

CHARLES GORE

**ST. PAUL'S
EPISTLE TO THE
ROMANS**

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OK Publishing, 2020

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EAN 4064066396183

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Introduction.

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i.

St. Paul's great Epistle to the Romans was written, as may be quite confidently asserted, from Corinth, during the second visit to Greece recorded in the Acts[1], i.e. in the beginning of the year commonly reckoned 58, but perhaps more correctly 56 A.D.—the year following the writing of the Epistles to the Corinthians. The reasons for this confident statement, and indeed for all that needs to be said about the circumstances under which St. Paul wrote and the conditions of Christianity at Rome, become apparent chiefly in connexion with the later parts of the epistle which are not included in this volume. They shall therefore be omitted here, and we will content ourselves for the moment with a very brief statement of the results in which scholars are now finding, as it would seem, final agreement.

The existence of Christians at Rome was due not to any apostolic founding, for no apostle appears yet to have visited Rome, but to the sort of 'quiet and fortuitous filtration[2]' of Christians from various parts of the empire to its great centre which must naturally have taken place; for from all quarters there was a tendency to Rome. 'Some from Palestine, some from Corinth, some from Ephesus and other parts of Proconsular Asia, possibly some from Tarsus, and more from the Syrian Antioch, there was in the first instance, as we may believe, nothing concerted in their

going; but when once they arrived in the metropolis, the freemasonry common among Christians would soon make them known to each other, and they would form, not exactly an organized Church'—that may well have been the result of the later presence of St. Paul and St. Peter—'but such a fortuitous assemblage of Christians as was only waiting for the advent of an apostle to constitute one[3].' Among this assemblage of Christians it appears evident from St. Paul's language[4] that there must have been Jews as well as Gentiles; but the dominant character of the church was Gentile[5]. It is perhaps only putting this in another way to say that there would have been among the Roman Christians elements of hostility to St. Paul and his teaching, but Christianity as St. Paul taught it would have been in the ascendant. And probably St. Paul's special informants about affairs there would have been his special friends, Prisca and Aquila[6].

The character of the epistle written to these Christians of the capital is marked. It has beyond any other of St. Paul's epistles the character of an ordered theological treatise. Of course it assumes the existence of accepted Christian principles—the rudimentary instruction or Christian 'tradition'—in the minds of those to whom it was addressed[7]. But it takes certain of these principles of the Christian religion and develops them systematically and argumentatively; though again, it must be explained, the argument is very far from being barely logical, but is full of the deepest feeling, showing itself in passages of memorable eloquence which live in the hearts of all of us.

Why this particular epistle should have this character of a systematic treatise is not hard to see. St. Paul was reaching the end of his great controversy for the catholicity of the Gospel, against the Judaizers—that is, for the equal position of Gentiles and Jews in the Church, and against the obligation upon the Gentiles of circumcision and the ceremonial law. That controversy was the occasion of the apostolic conference at Jerusalem, which is described both by St. Luke in the Acts[8] and, from the point of view of St. Paul's own 'apology,' in the Epistle to the Galatians[9]. It is felt at its whitest heat in that intensely concentrated and passionate epistle. But by the time that the Epistle to the Romans came to be written the controversy was quieting down. The victory of Catholicism over Judaism was as good as won. The great principle of justification by faith, not by works of the law, had developed itself lucidly and clearly in St. Paul's mind, and flowed out in our epistle in an ordered sequence of thought, rich, profound, and mature.

And there were special reasons why it should have been expressed in writing at this moment, and to the Roman Christians. Though the heat of the conflict inside the Church was over, the fierce hostility of many of the Jews, both within and without the Church, to St. Paul personally was by no means past. Now St. Paul was on his way up to Jerusalem with the money collected in the Gentile churches for the poor brethren there. He attached great importance to this expression of Gentile goodwill, and almost more importance to its acceptance at his hands by the Jerusalem Christians[10]. It was to be a link of mutual, practical love to bind the divergent elements in the Church together. But he

felt, and as experience showed rightly, that his enterprise would be attended with great peril to his life. This epistle therefore, like his speech at Miletus, has something of the character of 'last words[11].' He is in writing it committing to the future the fruits of his labours, so far as they can be expressed in a doctrine, at a moment when he feels that their continuance is being seriously imperilled. And this summary of his life's teaching in its most characteristic aspect is most fitly addressed to the Christians of the great city which was the centre of the then world. St. Paul already conceived of Christianity as, in prospect at least, the religion of the empire. It was vastly important, therefore, that the capital should know it and hold it in its full glory and richness. He himself, if he escaped safe through the visit to Jerusalem, was bent on immediately going thither and securing this great end by his personal ministry[12]. But he could not depend on the future. He must seize the golden moment—buying up the opportunity at least by a letter.

This, in very brief words, is an account of the circumstances and conditions under which the Epistle to the Romans was written, and it must suffice for the moment till some of the details are presented to us in its later chapters.

ii.

There are men of whom it is especially true that their teaching is the outcome of their own personal experience. If a man's teaching is to have any real force this must be in a measure true in any case. But in some men the personal experience has set an exceptionally strong impress upon

the intellectual convictions, and so upon the teaching. Such men—otherwise very different from one another—are Augustine, Dante, Luther, Bunyan, Newman. Such an one was St. Paul. His intellectual theory is on fire with the emotions bred of a personal experience, both bitter and sweet, but always intense. And if there is professedly more of autobiography in the Epistle to the Galatians, yet in fact we know St. Paul's interior life, both before and after his 'conversion,' so far as we know it at all, mainly through the generalized account of it in the Epistle to the Romans. For the doctrine of justification by faith, not by works of the law, developed in this epistle, is the record of his personal experience reduced to a general principle. St. Paul had, on the lines of his Pharisaic education, in the first half of his life zealously sought to be justified by works, and had found out his mistake.

What is the real meaning of this phrase? Ordinarily we Englishmen find it natural to appropriate St. James' 'common sense' language about justification rather than St. Paul's[13], and say that faith is surely of no moral value without works or good actions, and that we can be justified by nothing else except our conduct. Or if the Pharisees are pointed to with their rigid ecclesiastical observances as types of men seeking to be justified before God by the merits of their works, then, in this sense of works, we feel that the idea of justification by such means, apart from deeper moral effort, is one which has passed out of our horizon. Yet if we get to the moral essence of the Pharisaic idea, we may still find it lying very close at hand to us, even though we do not know what a phylactery means, and are

at a safe distance from fasting twice in the week, or giving tithes of all that we acquire. A well-to-do Englishman, of whatever class, has a strong sense of respectability. He has a code of duty and honour which he is at pains to observe. A soldier, a gentleman, a woman of fashion, a peasant's wife, a schoolboy, and an undergraduate, representing not more than the average moral levels of their different classes, will all of them make really great sacrifices to fulfil the requirements of their respective codes. Their conscience requires this of them, and they would be miserable in falling short of it. But their conscience is also limited to it. They resent the claim of a progressive morality. Conscientious within the region of the traditional and the expected, they are often almost impenetrable to light from beyond. They are nervously afraid of the very idea of subjecting their life to a fundamental revision in the light of Christ's claim, or to the idea of surrender to the divine light wherever it may lead. But this frame of mind—conscientiousness within a limited and well-established area accepted by public opinion, coupled with resentment at whatever completer and diviner claim may interfere to disconcert one's self-satisfaction, and bid one begin afresh on a truer basis—is that very attempt to be justified by works which appeared in the case of the Pharisees, only dressed in very different guise to that in which the conditions of modern England clothe it.

For the Pharisees of the Gospels were the later representatives of the Hasidaeans, i.e. Chasidim or 'pious' folk, whom we hear of in the Books of Maccabees[14]. The later religious development of Israel lay along the lines of

rigid reverence for the law. In days then of general laxity and a general prevalence of Greek customs, these pious Israelites united themselves to promote the devout observance of their law. Their relation to Maccabaeen heroes and rulers varied, as religious or political motives were uppermost in the Maccabaeen house. They themselves pursued one consistent aim. They came to be known as the Pharisees, the separated or the separatists, the party who kept aloof from everything common or unclean. As such they represented the religious nation in its later development. They had the bulk of the people, and especially the women, with them. They had consequently, as Josephus tells us, an irresistible influence upon public affairs, and especially upon religious affairs, and they held the social position befitting the legitimate religious leaders of God's own people.

This position, with its accompanying reputation, they doubtless deserved by their zeal for the law, and for the 'traditions of the fathers' which hedged about or interpreted the law. But according to the solemn witness of Christ and St. Paul, a disastrous lowering of the best moral standard of the Old Testament scriptures had taken place among them. The Mosaic law was, of course, a matter mainly of outward observance, and therefore would become a matter of rigid social requirement within the area of such a body as the Pharisees. Nowhere does public opinion act more strongly than in a close religious circle. But the social requirement according to tradition came to be substituted for that deeper spiritual relation of the 'holy nation' and the individuals composing it to God and His will, which is the

real moral essence of the Old Testament. 'How can ye believe,' our Lord said to them, 'which receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not[15]?' This is the central moral weakness of the Pharisaic position. A social or ecclesiastical tradition had taken the place of the will of God. This social tradition was rigid and stern in respect of the 'tradition of the elders,' but it did not revise itself constantly or at all in the light of the mind of God, and therefore its moral standard became debased. It 'made void the word of God because of the tradition.' It 'tithed mint and anise and cummin, and left undone the weightier matters of the law, judgement, and mercy, and faith.' It 'strained out the gnat, and swallowed the camel[16].' It came to be almost purely external and consistent with even the grossest spiritual hypocrisy, as both St. Paul and our Lord Himself assure us. Above all, it was completely satisfied with itself. 'We have Abraham to our Father.' 'I thank thee that I am not as other men are.' That is the characteristic tone of Pharisees and of all who, however unlike them otherwise, are living by a strong social standard and priding themselves on belonging to a respectable and dignified class. This it is that St. Paul calls seeking to be justified or commended to God by 'works' or 'works of the law'—not, we must observe, 'good works,' such as are the fruit of a right disposition towards God, of which St. Paul never spoke with any disparagement.

It is the characteristic of the Pharisaic attitude that a man holds by a strict code enforced by the public opinion of his church or circle; a code which he diligently and even painfully obeys. But it is characteristic of this attitude also

that it resents new light, and tacitly claims independence even of God, provided that 'the law' is kept or the accepted standard maintained. Thus the Pharisees resented the Christ, when renewing the voice of the old prophets, without respect of persons, He exposed the moral weaknesses of these religious leaders, and bade them, in effect, begin again and think afresh what God's will really meant: when He warned them that the one unpardonable sin is to be self-satisfied in one's own eyes, and to repudiate as an impertinent intruder the fresh divine light. The story is very familiar. They resented and rejected the Christ because He made the unlimited divine claim upon them: because He spoke to them as God to the human soul, and not as the representative of 'the tradition.' 'Seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God[17].'

Now we understand what it is to seek to be justified by works. It is to have a social or ecclesiastical code, and to claim acceptance in God's sight because we perform it, meanwhile making 'the law' under which we act, believed to be divine, a substitute for the living and personal God, and resenting any fresh and immediate claim of God on the human soul.

In this mixture of subservience and independence, of religious humility and human pride, Saul of Tarsus had been brought up 'at the feet of Gamaliel in Jerusalem.' His was not one of those slack consciences which enable men to take the lowest line which respectable public opinion will allow. In every ecclesiastical system the strict law comes to be mitigated by various dispensations and compensations—

generally substitutions of the easier ceremonial for the harder moral requirement. But young Saul no doubt took the law in its fullest sense as the thing to be kept, with all its accompanying traditions. So taken, it constituted no doubt what St. Peter calls it[18]—an intolerable yoke. A strict Jew must have had a very difficult life of it. But it was not this yoke of specific outward requirements that staggered St. Paul. What he found crushing was the inward claim—'Thou shall not covet[19].' He who had determined to appear before God at the last with a clear record as one who had kept the law, found himself confronted by an inner and searching claim of the divine righteousness, to which no blamelessness in outward conduct enabled him to correspond. He could not help feeling himself a sinner in the eye of God; and the sacrificial system plainly gave his conscience no relief at all. He does not even allude to it in this connexion. Meanwhile, as he moved about in Jewish society of the empire at Tarsus and elsewhere, he found that it required no spiritual microscope to discover that the law in many of its plainest moral injunctions was in fact not being observed at all. He seemed to see that instead of the law being really the means of justification, it in effect put 'the righteous nation' simply in the position of condemned sinners, and himself among them, as fully as if they were simply without a divinely given law, like the 'sinners of the Gentiles.'

We know well how, when the way of God had been learnt more perfectly, this earlier moral experience of the effect of the law on himself and others worked itself out in St. Paul's mind into a deep theory of the function, not of 'the law'

only, that is the Mosaic law, but of law altogether—of 'the letter' of any body of external enactments. Law, he found, could enlighten the conscience, but it could never reach deep enough to the springs of will to strengthen and purify them. God must become more intimate to man than any external law can make Him. A law of ordinances can only be a preparatory discipline, intended by the very falsity of the assumption on which it is based to teach men that they are not what they fancied themselves. They fancied themselves beings sufficiently independent to stand on their own basis and enter into a covenant with God, to make a compact with Him to observe a law and to abide by the result. It is the function of such a compact as between independent parties to convince men that any such relation between God, the Creator and Giver, and man, the creature and simply the receiver—still more between God the Holy and man the defiled and weakened—is simply contrary to fundamental facts[20].

As yet, however, St. Paul was only rendered miserable by his experience under the law. To feel himself a sinner alienated from God was a profound humiliation to his spiritual pride. He was fired no doubt by the lofty ideal of the righteous nation, standing before God in virtue of its righteousness, of its performance of the divine law, and therefore making its claim on God to vindicate it before the whole world. He threw himself zealously into rigid observance: only, however, to find himself humiliated and perplexed.

Meanwhile, he was becoming conscious of the claim of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ. Under what conditions

that claim began to confront him we do not in the least know. But he must have known in the period before his conversion that the severest attack on the spiritual position of the Pharisees ever delivered had been delivered by Him who claimed to be the Christ; that the Pharisees in consequence had thrown all their influence into the rejection of His claim, and if they had not been the most direct instruments of His death, yet had encouraged and sanctioned it. Thus the more dissatisfied he became in his own conscience, the more zealous he grew for the Pharisaic position, and the more fanatical, therefore, against the followers of the crucified Jesus. At what point it began to dawn upon his conscience that perhaps Jesus was right and not the Pharisees; that perhaps it was in His teaching that his own restless heart was to find repose, we can only wonder. Some struggle such as this dawning consciousness would involve he certainly passed through. 'It was hard for him to kick against the goad[21].' At last, and at a definite moment, God 'triumphed over him' in Christ, and he gave in his allegiance to Jesus as the Christ on the road to Damascus. Many a man has thus after a struggle surrendered to God at discretion: many a man has shown the will, as Faber calls it,

'to lose my will in His,
And by that loss be free.'

But to no man can it ever have involved a completer sacrifice of his own pride and prejudice—of his own personal comfort and safety—than it did to St. Paul: and, therefore, in

no man did it ever involve a vaster increase of spiritual illumination. Hitherto he had stood on the basis which his pride in his religious position gave him and, starting thence, had sought to erect the spiritual fabric of a life acceptable to God. But the more he had known of God and the more he had struggled, the less satisfied he had become. God seemed to be in no other attitude towards him than that of a dissatisfied taskmaster. Now he had surrendered at discretion into God's hands. He had no position of his own to maintain. He had put himself in God's hands. In His sight he was content to be treated as a sinner, just like one of the Gentiles—to be forgiven of His pure and unmerited love, and of His pure and unmerited love endued with a spiritual power for which he could take no credit to himself, for it was simply a gift. Once more, he had henceforth no prejudices and recognized no limitation on what he might be required to bear or do. His life was handed over to be controlled from above. Thus when St. Paul sets justification by faith and faith only in opposition to justification by works of the law, he is contrasting two different attitudes towards God and duty, which in the two halves of his own sharply sundered life he had himself conspicuously represented. The contrast may be expressed perhaps in four ways.

1. The man under the law of works is mainly concerned about external conduct and observances—the making clean of the outside of the cup and the platter: the man of faith is concerned almost altogether with the relation of his heart to God at the springs of action. Faith is a disposition of the heart which indeed results in a certain kind of outward conduct, but which has its value already, prior to the

outward conduct, because of what it inwardly is. Faith, as Calvin said, pregnant with good works, justifies before they are brought forth. This distinction between faith and works underlies St. Paul's teaching in parts, but is never very prominent. It accounts, however, for St. Paul's shrinking from any insistence upon outward observances in the Church, such as do not necessarily convey any spiritual meaning or power. 'Why,' he cries to the Colossians, 'do ye subject yourselves to ordinances; handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men? [22]'

2. Inasmuch as 'the law' was a national thing, so 'works of the law' were a supposed means of justification confined to Israel, and an occasion of contempt for other nations. Faith, on the other hand, the mere capacity to feel our own wants and to take God at His word, is a universal quality and belongs, or may belong, to all men. Thus justification by faith is opposed to justification by works of the law, as the universal or catholic to the merely Jewish or national, and in this aspect the contrast occupies a great place in St. Paul's thought and teaching.

3. But it is not in the things it is occupied about, or in the range of its activity, that faith is most centrally contrasted with works. It is in the attitude of man towards God which it represents. The 'worker' for justification always retains his own independence towards God. He works upon the basis of a definite covenant by which God is bound as well as himself. He has the right to resent additional claims. Faith, on the other hand, means an entire abandonment of independence. It is self-committal, self-surrender. 'I know

him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day[23].' The man of faith throws all the responsibility for life on God, and says simply and continually, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.'

It is of the utmost importance to notice that this is the only attitude of man towards God which corresponds with the ultimate facts of human nature, as science and philosophy are bound to represent them. Man is, in fact, an absolutely dependent being, physically and spiritually. His virtue must lie, not in originativeness, but in correspondence. Supposing him a free agent in God's universe, his freedom can only consist in a power to correspond with divine forces and laws intelligently and voluntarily; or on the other hand to disturb the divine order of creation in a measure by wilfulness and sin. Now faith is simply the faculty of loving correspondence with God. 'Justification by faith' is the only conception of justification which is possible in the light of the root facts of human nature. But of course the practical appeal of this conclusion to the heart and will is immensely increased, if men can be shown to have acted as if they were independent and to have found it a failure; if life lived in independence of God, with God as it were withdrawn from the actual scene of life to its far-off horizon, is found to have resulted in havoc, weakness and despair. So, in fact, St. Paul's doctrine of the true means of justification is based on an appeal, not so much to the ultimate constitution of our human nature as to the experienced results of our independence of God, to the facts of sin, whether among Gentiles or Jews.

4. Finally, the principle of justification by faith is contrasted with that of justification by works of the law in the view which it involves of the character of God. The law, as St. Paul interprets it, views God as a lord and taskmaster. Faith presents Him as the Father of our spirits, always waiting upon us with His eternal, unchangeable love; bearing with us; dealing with us even on a false basis which by our sins we have forced upon Him, in order to bring us to a recognition of the true; anyway acting or withholding action, if by any means we can be won to recognize His true character and our true life.

These are the broad contrasts between the alternative methods of justification by faith or by 'works of the law.' The law, and the attitude towards God which the law suggested, are, in St. Paul's view, the main characteristic of the Old Testament. This is a point of view which we should expect in one trained by the Pharisees. We may possibly feel that St. Paul tends to identify with the Old Testament as a whole one particular element in it which specially characterized one particular period. But at least the element was there, and occupied there a highly important place in the whole development; and if St. Paul in his idealizing manner sometimes speaks as if it was the whole of the older covenant, as if he had forgotten all the teaching of prophet and psalmist, yet he is not really forgetful. Law is to him the characteristic of the old covenant. But behind the law God's dealings with Abraham are for ever in his imagination witnessing against the law's limitation, and a similar witness is kept up all along: so that St. Paul can take out of one of

the books of Moses his very central statement of the principle of faith[24].

In what has just been said justifying faith has been treated as if it were simply, as it is really, faith in God; whereas in St. Paul's language the object of justifying faith is constantly 'Jesus[25].' The explanation of this is that in Jesus Christ God has manifested His character as Father, and has come near to men, 'reconciling the world unto Himself,' by the atonement wrought through His incarnate Son, and giving conspicuous evidence of His saving power by raising Him from the dead[26]. Thus, if Jesus is the proximate object of justifying faith, it is Jesus as manifesting the Father, Jesus as God incarnate; and St. Peter is strictly interpreting St. Paul when he represents the object of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection in the phrase, 'that your faith and hope might be in God[27].' The faith of the Christian is the old faith of Abraham and Habakkuk, the faith in the Lord Jehovah only now made manifest in a new and completer manner, in a more intimate relation to human life, and with a more winning appeal to the human heart.

iii.

Now that we have gained a general idea of what St. Paul meant by justification by faith, as opposed to justification by works of law, we are in a position to deal with a number of questions which have been famous in ecclesiastical history. Does justification mean being made righteous, or being reckoned for righteous? if it means the latter, how can God reckon us as being what in fact we are not? Again, what is

the relation of this justification to sanctification? are these two stages, of which the first is over before the second can begin? Again, what is the relation of justification to Church membership? is justification a purely individual process or fact, of which membership in the Church or, what comes to the same thing, reception of the sacraments, is a merely secondary and strictly unessential consequence?

The answers to these questions are all connected with one another. Justification, to begin with, is a judicial or, as it is called, 'forensic' word. It expresses the verdict of acquittal. The use of the word in the Bible made this quite indisputable[28]. Thus God justifies whenever He refuses to condemn—when, whatever may have been our sins, He ignores them, and therefore positively admits us into the accepted people. And He declares His willingness to do this simply because a man believes in Jesus Christ. Let a man believe, or take God in Jesus Christ at His gracious word, and the value of this act of trust or allegiance is such that God reckons it for righteousness, and admits a man into the accepted people, as if he were already fit for such fellowship in his actual habits or character. There is 'imputation' here, but it is the right sort of imputation. It is dealing with us not as we are, nor exactly as we are not, but as we are becoming in virtue of a new attachment under which our life has passed: and this, as the engrossing modern conception of development makes it easy for us to perceive, is the only true and profound way of regarding anything. Not the standard already reached, but the movement, direction, or vitality is the important matter. Faith, then, is 'reckoned for righteousness' because it puts us upon the right basis and in

the right relation to God; and therefore is a root out of which, provided it continues to subsist, all righteousness can healthily grow; whereas the most brilliant efforts or 'works' on a wrong basis may have neither sound root nor principle of progress in them. To believe in Jesus is to have the root of the matter in oneself. Therefore, when a man first believes, God can ignore all his previous life, and deal with him simply on the new basis, in hope. Of course this preliminary acquittal or acceptance is provisional. As the servant[29] who had been forgiven his debts found them rolled back upon him when he behaved in a manner utterly inconsistent with the position of a forgiven man, so our preliminary justification may be promptly cancelled by our future conduct if we behave as one who has 'forgotten the cleansing from his old sins[30].' The prodigal son, after he has been welcomed home, may go back again to the 'far country.' But it remains the fact:—of such infinite value and fruitfulness is faith in God, as He has shown Himself in Jesus, that when a man first believes—aye, whenever, over and over again, he returns to believe—he is in God's sight on a new basis, however dark be the background of his previous sins; and he can be dealt with simply on the new basis, according to the movement of the Father's heart of love which his faith has set free.

Now the justifying faith of the conscience-stricken sinner, whose case St. Paul always has in the foreground of his imagination, means first of all and most obviously that he consciously takes God at His word as being ready to forgive his sins, and accept him for Jesus' sake in whom he believes. It is belief in God as forgiving, or in Jesus as—he does not

stop to inquire how—obtaining and giving him forgiveness. And St. Paul laid great stress on this simple acceptance of the gift of pardon, as the gate of the new life and the first act of faith, because the readiness to be treated as a sinner and merely forgiven in spite 'f our sins is, as he knew full well in his own case, the final overthrow of spiritual pride. But this simple 'reliance on the merits of Christ,' and acceptance of forgiveness at His hands and for His sake, is a profound movement of the heart—of the spring of human actions—which involves much more than appears. Luther was hopelessly wrong and unlike St. Paul when he isolated this mere reliance on another's merits, and, setting it apart from all deeper movement of will or love, would have it, and it only, concerned with our justification. To St. Paul even the first movement of faith is a surrender of independence, and a recognition in intellect, and much more in will, of the lordship of Jesus. It is, in other words, a change of allegiance, and this is the important thing about it. And the absolved man, in thanking God for his forgiveness, finds himself, as it were, inevitably and without any fresh act, embarked on a new service. If he does not find this, he is not a man of faith at all. Faith is so deep a principle that, though it shows itself first as the mere acceptance of an undeserved boon from the divine bounty, it involves such hanging upon God as necessarily enlists the will to choose and serve Him, the intellect to know and worship Him with a growing perception as He is revealed in Jesus, and the affections to desire and love Him. The life of justification thus proceeds 'from faith to faith'—from faith in Christ 'for us' to faith in Christ 'in us.' The justified man, accepted into

the 'body of Christ' by baptism and made a participator of the life of Christ, receives the continual gifts of the divine bounty in their appointed channels, and his faith exercising its natural faculty of correspondence, absorbs and appropriates the divine gifts—intellectually, so that the eyes of the understanding are opened in increasing knowledge—practically, so that 'Christ dwells in the heart by faith,' and it is no longer the bare human self which lives, but Christ which lives in the renewed man, with a continual display of moral power.

The first justification or acceptance is therefore a preliminary step: it is acceptance for admission into the divine household, or city of God, or life in Christ. It is a means to an end, and that end the fellowship of Christ, and continually developing assimilation to Him. Does this mean, then, that justification and sanctification are processes following the one on the other, of which the former is over before the latter begins? Such a statement must be repudiated so far as its latter clause is concerned. You cannot thus logically sever a vital process. They are two parts of one vital process; and the man who is not on the way to being made like Christ (however far off it he may be at the moment) is by that very fact shown to be not in a state of justification or acceptance with God. At any stage of spiritual life there must be movement in order to make forgiveness possible. Grant this however and it becomes true that justification, as meaning acquittal, is a preliminary to sanctification, that is, the being made like Christ. The having our 'heart set at liberty' is a preliminary to 'running the way of God's commandments.' But even so we must

recognize that St. Paul never exactly uses this language. When he describes the stages of God's dealings with the soul he passes from justification to glorification, or (final) deliverance from sin and wrath[31]. Or, on one occasion, he mentions sanctification before justification[32].

This is in part accounted for by the fact that the word translated 'sanctify' or 'sanctification' means rather 'consecrate' (as to priesthood) or 'consecration.' And though this consecration involves 'sanctity' (in our sense) because of the character of God to whom we are dedicated, yet it may precede it; and we are in fact consecrated and hallowed at the moment when we are accepted into the 'priestly body' and anointed with the divine unction[33]. This exact meaning of the term sanctification in part accounts for St. Paul not speaking of sanctification and justification as successive stages of the spiritual life. When he is speaking about justification he is answering the question, What is the attitude of the human soul towards God which sets God free, so to speak, to accept it and work upon it? And the answer is, The attitude of faith. When he speaks of sanctification, or rather consecration, he is answering the implied question, How is the individual to be thought of when he has been admitted by baptism into the Christian community? And the answer is, He is to be thought of as consecrated, or as sharing the life of a consecrated people[34]. St. Paul's language in one place would suggest that if 'justification' qualifies for admission into the life in Christ, the result of this admission is again a justification, not now merely of our persons, but of our whole moral being

—a 'justification of life[35].' But this is, at least, not his usual use of the word.

And now we approach the question of the relation of our individual justification to membership in the Church and all that goes with that. To put the question in a rough controversial way—Is the Epistle to the Romans, as it has been frequently held to be, a thoroughly Protestant work?

The Prophet Ezekiel first clearly discerned and expressed the truth that the new covenant of God with man must be based upon the conversion of individual wills and hearts. So it was realized. The basis of the Church was a profound movement of individual faith and love and allegiance, in the apostles and first disciples. And that on which it is based is that by which it must progress—the real assent and correspondence of individual wills and hearts. They that receive the testimony must set to their seals that God is true. Thus one cannot possibly exaggerate the importance in Christianity of the individual spiritual life, or of individual conversion and faith, if he does not isolate it. He cannot possibly exaggerate the stress laid in the Epistle to the Romans on individual faith and its results, if he does not forget its context. But what is meant by this proviso? This simply. St. Paul, in his doctrine of justification by faith, is describing the basis of the new covenant of God with man which is, as truly as the old, a covenant with a community, an Israel of God. The faith which justifies, therefore, means the faith which qualifies for the community as truly as it admits into the favour of God. The very evidence that God accepts the first movement of faith is that the believing man is admitted by baptism into the body of Christ. The

idea of a faith in Jesus which does not seek admission into 'the body,' or disparages it even while it accepts it, does not even present itself to St. Paul's mind. A faith which is content to remain outside Christ is no faith at all, and the act of being 'baptized into Christ' is an act by which 'in one spirit we are baptized into one body.' Again, the conception impressed upon the institution of the Eucharist is that Christ's atoning sacrifice is the basis of a new covenant with a society which is to share His life[36].

Elsewhere St. Paul expresses this by saying that what Christ bought for Himself was a Church, a new Israel[37]. What His sacrifice purchased was a new *community*. There is the less necessity to insist upon this truth because it is now being very generally perceived. The most powerful influence in recent German Protestant theology is that of Albrecht Ritschl, and through him the truth has come back, through unexpected channels, that the object of the sacrificial death of Christ, and therefore of the divine justification, is not the individual but the Church[38]; or, if we may venture to modify the phrase, the object of divine justification is the individual only as becoming and remaining (so far as His will is concerned) a member of the Church. In fact, 'justification' may be rendered, without any false idea being attached to it, 'acceptance for membership in the sacred people, the Israel of God.' And where any one has become a member of the Church without even the rudimentary faith which can render him acceptable in God's sight, there the awakening of such faith is the condition of profitable or 'saving' membership.

From this point of view it is not difficult to see the relation of our epistle, broadly, to Protestantism and Catholicism. Protestantism was a reaction against one-sided ecclesiasticism. The Church is the household of God, the home of His people. She guides and disciplines their souls. She feeds them with the bread of life. But her representatives may suffer her to lose the spiritual characteristics of the new covenant and fall back upon those of the old. She may come to be characterized by a mere authoritativeness. The spirit of 'the law of ordinances' may come to prevail again. The sacraments may be treated as charms; or, in other words, all moral and spiritual requirement may be summed up in mere obedience, or in doing this and that. So, in fact, it happened to a great extent in the popular mediaeval system; and Protestantism was a reaction. It was a reaction based on truth, as Luther seemed to himself to re-discover it in the epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. But the reaction broke up the communion of Christians. It thus impaired the sense of the one body, and very often resulted in obliterating the perception of any obligation to the visible body of Christ at all. It became individualist, and disparaged the sacraments which are at once both the outward means of union with Christ and the bonds of cohesion for His body, the Church. But as we now look back upon the matter, we can see as clearly as it is possible to see anything, that both mediaeval Catholicism and Lutheran Protestantism (or modern English Protestantism) represent one-sided developments in which thoughtful men cannot permanently acquiesce. The preliminary justifying faith of the individual does but warrant