced historically, with a view toward evaluating their interpretations with that of the New Testament. Frequently, reference is made to the doctrine of justification by faith as being "Pauline." This terminology is not due to the fact that Paul was the only inspired writer to teach this doctrine; on the contrary, the whole New

Testament teaches the very same doctrine. Critics have called the doctrine "Pauline" due to the central position which this doctrine held in Paul's writings, especially as it is emphasized in the book of Romans; for this reason, the New Testament teaching on faith and works is conveniently referred to as "Pauline" in this study. Chapter II deals with the Ante-Nicene writings, which followed so closely upon the close of inspired scripture. Chapter III deals exclusively with the contribution made by Augustine to the interpretation of faith and works. Chapter IV presents the pertinent Medieval and Reformation thought, with particular emphasis upon the influential work of Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther, respectively. Chapter V relates the thinking of modern-day theologians. Chapter VI shows the return to New Testament teaching, as it was given impetus in the Restoration Movement. Chapter VII gives the summary and conclusions of the thesis.

CHAPTER II

THE ANTE-NICENE PERIOD

I. NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON FAITH AND WORKS

Jesus opposed legalism when he taught that men cannot earn their reward from God by works of human merit. He illustrated his teaching by means of a parable. In this parable, men are pictured as related to God as a bond-servant is to his earthly master; that is, the bond-servant owes everything to his master out of a sense of duty. Man, then, is unable to earn a reward from God, due to the fact that he already owes God every service which he is capable of rendering. Jesus concludes the parable and gives the following statement to explain its meaning:

Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do, (Luke 17:10).

The Apostle Paul also explains that one is not saved by his own meritorious works. He says,

... for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory, (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

Paul, to support his contention, cites Abraham as a man who was not justified by works of human merit. He says this of Abraham:

For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not toward God. For what saith the scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness (Romans 4:2-5).

Abraham's faithful obedience is what gave him access to God's mercy. It was not the merit of what Abraham performed which was important; rather, it was the fact that he was obedient to God's commands which counted. Since Paul thinks a man is not saved by works, he obviously does not consider "faithful obedience" under the heading of "works of law." Abraham obeyed in faith, and God rewarded him out of grace; therefore, he actually did not earn anything by his obedience. Paul cannot be accurately cited in defense of "faith only" if such is taken to mean "without any effort of obedience on man's part." Paul, to the contrary, favors the obedience which he calls the "obedience of faith" in Romans 1:5 and in Romans 16:26. In line with this, the Apostle Paul tells the Thessalonians that Christ will come "rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel ..." (II Thessalonians 1:8). The Apostle Peter voices his agreement on the necessity of obedience when he asks, "What shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" (I Peter 4:17)

James also agrees with the thought that "faith apart

from works is dead" (James 2:26). He cites the example of Abraham and Rahab (James 2) as cases in which "faith worked." Both of these cases mentioned had a faith which was obedient. Abraham "offered up Isaac ... " (James 2:21), and Rahab "received the messengers, and sent them out ... " (James 2:25). It is their "working faith" which James says justifies them.

Paul and James are consistent, then, in their teaching of faith and works. Both agree that meritorious works of law will not save a man; in like manner, neither will faith, apart from obedience to God's commands.

The New Testament, therefore, considers obedience to be a part of faith. God, out of grace, counts obedient faith as righteousness; man, as a result, has really earned nothing. In New Testament teaching, though, a "saving faith" is a "faith at work."

II. APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Immediately after the time that Paul, and others of the New Testament, announced the great theme of "Justification by Faith", there came the period of the so-called Apostolic Fathers. Their activity in writing extends over a period of years from A. D. 90 to A. D. 140. Their designation as "Apostolic Fathers" is not strictly accurate since

some of these "Fathers" were certainly not contemporaries of the Apostles. Neve suggests that the real significance of these few writers is that they furnish a connecting link between the time of inspired men and the Old Catholic Age. Although such writings are not plentiful, they at least serve to give some idea of the thinking of their age. These men were under the powerful impression left by the Apostles, and, as yet, they felt no need for strictly formulated doctrines; consequently, these "Fathers" do not present an orderly treatment of the doctrine of the relationship of faith and works. It took the work of later ages to detect the subtle nuances referring to the doctrine.

As Neve points out, a positive error was committed, when Christ, the gift of God, was interpreted by these writers to be only another law-giver. Due to this interpretation, there is little emphasis given in their writings to the New Testament doctrine of justification by faith. These men saw man's relation to God as being regulated by man's works, rather than by his faith. These Fathers are the first to reflect this emphasis upon human works and their merits.¹

¹J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1946), I, pp. 34, 38-39.

Lawson observes that there was an early tendency to interpret the Christian faith as nothing more than a new law sent forth from a better Sinai.² Harnack, in the same vein, states that at a very early period, eternal life was looked upon as the wages which were paid to a perfect moral life wrought out by one's own power.³ The evidence, therefore, must be examined, to see if it warrants such a conclusion.

First Clement. Sanday and Headlam's unwarranted conclusion is that Clement uses terms, in describing Paul's doctrine, which he does not completely understand. They claim that Clement seems to have inherited the phraseology of Paul, but that he misses the true significance of such terms as "faith," "works," and "righteousness."⁴

McGiffert seems to conclude that if a writer did not teach faith "without obedience," he was necessarily legalistic. He then tries hard to see "faith alone" in Clement's writings just because Clement denies salvation to Christians by

²John Lawson, The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus (London: The Epworth Press, 1948), p. 250.

³Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma, trans. Neil Buchanan (London: Williams & Norgate, 1894), I, p. 170.

⁴William Sanday, and Arthur C. Headlam, The Epistle to the Romans (fifth edition; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), p. 148.

their own works.⁵ Actually, Clement does not assert salvation by "faith alone," without works of obedience. What Clement does claim is that no one is justified on the basis of his own piety or works of righteousness. Clement's words are:

... we who through his will have been called in Christ Jesus, are not made righteous by ourselves or by our wisdom or understanding or piety or the deeds which we have wrought in holiness of heart, but through faith, by which Almighty God has justified all men from the beginning of the world ... (I Clement, 32:4).⁶

McGiffert construes I Clement 58:2 to be a legalistic passage.⁷ It is not necessary, however, to conclude that this passage teaches legalism. Certainly, there is an emphasis upon the performance of commandments in Clement's words, but the New Testament itself teaches that the Christian should be concerned with obedience. The Apostle Paul himself teaches obedience, without contradicting his teaching on faith. Clement does little more than advocate obedience, when he says,

... he who with lowliness of mind and eager gentleness

⁵Arthur Cushman McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), I, p. 84.

⁶The English translations quoted from the Apostolic Fathers are taken from: Kirsopp Lake, The Apostolic Fathers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912).

⁷McGiffert, op. cit., p. 84.

has without backsliding performed the decrees and commandments given by God shall be enrolled and chosen in the number of those who are saved through Jesus Christ (58:2).

McGiffert concludes, without sufficient evidence, that Clement was just reproducing Paul's doctrine of faith, without understanding the inner workings of it. He says this of Clement: "He really agreed with the other Christians of his day that salvation is to be had only by obeying God and doing his will."⁸

These passages, which critics say hint of legalism, must be taken in the light of Clement's other statements, if one is to understand Clement's true teaching on faith and works. He sees faith as making a man righteous in obedience to the will of God. Certainly, Clement's description of a "working faith" was not foreign to either Paul or James. An obedient faith is recommended by Clement, in these words:

Let us take Enoch, who was found righteous in obedience and was translated and death did not befall him. Noah was found faithful in his service, in foretelling a new beginning to the world ... (9:3, 4).

Clement says this of Abraham:

Abraham, who was called "the Friend," was found faithful in his obedience to the words of God. He in obedience went forth from his country and from his kindred and his father's house that by leaving behind

⁸Ibid., p. 85.

a little country and a feeble kindred and a small house he might inherit the promises of God (10:1, 2).

With this view of obedience, it is no surprise to hear Clement say,

What shall we do then, brethren? Shall we be slothful in well-doing and cease from love? May the Master forbid that this happen at least to us ... Let us observe that all the righteous were adorned with good works ... Having therefore this pattern, let us follow his will without delay, let us work the work of righteousness with all our strength (33:1, 7-8).

Critics may find a hint of legalism in Clement's writings, but it cannot be said that he made a complete departure from the New Testament teaching on faith and works. As is true in other points of New Testament teaching, Clement remains very close to the views of faith advocated by inspired men. It is obviously true that Clement has not drifted to the extreme position of justification by works.

Ignatius. It is the view of McGiffert that Ignatius was concerned mainly with the keeping of commandments, and did not bother to explain the exact relationship between faith and obedience.⁹ Speaking of Ignatius's treatment of justification by faith, Dierks says, "Instead of a clear, positive, and definite exposition of this doctrine we have

⁹Ibid., p. 44.

only vague words about faith and love."¹⁰

But Ignatius seems to talk quite clearly about the "deeds of faith." He explains the obedience of the Christian life in the following manner:

They who are carnal cannot do spiritual things, neither can they who are spiritual do carnal things, just as faith is incapable of the deeds of infidelity, and infidelity of the deeds of faith (To the Ephesians, 8:2).

Ignatius also says,

No man who professes faith sins, nor does he hate who has obtained love. "The tree is known by its fruits"; so they who profess to be of Christ shall be seen by their deeds (To the Ephesians, 14:2).

It is a mistake, then, for critics to picture Ignatius as one who forsakes the New Testament view of faith and works. In his comments, Ignatius seems to remain close to the New Testament view of a "working faith." Ignatius makes no effort to teach salvation by works of human merit.

Polycarp. Polycarp realizes that Christians are saved by grace, but he still rejoices when Christian faith bears fruit. He exclaims,

I rejoice also that your firmly rooted faith, ... still flourishes and bears fruit unto the Lord Jesus Christ, ... knowing that "by grace ye are saved, not by works but by the will of God through Jesus Christ (To the Philippians, 1:2, 3).

¹⁰Theodore Dierks, Reconciliation and Justification (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 92.

This much of the evidence seems to favor Polycarp's faithfulness to New Testament teaching. Some writers feel, however, that an emphasis begins to fall upon the merit of works about Polycarp's time.¹¹ One wonders if Polycarp is not leaning toward the merit of works, when he says, "When you can do good defer it not, 'for almsgiving sets free from death ...' " (To the Philippians, 10:2).

Perhaps this is just an inaccurate wording for what Polycarp intended to say, because it certainly does not fit the atmosphere found in the rest of his writings. He is aware of the grace which man experiences through Jesus Christ, and it is difficult to see how he would reconcile this statement with his former one. It is quite clear that no such merit or power was given to almsgiving in the New Testament. This may be one of the first indications to signal a departure toward justification by works.

Barnabas. Barnabas appears to be in harmony with Paul and others when he combines faith and baptism with these words:

He means to say that we go down into the water full of sins and foulness, and we come up bearing the fruit of fear in our hearts and having hope on Jesus ... whosoever hears and believes these things spoken shall live for ever (The Epistle of Barnabas, 11:11).

¹¹cf. Neve, op. cit., p. 39.

Barnabas also says,

... let us strive to keep his commandments in order that we may rejoice in his ordinances ... Each will receive according to his deeds (9:11, 12).

But this comment by Barnabas merely stresses what the New Testament teaches; namely, that everyone shall give an account of what he has done "... whether it be good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10).

What is harder to reconcile to New Testament teaching is the passage from Barnabas, which says,

Thou shalt remember the day of judgment day and night, and thou shalt seek each day the society of the saints, either laboring by speech, and going out to exhort, and striving to save souls by the word, or working with thine hands for the ransom of thy sins (19:10).

All other points mentioned here are admittedly scriptural in thought except for the phrase "working with thine hands for the ransom of thy sins." This could be taken to mean the same thing expressed in the New Testament exhortation of "... work out your own salvation ... (Philippians 2:12). In other words, it could mean that one should make an effort to live a faithful, righteous life; on the other hand, the use of the word "ransom" seems to lean a little toward legalism. It is obvious that a Christian's obedience is a form of "working out" his salvation in the sense that no one else can do it for him. But it is hard to see one's work as a

"ransom" for sins, when the New Testament pictures Christ in this role. Certainly, no conclusive decision may be drawn from this lone passage; rather, it must be taken in the light of Barnabas's other comments which seem to agree with those of the New Testament. It is possible, that in this passage also, Barnabas meant to teach nothing different from what inspired men wrote.

The Didache. One gets the idea from reading the Didache, that he is reading a book of legal rules for a Christian. The Didache gives a negative slant to most of its instructions. One author concludes that this document helped lower the vital faith of the New Testament into a mere exercise of law-keeping.¹²

The Didache does seem to be concerned with rules. It even lays down instructions for the most spontaneous expressions of the Christian. It enumerates the following:

Let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on Mondays and Thursdays, but do you fast on Wednesdays and Fridays ... Pray thus three times a day (8:1, 3).

It is significant that a heavier stress is placed on almsgiving. Note this admonition:

Of whatsoever thou hast gained by thy hands, thou shalt give a ransom for thy sins. Thou shalt not

¹²As per Edgar J. Goodspeed, The Apostolic Fathers (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1950), p. 1.

hesitate to give, nor shalt thou grumble when thou givest, for thou shalt know who is the Paymaster of the reward (4:6, 7).

It sounds foreign to New Testament teaching to say one can "ransom" his sins by what he gives. Perhaps the purpose of the book keeps its contents from being a complete explanation of Christian doctrine; the Didache tries to summarize the requirements of Christianity instead of explaining them. But this interest in rules and regulations appears to be a departure from the spirit of the New Testament. Interest in "works of righteousness" is to be found in New Testament writings, but such interest is generally not the exclusive theme of them.

The Shepherd of Hermas. There is certainly a tendency to exalt the merit of human works in the words of Hermas. The conclusion of Dierks, however, is probably an overstatement of the case. He says, "... in Hermas there is practically no Gospel."¹³

Hermas speaks much of repentance in his book. In one place, Hermas asks,

If this sin is recorded against me, how shall I be saved? Or how shall I propitiate God for my completed sins? Or with what words shall I beseech the Lord to be forgiving unto me?" (Vision I, 2:1).

¹³Dierks, op. cit., p. 109.

The thought of praying to God to receive forgiveness for sins is scriptural enough, but the use of the word "propitiate" seems to indicate a stronger power for prayer than is taught by the New Testament. Paul would say that nothing a man can do will actually be capable of "propitiating" God.

Baptism seems to be the last means of grace in the Christian life. When a man exhausts his one repentance after baptism, he is in danger of being lost. It seems as though a perfect life is demanded after baptism. Hermas says,

You have heard correctly, for that is so. For he who has received remission of sin ought never to sin again, but to live in purity ... he has one repentance, but if he sin and repent repeatedly it is unprofitable for such a man, for scarcely shall he live (Mandate IV, 3:2, 6).

Hermas's Similitudes give further evidence of the developing importance of works in the Christian life. The fifth Parable speaks of a man doing more than was required by God's commandment. In substance, this parable tells of a servant who is told by his lord to fence a vineyard; but, the servant, finishing what his lord told him to do, did more in addition. Whenever the servant fulfilled his duty, he was supposed to receive his freedom; however, when the master saw the extra work he had done, he made him joint-heir with his son. The conclusion of

this parable seems to teach that man may attain extra merit with God. The shepherd explains to Hermas in these words:

I will show you his commandments and if you do anything good, beyond the commandment of God, you will gain for yourself greater glory, and shall be more honourable with God than you were destined to be (Similitude V, 3:3).

In Hermas, therefore, works begin to take their place beside faith, as a means of finding favor with God. Since God requires a certain amount of work, it was thought possible for a man to earn extra merit above God's requirement.

Second Clement. In this book, legalism seems to reach a height of expression. One author explains this legalism by noting that Second Clement is so far removed from the influence of the New Testament.¹⁴

It must be admitted, however, that in some spots, this book presents good New Testament teaching; for instance, it states this:

But how do we confess him? By doing what he says, and not disregarding his commandments, and honouring him not only with our lips, but "with all our heart and all our mind" (II Clement 3:4).

It is difficult to harmonize one particular passage of this book with a New Testament view of works. Credit

¹⁴Johannes Quasten, Patrology (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1950), I, p. 57.

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is given to several things besides faith as being responsible for the remitting of sins. The works enumerated are:

Almsgiving is therefore good even as penitence for sin; fasting is better than prayer, but the giving of alms is better than both; and love "covers a multitude of sins," but prayer from a good conscience rescues from death. Blessed is every man who is found full of these things; for almsgiving lightens sin (II Clement 16:4).

The value of human works appears to have come into its own in the book of Second Clement. Almsgiving "lightens sin" in the words of this book. Almsgiving can even be substituted for other works. Such teaching is not found in the New Testament.

Summary of the Apostolic Fathers' views. The New Testament teaching on faith and works saw its meaning changed somewhat during the time of the Apostolic Fathers. The farther one goes from the New Testament literature, the less one hears about faith in Christ; instead, works become the point of emphasis. This does not mean that the most legalistic-sounding of the Apostolic Fathers would deny the power of faith; however, some of them did begin to lose the acute feeling of faith's power, as indicated by their writing. In the Apostolic Fathers, there was not a sudden departure, nor even a complete one; but the works of some of these writers show a drift away from a dependence on God, toward a righteousness by works.

III. THE APOLOGISTS

The second century proved to be an age of severe conflicts for Christianity due to much opposition from Judaism, Gnosticism, and heathenism. A group of men arose to defend Christianity; hence, they have been called "Apologists." From their defense of Christianity, one may determine the conception they had of it. In most instances, these Apologists spoke of Christianity as another law in their presentation of it to its enemies.

Justin Martyr. Justin seems to be representative of the Apologists. He referred to Christ as a "new Lawgiver" (Dialogue With Trypho, chapter 14).¹⁵ Justin seemed to conceive of Christianity as a mere law which had succeeded the law of Moses. He explains,

Now, law placed against law has abrogated that which is before it, and a covenant which comes after in like manner has put an end to the previous one; and an eternal and final law — namely, Christ — has been given to us, and the covenant is trustworthy, after which there shall be no law, no commandment, no ordinance (Dialogue With Trypho, chapter 11).

From a reading of his eleventh chapter, it is evident that he considers Christianity to be like Judaism, except that its law is permanent, instead of temporary. Certainly,

¹⁵The following translations in this chapter are taken from: Alexander Roberts, and James Donaldson (eds.), The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950).

it cannot be said that Justin thought of Christianity as nothing except a law, but this is the way in which he presented it in his writing.

Athenagoras. Stress was also laid by the Apologists upon the rewards and punishments which men were to earn as a result of their lives. Athenagoras says of the judgment, "But, because we are persuaded that we shall give an account of everything in the present life to God ... " (A Plea for the Christians, chapter 12). There is nothing wrong with teaching that Christians are to give an account of their lives, but it is important to notice that these Apologists were concerned primarily with this phase of Christianity, and had little to say about the saving power of faith.

Theophilus. Theophilus is another author who emphasizes the importance of abiding by God's commandments. He says,

For God has given us a law and holy commandments; and every one who keeps these can be saved, and, obtaining the resurrection, can inherit incorruption (Theophilus to Autolytus, Book II, chapter 27).

Theophilus also blends the Old and New Testament laws together in the following manner:

Now we also confess that God exists ... And we have learned a holy law; but we have as lawgiver Him who is really God, who teaches us to act righteously, and to be pious, and to do good (Theophilus to Autolytus, chapter 9).

Summary of the Apologists' views. The Apologists actually contribute very little to the doctrine of the relationship of faith and works. Their purpose was not to trace out fine doctrinal points; rather, they were engaged in defending the broad outlines of Christianity against hostile opposition. It can only be inferred that their silence on the power of faith helped to make Christianity legalistic. In harmony with their purpose, they did present Christianity to the world as a system of law and reward. No doubt, this approach appealed to the worldly minds to which it was directed, but it did not help keep alive the New Testament doctrine of justification by faith. The Apologists' part in defining the relationship of faith and works was more a work of omission than of positive teaching on the subject.

IV. THE EARLY FATHERS

Irenaeus. It is important to notice that Irenaeus considered the Old and New Testament laws to be of the same nature. He points out that one is to observe the laws in Christianity, because they are like God's previous laws.

He explains:

As in the law, therefore, and in the Gospel (likewise), ... For the precepts of an absolutely perfect life, since they are the same in each Testament ... the same God, who certainly has promulgated particular laws adopted for each; but the more prominent and the greatest (commandments),

without which salvation cannot (be attained), He has exhorted (us to observe) the same in both, (Against Heresies, Book IV, 12:3),

Irenaeus saw the natural law of God as being in force through the ages. The law of Moses was added because of Jewish disobedience. The ceremonies prescribed in it were pointless, but they served to acquaint men with the habit of obedience. Christianity came as an enlargement of God's natural law, and actually canceled only the ceremonial part of the Jewish law. He explains this point:

And that the Lord did not abrogate the natural (precepts) of the law, by which man is justified, which also those who were justified by faith, and who pleased God, did observe previous to the giving of the law, but that He extended and fulfilled them ... (Against Heresies, IV, 13:1).

The new law is a "law of liberty," but it is not easier to keep than the old; in fact, the new is harder to keep, because even the desires must be under control. He says,

But He has increased and widened those laws which are natural, and noble, and common to all, ... while they abstain not only from evil deeds, but even from the desire after them, (Against Heresies, IV, 16:5).

It is also possible to see another view of the relationship of faith and works in Irenaeus. He says of the Christian's faith in relation to Abraham's,

" ... his faith and ours are one and the same: for he believed in things future, as if they were already accomplished, because of the promise of God; and in like manner do we also ... " (Against Heresies, IV, 21:1).

He makes a statement which sounds like the "working faith" of the New Testament, when he says, "... those who believe God and follow His word receive that salvation which flows from Him," (Against Heresies, IV, 33:15)

It is clear that Irenaeus considered Christianity to be a more perfect expression of God's natural law, but beyond this it is hard to determine if he excluded the power of faith to save. Seemingly, he still believed in a working faith. It was the work of the next writer, who will be considered, which really gave impetus to legalism in the Old Catholic Church.

Tertullian. Second to Augustine, Tertullian is probably the greatest of the ancient church writers of the West. His influence has been felt in language and theology of the Old Catholic Church.

Tertullian speaks from the legalistic point of view. He sees many things from a lawyer's point of view. Some have even thought he was trained in this profession. An investigation of his works does show evidence of a trained, legal mind. One writer cites two passages from Tertullian's works to show that he viewed Christianity as a new law.¹⁶

¹⁶Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), pp. 67-68.

In the first of these, Tertullian says this of Christ:
 "He preached the new law and the new promise of the kingdom of heaven," (Prescription Against Heretics, chapter 13).
 The second passage sounds even more legalistic. It says of those who have received forgiveness of their sins in baptism, that they have become " ... competitors for salvation in earning the favor of God," (On Repentance, chapter 6).

Thus, according to Tertullian, men compete for salvation by keeping God's commandments and repenting to appease Him. They try to earn God's favor, which is to be bestowed upon them. Tertullian plainly indicates that men should try to pay God for what He gives them. God sets a price on the gifts which he extends to men. Tertullian says,

For repentance is the price at which the Lord determined to award pardon: He proposes the redemption of release from penalty at this compensating exchange of repentance," (On Repentance, chapter 6).

Furthermore, Tertullian seems to feel very little of the grace of God in the scheme of salvation. It is clear, from Tertullian's viewpoint, that salvation is not a gift; on the contrary, God checks to see if men really deserve it. Tertullian illustrates this by saying,

If, then, sellers first examine the coin with which they make their bargains, to see whether it be cut, or

scraped, or adulterated, we believe likewise that the Lord, when about to make us the grant of so costly merchandise, even of eternal life, first institutes a probation of our repentance, (On Repentance, chapter 6).

Tertullian pictures man in the position of a debtor trying to repay God. In encouraging men to try to please God by their repentance, Tertullian says,

You have offended Him, but there is a way of reconciliation. You have one to whom you can render satisfaction and who will be glad to accept it, (On Repentance, (chapter 7).

The view of man trying to render "satisfaction" to God for his debt certainly does not foster a pleasing relationship between God and man. Instead of enjoying the grace of God, man finds himself trying to work out the debt which God has imposed upon him. The New Testament view, which teaches that faith on man's part calls forth grace on God's part, certainly leaves room for man to be loving and thankful toward God. Tertullian does not seem to view salvation as much of a gift. He, in this manner, helped narrow the gospel down to a legal system, which had little notice of grace to modify its heavy emphasis upon works.

Origen. Origen seems to have the proper conception of faith when he teaches that it must manifest works in order to be a faith "according to knowledge." His words of explanation are:

In the same way it may be said of another that he

has faith in God, but not according to knowledge, if he is unaware that faith apart from works is dead, ... Thus if a man does not have faith so as to make it manifest by his good deeds in whom he believes, to him may it be said that he has faith in God but not according to knowledge, (Comment in Origen's Epistle to the Romans, viii:1)¹⁷

Origen also agrees that justification is by faith.

His comment on Paul, as cited from the Latin by Sanday, is:¹⁸

And he says that justification of faith alone suffices, thus that one who believes only is justified, although no one shall be completed by works itself.¹⁹

Origen remains close to New Testament thought when he explains that faith without works is an impossibility, since faith is the root from which good works spring. 2009

He says,

... not therefore a root of righteousness by works, but a fruit which increases work from the root of righteousness. This (work) certainly is by root of righteousness, because God in accepting brings righteousness without works.²⁰

Even though Origen has much scriptural thought in his comments, it is still noticeable that he has other

¹⁷R. B. Tollinton (trans.), Selections From the Commentaries and Homilies of Origen (London: Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929), p. 254.

¹⁸Origen's comments, as cited by Sanday, were translated from the Latin through the courtesy of Dr. J. W. Roberts.

¹⁹Sanday, op. cit., p. 148.

²⁰Ibid.

elements which are foreign to New Testament teaching.

He attributes the power for remitting sins to martyrs and their blood:

Note also that the baptism of martyrdom, as received by our Savior, atones for the world; so, too, when we receive it, it serves to atone for many. Just as they who assisted at the altar according to the law of Moses seemed to procure for the Jews remission for sins by the blood of goats and oxen, so the souls of believers that are beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, do not assist in vain at the altar of heaven, but procure from them that pray the remission of sins, (Exhortation to Martyrdom, Part IV, Section 30).²¹

It is further evident, that Origen has a concept which allows him to entertain the thought that men can attain extra merit with God. One way of becoming more exalted is to be a martyr. Some will even be ransomed by the blood of the martyrs. He explains,

It may be that as we have been purchased by the precious blood of Jesus who has received a name above all names, so some will be ransomed by the precious blood of martyrs; for the martyrs themselves are exalted higher than they would have been if they had been justified only and not also become martyrs, (Exhortation to Martyrdom, Part VII, Section 50).²²

Undoubtedly, the great concept of justification by faith has suffered somewhat due to the teaching of merit by human works. Men can become "justified," but

²¹John J. O'Meara (trans.), Origen (Vol. XIX of Ancient Christian Writers, ed. Johannes Quasten, and Joseph C. Plumpe. 20 vols.; London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954), p. 171.

²²Ibid., p. 195.

they can be exalted higher by the merit which they gain as martyrs. The New Testament teaches the worthlessness of human efforts to gain favor with God, but Origen seems to have lost sight of that concept. At least, one must admit that he had New Testament teaching, and a system of merit confused.

V. SUMMARY OF THE ANTE-NICENE PERIOD

The relationship of faith and works certainly changed between the time of Paul and the end of the Ante-Nicene period. The big question is to determine what caused this change from a "working faith" to a justification by meritorious works.

Reasons for interpretation. It is difficult to confine the reasons for erroneous interpretations to one particular cause.

The stress laid on law by Stoic philosophy is counted by some scholars as a factor in hastening the advance of legalism in Christianity. Some also see Jewish influences as a factor in making Christianity over into a glorified Judaism.²³ It must also be remembered that heathen minds were not prepared for

²³As per Neve, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

anything above a natural religion based upon man's own works.

Certainly, one cannot forget that the Apologists painted Christianity before the world and depicted it as a great system of law. This was done to make Christianity understandable to heathen minds, which understood law and the need for human works.

Orr recounts the fact that the Jews have been trained under the law for the fulfilling concept which came in Christianity, but even they failed to comprehend its meaning. It is no wonder then, Orr concludes, that the Gentile mind, not having the benefit of the law's training, failed to catch and retain the meaning of justification by faith.²⁴

Then, too, one must realize the natural tendency which besets any movement; that is, the tendency to lose the spirit and retain only the form as the movement loses its first burst of enthusiasm. This is a battle which Christianity continues to fight today, and which it will always have to fight.

Impact of interpretations. The interpretations

²⁴James Orr, The Progress of Doctrines (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Sons, 1907), p. 248.

fostered by the Apostolic Fathers and those who followed, have had a steady influence upon the development of doctrine through the centuries.

No doubt, it was due in a large measure, to the work of Tertullian, that an emphatic legal cast was given to the system of Western Christianity. A sense of grace remained in the Western Church during the Ante-Nicene period, but it did not play the major role in Roman Catholic theology.

With the possibility of earning merit put before man, man in time systematized his duties toward God into a legalistic system. The impact of the Ante-Nicene effort in slighting grace and faith, and emphasizing works, started a trend in Roman Catholic theology which has never been completely lost.

CHAPTER III

AUGUSTINE

Moving onward from the Ante-Nicene period, it is important that the influence of Augustine be considered in relation to the doctrine of faith and works. It is necessary that Augustine be considered since he blended much of what had gone before, into his system of thought. Also it is to be noted that many schools of thought look back to Augustine for their inspiration, and they often give a conflicting view of his teaching on the respective merits of faith and works. For this reason, this chapter will be devoted to an examination of Augustine's view of the relationship of faith and works.

I. HIS RESTORATION OF GRACE

The significance which Augustine's teaching has exercised on the doctrine of faith and works has been largely due to his emphasis on the doctrine of grace. To some degree, the grace of God had fallen into disrepute among the theologians, and the common people as well, in the Ante-Nicene period. Man had become overly concerned with the working out of their salvation, and in the process, they had pushed God's grace to the back of their minds. Only in a vague way was the doctrine of grace allowed to have a part in man's salvation. In Ante-

Augustine, however, God's grace once again came to occupy the foreground in God's plan of salvation for man.

Grace, for Augustine, is the power in man's life which makes his salvation possible. Man was lost under the law, because he did not have the power to keep the strict commandments. Neve cites a quotation from Augustine which certainly indicates that Augustine felt the new system of faith to be more of a gift. Augustine spoke of the old law as saying, "Do what I command," whereas the law of faith now says, "Give what thou commandest," (The Spirit and the Letter, 14. 22).¹ Certainly Augustine recognized the inherent power which God gave to faith under the Christian system. Augustine shows the difference between trying to earn justification and merely receiving it by faith, when he says, "To put it in a sentence: what is enjoined with threatenings under the law of works, is granted to belief under the law of faith," (The Spirit and the Letter, 14.22).²

McGiffert observes that Augustine insists on men being saved by grace, and not through any merit on their own. He points out that Augustine sees even faith as the

¹J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1946), I, p. 145.

²Ibid.

gift of God's grace. Augustine reasoned that everything good must come from God, and since faith was good; it too must have come through the workings of God's grace. He felt that men could not even have faith unless God gave him power to acquire it. Augustine says, "God certainly works in man the will to believe and in all things anticipates us with his mercy," (The Letter and the Spirit, 34.60).³

Orr notes that Augustine considered man's renewal by grace a work of God from first to last. There was not a point on the scale for which man could claim any real credit. Augustine, like Paul, could see that grace had the first and last word in man's salvation. Augustine shows that he considers God's grace to be the basis of the whole salvation scheme by these words:

It follows, then, beyond all doubt, that as your good life is nothing else than God's gift and grace, so also the eternal life which is the recompense of a good life is the gift and grace of God; moreover, it is a free and gratuitous gift of which it is the recompense. But the good life, thus rewarded, is solely and simply grace; therefore the eternal life which is its reward—and because it is its reward—is grace for grace; as if it were the remuneration of righteousness...(Grace and Free-Will, chapter 20).⁴

³Arthur Cushman McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), II, p. 100.

⁴James Orr, The Progress of Dogma (second edition; New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1907), pp. 150-152.

In answering the second question of Simplician, Augustine says of Paul's purpose in Romans, "It is that no man should glory in meritorious works ... " (To Simplician On Various Questions, Book I, Second Question, verse 2).⁵ Augustine continues to sketch the idea, in this question, that the Jews did not merit evangelical grace through their keeping of the law. He maintains that Paul means to say that grace, by its very nature, cannot be the reward of good works. Augustine cites Paul's example of Jacob and Esau, quoted in Romans, to show that one's works do not merit any consideration. Jacob had not done anything to earn the favor bestowed upon him by God. Augustine concludes that good works cannot be the cause of one's receiving grace, (Second Question, 3).

As to why God bestows grace where He does, Augustine can only appeal to the unquestionable judgment of God. Neither Jacob nor Esau had faith or works when God referred to them in the womb. Augustine concludes, "that there is no unrighteousness with God...he who receives remission ought not to glory in his own merits," (Second Question, 17).

In his Enchiridion, Augustine shows that humanity is not saved through its good works, but by the grace of

⁵Quotations of these questions are taken from: John H. S. Burleigh (trans.), Augustine: Earlier Writings (Vol. VI of The Library of Christian Classics, 14 vols.; London: SCM Press LTD, 1953).

God through faith. Augustine asks the question, "...could it be restored through the merits of its own works?" Then he answers the question by saying, "God forbid. What good can a condemned man do except as he has been released from his condemnation?" (Enchiridion, section 30). In the closing part of this same section, Augustine agrees with Paul that, "By grace you have been saved through faith,"⁶

Augustine definitely restored grace to prominence in Christianity. He believed that even faith itself was the gift of God, for he says,

And lest his hearers should claim that faith itself for themselves, not understanding it to be given of God—as elsewhere the same Apostle says that he has obtained mercy in order to be faithful—in this place also he adds: "and that not from yourselves, for it is the gift of God; not as the outcome of works, lest anyone may boast," (Enchiridion, section 31).

II. FAITH MUST SHOW WORKS

The fact that Augustine believed in the power of grace to save a man through faith does not mean that Augustine advocated justification by faith alone, using faith in the sense of "mental assent." Augustine saw the Christian's life as being one that bore testimony to his faith

⁶Quotations of the Enchiridion are taken from: Bernard M. Peebles (trans.), Writings of Saint Augustine (Vol. II of The Fathers of the Church. 26 vols.; New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1947).

through his good works done in love. He quoted Paul's statement in Ephesians 2: 10 to prove his point. "For His workmanship we are, created in Christ Jesus in good works, which God has made ready beforehand that we may walk in them," (Enchiridion, section 31). Augustine demonstrates that he does not believe in salvation by faith alone, when he makes this comment on Colossians 3: 6:

Surely it was a wholesome alarm that believers might not think that they could be saved on account of their faith alone, even although they should live in these evils, (On Contenance, section 30).

It is evident that the relation of faith and works was a problem for some in Augustine's day from his words in his Retractations:

I received letters from certain brethren...who so divorce Christian faith from good works that they are convinced that one is able to attain eternal salvation, not without faith, of course, but without good works, (Retractations 2: 64).

To combat the teaching described in the preceding excerpts, Augustine wrote a small book entitled Faith and Works. In the first part of this book, Augustine shows that there is a necessary connection between faith and the personal good works of the Christian.⁹

⁷Augustine, Faith and Works (Vol. 15 of The Fathers of the Church, trans. Marie Liguori, 26 vols.; New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1955), p. 215.

⁸Ibid., pp. 215-216.

⁹Ibid., p. 216.

In this work, Augustine stresses that men must not fall under the delusion of thinking "that faith alone is sufficient for salvation," and "neglect to live a good life and fail by good works to persevere in the way that leads to God," (Faith and Works, 14: 21).

Augustine explains that Paul did not teach such a doctrine either, because he states,

When the Apostle says, then, that in his opinion man is justified by faith even if he has not previously fulfilled the works of the Law, he does not intend by this decision to express contempt for the commandments and the works of justice by the profession of faith, but to inform anyone that he can be justified by faith even if he has not previously fulfilled the works of the Law, (Faith and Works, 14:21).

Augustine shows his view on the position of works when he says of them, "...for they follow when one has been justified, and do not come before for one to be justified," (14: 21). Augustine agrees with Paul's definition of the faith which saves, when he quotes Paul's words of Galatians 5:6, "but faith which works through charity," (14:21).

In chapter 15 of Faith and Works, Augustine refutes the feeling which some have, that faith in Christ is the common foundation upon which all will be saved regardless of their subsequent works. Some Christians thought that I Corinthians 3 taught the burning up of evil works and the saving of the Christian who performed them. Such men erroneously expected to be saved by merit of the fact that

they had once professed Christ as their foundation, (15:24).

Augustine objects to their false interpretation of Paul, because it would make the words of Paul meaningless, when he says, "Do not err; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, ... will possess the kingdom of God," (15:25).

Augustine maintains:

These warnings and entreaties will be false, for, if they only believe and are baptized, although they persist in such evils, they will be saved by fire; and so the baptized in Christ, even those who do such things, will possess the kingdom of God, (15:25).

Augustine, therefore, feels that faith is not enough; works must follow. If good works do not follow to show a saving faith, the Christian cannot expect to be saved by any purging of his evil works. Augustine did not advocate a dead faith. He says of those condemned on the Lord's left hand at the day of judgment, "There are the ones who had believed in Him but had not bothered to do good works, as if they expected to attain everlasting life from dead faith alone," (15:25). He defines real belief in Christ by saying, "To believe in Christ is not to have the faith of devils, accurately termed a dead faith; it is to have a faith which works through charity," (16:30).

III. HIS LEGALISM

Augustine, the great pleader for grace, has often

been quoted on the side of Catholic legalism by those who followed him. Harnack represents Augustine as bequeathing to the Catholic Church the successive steps of faith, love, and merit as the way of salvation.¹⁰

Certainly it cannot be denied that there is a trace of legalism in the language of Augustine. It is doubtful whether Augustine intended some of the meaning which his statements hold today. But as Harnack says, "His writings are at all times marked by a lofty appreciation of almsgiving."¹¹

Augustine admitted that "all sins are forgiven though the 'bath of regeneration'," but he pointed out the need of having a continual forgiveness of daily sins, (Sermon 56, On the Lord's Prayer, verse 12).¹² For these smaller sins, Augustine recommends that, "Almsgiving and prayer wash sins away, provided that no such sins be committed as would necessitate our being excluded from the daily Bread," (Sermon 56, On Almsgiving, verse 12). Certainly the washing away of sins by the power of almsgiving sounds foreign to

¹⁰Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma trans. James Miller (third German edition; London: William and Norgate, 1898, V, p. 90.

¹¹Ibid., p. 209.

¹²Quotations from Augustine's sermons are taken from: Denis J. Kavanagh (trans.), Saint Augustine (Vol. II of The Fathers of the Church, 26 vols.; New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1951).

the teaching of the New Testament, which gives no such force to the efficacy of alms.

Augustine paints a vivid picture, in one of his sermons on almsgiving, of how a rich man can lay up treasures in heaven by giving his money to the poor upon the earth. Augustine makes his statement of the power of almsgiving a little stronger when he says, "As water quenches fire, so does almsgiving quench sin," (Sermon 60, On Almsgiving, verse 10). He continues,

In the Divine Scripture, there are many other passages by which we would show that almsgiving is of much avail for the quenching and erasing of sin, (Sermon 60.10).

It is evident that Augustine has gone beyond the point of attributing everything to grace when he states that Christians will enter heaven as a result of their almsgiving. He states it thus:

Therefore, brethren, you will enter the kingdom of heaven, not because you have not sinned, but because you have redeemed your sins by almsgiving," (Sermon 60, On Almsgiving, verse 10).

In this same verse, Augustine shows that almsgiving will deliver the soul. He continues,

If you had turned away from all those evil deeds of yours and had turned to Me and had redeemed all those sins and transgressions by giving alms, your almsgiving would now deliver you and free you from the punishment due to such a great crime," (Sermon 60, On Almsgiving, verse 10).

Augustine labors on the point, in his sermon, that Christ at the judgment will reward or punish according to

the person's service in the giving of alms. He finds merit in the performance of such a duty. He concludes, "Briefly, then: Let men hear and rightly consider how meritorious it is to have fed Christ when He was hungry ... " (Sermon 60.11).

Augustine was not one who advocated trying to buy off God with almsgiving, but he did say, "...alms should be offered as propitiation to God for our past sins," (Enchiridion, 19.70).

Sheldon observes that even though Augustine advanced the principle of grace, there were other tendencies at work besides the one which caused man to depend upon divine grace. There was a tendency to exalt outward works above the plane of mere fruits of faith. Faith was often lowered to nothing more than a subscribing to a certain creed. In line with this tendency was the style in which works of mercy and self-discipline were commanded. Augustine also fell prey to this emphasis when he spoke, in Enchiridion 19.70, of almsgiving as a means of propitiating God. Augustine certainly believed that faith, which depended upon divine grace, was the channel through which salvation was to be received. This much is found to be true from a reading of The Letter and the Spirit, chapter 22, where he says, "but by the law of faith we say to God, Give me what Thou commandest." But Augustine still describes almsgiving as the proper means of making satisfaction

to God for daily sins.¹³

Berkhof admits that Augustine's teaching did contain some elements which pointed toward ceremonialism and works-righteousness. His system of grace seems to have been conceived, in some instances, in legal terms. For instance, man received grace, and thereafter he was able through faith and love to work out his salvation through meritorious works.¹⁴

It is not to be disputed that Augustine talks of merit and demerit in the life of a Christian. The term "merit" continually seems to appear in his works. Augustine speaks of merit when he talks of the soul existing in an intermediate state "according to what it has merited while it lived in the body," (Enchiridion, 29. 109). He further observes,

It is here, then, in this life, that all merit or demerit is acquired whereby a man's condition in the life hereafter is improved or worsened. Therefore, let no one hope to obtain any merit with God after he is dead that he has neglected to obtain here in this life, (Enchiridion, 29. 110).

IV. HIS INCONSISTENCY

¹³Henry C. Sheldon, History of Christian Doctrine (fourth edition; New York: Eaton & Mains, 1885), I, pp. 264-265.

¹⁴L. Berkhof, The History of Christian Doctrines (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), pp. 211.

Quoted on both sides. What is true of other writers is especially true of Augustine; namely, he is often quoted upon both sides of a particular issue. Roman Catholics who followed Augustine were able to find the doctrine of meritorious works in his thought, and in like manner, the Protestant reformers were able to find justification by faith. Harnack observes that this problem came about due to Augustine's effort to harmonize his doctrine of grace with popular Catholicism. It is said that Augustine set up grace as the beginning, the middle, and the end of the Christian life; however, he did it in such a way as to allow for further concessions to traditional views.¹⁵

McGiffert points out that obviously there are two inconsistent doctrines combined in Augustine's system of thought. Augustine is fully in favor of ascribing everything good to the grace of God, but he is unwilling to give up the conception that man might in some way earn a reward from God. Augustine seemed reluctant to relinquish the traditional legal idea that men can earn their way to heaven. And certainly he does combine these two elements freely in his writings.¹⁶

¹⁵Harnack, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁶McGiffert, op. cit., pp. 103-104.

Augustine's harmony. Harnack shows that Augustine had a definite problem in reconciling these two concepts. Where the idea of merit is assumed, it is extremely difficult to include the idea of man's weakness and utter dependence on God. Actually, when Augustine left his doctrine of grace to the Catholic Church he left something, which if carried out, would of necessity be fatal to any doctrine of merit.¹⁷

Augustine, however, retained both features in his thought. Orr notes that he accepted the grace along with the Catholic doctrine of merits. Augustine combines these two forces into an evangelical doctrine by saying that God, in bestowing eternal life as a reward, "crowns his own gifts, not thy merits," (Grace and Free-Will, 15).¹⁸ As workman explains, Augustine reconciled merit with his doctrine of grace by teaching that all our merits are, in the final analysis, only the gifts of God. When God crowns a man's merits, he can only be crowning His own divine gifts.¹⁹ This is further documented when Augustine explains,

¹⁷Harnack, op. cit., p. 91.

¹⁸Orr, op. cit., p. 151.

¹⁹Herbert B. Workman, Christian Thought to the Reformation (London: Duckworth, 1911, p. 121.

We are, therefore, to understand that even man's merited goods are gifts from God, and when life eternal is given through them, what else do we have but "grace upon grace returned," (Enchiridion, 28. 107).

From the standpoint of harmonizing the two concepts of grace and merit, Augustine saw man as able to do good works in a process of justification. Augustine admitted that justification could mean "shall be accounted just," but he talked of an infusion of grace which could help a man to be "made righteous," (The Letter and the Spirit, 26. 45).²⁰ Augustine said in this vein, "We believe that from God is given to us and will be given yet more fully the life of righteousness," (The Letter and the Spirit, 11. 18). Sanday and Headlam sum up Augustine's system in these words: "Faith is a gift of grace which infused into men, enables them to produce works good and acceptable to God,"²¹

In further searching out the cause of man's justification, Augustine saw man receiving the power to start a process of justification and the ability to do good works. He relates, "Unless, therefore, the mercy of

²⁰Quotations from this book are taken from: John Barnaby (trans.), Augustine: Later Works (Vol. VIII of The Library of Christian Classics. 14 vols.; London: SCM Press, LTD, 1955).

²¹William Sanday, and Arthur C. Headlam, The Epistle to the Romans (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), p. 150.

God in calling precedes, no one can even believe, and so begin to be justified and to receive power to do good works," (To Simplician, second question, 7). He again expresses this thought when he states, "He freely bestows upon us voluntary assent, earnest effort, and the power to perform works of fervent charity," (second question, 21). Man therefore found power to merit salvation from God through means of God's grace. God in turn rewarded man's merits as his own, even though God had actually given them to man previously.

Augustine's connection with the church. Augustine's system of thought was associated with the existing church order of his day. Augustine himself expressed great confidence in the authority of the church. He said it was the great authority of the church which helped him to believe and be converted. The church of his day was strongly influenced by a legalistic Gospel, an organized hierarchy, and an ascetic view of the Christian life. The kind of legalism which was in the Church could not help but influence Augustine. Christians all around were trying to merit a reward from God on the basis of their good works. Ascetic works were especially played up in the monastic movement. All such efforts as these were based on a desire for self-justification and were out of harmony with Paul's view of

faith versus works.

Mackinnon points out, however, that it was into this conventional type of piety that Augustine thrust his doctrine of grace. Augustine naturally identified the grace of God and its measures with the existing church order. It is possible that it was this pressure which caused Augustine to mold the doctrine of grace, which he saw in Romans, into a form which would not violate the continuity of traditional Catholic doctrine.²²

V. SUMMARY OF AUGUSTINE

Reasons for his interpretations. The fact that Augustine leaned strongly toward the grace of God as man's salvation was no doubt due to some extent to his experience of conversion. Augustine, when surveying his own wicked life prior to his conversion, felt God's grace to be the only power which could have saved him from eternal punishment. Perhaps part of Augustine's emphasis on grace was caused by the stress put upon the freedom of man's will by the Pelagian movement. Augustine could not conceive of man being able to obey God out of any goodness of his own.

²²James Mackinnon, Luther and the Reformation (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1925), I, pp. 58-63.

Augustine, catching the spirit of Paul's exposition in Romans, could see that, basically, everything was a result of God's grace.

Augustine came close to catching the full spirit of the Apostle Paul. He understood the power of grace, but he failed to apply such a doctrine due to the influence of the legalism in the historic Catholic church. Augustine became inconsistent through his efforts to reconcile justification by grace through faith, with the popular Catholic doctrine of merits and good works. Augustine certainly contains elements of legalism, but his major emphasis is upon grace, which saves through a faith as it works by love.

Faith is related to works in Augustine's system. Augustine did not allow the possibility of justification by faith alone, without some evidence of a changed life and changed works. Augustine's little book Faith and Works definitely shows he believed in the necessity of personal good works in the faithful Christian's life. Faith worked by love.

His impact. It is difficult to ascertain the full impact which Augustine has made upon the course of church history. It is certain that Augustine influenced men of all schools of thought following his period of activity.

As Neve has observed, Roman Catholics look back to him to justify their doctrine of merits and their gradual process of justification; likewise, the reformers look back to Augustine to find their doctrine of justification by faith without previous merit on man's part.²³

But by far the most important contribution which Augustine made was his work in turning the minds of men away from legalism and back toward the forgotten power of grace. It is true, in some cases, that Augustine allowed even his concept of grace to become legalized; in general, however, it must be admitted that Augustine turned the tide of legalism and kept the church from decaying in the pursuit of that barren goal. After the time of Augustine, the doctrine of grace was a force to be considered in the interpretation of the relationship of faith and works.

CHAPTER IV

MEDIEVAL AND REFORMATION PERIOD

After the time of Augustine, the next important segment of time to be considered is the era of the Medieval and Reformation periods. Here one finds that the relationship of faith and works was interpreted from two extreme positions. In the Medieval period, the Catholic Church pursued its course toward legalism with renewed fervor. The tendency toward legalism, found in Augustine, was used by scholars of this period to bring the doctrine of meritorious works to its full fruition. On the other hand, however, the scholars of the Reformation also found in Augustine the emphasis on grace and faith for which they were looking. At this crucial point of history, the world saw theological minds swing to the extreme position of righteousness by works, and then back in the opposite direction to righteousness by faith.

I. MEDIEVAL PERIOD

A General Picture

D'Aubigne sketches a general picture of the Medieval period and shows that the emphasis of this period was the direct cause of Reformation's outbreak. It was the

characteristic of this age to stress that man is made righteous by his works. This emphasis upon works caused men to feel that they could justify themselves through their own power. If works were to be so important, it was necessary that faith be relegated to an inferior position in Christian thought.

Faith's nature changed. D'Aubigne continues in his analysis to show that the Pauline concept of faith, which included the whole of the believer, was soon lost from view. Faith had the meaning, in the New Testament, of a real reaching out toward God to receive the salvation offered by Him. Man was not to so reach with a half-hearted effort, but to exert himself completely in this cause. But, once this purpose for faith faded, faith's power to renew a man and bring forth spontaneous good works also faded. The faith of the Medieval period became, in the final analysis, nothing more than a simple act of human understanding, or a mere submission to the authority of God and the Catholic Church.¹

Faith became merely an intellectual assent, according

¹J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, History of the Reformation (New York: Robert Carter, 1847), I, p. 14.

to Morgan.² The highest mysteries of the faith were painted as being inaccessible to reason and therefore could only be received on the basis of external authority, such as the Catholic Church. The Church ceased to expect an intelligent assent to its doctrines from unlettered people, and in its place, mere submission to Church authority was substituted.

Works as important as faith. Once faith was stripped of its vital meaning, it was no longer possible to say that faith could save a man. Morgan states that it was still considered necessary for salvation, but faith had lost its real meaning for the justification of the sinner.³ The only external bond left was merit. Faith eventually was replaced by good works as the principle of justification. Faith, then, was submission to the authority of the Church, but it was the merit of a man's works which really gave him a standing with God.

D'Aubigne also relates the powerful influence which Pelagianism had in contributing to this error. Pelagius had asserted that human nature was not fallen, but that it had only to will to do good, and with a little

²William Morgan, "Faith," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), V, p. 690.

³Ibid.

help, it could do so. Such an emphasis on the power to do good led easily to an undue stress upon the outward works which men could perform. It was easy, therefore, for men to place great value upon the number of penitential works they had done rather than on their faith in Christ. If works were the important factor, then men could naturally assume that men must earn the reward of heaven. And if a certain amount is required in order to reach heaven, some men must be able to earn merit above the required amount since all men are not equal in their ability.

Importance of the Catholic Church. After God's grace was slighted and works magnified, it was necessary that some authority set up the required works which men had to do. The Church of the Middle Ages served to fill this need. The grace which once had resided in God's hands now passed into the hands of the Church's priests. The Church took the place occupied by God. It was the Church which dispensed the merit gained by saints and martyrs, and souls turned to the Church to receive the benefit of this grace which God had said was free.

Rites and ceremonies were multiplied in the human effort to please God. D'Aubigne mentions the harm done by the Church's doctrine of penance. At first, penance consisted of confession and repentance of any public sin.

Gradually, penance became the means whereby a sinner could be re-admitted to the Church. The Church, not God, granted forgiveness of sins through the ministry of a priest.

Once men became sensitive to their sins against the moral and ceremonial laws, it became necessary for the Church to provide some means of forgiveness, lest men be discouraged from trying altogether. The Church provided this means through the sale of indulgences. Indulgences made up for what men lacked in attaining forgiveness of their sins. Gradually, indulgences took the place of real repentance and change of life. The Pope and the rest of the Catholic Church grew accustomed to making a profit on forgiving the sins of men. What God had given freely, the Medieval Church was selling. In ascribing merit to sinners, the Church claimed to have merits accumulated throughout the past ages to draw upon. Purgatory was even added to the Church's domain, and indulgences were said to liberate souls trapped there. And thus it was that faith's power was lost in a maze of works-righteousness fostered by ecclestical authorities.⁴

The efforts of this age separated Christ the redeemer from the individual sinner, who needed Christ's

⁴D'Aubigne, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

grace, by a series of righteous works imposed by the Medieval Church.⁵

Scholasticism

Buchanan calls attention to the development in the Medieval period which resulted in what has been called Scholastic Theology. Such theology is called Medieval as to its date of appearance, and Scholastic as to its source. This theology is important, because it contributed much to the trend of Medieval theology.

Religion mixed with philosophy. Scholasticism was a theology which attempted to explain the Church's doctrine by the philosophy of the Schools. Previous to the time of Scholasticism, doctrine had been established by collecting the sentences of the Fathers, the Popes, and the Councils on any one subject, and then appealing to the resulting traditional view as authoritative. The Schoolmen sought to submit every article of faith to the intellectual and ethical principles of philosophy, as a test of its validity. The philosophy of Aristotle, which had been corrupted by certain Arabian interpreters, was then currently being studied. Buchanan points out that

⁵Henry C. Sheldon, History of Christian Doctrine (fourth edition; New York: Eaton & Mains, 1885), II, p. 4.

these Arabian interpreters knew nothing except human righteousness, and therefore, their coloring of Aristotle made him teach a righteousness by works. The uniting of this philosophy with the Church's doctrine then led to the substitution of man's earned righteousness in the place of Christ's imputed righteousness. This naturally led to many other errors, not the least of which was a full-blown doctrine of meritorious works.⁶

Scholastic justification. Scholastic doctrine is replete with various shades of Semi-Pelagianism. For this reason, the general opinion of the Schoolmen was that faith justifies on the ground of love. Justification was not a judicial act of God, but a process by which man is made righteous. Grace is infused into man to help him to do good works of justification.

Scholasticism made good works and love the center of justification in place of faith. Justification had significance, according to Scholasticism, only in that it made men capable of doing good works. They saw man as able to act meritoriously on his own free will to some extent. This they called meritum de congruo. After the

⁶James Buchanan, The Doctrine of Justification (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955), pp. 98-99.

infusion of God's grace, man may have meritum de condigno, or works made possible by grace and free-will. Since man could earn merit, the idea of being able to earn more than he needed for himself was also conceived. Man could earn this extra merit by obeying the evangelical counsels, in addition to the commandments. Such things as poverty, celibacy, and other ascetic works were considered works of supererogation, which earned extra merit for those who performed them.⁷

Value of merit. The Schoolmen distinguished between the guilt of sin and the guilt of punishment. The guilt of sin could be removed in baptism, but the guilt of punishment had to be removed by penance or purgatory. It was necessary, therefore, for one to gain merit which would hide his guilt of punishment.

Buchanan shows that Scholasticism taught the justness of men's claim upon God for merit when they performed good works. After the infusion of grace, men were supposed to be able to really merit God's rewards. Beyond this, men tried to acquire more merit by voluntarily assuming the monastic vows and submitting to the ascetic rules. Men

⁷E. H. Klotsche, The History of Christian Doctrine (Burlington: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1945), pp. 144-146.

looked to the storehouse of merit, vested in the Church by the saints and martyrs, for help in attaining forgiveness for their sins. This resource of merit was tapped through means of indulgences made available to all who could buy. It was this practice which furnished the spark which set in flame the Reformation.⁸

Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas is to be considered at this point, because, in him, the theology of the Medieval period is well summarized. Aquinas took the thought of the day and cast it into a systematic form. Neve agrees that the perfection of scholasticism was reached under Aquinas.⁹ Aquinas wrote commentaries on Aristotle and books on the Old and New Testaments. In his Summa Theologia Aquinas gave a modern reworking to theology and provided it with a clarity unknown before.

Walker sketches the system of Aquinas's theology, and describes it as teaching that man's restoration is made possible only through the unmerited grace of God. Thomas

⁸Buchanan, op. cit., pp. 104-108.

⁹J. L. Neve, History of Christian Doctrine (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1946), I, p. 200.

thought that Christ's merit which he, being without sin and did not need, was to be used for the needs of his human brethren.¹⁰

Not earn first grace. It is clear, from a reading of Thomas's Summa Theologica, that man cannot merit the first grace bestowed by God while he is in a state of nature. Only by the gift of grace is it possible for man to merit anything. Aquinas says, "God ordained human nature to attain the end of eternal life not by its own strength, but by the help of grace, and in this way its act can be meritorious of eternal life." He further states, "A man can merit nothing from God except by His gift." (Summa Theologica, Part I of Second Part, Ques. 114, Art. 2)¹¹ Aquinas maintained that no one could merit the first grace. The first grace was given, and then other works of merit flowed from its effects. Aquinas concludes, "Hence it is manifest that no one can merit for himself the first grace." (Part I of the Second Part, Ques. 114, Art. 3)¹²

¹⁰Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 272.

¹¹Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (Vol. XX of Great Books of the Western World, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. 54 Vols.; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1955), pp. 370-371.

¹²Ibid., pp. 370-371.

Merit possible after first grace. Once a man is redeemed by the first grace, however, he can then acquire merits in the sight of God. In line with true Medieval Catholic thought, Aquinas teaches that man is able to merit something from God, and he therefore does not not depend solely upon faith as the grounds for his justification. Aquinas equates man's merit with God with the kind of merit a child might have with his father, or a slave, with his master. Aquinas means that man attains a relative merit. He states it thus: " ... so that man obtains from God, as a reward of his operation, what God gave him the power of operation for ... " (Summa Theologica, Part I of Second Part, Question 114, Article 1). He continues in this same context to say that man " ... the rational creature moves itself to act by free choice and so its action has the character of merit." ¹³

Aquinas answers the objection that man are unprofitable servants to God even after they have done what He commands, by saying, "Man merits in so far as he does what he ought by his own will" (Part I of Second Part, 114, 1).¹⁴

Aquinas further answers the objection that the doctrine of merit makes God man's debtor, when he says,

¹³Ibid., p. 371.

¹⁴Ibid.

Since our action has the character of merit only on the presupposition of the Divine ordination, it does not follow that God is made our debtor absolutely, but His own, in so far as it is due that His will should be carried out (Part I of Second Part, Ques. 114, Art. 1).¹⁵

God then is not a debtor to man when He bestows merit upon him; rather God is merely bound to carry out His own avowed purpose.

Aquinas shows that man can merit eternal life after he is justified. An objection is raised, that man is paid the wages of sin, but the gift of eternal life comes from grace, according to Romans 6:23. Aquinas is faced with the problem of reconciling the fact that our salvation is called a gift, by the New Testament, and he says it is earned by merit. Aquinas explains, "This saying is to be understood of the first cause of our reaching everlasting life, namely, God's mercy. But our merit is the subsequent cause" (Part I of Second Part, Ques. 114, Art. 3).¹⁶

Faith less important. The thinking of Aquinas is dominated largely by the concept of merit; consequently, faith sinks to a low ebb in his writings. Faith itself becomes mere assent, and has only the standing of being meritorious like other works. Aquinas says of faith,

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 372.

Now the act of believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the Divine truth at the command of the will moved by the grace of God, so that it falls under free choice in relation to God. And consequently the act of faith can be meritorious. (Part II of Second Part, Ques. 2, Art. 9)¹⁷

Some mention that the system of Thomas, as related in his Summa Theologica, was too complicated for the popular mind to grasp; as a result, many errors sprang from it.¹⁸ It is certain that Paul's system of justification by faith was not present in its teaching. By this time, the tendency has been to drift far away from New Testament teaching into outright legalistic works.

End of Medieval Period

The Catholic Church of the Medieval period stressed the sinfulness of mankind until men had to have a way to work out their debt to God. The Church provided a way to relieve this guilt through penance and indulgences. Just before the Reformation, the Church became lax in its role as judge of the people's sins. Sheldon names such indulgence-peddlers as Tetzal who were allowed to roam the countryside, representing the Church as ready to pass out pardon for a price in money. Sin became cheap,

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 398.

¹⁸ As per William Sanday, and Arthur Headlam, The Epistle to the Romans (fifth edition; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), p. 151.

because the Church used an artificial legalism to combat its evil power. It was the practice of such vice as this which spurred Martin Luther to the scene of action in the dawning of the Reformation.¹⁹

II. THE REFORMATION

Martin Luther

The corruption of the Medieval Church grew so bad that reform was demanded by the people. It seemed that a movement for reformation was in the air, but the waiting minds of men lacked a guiding spirit. This guiding spirit was furnished in the person of Martin Luther, whose name will always be intimately connected with the Reformation. It was Luther's spirit and conviction which gave impetus to the cause of reform.

Luther's preparation. Luther was prepared for his role as reformer through the training which he had received under the ponderous and pedantic scholastic theology. This system did little to make religion intelligible to the common people. From this abstract system of merit and works-righteousness, Luther finally revolted in an

¹⁹Sheldon, op. cit., II, p. 4.

effort to restore the power of faith to the people.²⁰

Luther's teaching unlike Medieval. Luther scoffed at the idea, held by the Scholastics and monastics, that a man could do good works by his own will in an effort to commend himself to God's grace. Rather he says,

Hence, the teaching of all the schools and monasteries is misleading, when they teach man to begin to pray and do good works, to found something, to give, to sing, to become spiritual and thereby to seek God's grace.²¹

Luther exposes the fallacy of man's ever attaining any merit, by showing that such human merit would make the sacrifice of Christ unnecessary. He expresses it in these words:

For if out of your own free will you might avoid sin and do that which pleases God, what need would you have of Christ? He would be a fool to shed his blood for your sin, if you yourself were so free and able to do aught that is not sin. From this you learn how the universities and monasteries with their teachings of free will and good works, do nothing else but darken the truth of God ... (Gospel Sermon, First Sunday in Advent-Lenker Edition, Vol. X, #21-25)²²

It is obvious that Luther was in a complete reaction against the teaching of Medieval Catholicism, from his

²⁰James Mackinnon, Luther and the Reformation (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1925), I, pp. 66-67.

²¹Hugh Thomson Kerr, Jr. (ed.) A Compend of Luther's Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), p. 105.

²²Ibid.

words directed against the practice of rendering satisfaction.

Luther said,

They have grossly abused it, to the ruin of Christians in body and soul ... Then, they so continually harp on it and emphasize its necessity, that they leave no room for faith in Christ ... they torture poor consciences to death, and one runs to Rome, one to this place, another to that, this one to Chartreuse, ... one scourges himself with rods, another ruins his body with fasts and vigils ...²³

Luther definitely combats the Roman doctrine of grace de congruo and grace de condigno. He shows the outcome of such doctrines is that man can do a good deed before his reception of grace (meritum de congruo), and God is expected to reward the man's goodness out of a sense of fairness. Also, after grace is given, God then is represented as being duty-bound to reward man's merit (meritum de condigno). Luther accuses Medieval scholars of teaching that man only needs a "formal righteousness" from God in order to complete his good life. Luther contends that if man can earn a natural goodness, then there is no need for Christ in God's plan.²⁴

²³Martin Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," Works of Martin Luther, trans. A. T. W. Steinhaeser (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1943), II, pp. 253-254.

²⁴Martin Luther, A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, trans. Theodore Graebner (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n. d.), pp. 63-64.

Works the fruit of faith. Luther did not deny the necessity of good works after justifying faith. Luther said, "Now after a man is once justified ... doubtless he will not be idle, but as a good tree he will bring forth good fruits," (Commentary on Galatians, p. 114).²⁵ He continues,

Thus we owe whatever of good there may be in our penance, not to our scrupulous enumeration of sins, but to the truth of God and to our faith. All other things are the works and fruits of this which follow of their own accord, and do not make a man good, but are done by a man already made good through faith in the truth of God.²⁶

Good works, therefore, are the fruit of faith and do not justify a man by virtue of their merit. In Luther, all seeking of good works collapses. Only the works which arise from a spontaneous love for God and fellow-man are needed.

Not saved of works. Luther rebelled against ascribing salvation to good works, as had been done in the age preceding the Reformation. Luther saw salvation as being composed of two steps. First, it is necessary " ... that a man do acknowledge himself by the law, to be

²⁵Kerr, op. cit., p. 104.

²⁶Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," op. cit., p. 249.

a sinner, and that it is impossible for him to do any good work," (Commentary on Galatians, p. 92)²⁷ His second step he described by saying, " ... if thou wilt be saved, thou mayest not seek salvation by works: ' for God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him ... ' " (Commentary on Galatians, p. 92).²⁸

Luther made a distinction between the methods of justification found in the Law and in the Gospel. Neve points out that Luther maintains that the Gospel gives what the Law had commanded.²⁹ Luther did not see Christianity as merely another system of law-keeping or works-righteousness; rather, the Gospel was a system based on faith.

Luther, in his comment on Romans 3:28, expresses the conviction that Paul is not talking about the works of faith when he says that a man is " ... justified by faith without the deeds of the law." He maintains that those who do the works of faith do not depend on those works as a basis for their salvation. Luther wanted men

²⁷Kerr, op. cit., p. 104.

²⁸Kerr, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

²⁹Neve, op. cit., p. 229.

to put their trust in Christ by the avenue of faith.³⁰

Luther's position on works is best summed up in his own words, in which he takes the position that works are good, but not the basis of man's salvation:

We do not, therefore, reject good works; on the contrary, we cherish and teach them as much as possible. We do not condemn them for their own sake, but because of this godless addition to them and the perverse idea that righteousness is to be sought through them; ...³¹

By faith alone. By far the most startling feature of Martin Luther's theology was his contention that man is saved by faith only. It was this concept which stirred up so much controversy between him and the Catholic Church. It is also this point for which Luther is mostly remembered today. In this one stroke of interpretation of Romans, Luther started a new trend of thought for the religious world.

It is obvious to any student of the Bible, that Martin Luther altered the words of Paul from "justification by faith" into "justification by faith alone." Lampe

³⁰Martin Luther, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans trans. J. Theodore Mueller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), p. 64.

³¹Martin Luther, "A Treatise on Christian Liberty," Works of Martin Luther, trans. W. A. Lambert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1943), II, p. 333.

suggests that men of the sixteenth century were asserting the doctrine of faith alone against a corrupt Catholic system, which had offered salvation for centuries, based upon human merit.³² No doubt, some of Luther's emphasis upon faith was a reaction against the excessive stress formerly placed on merit by the Medieval theologians.

Luther admitted that he added the "only" to Paul's statement of the matter, and he justified himself in doing so. First, he explained it from the standpoint of language:

In Romans iii, I know right well that the word solum was not in the Greek or Latin text ... It is a fact that these four letters s-o-l-a are not there, ... At the same time they do not see that the sense of them is there and that the word belongs there if the translation is to be clear and strong. I wanted to speak German, not Latin or Greek, since I had undertaken to speak German in the translation. But it is the nature of our German language that in speaking of two things, one of which is admitted and the other denied, we use the word "only" along with the word "not" or "no." So we say, "The farmer brings only grain and no money; ..."³³

After having explained the nature of the German language and illustrating the need for the "only", Luther

³²G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), The Doctrine of Justification by Faith (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, 1954), p. 22.

³³Martin Luther, "On Translating: An Open Letter," Works of Martin Luther, trans. C. M. Jacobs (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1931), V, p. 15.

next indicated that the nature of the scripture context demands the interpretation which he has given it. He argues,

Now, however, I was not only relying on the nature of the languages and following that when, in Romans iii, I inserted the word solum, "only," but the text itself and the sense of St. Paul demanded it and forced it upon me. He is dealing, in that passage, with the main point of Christian doctrine, viz., that we are justified by faith in Christ, without any works of the law, ... "If Abraham was justified by works, he may glory, but not before God." But when works are so completely cut away, the meaning of it must be that faith alone justifies ... Paul's words are too strong; they endure no works, none at all; and if it is not a work, it must be faith alone.³⁴

A possible misunderstanding of "faith alone." Many have felt that Luther meant "faith alone" in the sense of man having nothing to do with his salvation. At least, this has been the interpretation credited to him by some of later ages. Certainly, one can see why there is room for misunderstanding of Luther. Much of what he says seems to be self-contradictory. He denies that works can have any part in man's salvation, and then, advocates that man should manifest good works in his life. Perhaps it would clear up much of the uncertainty about Luther's teaching, if one could determine what Luther meant by "faith alone."

Contrary to a first impression of Luther, he seems to really insist on what sounds like the New Testament

³⁴Ibid., pp. 20,22.

"working faith." Luther did not define every effort of man as being separate from "faith alone." Luther's definition of works was, "We take the work of the law therefore generally for that which is contrary to grace."³⁵ From this statement, it sounds as though he would expel from faith, only those efforts which were contrary to the principle of grace.

Luther states his view in more familiar terms, when he speaks of a "working faith:"

What marvel is it then, if rewards be promised to the incarnate faith, that is to say, to the working faith, as was the faith of Abel, or to faithful works.³⁶

He makes his approval of "working faith" even stronger, when he says,

Therefore we must in no wise think with the sophisters and hypocrites, that works do absolutely justify, or that rewards are promised to moral works, but to faithful works only.³⁷

If Luther believed so strongly in "working faith," one wonders where he would place baptism. In other words, is baptism a "work of merit," or a part of "faith only?" It seems that Luther considered baptism to be something other

³⁵Martin Luther, Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (Blair, Nebraska: Lutherans In All Lands Co., 1901), p. 128.

³⁶Ibid., p. 260.

than the type of works which he condemned. In fact, he seems to consider baptism as being on the opposite end of the scale from works. He says of the Papists and the Anabaptists,

Thus are they ... calling back the people from baptism, faith, ... to law and works, turning grace into law and law into grace.³⁷

Quoted on both sides. What is true of Augustine, also seems to be true of Luther; namely, that he can be quoted on both sides of the question. There are certain passages from Luther which seem to teach that man does not even have to make the effort to obey. Of course, these passages must be examined in the light of his other comments. He explains what one must do to attain righteousness:

But this most excellent righteousness, of faith I mean (which God through Christ, without works imputeth unto us,) is neither political nor ceremonial, nor the righteousness of God's law, nor consisteth in works ... that is to say, a mere passive righteousness ...³⁸

He makes this point even stronger in the following quotation:

Why, do we then nothing? do we work nothing for the obtaining of this righteousness? I answer, Nothing at all. For this is perfect righteousness, "to do nothing, to know nothing of the law of of

³⁷Ibid., p. 147.

³⁸Ibid., p. xxvi.

works;" but to know and to believe this only ...³⁹

These quotations sound final in their legislation against efforts on man's part; however, if one understands Luther to be speaking of human works of moral righteousness not saving a man, then such statements seem to harmonize with what he has said before.

His position on James. But the question then is, "Why did Luther object to the teaching on faith and works found in the book of James, and call it a 'book of straw'?" The comments he made upon the book of James, however, are not quite as strong as they have been pictured by some. He considered James to be less important than other New Testament books, because James did not dwell upon the Gospel message of Christ's resurrection enough. He esteemed the books highest which had this element in them. He evaluates James, therefore, by saying,

Hence one can well feel that the Epistle of James is no right apostolic epistle; for there is hardly a thing of this in it.⁴⁰

Luther made his famous statement about the book of James due to the fact that it had so little of this element

³⁹ Ibid., p. xxvi.

⁴⁰ R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1938), p. 522, citing Erlangen ed., vol. 51, p. 337.

in it. He concludes,

Therefore St. James' Epistle is a right strawy epistle (ein recht strohern Epistel) compared with them (i. e. John's Gospel, Paul's Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and First Peter), for it bears no evangelical character (kein evangelisch Art).⁴¹

Evidence of confusion. But there is evidence to show that Luther was really confused over the teaching of the book, because he says,

But this James does no more than drive to the law and its works, and in a disorderly way throws one thing into another, so that I imagine, it was some good pious man or other, who took up a few statements from the disciples of the apostles and so threw them on paper, or perhaps out of his sermon the thing was composed by another.⁴²

This statement, by itself, is enough to indicate that Luther was confused as to the meaning of James's teaching. He seemed to understand James as directing men back to the law and works.

Another quotation from Luther shows him to be in utter confusion concerning James. He says,

All things which are attributed to works, do properly belong unto faith. For works must not be looked upon morally, but faithfully, and with a spiritual eye ... Abraham is called faithful, ... so that, beholding him working, I see nothing of the carnal or of the working

⁴¹Ibid., p. 523, citing Erlanger ed., vol. 63, p. 115.

⁴²Ibid., citing Erlanger ed., vol. 63, p. 157.

Abraham, but of the believing Abraham.⁴³

How Luther could say this, and then disagree with James, is amazing, to say the least!

Summary of Luther's views. Since Luther believed that man is rewarded for his "faithful working," it would not be difficult to picture him as being in favor of the faith endorsed in the New Testament. Of course, there is the objection concerning his motto of "faith alone." But this could be explained as an effort, on his part, to state the New Testament position in a form which would best oppose the Medieval Catholic system of meritorious works. This solution would also explain Luther's aversion to the teaching found in the book of James. He was in revolt against works-righteousness, and he dared not endorse any writing which seemed to favor that system. It is easy to see how later theologians understood Luther as favoring a faith which did not require any effort of obedience on man's part, because such seems to be the implication of "faith alone." Also many of his statements, taken separately, would favor this interpretation.

Luther, however, merely intended to show that men

⁴³Luther, Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, p. 261.

may obey God in faith in order to be justified. Such obedience of work, in itself, is not the real cause of justification; on the contrary, it is always the faith. It is unfortunate that so many have taken Luther's statement of "faith alone," and made it mean something which excluded obedience to God's commands.

John Calvin

As a reformer of the second generation, John Calvin took advantage of the work of the first reformers, and was able to refine much of what had been said before. He seems clearer than Luther in his expression of the relationship of faith and works.

Unfortunately, Calvin's cardinal doctrine of predestination took much of the meaning out of his teaching on this subject. The fact that some men have experienced a previous election by God tends to minimize the importance of both faith and works.

Justification by works or faith? Calvin shows the impossibility of being justified by works, when he shows the inability of weak humans to keep the law perfectly. He explains,

Above we have clearly shown that justification by works consists only in a perfect and absolute fulfillment of the law; and that, therefore, no

man is justified by works unless he has reached the summit of perfection, and cannot be convicted of even the smallest transgression.⁴⁴

Calvin also steers clear of any righteousness by works when he shows the difference between the respective methods of justification under the law and the Gospel. He uses the figure of a court trial to illustrate the point that justification by faith excludes works:

In the same manner, a man will be said to be justified by works, if in his life there can be a purity and holiness which merits an attestation of righteousness of works, he by faith lays hold of the righteousness of Christ, and clothed in it appears in the sight of God not as a sinner, but as righteous. Thus we simply interpret justification, as the acceptance with which God receives us into his favor as if we were righteous:⁴⁵

Law and Gospel. In explaining the requirements of the Gospel as compared to the Law, Calvin asserts the difference between the two systems. Unlike the Law, there is no earning of salvation through the Gospel. God gives salvation freely to those who will accept it:

And in what can the difference consist unless in this, that the promises of the Gospel are gratuitous, and are founded on the mere mercy of God, whereas the promises of the Law depend on the condition of works?⁴⁶

⁴⁴John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), II, pp. 90-91. (Book III. 15, 1)

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 38. (Book III. 11, 3)

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 54. (Book III. 11, 17)

By faith alone. Calvin steps into the path trod by Luther, when he argues against those who do not believe in being justified by "faith alone." He states that no one dares deny that men are justified by faith, for this truth is mentioned too many times in the scriptures; however, he does admit that some will not tolerate the word "alone," since it is not expressly stated in the scripture. But Calvin asks, "Does he not plainly enough attribute everything to faith alone when he disconnects it with works?" He quotes, " ' Faith is imputed for righteousness, ' and therefore righteousness is not the reward of works, but is given without being due."⁴⁷

Calvin testifies that faith has no intrinsic power in itself, but it acts only as an approved vessel to receive Christ's righteousness. He explains this faith:

When he objects that the power of justifying exists not in faith, considered in itself, but only as receiving Christ, I willingly admit it. For did faith justify of itself, or (as it is expressed) by its own intrinsic virtue, as it is always weak and imperfect, its efficiency would be partial, and thus our righteousness being maimed, would give us only a portion of salvation. God alone justifies ... we compare faith a kind of vessel, because we are incapable of receiving Christ, unless we are emptied, and come with open mouth to receive his

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 56. (Book III. 11, 19)

grace.⁴⁸

Relation of faith and works. Calvin is even clearer on the question when he explains that justification is not due to works themselves, but that works are still a necessary part of "justification by faith." The works are necessary, he affirms, but the justification is in the faith. He sketches what he feels is the relationship between faith and works:

We dream not of a faith which is devoid of good works, nor of a justification which can exist without them: the only difference is, that while we acknowledge that faith and works are necessarily connected, we, however, place justification in faith, not in works ... Why then, are we justified by faith? Because by faith we apprehend the righteousness of Christ, which alone reconciles us to God.⁴⁹

He continues to show that it is impossible for works in themselves to have any power to justify man:

Now if faith utterly excludes boasting, the righteousness of works cannot in any way be associated with the righteousness of faith. This meaning is so clearly expressed in the fourth chapter to the Romans as to leave no room for cavil or evasion. "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory;" and then is added, "but not before God." (Romans iv.2)

Calvin's conclusion is that there is no mixture of faith and works of merit in the process of justification.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 43. (Book III. 11,7)

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 98-99. (Book III. 16,1)

It is either one or the other. It cannot be God's grace and then partly man's merit; to the contrary, the righteousness which God gives is by grace through faith. Calvin did not want to leave any room for the Catholic system of ascribing part of the merit to man's work. He ends his argument by saying,

The conclusion therefore is, that he was not justified by works. He then employs another argument from contraries—viz. when reward is paid to works, it is done of debt; not of grace; but the righteousness of faith is of grace: therefore it is not of the merit of works. Away, then with the dream of those who invent a righteousness compounded of faith and works.⁵⁰

III. SUMMARY OF MEDIEVAL AND REFORMATION PERIOD

It is certainly obvious that this period of history is vitally important to the interpretation of the relationship of faith and works. In this influential period, the direction of interpretation changed twice. In the Medieval period, the emphasis on legalism reached its height, but under Martin Luther and others of the Reformation, the pulse of feeling deflected toward the other extreme of justification by faith alone, without works of the law.

Reasons for such tendencies

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 51. (Book III. 11,13)

Medieval period. The Medieval period was influenced, in its interpretation of faith and works, by the Catholic Church's rise to power. The Church intervened between the people and God and took an authoritative position. Then, with the mixture of human righteousness introduced by Scholasticism's acceptance of the philosophy of Aristotle, the Church began to prescribe legal works whereby a man might earn favor with God. It is this ecclesiastical system of merit which Thomas Aquinas summarized and perfected in his Summa Theologica.

Reformation period. Martin Luther, and the respective leaders of the Reformation, went to the statement "faith alone," in a desperate effort to return to the New Testament and to repudiate all which resembled Medieval Catholicism. The whole world was tired of religious oppression, and for this reason, many were glad to reject medieval views.

Impact of Interpretations

Medieval period. The impact of Medieval interpretation survives today in the Catholic Church through the influence of Thomas Aquinas and his systematization of the doctrine of meritorious works. It is his summary which helps hold faith in the subordinate position of being mere

assent to Catholic dogmas. Faith remains the first step of salvation, with works of merit being the real means of arriving to a position of favor in God's sight.

Reformation period. The impact of the Reformation and the work of Luther and Calvin are still an influence today in Protestant circles. The work of these reformers endures in religious bodies who emphasize the great power of faith to save. Under Luther's influence, these religious bodies tend to shun works. Luther's avowed purpose of breaking with a system of works-righteousness caused him to doubt the value of the book of James. The book of James was inferior for Luther, because it seemed to teach justification by works of law. Modern interpretation has leaned so strongly toward "faith alone," that Luther's position on faith has often been falsely interpreted to mean mental assent, without the need of any obedience to the commands of God.

CHAPTER V

MODERN PERIOD

The modern period should be considered in order to determine the influences which have been brought to bear upon its development. Catholic and Protestant developments into the present day will be shown to be a result of the thinking established in the Medieval and Reformation periods, respectively. Liberal and Neo-Orthodox thinking, which will also be examined in this picture, will be presented as new developments nurtured in the modern period.

I. MODERN CATHOLIC

Merit

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, merit is generally understood to be "that property of a good work which entitles the doer to receive a reward from him in whose service the work is done."¹

Two types of merit. The Catholic Church today recognizes that there are two kinds of merit which man may have.

¹Joseph Pohle, "Merit," The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York; The Encyclopedia Press, Inc., 1911), X, 202.

The first kind of merit is the one which is most objectionable in its claim to righteousness by works of merit. This merit is defined, in a general way by Pohle, as being something which man has really earned. He states, "Condign merit supposes an equality between service and return ...; and thus gives a real claim to a reward."²

Congruous merit is the second type of merit. This type has less claim upon God for its reward. It is based more on the merciful nature of God, rather than on His justice. "Congruous merit, owing to its inadequacy and the lack of intrinsic proportion between the service and the recompense, claims a reward only on the ground of equity."³

Difference between the types of merit. The practical difference is,

... if the reward due to condign merit be withheld, there is a violation of right and justice and the consequent obligation in conscience to make restitution, while, in the case of congruous merit, to withhold the reward involves no violation of right and no obligation to restore, it being merely an offence against what is fitting or a matter of personal discrimination. Hence the reward of congruous merit always depends in a great measure on the kindness and liberality of the giver, though not purely and simply on his good will.⁴

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 203.

Merit before God. Smith, in summarizing the teaching of the Catholic Church on the matter of merit, says, "It is the treasured belief of the Catholic Church that the soul which is in a state of grace can merit eternal reward." He justifies the calling of heaven a reward for believers when he says, "Just as evil action deserves its punishment so does virtuous action deserve its reward."⁵

However, in applying these ideas of merit to God, Pohle makes the distinction that God, in a strict sense, is not bound by claims of justice with regard to his creatures. In other words, he will not go so far as to say that man can demand something of God. God, to the contrary, is sovereign, and man possesses nothing of his own; therefore, all that man can do is essentially given to him by God. He feels that the only reason for God having to reward man is because of His own veracity. God, then, rewards men because He has promised to do so, and He is bound to His truthfulness.⁶

Pohle further supports the claim of merit for the believer by citing the Council of Trent as upholding the doctrine of merit. He also refers to the Council of Trent

⁵George D. Smith, The Teaching of the Catholic Church (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), I, p. 576.

⁶Pohle, op. cit., p. 203.

as proof that eternal life is both a reward and a grace.⁷ Smith is in agreement on this point also.⁸ Stuber shows that the Council of Trent actually thought man could merit something with God:

Eternal life is proposed to those who do good unto the end and hope in God, both as a grace mercifully promised to the children of God through Jesus Christ, and as a reward to be faithfully rendered to their good works and merits, in virtue of the promise of God Himself (II Tim. 4:7) ... For since Christ Jesus Himself constantly communicated His virtue to those who are justified ... , which virtue always preceded, accompanied and followed their good works, without which they could be nowise agreeable to God and meritorious; we must believe that nothing more is wanting to the justified, nor is there any reason why they should not be considered as having fully satisfied the divine law, as far as the condition of this life admits, by such works as are done in God, and truly merited the attainment of eternal life in due time, ...⁹

Catholic Defense of Merit

Biblical defense. To show that merit has a Biblical foundation, Pohle quotes the words of Jesus found in Matthew 5:12. These words are taken by Pohle to be a teaching in favor of merit. Jesus says, "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven."

⁷Ibid., p. 204.

⁸Smith, op. cit., p. 577.

⁹Stanley J. Stuber, Primer on Roman Catholicism for Protestants (New York: Association Press, 1953), pp. 171-172, citing the Council of Trent, Session VI, Chap. XVI.

Certainly, the faithful will receive a reward, but it will not be because they have earned it; a "reward" does not necessarily imply that one has merited what he receives. Abraham did not earn the righteousness which he received; rather, the scripture says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness," Romans 4:3). The faith which Abraham had, did not earn his reward of righteousness; instead, it was a gift of grace on God's part.

Christ's description of the last judgment is cited from Matthew 25, to prove that Christ will make the eternal reward dependent upon the works of mercy which one has performed.

The works mentioned in Matthew 25, are the works of love which flow from a saving faith. As James says, a faith without works is a "dead faith." This, then, is not a description of salvation by "works of merit," but of salvation through a "working faith."

Paul, the defender of salvation by grace, is shown by Pohle to be in favor of merits which are founded on grace. His proof of Paul's recognition of merits is that Paul used the terms "prize" (Philippians 3:14), "reward" (Colossians 3:24), and "crown of righteousness" (II Timothy 4:8), in referring to man's eternal life. He construes

these passages to be a part of the basis for the Catholic system of merit. He contends, therefore, that merit is not foreign to the Bible, but an integral part of it.¹⁰

But, such terms, as the ones previously cited, do not demand a system of merit in Christianity. They merely show that the Christian will be rewarded in heaven. The "crown of righteousness" does not describe what man has earned, but what "... the righteous judge, shall give ... " (II Timothy 4:8).

Traditional defense. The Catholic doctrine of merit is also defended by Pohle from the standpoint of tradition. He thinks the early writers gave a true New Testament picture when they endorsed the doctrine of merit. He asserts that even Protestants agree that in the Apologists and Apostolic Fathers, "the idea of merit was read into the Gospel," and that Tertullian in his defense of "merit in the strict sense gave the keynote to Western Catholicism."¹¹

Cyprian followed this beginning by saying, "You can attain to the vision of God, if you deserve it by your life and works."¹²

¹⁰Pohle, op. cit., p. 204.

¹¹Ibid., citing Realencykl, pp. 501-502.

¹²Ibid., citing "De op. et. elemos," xiv, ed. Hartel, I, 384.

Pohle goes on to claim Augustine and others as being in favor of the system of meritorious works, and summarizes:

So that uninterrupted agreement is secured between Bible and Tradition, between patristic and scholastic teaching, between the past and the present.¹³

Pohle's conclusion is that the Council of Trent saved the truth taught by the Bible and tradition, when it defended the old doctrine of meritorious good works.¹⁴

Scriptural Opposition to Merit

Catholic insistence on works. Berkouwer cites such scriptures as Romans 4:4, which say, "Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt." If a man intends to earn his salvation, he will have to keep the law perfectly. In this verse, Paul shows that working to receive the reward dispenses with grace. Catholics combine both grace and human merit into one inconsistent system. The stress of the Reformation was on such verses as Luke 17:10, which says, "Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which it was our duty to do." Berkouwer shows that Jesus, in his use of the master-servant relationship in Luke 17,

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

was trying to repudiate completely the idea of human merit. He also points out that in spite of all these teachings against merit and good works, the Catholic Church continues to insist on the meritoriousness of good works.¹⁵

Catholic explanation of the validity of merit. It is understood by the Catholic Church that Paul rejected works as the basis of the sinner's justification before God, but Catholic scholars try to escape the force of his argument by introducing grace into the process of meriting. God is given the credit for starting man off in the process of performing good works, and man is given a reward for his use of God's grace. Berkouwer shows that this is the Catholic harmony of works and grace.

Merit still opposed to grace. He continues in this vein, and proves that Catholic teaching still makes man's reward something which he has earned and God owes to him.¹⁶ Certainly this is a valid estimate of Catholic teaching on merit. Some place is given to faith as the power to save, but justification really comes through

¹⁵G. C. Berkouwer, Faith and Justification (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954), pp. 122-124.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 124.

man's own efforts. No matter, though, if grace is put "at the bottom" of the process of justification, man cannot truly earn any merit before God. The believer may obey God's commandments and can be given eternal life, conditional on his obedience, but no amount of good works can ever earn any merit with God: God promises rewards, and man can do what God requires in order to receive that reward; however, there can still be no real claim by a believer upon God. All rewards are the results of God's mercy.

II. OLD CONSERVATIVE PROTESTANT VIEW

As the modern Catholic position on faith and works rests basically upon the work of Thomas Aquinas and the scholars of the Medieval period, even so does the modern Conservative Protestant feel the impact exercised by Luther and Calvin through their work in the Reformation. As the Catholic position continues to deprecate the value of faith and grace through its emphasis on righteousness by works of merit, even so does modern Protestantism show the effects of a misinterpretation concerning Luther's teaching of "faith only." The reaction of the reformers against works-righteousness continues to the modern period as the teaching of Protestantism. This much is clear from a reading of the different creeds and confessions formulated

by the different Protestant bodies.

Protestant Confessions

Baptist. Faith has continued to be the emphasis point for Baptist confessions. All blessings are considered to be the result of faith only, and not a result of works at all. The New Hampshire Baptist Confession of 1833, which was accepted by Baptists of the Northern and Western States, says this of justification:

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in him is Justification; that Justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith ...¹⁷

The Confession of the Free-Will Baptists of 1834 and 1868 gives the power to save to faith of the mind. It reads:

Saving faith is an assent of the mind to the fundamental truths of revelation; an acceptance of the gospel, through the influence of the Holy Spirit; and a firm confidence and trust in Christ.¹⁸

Methodist. The Methodist Articles of Religion of

¹⁷Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), III, pp. 742-744, citing Baptist Church Manual.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 753, citing Treatise on the Faith and Practice of the Free-will Baptists.

1784 also shows the influence of "faith alone." This confession says of works, "Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, can not put away our sins ..."

Not only does this confession deny that works are powerless to save man, but it also denies any semblance of the Catholic doctrine of works of supererogation.

It reads:

Voluntary works—besides, over, and above God's commandments—which are called works of supererogation, can not be taught without arrogancy and impiety ... whereas Christ saith plainly, When ye have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

In opposition to the doctrine of righteousness by works, this creed emphasizes justification by "faith only."

Its words are:

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.¹⁹

Episcopalian. Faith only is also considered to be the basis of man's salvation in the Episcopal creed. The Reformed Episcopal Articles of Religion of 1875 reads thus:

We are pardoned and accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,

¹⁹Ibid., p. 809, citing The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

by faith; and not for our own works or deservings ...
Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a
most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.²⁰

Protestant Writings

Protestant writings on the subject of faith and works are in accordance with the creeds of Protestantism. In line with Reformation tradition, much of the writing and debating done by Protestants have emphasized the role of faith in man's salvation to the exclusion of works, even works of obedience.

Ben Bogard, a well known Baptist debater, is referred to here to show the influence of faith alone in Protestant thinking. Mr. Bogard, in debating N. B. Hardeman, would not allow the believer to do anything toward his own salvation. Bogard felt that if the believer even complied with God's commands in order to gain access to God's grace, he had ceased to depend on God and had begun to work out salvation by his own merit. Bogard says,

I am going to maintain that there is no act at all that any man in the Old Testament time or the New ever had to perform in order to be saved. Salvation is received by faith, and faith is the only thing you can do without doing anything. Faith submits to the Lord and doesn't pretend to do; as

²⁰Ibid., p. 818, citing Minutes of the Third General Council.

long as you attempt to do, you are working at yourself and not depending upon the Lord.²¹

Martin Luther and John Calvin had refused to let human works have any part in a man's salvation, and this later came to mean that works of obedience were not even allowed to be a part of faith. Such interpretation of faith is not in harmony with scripture, because the Bible teaches that a saving faith is always an obedient faith. Allowing works of obedience does not make man earn his salvation with God; on the contrary, when man has done all the things commanded by God, he has still not earned his salvation by merit. God promises salvation on the condition of obedient faith; when man possesses this kind of faith, God gives him salvation on that basis in spite of the fact that faith does not earn it. Protestant emphasis upon "faith alone" is not correct when it makes "faith" anything less than an obedient, saving faith.

III. LIBERALISM

Liberalism is a movement which arose within the fold of Christianity. Its purpose has been to apply critical methods to the study of the Bible and the Christian

²¹N. B. Hardeman, and Ben M. Bogard, Hardeman-Bogard Debate (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1938), p. 92.

religion. The use of scholarly, critical technique on the Bible, as on other literature, has tended to make the Bible just another human book in the eyes of liberals.

Liberalism, as a movement, has had little to offer in the interpretation of faith and works. In a decided manner, liberalism has led the minds of scholars toward the power of man to save himself and to work out his own problems. The good works which liberalism has attributed to man, have not been works which had God as their center of reference; instead, man's capacity for saving and perfecting himself has been the heart of liberalism's thesis. Since the relationship between God and man has been slighted by liberalism, little significance is found in the movement for the interpretation of faith and works as a Biblical doctrine.

Old Liberals

Schleiermacher. The trend toward centering everything in man is seen in the work of Schleiermacher, a mediating theologian of his day. For him, religion was not just an abstract summary of ideas with religious content. It was not just a code for living. Klotsche indicates that Schleiermacher saw religion as centering in the depths of man's own personality, hence in man's

feeling.²²

Hordern observes that Schleiermacher thought debates over the proofs of God were without meaning. God or the miracles of the Bible were not really the heart of religion. Man's individual experience was its own proof, and for this reason, Biblical criticism could not harm Christianity.

All religions can, then, have their consciousness of God. Other religions may differ in their doctrines from Christianity, but they have all experienced a common religious moment.²³ It is obvious then, that Schleiermacher begins to turn attention from Biblical doctrine, and to center attention upon man and his experience.

Ritschl. Ritschl is a great theologian of practicality, according to Hordern. He was not concerned with "theoretical" problems like going to heaven after death; he was more concerned with the practical problems of living for today, as is usual with Liberals.

Hordern points out that Ritschl thought of religion as being based on value judgments. Religion's purpose is to weigh the facts presented by science. Religion is not

²²E. H. Klotsche, The History of Christian Doctrine (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1945), p. 311.

²³William Hordern, A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), pp. 49-51.

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to dispute the facts of science by pronouncing the theory of evolution as wrong, and in like manner, science should not try to evaluate what it finds in relation to religion.

Biblical criticism, for Ritschl, is, helpful, but it cannot determine the value of the facts it finds. It makes little difference if the miracles of the Virgin Birth are derided, Jesus is still important because he showed men how to live up to high ideals.²⁴

Ritschl and Schleiermacher, through their work, gave impetus to a "religious humanism." For them, man has the important place in determining his own views of God and religion. Man becomes the important cog in the wheel, and divinity fades farther into the background, as the divinity of Christ and the other fundamentals of Christianity are slighted. Liberalism owes its emphasis on humanism, in part at least, to the basic trend of thinking begun by Ritschl and Schleiermacher.

Tenets of Liberalism

A consideration of some of the points of Liberal Theology, as outlined by Albert Outler, will help show the direction of liberalism. One point, suggested by

²⁴Ibid., pp. 51-55.

Outler, is that authority in liberalism has shifted from external things like the Bible and the Church, to the internal experience of man. Liberalism has also insisted that man is not hopelessly sinful, and therefore, he does not need the traditional religious methods of salvation. Another point is that liberalism has had a confidence in the perfectibility of humanity, and it has held high hopes for the indefinite capacity of man for progress.²⁵

Humanistic leanings. With all its emphasis on man, liberalism must admit its tendency toward humanism. Hordern traces the development of a left wing group of liberals, who claimed to carry liberalism to its logical conclusion. Liberalism tried to humanize the Bible and Christianity, but humanists within the fold of liberalism carried this trend all the way, and made the Bible and religion completely human. All contact with God was denied, and faith in God was rejected in favor of a faith in man.²⁶

As Hordern traces the thinking of liberals, he shows that their faith remained unlimited in man until

²⁵ Albert C. Outler, "Backgrounds and Patterns in Contemporary Theology," The Perkins School of Theology Journal, VIII (Spring, 1955), 6.

²⁶ Hordern, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

events took a turn for the worse. All went well in the 1920's; man seemed to be solving more and more problems through his efforts in science and education. But the stockmarket crash and the world war brought an end to such implicit trust in man's capacity. Liberalism found itself bankrupt when emphasis shifted from man. Liberalism found that man's capacity was not the answer, and it had to re-examine its presuppositions before it could go forward.²⁷

Weakness of liberalism. Nels Ferre shows that a weakness of liberalism is its man-centered mood. If man's experience is made the judge over him, it is difficult for him to find eternal truth. Ferre asserts that "the standard for faith cannot center in man if it is to be a saving faith."²⁸

So Liberalism, with its emphasis on man, holds little for the interpretation of faith and works. Liberalism has been forced to rethink its position, and in doing this, some critical thinkers have turned back toward God's grace in the movement called Neo-orthodoxy.

IV. NEO-ORTHODOXY

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 100-101.

²⁸ Nels F. S. Ferre, "Where Do We Go From Here in Theology," Religion In Life, XXV (Winter, 1955-56), 6.

A Search For The Answer

Liberalism fruitless. When mankind showed by its failure, that it was unable to raise itself to the level of perfection through its own efforts, liberalism began to look around for the answer to its problems. Hordern observes that man had proved that education and a correct knowledge was not enough to make man good; it seemed likely, contrary to liberal contention, that man was just as sinful as the Bible said he was. The liberal critics had torn the Bible apart, and now they found themselves in the position of desiring to put it back together again, in order to find its message.²⁹ Since man could not solve his own problem, Neo-orthodox scholars looked back toward God and His grace for the answer.

A new method. In searching for the answer to man's dilemma, scholars used what has been characterized as a "theology of crisis." Sometimes this has been termed "dialectical theology." These terms describe a method of reasoning which sets opposites over against one another in order to resolve the dilemma. Lehmann indicates that these contradictions, in a religious context, are the contradictions seen by Kierkegaard between God's

²⁹Hordern, op. cit., pp. 102-104.

self-revelation in Christ and the problem of human existence.

The Neo-orthodox position is orthodox in its acceptance of the central convictions of the Reformation, but it is neo-orthodox in that it tries to give the modern meaning held in old religious symbols, according to Lehmann.³⁰ It is this position which has driven the critical scholars away from man's own resourcefulness, and back to God's revelation, for the answers of life. Man's weakness has driven him back to God's grace for the solution to life's greatest problems.

This return to God's grace through faith is described by Dickie in these words:

Man has urgent need of God, because every instant is wasted when he has Him not. Dialectical contradiction brings man's passion to despair and helps him, by means of "the category of despair" which is faith, to embrace God.³¹

Work of Barth and Brunner

Barth. It is obvious that the work of Barth tended back in the direction of Luther and Calvin. Of course, Barth did not actually return to the full emphasis of the

³⁰Paul L. Lehmann, "The Theology of Crisis," Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955), I, 310-311.

³¹Edgar Primrose Dickie, "Dialectical Theology," ibid., 335, citing Unscientific Postscript and Philosophical Scraps.

Reformation on either grace or the scripture. Barth's "theology of crisis" led him to see man as condemned before God's judgment bar, but man, in spite of his despair and condemnation, takes the leap of faith into the unknown.³² With all his investigation, man finds no answer; however, feeling there must be an answer, man deliberately takes a step toward God in a blind faith. This kind of faith is not the kind of faith which orthodox Christians have always held. It is not based on God's precious promises, given through Jesus Christ.

Certainly, Barth defines faith as a "leap." In his commentary on Romans, he says,

There is no such thing as mature and assured possession of faith: regarded psychologically, it is always a leap into the darkness of the unknown, a flight into empty air.³³

Outler asserts that Barth's theology is "essentially a theology of grace." Outler also sets forth the fact that Barth's positive themes are concerned with the fact of "sheer unmerited grace in man's salvation."³⁴ It is obvious that Barth does signify a return to the theology

³²Klotsche, op. cit., p. 339.

³³Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 98.

³⁴Outler, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

of grace, as is seen in his comment, "we are justified by God in His Presence," and this "takes place freely by his grace, and only by His grace."³⁵

Certainly Barth did not return to orthodox Christian doctrine, but his emphasis on grace turned men's minds from their own power, and made them realize their helplessness and dependence upon God's grace. As Klotsche points out, Barth counteracted the religious humanism fostered by old liberal theology.³⁶

Brunner. Brunner also failed to return to orthodox Christianity, due to his use of the critical method on the Bible and Christianity; but he too saw faith as the gift of God, without which man would be helpless. Brunner felt that man had to have more than just a learning process to produce faith. He said, "But faith is not something that a man can 'learn'; it is the free gift of God."³⁷

He also says of faith,

Faith is not a possession that man has at his command, but actually an utterance and gift of God, which of himself man can never bring about

³⁵ Barth, op. cit., p. 102.

³⁶ Klotsche, op. cit., p. 340.

³⁷ Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 420.

or in any way command.³⁸

He further shows that God's grace is man's only hope, in these words: "Faith is real faith only when man has given himself up and relinquished his trust in religion and rests on God alone."³⁹

In his book, Our Faith, Brunner brings out clearly what he means by faith. He defends the doctrine of "faith alone." He admits that if by "faith," one means "the taking for granted of certain dogmas, the simple acceptance of what is in the Bible as true—there is, indeed, no more fatal error in Christianity ..."⁴⁰

Brunner insists that, "What do you 'believe' rightly understood means, whom do you trust, to whom have you pledged your loyalty?"⁴¹ He maintains, however, that faith is not just a vague "trust in God."⁴² He also denies the power of pious works to save a man.

Brunner traces the road of grace back to God in

³⁸Emil Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, trans. A. J. D. Farrer, and Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), p. 94.

³⁹Emil Brunner, The Theology of Crisis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 61.

⁴⁰Emil Brunner, Our Faith (London: SCM Press LTD, 1949), p. 82.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., p. 81.

these words:

In the Bible, however, it is said that you cannot satisfy God, but God satisfies Himself and you. You are not to rely on what you do, but solely, alone, on what God does. We must say even more than that. You cannot know what the word "God" means until you are at the end of your strength, and can hope only in God ... The true God is the God a man finds when he can no longer help himself, and he puts his hope in Him alone.⁴³

This kind of faith, which relies on God alone, is said by Brunner to be harder than any works of self-righteousness of man. In fact, the hardest thing for a man to do is to trust God instead of himself.⁴⁴

Work of Reinhold Niebuhr

Niebuhr is considered representative in America of the new movement called Neo-orthodoxy. Hordern explains that Niebuhr's theology was not worked out in a quiet, academic atmosphere; rather, Niebuhr did his first preaching among working men who were troubled by opposition to their formation of a labor union. Niebuhr came to realize, as a result of his experience with the realities of life, that man needed a theology which met their needs.

He realized that liberalism had no answer to man's

⁴³Ibid., p. 82.

⁴⁴Ibid.

problems, but this does not mean that he returned to fundamentalism. As Hordern points out, his use of the term "myth" shows this to be a wrong view. He felt that man's hope lay in revelation, but he did not see the Bible as being strictly true. For Niebuhr, theology is like the painting of a picture; the artist may often use tricks of the brush to fool the eye into seeing what is real, even though such reality is not on the canvas. The myths of the Bible are a deception of symbolism, but they help man to see the real truth.⁴⁵ So Niebuhr says the Bible has the answer, without really believing all the Bible seems to teach. Niebuhr at least returns to the Bible to find the answers, instead of going to man himself, as the liberals do.

Pride the problem. Niebuhr finds that man's problem originates in his own pride. Soper summarizes Niebuhr's thought on the problem:

Man's predicament lies in the fact that the human problem is insoluble with human resources. Man is imbedded in nature, ... His sin issues not from his finiteness, but his unwillingness to accept it, his pride, his desire to make himself the center of the universe, his will to make himself independent of God.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Hordern, op. cit., pp. 145-147.

⁴⁶David Wesley Soper, Major Voices in American Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953, p. 52.

Hordern explains Niebuhr's analysis of the problem, by saying that man even uses religion, like the Pharisees did, to elevate himself to a proud position. Men join churches to give themselves a feeling of superiority. So man's real problem is his proud sense of self-righteousness.

Grace the answer. As Hordern relates, Niebuhr goes back to the answer given by the Reformation; that is, that grace is the only answer for man's salvation. Man may try to escape his anxiety by thinking he can overcome all obstacles, but this pride only leads him into more sin. Faith is the only answer, because it rests upon the power of God's grace. Niebuhr shows that man needs more than grace to go to heaven, as the Protestants claim; he also needs grace to solve the problems of life.⁴⁷

It is quite clear that Niebuhr presents grace as the power which can save man from his own weaknesses. Niebuhr thinks that man must have grace to succeed. He says,

Grace represents on the one hand the mercy and forgiveness of God by which He completes what man cannot complete and overcomes sinful elements in all of man's achievements. Grace is the power of God over man. Grace is on the other hand the power of God in man; it represents an accession of resources, which man does not have of himself, enabling him to

⁴⁷Hordern, op. cit., pp. 152-155.

become what he truly ought to be.⁴⁸

In spite of the fact that Niebuhr advocates grace as the answer to man's problem, he does not mean the same thing by his solution as the orthodox Christian does by his Biblical solution, which is centered in Jesus Christ. Niebuhr reserves the right to make a mythological interpretation of grace, as he does of other Biblical concepts; and, in doing this, he attaches a Neo-orthodox meaning to the term "grace." Niebuhr sees the objects of Christianity as symbols which merely express the vital truth of the problem of grace.

Faith the means of attaining grace. Niebuhr's meaning of grace is made clear when he makes Jesus just a symbolic man to which the meaning of grace has been attached by man's faith. He feels that one cannot understand such concepts as grace, unless they are expressed in mythical terms. Niebuhr maintains that faith needs these symbols:

The fact that Christian orthodoxy relates and fastens the experience of grace, which in the religion of Jesus is organically related to the total moral and religious experience in human life, to the one fact of the incarnation need not lead to

⁴⁸Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), II, pp. 98-99.

a magical and unmoral interpretation of grace. Religious faith needs specific symbols; and the Jesus of history is a perfect symbol of the absolute in history because the perfect love to which pure spirit aspires is vividly realized in the drama of his life and cross. Thus a man becomes the symbol of God and the religious sense that the absolute invades the relative and the historical is adequately expressed. Naturally rational theology has difficulty in bringing the paradoxes of this mythological conception into the canons of rationality ...

The idea of grace can be stated adequately only in mythical terms.⁴⁹

Niebuhr accepts, as do Barth and Brunner, faith as the "leap" which gives the answer of grace to man. He believes that faith demands a risk of some sort. For him, faith still springs from man's despair. He says, of man,

... his anxiety is not heightened until it reaches despair. Out of such despair contrition is born; and of contrition faith is conceived; and in that faith there is "newness of life," which is to say "power."⁵⁰

Niebuhr, however, thinks Kierkegaard goes too far in his definition of faith. Kierkegaard sees faith as the believing of a complete absurdity. His words are:

Anything that is almost probable or probable, or extremely and emphatically probable, is something he (man) can almost know, or as good as know, or extremely emphatically almost know—but it is impossible to believe. For the absurd is the object of faith, and the only object

⁴⁹Reinhold Niebuhr, Reflections on the End of an Era (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), pp. 287-290.

⁵⁰Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, op. cit., p. 61.

that can be believed.⁵¹

But Niebuhr differs from Kierkegaard, in that he does not see faith as a completely irrational step. His objection is,

The final truth about life is always an absurdity but it cannot be an absolute absurdity. It is an absurdity insofar as it must transcend the "system" of meaning which the human mind always prematurely constructs with itself as the centre. But it cannot be a complete absurdity or it could not achieve any credence.⁵²

V. SUMMARY OF THE MODERN PERIOD

In this chapter, it has been noted that the modern Catholic position on faith and works is still influenced by the concept of merit developed during the Medieval period. In spite of protests from Catholic sources that God is the ultimate source of all blessings, the fact remains that the ancient error, of a person meriting through his righteous works, still dominates Catholic thinking.

The Protestant world still shows itself to be influenced strongly by the basic thought of the Reformation view. Protestantism still finds itself in protest against

⁵¹Ibid., p. 38, citing Concluding Unscientific Postscript, translated by D. F. Swenson and W. Lowrie, p. 189.

⁵²Ibid., p. 38.

Catholic works-righteousness; and consequently, Protestantism remains on the other extreme of "faith only." This has, in many cases, shut out all traces of human effort from the process of justification. Man is not considered to be able to perform works of obedience in order to comply with God's commands, and thus to receive the blessing of salvation as a gift, through the obedience of faith.

Liberalism represents a complete departure from any effort to please God through obedience to His word. Liberalism, with its critical treatment of the Bible and of Christianity, has glorified man at God's expense. The liberal scholar has begun the road to complete humanism, but he is not ready to go all the way. Liberalism has plumbed the depths of man's ability, and it has found that man is not able to be his own savior. The liberal has searched for the answer, and has found none; hence, he is left with the despair of having no solution to man's dilemma.

Neo-orthodoxy is making an effort to find the answer in spite of liberalism's failure. Scholars of this newer persuasion have turned their eyes back to the central convictions of the Reformation; that is, they see grace as the only answer to the problem of man's salvation.

But their interpretation of grace is not like that of the fundamentalist; it is symbolic, with "Christ" being a mere mythological effort by Bible writers to help man see the truth. Neo-orthodoxy, therefore, is not a return to orthodoxy; it is a combination of liberalism's critical methods and orthodoxy's convictions in an irrational way. Neo-orthodoxy points back to grace which saves through faith, but their faith is that of a despairing mind which takes a leap of faith into the unknown, when it can find no other solution. It does not have the solid foundation on God's revelation which the real Christian faith has. Christian faith is founded solidly upon God's will, and is expectant of receiving grace by complying, through the obedience of faith, with God's requirements for salvation.

CHAPTER VI

THE RESTORATION PERIOD

Since this paper has given a history of the interpretation of the relationship of faith and works, and has found these historical interpretations out of harmony with New Testament teaching, this chapter will consider the Restoration period's interpretation of this question.

It was during the Restoration that an effort was made to return to New Testament teaching on all subjects, irrespective of the bias created by previous theological interpretations. Like the Reformation, this movement seemed to suddenly appear upon the scene of history. Men had grown weary of party divisions which had sprung up in the wake of the Reformation; therefore, efforts were made to return to Apostolic teaching. One author sketches the various movements begun in England and Scotland. There was the independent movement in Scotland, which fostered the growth of the New Testament congregational pattern of government as early as 1726. James A. Haldane exerted his efforts toward restoring New Testament Christianity in Scotland. Archibald McLean helped begin the Scotch Baptist movement through his conclusion that the New Testament required believers to be immersed in water. The Separatist movement made an effort

to restore the New Testament pattern of doing things.¹

It is clear, therefore, that men of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made efforts to restore New Testament Christianity. The efforts of the earlier men often fell short of a complete restoration of New Testament teaching, but their work paved the way for others.

With the foundation laid by these early efforts, there was a better opportunity for later men to restore first century Christianity. Thomas Campbell broke with Presbyterianism in America in the year 1808. His son, Alexander Campbell, also broke with this denomination after he came in contact with the Haldane movement in Scotland. The Campbell's were not alone, however, in their work of restoring New Testament Christianity in America. At the turn of the century, such men as James O'Kelly, Elias Smith, Abner Jones, and Barton W. Stone left various denominations for the purpose of restoring New Testament teaching and practice.²

The men of the Restoration made honest efforts to determine what the Bible actually taught on the subject of faith and works. It shall be the purpose of this chapter

¹J. W. Shepherd, The Church, The Falling Away and the Restoration (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1948), pp. 139-146.

²Bill J. Humble, "Birth of a Movement," The Preceptor, I (December, 1951), 6.

to present the interpretations of some of the later Restoration leaders, with emphasis upon the distinctive points contributed by each.

I. RESTORATION WRITERS OF THE PAST

Due credit must be given to the men who blazed the trail in the movement back to Bible teaching. Such pioneers have rendered a great service to the cause of Christ. But for the work of these men, the simplicity of God's great plan for man might still be buried under a maze of errors.

Alexander Campbell

Certainly, no treatment of the Restoration could omit the work of Alexander Campbell. His work was dedicated to the goal of restoring New Testament teaching, and Campbell's interpretation of the process of justification will illustrate the insight which men of the early Restoration period had into the question of faith and works.

Justification by grace. Campbell explains that the term "justification" is admittedly a forensic word. He further states that in a court of law, this term would indicate that one had been accused, tried, and in turn, acquitted. In other words, the man accused would be found "not guilty."

Campbell maintains, however, that the preceding

process is not an adequate description of God's justification of the sinner. God has tried the world, but His verdict has been, "there is none righteous; no not one." By the verdict of law, every man has been found guilty before God. All have been tried, but none have been acquitted; however, God pardons a guilty sinner by the power of His grace. God pardons the guilty man; therefore, the scripture is true when it says of God that he "justifies the ungodly."³

Justification through faith. As to how a man receives this blessing from God, Campbell points to Bible teaching and says that it is through faith on man's part. Paul says, "It is through faith, that it might be by grace." Campbell assures his readers that it is not on account of faith, as if faith had some actual merit, but through faith. He refuses to allow faith to be another work which would demand a reward from God.

Campbell lists seven actual causes of man's salvation. These are: (1) faith (Romans 5:1), (2) grace (Romans 3:24), (3) Christ's blood (Romans 5:9), (4) the name of Jesus and the Spirit of God (I Corinthians 6:11), (5) knowledge (Isaiah 53:11), (6) Christ (Galatians 2:16), and (7) works (James 2:21).

He maintains that these foregoing elements are all

³W. A. Morris (comp.), The Writings of Alexander Campbell (Austin: Eugene Von Boeckmann, 1896), pp. 244-245.

scriptural means or causes of man's salvation. He then argues that this is not an unusual statement to make, considering all the elements which take part in making man's daily bread possible. Were it not for the co-operation of the sun, the soil, the water, and many other forces, man's daily bread would not be possible. Campbell also tells the story of a shipwrecked crew which was saved by the man who saw them, the boat which went after them, and the man who threw them a rope; his question, then, is, "Who saved the crew?" His conclusion is, that all the things mentioned in the Bible play an important, but a necessarily different part. Faith happens to be the part which God requires of man.⁴

Justification by faith or works? Campbell points out that the Romanists have taught works without faith, and Protestants, on the other extreme, have often taught faith without works. It is clear from Bible teaching that a man can not be justified by the works which he performs for an earned reward. Works of the law just do not have the power to save a man unless he is able to keep the law perfectly. The man who tries to be justified by his works is like the Pharisee, who became proud when he thought he had kept God's law and, hence, deserved a reward. To quote Paul, such men "have not submitted

⁴Ibid., pp. 246-249.

themselves to the righteousness of God."⁵

Actually Campbell asserts that, "Faith without works ✓ is no more faith than a corpse is a man."⁶ But this kind of works is an entirely different kind of works; they are works which look humbly toward Christ and do not depend on any merit of their own. Faith is the means through which man is made pleasing to God. This faith becomes saving faith as it manifests itself initially in obedience to Christ's commands of repentance and baptism.

This obedience in baptism is not a work of law which gives man any real claim upon God; it is actually a faith being perfected. Of course, baptism without faith has no value, and any value in scriptural baptism comes from the merit of Christ's blood. Faithful obedience to the requirements of God does not make salvation a reward based on works, and neither does it nullify salvation by grace through faith.⁷

Moses Lard

By faith only? Moses Lard, in his commentary on the book of Romans, opposes the translation of Luther, which said,

⁵Ibid., p. 250.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., pp. 250-253.

"we are justified by faith only." Lard reasons this way:

... it is conceded by all, that repentance is one act of obedience to Christ's authority, and belief a different act ... Each performs a special function which the other can not perform; nor can either become a substitute for the other. How now, in the light of this, can belief be the sole condition of justification? The truth is, it is impossible.⁸

Paul and James. Lard observes that James admits that man is justified by faith, but denies that it is of faith only. The works which James does command are not works which make one perfect in themselves; rather, they are works of obedience to God's positive will. James teaches that Abraham, Rahab, and anyone else must submit to God's conditions of justification.

Lard also points out Paul's emphasis on faith, and shows that Paul did not deny the works of obedience commanded by James. Paul shows that works done as payment of a debt do not ingratiate the sinner with God, but Paul does not deny that one must obey God's expressed will. According to Lard, then, the contradiction between Paul and James has been a misinterpretation of the facts. They both believe that man is justified by faith before God, and they both agree that legal works are not the means which will satisfy

⁸Moses E. Lard, Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, n. d.), p. 124.

God's sense of justice,⁹

J. W. McGarvey

Paul and James. J. W. McGarvey also deals extensively with the problem of interpreting Paul and James. He summarizes the problem by quoting exact statements from both Paul and James. Paul says, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law," (Romans 3:28). But James says, "You see, then, how that by works a man is justified; and not by faith only," (James 2:24). The gist of the problem is, upon comparing the statements of the two, that, "They both admit that man is justified by faith; but Paul adds, 'without works of law;' and James adds, 'not without works.'" ¹⁰

Use of the term "works." McGarvey suggests that the solution to the problem of harmony lies in the different usage made of the term "works."

Paul shows in a negative way what will not justify one, when he says, "Therefore, by deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight," (Romans 3:28). Since

⁹Ibid., pp. 130-132.

¹⁰J. W. McGarvey, "Justification by Faith," Lard's Quarterly, III (January, 1866), 114.

Paul also showed that even Gentiles were condemned under the law they knew, it is obvious that Paul is speaking of any effort on the part of man to be righteous by law-keeping. The Apostle Paul makes it clear what kind of works he means when he says, "Now to him that works, the reward is not reckoned according to grace, but according to debt," (Romans 4:4). Man cannot try to earn his salvation by works. It is certainly obvious that Paul is speaking of works which leave no room for pardon.

James speaks of a different type of works when he teaches, "Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone." McGarvey impresses this fact upon his readers by demonstrating that the man who had Paul's kind of works would not even need faith; he would already be perfect, and in his perfect moral state, he would not need Christ's redemption through faith.

McGarvey summarizes the harmony of Paul and James on the subject of faith and works, by concluding,

The doctrine of James, then, is that we are justified by faith not without works of obedience to some positive law. That of Paul is, that we are justified by faith without previous works of perfect obedience to moral law. James asserts nothing of Paul's works; Paul denies nothing of James's works.¹¹

David Lipscomb

¹¹Ibid., pp. 119-122.

Saving faith. David Lipscomb maintains that all agree on faith as a factor necessary for man's salvation; his concern is to determine when faith, which is assent of the mind, becomes "saving faith."

His answer is, that faith becomes saving power when it shows its ability to cause obedience of the physical body. As proof of this conclusion, he cites the examples enumerated in the book of Hebrews. For example, the writer of Hebrews calls the roll of the heroes of faith by saying, "Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," By faith Noah ... prepared an ark ...," "Abraham ..., obeyed to go out." In all these cases, the blessing came to faith after it had acted, Lipscomb argues. Jesus, in his personal ministry, rendered rewards according to faith expressed. On one occasion when Jesus saw some men bringing a man sick of the palsy to him, the record says, " ... and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven," (Matthew 9:2). Saving faith, then, is faith which controls the body enough to demand obedience.¹²

Law of faith. The Apostle Paul taught that God did not allow man to boast about his salvation. He says, "Where then

¹²David Lipscomb, "Faith and Works," Salvation From Sin, ed. J. W. Shepherd (Nashville: McQuiddy Printing Company, 1913), pp. 192-195.

is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? **May:** but by a law of faith," (Romans 3:27). It is on the principle of faith, then, that all room for boasting in one's achievements is ruled out; faith is the principle, and nothing else can be substituted.

In the law given by Christ, there is nothing which allows a man to trust in himself; in fact, one must actually distrust himself and lean heavily upon Christ for salvation. Faith looks away from self and toward Christ. Repentance turns man in sorrow from his own sins, and toward the merit of Christ's blood. Even baptism declares the sinner's distrust of himself, for in it he reaches for the contact of Christ's blood which will wash away his sins.¹³

II. RESTORATION WRITERS OF THE PRESENT

G. C. Brewer

Under law to Christ. Brewer admits that some have said Christians are under law to Christ, (I Corinthians 9:21). The use of "law" has been determined to mean a rule of action, and not just another law like the law of Moses. Still, it cannot be like any other law; if it were, Christians would have to live up to it exactly. If the Jews had to live in

¹³Ibid., pp. 205-207.

the requirements of the law of Moses, Christians would also have to keep all the points of the new law, if it were nothing more than a new law. There would be no difference between the old and new covenants if this were the case. Salvation, however, does not depend on this law-principle anymore.

Brewer shows that Christianity is not bound by the principle of law by his use of an illustration, which explains the meaning of what Paul declared, when he said God reckoned Abraham's faith for righteousness. He explains in the following manner:

Here we may illustrate the point by having a debit and a credit side of our ledger. On the side of law, whether it be New Testament order or Old Testament order, we may write the word "Duties" and let us say that the other side of the ledger is headed "Performances." To keep the illustration, let us say that under "Duties" we have one hundred numbered or listed acts to be performed. Over on the other side of the ledger, we would have to have one hundred acts performed in order to have the totals balance. Thus the man would have a balanced account if he had performed all the duties required. But instead of dealing with Abraham after this fashion, on the side of the ledger where "Performances" is written, God filled that column with the word "faith," and at the bottom of the ledger the totals were balanced. The account was balanced because God counted Abraham's faith of more value than all of the performances, even if he had been able to meet this demand. Just so God deals with us. He has made us free from the law and offered us a righteousness which comes to us on account of our faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord.¹⁴

¹⁴G. C. Brewer, "Grace and Salvation," Abilene Christian College Bible Lectures (Austin: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1952), pp. 114-116.

Faith includes obedience. Brewer suggests that some have thought that since salvation was by grace and not of man's own achievement, man then has no choice or part in the matter. To dispel this notion, Brewer points to Christ's great invitation in Matthew 11:28, which necessarily implies that man has the power to come in response to Christ's plea.

Also, it is pointed out that the words "believe" and "obey" are used interchangeably; this shows that faith includes some action other than what takes place in the mind. Brewer cites John 3:36 from the Revised Version to show the inclusion of action and obedience in the meaning of faith. It reads: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." It is no problem then, Brewer concludes, when one learns that he must "obey the gospel," (II Thessalonians 1:8).¹⁵

K. C. Moser

Not saved by works. Moser explains that under the law of Moses, it was the doing that counted, not the object to which the works were directed. As Paul expresses it, "The law is not of faith; but, He that doeth them shall live in them," (Galatians 3:12).

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 119-122.

Under Christianity, Paul says, "But if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace," (Romans 11:6). Nothing which is done by a sinner is able to procure even the least amount of merit before God. If a man contracts to build a house, and he is paid for his work; his reward comes as a just payment of debt by his employer. There is no such hint of debt in the Christian's salvation; God never owes man anything. Salvation comes by faith, not because faith has any merit of its own, but because it points to the merit of Christ's blood. Baptism, as an act, has no value apart from Christ. Since man earns nothing by his acts, salvation remains wholly a matter of God's grace.¹⁶

The law of liberty. Moser shows that Christianity is a law in the sense of being a law which requires something, but these laws or obligations can be met by the man who tries. A sinner must keep the conditions imposed by the law of Christ, but he is not left in bondage to this law like those under the law of Moses. James does not say that man is under a purely legalistic system, but under a "perfect law, the law of liberty."¹⁷ Under this law, a

¹⁶K. C. Moser, The Way of Salvation (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1932), pp. 35-38.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 74.

sinner does not earn his way, but he does fulfill the merciful commandments laid down by Christ; thereby, he is given salvation without having to earn it.

III. SUMMARY OF THE RESTORATION PERIOD

It is quite noticeable that each of the writers quoted in this chapter presents the explanation of the problem of faith and works in his own particular way. The fact that one explains the same truth by another method than that used by another person is no basis for saying that the two men are necessarily contradicting one another. Different men will often use varied language and illustrations to present the same truth. To avoid leaving the views of these different men in what may seem to be a state of disorder, an effort will be made to summarize the distinctive points of each man's writings into a comprehensive picture. From this picture, one will be able to understand the relative positions of faith and works in the Christian system.

The law versus Christianity. Under the law of Moses, it was necessary that a man keep all the laws perfectly in order to find justification before God. No allowances were made for slips in man's success toward serving God. It was a matter of doing the law, and of being righteous by such perfect obedience. It was very evident that there was no hope

for the man who failed to measure up to the strictest of the law's requirements. In fact, if a man offended in one point of the law, he became "guilty" of all," James 2:10). Many have tried to make Christianity just another law like this. Catholic efforts have been toward making man capable of "earning" his salvation from God through works of merit. Any scheme which makes works the basis of man's reward, apart from God's mercy, is like the law commanded by God through Moses.

Christianity has certain works or conditions of obedience to be met, but these are not based upon the same principle found in the law of Moses. Christianity has works of faith, but they are not to be regarded by God or man as being capable in themselves of procuring man's salvation, apart from some other merit given by God in Christ Jesus.

Faith and works in Christianity. It is agreed by all that man is saved by faith and grace. The grace of God is unmerited favor, and faith is man's response to that favor; but the sinner's response to God in obedience is not meritorious in itself. Faith looks to Christ's blood for its merit, not to itself. The whole system, therefore, is built on the principle of faith, instead of being built on the works principle.

Some, then, would hasten to conclude that no effort is required on the part of the sinner. Some Protestant groups, following the lead of Luther, have so construed the Apostle Paul to mean that one is saved by "faith alone." When Paul spoke of saving faith, he meant a working faith. The principle of faith includes the actions of obedience to God's prescribed conditions of salvation. The sinner is saved by faith, but it is a "faith which works through love." One does not give God so much work for so much pay; rather, he works for God faithfully, out of a sheer joy of working for One he loves.

The difference between the two types of work might be illustrated like this. A private nurse might be hired to care for a sick child from eight o'clock till five o'clock every day, and she would give the child expert care during these hours; but when the five o'clock whistle blew, she would leave this work behind. Her evening, after leaving her work, may be filled with entertainment and pleasure. No one would say that she was not doing her job well, because she would be doing all that she is paid to do. But follow this woman a little farther in her life, until she marries and has a child of her own. If at some time her child becomes sick, she will give it the same expert care which she gave to the other child; however,

the difference will come when she does not quit at five o'clock as before. If the child develops a fever, she will stay up half the night hovering at the child's bedside, and all this without any mention of pay! What is the difference between the two cases considered here? The difference is, that the woman is working because of her love, not because of the money she might earn. It is such love which compels the sinner to obey Christ and to do His will faithfully, even at the cost of great sacrifice.

A promise with a law wrapped up in it. After considering all these aspects of Christianity, one may ask, "What, then, is Christianity?" The answer is, "It is a promise with a law wrapped up in it." Man cannot earn this gift in any way, but God lays down certain conditions which man must meet in order to receive the promise. God's purpose is that man might show his faith in obedience, then God will be willing to give man the gift of salvation. Man has not earned the gift just because he has done what God required; on the contrary, it is still a gift promised upon the fulfillment of certain conditions. The performance of the required conditions is never equivalent to the earning of salvation. Man is saved by faith, as his faith complies with God's conditions and is brought in contact with the

saving merit of Christ's blood. The Christian "law" is only a part of the "promise" system. It is not a legal "code" in the same sense as Moses' law was. It actually consists of only those commands or requirements, upon which the gift of grace is conditioned. So the Christian system is actually a promise, with a "law" wrapped up inside.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I. SUMMARY

It is quite obvious that Christianity suffered a reverse when the writers of the second century tended in the direction of legalism. The vibrant, saving faith which had so soon before been propagated by the Apostle Paul and others, began to lose its influence in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. Men's minds were led into channels of human effort and merit, and dependence upon God's grace began to fade into the background of man's religious thought. Works-righteousness came into its own in such works as the Shepherd of Hermas and others. When the Apologists spoke of Christianity, they also spoke of it as a "new law." Among the Early Fathers of the Old Catholic Church, none was more influential in promoting legalism and merit than Tertullian. Tertullian cast Christian thought into a legal system, which endures to the present day in Catholic thought.

Augustine stands as a point of reference in church history. From him flows influence found in many schools of thought. He turned men's minds back to God's grace. Augustine certainly emphasized the power of God's grace, but even his concept of grace was legalized to some extent

through the influence of the Church's doctrine of merit. He saw the inconsistency between merit and grace, and tried to harmonize the two, but his efforts to do so contributed to his own inconsistency. Augustine's solution was to attribute all merit earned by man as based upon God's gift of grace; in other words, man earns only what God has previously given him. Augustine's view of grace and faith was not perfect, but he at least saved Christianity from a stagnant legalism, by his return to the grace of God.

In the Medieval Period, the Church came to the front as the authority in religion. The tendencies seen in earlier history toward righteousness by works of merit came to dominance under the direction of the Medieval Catholic Church. Scholasticism helped to advance the cause of merit through its introduction of human philosophy. In the Summa Theologica of Thomas Aquinas, there is found a summary of the legalistic thinking of this age.

The Reformation Movement sprang from a reaction to Medieval teaching on the merit of human works. Martin Luther's misunderstood statement of "faith alone" was an effort to escape the erroneous interpretation given to the power of human works in the Medieval Catholic Church. In Luther's footsteps, there came John Calvin, asserting

the same doctrine of "justification by faith alone."

Under the impact of Medieval thought, modern day Catholicism still clings to the doctrine of meritorious works. Protestant groups, in like manner, look back to Luther for the inspiration of "faith alone." Due to their interpretation of Luther's misleading "faith alone" statement, there is still a decided effort by Protestants to separate salvation from any connection with human effort. In this manner, teaching on obedience to the requirements of the Gospel has been neglected.

Liberalism has broken with all religion in an effort to enthrone man upon the pedestal formerly occupied by God. Humanistic tendencies in the movement have made man his own savior and therefore capable of saving and perfecting himself. Liberalism's critical treatment of the Bible has had the effect of centering attention upon man and his capabilities. After two world wars, liberalism finds its hope in man in a stage of bankruptcy; but, such men still look to man for the answer.

Neo-orthodox scholars have realized that man is just as sinful as the Bible says he is, and they have looked back to the Bible for the answer to man's problem. Barth, Brunner, and Niebuhr see God's grace as the answer to man's dilemma. Such men see that liberalism's tenets and critical investigation leave man in despair; for this reason, Neo-orthodox

scholars teach that man must take the "leap of faith," to escape his despair. Neo-orthodoxy looks back to the Bible and sees the emphasis of the Reformation, that is, grace and faith. But Neo-orthodoxy does not return all the way to orthodoxy; it still wants to interpret the Bible as a "myth." The Bible is not literal truth; it is merely the truth wrapped in symbolism. This return to grace, then, is not a real return to the Bible's teaching of salvation "by grace through faith."

Only in the Restoration Movement is there a real return to the teaching of the New Testament on faith and works. In the Restoration, men turned their eyes back to the New Testament teaching, and rejected all the erroneous historical interpretations. The Restoration did not see "works alone," nor "faith alone;" rather, they saw "obedient faith" as it was taught by Paul and others in the first century.

II. CONCLUSIONS

From a study of the historical interpretations of faith and works, the following conclusions may be drawn. (1) The relationship of faith and works was misinterpreted as early as the second century. (2) Man's natural tendency has been to make Christianity into a legalistic system, with

an emphasis upon human works of merit. (3) Erroneous interpretations of faith and works in earlier history have been a factor in fostering other erroneous interpretations in later history. (4) Men have been guilty of reacting so strongly against one false interpretation, that they have swung to the opposite extreme and fallen into another error. For instance, Luther reacted so strongly against the Medieval doctrine of merit, that he, in confusion, advocated an equally confusing solution of "faith alone." (5) Interpretations of the relationship of faith and works, from the second century down to the Restoration, have been out of harmony with New Testament teaching on the subject. (6) The erroneous interpretations of faith and works, as found in history, have not been due to any ambiguity in New Testament teaching. (7) The scriptural view, as taught by Paul and the inspired writers of the first century, was not restored clearly until the Restoration writers returned to the New Testament teaching on faith and works.

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