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The Article of a Standing or Falling Church.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D., PH.D., GALT, ONT.

For the Review.

LUTHER in his own terse way calls, "Justification by faith alone," the article of a standing or falling Church. And he is right. That is a legitimate deduction from the history of the Church in the past, and it is a clear note of warning for all the future. As the Church holds fast to this doctrine it will flourish; as it loses its grip on it, it will fail. And for this reason alone—it is God's truth. The Church cannot dispense with God's truth. Its work as "the pillar and ground of the truth" is to hold it forth in living embodiment and in faithful proclamation. When the fundamental fact of human experience is dealt with so that men come to themselves, and see and feel that they are lost, and undone; that they are under the curse; that only hell awaits them; and that the more they work, like men in a quagmire, the deeper they sink, and the more hopeless they become—then it is that another fundamental fact is appreciated, namely, that we are accepted before God, and justified by faith in Christ Jesus alone. We have nothing to pay our large and heavy indebtedness, and for the suretyship of Christ He frankly forgives us all. The one doctrine prepares the way for the other. And the one dovetails into the other. Hence, we shall have no need of justification by faith, if we have no such truth as the sinfulness of man by nature. The want of the one voids the other. In the New Testament it is always after men are sensible of their evil condition that the justifying righteousness of Christ is presented. See Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and all the preaching of the Apostles. A model treatise on this subject is Luther's "Commentary on Galatians." It is the work of a master in Israel and deserves close and also prolonged study. It is full of golden nuggets. It is almost presumptuous daring to attempt to select any, yet the temptation is so strong that we must. But do not forget that these are only small chips off a great block, shining with some of its light and beauty. May they bring you to the treatise itself. "Peace of conscience can never be had, unless sin be first forgiven. But sin is not forgiven for the fulfilling of the law; for no man is able to satisfy the law. But the law doth rather show sin, accuse and terrify the conscience, declare the wrath of God, and drive to desperation. There is no work that can take away sin; but sin is rather increased by works. No means can take away the sin but grace alone." "His intent (*re* the Apostles) in this Epistle is, to treat of the righteousness that cometh by faith, and to defend the same; again to beat down the law, and the righteousness that cometh by works." "Christ was given not for feigned or counterfeit sins, nor yet for small sins, but for great and huge sins; not for one or two, but for all; not for vanquished sins, for no man, no, nor angel, is able to overcome the least sin that is, but for invincible sins." "He saith not Christ was made a curse for himself, but for us. Therefore all the weight of the matter standeth in this word 'for us.' Christ took all over sins upon Him, and for them died upon the cross; therefore it behoved that He should become a transgressor, and as Isaiah the prophet saith, chap. iii 'to be reckoned and accounted among transgressors and trespassers.'" "To be brief, our sins must needs become Christ's own sin, or else we shall perish for ever." "We must as well wrap Christ, and know Him to be wrapped in our sins, in our malediction, in our death, and in all our evils, as He is wrapped in our flesh and blood." "All the curses of the law are heaped together and laid upon

Him, and therefore He did suffer and bear them in His own body for us. He was therefore not only accursed but also was made a curse for us." How close He keeps to the heart of the subject! He indulges in no vapid oratorical flights, He is in dead earnest and so keeps sinners and salvation ever in view. When a man is in close grips with the souls of men He wrestles with them in soulful concern and in heart-breaking anxiety. Listen again: "If we neglect the article of justification, we lose it altogether." "We must learn therefore diligently the article of justification, as I often admonish you. For all the other articles of our faith are comprehended in it; and if that remain sound, then are all the rest sound. Therefore, when we teach that men are justified by Christ, that Christ is the conqueror of sin and death, and the everlasting curse, we witness therewithal that He is naturally and substantially God." This was pre-eminently the doctrine of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. And it is the doctrine of every true spiritual change in every century. John Ruskin has said truly "I believe the root of almost every schism and heresy from which the Christian Church has ever suffered has been the effort of man to earn, rather than to receive his salvation; and that the reason that preaching is so ineffectual is, that it calls on men oftener to work for God, than to behold God working for them."

This doctrine must in evangelical preaching be kept to the front. It is full of health for the soul. It offers the only true ground on which a poor sinner may stand before God—not his own righteousness—that is as filthy rags—but Christ's, which is spotless and perfect and God honoring. Lambert's cry at the stake sounded it out "none but Christ," "none but Christ."

The common course of men was marked out by the Jews, who "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Mark the Apostle's word "ignorant" and so they need instruction, enlightenment, knowledge. And so the first duty of a minister of the gospel is to "Open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan into God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ." The power of the devil over men is because they are ignorant of Christ's justifying righteousness. The devil reigns in the darkness of the mind, therefore let in the holy light and break his evil spell. How simple and tersely put is the whole matter in the Epistle to the Romans? Sometimes other means are blest to set men free. Grimshaw of Haworth in Yorkshire, a famous gospel preacher, was instructed in God's way of justifying the ungodly by reading "Owen on Justification." Sometimes a short tract, or a verse of scripture, or a few words may lighten up by the Grace of God the whole matter. It is only as this teaching is given that men see the way out of the pit in which they are. "He took me out" cries the psalmist. "Not by works which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life," is the apostles testimony.

Every sound conversion is based here, on the justifying righteousness of Christ. Every work that slights this shall come to nought. Great care shou'd therefore be taken to sail according to the chart of God's word, that we may escape harm or wreck. He sails safely whom God pilots,