

Justification: The Calvin-Saumur perspective

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The new perspective

Judging by the current issue of *The Banner of Truth*¹ magazine, the theological revisionism of the so-called ‘New perspective on Paul’² has made a disturbing impact within the Reformed constituency on both sides of the Atlantic. Shock-waves of a movement which began in the late 1970s, and which gained considerable momentum during the next two decades, are leaving no one unaffected by the opening years of the new millennium. The nervous undercurrent evident in the articles by Ian Hamilton, Cornelis P. Venema and Walter J. Chantry is easy to explain. If the views of E. P. Sanders, James Dunn and N. T. Wright are correct, – that the Protestant reformers simply misread and misinterpreted Paul’s theology of salvation – then the alarm bells are ringing about a issue of fundamental significance. Despite the fact that the chief advocates of the NP do not in fact represent a harmonious and unified perspective,³ the relatively-peripheral position of Norman Shepherd within American Presbyterianism has contributed to a general feeling of unease among evangelical Protestant and Reformed Christians since his views correlate to some extent with NP thinking. As for the main theses of the NP ‘prophets’, others⁴ have exposed the dubious perspectives on offer. Clearly, in pursuit of multi-faith and ecumenical objectives, an obvious reductionist agenda⁵ is at work. E. P. Sanders’ ‘covenantal nomism’ claim that first century Judaism was about *maintaining* one’s position within God’s covenant rather than *earning* divine grace, and thus not a religion of legalistic works-right-

1 *Banner of Truth* 523 (April 2007).

2 For a useful overview, see Tim Chester, ‘Justification, Ecclesiology and the New Perspective’, *Themelios* 30.2 (Winter 2005), 5-20.

3 See Michael B. Thompson, *The New Perspective on Paul* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2002), 11.

4 Besides Chester, Thompson and others, see Philip H. Eveson, *Justification by Faith Alone* (Epsom: Day One Publications, 1996) and Guy Prentiss Waters, *Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 2004).

5 D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien and Mark Seifrid (eds.), *Justification and Variegated Nomism: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 15-16.

eousness⁶ is hard to square with relevant biblical data. While the original Mosaic revelation was a grace-law covenant, in which divine provision and human responsibility, faith and obedience, repentance and forgiveness operated (Pss. 32, 51, 130), the NT suggests that legalism had become a prevailing mind-set among Jewish people – see the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14); Christ's encounter with the Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-22) and Paul's assessment of Israel's merit-seeking tendency (Rom. 9:30-2). In addition to Paul's own reliance on pharisaical merit (Phil. 3:4-6), he exchanged his self-righteousness for self-loathing and righteousness in Christ when he experienced conversion (Rom. 7:24; Philip. 3:7-9). Here is clearly a precedent for Luther's solution to his 'existential guilt'.

Considering James Dunn, his insistence that a Hebrew racist relational ethic (rather than Greek-inspired absolute ideas of forensic justice) operated within Israel (with a Jewish preoccupation with such 'identity markers' or 'badges' like circumcision, dietary laws and festivals)⁷ obscures the root reality of meritorious self-justification as cited above. Rejecting Mosaic grace for legalistic achievement was an apostate abuse of God's grace. What Dunn appeals to are but the socio-cultural symptoms of a deeper spiritual malaise. Surely, 'absolute' and 'relational' ideas of justice juxtapose in both Romans and Galatians, ideas that the Greeks possibly got from the Jews in any case! That said, Dunn's idea that 'justification' is more than just an initiatory event⁸ is, while not as original as some scholars think, an important issue waiting to be clarified.

Turning to N. T. Wright, his over-imaginative thesis that Israel's exile ended in Christ – a deliverance that Gentiles are invited to share – requires more data than he can cite to make it plausible as the dominant NT idea. A more valid metaphor is the pre-exilic one that Christ is the ultimate 'sabbath rest' for Israel and all nations (Ps. 95:7-11; Matt. 11:28; 28:18-20; Heb. 3:7-4:10 and Rev. 14:1-13). That said, more concern has been expressed about the challenge Wright poses to the traditional Reformation view of salvation. While he admits that Paul's concept of justification is forensic, to say that justification is about 'staying in' God's covenant rather than 'getting in' invokes an unwarranted and unnecessary distinction. It is surely 'both', which he seems to admit (along with Dunn) in his three tenses of justification – initial, present and future. Quite alien to the Reformation view of justification by faith, Anglican bishop Wright's view that people join the Christian community through justifying baptism looks suspiciously close to the Roman Catholic view of justification by baptismal regeneration. Clearly, this idea has great ecumenical potential. Unless it is carefully qualified – as I intend to explain – Wright's view that 'present justification declares on the basis of faith, what future justification will affirm on the basis of the entire life'⁹

6 E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977).

7 James D. G. Dunn, 'The New Perspective on Paul', in *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1990), 183-214

8 Ibid. 190.

9 N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Cambridge: Lion, 1997), 129.

also has a strong ecumenical flavour. As if he forgets that the Reformed churches were careful to stress the *corporate* as well as the *personal* nature of salvation, the same may be said about his statement that '[Justification] wasn't so much about soteriology as about ecclesiology; not so much about salvation as about the church....'¹⁰ However, all this flies in the face of Paul's crystal-clear case that 'being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' and that we are 'justified by his blood' (Rom. 5:1, 9). This is what Paul 'really said' and one cannot get more *personal* and *soteriological* than that!¹¹

The old perspective

While Cornelis P. Venema fires little more than a passing shot in the direction of N. T. Wright,¹² the *Banner of Truth* authors (cited above) are chiefly concerned with Norman Shepherd's ideas. These writers simply represent 'the old perspective' response to issues that predate NP thinking by at least three centuries. Indeed, the complex of questions concerning the relationship between justification by faith alone and the place of good works were exhaustively discussed in seventeenth-century England. I refer, of course, to the theological activity of the great puritan Richard Baxter (1615-91), famous for his life-long polemic against antinomianism. Representing 'old perspective' puritan icon and opponent of Baxter, John Owen (1616-83), 'Banner of Truth' authors fail to do justice to Baxter's teaching,¹³ much of which may be usefully rehabilitated in the context of the current debates.¹⁴

What has yet to be realised is that when tested against the Bible and sixteenth-century Reformation theology, the so-called 'old perspective' is as dubious on several issues as is the 'new perspective' on others. For instance, the critiques of Hamilton, Venema and Chantry (as well as those of Packer,¹⁵ Murray,¹⁶ Eveson and Waters) assume a 'Reformation consensus' on justification within 'Protes-

10 Ibid. 119.

11 Waters, *Justification*, 175, rightly says that Wright fails adequately to explain Romans 5:9.

12 See 'Justification and a Final Judgement According to Works', *Banner of Truth* 523 (April 2007), 7.

13 Sadly, relying only on second-hand citations from J. I. Packer and Iain H. Murray, Philip Eveson totally misrepresents Baxter's view of the atonement when he states: 'His commendable concerns and love for lost sinners made him renounce the widely prevailing belief that Christ's death, though sufficient for all, is effective for the elect alone' (*Justification by Faith Alone*, 172). This was precisely Baxter's own view!

14 See my *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelicalism 1640-1790 - An Evaluation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, repr. 2002).

15 See J. I. Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2003).

16 See Iain H. Murray, *The Old Evangelicalism: Old Truths for a New Awakening* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2005). See my critique of Murray's views of the atonement in *Calvinus: Authentic Calvinism, A Clarification* (Norwich: Charenton Reformed Publishing, 2007).

tant theology' which is simply false. I refer to a cluster of issues as follows: (1) the precise meaning of 'justification', (2) imputed righteousness, (3) the time of justification, (4) the place of good works in the *ordo salutis* and (5) the status of the *sola fide* principle. As to the first, it is maintained that 'justification' is a declaration of 'righteousness', something more positive than mere forgiveness of sin. Regarding the second, believers are justified on the basis of a double imputation of both the *passive* and *active* obedience of Christ. Third, justification is a once-for-all declaration when sinners believe. Fourth, while good works necessarily follow faith as the fruit from the root, they play no part in the believer's justification before God. Fifth, while faith is never alone, sinners are justified by faith alone.

Clearly, the views of Dunn and Wright respecting initial, present and future justification and the role of good works have rattled the likes of Hamilton, Venema and Chantry. Their discussion of the relationship between justification by faith and good works exhibits a nervous ambivalence. Hamilton admits that 'good works [are] native and necessary to authentic Christian faith'¹⁷ (according to James 2:17) but 'they have no part to play in the faith that is the instrumental means of our justification'.¹⁸ He rejects Norman Shepherd's idea of '*obedient faith*' as contradicting '*faith alone* in Jesus Christ'.¹⁹ Venema sounds every bit as ambivalent when he says 'Though we will affirm the doctrine of a final judgement according to works, we will also reject as unscriptural and dangerous the teaching that this event represents the completion of the believer's justification before God.'²⁰ Then, after rejecting Shepherd's notion of 'obedient faith', in his summary (and as if 'vindicate' is not a synonym for 'justify') he concludes that 'God will not vindicate in the final judgement professed believers whose lives belie their profession.'²¹

As I intend to demonstrate, the explanation of these nervously-qualified concessions lies in profoundly defective understandings of the remaining issues I have identified, viz. 'justification', imputed righteousness, the time of justification, and the status of the *sola fide* principle. As I have argued elsewhere, it would be possible to assess 'old perspective' orthodoxy with reference to Baxter's teaching, much of which is biblically valid despite his ambiguous double use of 'justification' – which, despite his protest against 'two-fold justification', John Owen also lapsed into!²² Instead, we will cross the Channel for a visit to Saumur and

17 Ian Hamilton, 'How a Believer's Good Works are Acceptable to God', *Banner of Truth* 523 (April 2007), 1.

18 Ibid. 2

19 Ibid. 3.

20 Cornelis P. Venema, 'Justification and a Final Judgement According to Works', *Banner of Truth* 523 (April 2007), 6.

21 Ibid. 14.

22 Owen stated: 'That upon it (i.e. 'evangelical righteousness') we shall be declared righteous at the last day, and without it none shall so be. And if any shall think meet from hence to conclude unto an evangelical justification, or call God's acceptance

thus consider what I call ‘the Calvin-Saumur perspective’. While Moise Amyraut may be regarded as ‘Amyraldian’ Richard Baxter’s French Reformed counterpart (if not mentor), we will encounter a significantly sounder view of justification in its diverse aspects.

The Calvin-Saumur perspective

Just as Amyraut embraced and defended Calvin’s view of the atonement, Brian G. Armstrong also points out (not quite as accurately as he might have done) that ‘Amyraut defines justification in the same terms as did Calvin: That is, justification consists of two parts: “the remission of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ”²³ However, before scholars like Philip Eveson²⁴ conclude that Calvin means the same thing as ‘old perspective’ double-imputation orthodoxy – of the kind actually taught by his successor Theodore Beza,²⁵ Armstrong hastens to add (more accurately) that ‘Frequently Amyraut’s discussions

of our righteousness by that name, I shall by no means contend with them. And wherever this enquiry is made, – not how a sinner, guilty of death, and obnoxious unto the curse, shall be pardoned, acquitted, and justified, which is by the righteousness of Christ alone imputed unto him – but how a man that professeth evangelical faith, or faith in Christ, shall be tried, judged, and whereon, as such, he shall be justified, we grant that it is, and must be, by his own personal, sincere obedience’ (*Justification by Faith in Works*, ed W. H. Goold (Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850-55), vol. 5, 159-60).

23 *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 225.

24 Eveson, *Justification by Faith Alone*, 61. Eveson fails to grasp the significance of my discussion of this issue (see *ibid.* 75). While Calvin occasionally defines justification as ‘the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ’ (*Inst.* III. xi. 2), high orthodox authors misleadingly cite such statements to endorse their double-imputation view. In view of his ubiquitous teaching, Calvin would be contradicting himself if they are correct (see note 27). However, the most accurate interpreter of Calvin is David Pareus of Heidelberg (1548-1622), who disputed Cardinal Bellarmine’s similar misinterpretation of Calvin’s words: ‘[Calvin’s] meaning was not, that there should be a double (formal) cause of justification (for so he would fight against himself, and against the Scriptures) but his intent was, by two Scripture-terms equipollent, the one to the other, to express one and the same formal cause, or to join these two expressions together exegetically... so that one might help to explain the other’ (cited in J. Goodwin, *Imputatio fidei, or a Treatise of Justification* (London, 1642), 121-24). This view is surely made clear by Calvin himself. When he states that Christ ‘atoned for our sins by his death, and his obedience is imputed to us for righteousness’ (Comm. 1 Cor. 1:30), Calvin merely equates Christ’s ‘obedience’ with his ‘death’ (see also *Comm.* Rom. 4:25). In this Corinthian comment, he is not asserting that the imputation of righteousness is something *additional* to ‘the remission of sins’.

25 See T. Beza, *Tractationes theologiae* (Geneva: 1570-82), iii. 248, 256; *The Christian Life*, tr. J. Clark (Lewes, Sussex: Focus Christian Ministries Trust, 1992), 19-22.

of justification include only the idea of remission.²⁶ Just as Calvin did,²⁷ Amyraut carefully speaks of ‘remission of sins, or justification.’²⁸ Indeed, there is no exegetical basis for saying otherwise. Concerning imputation, Amyraut – again like Calvin²⁹ – taught only the imputation of Christ’s *passive* obedience: ‘Justification by faith is by a totally supernatural revelation... to justify a guilty man by imputing to him the sufferings of another who has been punished for him.’³⁰ Once

26 *Deux sermons sur la matiere de la justification et de la sanctification* (Saumur: I. Debordes, 1658), 5 cited in Armstrong, *Calvinism*, 226.

27 Calvin regularly insists that ‘Justification by faith... consists solely in the remission of sins’ (*Inst.* III. xi. 21); ‘God justifies by pardoning’ (*ibid.* 11); ‘this justification may be termed in one word the remission of sins’ (*ibid.* 21); ‘the Apostle connects forgiveness of sins with justification in such a way as to show that they are altogether the same’ (*ibid.* 22); ‘indeed, since it is only by the forgiveness of sins that God is reconciled to us,... This verse teaches clearly what it really is to be justified – to stand before God as if we were righteous... and from this it follows that righteousness consists in the forgiveness of sins’ (*Comm.* Luke 18:13-14); ‘... righteousness for Paul is nothing other than the remission of sins’ (*Comm.* Rom. 4:6).

28 *Quatre sermons sur le chap. vi de l’epistre aux Hebreux* (Saumur: I. Desbordes, 1657), 18-19 cited in Armstrong, *Calvinism*, 230.

29 While Calvin clearly grounds Christ’s saving work in the whole of his obedience (see *Inst.* II. xvi. 5), he plainly implies that while he possessed innate and habitual holiness, the ‘active’ aspect publicly demonstrated Christ’s qualification to be the guiltless sin-bearer (see also *Comm.* Heb. 7:26-7). Since a guilty mediator could not mediate, his own obedience is thus immediately relevant to his mediatorial role, and to the believer’s justification only indirectly. In the passage just cited from the *Institutes*, Calvin focuses attention on Christ’s sacrifice as the basis of ‘pardon’ (= ‘righteousness’). At no point does he even mention imputation, let alone hint that this includes the ‘active’ obedience (the term is, of course, post Calvin). Untypical of the high orthodox tendency to over-react to medieval theology, Calvin would have us believe that Christ’s ‘active’ obedience or example is for imitation rather than imputation (see *Comm.* 1 John 2:6).

30 Armstrong, *Calvinism*, 225. Calvin always defines pardon or justification in terms of Christ’s death alone: ‘Christ has attained righteousness for sinners by his death’ (*Comm.* Rom. 5:9); ‘... righteousness has been procured for us by the death of Christ, so that our sins being abolished, we are acceptable to God’ (*Comm.* Col. 1:22); ‘Our righteousness has been procured by the obedience of Christ which he displayed in his death’ (*Comm.* Rom. 4:25); ‘Christ by his obedience satisfied the judgement of the father... Our guilt is taken away by the expiatory sacrifice which he offered’ (*Comm.* Rom. 3:24); ‘When [Paul]... states that we are made righteous by the obedience of Christ, we deduce from this that Christ, in satisfying the Father, has procured righteousness for us’ (*Comm.* Rom. 5:19). Clearly, nothing further is necessary for justification than the pardon of sin through the death of Christ. Furthermore, whenever Calvin expounds the subject, he plainly regards ‘justification’, ‘imputation’ and ‘pardon’ as synonymous terms: ‘... in the fourth chapter of Romans he first calls justification “imputation of righteousness”. And he does not hesitate to place it in forgiveness of sins. Paul says: “That man is declared blessed by David whom God renders acceptable or to whom he imputes righteousness apart from works, as it is written: ‘Blessed are they whose transgressions have been forgiven’” (Rom. 4:6-8; Ps. 32:1). There he is obviously discussing not a part of justification but the whole of it’

more like Calvin, Amyraut is careful to insist on the inseparable bond between justification (or forgiveness) and sanctification:

To condemnation is opposed justification, which consists in the remission of sins; to corruption is opposed sanctification. But there is no sanctification where sins have not first been pardoned, and no one's sins are pardoned but that this remission necessarily draws sanctification in consequence of it.³¹

It is this 'inseparable bond' that rules out the possibility of antinomianism. Holiness and good works are *necessarily* part of the package of saving grace.

This leads us to an issue that is rarely, if ever, discussed in literature about justification in general or Calvin's views in particular. It also has a vital bearing on Dunn's and Wright's thesis regarding the three tenses [past, present and future] of justification. Contrary to Chantry's suggestion,³² Calvin never teaches that justification is a single, one-off 'lightning-flash' event; this is more applicable to adoption and regeneration. He views justification as a *continuum*, beginning at conversion and extending throughout the duration of life.³³ This is not to be confused with the process of sanctification, which admits of degrees. At any moment in one's life, justification relates to current guilt arising from defective sanctification. In this respect, justification and sanctification are perpetual and inseparable correlates in the believer's daily pilgrimage. This connection between the two parts of salvation³⁴ has implications for faith and good works. While the latter – being dutiful, always defective and divinely energised – possess no meritorious value, they are necessary concomitants of a living faith. Faith, while directed to Christ alone is never alone. Calvin says: 'We dream not of a faith which is devoid of good works, nor of a justification which can exist without them.'³⁵ Since justification and pardon of sin are the same thing, and pardon is a daily requirement,³⁶ justification is to be seen as a lifelong continuum rather than a once-for-all conversion event. This is perfectly consistent with the Greek *aojist* tense – the tense of simple action, whether complete or incomplete – in Romans 5:1.³⁷ Whenever justification occurs, either at conversion or subsequently, the

(*Inst.* III. xi. 4). Numerous quotations may be cited from Calvin to the same effect (see *Inst.* III. xi. 3; *Comm.* Luke 1:77; *Comm.* Rom. 4:6; *Comm.* Rom. 6:14).

31 Armstrong, *Calvinism*, 237-38.

32 Walter J. Chantry, 'The Time When a Sinner is Justified by God', *Banner of Truth* 523 (April 2007), 18.

33 See *Inst.* III. xiv. (title), 11; *Comm.* Luke 1:77.

34 See *Inst.* III. xi. 6.

35 *Inst.* III. xvi. 1.

36 See *Comm.* 2 Cor. 5:20; *Comm.* 1 John 1:7.

37 '... it is an over-simplification to regard the aorist as a simple past. Greek tenses have to do primarily not with the *time* of the action (past, present or future) but with the *state* of the action (complete, incomplete or indefinite). The aorist is the tense of indefinite action. "It is simple action without representing it either as completed or incompleting," wrote... grammarian, A. T. Robertson' (Donald Macleod, *The Spirit of Promise* (Fearn, Tain, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1986), 50).

Christian life consists of a succession of forensic justifying instants. Accordingly, having stated that reconciliation with God is enjoyed when we embrace his promises and rest on the mercy of God in Christ, Calvin is careful to add:

Nor can this be confined to the commencement of justification, as those interpreters fondly suppose, for the definition, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, was effected in David after a lengthy period of training in the service of God. And Abraham, though a rare example of holiness, thirty years after his call had no works in which to glory before God, and therefore his belief in the promise was imputed to him for righteousness. When Paul teaches us that God justifies men by not imputing their sins, he quotes a passage which is daily repeated in the Church. That peace of conscience, which is disturbed on the score of works, is not a one-day phenomenon, but ought to continue through our whole life. It follows from this that until our death we are justified only as we look to Christ alone in whom God has adopted us, and now regards us as accepted.³⁸

It should thus be clear that Calvin's rather unique position is not only very different from 'old perspective' orthodoxy. While correcting the defects of this position, his cogent 'continuum' exegesis – if it is embraced – relieves it of unnecessary anxiety in the face of the Dunn-Wright thesis seemingly set against Reformation theological distinctives. In short, Calvin is perfectly able to stress the necessary conditionality of good works in the lifelong pilgrimage of salvation (Heb. 12:14) without calling into question the all-sufficient merit of Christ or faith's exclusive reliance thereon. For instance, regarding our own justification or forgiveness, Calvin insists 'it is to be observed that the condition of being forgiven as we forgive our debtors, is not added because by forgiving others we *deserve* forgiveness, as if the *cause* of forgiveness were expressed [which is the blood of Christ].... [yet] our sins are as certainly forgiven as we are certainly conscious of having forgiven others.'³⁹ Furthermore, explaining the significance of good works in Christ's teaching concerning the Day of Judgement (Matt. 25), Calvin declares that '[Christ] promises the inheritance of the skies to none other but those who with good works aim at the prize of the heavenly calling.'⁴⁰ As one would rightly expect in Calvin, he renounces the 'heathenish'⁴¹ idea of merit while still urging that 'the faithful are called to possession of the heavenly kingdom in respect of good works.'⁴² After all, 'although they aspire for righteousness under the leading of the Spirit, yet they never satisfy God's Law, and no reward is due them, but, what is given freely is called their reward.'⁴³ Thus, while ever-defective good works must perpetually correlate with life-long faith, 'as God begins

38 *Comm. Rom.* 3:21.

39 *Inst.* III. xx. 45.

40 *Comm. Matt.* 25:34.

41 *Comm. Luke* 17:7-9.

42 *Comm. Matt.* 25:35.

43 *Ibid.*

righteousness in us through the regeneration of the Spirit, so what is lacking is supplied through the remission of sins, yet so that all righteousness depends on faith.⁴⁴ Without calling into question the believer's assurance derived from the finished work of Christ, Calvin notes the conditionality in Romans 8:1: 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.' Thus Calvin comments:

Having described the struggle which the godly continually have with their own flesh, [Paul] returns to the consolation which he had before mentioned, and which was very necessary for them – although they are still beset by sin, yet they are free from the power of death, and from every curse, *provided they live not in the flesh but in the Spirit*. Paul connects these three ideas together – the imperfection under which believers always labour; the mercy of God in pardoning and forgiving it; and the regeneration of the Spirit.⁴⁵

Lastly, stressing the conditionality of holiness for justification and salvation in the light of the existential bond between justification and sanctification, another of Calvin's comments introduces us to the status of the *sola fide* principle. Since Christ is also our 'sanctification',

... from this we gather that we cannot be justified freely by faith alone, if we do not at the same time live in holiness.... Men find fault with us, because in preaching the free righteousness of faith, we seem to be calling men away from good works. But this passage clearly refutes them, by showing that faith lays hold of regeneration just as much as forgiveness of sins in Christ.⁴⁶

Returning to the Saumur professor and anticipating the point that the phrase 'faith alone' does not isolate faith from repentance, love, obedience and good works but, by focusing exclusively on Christ, is intended only to isolate him from all other 'objects of faith' (including our works), Amyraut insists that 'Primarily the gospel teaches us that we are justified by faith alone in our Lord Jesus, and by the remission of our sins in Christ.'⁴⁷ Thus Amyraut's phraseology avoids the impression that the statement 'justification by faith alone' tends to relegate good works as a mere appendage in salvation. Of course, this perception began with Martin Luther, as Norman Shepherd rightly points out.⁴⁸ Indeed, it is an unfortunate fact that, in his German New Testament of 1522, Martin Luther added the word 'alone' (*allein*) to Romans 3:28, 'Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith [alone] apart from the deeds of the law.' Thus the great reformer was arguably guilty of doing very *explicitly* what he and his fellow reformers justly

44 *Comm. Phil.* 1:11.

45 *Comm. Rom.* 8:1 (emphasis mine).

46 *Comm.* 1 Cor. 1:30.

47 Armstrong, *Calvinism*, 226.

48 Norman Shepherd, 'Justification by Faith Alone', *Reformation & Revival Journal*, 11. 2 (Spring 2002), 87.

accused Rome of doing *implicitly*, viz. adding to Holy Scripture. Naturally, Roman Catholics pounced on Luther for his alteration and his defence is not very edifying reading. From a Reformed point of view, Luther's 'own goal' was effectively calling in question the perspicuity of Scripture. After all, was Paul's language in Rom. 3:28 not clear enough? The simple fact is that 'faith alone' is only used in James 2:24 where it is specifically rejected. In the heat of over-reaction to Rome's merit mongering, Luther thought James was in opposition to Paul; he thus dismissed the letter as 'an epistle of straw'. The chief point at issue is that James was merely rejecting a theoretical faith, asserting a composite tripartite 'head, heart and hand' view of faith – involving assent, trust and obedience – of the kind Paul⁴⁹ and Peter⁵⁰ took for granted. In short, trust is never alone in the Holy Spirit's regenerating work. It is always accompanied by assent, repentance, love, hope and obedience – leading to good works (Eph. 2:8-10). However, while all must be present, none of them – not even faith – have *meritorious* value in themselves on account of their imperfection. The crucial thing for Paul is that the saving work of Christ is the sole focus of faith (Gal. 2:17). We are to trust neither good works nor faith! Luther's textual emendation tended to draw attention to faith itself, which, contrary to the impression *he* created, even *he* admits is never alone. For Paul, 'faith' – never to be used without its object – is simply an elliptical or 'shorthand' expression for 'faith in Jesus' (Rom. 3:26). He was not implying that faith has an isolated, unaccompanied function.

With a sounder view of *sola fide*, Calvin asserts that 'faith cannot possibly be disjoined from pious affection'.⁵¹ Clearly, instead of separating faith and good works, Calvin considers that 'faith alone' simply means 'mercy alone'.⁵² In other words, *sola fide* was not a statement about the *psychological* constituents of a believer's experience but a statement about the merits of Christ. It is a *synecdochal* expression meaning 'faith in the merits of Christ only'. Luther himself denied that faith was alone 'after it hath justified',⁵³ but his anxiety to defend the *sola gratia* principle made him view *sola fide* *psychologically* rather than *synecdochally*. This was quite unnecessary. If 'faith alone' lent itself to a cavalier attitude to good works, it was best used to emphasise the exclusive place of Christ's merits in the sinner's justification. Other reformers confirm what may be truly regarded as the original 'Reformed consensus'. Approving of the best of the medieval theologians, Cranmer said that they never viewed *sola fide* to mean 'to be justified without our good works'.⁵⁴ Hence it means that 'we are justified by faith in Christ only'.⁵⁵ William Tyndale affirmed that 'faith only' means 'trust only in

49 See Rom. 1:5; 6:17; 10:16; 16:26; Gal. 5:6; 1 Thess. 1:3; Heb. 5:9.

50 See 1 Pet. 1:2, 14, 22; 2:7-8; 3:1; 4:17.

51 *Inst.* III. ii. 8.

52 *Comm.* Rom. 3:21; Hab. 2:4.

53 Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, ed. P. S. Watson (London: James Clarke, 1953), 466.

54 *Sermons or Homilies* (London: Prayer Book and Homily Society, 1833), 16.

55 *Ibid.* 17.

Christ's deserving'.⁵⁶ In the context of merit, Calvin describes faith as an 'empty vessel',⁵⁷ since 'faith' is 'turning to Christ only'.⁵⁸

The *sola fide* slogan, properly understood, is simply stressing the objective, meritorious basis of justification. In this respect, faith – viewed as the divinely energised human response – does not itself justify, a truth Cranmer⁵⁹ and Calvin⁶⁰ sought to clarify. To say otherwise is to revert to the Roman Catholic view that justification is by 'an infusion of grace', for faith is the fruit of regeneration. What J. H. Thornwell says of obedience applies as much to faith in this respect, 'To be justified by graces is not to be justified by grace.'⁶¹ Once the synecdochal view of *sola fide* is strictly adhered to, it at once makes unnecessary the debate as to whether faith or love or any other spiritual graces justify. The answer is that none of them do. If it is said that works can never justify because of their imperfection, the same has to be said of faith. The theological conundrum 'How does faith alone justify when faith itself is never alone?' becomes a non-starter. The issue then is not whether faith is ever isolated or unaccompanied in justification – which it is not – but what is the sole object of trust. Although love, hope and obedience are the necessary concomitants of faith, Christ and his merits are the sole focus of attention in faith's fiducial role.

In their discussions about faith, the reformers were greatly concerned to rescue justifying faith from Roman Catholic misrepresentations. Calvin argued clearly that 'faith is more a matter of the heart than the head, of the affection than the intellect. For this reason, it is termed "the obedience of faith".'⁶² Thus for Calvin, faith is never devoid of moral content: 'We, indeed, acknowledge with Paul, that the only faith which justifies is that which works by love (Gal. 5:6),'⁶³ and in his comment on that key verse – a text often used by Roman theologians to refute *sola fide* – Calvin denies that saving faith is 'naked': 'Faith... is always joined with good works.'⁶⁴ Thus Calvin provides a solution to the Paul-James antinomy, a solution more satisfactory than his questionable 'official' exposition of James 2:24 (that James uses 'justify' differently from Paul to indicate justification before men rather than God).⁶⁵ Significantly, only weeks before his death in May 1564, Calvin delivered his final assessment of the *sola fide* concept:

Thus it still remains true, that faith without works justifies, although this needs prudence and a sound interpretation; for this proposition, that

56 *Doctrinal Treatises* (Cambridge: The Parker Society, 1848), 509.

57 *Inst.* III. xi. 7.

58 *Ibid.* xvi. 1.

59 See *Sermons or Homilies*, 17.

60 See *Inst.* III. xi. 7.

61 *Collected Writings* (Richmond, Virg, 1875; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust fac., 1974), vol. 3, 353.

62 *Inst.* III. ii. 8.

63 *Ibid.* III. xi. 20.

64 *Comm.* Gal. 5:6.

65 See my criticism of Calvin in *Atonement and Justification*, 222-23 and 243.

faith without works justifies is true and yet false, according to the different senses which it bears. The proposition, that faith without works justifies by itself, is false, because faith without works is void.... faith cannot justify when it is without works, because it is dead, and a mere fiction.⁶⁶

Returning briefly again to Saumur, Amyraut's one-time fellow student in the Academy and pastoral predecessor in the Reformed Church there, the eloquent Jean Daillé (1594-1670), may usefully be consulted as a true representative of the 'Calvin-Saumur perspective'. During Daillé's later preaching ministry at the great Reformed Temple at Charenton near Paris, his expositions brilliantly expressed this perspective. As one would expect, Daillé rejected the Roman Catholic slur on the Reformed doctrine of justification *sola fide* that it produced moral laxity. Noting that the objection was not new, the preacher declared:

And in this our day, is not our doctrine misunderstood and calumniated in the same way? Do they not say, since you are justified by faith alone, what inducement have you to perform good works? But, O ye adversaries, it is to perform good works that I am justified. This divine righteousness of Christ has been communicated to me, in order that I may be transformed into his image; that I may know the power of his resurrection, and that I may be like him, a new creature; that I may love God, not to lay him under obligation to me, (far, far from my soul such a preposterous notion) but to acquit myself in a small degree of the immense debt I owe him. I love him because he has loved me, because God is love, and because he has sent his Son Jesus to die and rise again for me. Will my obedience be less acceptable to him because I think not of merit in rendering it? Will he reject it because the cross and resurrection of Christ inspires it, and not an intention of deserving a reward? Why may I not serve God here on earth in the same manner as I hope to serve him hereafter in heaven, with a pure, a free, and truly filial affection. And such affection, far from presuming to acquire any right or reward from so good and so merciful a Father, must after all its efforts remain dissatisfied with itself and be content to ascribe all it has been able to do to his free grace alone.⁶⁷

Insisting like Calvin that 'justification and sanctification' are 'inseparable graces, which are never without each other',⁶⁸ Daillé warns against a lifeless, loveless 'faith of devils', arguing that the 'love of God' which a 'saving' and 'vivifying' faith 'apprehends and embraces, gives it salvation, and enables it to produce in us all that is necessary for entering into the celestial kingdom'.⁶⁹

It is clear that, for Daillé, the faith which justifies is necessarily a good works-

66 *Comm. Ezek.* 18:14-17.

67 Sermon on Philippians 3:9-11 in *An Exposition to... the Philippians*, tr. James Sherman (Edinburgh: J. Nichol, 1863), 124

68 Sermon on Colossians 1:21-22 in *An Exposition to... the Colossians*, tr. James Sherman (Edinburgh: J. Nichol, 1863), 57.

69 Sermon on Colossians 1:1-5 in *ibid.* 4.

producing faith' (Eph. 2:8-10) rather than a fruitless antinomian one. His stress on a justified believer's obedience cannot justly incur the displeasure of either the NP or OP schools. Matters might be different when we consider his strongly soteriological doctrine of imputation:

Whosoever believes obtains remission of sin, and access to the throne of God, there to receive the fruits of grace, peace, consolation, sanctification, and in the end a blessed immortality; all in virtue of that obedience which Jesus rendered to the Father on the cross, where He was made sin and a curse for us, His agonies being imputed to us as though we had suffered them.... [Paul] calls it righteousness because it is by it that we are justified, being dealt with by the Lord as though we were perfectly righteous, as though we had never committed a sin against Him.... [God communicates] this righteousness in imputing to the believer the obedience of the Mediator, regarding him with a favourable eye when thus clothed as it were with Jesus, and crowning him with all the benefits He purchased by His death upon the cross.⁷⁰

Clearly, in 'authentic Calvinist' style, Daillé equates 'justification' with 'remission of sin', asserting also the imputation of Christ's 'passive' obedience only. Elsewhere he insists that 'the remission of our sins' is 'constantly referred to the death, to the blood, and to the cross of the Lord, as to its true cause'.⁷¹

The Calvin-Heidelberg perspective

Contrary to the remarks of Philip Eveson,⁷² the position of Calvin – shared also by Amyraut and Daillé is fully in accord with the 1559 *Confession of Faith* of the French Reformed Churches.⁷³ As a consequence, wrongly believing that Calvin provides a precedent for *Westminster Confession* orthodoxy, OP scholars like Eveson would be unimpressed by the views of Amyraut and Daillé. They would further find it discomfiting to discover theological solidarity between Calvin and the 'heterodox' Salmurian divines! They would equally find news from Heidelberg unwelcome, judging by Eveson's appeal to the Answer to Question 60 [Lord's Day 23] of the *Heidelberg Catechism*.⁷⁴ While the 'official' catechism is undoubtedly OP in tone and substance, the standard text of Lord's Day 23 is not the original as drawn up by the catechism's authors Professor Zacharias Ursinus (1534-83) and Pastor Caspar Olevianus (1536-87). According to the original text, the authors clearly taught that Christ's 'passive obedience' only is imputed to the believer for justification. Agreeing with Calvin rather than Beza, they emphati-

70 Sermon on Philippians 3:8 in *An Exposition to... the Philippians*, 122.

71 Sermon on Colossians 1:14 in *An Exposition to... the Colossians*, 29.

72 Eveson, *Justification by Faith Alone*, 75.

73 See my 'John Calvin and the Confessio Fidei Gallicana', *Evangelical Quarterly* 58.3 (1986), 195-206.

74 Eveson, *Justification by Faith Alone*, 61.

cally believed that such was the true teaching of Holy Scripture. At some stage between the first and second printings, changes were introduced by unknown theologians without the authors' consent. This information is supplied by the son of David Pareus (1548-1622) who was Ursinus' successor at Heidelberg.⁷⁵ The following extracts from the authors' comments on the *Catechism* confirm precisely the views expressed in the original text:

Evangelical justification is... the imputation and application of that righteousness which Christ wrought out for us by his death upon the cross, and by his resurrection from the dead.... Justification and the forgiveness of sins are, therefore, the same.... The righteousness with which we are justified before God, is not our conformity with the law, nor our good works, nor our faith; but it is the satisfaction which Christ rendered to the law in our stead; or the punishment which he endured in our behalf.⁷⁶

Besides stating that Christ's passive obedience alone is imputed to the believer, Ursinus also explains the purpose of Christ's active obedience:

The holiness of his human nature was necessary to his obedience; for it became our mediator to be holy and righteous in himself, that he might be able to perform obedience, and make satisfaction for us (Heb. 7:26). This obedience now is our righteousness.⁷⁷

Ursinus' co-author Olevianus was clearly of the same view:

The righteousness of Christ, obtained for us with His suffering and death, is freely and graciously given to us as our own when he gives us faith.... The obedience of the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, or the sacrifice of Christ on the cross [is that gift... that is credited (= imputed) to us for righteousness] (Rom. 5; 2 Cor. 5; Isa. 53; Col. 2; 1 Pet. 1; Heb. 10). This obedience of the death of Christ is freely granted and credited to us, so that from now on it is our own and our righteousness before God.... The whole of justification consists in the obedience of Christ the Lord, who became a sacrifice for our sin.⁷⁸

It should now be clear that Ian Hamilton's appeal to the 'Reformation consen-

75 'Pareus... would by no means permit that any should depart from the *Catechism* of his professor Ursinus, as some divines, I know not who, departed from it, who added no fewer than three kinds of imputations, to that which was laid down by Ursinus, as the matter of our justification before God, viz. the imputation of the death of Jesus Christ, the imputation of his actual righteousness, and habitual holiness' (Philip Pareus, *The Life of David Pareus* (Geneva: 1641), 102, cited in P. Bayle, *The Dictionary Historical and Critical* (London: 1734), vol. 4, 474).

76 Zacharias Ursinus, *The Commentary of Dr Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*, tr. G. W. Williard (Columbus, Ohio, 1852; fac. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1985), 326-27.

77 Ibid. 328.

78 Caspar Olevianus, *A Firm Foundation: An Aid to the Heidelberg Catechism*, tr. & ed. Lyle D. Bierma (Grand Rapids: Baker Books and Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), 110-12.

sus' on key aspects of justification theology is questionable to say the least. Contrary to Iain Murray's stance,⁷⁹ what might be true of Anglo-Scottish Westminster orthodoxy is evidently not the case where continental Calvinism is concerned. Neither is the 'Heidelberg perspective' hard to explain. Indeed, both Ursinus and Olevianus spent time in Geneva and were clearly influenced by Calvin. Founder of the German Reformed Academy at Herborn in Nassau in 1584, Olevianus based his lectures in dogmatics on Calvin's *Institutes* and in fact edited his own compendium of the *Institutes* in 1586.⁸⁰ A further highly significant fact is that Johannes Piscator (1546-1625) – who is generally charged with exposing the incoherence of the double-imputation view of justification⁸¹ – was a colleague of Olevianus at Herborn.

Basically, Piscator argued that the law only required 'do or die', not both, to satisfy its demands. The high orthodox OP view implies a twofold satisfaction if Christ had to fulfil both precept and penalty for double imputative ends. It also implies that the statements 'Christ died for others' and 'Christ lived for others' have the same substitutionary status. If the latter is true, it makes the former redundant, *since one reputed as holy as Christ requires no pardon*. If the former is adequate (as the event understood by 'authentic' Calvinists clearly is), then the latter – as a basis for imputation – is superfluous. To use a simple domestic analogy, thoroughly washing a dirty cup is perfectly adequate without giving it a coat of glossy-white paint! In addition, whereas the former makes good 'gospel sense', the latter is bad 'antinomian nonsense'. Indeed, as Calvin makes clear (*Comm.* Gal. 3:25, 4:4), the believer is delivered not from the precept but only the penalty of the moral law, a view impossible to reconcile with a high orthodox view of imputation. And while the antinomian implications of such teaching were held in check by a stress on the necessity of personal holiness in the English puritan confessions, such tendencies found expression in hyper-Calvinist piety.⁸²

Besides most of the English reformers,⁸³ puritans such as William Twisse, George Lawson, John Ball, Thomas Gataker, John Goodwin, Anthony Wotton and others taught the 'passive obedience' view of imputation. Besides Amyraut and Daillé, several other French Reformed divines such as Amyraut's Saumur colleagues Louis Cappel and Joshua de la Place taught the same, as did also the historian David Blondel.⁸⁴ Regarding the Huguenot group, although the

79 See Murray, *The Old Evangelicalism*, 90.

80 See Lyle D. Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2005), 149. This work first appeared as *German Calvinism in the Confessional Age: The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996).

81 See my *Atonement and Justification*, 190.

82 For a comprehensive discussion of these and other issues, see my *Atonement and Justification*, 169-239.

83 See *Ibid.*

84 See H. Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy* (Zoetermeer, the Netherlands: Boekencentrum, 1993), 221.

French Reformed Churches censured Piscator's view at the Synod of La Rochelle (1607),⁸⁵ these 'Amyraldian' divines were never censured for holding it. Had a controversy erupted on this issue during Amyraut's career, he would doubtless have appealed to Calvin as he did in the atonement controversy (1634-59). Notwithstanding the ruling at the Synod of Privas (1612),⁸⁶ it was contradictory to repudiate Piscator's 'Calvinist' view and still affirm the Confession of Faith's teaching on justification.

Conclusion: Paul's *Christian* perspective

It should now be clear that, in different ways, both the NP and the OP give us defective accounts of justification. When N. T. Wright stated that '[Justification] wasn't so much about soteriology as about ecclesiology'⁸⁷ and when, according to Ian Hamilton, dying J. Gresham Machen said, 'I'm so thankful for the active obedience of Christ. No hope without it.'⁸⁸ they were not in harmony with Paul at the very heart of his faith: 'God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Gal. 6:14). Indeed the opposing viewpoints are both guilty of shifting the believer's focus away from the cross.

Focusing on Christ's death, Paul says quite specifically that sinners are 'justified by his blood' (Rom. 5:9). According to the OP view, the Apostle was only half right. He should therefore have said that we are 'justified by his blood *and* his obedience in life'. But Paul's statement is clarified in Romans 5:18. Here the AV translation is unclear and misleading. It should read 'righteous act' (as in the NKJV, NIV, etc) rather than 'righteousness' since the Greek is *dikaioma* rather than *dikaioisune*. The point made by Paul is clear: whereas Adam's sinful act of revolt brought condemnation, Christ's righteous act of sacrifice is the basis of justification. Significantly, Calvin makes this very observation.⁸⁹ Predictably, wherever the New Testament discusses Christ's obedience, the context focuses attention on his sacrifice (Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8). Ian Hamilton, disparaging the idea that Christ's life was 'merely a prelude to the main event', is stretching language beyond plausible limits when he describes 'the whole course of Jesus' life, death and resurrection' as 'one act of righteousness'.⁹⁰ Surely, the whole life of Christ consisted of *many* acts, His death – as the whole context of Romans 5 makes clear – being *the* act to which Paul refers in verse 18. Even the 'flagship' Banner of Truth commentary on Romans is clear about this,⁹¹ as is, for instance, another

85 See J. Quick, *Synodicon in Gallia Reformata* (London: 1692), i. 265-6.

86 See Quick, *ibid.* 348.

87 N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 119.

88 Hamilton, 'How a Believer's Good Works are Acceptable to God', 5.

89 See *Comm.* Rom. 5:18.

90 Hamilton, 'How a Believer's Good Works are Acceptable to God', 3.

91 See Robert Haldane, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 216. Haldane is arguably more accurate than D. M. Lloyd-Jones' *Romans 5: Assurance* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 274-5.

commentary with a slightly different pedigree.⁹²

Finally, the issue of the relationship between justification and good works finds the opposing perspectives profoundly defective. If the NP is guilty of over-rating the place of good works, the OP is guilty of under-rating them (and, in the process, failing to do justice – as Richard Baxter would argue⁹³ – to the full-orbed character of obedient faith in relation to Christ's three-fold office of Prophet, Priest and King⁹⁴). I conclude that the authentic CP – with the reformer's 'continuum view' involving a perpetual correlation between repeated pardon and progressive sanctification, with the proviso that 'justification' always means 'forgiveness' at every stage of a believer's pilgrimage – relieves completely the other views of their perplexities. Of supreme and ultimate importance, the 'Pauline perspective' is the 'Christian perspective' in the strictest sense, when all the Apostle's teaching is compared with his Lord's. It is arguable from Christ's own teaching on justification in Luke 18:11-14 and Matthew 12:36-37 (not to forget the implications of his Lordship in Matthew 7:21-3 and Luke 6:46)⁹⁵ that the proceedings of the day of judgement will terminate the justification continuum. In the former case, where the publican 'went down to his house justified' rather than the Pharisee, the stress is placed on the objective, meritorious basis of justification, i. e. the publican appealed to God's mercy and was pardoned. In the other passage, Christ is pointing out the conditional appropriating factor of justification: 'For by your words you shall be justified' (v. 37), i. e. – as Calvin argues⁹⁶ – by 'words' which indicate the *final* penitent and trusting confession of a genuine Christ-dependent faith wrought in the heart at one's conversion (v. 35). However, these two aspects – the meritorious *and* the conditional – correlate at every stage of the believer's pilgrimage.

It is therefore unscriptural to say that justification requires the imputation of Christ's passive *and* active obedience. The chief point at issue is very simple. Just as the Roman Catholic Church – in which direction the NP advocates have drifted – considers that the merit of Christ's sacrifice is not sufficient for salvation *without the additional merit of our works*, so the OP advocates have denied that Christ's death is sufficient for our justification without *some additional merit derived from His personal holiness*. As Ursinus himself made clear, the *primary* purpose of our Saviour's 'active obedience' was to demonstrate His qualification to be our sinless sin-bearer. The *secondary* purpose of His 'active obedience' is as a model and example for Christian *sanctification* rather than as a contributory factor in our *justification* (1 John 2:6). In short, it is for our *imitation* rather

92 See H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Pickering & Inglis Ltd, n. d.), 150, 153.

93 See Richard Baxter, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (Fearn, Tain, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1998), 6-8.

94 See my *Atonement and Justification*, 205-208.

95 See Shepherd, 'Justification by Faith Alone', 86.

96 See *Comm. Matt.* 12: 37.

than *imputation*.⁹⁷ Apart from being without exegetical support, if the NP has a legalistic tendency, the OP has an antinomian one. It can encourage disobedience if Christ's obedience in life is counted as ours. The true 'single imputation' view, while guaranteeing our full acceptance before God, promotes a desire to follow Christ daily, 'walking as He walked'. May that always be our humble yet hearty desire! Amen.

Postscript: Having discussed a subject with a potential for immense complexity and confusion, I believe a famous children's hymn simply and beautifully weaves together all the vital threads of truth we have considered:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 There is a green hill far away,
Outside a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.</p> | <p>2 We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains He had to bear;
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.</p> |
| <p>3 He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by His precious blood.</p> | <p>4 There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.</p> |
| <p>5 O dearly, dearly has He loved!
And we must love Him too,
And trust in His redeeming blood
And try His works to do.</p> | |

Cecil Frances Alexander (1823-95)

Abstract

Focusing attention on the doctrine of Justification, the article seeks to compare and evaluate the 'New' (NP) and 'Old' (OP) perspectives on Paul. In view of problems encountered in both, a proposed solution to the impasse is derived and argued for from the generally-misperceived stance of Calvin and his legitimate successors among the theologians of Heidelberg and Saumur. In the course of the discussion (in which the little-known insights of the German divines and the long-discredited French academy are rehabilitated), the assumption that recent Anglo-American expositions of the OP accurately perpetuate Calvin's stance is challenged. Significant differences between Calvin and later Calvinists are exposed during an investigation of the following issues: (1) the precise meaning of 'justification', (2) imputed righteousness, (3) the time of justification, (4) the place of good works in the *ordo salutis* and (5) the status of the *sola fide* principle. Avoiding the ambiguities of Luther's version of *sola fide*, the article concludes on biblical grounds that the authentic 'Calvin' (CP) perspective relieves completely the other views of their perplexities.

⁹⁷ See Calvin, *Comm.* 1 John 2:6.

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