

November 4, 1978

To: the Faculty and Board

From: R. B. Gaffin, Jr.

- - - - -

Among the dissents from the Faculty Report addressed to the May 1978 meeting of the Board, the communication of Dr. Hughes is significant because it does not mention Prof. Shepherd by name nor refer specifically to his views. Instead he deals with the Faculty Report in itself, and seeks to show that it takes a position which seriously confuses the gospel (p. 10). The majority of the Faculty, not just one member, he alleges, is in fundamental error.

Consequently, it seems important, even essential, that there be some response in writing. The accompanying paper was prepared for discussion at the November 3rd meeting of the faculty committee erected last May to continue consideration of the justification issue. By action of that committee it is now being sent for information, with slight modifications made by myself, to the other members of the Faculty. On my own initiative I am sending it to the members of the Board also.

It should be made clear that, while I write in defense of the Faculty Report, I write as an individual and not on behalf of the drafting committee or the faculty majority. I ask also that the specific purpose and limited scope of my remarks be kept in mind. They are obviously not to be taken as a complete statement of the doctrine of justification, although on their positive side they certainly express biblical consideration which I believe to be basic to that doctrine.

I truly appreciate the gracious spirit in which Dr. Hughes has prosecuted his concerns. I hope that in response I have been granted a measure of his exemplary blend of candor and courtesy.

Dr. Hugnes finds in the Faculty Report (FR) two statements in particular which are disturbing and unacceptable to him, statements which he believes crystallize the issue before the Faculty and Board (p. 1, par. 2). His remarks as a whole may be taken as elaborating his objections to these two (and related) statements in the FR.

1. Dr. Hughes rejects the statement: "Hebrews 12:14 speaks of the 'holiness without which no one will see the Lord,' which surely involves standing justified before the Lord" (FR, p. 4, top). For him the sum of the matter is that Heb. 12:14 "is speaking about sanctification, not justification" (p. 3, par. 1).

(a) Heb. 12:14 does in fact speak about sanctification. And it is important to appreciate just how that is done. Believers are here exhorted to "pursue peace with all men, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." While the ultimate perspective on this holiness (hagiasmos) is no doubt the absolute holiness of Christ which will be imparted to believers in their glorification at his return, such perfect conformity to Christ is not (primarily) in view here. The writer is not exhorting to holiness conceived of absolutely, as a goal or limiting reality, unattainable prior to Christ's return. Rather he is concerned with holiness as presently (to be) realized in the life of the believer.

This can be seen from several angles. (1) In vs. 14 "peace with all men," coordinate with "holiness" as the direct object of the common imperative "pursue," plainly is (to be) a present reality. So likewise, in view of the syntax, the holiness spoken of is (to be) present. (2) The negative counterpart to peace and holiness in vs. 14 is "the root of bitterness," which presently "causes trouble and defiles many" (vs. 15). (3) "The peaceful fruit of righteousness" (vs. 11) is one result of snaring, presently produced by God's discipline, in his holiness (hagiotēs, vs. 10). (4) The indicative of God's absolute holiness in 1 Pet. 1:15, 16, cited by Dr. Hugnes, entails the presently realizable demand that believers now be holy in conduct (vs. 15) and that, as obedient children, they now no longer be conformed to former lusts (vs. 14).

Heb. 12:14, then, does speak about sanctification. Specifically, the holiness in view is not the perfect conformity to Christ's image to be imparted to believers at glorification, but that (partial, imperfect) conformity being worked in them presently. Whether or not Dr. Hugnes agrees with this is not clear to me from his comments. But this point is vital for understanding Heb. 12:14, as it is presently being debated.

(b) But now, is it true that Heb. 12:14 says nothing about justification? What about the future seeing of the Lord at stake in this verse? Seeing the Lord is not some subordinate, penultimate future blessing, for some believers only in distinction from others. Seeing

the Lord is the focus of comprehensive hope for all those he has made to be his children (I John 3:1-3). To see the Lord will be to enter into the all-encompassing blessing of the new heaven and earth revealed at Christ's return (Rev. 22:4 in context). At stake is heaven or hell. To see the Lord will be to snare in the consummation of eternal life; not to see him will mean everlasting destruction from his presence (II Thess. 2:9).

Only those, and all those, who have had their sins forgiven and been received into the fellowship of sons will see the Lord. Only his justified and adopted children will see the Lord. In other terms, standing justified before the Lord is integral to seeing the Lord. The one is simply inconceivable without the other: to see the Lord will be to stand before him justified. Can we deny that the believer's justified state is implicit in the notion of seeing the Lord in Heb. 12:14?

"Without holiness no one will see the Lord." In other words, Heb. 12:14 teaches that without at least some measure of conformity to Christ presently realized in the believer's experience, he will not stand justified before God. Sanctification, the writer indicates, is a sine qua non for (continuing in the state of) justification. In this sense, no justification without sanctification; sanctification is necessary for justification.

(c) A brief glance at the controlling soteriological structure of Hebrews provides a helpful perspective on this and related statements of the writer. The model used to explain and address the present experience of believers as a whole comes out particularly in the exposition of Ps. 95:7ff. beginning at 3:7: The church is the new wilderness community. The situation of the people of God under the new covenant, between the exaltation of Christ (1:3, 4) and his return (9:28), compares to the circumstances of Israel in the Sinai desert, between the Exodus and entrance into the promised land. On the one hand, the church has had a real experience of the exodus-redemption accomplished in the death and exaltation of Christ. On the other hand, the church has not yet entered into God's promised land-rest in its full finality (4:8-11); believers have not yet attained to an experience of salvation which is unthreatened and unchallenged. To be sure, by virtue of their solidarity with their exalted high priest (3:14), they may be said to have arrived (e.g., 12:22: "you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,..."). But in terms of their experience--their thinking, willing, doing--believers are on the way, a pilgrim people. Like wandering, alien Abraham, they are seeking the city "with foundations" (11:10), "which is to come" (13:14).

This present wilderness-identity of the church provides the framework for the urgent exhortations and serious warnings to believers which pervade Hebrews, and which have proved to be a stumbling block from the anti-Novatianists down to Luther. This parenthesis needs to be read in its totality to appreciate its full impact (esp. 2:1, 3:12-14; 4:1; 6:4-6; 10:26f.; 12:15, 25). Because of its desert-existence the church is in a time of great hardship and temptation. It is under pressure

from forces that would detour or destroy it. So, in various ways believers must be exhorted to "hold fast our confession" (4:14; 10:23).

The severe, almost ominous tone of some of this exhortation should not be suppressed (e.g., 2:1; 3:12, 13). This is not intended to unsettle the readers or to undermine their confidence that they are partakers of the heavenly calling and that Jesus is their apostle and high priest (3:1). They are not to fear that they have been left to their own efforts or that their high priest will abandon them. But they must be made aware that the only mode of their being partakers, of their undeniable security in Christ, is in holding fast to the end of their wilderness-ordeal. The (definitive) indicative of participation in Christ includes the partaker's response to the imperative to hold fast; (compliance with) the imperative is integral to (the reality of) the indicative.

(d) One hortatory statement in particular is worth examining more closely for the way it raises the issues encountered in 12:14. 3:14 states, "We have come to share in Christ, if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first" (NIV; cf. vs. 6: "We are Christ's house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast"). To have come to share in Christ, to be his house, refers in an all-encompassing way to the saving benefits already enjoyed by believers. This union is not a particular blessing alongside of justification and distinct from it; it includes and brings justification. Similarly, to hold firmly till the end our first confidence brings into view the Christian life in its entirety (cf. 6:9-11, where, in contrast to those who have apostasized and will be destroyed, vs. 4-8, the writer is convinced of "better things" in the case of his readers, "things that belong to salvation," a confidence resting in part on the fact that "God is not unjust so as to forget your work and love...", which show their "diligence to realize the full assurance of hope until the end").

Heb. 3:6, 14 teach that we have been justified if we hold fast till the end. The indicative consequent of (being in the state of) justification is conditioned on persevering in serving the Lord. There is no justification without sanctification; sanctification is necessary for justification.

(e) Dr. Hughes finds the FR in serious error for its view: no good works of sanctification, no salvation (justification) (p. 1, bottom, p. 2, bottom). But this, in one legitimate manner of statement, as I have tried to show, is precisely what the writer of Hebrews teaches, not to mention the rest of Scripture.

Dr. Hughes' concern in this connection seems clear. He fears compromise or denial of the truth that Christ's righteousness reckoned to the sinner is "the sole ground (my ital.) of his acceptability before God" (p. 1, top), that good works "can never be even partially a basis (my ital.) for our standing justified before the Lord" (p. 3, top). He fears lest works be viewed as "a further basis (my ital.) for justification" (p. 4, bottom). But where in the FR (or in the views of Shepherd, for that matter) is there even a suggestion that something the believer

does is the ground or basis of justification, or supplements the righteousness of Christ as the sole foundation of our standing before God as justified? Is "necessity" necessarily synonymous with "ground," as Dr. Hughes seems to think? Certainly the qualification of good works as non-meritorious, to which he alludes (p. 1, bottom, p. 10, middle), is not made in order somehow to reintroduce good works as the (partial) basis for justification, after they have been rejected as the meritorious ground. (By the way, what is a "nonmeritorious ground"? In my judgment, a contradiction in terms, at least in the present context, for if it is ground, then it ultimately is what is worthy of, deserves, that is, merits the justifying verdict.)

But if good works are excluded as in any sense a ground of justification or supplement to Christ's righteousness, where then is the threat to the gospel? Are we not to be able to say with Calvin, "Thus it is clear now true it is that we are justified not without works (non sine operibus) yet not through works (neque...per opera),..." (Institutes, 3:16:1, last sentence)? Doesn't this "not without", this sine qua non, this necessity, simply pick up on New Testament language? More importantly, doesn't it capture an integral aspect of biblical teaching on good works (sanctification) in relation to justification?

(f) Bavinck, as usual, is instructive at this point. After noting the "protracted and heated conflict" within Lutheranism over the relationship of good works to salvation and the judgment of the Formula of Concord, rejecting any formulation that goes beyond saying that good works are "evidences of eternal salvation" (indicia aeternae salutis), he continues:

The judgment of the reformed was more moderate. They saw in the conflict among the Lutherans a battle over words and could not see the great difference between the rejected expression: good works are necessary for salvation (bona opera necessaria esse ad salutem), and another, endorsed by some Lutherans like Quenstedt and Buddeus: good works are necessary for those who are to be saved (bona opera salvandis esse necessaria). They had no objection to calling good works necessary for salvation, provided this necessity was not thought of as a causal necessity or a necessity of merit or efficacy (necessitas causalitatis vel meriti vel efficientiae), but as a necessity of presence, means and way for obtaining eternal salvation (necessitas presentiae, mediū et viae ad salutem aeternam obtinendam) (Dogmatiek, 4:239f; cf. Hodge, Systematic Theology, 3:238-241).

And then, after noting the view of Voetius, Bavinck adds, "In speaking in this way, they undoubtedly had Scripture on their side."

2. Dr. Hughes repudiates the statement: "Faith is never faith-in-isolation" (FR, p. 2, par. 2). He insists strongly that that is precisely what faith is in relation to justification (pp. 3, 4). Not to acknowledge this isolation involves a deprecatory "extension of justification into the sphere of sanctification" (p. 3, bottom).

(a) Dr. Hughes' manifest concern is for the sola fide of the Reformation. But is "isolation" a helpful or even appropriate word to protect that concern? Do we really want to say, even with the qualification Dr. Hughes makes (where justification is concerned), that good works are "intrinsicly in competition with the unique role of faith" (p. 3)? Is the faith sovereignly worked by God in the sinner ever in any sense "intrinsicly in competition with" good works, which are its integral and inevitable fruit and which are likewise wrought by the Holy Spirit?

(b) The balance of Dr. Hughes' paper is taken up in developing his opposition to the FR on this point of the isolation of faith. For the most part, his "argument is based on the biblical teaching that the good works of the Christian believer are still works of the law" (p. 9). This position, particularly as it is applied to the one pole of the faith-works antithesis in Paul, has come up before in our discussion, apparently, I had thought at one time, as a side issue. But now because it proves to be so basic for Dr. Hughes' argument and is also maintained in one way or another in the various communications to the Board of Messrs. Goufrey, Knudsen, Kuschke and Robertson, some response to it here is necessary.

Let me say, first of all, that the issue is not the permissibility of viewing the good works of the believer as works of the law. This certainly has its good biblical sense. God's law is the norm and guide at every point in the life of the believer, and obedience, which his good works are, is defined by the law. This is obvious and should not need to be discussed. The issue, again, is not whether it is warranted biblically to call believers' obedience the works of the law. Rather, the issue is the meaning of the expression "works (of the law)" in Paul. In what sense does he use it? Must his usage include all the senses which in one way or other can be sanctioned from Scripture? What is its reference, especially where he sets it in opposition to faith? Pointedly, does Paul include the good works of believers among "the works of the law"?

It seems clear to me that the good works of believers are not in view in Paul's use of "works of the law." In Paul, "good works" are the Spirit-worked obedience of already justified believers; "works of the law" are the efforts of those trying to earn their salvation (justification) by their own striving.

I won't repeat the arguments for this position given in my communication to the Faculty of March 22, 1978 (including the additional page 5a sent along several weeks later), except to say that I am still bound to maintain them. I limit myself here to a telling consideration in Dr. Hughes own argumentation.

In appealing to Gal. 3, he cites Paul's climactic rhetorical question in vs. 3: "Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" (p. 4, bottom). This question Dr. Hughes rephrases, as his surmise of the apostle's reaction to the Fr: "Having begun with faith, are you now ending with works?" (p. 5, top). Just how decisive this rephrasing is to his entire outlook appears from its use as his concluding exhortation: "Having begun with faith, let us not end with works!" (p. 11).

I could not agree with Dr. Hughes more thoroughly that he has accurately rephrased the apostle (cf. vs. 2). But his own restatement reveals that for the purposes of Paul's argument, the Spirit and faith, on the one hand, the flesh and works, on the other, are interchangeable. Further, Spirit-flesh is the more fundamental of these two antitheses: faith is created by the Spirit, "works" are an expression of the flesh in its sinful self-pretence and rebellion against God. Pointedly, as Dr. Hughes' rephrasing itself makes plain, "works (of the law)" are works of the flesh, in opposition to the work of the Spirit. This cannot possibly be said of good works, for which believers have been created in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10). In terms of Paul's question and its rephrasing, good works are on the side of the Spirit and faith in opposition to the flesh and "works." Within the framework of Paul's teaching as a whole, the expressions "works (of the law)", always (either explicitly or implicitly) in antithesis to faith, and "good works," always "the work of faith" (I Thess. 1:3), cannot possibly be brought under some common denominator, or the latter subsumed under the former, from any perspective. For Paul (and the rest of Scripture) it would be just as possible for the Spirit and flesh to share a common denominator or for life to be subsumed under death (cf. Rom. 8:6). (Note Heb. 9:14 (cf. 6:1), where the writer speaks of "dead works," possibly overlapping in their reference with "works" in Paul, and sets them in antithesis to "serving the living God.")

Dr. Hughes apparently believes that the critical factor overlooked in these observations is that the Galatians were not unbelievers seeking to justify themselves by their own efforts, but that their error was one of "reversion" (his ital.) to works for justification "as an adjunct to faith" (p. 5, middle). But what was their reversion? Not to works, generically or abstractly considered as (external) conformity to God's law. Nor to works as good works in the Pauline sense. It is a widespread but, I believe, fundamentally wrong and misleading view that the Galatians had an essentially correct understanding of faith and good works, but erred specifically in joining works to faith for justification. Rather, their heresy was that, whether wittingly or not, they denied the sufficiency and finality of Christ's work and were seeking to supplement that work by their own as the basis for justification. In this they revealed that they did not properly grasp the true character of either faith or good works. Their reversion was precisely what Paul says it is, to the flesh, that is, to the sinful human pretense and striving (of the present evil age, 1:4) which is in opposition to and irreconcilable with the work of the Spirit, faith and (new creation, 6:15) good works (in Christ). Their reversion is so serious because it

does not differ essentially from the unbelieving and self-assertive efforts toward justification from which they have been delivered by Christ.

The abiding relevance of Galatians for the Church is that it warns against this reversion. It cautions believers caught up as they are in the struggle between the Spirit and flesh (e.g., 5:16ff.), against the temptation to view anything we do, be it faith or any of its fruits, as in some degree supplementing or completing Christ's righteousness as the basis for receiving the forgiveness of sins and the fellowship of sons. Where this temptation is actually succumbed to, then to that extent faith in Christ is abandoned and the good works wrought by Christ's Spirit are perverted into their opposite, deeds of the flesh, "works (of the law)" (cf. my paper of 3/22/78, p. 5a).

I hope that these remarks make clear (and provide some measure of confidence) that, in excluding "good works" from Paul's polemic against "works (of the law)," it is not the purpose of the FR (or Shepherd, with whose views it is concerned), indeed that it is contrary to our purpose, thereby to reintroduce the believer's works, even implicitly, as the (even partial) basis or foundation or in any sense the "justification" for his justification. That ground is Christ's perfect righteousness.

(c) It is perhaps not idle to note that the view that "works (of the law)" do not include "good works" is, at least by implication, the view held, across a broad front, by most contemporary interpreters of Paul. Moreover, it is the position of Machen. He could not make that more clear than he does in brief, but succinct statements addressed to the apparent contradiction between Paul and James (The New Testament. An Introduction to its Literature and History, p. 239):

Moreover, as the faith which Jesus condemns is different from the faith which Paul commends, so also the works which James commends are different from the works which Paul condemns. Paul is speaking about "works of the law"--that is, works which are intended to earn salvation by fulfilling the law through human effort. James says nothing in ch. 2:14-26 about works of the law. The works of which he is speaking are works that spring from faith and are the expression of faith.

In my judgment, this is also the view of Professor Murray. Although he does not deal with this issue formally, now he ought to be read with reference to it comes out perhaps most clearly just in a paragraph appealed to at different times by more than one of those opposed to the FR.

In this paragraph (Romans, 1:123) Murray addresses the question "how the principle of faith is so rigidly exclusive of and antithetical to works of the law in the matter of justification." The answer lies in "the specific quality of faith as opposed to that of works," the "antithesis of principle" between them. He then proceeds to delineate, more pointedly

than anywhere else in his writings that I am aware of, the "specific quality," respectively, of faith and works negated for justification. The specific quality of faith is "trust and commitment to another"; it "looks to what God does" and is "essentially extraspective" and "self-renouncing." Works are the "diametric opposite." "Justification by works always finds its ground (my ital.) in that which the person is and does;..." "Works have respect to what we are" and are "self-congratulatory."

But is this what we want to say about the good works of the believer? When it is "God who is at work in you, both to will and do his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13) and who is "working in us that which is pleasing in his sight" (Heb. 13:21), how can we possibly say that good works have respect "to what we are" to the exclusion of "what God does," or that their "specific quality" is "self-congratulatory"? Am I wrong in hearing Professor Murray say to us at this point that such a conception is nothing less than "monstrous"? Good works, as well as faith, are "extraspective" and "self-renouncing." To be sure, faith in its distinctiveness is extraspective in a unique and heightened way (as receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation). But good works, the fruit of faith, are surely not otherwise motivated and directed. Certainly they are not essentially self-preoccupied and self-congratulatory. For sanctification no less than justification (I Cor. 1:30), it holds true: "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord" (vs. 31).

(d) My concern here can be gotten at briefly from another angle. The sola fide of the Reformation concerns sanctification as much as justification. This has been pointed out most effectively, with extensive citations, by Berkouwer ("Sola Fide' and Sanctification," ch. II in Faith and Sanctification, pp. 17-44). Sanctification, no less than justification, is by "faith alone." "Faith is the act by which the soul receives and rests on Him for sanctification as well as for justification" (Hodge, Systematic Theology, 3:241).

Care must be taken not to leave the superficial and misleading impression that Rome and the Reformation agree on the doctrine of sanctification and that disagreement is "limited" to the issue of justification or the fusing of justification and sanctification. In holding to the (imputed) righteousness of Christ as the sole (meritorious) ground of justification, the Reformers knew themselves to be in a life and death struggle with an overall misconception of grace. According to this misconception, in all its early, mid- and late medieval variations, grace, institutionalized in the sacraments of the church, functions as supernatural assistance to the sinner, who, despite the fall, is still by nature disposed toward God and fellowship with him; so the sinner is still capable, with this supernatural aid, appropriated by a diligent use of the sacraments, of achieving this flawed but essentially unchanged inclination of his nature toward God and the supernatural. Such a conception of grace has no more room (and no more need) for the new creation renewal of the sinner, as taught in Scripture, than it does for the imputed righteousness of Christ.

It is against this massive misconception in its entirety that the sola gratia (and so the sola fide) of the Reformation is opposed. The issue for the Reformers was sanctification no less than justification. The "isolation" of faith applies equally to sanctification as to justification. This comes out more clearly and much more adequately, I think, in the Reformed than in the Lutheran tradition. But I can see no essential difference between the two, at least at their fundamental level of concern.

Calvin's handling of the application of redemption in the Institutes is particularly instructive here. At first glance the structure of Book III can appear downright "un-Protestant." Right at the outset he accents the inner work of the Holy Spirit in uniting the sinner to Christ and producing faith. He then moves on to an extensive description of faith (ch. 2) and a lengthy discussion of sanctification (chs. 3-10). Only afterward is there a thorough treatment of justification (chs. 11-18). This scheme was followed, he tells us, "because it was more to the point to understand first how little devoid of good works is the faith, through which also we obtain free righteousness by the mercy of God; and what is the nature of the good works of the saints, with which part of this question is concerned" (11:1). The Reformation at its best is not in any sense a polemic against good works, understood biblically. In fact, just in the article on justification the Reformed tradition particularly has not hesitated to say "not without works" (Calvin) and of faith as the alone instrument, "yet...not alone..., but...ever accompanied with all other saving graces..." (WCF, 11:2).

(e) I truly wish that both those for and those against the FR could agree at least on this point, that the biblical (Pauline) antithesis between faith and "works (of the law)" does not involve a polemic against "good works," except where the latter are perverted into an illusory (even partial) ground of justification. "Good works" are always in Christ; therefore they are always the "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; 16:26), the obedience of already justified believers. Until there is agreement on this, I doubt that progress toward resolving our larger differences is possible.

3. Dr. Hughes (and the other opposers of the FR) find in it (and Shepherd's views) a confusion of justification and sanctification that touches the heart of the gospel. Some of us supporting the FR see in its opposers a tendency to isolate justification from sanctification in a way that eclipses the latter and distorts both. I, for one, do not doubt that the FR opposers are deeply concerned for sanctification and its integral and necessary place in the Christian life. Only it seems to me that they are taking a position in which this integral necessity of sanctification can not be maintained as convincingly (and as biblically) as it might.

Stated in these terms the current struggle within the Faculty and Board repeats a perennial debate within the churches of the Reformation. But what is the way out of this impasse? Put another way, how ought we to view the relationship between justification and sanctification?

(a) I would like to suggest that the answer lies in both sides embracing the soteriological framework set out and developed by Calvin in Book III of the Institutes. Briefly, union with Christ is the decisive and dominating reality from beginning to end. This union is an experiential union (by faith) with the exalted Christ forged by "the secret energy of the Spirit" (1:1). As such it is not merely the presupposition or foundation for a series of divine acts toward or in the sinner that are in addition to it. Rather, this spiritual union is the alpha and omega of our experience of salvation. The rich, multiple benefits of salvation are but different facets of this union. Apart from Christ we have nothing; united to him we share everything he is and has accomplished for us. Theologically, for Calvin, the heart of the gospel is not the forgiveness of sins, his statement that justification is "the main hinge on which religion turns" (11:1) notwithstanding, but union with Christ (from which, of course, the forgiveness of sins, is inseparable).

The figure that Calvin himself uses to illustrate his position is difficult to improve on. He introduces this figure in the course of his refutation of Osiander (11:5-12). My admiration is almost unbounded for the theological command and biblical fidelity with which Calvin conducts this polemic. Osiander's error, a surrender of the Reformation, lay in confusing justification and renewal by making justification the infusion of Christ's (divine) essence, so that the sinner becomes substantially righteous. The temptation was surely great, in opposing this doctrine of "essential righteousness" and for more easily distinguishing his own position from Osiander's, to lay all the emphasis on the imputation of Christ's righteousness. But Calvin does not abandon his own ground for the sake of argument. To be sure, he sharply rebukes Osiander for rejecting imputation (11:11). But he recognizes that the more profound error is Osiander's misconception of union with Christ. "Because he does not observe the bond of this unity, he deceives himself," (11:5, 2nd par.). Osiander has fallen into such serious error in the doctrine of justification not primarily because he denies the imputation of Christ's righteousness but because he does not understand union with Christ. He "spurns this spiritual bond" (11:10, 1st par.) and does not grasp that we are "united with Christ by the secret power of his Spirit" (11:5, 2nd par.).

In this context Calvin employs the following figure to illustrate his soteriology as a whole (11:6, 2nd par.): Christ is the sun; justification and sanctification, its light and heat, respectively. Osiander's error is in confusing light and heat; heat does not illumine, nor does light give warmth. At the same time, they are "inseparable"; there is between them "a mutual and indivisible connection."

This model helps to clarify a couple of issues before us. (i) In terms of it the question of the priority of justification and sanctification relative to each other is a secondary one, and one which has differ-

ent answers depending on the perspective from which it is raised. The crucially decisive priority belongs exclusively to the act of being united to Christ which carries with it, coincidentally, the distinct, yet inseparable benefits of forgiveness and renewal. The sun has "priority" such that neither light nor heat have priority relative to each other; nor is our experience of the sun's light and heat somehow in addition to our experience of the sun itself.

Accordingly, when Dr. Hughes writes that the believer's sanctification "flows from" his justification (p. 4, top), I certainly agree in the sense that sanctification has a progressive aspect which obviously follows in time and is conditioned on the believer's being justified at conversion. But I can't accept this statement, as Dr. Hughes seems to intend it, as an adequate overall representation of the relationship between justification and sanctification. It omits entirely the definitive aspect of sanctification, on which Professor Murray, for one, put considerable stress in the closing years of his teaching and writing (Collected Writings, 2:277-293). Integral to sanctification, as its beginning, is the decisive, once-for-all experiential breach with sin as a controlling power that takes place when we are united to Christ (e.g., Rom. 6:2ff.). Justification (deliverance from the guilt of sin) and sanctification (deliverance from the power of sin), without confusion, yet without separation, together "flow from" union with Christ.

(ii) Calvin's figure also bears on the question of the necessity of justification and sanctification relative to each other. Light and heat, each with its particular qualities, are necessary to each other; there is no light without heat, and no heat without light. The one is not "more necessary" or more important than the other. And this reciprocal necessity exists, of course, because of the nature of the sun. Given that nature, things could not be otherwise. Accordingly, Calvin says, as he does in the sentence already cited, that "we are justified not without works..., since," as he concludes this sentence, in our sharing in Christ which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness" (16:1, last par.).

(b) I submit that in the Westminster Standards the soteriological structure of Calvin, while perhaps not so explicit, is nonetheless the one which essentially controls. In the Shorter Catechism, the application of redemption in its entirety roots in that work of the Spirit which consists in "working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling" (A. 30). The primary effect of effectual calling is that we "embrace Jesus Christ" (A. 31). Justification, adoption, sanctification, and all other saving benefits, are enjoyed, then, by the "effectually called," that is, those united to Christ (A. 32). The Larger Catechism has basically the same pattern and speaks of "justification, adoption, and sanctification, and whatever else, ... manifests their union with him" (A. 69, my ital.). In the chapter on justification, the Confession says, not to express something different than or additional to the imputation already described (11:1) but as a restatement of that reality, "nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them" (11:4).

(c) Finally decisive, much more than either the Institutes or the Westminster Confession, of course, are the soteriological patterns of Scripture itself. This is a vast and rich territory so that I limit myself here to surveying it briefly and tentatively from a single angle. I want to draw attention to some of those passages where it seems to me justification and sanctification are intertwined and drawn together more closely than would appear to be permissible to the FR objectors.

To begin with there is Gal. 5:6. It seems undeniable to me that in this verse Paul's primary concern is justification. The context enforces this conclusion. In verses 2 and 3 he refers to those who are insisting on the necessity of circumcision. As such, according to verse 4, they are "seeking to be justified by law." Consequently, the issue at the beginning of verse 6 is plainly justification, not sanctification: "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything" for justification. Justification is not based on human status or performance of any kind. To observe, then, that the latter part of the verse ("but faith working through love") has sanctification in view is right but at the same time concedes our point: in pointed antithesis to the wrong way of justification Paul sets sanctification (faith at work, in action). Further, to observe that "working through love" is an incidental addition and not really integral to faith, as justifying faith, is purely gratuitous and hardly a probing exegesis of the apostle. What does matter for justification, he says, is faith working through love.

Similarly, if somewhat more loosely, earlier in Galatians (2:16ff.), where Paul is developing the thesis that justification is "by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law" (vs. 16), he amplifies the thought that he has "died to the law" (as the means of justification, vs. 19) with the consideration: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (vs. 20). Pointedly, in Rom. 8:1, 2 the consideration that supports the ringing affirmation, "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," is not: "because Christ's righteousness has been imputed to me," but: "because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death." Again, in II Cor. 13:5, where the readers are exhorted: "examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith," the critical factor deciding this ultimate test is not whether they are depending on Christ's imputed righteousness, but whether they "recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you."

What is happening in these passages? (I have only selected several, more or less at random, from Paul.) Is it, as much of the critical interpretation of Paul has tediously insisted, that he is trying to combine the forensic aspect of his gospel with the basically incompatible elements of a "Christ mysticism"? In II Cor. 13:5 ("Christ in you") for instance, has the apostle who takes us to the dazzling heights of imputed righteousness and justification by faith, himself lapsed into the morass of introspective mysticism and moralism from which the Reformation was set free? Hardly. The reason that Paul can express himself as he does,

bringing into his discussion of justification matters that pertain to the believer's inner transformation and renewed life, is that his soteriology as a whole is so thoroughly controlled by the truth of union with Christ (note the accent, "in Christ," "with Christ," or "Christ in you" in all four passages). This Spirit-wrought bond with the exalted Christ in all its aspects, both definitive and ongoing, is the all-encompassing and, in a sense, sole saving reality (in the application of redemption). Consequently, because of the nature of this union, to call attention to a particular aspect (e.g., justification) is always (at least implicitly) to call attention to the whole Christ, and our union with him (I Cor. 1:30); and the one aspect (sanctification) can be appealed to in support of the other (justification), without confusing the two, because what is finally decisive is union with (the whole, indivisible) Christ. Only the indwelling Christ is the justifying Christ, not, to be sure, because or to the extent, by this indwelling, he transforms us (inwrought righteousness), but because only as he indwells us is his righteousness accounted ours (cf. the opening section of Book III of the Institutes (3:1:1) and other statements of Calvin cited below, p. 14). The issue here, however, is not the adequacy of my brief treatment of these passages, but their own undeniable pattern of expression.

(d) A recognition of the controlling place of union with Christ in biblical soteriology permits two further observations: (i) Shepherd has frequently been faulted for using "justification" and "salvation" interchangeably. As a matter of fact, the same charge, it seems to me, can also be made against Dr. Hughes (p. 1, bottom, p. 2, bottom). But both, albeit with different intentions, are on biblical ground with this interchange. Both "salvation" (usually the more comprehensive of the two terms, but not always, e.g., Eph. 2:8) and "justification" are a matter of union with Christ--he is our salvation, he is our justification; therefore to partake of the whole (salvation) is to partake of the part (justification), and to partake of the part is to partake of the whole. Likewise, what is necessary to the part is necessary to the whole, and what is necessary to the whole is necessary to the part (however that necessity needs to be qualified).

(ii) It is no doubt true to acknowledge that in this life we make "only a small beginning" of obedience (Heidelberg Catechism, A. 114). Conflict with sin and temptation is a constant of our present experience (Rom. 7:14ff.; Gal. 5:16, 17). But what needs to be appreciated is that it is not from this perspective that the N.T. primarily views the obedience of believers. The accent is not on what is imperfect or wrong with what believers do but on what is right and even eschatological. This is so because their obedience is seen primarily in terms of their union with Christ. Their works are "good works" for which they have been recreated in Christ and recreated in Christ (Eph. 2:10). There is no place in the message of the N.T. for any tension between these good works and the imputed righteousness of Christ. For both have an eschatological, age-to-come quality and are together components of the end-time salvation revealed in Christ and appropriated by union with him. Any attitude, even if only unintentionally or in practical effect, which

views sanctification primarily as "our part" in response to "God's part," salvation defined as justification, or which considers good works to be merely expressions of our gratitude for the forgiveness of sins (they are certainly that, to be sure), usually with an accent on the defective and inadequate character of these expressions, strikes at the heart of the gospel. Such attitudes, however unwittingly, impoverish Paul's gospel-proclamation that the just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:17; cf. Gal. 3:11).

The two statements in the FR particularly disturbing and unacceptable to Dr. Hughes are in fact fully consonant with the teaching of Scripture and the Westminster Standards. His dissent from the FR as a whole, I must conclude, rests on a misreading of some parts and a failure to appreciate the genuinely biblical thrust of others. This misconstruction is all the more unfortunate because it has brought him to the charge, which I'm sure he took no pleasure in making, that the FR has (unintentionally) confused the gospel at its heart (p. 10), a charge whose extremely serious implications do not need to be spelled out.

4. I want finally to broaden the horizon a bit by indicating briefly several points apparently common to most, perhaps all of the objectors to the FR, points I believe it would prove helpful to discuss further. How much these touch the heart of the issue before us remains to be seen.

(a) The objectors to the FR seem to isolate the imputation of Christ's righteousness. For them, the demand for an adequate formulation of the doctrine of justification seems to be satisfied by correctly relating the act of imputation to the (initial) act of faith. But is this adequate? My point here is not at all to question the reality of imputation. But the doctrine of justification can't be stated fully and biblically without explicit reference to union with Christ. This is true not only for theological formalization but also for satisfying the souls of the congregation.

Once again, Calvin proves instructive. In his refutation of Oslander, he says of justification that "we are deprived of this utterly incomparable good until Christ is made ours" (3:11:10, 1st par.). "That indwelling of Christ in our hearts, ... that mystical union (mystica unio)," he adds, "are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, ..." And then he continues: "We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar (extra nos procul) in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body--in short, because he deigns to make us one with him" (my italics). We are reckoned righteous because "we have fellowship of righteousness (iustitiae societas) with him" and because of the "spiritual bond (spiritualis coniunctio)" between Christ and believers.

It bears repeating here that the basic error of Rome is not its denial of imputation. Rome has no place for imputation because it has no place for union with the exalted Christ, eschatologically wrought by the power of his Spirit. This is the insight that controls the composition of the Institutes, Book III as a whole ("The way We Receive the Grace of Christ"). The entire medieval tradition, I venture, knows nothing of this union with Christ, only the union of mystical absorption or the imitation of (the humiliated) Christ, understood as the striving of man in his higher, spiritual nature toward God and the supernatural, a striving which, despite sin, is natural to man and aided by supernatural grace. The grace, not only the faith, of which Rome speaks is of an entirely different character than that of the Reformation and radically opposed to it. It is a superficial and misleading representation of the issues involved to view Christ as a source or treasury of merit outside the sinner, the difference being that for the Reformation Christ's merit is received all at once by imputation, while for Rome this merit is gradually appropriated by the diligent use of the sacraments and deeds of love.

(b) The objectors to the FR seem to have no place for the ongoing, durative consideration that attaches to justification. For them, all that can be legitimately said in the article on justification must be applied to what takes place at conversion. This has led, in my judgment, to a less than satisfactory handling of Scripture, for instance, the exegetically questionable insistence on a purely demonstrative force for James' use of justification terminology ("shown to have been already justified"), as requisite for preserving the integrity of the gospel.

We have our justification by union with Christ. Justification is not an isolated transaction of God toward the individual sinner. It is the real, definitive because eschatological anticipation of "open acquittal" (WSC, 38; WLC, 90) in the day of judgment. Its efficacy (just as the forgiveness of sins, the imputation of Christ's righteousness and the fellowship of sons, already received), therefore, is inseparable from receiving that open acquittal. Justification (as forgiveness and imputation already granted) is conditioned on continuing in "the state of justification" (WCF, 11:5). Put another way, union with Christ is a justifying union only as it is an abiding union. Apart from that union today there is for me no justification, no matter what may have been my situation yesterday. This last sentence is not written to create fear and uncertainty or to overturn the Confession, when it says that those justified "can never fall from the state of justification"; that is, the bond of their union with Christ can never be broken. But we must recognize just how much forgiveness and imputation are bound up with that union, not merely as their presupposition, but as they are part of its very substance. Christ and his benefits cannot be abstracted from each other. Consequently, we must appreciate now in God's sovereign and gracious preservation of his people to the end, justification is conditioned on all that is necessary not only to the inception, but also to the maintenance of union with Christ. We must say of justification with Calvin, commenting on Paul's use of Ps. 32:1 in Rom. 4:7: "Therefore, we

must have this blessedness not just once but must hold to it throughout life" (3:14:11). Is there not room for this "hold to it throughout life" in our doctrine of justification? Doesn't this express something biblical (Heb. 3:14; cf. Jam. 2:14ff.; see Jonathan Edward's incisive comments on this point, Works (Banner of Truth ed., 1974), 1:640-642)?

(c) The objectors to the FR seem to take the position that anything the believer does other than believe, any function other than faith, is a "work" that as such must inevitably serve as a ground for judgment before God, if not ultimately for justification, then as a ground for judgment in some lesser sense. Where does this idea come from? Is it biblical? Is it not perhaps a lingering remnant of the unbiblical intrusion of the idea of meriting on the part of believers in their relationship to God, of the notion that the believer's obedience is meritorious performance before God, even if only in a penultimate sense?

R. B. Gaffin, Jr.
November 4, 1978