

The Reformed Doctrine of Justification by Works: Historical Survey and Emerging Consensus

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It is well known that the Protestant Reformation unearthed the glorious biblical truth of justification by faith alone. But it is not as well known that the early Calvinistic Reformers taught a “second justification”¹ by works, based on texts such as Mathew 25:31–46, 2 Corinthians 5:8–10, and James 2:14–26.²

This “justification not of the sinner but of the righteous,” declared “in the recognition of inherent righteousness, by no means perfect but nevertheless genuine,”³ has largely disappeared in Protestant theology in our day, but it was a significant feature of the Reformed doctrine for several generations. This doctrine was remarkably different from the Roman Catholic conception of the place of works (and merit) in justification. All of the theologians addressed here, past and present, are undoubtedly committed to Jesus Christ as the sole ground of forgiveness and vindication. They are all unequivocally and indisputably committed to *sola fide*. But they do not believe *sola fide* rules out a further phase of justification in which works are taken into consideration as the fruit and evidence of a living faith; indeed, their commitment to *sola scriptura* and *tota scriptura*

¹ Heinrich Hepp, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set Out and Illustrated from the Sources*, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1950), 562f.

² Romans 2:1–16 might deserve inclusion in this list of “second justification” texts, except that the exegetical tradition is very uneven. Several early Reformed commentators, such as John Calvin, took 2:1–11 as actual, and 2:12–16 as hypothetical, with regard to eschatological justification. As we will note towards the end of this essay, the best contemporary evangelical and Reformed biblical theologians do not read any of the passage hypothetically; instead, they see it as teaching an actual eschatological justification of faithful believers according to their works.

³ Hepp, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 563.

demand that they teach such a doctrine. As will be seen, these justifying works are treated as a necessary condition of final justification, but they are never regarded as meritorious in any way. Rather, they are viewed from within the circle of faith and grace. "Future justification according to deeds" was never treated as stand alone doctrine, but as circumscribed and contextualized by (prior) justification by faith and (more broadly) Spirit-wrought union with Christ. In the Reformed doctrine of "double justification," the second justification by works presupposes and rests upon the first justification by faith.⁴

It is my aim to show that some notion of "second justification" according to works is well attested in the history of the evangelical Protestant movement, even if receives precious little treatment in our contemporary preaching and teaching. (Indeed, in many cases, it is openly rejected as a compromise of the Reformational gospel! Nothing could be further from the truth.) In my historical survey, I am not attempting to be comprehensive, but representative. At the end of the paper, I hope to demonstrate that this double justification doctrine (initial justification by faith alone, followed by a second justification according to works in the eschatological judgment) is re-emerging as a "consensus position" among today's leading evangelical and Reformed biblical theologians.

Obviously, theologians develop their own peculiar vocabularies and forms of expression. We do not approach our subject searching for strict uniformity in formulation. In this paper, we are looking for quotations of at least three sorts: [a] quotations that affirm God's merciful judgment of the works of his believing people in this life and especially at the last day; [b] quotations that affirm that works arising from faith play a non-meritorious but decisive role in the final judgment, resulting in believers' final acquittal; and [c] quotations that affirm that the final judgment of God's people is not merely about rewards added to salvation, but salvation itself. A final caveat before we begin our survey: Space does not permit a full analysis of the quotations offered here, and readers should not assume the cited authors are above criticism or that their formulations cannot be

⁴ Some theologians in the Reformed tradition, especially more recently, have been much more comfortable speaking of a single justification that unfolds in two phases (the "already" and the "not yet"), rather than multiple justifications, but this difference is rather minor.

improved upon in various ways. But I have attempted to provide enough context to leave the meaning of the quotations unmistakable.⁵

Vintage Reformed Theology

Our discussion begins where it must, with John Calvin.⁶ Calvin believed a final judgment according to works could have a positive outcome for the believer. Because God has already accepted our persons in Christ, he may now accept our works in Christ as well. Commenting on 2 Corinthians 5:10, Calvin says:

God in rewarding good deeds does not look to merit or worthiness. For no work is so full and complete in all its parts as to be deservedly well-pleasing to him, and farther, there is no one whose works are in themselves well-pleasing to God, unless he render satisfaction to the whole law. Now no one is found thus to be perfect. Hence the resource is in his accepting us through unmerited goodness, and justifying us, by not imputing to us our sins. **After he has received us into favor, he receives our works also by a gracious acceptance.** It is on this that the reward hinges. There is, therefore, no inconsistency in saying, that he rewards, provided we understand that mankind, nevertheless, obtains eternal life gratuitously.

In another place, commenting on Romans 3:22, Calvin writes:

Hence faith is said to justify, because it is the instrument by which we receive Christ, in whom righteousness is conveyed to us. **Having been made partakers of Christ, we ourselves are not only just, but our works also are counted just before God, and for this reason, because whatever imperfections there may be in them, are**

⁵ In the quotations included in this paper, I have occasionally added my own **emphasis** to draw attention to particular expressions that are especially notable.

⁶ Quotations from Calvin's commentaries are taken from *Calvin's Commentaries: Twenty-Two Volume Set* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, reprint, 1993). Quotations from Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* taken from the translation by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

obliterated by the blood of Christ; the promises, which are conditional, are also by the same grace fulfilled to us; **for God rewards our works as perfect, inasmuch as their defects are covered by free pardon.**

His analysis of Phinehas' justification as described in Psalm 106:31 makes the same points. Calvin affirms a second imputation of works as righteous:

It remains, therefore, that we affirm that the work of Phinehas was imputed to him for righteousness, in the same way as God imputes the works of the faithful to them for righteousness, not in consequence of any intrinsic merit which they possess, but of his own free and unmerited grace...Besides, were our works strictly examined, they would be found to be mingled with much imperfection. We have, therefore, no other source then to flee for refuge to the free unmerited mercy of God. And not only do we receive righteousness by grace through faith, but as the moon borrows her light from the sun, **so does the same faith render our works righteous,** because our corruption being mortified, **they are reckoned to us for righteousness. In short, faith alone, and not human merit, procures both for persons and for works the character of righteousness...But righteousness by works is as it were subordinate (as they say) to the righteousness just mentioned,** while works possess no value in themselves, excepting, as far as, **out of pure benevolence, God imputes them to us for righteousness.**

God imputes his people as righteous in Christ; following this, he imputes their good-but-imperfect, Spirit-wrought works as righteous in Christ as well. For Calvin, even as justification by faith is contained within union with Christ, so justification by works is contained within justification by faith. Justification by works is a subordinate, secondary aspect of justification by faith.

Calvin makes it clear that while God approves of and rewards our Spirit-generated good works with eternal glory, they have no merit in their own right. In his *Institutes* (3.15.4, 3.17.3), Calvin develops this doctrine more fully:

[When God] examines our works according to his tenderness, not his supreme right, **he therefore accepts them as if they were perfectly pure; and for this reason, although unmerited, they are rewarded with infinite benefits, both of the present life and also of the life to come. For I do not accept the distinction made by learned and otherwise godly men that good works deserve the graces that are conferred upon us in this life, while everlasting salvation is the reward of faith alone.** On the other hand, so to attribute to the merit of works the fact that we are showered with grace upon grace as to take it away from grace is contrary to the teaching of Scripture . . . Whatever, therefore, is now given to the godly as an aid to salvation, even blessedness itself, is purely God's beneficence. Yet both in this blessedness and in those godly persons, he takes works into account. For in order to testify to the greatness of his love towards us, he makes not only us but the gift he has given us worthy of such honor...

Finally, while they [the Sophists] repeatedly inculcate good works, they in the meantime so instruct consciences as to discourage all their confidence that God remains kindly disposed and favorable to their works. **But we, on the other hand, without reference to merit, still remarkably cheer and comfort the hearts of believers by our teaching, when we tell them they please God in their works and are without doubt acceptable to him . . .**

[T]he promises of the gospel...not only make us acceptable to God but also render our works pleasing to him. And not only does the Lord adjudge them pleasing; he also extends to them the blessings which under the covenant were owed to observance of his law. **I therefore admit that what the Lord has promised in his law to the keepers of righteousness and holiness is paid to the works of believers, but in this repayment we must always consider the reason that wins favor for these works.**

Now we see that there are three reasons. The first is: God, having turned his gaze from his servants' works, which always deserve reproof rather than praise, embraces his servants in Christ, and with faith alone intervening, reconciles them to himself without the help of works. The second is: of his own fatherly generosity and loving-kindness, and without considering their worth [used here in the sense of "merit"], he raises works to this place of honor, so that he attributes some value to them. The third is: He receives these very works with pardon, not imputing the imperfection with which they are all so corrupted that they would otherwise be reckoned as sins rather than virtues.

And this shows how deluded the Sophists are, who thought they had neatly got around all these absurdities by saying that works of their own intrinsic goodness are of no avail for meriting salvation but by reason of the covenant, because the Lord of his own liberality esteemed them so highly. **Meanwhile they did not observe how far those works, which they meant to be meritorious, were from fulfilling the conditions of the promises unless preceded by justification resting on faith alone, and by forgiveness of sins, through which even good works must be cleansed of spots.** Of the three causes of liberality, then, which make the works of believers acceptable, they noted only one, and suppressed two – and the chief ones at that!

Note that Calvin says our works are *repaid* with an eternal reward ("everlasting salvation"), even though it is unmerited! Our works have "value" (though not merit), because God judges us with a certain fatherly tenderness. In a masterful synthesis of the biblical material, he rejects the flawed doctrine of the Sophists, but without losing theological balance.

In his *Antidote to the Council of Trent*, Calvin gives a careful, precise delineation of the true doctrine of "justification of works":

I say that it is owing to free imputation that we are considered righteous before God; I say that from this also

another benefit proceeds, viz., that **our works have the name of righteousness, though they are far from having the reality of righteousness. In short, I affirm, that not by our own merit but by faith alone, are both our persons and our works justified; and the justification of works depends on the justification of the person, as the effect on the cause. Therefore, it is necessary that the righteousness of faith alone so precede in order, and be so preeminent in degree, that nothing can go before it or obscure it.**⁷

In his commentary on Malachi 3:17, he explains how God actually approves of the obedience of believers:

The second promise refers to another grace—that God in his mercy would approve of the obedience of the godly, though in itself unworthy to come into his presence...It is therefore necessary, even when we strive our utmost to serve God, to confess that without his forgiveness whatever we bring deserves rejection rather than his favor. Hence the Prophet says, that when God is reconciled to us, there is no reason to fear that he will reject us, because we are not perfect; **for though our works be sprinkled with many spots, they will yet be acceptable to him, and though we labor under many defects, we shall yet be approved by him.** How so? Because he will spare us; for a father is indulgent to his children, and though he may see a blemish in the body of his son, he will not yet cast him out of his house; nay, though he may have a son lame, or squint-eyed, or singular for any other defect, he will yet pity him, and will not cease to love him: so also is the case with respect to God, who, when he adopts us as his children, will forgive our sins. As a father is pleased with every small attention when he sees his son submissive, and does not require from him what he requires from a servant; so God acts; he repudiates not our obedience, however defective it may be...**God also, though their**

⁷ Quoted in Peter Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 188.

works are unworthy of his favor, will yet count them as acceptable, even through pardon, and not on the ground of merit or worthiness.

Again, for Calvin, there is a “twofold acceptance” of believers before God: first of our persons, second of our works. Calvin always explains the latter in terms of the former (*Institutes*, 3.17.5):

This is the “acceptance” which Peter mentions [Acts 10:34; cf. 1 Pt. 1:17] whereby believers are, after their call, approved of God also in respect of works [cf. 1 Pt. 2:5]. For the Lord cannot fail to love and embrace the good things he works in them through his Spirit. But we must always remember that God “accepts” believers by reason of works only because he is their source and graciously, by way of adding to his liberality, deigns also to show “acceptance” toward the good works he has himself bestowed . . . Whence, also, are these works reckoned good as if they lacked nothing, save that the kindly Father grants pardon for those blemishes and spots which cleave to them? To sum up, by this passage he means nothing else but that God’s children are pleasing and lovable to him, since he sees in them the marks and features of his own countenance. For we have elsewhere taught that regeneration is a renewal of the divine image in us. **Since, therefore, wherever God contemplates his own face, he both rightly loves it and holds it in honor, it is said with good reason that the lives of believers, framed to holiness and righteousness, are pleasing to him.**

The Father approves not only of the Son’s work for us, but the Spirit’s work in us. According to Calvin, this means our works possess a real righteousness, though apart from merit, since they are the product of grace. When God judges the works of his people, they will find his favor. This judgment of works presupposes justification by faith and imputed righteousness/forgiveness. Again, from the *Institutes* (3.17.8-10):

After forgiveness of sins is set forth, the good works that now follow are appraised otherwise than on their own merit. For everything imperfect in them is covered by Christ's perfection, every blemish or spot is cleansed away by his purity in order not to be brought in question at the divine judgment. Therefore, after the guilt of all transgressions that hinder man from bringing forth anything pleasing to God has been blotted out, and after the fault of imperfection, which habitually defiles even good works, is buried, **the good works done by believers are accounted righteous, or what is the same thing, are reckoned righteousness [Rom. 4:22] . . .**

They cannot deny that justification by faith is the beginning, the foundation, the cause, the subject, the substance, of works of righteousness, and yet they conclude that justification is not by faith, because good works are counted for righteousness. Let us have done then with this frivolity, and confess the fact as it stands; **if any righteousness which works are supposed to possess depends on justification by faith, this doctrine is not only not impaired, but on the contrary confirmed, its power being thereby more brightly displayed.** Nor let us suppose, that after free justification works are commended, as if they afterwards succeeded to the office of justifying, or shared the office with faith. For did not justification by faith always remain entire, the impurity of works would be disclosed. There is nothing absurd in the doctrine, that though man is justified by faith, he is himself not only not righteous, but the righteousness attributed to his works is beyond their own deserts.

In this way we can admit not only that there is a partial righteousness in works (as our adversaries maintain), but **that they are approved by God as if they were absolutely perfect.** If we remember on what foundation this is rested, every difficulty will be solved. **The first time when a work begins to be acceptable is when it is received with pardon. And whence pardon, but just because God looks upon us and all that belongs to us as**

in Christ? Therefore, as we ourselves when ingrafted into Christ appear righteous before God, because our iniquities are covered with his innocence; so our works are deemed righteous, because every thing otherwise defective in them being buried by the purity of Christ is not imputed. Thus we may justly say, that not only ourselves, but our works also, are justified by faith alone. Now, if that righteousness of works, whatever it be, depends on faith and free justification, and is produced by it, it ought to be included under it and, so to speak, made subordinate to it, as the effect to its cause; so far is it from being entitled to be set up to impair or destroy the doctrine of justification...

Accordingly, we can deservedly say that by faith alone not only we ourselves but our works as are justified.

This “works righteousness” is *not* some form of legalism or covenant nomism (to use contemporary terminology): In Calvin’s doctrine of justification, we “get in” by grace alone, but also “stay in” by grace alone. Our works only find acceptance with God because our persons are *already* accepted by God in Christ. Indeed, as Calvin says, in Christ, even “our works also, are justified by faith alone.” Apart from justification by faith in Christ, our persons and works would be condemned.

Again, biblical passages which speak of believers being “repaid” for their works are only describing the “inheritance” promised to faithful sons (*Institutes* 3.18.2). “Nothing is clearer than that a reward is promised for good works to relieve the weakness of our flesh by some comfort but not to puff up our hearts with vainglory. Whoever, then, deduces merit of works from this, or weighs works and reward together, wanders very far from God’s own plan” (*Institutes* 3.18.4). For Calvin, justification by faith paves the way for justification by works; *sola fide* envelops, contains, and contextualizes God’s favorable judgment of our deeds.⁸

Turning from Calvin to his close friend Martin Bucer, we find the same doctrine of “double justification,” first of faith and imputed

⁸ A very helpful discussion of the role of good works in Calvin’s soteriology can be found in Lillback’s fine volume, *The Binding of God*.

righteousness, second of works and inherent righteousness. Bucer was the driving force, at least on the Protestant side, at the Regensburg Colloquy in 1541. Calvin and Melancthon were also participants in the meeting with Roman Catholic theologians, aimed at finding common ground and reuniting a splintering Christendom. While the parties actually achieved agreement on an article of justification, the Colloquy itself failed when other doctrinal disagreements could not be settled. Neither Martin Luther nor the Pope ultimately approved of its proceedings. However, the portion of the Book of Regensburg on justification remains historically important and instructive in showing us what Bucer and his colleagues were comfortable with in terms of a doctrine of justification.

The draft of the article on justification spoke of two kinds of justification, distinguished yet inseparable:

For the sake of sound instruction, and in order that the harmony of the Scriptures, which give the appearance of being divided in this matter, may shine forth, **we observe that a double justification is set forth in the Scriptures:** one, which Christ calls regeneration, the Apostle Paul calls the justification of the ungodly, which is due to none of our preceding works or merits but is now received freely through faith...

The second is the justification of works which arise out of the root of the faith received, and of love, and which brings faith itself to perfection, as St. James says. It cleaves to the first [justification] as if by an indissoluble bond and wholly depends upon it...this is also called sanctification in the Scriptures...

When these things are considered in this way, **the Scriptures also speak and teach about that justification which arises out of our zeal and good works**, by which the just man is increasingly justified, and by which the righteousness of Christ increases in us daily, takes hold of the increase and is perfected, but yet to be fulfilled in the future life...

Therefore, this is our daily renewal and reformation, and the justification which arises from it for us before God and man is always enlarged and promoted by good works, but not by the works of the law or of death, but truly by works of the Spirit which are love, joy, peace, patience, long-suffering, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faith, modesty, continence and chastity...

And therefore it is not absurd to say that the regenerate are sanctified and justified through this kind of works of faith and love, provided only that they be done in the faith received in the first justification.⁹

The parties at Regensburg were simply following and building upon Augustine, who described two kinds of righteousness, the first, "the righteousness of God, wherewith he clothes man when he justifies the ungodly;" the second, "the justification whereby we do what he commands," resulting in "a lesser righteousness belonging to this life."¹⁰

The final version of the Regensburg Book spoke, in more Lutheranesque terms, of two kinds of righteousness, rather than a double justification:¹¹

Therefore, it is firm and sound doctrine that the sinner is justified by a living and efficacious faith, for through it, we are pleasing and acceptable to God for the sake of Christ...This is so because faith which is truly justifying is that faith which is efficacious through love...And yet, however, he who is justified also receives and possesses through Christ an inherent righteousness...Therefore, the holy fathers employed [the expression] "to be justified"

⁹ See Phillip Pederson, "The Religious Colloquy of Regensburg (Ratisbon), 1541," an unpublished dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, 1978, especially 347-348, 376, 378, 382.

¹⁰ Pederson, "The Religious Colloquy of Regensburg (Ratisbon), 1541," 243-4.

¹¹ Pederson, "The Religious Colloquy of Regensburg (Ratisbon), 1541," 244-5. Of course, Luther rejected the Regensburg synthesis, ultimately dooming the influence of the colloquy: "Luther's opinion about the original form of the Regensburg articles, while moderate in tone, was sufficiently negative to dampen hopes of winning the reformer's approval for the discussions at Regensburg" (97).

also in the sense of receiving inherent righteousness...And so by faith in Christ we are justified or reputed just, that is accepted, through his merits, not because of our worthiness or works. And in addition, because of inherent righteousness, we are called righteous because we do things which are righteous, according to the statement of John, "He who performs righteousness is righteous."¹²

In his *Common Places*, Bucer unfolds his doctrine of justification. Regarding the good works of believers, he writes,

Scripture says that God renders to every man according to his works. Now because this is true, Augustine rightly strove for its truth to be acknowledged, and also held that an understanding of what James wrote, 'Abraham was justified by works, not by faith alone,' was not irrelevant here. But while on the one hand he regarded these very works which he recompenses with honor and glory and whereby he makes it manifest that his own are counted as righteous in his sight, as the free gifts of God, he never claims that they can be effective as the ground of our acceptance before God, for unless we first believe that we have been accepted by him on the basis of mercy alone, we are unable to perform any good works...

For the very righteousness and the good works wrought in us by the Spirit of Christ constitute the visible evidence of that unmerited acceptance of ours in the sight of God. **For unless we ourselves are counted by God as good and righteous nothing that belongs to us can be reckoned good or righteous.**¹³

¹² Pederson, "The Religious Colloquy of Regensburg (Ratisbon), 1541," 385, 386, 387.

¹³ Martin Bucer, *The Common Places of Martin Bucer*, trans. D. F. Wright (Appleford, Abingdon, Berkshire, England: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1972), 165, 166. Wright introduces Bucer's section on justification with these words:

This extract clearly illustrates Bucer's distinctive approach to the doctrine of justification, viz., his refusal to separate the imputing from the imparting of righteousness, that is, the gift of pardon and reconciliation from the

Bucer goes on to say that in the matter of teaching a second justification by evangelical works, “the early Fathers are at one with us, and do not conflict either with Philip Melanchthon or with all the others...”¹⁴

Because Bucer never gave a fully systematic and comprehensive exposition of his doctrine of justification in one place, it is easier to cite expert summaries than piece together excerpts from the Reformer’s writings. Alister McGrath writes:

Bucer developed a doctrine of *double* justification: after a ‘primary justification,’ in which a man’s sins are forgiven and righteousness imputed to him, there follows a ‘second justification,’ in which man is *made* righteous: the *ustificatio impiii*, expounded by Bucer on the basis of St. Paul, is followed by the *ustificatio pii*, expounded on the basis of St. James. While Bucer is concerned to maintain a forensic concept of primary justification, he stresses the need for this to be manifested as good works in the secondary justification. Although man’s primary justification takes place on the basis of faith alone (*sola fide*), his secondary justification takes place on the basis of his works. While Bucer maintains the forensic nature of the primary justification, he stresses the need for this to be

production of the godly life in us through the Holy Spirit. The latter is God’s public attestation of the former. Bucer stresses, of course, that the actual righteousness effected in us by the Spirit is never sufficient to merit divine acceptance; we always stand in need of mercy, and so justification is always ‘by faith.’ Nevertheless he is able to speak regularly of a twofold justification, the one of remission of sins through faith, the other as God’s rewarding of good works not as of payment due but by his gracious honoring in man his own gifts, which is a decidedly Augustinian way of speaking.

¹⁴ Bucer, *Common Places*, 167. Bucer is exactly right that to claim that this doctrine of final justification by works is attested in the church fathers. Besides the well known saying of Augustine, “When God rewards human works, he is not crowning our merits, but his own gifts of grace,” consider the words of St. Patrick’s “Lorica” hymn, which comforts believers with the hope of hearing “the sweet ‘Well done’ in judgment hour.” The church fathers did not always carefully distinguish initial and final justification; that kind of precision became a key issue in the Reformation.

manifested in good works...Bucer clearly considers the role of piety in the Christian life to be of sufficient importance to require explicit incorporation into a doctrine of justification...[In Bucer's *ordo salutis* there is an] initial justification by faith, and a subsequent justification by works.¹⁵

From Reformed Orthodoxy to Late Puritanism¹⁶

The successors of the Protestant movement, the "Reformed scholastics," worked towards a Reformed consensus, seeking to systematize, codify, and build upon the work of the magisterial Reformers. On the whole, they maintained the double justification doctrine of Calvin and Bucer, even citing those earlier theologians with great frequency to prove the point. Later controversies would obscure, marginalize, and prune out the doctrine, but it must still be considered a part of the Reformed tradition. Major Reformed theologians who taught some form of "second justification" from the time of the Reformation to the waning of Puritanism include Philip Melancthon (1497-1560),¹⁷ George Major (1502-1574),¹⁸ Thomas

¹⁵ Alister MacGrath *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification, Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 223–224. An excellent summary of "double justification" as taught in Calvin, Bucer, and Regensberg is found in Anthony N. S. Lane's *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue: An Evangelical Assessment* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2002), 33–36, 49–60. Lane's provides a quite positive assessment of the Regensberg synthesis in his essay "Twofold Righteousness: A Key to the Doctrine of Justification: Reflections on Article 5 of the Regensberg Colloquy" (1541), ch. 8 in *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates*, eds. Mark Husbands and Daniel Treir (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004). Lane also explores Regensberg in the essay, "A Tale of Two Imperial Cities: Justification at Regensberg (1541) and Trent (1546-1547)," ch. 6 in *Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges*, edited by Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006). See also Paul Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation: The Role of Christian Obedience in Justification* (Waynesboro, Georgia: Paternoster Press, 2005), 254ff.

¹⁶ I owe special thanks to Steven Wedgworth for helping research and assemble much of the historical data in this section. Additional quotations and discussion may be found on Steven's blog: <http://wedgewords.wordpress.com/> and my forthcoming paper, "Theologians in Pajamas."

¹⁷ See the discussion in Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 250f.

¹⁸ See the discussion in Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 252f. Major spoke explicitly

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Cranmer (1489-1556),¹⁹ Richard Hooker (1554-1600),²⁰ George Downname (1560-1634),²¹ James Ussher (1581-1656),²² Richard Sibbes (1577-1635),²³ Richard Baxter (1615-1691),²⁴ and Jonathon Edwards (1703-1758).²⁵ Of course, this list is representative, not comprehensive.

of a “twofold justification,” “one in this life and the other in eternal life.”

Justification begins in this life, but we are not “perfectly justified” until the last day.

¹⁹ See the discussion of the *Book of Common Prayer* in Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 257f.

²⁰ See the discussion in Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 257.

²¹ George Downname, *The Christian's Freedom* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1994), 70, 126ff:

[G]ood works are necessary to salvation...as necessary forerunners to salvation, being undoubted badges of them that shall be saved, being the way wherein we are to walk to everlasting life, being the evidence according to which God will judge us at the last day...God covering our imperfections, as an indulgent Father, with the perfect righteousness and obedience of Christ, imputeth not our wants unto us, but accepteth of the truth of our will and desire for the deed, and our sincere endeavour for the perfect performance. And therefore, a Christian may, in respect of this liberty, with comfort and cheerfulness perform obedience, according to the measure of grace received, being assured that our defective and stained obedience, will be accepted of God through the mediation and intercession of Jesus Christ.

Downname does not use future or double justification language explicitly, but all the ingredients of the doctrine are present.

²² In his *A Body of Divinity* (Birmingham, Alabama: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2007 reprint), 405, he writes that at the final judgment, there will be a difference in the examination of the elect and reprobate, namely, “The Elect shall not have their sins, for which Christ satisfied, but only their good works, remembered...Being in Christ, they and their works shall not undergo the strict trial of the Law simply in itself; but as the obedience thereof does prove them to be true partakers of the grace of the Gospel.” In a sermon, he alluded to a doctrine of double righteousness and double justification, though without developing it. See *The Whole Works of the Most Reverend James Ussher, Vol. 13* (no publication data), 248ff.

²³ In *The Fountain Opened in The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes*, vol. 5 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1858, reprint), 492–493, Sibbes writes:

For our further instruction and comfort, let us consider, that in regard of God likewise, we shall be ‘justified’ from our sins in our consciences here and at the day of judgment, before angels and devils and men. As Christ was ‘justified’ from our sins himself, and he will justify every one of us by his Spirit, his Spirit shall witness to our souls that we are justified; and likewise his Spirit shall declare it at the day of judgment; it shall be openly

Let us look in more detail at a few of theologians on this issue, ranging from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century. John Diodati (1576-1649), a Genevan divine and author of the famed *Annotations of the Whole Bible*, viewed James 2:14ff as a “second justification” text:

We must of necessity distinguish the meaning of this word justifie, which is used by St. Paul, for absolving a man as he is in his natural state, bound to the law, and subject to damnation for his sin, which God doth by a rigid act of

declared that we are so indeed. There is a double degree of justification: one in our conscience now, another at the day of judgment. Then it shall appear that we have believed in Christ, and are cleansed from our sins. When we shall stand on the right hand of Christ, as all that cleave to Christ by faith [will do], then it shall appear that by him we are ‘justified’ from all our sins whatsoever.

²⁴ See Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter’s Doctrine of Justification in Its Sixteenth Century Context of Controversy* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2004) and C. Fitzsimons Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003, reprint) for detailed assessments of Baxter’s doctrine.

²⁵ See the discussion in Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 259ff; Gerald McDermott, “Jonathan Edwards on Justification by Faith — More Protestant or Catholic?,” *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 17, no. 1, Winter 2008, 92–111; and Anri Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 107ff. Edwards argued that justification is, in some sense, in principle, suspended until the end upon obedient perseverance: “God in the act of justification, which is passed on a sinner’s first believing, has respect to perseverance, as being virtually contained in the first act of faith; and it is looked upon, and taken by him that justifies, as being as it were a property in that faith.” Elsewhere, he wrote,

It is no way impossible that God may bestow heaven’s glory wholly out of respect to Christ’s righteousness, and yet in reward for man’s inherent holiness, in different respects and in different ways...Believers having a title to heaven by faith antecedent to their obedience, or its being absolutely promised to them before, does not hinder but that the actual bestowment of heaven may also be a testimony of God’s regard to their obedience though performed afterwards.

Miscellany 847 makes a similar point: “Even after conversion, the sentence of justification in a sense remains still to be passed, and the man remains still in a state of probation for heaven.”

justice, that requireth full satisfaction, which seeing he could not get of man Rom. 8.2, he hath received at Christ's hand (who was the Surety) imputed to man by God's grace, and apprehended by a lively faith. **Whereas St. James takes the same word for the approving of man, in a benigne and fatherly judgment, as he is considered in the quality of God's child, and living in the covenant of grace, as having the two essential parts of that covenant joined together, faith to receive God's grace and Christ's benefit, and works to yield him the duties of service and acknowledgement;** and this justification is no longer opposite to the condemnation of a sinner in generall, but to the particulare one of an hypocrite, who rending asunder these two inseparable parts, sheweth that he hath neither the one nor the other: see Luke 17.19.²⁶

John Preston (1587-1628) took a slightly different approach, but still insisted on a double justification doctrine, based especially on texts such as Matthew 25:31ff, James 2:14ff and Romans 2:1ff. For Preston, the link between initial justification by faith alone and a final judgment according to works is found in the living, working quality of true faith.

And last of all, good workes are required of necessity, as the way to salvation: Ephes. 2.10. We are Gods workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good workes, which he hath ordained that we should walke in them. Good workes are required of necessity; **God judgeth us according to our workes, Rom. 2. and at the last day the reward is pronounced according to that which men have done;** When I was in prison you visited me, when I was naked you clothed me, & c. Mat. 25.35, 36. And if they be required for necessity, then it is not a dead, liveless, workless faith, but a powefull, energeticall faith, a faith that is stirring and active, a faith that is effectuall which God requires, without which we cannot be saved. We come now to make some use of what hath been said...

²⁶ John Diodati, *Pious and Learned Annotations upon the Holy Bible* (London: James Flesher for Nicholas Fussell, 1651).

It is true (saith hee) if you have a right faith, you shall bee saved by it; but yet know this, that unlesse your faith be such a faith as enableth you to doe what I say, it is a faith that will doe you no good, it will not save you: for though faith saveth you, yet it must be such a faith as worketh. And that he proveth by many arguments; (it is a place worth the considering, and fit for this purpose) I say hee useth some arguments to prove, that that faith which is not effectuell, will not save us...

Fourthly, if any man could bee justified by faith without workes, Abraham might have beene so justified; **but Abraham was justified by his workes, that is, by such a faith as had workes joined with it.** And not Abraham only, but Rahab (that is another example) for it might be objected, Abraham indeed believed, and was justified by workes, but Rahab had no workes, she was a wicked woman, and therefore was justified by faith.

To this therefore he answereth, that she had workes, or else she could not have been saved, unlesse she had such a worke as that in sending away the Messengers, her faith could not have justified her. Indeed that was a great worke, for she adventured her life in it...

Ob. If they object that place of S. James, Wee are not justified by faith, but by workes.

Ans. **I answer, that there is a double justification;** there is a justification of the person: so was Abraham justified by faith, as Saint Paul expresseth it, Rom. 4. **But then there is a second justification,** a justification of the faith that Abraham had, he justified his faith by his workes, he shewed that hee had not a dead faith, a livelesse faith, a faith without workes, but that he had a lively effectuell faith: for hee added workes to his faith, his workes wrought together with his faith. So that if the question be, Whether Abraham was an hypocrite? His workes justified him that hee was none. If the question be, Whether Abraham was a sinner? His faith justified him, and shewes that he was

made righteous through faith. So there is a justification of the person, and a justification of the faith of the person: as when a man is said to justify such an action, or such a cause, the meaning is not, that he will make that just which was unjust before, but he will make it appear to be just: so Abraham was declared to have a justifying faith, by that power and efficacy it wrought in him, in offering up his son.²⁷

I would want to quibble a bit with Preston's reading of James, since I think the apostle is clear that *persons*, rather than *faith*, are the object of God's justifying verdict in context. But it is also easy to see how close Preston is to the other leading Reformed theologians we have already cited. Preston teaches a "second justification" that flows from and follows justification by faith and gives place to faith-produced works.

Puritan Edward Polhill (1622-1694) explained the differences between initial and final justification, and rooted his views in the Reformed tradition:

There is a double justification; constitutive justification, whereby God maketh us just in this life; sentential justification, whereby God pronounces us just at death and judgment. Constitutive justification is the foundation of sentential, for the true God will not pronounce us just unless we are such; and sentential justification is the complecture of constitutive: for here there is *sententia judicis*, crowning us as righteous; the query, then, being touching constitutive justification in this life, I conceive, with worthy Mr. Baxter, that "God justifies a believer by the moral agency of the gospel, by which, as by his grand charter and law of grace, he doth make over Christ and his righteousness to the believer:" neither need this seem strange, every human instrument doth, *moraliter agere*. A prince's pardon conveys an impunity; a charter, an estate; a law, a title or right; a testament, a legacy; and shall not the gospel do as much to believers? God doth

²⁷ John Preston, *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, reprinted 1979), 170-177.

constitutive justify the believer by making him righteous, and makes him righteous by making over to him the righteousness of Christ, and that he makes over by the gospel, which is his pardon, charter, law, and testament of grace, conveying the same upon believing: no sooner doth a man believe, but the conditional promise becomes absolute. As the old covenant running, Do this and live, would have justified upon perfect obedience; so the new, running, Believe and be saved, doth justify upon believing; as man sinning is condemned by the law of works, so man believing is justified by the law of grace. Hence the gospel is called, The ministration of righteousness, as the law is of condemnation, (2 Cor. iii. 9); "The power of God to salvation to the believer," (Rom. i. 16); *quia nos per evangelium justificant Deus*, because God justifies us by the gospel, as reverend Calvin hath it on the 17th verse; *virga virtutis*, a rod of strength (Psalm cx. 2), that is, in the justification of men, saith the excellent Dr. Reynolds; and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, making us free from the law of sin and death; as many divines interpret that place (Rom viii.2) Upon which Pareus doth observe, *Liberatio a condemnatione legis, Deo, Christo, Evangelio tribuitur; Deo ut auctori, Christo ut Mediatori, Evangelio ut organo*: Freedom from the condemnation of the law, is attributed to God as the author, to Christ as the mediator, to the gospel as the instrument. God makes over Christ and his righteousness unto the believer by the gospel, as by his charter and law of grace. This is the transient act by which God doth justify us in this life...

Such reviving refrigerations believers have sometimes here; much more transcendant will their divine refreshments be at the last day. The top-stone of justification shall be then laid on to make it complete, as may appear by the ensuing considerations.

First, Here the believer is justified privately by the gospel, but then he shall be justified openly by the solemn sentence of God before all the world; here he hath the white-stone of absolution given in secret, but

then it shall be brought forth to view, glittering in all the orient colours of free-grace. It was a great honour done to Mordecai, to be arrayed in royal apparel, and to have it proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour. **But oh! What glory will be upon the believer at that day; when he shall stand in the glorious righteousness of Christ, and hear it proclaimed before men and angels, This is a righteous man; when Christ shall confess him before his Father and the holy angels, to be a piece of himself, of his flesh and of his bones?** As it was with the sons of Jesse passing before Samuel; Eliah came and was refused, Abinadab came and was refused, and so others; at last David came, and the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he," (1 Sam. xvi.) **So it will be with the sons of men, at the great day of judgment. The great potentate may come and be rejected as a vile person; the rich Dives may come and be put away as dross; the learned rabbi may come, and be turned off as a fool; only when the believer comes, God will say, This is he; this must reign in glory for ever. This is a justification before God after a most signal manner.**

Secondly, Here the believer stands justified, but, in the midst of briers and thorns, remaining corruptions vex and tear his righteous soul from day to day. He is in the land of promise, but the Canaanite is not quite driven out; the relics of sin, inmates in the same heart with grace, like the liars in wait for Samson, are ready to make an assault upon him. Hence the Jewish doctors say, That God calls no man saint, or holy, till he be dead and in the grave; because the concupiscential frame is not quite out of him before death, but at that day there shall be *nihil damnabile* remaining in him. Sin shall be no more: no more tumours of pride; no more boiling up of concupiscence; no more spots or wrinkles, or dark shades of infirmity; nothing but pure spotless holiness: **insomuch that divines say, that from henceforth our justification shall be in another way than by imputed righteousness; because, having perfect**

inherent righteousness in ourselves, we shall need no covering...

Fourthly, Here the believer is justified, but his comfort is not always the same. Now the light of God's countenance breaks out like a clear sun upon him, and anon there is a sad eclipse, leaving him in darkness; one day a banquet of heavenly comforts is let down into his heart; and another, all is drawn up into heaven again. His evidences may be blurred; Satan may hold up his pardoned sins, as it were in their old guilt; the arrows of God may stick fast in him, and bring qualms and sick-fits upon his conscience: but at that day his comforts shall be unvariable; a nightless day, and a cloudless horizon; an eternal feast upon God and all things in him; his evidences all clear, and, after but this once shewing forth, an everlasting possession of the expected happiness. **The accuser, Satan, shall be struck dumb at the blessed sentence of pardon and acceptance pronounced by God before men and angels. God shall never frown, or wound him any more, but wrap him up in the arms of endless love and joy. This will be a day of refreshing indeed.**²⁸

In another place, Polhill writes about the important role of obedience in maintaining our justified status:

Obedience is necessary, though not to the first entrance into justification, yet to the continuance of it; not indeed as a cause, but as a condition...If a believer, who is instantly justified upon believing, would continue justified, he must sincerely obey God. Though his obedience in measure and degree reach not fully to the precept of the gospel; yet in truth and substance it comes up to the condition of it; else he cannot continue justified; this to me is very evident; we are at first justified by a living faith, such as virtually is obedience; and cannot continue justified by a dead one such as

²⁸ Edward Polhill, "Precious Faith" in *The Works of Edward Polhill* (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria, 1998 reprint), 264–265, 269.

operates not at all. We are at **first justified** by a faith which accepts Christ as a Saviour and Lord; and cannot continue justified by such a faith as would divide Christ, taking his salvation from guilt, and by disobedience casting off his lordship; could we suppose that which never comes to pass, that a believer should not sincerely obey: **How should he continue justified? if he continue justified, he must, as all justified persons have, needs have a right to life eternal; and if he have such a right, how can he be judged according to his works? no good works being found in him after his believing, how can he be adjudged to life? or how to death, if he continue justified? These things evince, that obedience is a condition necessary as to our continuance in a state of justification: nevertheless it is not necessary, that obedience should be perfect as to the evangelical precept; but that it should be such, that the truth of grace which the evangelical condition calls for, may not fail for want of it: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city," (Rev. xxii.14.) The first fundamental right to heaven they have by the faith of Christ only: but sincere obedience is necessary that that right may be continued to them: in this sense we may fairly construe that conclusion of St James, "Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only," (Jam. ii.24.) Faith brings a man into a justified estate; but may he rest here? No, his good works must be a proof of his faith, and give a kind of experiment of the life of it. Nay, they are the evangelical condition, upon which his blessed estate of justification is continued to him; *in foro legis*, Christ and his righteousness is all; neither our faith nor our works can supply the room of his satisfaction to justify against us against the law: but *in foro gratiae*, our obedience answers to the evangelical condition, and is a means to continue our justified estate...²⁹**

²⁹ Polhill, "A View of Some Divine Truths" in *The Works of Edward Polhill*, 92–93.

All that to say: According to Polhill, initial justification by faith is not the end of the matter. After that initial justification, works become a subordinate condition of maintaining justification. No one remains in a state of justification apart from ongoing obedience; no one will be justified at the last day apart from lifelong obedience.

Puritan leader and Westminster divine Thomas Goodwin taught a future justification of the godly at the last day. Goodwin saw no more danger in speaking of final “justification by works” than in the language of a final “judgment according to works” since the expressions are equivalent:

And yet further, he herein prosecutes what he had said, ver. 12, that we should be judged by our works, and so speaks this in relation thereunto. **And look in what sense a man may be said to be judged by his works at the latter day, in the same sense, and that sense only, he intends this his justification by works, and in no other; for all judging and passing of sentence must have either a justification or a condemnation, as the sentence of it in the close. So as there is no more danger to say, a man at the latter day shall be justified by his works, as evidences of his state and faith, than to say he shall be judged according thereto; and the one is to be taken in a similar or like sense unto the other.** Now, to be judged ‘according to works’ (when it is spoken of a good man), is meant demonstratively, as they are evidence of his estate. **The apostle’s scope being also to shew, by God’s approbation given Abraham, upon the story of his offering up his son in his lifetime, what like approbation or justification Christ will declare and hold forth concerning true believers, when the story of their lives and all the good they have done, or was wrought in them, shall be ripped up: ‘I was naked, and ye clothed me;’ and so gives them the testimony of his knowing that they had done so. As, on the contrary, to them that regarded not good works, he says, ‘I know you not,’ Mat. vii. 23. And David, speaking of standing in judgment, useth the same phrase, Ps. i.5, 6, ‘The Lord knows the way of the righteous,’ that is, justifies and**

approves; as in that speech God did Abraham, ‘Now I know thou fearest me,’ &c.

And in relation to this outward judgment at the latter day, our sentence of salvation is termed expressly a justification; and this very thing is asserted by Christ himself: Mat. xii. 36, 37, ‘I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment; for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.’ Neither is it anywhere said, that God will judge men according to their faith only; nor will it be a sufficient plea at the latter day to say, Lord, thou knowest I believed, and cast myself at thy grace. God will say, I am to judge thee so as every one shall be able to judge my sentence righteous together with me: 1 Cor. iv. 5, ‘Therefore, show me thy faith by thy works;’ let me know by them thou fearest me; for as I did judge Abraham, and gave thereupon a testimony of him, so I must proceed towards thee. And this God will do, to the end that all the sons of Israel, yea, the whole world, may know that he justified one that had true faith indeed.³⁰

Thus, at the last day, Goodwin says God’s justification will be by means of the evidence, as believers have proved their faith by their deeds. This truly constitutes a type of “final justification by works.”

Perhaps the best known of the early Reformed scholastics, Francis Turretin (1623-1687), was not as explicit about a doctrine of “double justification” as his predecessors. However, in his *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*,³¹ he argues forcefully that good works are the means to the end of eternal life, not as “a cause properly so called,” but as “a relation of order and connection” (17.5.13). At the final judgment “life is rendered to good works” (17.5.29). Turretin says in 17.4.12 that our good works

³⁰ Thomas Goodwin, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, vol. 7 (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985 reprint), 182.

³¹ All quotations from Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 1997 reprint).

are ordained to a reward, both from the condition of the worker, who is supposed to be a believer (i.e., admitted into the grace and friendship of God), and from the condition of the works themselves, which although not having a condignity to the reward, still have the relation of disposition required in the subject for its possession. This condition being fulfilled, the reward must be given as, it being withheld, the reward cannot be obtained. For as without holiness, no one shall see God and, unless renewed by water and the Spirit, cannot enter the kingdom of heaven (Jn 3:5; Heb 12:14); so, holiness being posited, glory is necessarily posited from the inseparable connection existing between them.

Turretin says our good works are “in view” at the eschatological judgment, when we receive final acquittal. Our good works, gratuitously worked in us by God, will be crowned at the last day (17.5.34). Again, Turretin hesitates to call this “justification,” but the overall shape of his doctrine is very similar to others we have examined.

Elsewhere, Turretin asserts that good works are “required as the means and way for possessing salvation” (17.3.3). “Although works may be said to contribute nothing to the acquisition of salvation, still they should be considered necessary to the obtainment of it, so that no one can be saved without them” (17.3.4). “Although God by his special grace wishes these duties of man to be his blessings (which he carries out in them), still the believer does not cease to be bound to observe it, if he wishes to be a partaker of the blessings of the covenant” (17.3.7). He deals with these themes extensively (17.3.12; 17.1.17; 17.3.14):

This very thing is no less expressly delivered concerning future glory. For since good works have the relation of the means to the end (Jn. 3:5, 16; Mt. 5:8); of the ‘way’ to the goal (Eph. 2:10; Phil 3:14); of the ‘sowing’ to the harvest (Gal. 6:7,8); of the ‘firstfruits’ to the mass (Rom. 8:23); of ‘labor’ to the reward (Mt. 20:1); of the ‘contest’ to the crown (2 Tim. 2:5; 4:8), everyone sees that there is the highest and an indispensable necessity of good works for

obtaining glory. It is so great that it cannot be reached without them (Heb. 12:14; Rev. 21:27).

It is not sufficient that Christ died and lives for us, unless he also mortifies the old man in us after the likeness of his own death and vivifies the new man, so that what was done in the head is done in the members.

Works can be considered in three ways: either with reference to justification or sanctification or glorification. They are related to justification not antecedently, efficiently and meritoriously, but consequentially and declaratively. They are related to sanctification constitutively because they constitute and promote it. They are related to glorification antecedently and ordinatively because they are related to it as the means to the end.

Again, unlike other Reformed theologians, Turretin is not entirely comfortable calling the outcome of final judgment a "second justification," but he does include final open acquittal as a part of the doctrine of justification. Regarding the sense in which justification is a singular act, with multiple dimensions/applications, in 16.9.2, he says:

Hence it is evident in what sense justification can be called an undivided act; not on our part and with respect to the sense of it (which is produced by various and repeated acts according as this sense can be interrupted; or increased or diminished, by reason of interfering sins); but on the part of God, not only by reason of his decree (by which our justification was decreed) and by reason of his merit (by which he obtained it), but also by reason of the application when the absolving sentence is intimated to us. This is done by a unique act, not by many successive acts, just as inherent righteousness is wont to be infused into us (although this act is often applied to particular everyday sins).

For Turretin, the main difference between initial justification and final justification is the public nature of the declaration made at the end. But that public declaration is also the culmination of salvation

and the declaration is pronounced over the entirety of our lives. Turretin views good works as a means to the end of that final glorification, which includes the sentence of divine approval.

Benedict Pictet (1655-1724), Turretin's nephew and fellow minister in Geneva was very forthright regarding "double justification":

We have spoken of the justification of man as a sinner; we must now speak of his justification as a righteous man, i.e. that by which he proves that he is justified and that he possesses a true justifying faith. Now this justification is by works, even in the sight of God, as well as of men; and of this James speaks when he declares that "by works a man is justified and not by faith only" (Jam 2:24). To illustrate this, we must remark that there is a twofold accusation against man. First, he is accused before God's tribunal of the guilt of sin, and this accusation is met and done away by the justification of which we have already treated. Secondly, the man who has been justified may be accused of hypocrisy, false profession and unregeneracy; now he clears himself from this accusation and justifies his faith by his works-this is the second justification; it differs from the first; for in the first a sinner is acquitted from guilt, in the second a godly man is distinguished from an ungodly. **In the first God imputes the righteousness of Christ; in the second he pronounces judgment from the gift of holiness bestowed upon us; both these justifications the believer obtains, and therefore it is true that "by works he is justified and not by faith only."**

From these remarks it is plain that James is easily reconciled with Paul, especially if we consider, that Paul had to do with judiciousaries, who sought to be justified by the law, i.e. by their own works, but James had to deal with a sort of Epicureans, who, content with a mere profession, neglected good works; it is no wonder then, that Paul should insist upon faith, and James upon works. Moreover, Paul speaks of a lively and efficacious faith, but James of a faith without works. **Paul also speaks of the justification**

of the ungodly or sinner, James of that justification, by which a man as it were justifies his faith and proves himself to be justified. For it is his design to show that it is not enough for a Christian man to glory in the remission of sins, which is unquestionably obtained only by a living faith in Christ, but that he must endeavor to make it manifest by his works that he is truly renewed, that he possesses real faith and righteousness, and lives as becomes a regenerate and justified person. Hence it is plain, that Abraham is properly said to have been justified, when he offered up Isaac, because by this he proved that he had real faith, and cleared himself from every charge of hypocrisy, of which he might have been accused. In this sense that passage is explained: "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still" (Rev 22), i.e. let him show by his works that he is justified...³²

Puritan giant John Owen (1616-1683) is an interesting case. Volume 5 of his collected works includes the treatise *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*. Owen does not want to speak of multiple justifications, because he fears confusion with the Roman doctrine. However, he acknowledged there were orthodox, Reformed brethren who did not share his scruples. These Reformed theologians taught an evangelical justification according to works at the last day. On pages 159-160, Owen wrote,

Suppose a person freely justified by the grace of God, through faith in the blood of Christ, without respect unto any works, obedience, or righteousness of his own, we do freely grant,—

(1.) That God doth indispensably require personal obedience of him; which may be called his evangelical righteousness.

(2.) That God does approve of and accept, in Christ, this righteousness so performed.

³² Benedict Pictet, *Christian Theology*, quotations available from Mark Horne at http://www.hornes.org/theologia/content/benedict_pictet/pictet_on_justification.htm.

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(3.) That hereby that faith whereby we are justified is evidenced, proved, manifested, in the sight of God and men.

(4.) That this righteousness is pleadable unto an acquitment against any charge from Satan, the world, or our own consciences.

(5.) That upon it we shall be declared righteous at the last day, and without it none shall so be. And if any shall think meet from hence to conclude unto an evangelical justification, or call God's acceptance of our righteousness by that name, I shall by no means contend with them. And wherever this inquiry is made, — not how a sinner, guilty of death, and obnoxious unto the curse, shall be pardoned, acquitted, and justified, which is by the righteousness of Christ alone imputed to him — **but how a man that profeseth evangelical faith in Christ, shall be tried, judged, and whereon, as such, he shall be justified, we grant that it is, and must be by his own personal, sincere obedience.**³³

Herman Witsius (1636-1708) continues to be widely revered and read down to our own day. Witsius clearly articulates a Calvinian doctrine of future justification that is both public in nature and declared according to faithful obedience. In his *Economy of the Covenants*, Witsius writes:

The fifth and last [justification] is at the last day, which is therefore called the day of judgment, Mt. 12:36, when the elect shall be publicly justified, and, in the view of the whole world, declared heirs of eternal life...

Christ the judge... will pronounce two things concerning his elect. 1st. That they are truly pious, righteous and holy. And so far this justification will differ from the

³³ John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 5 (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990 reprint).

former [justification]; for by that [justification] the ungodly is justified... 2dly. That they have a right to eternal life, Mt. 20:35.

The ground of the former declaration is inherent righteousness, graciously communicated to man by the Spirit of sanctification, and good works proceeding therefrom. For on no other account can any person be declared pious and holy, but because he is endowed with habitual holiness, and gives himself to the practice of godliness...

The foundation of the latter can be no other than the righteousness of Christ the Lord, communicated to them according to the free decree of election, which is succeeded by adoption, which gives them a right to take possession of the inheritance...

Meanwhile in this respect too, there will be room for mentioning good works for they shall be produced, 1st. As proofs of faith, of the union of believers with Christ, of their adoption, and of that holiness, without which none can see God, and of friendship with God, and brotherhood with Christ. 2dly. As signs of that sacred hunger and thirst with which they desired happiness, and of that strenuous endeavor, by which...they had sought the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness... 3dly. As effects of divine grace, to which, the communication of divine glory will answer in the most wise proportion, when it shall come to crown his own gifts... **And in this sense, we imagine, it is so often said in Scripture, that every one shall be recompensed according to his works, not that these works are, on any account, the cause of any right they will have, to claim the reward; but as they are evidences of our adoption and of our seeking the chief good, and as they shew that proportion of grace, according to which the proportion of future glory will be dispensed...**

In this judgment, therefore, there will also be grace mixed with justice. Justice will appear because none will

be admitted to the possession of the kingdom of heaven, but who can shew by undoubted evidences, that he is a partaker of Christ and his righteousness. Grace also will appear, because eternal happiness will be adjudged to him, who has done nothing to acquire right to it; **because works, stained with so many infirmities, as justly make believers themselves blush, will then be celebrated with so great an encomium by the Judge...**

Whence it appears, that they do not speak right, who affirm, that in the last justification mere justice will take place without any mixture of grace...

As God will justly inflict his punishments on the impenitent, so in like manner, agreeably to his justice, he will distribute rewards, and shew grace to the godly...Justice and grace are here not to be opposed but joined together...

Nor will the righteousness of the judgment of that day in the least be diminished, though the works of believers, by which they shall be judged, are imperfect. For, they will not be mentioned as the causes of their right to claim the reward, to which perfection is requisite; but as effects and signs of grace, and of union with Christ, and of a living faith, and of justification by faith, and of a right to life: for which their unfeigned sincerity is sufficient. We therefore conclude, that the justification in the next world is not to be very much distinguished from the justification in this world.³⁴

In a very real sense, Witsius acknowledges multiple justification events, and in doing so, believes he is upholding the classic Reformed position:

XXI. Thus much for the declaration of God concerning the actions of men. On the other hand, his declaration as to

³⁴ Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man*, vol. 1 (Escondido, California: The den Dulk Foundation, 1990 reprint), 418-421, 424.

their state is of several kinds. For either God considers them as they are in themselves, according to inherent qualities, either vicious through corrupt nature, or holy and laudable through reforming grace; or as they are reputed in Christ the surety.

XXII. God can neither consider nor declare men to be otherwise than as they really are. For “his judgment is according to truth,” Rom. ii. 2. and therefore they, who are still under the dominion of sin, and walk with delight, according to their depraved lusts, are judged and declared by God to be unregenerate, wicked, and slaves of the devil, as they really are; for, “by no means does he clear the guilty,” Exod. xxxiv. 7 but they who are regenerated by his grace, created anew after his image, and heartily give themselves up to the practice of sincere holiness, are by him absolved from the sin of profaneness, impiety, and hypocrisy, and are no longer looked upon as dead in sins, slaves to the devil, children of the world; but as true believers, his own children, restored to his image, and endowed with his life. It was thus he justified his servant Job, declaring, “that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man one that feareth God and escheweth evil,” Job i. 8.

XXIII. And this is still the case of all believers. The devil indeed, who is the accuser of the brethren, frequently charges them with hypocrisy before God, as if they did not serve him in sincerity; and he not only thus accuses them before God, but he also disquiets their conscience, as if all their faith and piety were only a mask and outward shew, by which they have hitherto imposed not only on others, but also on themselves. In order to calm the consciences of believers, when thus shaken by the false accuser, they have need to be absolved from this accusation, and justified from this false testimony before God; which God also daily does, assuring the elect of the sincerity of their conversion, by the testimony of his Spirit, and thereby shewing, that “the praise of a true Jew is of him.” Rom. ii. 29. This justification is indeed very different from that other, of

which we shall presently treat, wherein the person is absolved from sins, whereof he is really guilty, and which are forgiven him on Christ's account. In this we are speaking of he is acquitted of sins, which he is not chargeable with, and is declared not to have committed.

XXIV. The foundation of this justification can be nothing but inherent holiness and righteousness. For, as it is a declaration concerning a man, as he is in himself: by the regenerating and sanctifying grace of God, so it ought to have for its foundation, that which is found in man himself: He that doth righteousness is righteous, says John, 1 John iii. 7. and Peter says, Acts x.34, 35. "of a truth, I perceive, that in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with God." And Luke in the name of God, gives this testimony to the parents of John the Baptist, that "they were righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," Luke i.6. **But yet inherent righteousness is not the foundation of his justification, from its own worthiness, or because it is a holiness exactly commensurate with the rule of law, but because it is the work of the Holy Spirit in the elect, which God cannot but acknowledge and delight in as his own, and because the failings with which it is always stained in this world are forgiven for Christ's sake.**

XXV. In this sense we think the apostle James speaks of justification in that much controverted passage, James ii. 21, 24. where he declares, that "Abraham was not justified by faith only, but also by works," and insists upon it, that every man ought to be justified in this manner. For the scope of the apostle is to shew, that it is not sufficient for a Christian to boast of the remission of his sins, which indeed is obtained by faith only, but then it must be a living faith on Christ; but that besides he ought to labour after holiness, that being justified by faith only, that is, acquitted from the sins he had been guilty of, on account of Christ's satisfaction, apprehended by faith, he may likewise be justified by his works, that is declared to be truly

regenerated, believing and holy: behaving as becomes those who are regenerated, believing and holy. **Thus our father Abraham behaved, who having been before now justified by faith only, that is, obtained the remission of his sins, was afterwards also justified by his works.** For, when he offered up his son to God, then God said to him, "no I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me," Gen. xxii. 12. **And James insists upon it, that this last justification is so necessary to believers, that, if it be wanting, the first ought to be accounted only vain and imaginary.**

XXVI. **These things are evident from scripture: but lest any after the manner of the world should ridicule this, I inform the more unskillful, that this is no invention of mine, but that the most celebrated divines have, before me, spoken of such a "justification according to inherent righteousness and of works."** *Bucerus in altero Colloquio Ratisbonensi*, p. 313. says, "we think that in this begun righteousness is really a true and living righteousness, and a noble excellent gift of God; and that the new life in Christ consists in this righteousness, and that all the saints are also righteous by this righteousness, both before God and before men, 'and that on account thereof the saints are also justified by a justification of works,' that is, are approved, commended and rewarded by God." Calvin teaches much the same, *Instit.* Lib. iii. c. 17. §viii. which concludes with this words, "The good works done by believers are counted righteous, or which is the same, are imputed for righteousness." The very learned Ludovicus de Dieu has at large explained and proved this opinion, in *Comment. Ad Rom.* viii. 4. And he quotes, as agreeing with him herein, Daniel Colonius, formerly regent or professor of the French college at Leyden. The same is also maintained by the Rev. Dr. Peter de Witte, that very able defender of the truth, in *Controversia de justificatione adversus Socinianos*. And Triglandius explains the passage of James to the same purpose with us, making use of the

very same distinction, *Examine Apologiae Remonstrantium*, c. 21. p. 316.³⁵

In another place, Witsius points to the absolute necessity of good works as the “way” in which we travel towards final justification and eternal life. In his exposition of the Apostles’ Creed, Witsius restates many of the things said in the quotations above. He says that at the last day a “two-fold sentence” will be pronounced, absolution for believers and condemnation for unbelievers. “Each sentence will contain a public commemoration of the works, whether good or bad, as well as an assignation of the reward or the punishment.” The graciousness of the absolution is seen in that when God evaluates the works of his people, “though [they are] stained with numerous blemishes, [they] will receive so high a commendation from the Judge, that the saints themselves will not hear it without being astonished, that God should put such a great value on services which to themselves appear so inconsiderable.” Later, on pages 479-480, Witsius echoes the same point again,

God indeed has freely promised that future bliss to his people. It is ‘the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Our title to eternal life is not founded on any merit of our own works, but solely on the satisfaction which Christ hath made in our stead. **Let none, however, expect to obtain the possession of it otherwise than in the way of good works.** The Apostle’s earnest exhortation to all is, ‘Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.’ The attainment of so great a felicity is no easy or common matter. ‘The righteous’ himself ‘is scarcely saved.’ We must ‘strive to enter in at the strait gate.’ The heavenly Jerusalem must be taken by a holy violence, nor can it be otherwise obtained. ‘The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.’ **God ‘will render to every man according to his deeds’; and he will adjudge eternal life to none but “them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honor and immortality.”**³⁶

³⁵ Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man*, 399ff.

³⁶ Herman Witsius, *Sacred Dissertations on the Apostles Creed in Two Volumes*

Jumping continents and centuries for one last example, Southern Presbyterian theologian Robert Louis Dabney (1820-1898) saw final justification (manifested in the resurrection of the body) as the consummation and completion of our initial justification. Dabney, using language most Reformed theologians today would find problematic, grounds the open nature of the final verdict in the publicly manifested works of believers. The final verdict is pronounced not only over faith, but over works that spring from faith. Thus, Dabney refers to works as the “ground” of this final declaration of acquittal. Final justification is not by faith alone, according to Dabney; it is also according to works. Thus, Dabney asserted dual criteria with respect to the final judgment. There is a very real sense in which we are *not* justified by faith alone at the last day. In Dabney’s *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, we find:

There are two qualified senses, in which we are said to be justified at the judgment-day. See Acts 3:19-21; Mt. 12:36-37. **Indeed, a forensic act is implied somehow in the very notion of a judgment-day.** First: Then, at length, the benefits of the believer’s justification in Christ will be fully conferred, and he will, by the resurrection, be put into possession of the last of them, the redemption of his body. Second: There will be a declaration of the sentence of justification passed when each believer believed, which God will publish to His assembled creatures, for His declarative glory, and for their instruction. See Malachi 3:17-18. **This last declarative justification will be grounded on believers’ works (Mt. 25) and not on their faith, necessarily; because it will be addressed to the fellow-creatures of the saints, who cannot read the heart, and can only know the existence of faith by the fruits.**³⁷

(Escondido, CA: The den Dulk Foundation, 1993 reprint), vol. 2, 288–289, 479–480.

³⁷ Robert L. Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985 reprint), 645. While Dabney stresses that the justification of believers by works at the last day is in the eyes of their fellow creatures, it is still a verdict declared by God as the Judge.

None of the evidence cited in this paper thus far *proves* that “double justification” is *the* Reformed position, although it should be considered at least a significant strand in the tradition. The fact that it has become a minority position does not negate its historical importance. Sadly, too many of our so-called historical theologians today gerrymander the tradition around their own positions, rather than admitting the breadth and diversity of historic Reformed theology. Apart from honesty and accountability in a scholarly community, it is all too easy for those with clout to redefine the boundaries of the tradition to suit their own purposes (which all too often have to do with playing church politics rather than pursuing biblical truth).

Contemporary Biblical Theologians: An Emerging Consensus?

The “double justification” doctrine of Calvin, Bucer, and the early Puritans eventually fell into disfavor. It is not within the scope of this paper to explore why the shift away from a second justification by works took place in Reformed dogmatics. Nor will we catalog the problems that such a truncating of classic Reformed teaching created.³⁸ But in recent times, the doctrine, in various shapes, has begun to re-emerge, especially among Reformed and evangelical biblical theologians. Those who are interacting most directly with the text of Scripture are rediscovering the insights of classic Reformed theology.

Scholars who have advocated some form of “double justification” or “final justification” in recent times include Herman Ridderbos,³⁹ Markus Barth,⁴⁰ Leon Morris,⁴¹ C. E. B. Cranfield,⁴²

³⁸ See, e.g., S. M. Hutchens, “Getting Justification Right,” in *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity*, July/August 2000, 41ff. Hutchens points out some of the dualisms that the modern (as opposed to classic) Reformed doctrine of justification has created: “The Protestant, concerned with justification by faith alone apart from works, has always been plagued by dichotomies of act from belief, of body from mind, of sacred from secular.” This is a large reason why modern, evangelical Protestants have struggled to develop an integrated worldview, a coherent public theology, an embodied concern for the poor, a robust sacramental and liturgical theology, etc., and have all too easily turned the gospel into an intricate, sectarian ideology.

³⁹ Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard DeWitt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), ch. 4. Ridderbos insists on works as the criterion of the final judgment. The link between justification by faith and justification to doers of the law is found in the inseparability of faith and works.

⁴⁰ Markus Barth, *Justification* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eermans, 1971). Barth argues that Paul's doctrine of justification according to works is not a leftover from Judaism, but a fully Christological doctrine. See 74ff:

Paul's statements about the coming judgment according to works (2 Thess. 1:5-10; Gal. 6:5, 7-10; 1 Cor. 3:13-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 11:15; Rom. 2:5-13; Eph. 6:8; cf. 2 Tim. 4:7-8, etc.) are sometimes looked on as being incompatible with his doctrine of justification by grace and faith alone without works of the law...But according to 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; Phil. 4:4-6; Rom. 2:16; Col. 3:4...it is none other than "our Lord Jesus Christ," the "slaughtered lamb," the "true witness" who "appears in glory" and who, "before God's judgment seat," brings that "righteous judgment of God" to completion, which, according to Rom. 2:5; 14:10, is God's own judgment. Since Paul explicitly asserts that the judgment according to works is placed in the hand of the (crucified and risen) Jesus Christ, it is impossible to hold the position that Paul's assertions about the Last Judgment are directly derived from "Jewish" imagery and not influenced by his faith in Jesus the Messiah...

Calvin...held that a man's person is accepted in the justification effected by the cross and Easter, and the Last Judgment supplements this first justification with a second in which, by grace alone, the works of the justified persons are accepted by God. [Barth is doubtful this is the best way to express Pauline teaching, but his own view comes quite close.]...

All works and all men must, indeed, go through the fire of the verdict of Jesus Christ. This Judge certainly will so judge that hidden things come to light. Men who did not know when and how they really had accepted and honored Christ will now discover to their amazement that Christ knew them well and accepted their service. The "good works" for which men have been made anew by God are distinguished from "works of the law" by a humbling criterion: no man can or will boast about them...

The Last Judgment is the guarantee that "in the Lord your labor is not in vain." God justifies his work of creation and salvation to the embarrassment of all who had disbelieved in theodicy. He justifies himself by showing he is pleased with the man he has created anew. Resurrection, glorification, clothing over, renewal, changing a fleshly into a spiritual body – all these are designations for one and the same event: the public, glorious, incontestable, and irrevocable justification of man through God's grace.

⁴¹ Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's, 1965, reprint), 256ff, 260ff, 270, 283.

⁴² C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Shorter Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's, 1985), 45ff. Cranfield argues the "doers of the law" who will be justified in Romans 2:13 are Gentile Christians.

Sinclair Ferguson,⁴³ Richard Gaffin,⁴⁴ C. K. Barrett,⁴⁵ Thomas Schreiner,⁴⁶ Ardel Caneday,⁴⁷ Peter Lillback,⁴⁸ Scott Hafeman,⁴⁹ Kent

⁴³ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1996), 103:

But there is an eschatological ('already/not yet') structure to each aspect of soteriology . . . And while it requires carefully guarded statement, it is also true that justification is an already accomplished and perfect reality, but awaits consummation. . . . Similarly, while believers have already been justified with irreversible finality, they will appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive what is due them (2 Cor. 5:10).

⁴⁴ Richard B. Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987 reprint), 133–134. In his more recent statements, Gaffin seems to be pulling back from a doctrine of future justification according to grace-enabled works, but it was certainly present in his earlier writings.

⁴⁵ C. K. Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation: A Study of the Epistle to the Galatians*, 64–65 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985). Barrett speaks of “two justifications, two acts of acquittal” in Pauline theology.

⁴⁶ Thomas Schreiner, *Paul: Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 279ff. Schreiner rejects the hypothetical view of Romans 2:13, instead arguing,

Therefore Paul means what he says in asserting that “doers of the law will be justified” (Rom. 2:13). Such keeping of the law for justification, however, is to be distinguished from righteousness by works of the law (Rom. 3:20). . . . [W]hen Paul says the doers of the law will be justified, he has something else in mind. He contemplates the result of the Spirit's work, not the attempt of human beings to be right in God's eyes by virtue of their own works. . . . Paul does not dismiss the idea that our lives must be changed in order to be vindicated at the last day. . . . Paul insists that one must do good works to receive eschatological vindication (Gal. 6:4–5; 2 Cor. 5:10). The reward in these texts is eternal life, entrance into the kingdom of God. . . . [G]ood works are an essential part of salvation. They are *evidence* of genuine salvation and the *means* by which salvation is obtained on the last day.

⁴⁷ Thomas Schreiner and Ardel Caneday, *The Race Set Before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 78f, 160ff, 187:

Believers are righteous now, yet they still await the gift of righteousness that will be theirs on the day of redemption. . . . So judgment according to one's deeds is not alien to Paul's gospel but an essential element of it. . . . In Romans 2, Paul makes one thing clear: God's promise of salvation is conditional. On the day of judgment God will award eternal life to those

L. Yinger,⁵⁰ James T. Dennison, Jr.,⁵¹ Klyne Snodgrass,⁵² Mark Seifrid,⁵³ Don Garlington,⁵⁴ Knox Chamblin,⁵⁵ Michael Bird,⁵⁶ N. T.

who persevere in good works (Rom. 2:7, 10), because God does not justify hearers of the law but doers of the law (Rom. 2:13). Praise from God belongs to all who keep the requirements of the law, to all who obey from hearts circumcised by the Spirit (Rom. 2:26, 29)...[T]here is an irrevocable connection between what we are in the present age and what we shall be in the age to come (1 Jn. 3:2-3).

⁴⁸ Lillback, *Binding of God*. See also his testimony in the trial of John Kinnaird, available at http://www.trinityfoundation.org/day2_session_2B.php.

⁴⁹ Scott Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2001), 179ff, 216ff, 246.

⁵⁰ Kent L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4, 16, 290–291. Yinger provides one of the most comprehensive expositions of eschatological justification available. See especially 175, 284ff, 288ff. But see also the critique of Yinger in Michael Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God*, (Waynesboro, Georgia: Paternoster, 2007), 172ff.

⁵¹ James T. Dennison, Jr., “The Eschatological Aspect of Justification,” available at <http://www.kerux.com/documents/KeruxV10N1A2.asp>. Dennison says nothing about the place of works, but he certainly stresses the “not yet” aspect of justification:

Well then, why do we appear in the final judgment at Christ’s second coming? Certainly not to jeopardize the eschatological character of his justification and our justification in him. Rather we will be, together with Christ, the justification of God, for we shall reveal that we are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus on that great day. He was raised for our justification—we have now been justified and yet will be justified. He was raised for our justification—we have now been raised up and yet will be raised up.
He was raised for our justification—we have now been seated in heavenly places and yet will be seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

⁵² Klyne Snodgrass, “Justification by Grace – to the Doers of the Law: An Analysis of the Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul,” *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986), 72-93. In a seminal article for this discussion, Snodgrass unfolds the claim that justification by works presupposes justification by faith.

⁵³ Mark Seifrid, *Christ Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Apollos, 2000), 179ff.

⁵⁴ Don Garlington, *Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance: Aspects of Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994). Garlington argues with keen exegetical insight that the link between present justification by faith alone and final justification according to works is “the obedience of faith.” See, e.g., 44:

While Paul is adamant that it is faith alone which justifies here and now, he

Wright,⁵⁷ and, of course, Norman Shepherd.⁵⁸ Of course, this list is by no means comprehensive and could easily be expanded even further.

is equally insistent that it is the “doers of the law,” Rom 2:13, who will be justified in the eschatological judgment. As Cosgrove rightly stresses, *justification*, not simply judgment, belongs not only at the beginning of life in Christ but also at its final consummation: there are, in fact, two moments of justification. In addressing the problem, we shall argue that it is none other than “faith’s obedience” which bridges the gap between these seemingly polar opposites.

⁵⁵ Knox Chamblin, “The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. by John S. Feinberg (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway, 1988), 194-195:

Whereas obedience is the response to grace, grace is the consequence of law keeping. The merciful will be shown mercy (Matt. 5:7). In response to his children’s obedience, the Father gives yet more grace. The righteousness for which believers hope (Gal. 5:5) is no less a gift than that which has embraced them in the gospel (Rom. 1:17; 3:21). At the Final Judgment, those who obey the law will indeed be declared righteous (Rom. 2:13), not as a basis for forgiveness, but as the Father’s glad acceptance and approval of what they have done in response to grace (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5; Mt. 25:21; Jas. 2:14:26).

⁵⁶ Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God*, 51, 155ff. Bird takes a rather restrained view of the place of works in the final judgment because he fears shifting the ground of justification from Christology to pneumatology. Further, he is not satisfied with the language of “double justification.” Nevertheless, he is very explicit in applying the already/not yet paradigm to the doctrine of justification and stresses the necessity of works as the evidential fruit of faith. He rejects the hypothetical interpretation of Romans 2:13, arguing that 2:1-29 as a whole describes Gentile Christians who fulfill the true meaning of Torah through faith in Christ and life in the Spirit. See 161, 167, 177:

Paul really did believe in judgment by works and salvation to those who live obediently...However, obedience itself is a result of God’s activity...Paul agrees with Judaism that there is indeed a judgment according to deeds but he offers a wholly different conception of the basis of acquittal at the final recompense. Obedience to *Torah* is replaced by faith in Christ as the means for deliverance...If obedience is the fruit of faith, and if faith is necessary to keep the believer in communion with God, then obedience is required for maintaining the status of justification – after all, no one will be justified if they do not persist and persevere in faithfulness.

⁵⁷ N. T. Wright “The Law in Romans 2” in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. James D.

To illustrate the newly emerging consensus, we will take three representative theologians, Simon Gathercole, Alan Stanley, and Paul Rainbow.⁵⁹ As we will see, these theologians are well within the Reformed tradition, even if they seek to refine it by being more faithful to the language of the biblical text. As the works of these scholars are published by reputable book houses and are growing in popularity, they seem fit choices to illustrate the rising viewpoint.

Simon Gathercole is one the leading voices in current NT scholarship. He clearly affirms an orthodox view of initial justification based on the imputed righteousness of Christ, received by faith alone. But that does not exhaust the meaning of the doctrine of justification. In his book, *Where Is Boasting?*, Gathercole makes compelling exegetical arguments for a final justification according to works from Romans 2 and James 2. In view of Romans 2, Gathercole says that Paul does not disagree with the view of Second Temple Judaism that final judgment will be according to works; “Indeed, he cheerfully affirms it.” Gathercole summarizes the matter this way:

G. Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 131–150; *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 129; *Paul: Fresh Perspectives* (London: SCPK, 2005), 57, 148.

⁵⁸ Technically, one could object to the inclusion of Norman Shepherd in this list since he does not make use of a double justification formula. Indeed, in private correspondence, he has expressed reservation about applying the already/not yet construction to the doctrine of justification for fear of lapsing into scholasticism. Nevertheless, the content of Shepherd’s doctrine of justification certainly makes eternal weal or woe at the last day in some sense dependent upon works. According to Shepherd, this is not a denial of justification by faith alone, but an affirmation that the faith that justifies is always an obedient, working faith. Justifying faith is never solitary; it is always the fruit of the Spirit’s work in us, along with repentance and obedience, all of which have their source together in our union with Christ. Shepherd does not believe works have merit, and does not believe works play a role in our transition from condemnation to acquittal. Nevertheless, grace-effected good works must never be severed from faith and justification. Shepherd believes the justification by works spoken of by Apostle James is an eschatological justification, taking place at the last day. For these reasons, he belongs in our list.

⁵⁹ By no means are all these theologians on exactly the same page with regard to justification by works. They have different concerns, exegete particular texts differently at times, use different language, etc. But there is certainly enough of a family resemblance to lump them all together. Likewise, none of them simply repeat the viewpoints of earlier Reformed theologians, such as those we have already surveyed. But there are obvious similarities with the traditional doctrine of “double justification,” and quite a few of these contemporary theologians acknowledge that link and their debt to previous generations of Reformed scholarship.

Paul's theology of final judgment according to obedience, then, exhibits both continuity and discontinuity in relation to other Jewish texts: continuity as to obedience being a criterion for the final judgment, discontinuity as to the character of the obedience [since for Paul, unlike Judaism, true obedience is empowered by the Spirit of Christ].⁶⁰

Gathercole argues that this reading of Romans 2 is reinforced by what we find elsewhere in Paul's writings (e.g., Rom. 6:21-22; Gal. 6:8; Col. 3:23-25). Against Judaism, Paul redefines obedience in Christocentric terms, and says such obedience is the means and way to final justification and eternal salvation. As Gathercole explains,

Paul expresses a symmetrical judgment where salvation and condemnation are according to deeds: condemnation is a "measure for measure" judgment, and salvation is (with something of a mixing of metaphors!) an inheritance that is repaid...[O]ne's actions determine one's destiny...[Paul] affirmed the importance of final salvation according to works as part of his theology, and it also has an important place in New Testament theology as a whole.⁶¹

When Gathercole turns his attention to focus on James 2, we find the same truths. Gathercole argues convincingly that works are not merely evidential in this passage since James uses the same instrumental language for works as for faith. Gathercole concludes:

James does describe works as the means to eschatological justification... [We must see] James as in some continuity with his Jewish background on the issue. **Thus works have a genuine instrumental role in**

⁶⁰ Simon Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 124, 133. Of course, the distinction between works as "evidence" and works as "instrument" is a thin line at best. The artificial nature of this distinction is seen if we consider the fact that any in courtroom setting, *evidence* is *instrumental* in reaching the verdict.

⁶¹ Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?*, 130-131.

eschatological justification for the believers James is addressing.⁶²

Gathercole pinpoints the problem with so much modern exegesis of Paul:

These emphases are appreciated properly neither by the New Perspective nor by Lutheran exegesis. The New Perspective, as I have been maintaining, has tended to remove works from any positive functional role in *Jewish* eschatology and soteriology. Lutheran theology, however, has tended to neglect the role of works in the soteriology of the NT and has so stressed the role of faith that it has swallowed up the area of initial and final justification and excluded works from *both*.⁶³

In another place, Gathercole stresses the role of works in the final judgment, over against certain inadequate treatments of Pauline theology, especially Romans 2:

Finally, if the law-abiding Gentiles in 2:14-15 are Christians, then the statement of 2:13 can by no means be dismissed as merely hypothetical or *ad hominem*. Rather, in the company of statements about the reward of eternal life for obedience in 2:7, 10, 26-27 and 29, **Romans 2:13-16 must point to a stronger theology of final vindication on the basis of an obedient life than is evident in most analyses of Pauline theology.**⁶⁴

In his essay, "The Doctrine of Justification in Paul and Beyond," Gathercole synthesizes and summarizes the NT data, showing that a present justification by faith alone followed by a final justification by works, cuts across the various strata of the canon:

⁶² Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?*, 116–118.

⁶³ Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?*, 119.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Bird, *Saving Righteousness of God*, 172.

[O]ther voices in the New Testament, however, force us to acknowledge that the biblical concept of justification is not a monolithic one...

In [Matthew] 12:37 the reference to justification is clearly in the context of an eschatological acquittal; it stands in contrast with condemnation, and both future tenses certainly refer to the eschatological future of the day of judgment. Here *words* are the fruit that are referred to as the reason for justification. **It is dangerous to attempt to be more orthodox than Jesus by insisting that 'fruit' [of faith] cannot be described as an instrumental cause of eschatological justification...**

[T]he description of justification that we saw in the Matthean saying is, *mutatis mutandis*, very close to what we see in the Epistle of James.

James, as is well known, makes the point very explicitly that justification is not by faith alone but by works (James 2:24). As the context makes clear, James understands justification to be linked to *future* salvation, much as in Matthew's gospel. Consequently, scholars who have attempted to solve the Paul/James tension by focusing on James's concern with eschatological justification [such as Douglas Moo] have hit on an important point. Other have tried to address (or perhaps circumvent) the problem by arguing that faith and works have very different senses in Paul and James: Paul contrasts trust in God (faith) with meritorious legalism (works of the law), whereas James contrasts nominal monotheism (faith alone) with works of charity. And there is a good deal of merit in those observations as well.

The question needs to be addressed, however, from within the context of James's formulations; we have no references to justification in James beyond the statements in 2:21-25...

Three points are particularly relevant to the discussion of James here. First James understands justification predominantly as eschatological, although his usage cannot be confined to this sphere. Although his discussion is framed by the concern with what kind of faith avails eschatologically, he also brings in the examples of Abraham and Rahab, where the sense is not of eschatological justification. Second, James does not – as is perhaps commonly thought – confuse faith and works. He regards faith as working together with works (2:12) and “made perfect by works” (2:22). Third, James, crucially, regards future salvation as having pastoral implications for those who are resting on their doctrinal laurels. The pastoral situation must be seen as the setting for James’s formulations...

The problem of the apparent differences between James and Paul has long been a *crux interpretum*, but it needs to be remembered that (as we have seen) the James/Paul tension is merely a manifestation a generation or so later of a Jesus/Jesus tension. **Already in Jesus’ teaching there is clear indication that God accepts sinners but that at the final judgment, vindication is for the righteous who have produced fruit...**

Furthermore, it is also a Paul/Paul tension: **Paul, too, can use the language of justification to describe the final vindication of God’s people on the basis, from one angle, of their obedience.** In Romans 2:13 Paul talks of justification as for the *doers*...It will not do to write this off as a hypothetical reference to an empty set of “the righteous,” for Paul goes on directly afterward to provide instances of these doers of the law who will be justified: the Gentiles who have the law written on their hearts...If this interpretation is correct, then it is not simply within the New Testament more broadly that we find this tension, but even within Paul...

Can this diversity, even within Paul himself, be accounted for?...**The New Testament does not offer two ways of**

salvation, one by faith and one by works. Rather, the category of those who are justified by faith is coextensive with those who will be justified on the final day after a whole life of perseverance. The two groups are identical...For Paul, the categories of “those of faith” (Gal. 3:7) and “all who do good” in Romans 2:10 (cf. Rom. 2:7, 13, 26-27) are one and the same...⁶⁵

Another evangelical scholar who has extensively examined the place of works in NT theology is Alan P. Stanley. In his books, *Did Jesus Teach Salvation by Works?* and *Salvation Is More Complicated Than You Think*, he explores the place of works in the biblical plan of salvation. After decisively ruling out any salvific role for pre-conversion (or meritorious) works, Stanley explores the relationship of obedience to salvation in several different areas, including discipleship, perseverance, how we treat others, how we use money, and so on. Stanley is especially concerned to focus on the teaching of Jesus in the gospels because he believes the church has muzzled and muted the challenge of Jesus' words. Stanley wants to show that the gospel is indeed found in the gospels – but that the gospel is not at all at odds with the demands of holiness. Indeed, as Stanley points out, the necessity of works is integral to the evangelical message: “At the end of every of Matthew’s five discourses Jesus teaches judgment by works and the judgment in each case applies to eternal salvation (7:24-27; 10:40-42; 13:47-50; 18:32-35; 25:31-46)...Therefore these passages are key to understanding Jesus’ view on the role of works in salvation and admission requirements to heaven.”⁶⁶

We are particularly concerned with a recovery of the Protestant doctrine of (second) justification by works, so our survey of Stanley’s writings will focus on those places where he takes up the NT’s

⁶⁵ Gathercole, “The Doctrine of Justification in Paul and Beyond,” in *Justification in Perspective: Historical developments and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), ch.10, 232-234. In a footnote on James, Gathercole adds: “The context leading up to the discussion of justification in James 2:14-26 is concerned with final salvation (see 2:12-13), and the meaning of the ‘save’ word group in James probably refers consistently to eschatological salvation.”

⁶⁶ Alan Stanley, *Did Jesus Teach Salvation By Works? The Role of Works in Salvation in the Synoptic Gospels* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2006), 319.

teaching on justification. Stanley lays out the basic issues in these terms:

To be saved Jesus lays down definitive conditions that must be fulfilled...Jesus tells his disciples in advance the criterion He will use to determine where people will spend eternity. In the final analysis those who are not merciful will go away to eternal punishment while those who are merciful will go to eternal life (Mt. 25:34-46).

So — did Jesus teach salvation by works?...In the Synoptic Gospels there are many passages that appear to teach a *direct* relationship between works and salvation. Simply put *the presence or absence of “works” plays a significant role (in the final judgment) in determining where one spends eternity. That is, if works are present, one can expect to spend eternity with God in heaven; if works are absent, one can expect to spend eternity without God in hell.*

If this thesis is correct, how do we reconcile this with what has become the hallmark of evangelical Christianity: “Salvation is by *grace alone* through *faith alone*”? Of course some might prefer to pose the question in another way—“How does one reconcile Jesus’ teaching on salvation with Paul’s doctrine of justification by grace through faith *and not by works*?” Yet even to pose the question in this way perhaps betrays more *our* understanding of where any incongruity lies than the Bible’s understanding of where it might lie. The incongruity, we assume, must lie with Jesus. Yet why is it that Jesus must be reconciled to Paul as if Paul were the benchmark? If anyone should be the benchmark, should it not be Jesus himself?...

[W]e cannot deny that Jesus demanded obedience to enter into *eschatological* life. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said “only those *do* the will of my Father” will enter the kingdom of heaven. The Father’s will in Mathew is expressed in 5:20 as “surpassing righteousness,” which itself is defined and

described in vv. 21-48 as not getting angry with a brother, not looking lustfully at a woman, loving one's enemy, etc. In other words, Jesus demands very real and concrete obedience in order for one to enter into the kingdom and thus eternal life (see esp. 25:34-46).⁶⁷

After noting the similarities between Jesus' teaching and Romans 2:13, Stanley continues:

In case this sounds something close to salvation by works we should remember two things: first, Jesus does not expect anyone to obey commandments to enter into a relationship with Himself for he did "not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt. 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32). However He does say that it will be the righteous who will enter the kingdom (e.g., Matt. 5:20; 13:43, 49; 25:34-46). Second, Jesus told his disciples that it is impossible for *anyone* to enter the kingdom. We may conclude from this that any righteousness that admits anyone into eternity is due completely to the work of God and His grace (cf. esp. Gal. 5:22-23; 6:8). This is a theological truism...⁶⁸

Stanley provides a detailed look at what it means to the life of the kingdom at the last day. What is at stake in the final judgment according to deeds is not merely one's degree of reward, but salvation itself.⁶⁹

Elsewhere, Stanley notes the similarities between the teaching of Jesus and James:

James 2:21-26...most likely explicates Matthew's teaching on the last judgment...James 2:14 is speaking of eschatological and eternal salvation. Of interest to us now is James' teaching on justification by works in vv. 21, 24-25. James insists that Abraham was justified by works

⁶⁷ Stanley, *Did Jesus Teach Salvation By Works?*, 2-3, 196-197.

⁶⁸ Stanley, *Did Jesus Teach Salvation By Works?*, 197-198; cf. 328.

⁶⁹ Stanley, *Did Jesus Teach Salvation By Works?*, see especially ch. 10, as well as pages 307-8.

subsequent to offering Isaac on the altar (v. 21). From here James is able to make his main point: “*You see* a person is justified by works and not by faith alone” (v. 24; cf. v. 25)...

If little else is clear it is clear that Paul and James cannot be speaking about the same justification. Paul means justification as an *entry point* into salvation whereas James evidently means justification at some point subsequent to entry...In all probability, James is speaking of Paul’s justification as an acquittal or declaration of righteousness, not as the entry point to salvation but the end point, that is, final justification at the future judgment (cf. Isa. 43:9; 45:25; 50:8)...

Thus the evidence suggests that James’ justification is a reference to the eschatological judgment associated with the second Coming, the outcome of which concerns eternal salvation. Two things confirm this. First, James’ entire concern is expressed in 2:14: faith without works cannot save—in the eschatological sense—someone eternally (v. 14)...

Second, James is obviously familiar with Matthew’s teaching on eschatological judgment. He utilizes material from Matthew 25:35-36 (in Jas 2:15-16) and has evidently drawn on Jesus’ words in Matthew 12:33-35 in his exposition of the tongue in James 3. What is striking is that in Matthew 12:36 Jesus makes reference to the “day of judgment” when all men will give an account for what they have spoken (as in Jas 2:12). Jesus finishes by saying that “from your words you will be *justified* and from your words you will be condemned” (Matt 12:37). **Clearly Jesus knows of a justification that will take place in the “day of judgment” and it is likely James is speaking of the same judgment, that is, all people will be judged on the basis of their works vis-à-vis their eternal destiny.**

It is my opinion that the troublesome James 2:14-26 passage teaches judgment on the basis of

works...Matthew's last judgment scene (Matt 25:31-46) is James' salvation/justification by works (note esp. Jas. 2:15-16 par. Matt 25:35-36) although I have not explored this here (cf. also Rom 14:10-12; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; Rev. 20:11-13; 22:12). Thus we may legitimately speak of salvation by works though what I mean of course is eschatological salvation by works.⁷⁰

Stanley states the basic principle that drives the NT doctrine of double justification:

When the focus is on the beginning of salvation God's initiative is highlighted (e.g., grace, calling, election, etc.). But when the focus is on the end of salvation the works of individuals are emphasized (e.g., Matt 16:27; 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Rom 2:6-8).⁷¹

This is why Scripture so repeatedly links our final destiny to deeds, such as the words we speak and how we treat the poor.

Finally, Stanley gives a summary of Jesus' teaching, as it is contextualized by the rest of the NT:

So did Jesus teach salvation by works? We have seen clearly that indeed He did. However, we must remember to carefully define our terms. If by salvation we mean conversion and something akin to Paul's justification by faith; and if by works we mean works prior to conversion and thus originating from ourselves then it is clear—Jesus did *not* teach salvation by works. **If however we mean final or eschatological salvation and post-conversion works originating from God Himself then, yes, Jesus *did* teach salvation by works—in the same way James taught *justification by works*...Paul says *no one is justified by means of works*; James [along with Jesus] says that we are. They are simply speaking from different perspectives. Both are correct.**

⁷⁰ Stanley, *Did Jesus Teach Salvation By Works?*, 308–311, 333.

⁷¹ Stanley, *Did Jesus Teach Salvation By Works?*, 312.

Eschatological salvation then, in the Synoptic Gospels, is indeed by works. But we must remember—also in the Synoptic Gospels—that it is *impossible* for anyone to enter into the kingdom. Thus Jesus is—and must be—the One who calls, since with God “all things are possible.” He alone can get the camel through the eye of the needle. Only those who are poor in spirit are blessed and enter the kingdom. Thus Jesus calls sinners only. All this points to the *priority* of God’s grace. By priority I mean even conversion is not possible apart from God’s call. It follows that works—works that save—are not possible unless God enables them. Hence those who enter into eternal life have been blessed *by God* and enter into something prepared *by God* (Matt 25:34)...Thus, even though works are necessary for salvation, the works themselves are only possible “with God.” Works then are, as we saw...from John Calvin, “inferior causes.” The possession of eternal life, says Calvin, “is by means of good works...eternal life [is] a consequence of works.” We can rightly say with Augustine that at the time of final salvation God will “crown not so much thy merits as *His own gifts*.”⁷²

Paul Rainbow’s erudite book *The Way of Salvation* is crucial to the re-emergence of the classic Reformed “double justification” doctrine for several reasons. While critical of the Reformation at points (often unfairly, in my opinion), Rainbow holds to a doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s active obedience. He also does extensive exegetical and theological work on the issues at hand, patiently building a cohesive case. Rainbow boils the issue down to one basic question: “Many of the problems,” facing us in this discussion, “revolve around the single question whether the fruit of the Spirit counts towards a finalizing of justification.”⁷³ Rainbow argues that while the church has picked up on Paul’s antitheses between old covenant vs. new, law vs. grace, and works of the law vs. faith, we have not noticed the antithesis pitting works of the law vs. good works.⁷⁴ Works done by Adam’s offspring in their own strength are

⁷² Stanley, *Did Jesus Teach Salvation By Works?*, 333–334.

⁷³ Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 46.

⁷⁴ Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 79.

worthless, but Spirit-empowered works performed by regenerate believers truly find favor in God's sight.⁷⁵ He explains: "In every instance where Paul plays faith and works off against each other, the works he has in mind are those of fallen humanity apart from Christ. Yet Paul never treats faith and 'good' works as opposites...What prevails for future justification is 'faith working through love' (Gal. 5:6)."⁷⁶ Thus, "Whenever Paul says that works of the law form no part of the basis on which God accepts sinners, he means that fallen humanity can do nothing to merit God's favor," but this does not rule out a place for good works done by believers "which God will approve at the last day."⁷⁷ Rainbow faults many Protestants for having an inadequate doctrine of justification that covers only part of the Pauline material. It certainly captures Paul's main emphasis on the inauguration of the justified state when the subject is first transferred from the old covenant to the new. But several passages in Paul either apply the verb 'to be justified' to an unfinished goal towards which we move throughout the Christian life (Gal. 2:17; cf. 5:4-5), or point to the last assize as the setting for its attainment (Rom. 2:13; 8:33; 1 Cor. 4:4). 'Impute' can also refer to judgment day (Rom. 2:26; 2 Tim. 4:16).⁷⁸

Rainbow fleshes out the justification/sanctification relationship in terms of the "already" and the "not yet" of NT eschatology: Sanctification is situation between the initial and final phases of justification:

Insofar as justification is already inaugurated, it preceded sanctification and had an independent formal cause in the perfect righteousness of Christ attributed to our faith. At the same time, however, it is by lumping individuals with Christ that God justifies them. More precisely, God has justified Christ; those who belong to Christ are counted righteous only insofar as they participate in his status as the Justified One. In this union with the Lord, no one is

⁷⁵ Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 79ff.

⁷⁶ Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 82.

⁷⁷ Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 82-83.

⁷⁸ Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 115.

justified whom God does not also destine for conformity to his Son (Rom. 5:18-19; 8:29).

But insofar as justification remains to be concluded at the final judgment, our increase in sanctity precedes that event and supplies one aspect of the basis for a favorable verdict (Rom. 8:1-2). What will weigh with the judge in that day is our faith operative in deeds of love wrought through God's Spirit (Gal. 5:5-6).⁷⁹

Rainbow explores in great theological and exegetical detail the place of works in this final justification/imputation in chapters 12-17 of his book. He catalogs numerous texts that use judicial language in an unmistakably eschatological way. Rainbow also painstakingly demonstrates that what is at stake in the final judgment is not merely rewards, but salvation itself, and the key criterion in the judgment will be deeds.

[W]e must establish the temporal framework of justification. Not everything Paul has to say about it pertains to the present. He is also concerned about how believers will fare at the last judgment. Paul paints his gospel on the canvas of time, which progresses under divine providence toward the end appointed for all things by God. The justification of God's elect is an important part of the denouement...

[J]ustification occurs in two phases. The righteousness God gave us when we turned to him, he actuates in another dimension before he admits us into the everlasting state. ...

God will decide each one's portion by reference to what that one has done. Paul can state this generally. God 'will render to every man according to his works' (Rom. 2:16). 'Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap' (Gal. 6:7)...Eternal life will be the outcome of 'patience in well-doing' (Rom. 2:7), of 'righteousness' (Rom. 5:21), of slavery to God and sanctification (Rom. 6:22), of putting to

⁷⁹ Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 186-187.

death the deeds of the body by the Spirit (Rom. 8:13), of 'godliness' (1 Tim. 4:8; Tit. 1:11-2), of fighting the good fight of the faith (1 Tim. 6:12), of doing good and being rich in good deeds (1 Tim. 6:19)...

We cannot locate a statement anywhere in Paul's writings to the effect that at the last judgment God will look upon the faith of believers instead of their deeds. Since deeds express faith and are the index of faith's genuineness, deeds will be the criterion... **Specifically, good deeds done by believers through God's grace will be the criterion for their final justification.**

I have marshaled data from the Pauline epistles to prove that what will be at stake for believers at the last judgment is their eternal destiny, not just the secondary issue of rewards; and that the decision will be based on the criterion of their deeds as having demonstrated the reality of their union with Christ by faith. That perspective on justification is by no means foreign to Paul, which sees the prevenient grace of God as bringing forth good works in the lives of believers to be recognized and rewarded with eternal life on the last day. This actual righteousness does not run on a mundane plane entirely separate from imputed righteousness, but it an integral aspect of that rounded out righteousness by which we shall stand before our final judge...

All this amounts to a double justification doctrine first by faith, then according to works. Rainbow unpacks the meaning of second justification:

The second critical moment of justification will occur at the end of the world. Our union with Christ is not merely a legal concept in the divine mind. That union also assimilates us into God's programme to conform his elect to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29), and unleashes in us God's power (Rom. 8:2) to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) so that we fulfill the just requirement of the law (Rom. 8:4). Since God is ultimately the one who is at work

in us both to will and to perform his good pleasure, we co-labor in the sphere of his grace toward our final salvation (Phil. 2:12-13; 2 Thess. 1:11-12). At the last judgment, God's operative grace, manifest in acts of love done by the living faith of his people, will prevail with him (Gal. 5:5-6), and those who have done the law will be justified (Rom. 2:13).

How do works fit into dual scenario? It depends on whether we are talking about the moral efforts of Adamic humanity, which Paul calls works of the law, or about those of Christ's members, called good works or the works of faith. From the inaugural moment of justification Paul rigorously excludes works of the law (the work of faith is, of course, not an issue before a person comes to faith)...From the final moment of justification, however, Paul not only does not exclude good works, but he positively identifies good works as the criterion by which the saving faith of the elect will be proven and they justified....

Obviously obedience does not take the fundamental role [in our justification], for Paul makes faith the end as well as the beginning of our duty under the new covenant (Gal. 3:2-3; Rom. 1:17). In the inaugural moment of justification, one who has been unregenerate up to that point has no acceptable works to contribute. God freely imputes the righteousness of the Last Adam to his corporate members through their empty and receptive faith. He also imparts his Spirit to liberate them from sin's reign, regenerate them and stir them in the service of God. Until that happens, evangelical obedience does not even arise. Therefore good works are secondary to faith, both temporally and logically.

After we are made partakers of Christ's righteousness and of his Spirit, however, salvation remains a goal to be attained in the future (Rom. 5:9-10), righteousness in the fullest sense is still a matter of hope (Gal. 5:5). The dual condition for finishing well is perseverance in faith (Col. 1:23) and in doing good (Rom. 2:7, 10, 13, 26; 6:22; 8:13), or, expressed as a single compound condition, 'faith

working through love' (Gal. 5:6) or the 'work of faith' (1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:11). Because faith is the primary instrument by which we accede to divine grace – which is itself dynamic and sets us in action as we journey toward the end – good deeds are, on the one hand, the demonstration of saving faith and the sign of the righteousness which God has already given; and, on the other, good deeds are instrumental in meeting the outstanding condition for being justified finally. Christian obedience may be called a sub-condition for the culminating moment of justification. It is a second condition in its own right besides faith, because God requires holiness just as surely as he requires faith for salvation, and will use good works at the judgment as the index of faith's authenticity. It is subordinate, because obedience is a fruit of grace, its divine root, and therefore deeds do not form a separate condition wholly independent of faith.

This account of Christian obedience in justification is an attempt to unify various strands of Paul's teaching on the subject...

Rainbow believes he is integrating the best of Luther with the best of Augustine:

Paul's teaching about inaugural justification feeds into the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone. What Paul says about final justification is identical with Augustine's view of justification by works of grace. We are going to have to find a way to integrate the biblical truths behind these two systems...How to think of justification inaugurated and consummated, of imputed justice and actual justice, as being related to each other, is a pressing systematic question.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ See Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 155, 174, 193, 194, 203, 205-6, 212. Along the lines of synthesis, Rainbow does a fine job drawing together Paul and James on justification in ch. 16, and integrating the biblical material as a whole in ch. 17.

Rainbow's book is not above significant criticisms. Indeed, where the older Reformed theologians might serve to bolster his case is in their explanation of how God accepts our imperfect-but-good works through the mediation of Christ. In what sense is even final justification "by faith"? Rainbow does not sufficiently develop the place of forgiveness at the last day, nor does he adequately explain the theological relationship between initial and final justification. Still, his book is important step forward in the present discussion.

Rainbow's thoughts on the state and direction of the best evangelical NT scholarship form an apropos conclusion to this article:

There is a very broad consensus among many New Testament scholars in the conclusion that Christians are justified in one sense, but still need to delivered from the judicial wrath of God to come (Rom. 5:1-11). If Protestantism is to live up to its radical claim to derive its doctrines from the Bible, then its doctrine of justification needs to [incorporate all the biblical data]. Paul's epistles provide no warrant for the typical Protestant view that the plenary pardon which God advances to a repentant sinner constitutes justification, while the judicial review of the same person at the end of his or her earthly sojourn belongs under some other rubric. Paul uses the same language and conceptuality in reference to both events. Therefore both belong to the doctrine of justification.

It seems natural to apply to the two phases of justification the same terminology that scholars have adopted for New Testament eschatology in general. We are 'already' justified, but we are 'not yet' justified. Now in the present we have tasted of our future justification. The justification of God's people has been inaugurated; it has yet to be consummated.⁸¹

⁸¹ Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation*, 174. See also 206ff for a survey of the contemporary scholarship. Bird, *Saving Righteousness of God*, 172, makes the same point about the direction of contemporary scholarship, though he does not necessarily agree with it *in toto*:

Within this "Christian" interpretation of Romans 2, some believe that the

role of the Spirit in the life of the believer solves the incongruity about justification by faith and judgment according to works. A solution that has received increasing popularity (though it is hardly new) is to advocate that God indeed requires works as the basis of *final* justification, but God himself produces in the believer through the Spirit the works that he requires.

“Basis” (or “ground”), though used by some theologians, is not the best choice of terminology, and is bound to create unnecessary confusion and objections. But the essential view that the NT teaches works are a conditional means in our final acquittal at judgment day is now (once again!) widely embraced in evangelical and Reformed scholarship.

