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Justification and God's Kingdom

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For Prof. Dr. Peter Stuhlmacher,
In Appreciation of His Scholarship, Discipleship
and Friendship

Preface

In the fall of 2012, Duranno Publishing House, Seoul, Korea, invited me to give two-day intensive lectures on "sanctification" to pastors, theology students, and lay leaders in Seoul, Korea, stating that lately there had been in Korea much criticism of poor ethical conduct of Christians, especially among prominent Christian political leaders, Christian business people, and even pastors, and that they, the House, believed the problem was due to Korean churches teaching only the doctrine of justification and neglecting the doctrine of sanctification. So I delivered a series of lectures on Paul's doctrine of justification, suggesting that the problem arose partly because that doctrine was not properly taught, and that the distinction between justification and sanctification in the traditional scheme of *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) itself was part of that misunderstanding of the doctrine of justification that contributed to the problem. The lectures were recorded and later transcribed into a book, *Justification and Sanctification* (Seoul: Duranno, 2013, in Korean).

That book already presents the substance of this book, but on a popular level and in a discursive style. Subsequent to the book, I have been preoccupied with writing a commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians. But still that commentary work (especially in connection with 1 Thess 1:9–10; 2:19–20; 3:12–13; 4:6; 5:9–10; 2 Thess 1:5–12; 2:10–15) created occasions from time to time for me to reflect further on the justification doctrine and related themes. Then

came an invitation from the Lutheran School of Theology (Församlingsfakulteten) in Göteborg, Sweden, for me to teach a mini-intensive course and deliver a lecture on justification in their Bible Conference that was to be held at the school in celebration of the Reformation 500 Year Jubilee during November 8–11, 2017. So, the invitation provided me with the occasion to write up this book.

Therefore, this book has taken the shape of an extended theological essay, which seeks clearly to set out my thesis on Paul's gospel of justification, discussing only with a limited number of partners, rather than an exhaustive monograph, which would have required a much longer and detailed discussion with many more authors. I hope that in an age when theological monographs are getting so lengthy that even full-time scholars find it hard to read them all and keep up properly with all the threads of their complex arguments, there are some readers who find some merits in a compact book like this one. I have put in the footnotes most of the more extended and technical discussions with other scholars as well as remarks about some relevant Pauline texts. I hope this helps some lay readers follow my main arguments more easily.

The divorce between justification faith and righteous living is a serious problem not just among Christians in Korea, my native land, but also among Christians in America, where I now live and work. The problem makes the church, the community of God's justified people, ineffective in its mission to realize the righteousness/justice and peace of God's kingdom on earth. So, instead of becoming "the salt" and "the light" of the world as Jesus commanded (Matt 5:14–16) or "shining as lights in the world" as Paul directed (Phil 2:14–16), Christians often contribute to making this world darker and more corrupt, earning the scorn of more conscientious non-Christians.

So this book has been written with a pastoral concern. However, it is not a homily, but an academic dissertation. Nevertheless, it is still my hope that my exposition of Paul's doctrine of justification in this book leads some readers to consider their discipleship more seriously (as it has led me to examine mine) and persuades some fellow teachers and pastors to teach or preach that doctrine as a comprehensive whole – so that the church of Christ may make the righteousness and life of the kingdom of God and his Son Jesus Christ the Lord more real on earth.

I would like to thank Församlingsfakulteten, its students, faculty, staff, and local pastors, especially Dr. Timo Laato, for their invitation as well as their kind reception and hospitality during my stay with them. I am grateful to Fuller Theological Seminary for providing me with a good working environment for my scholarly efforts. Once more, Susan Carlson Wood of Faculty Publication Services, School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary, undertook the editorial work, and I am very grateful to her for her fine job. I would also like to thank the staff of Fuller Seminary Library and Tiffany Choi, a secretary of the Korean Studies Center at Fuller Seminary, for their help with literature procurement. Youngna Park, a PhD candidate at Fuller, compiled the bibliography and indices, and I am grateful to her for helping me with the tedious job. I would also like to thank Frau Dr. Katharina Gutekunst, the new Program Director for Theology and Jewish Studies of Mohr Siebeck, for accepting this book for publication and providing some good advice about the layout of the book; Prof. Jörg Frey for his recommendation of it; and Frau Daniela Zeiler, Frau Elena Müller, and their colleagues at the Verlagshaus for their efficient work in its production.

With great pleasure as well as hearty gratitude I dedicate this humble book to Prof. Peter Stuhlmacher, from

whose teaching, example, and encouragement I have benefited so much from my student days. The book amply testifies how much I owe him. I hope that he finds it worthy of his name.

Pasadena, California Seyoon Kim
March 2018

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Abbreviations

BDAG: Bauer, W., W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

LSJ: Liddell, H., R. Scott, and H. D. Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with rev. supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.

Introduction

Five hundred years ago, having found a new understanding that "the righteousness of God" in Rom 1:17 does not refer to God's attribute that punishes sinners, but rather to the righteousness with which God justifies them, Martin Luther expounded the Pauline doctrine of justification by grace and through faith against the good works or merit theology of the medieval Catholic Church. This new teaching of Luther launched the Protestant movement of reforming the church, so that this doctrine became central to the faith of all the churches that originated from the Reformation, notwithstanding some fine differences among them in their understanding of it. Protestant Christians have greatly cherished that form of preaching the gospel as it gives them assurance of salvation as well as freedom and peace.

However, as the Reformation doctrine of justification stressed the juridical declaration of sinners as righteous in contradistinction to the Catholic understanding of its making them (morally) righteous, questions about the righteous living of the justified – the relationship between justification and ethics – were bound to arise. The Reformers and their successors tried to resolve this question by teaching that with justification the process of sanctification or regeneration begins. But "regeneration" is not a Pauline term, and "sanctification" is in fact a metaphor that Paul uses in parallel to "justification," so that, according to Paul's teaching, just like justification, sanctification also takes place proleptically at our baptism (we are al-

ready "sanctified" or made "saints"), and it is consummated at the last judgment, which is to be according to our works.[1] Therefore, just as the question arises of how our baptismal justification actually makes us live a righteous life (or is related to our righteous living at present), so also does the question of how our baptismal sanctification actually makes us live a holy life (or is related to our holy living at present). Therefore, for me, the systemization of the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) has not resolved these questions satisfactorily.

Nevertheless, it is a much-lamented fact that in many parts of the Protestant world there is a serious divorce between faith and righteous living, so that faith becomes an "idle" one that does not bear good works (Jas 2:20), making God's grace "cheap" (D. Bonhoeffer). Therefore, it is understandable that from the early decades of the twentieth century this problem has become a serious issue among Pauline interpreters and theologians. As is well known, A. Schweitzer pointed out most sharply the problem that the forensic doctrine of justification by faith cannot produce ethics. Then, arguing that Pauline ethics arises out of his mystical understanding of Christ's redemption, that is, redemption through union with Christ in his death and resurrection, Schweitzer downgraded the status of the justification doctrine within Pauline theology by famously declaring: "The doctrine of righteousness by faith is therefore a subsidiary crater, which has formed within the rim of the main crater – the mystical doctrine of redemption through the being-in-Christ."[2] Even earlier

[1] See pp. 73–74 with n. 1 below.

[2] A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, 2nd ed. (London: Black, 1956; German original, *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus*, 1929), 217–26, 295 (quotation from 217).

than Schweitzer, W. Wrede also pointed out the problem of ethics, and seeing that the doctrine of justification appears only in those letters of Paul where he debates with Judaizers (Romans, Galatians, and Philippians 3), Wrede designated the doctrine a "polemical doctrine" (*Kampfeslehre*) designed for the limited purpose of defending the legitimacy of his law-free Gentile mission.[3]

Nevertheless, during the middle decades of the twentieth century, R. Bultmann and other scholars under his influence upheld the centrality of the doctrine of justification in Pauline theology, further sharpening the Lutheran forensic interpretation of that doctrine existentially. But they did not help much with the problem of explaining Pauline ethics as deriving from that doctrine. So, for example, Bultmann[4] stresses that "Paul understands faith primarily as obedience" (314–15, 324, 330), and says that "the imperative, 'walk according to the Spirit,' … results from the indicative of justification" (332). But understanding the obedience of faith mainly in terms of "a new understanding of one's self" (315, 324, 330), he carries out his anthropocentric and existentialistic explanation of that obedience with no reference to Christ Jesus' exercise of lordship and to the enlightening and empowering work of the Spirit as the Spirit of God and his Son Jesus the Lord. Therefore, he is able to connect his discussion of Pauline ethics only with the freedom from the (existentially understood) power of sin that justification brings.

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[3] W. Wrede, *Paulus* (Halle, 1904), reprinted in *Das Paulusbild in der neueren deutschen Forschung*, ed. K. H. Rengstorf, Weg der Forschung 24 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 67–69, 73–74. Cf. also Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 220.

[4] R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1952), 1:314–45.

Protesting against Bultmann's anthropological or anthropocentric interpretation of Paul's theology as a whole, and stressing the priority of Christology over anthropology in Paul's theology as well as the need to understand the apostle as an apocalyptic thinker,[5] E. Käsemann suggested understanding justification as *Herrschaftswechsel*, lordship-change, from the kingdom (or lordship) of Satan to the kingdom (or lordship) of God and his Son Jesus Christ the Lord. Thus he opened up a real possibility for explaining Pauline ethics deriving from his justification doctrine. However, Käsemann worked out this new understanding not through an analysis of Paul's Christology or his theology of God's kingdom but through an interpretation of "God's righteousness" (or grace) as having the character not only of God's gift but also of his power or sovereignty. This leads him to fall short of explaining more systematically our justification in terms of our being placed under the reign of God and his Son at present and Pauline imperatives for what he calls *nova oboedentia* being logical consequences of the indicative of that salvation occurrence. Hence, he also fails to resolve more satisfactorily the tension between the baptismal justification and the end-time justification. Therefore, it is to be regretted that his brilliant insights into understanding justification as "lordship-change" and striking formulations about it, which are scattered throughout his essay, are not properly undergirded by Pauline Christology, his stress on it notwithstanding.[6]

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[5] E. Käsemann, "Zur paulinischen Anthropologie," in *Paulinische Perspektiven*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969), 9–60 (see esp. 27); idem, "On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic," in *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 131–37.

[6] E. Käsemann, "'The Righteousness of God' in Paul," in *New Testament Questions of Today*, 168–82 (see esp. 174, 176–78, 180–82).

During the last forty years the overwhelming concern of New Testament scholarship has been about "the New Perspective on Paul." As is well known, the movement to have a new perspective on Paul was sparked by E. P. Sanders's publication of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). In it Sanders argued that the Ju-

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Cf. also idem, "Rechtfertigung und Heilsgeschichte im Römerbrief," in *Paulinische Perspektiven*, 133: "Justification concerns nothing other than the kingdom of God that Jesus preached … God's basileia is the content of the Pauline doctrine of justification." His view of the concept "God's righteousness" as a quasi-technical term ("a ready-made formulation," 172) in OT-Judaism has been criticized, but there is no doubt that in some contexts such as Rom 1:3–4/16–17 that concept takes on the connotation of God's sovereign, saving power as a natural contextualization of its basic meaning of God's covenant faithfulness, the meaning to which Käsemann regrettably shows an ambivalent attitude in the essay (on this last point, cf. N. T. Wright, "A New Perspective on Käsemann? Apocalyptic, Covenant, and the Righteousness of God," in *Studies in the Pauline Epistles: Essays in Honor of Douglas Moo*, ed. M. S. Harmon and J. E. Smith [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014], 248–58 [243–58]). For the concept of "lordship-change," cf. also K. Kertelge, *'Rechtfertigung' bei Paulus* (Münster: Aschendorf, 1967), 127, 158–59; P. Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 1: *Grundlegung von Jesus und Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 337; also E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Pattern of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 497–500. J. M. G. Barclay, in his recent study, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), corroborates Käsemann's view on "God's righteousness (or grace)" by his wide-ranging study on the anthropology of "grace" in the ancient pagan and Jewish worlds: "Gifts … convey the power and even the presence of the giver; some are 'inalienable' in the sense that they continue to belong to the giver even when given. Obligation thus arises not just from the authority of the giver (in Paul's case, the Lordship of Christ) but from the structure of gift-giving itself" (499). Thus Barclay also approaches the problem of the relationship of the justification doctrine and ethics anthropologically in terms of the grace-gift of salvation by Christ creating allegiance and obligations toward the giver, the Lord Jesus Christ (493–519). Cf. pp. 94–101 n. 4 below for a critique of his view on this question.

daism of the Second Temple period (200 BC – AD 200) was not a works-righteousness religion but a "covenantal nomism," which was based on God's grace of election of and covenant with Israel as his people and required Jews to keep the law in order to stay in the covenantal relationship with God for eventual salvation, availing themselves of the means of atonement that are graciously provided within the legal system itself for their occasional sins. Sanders advanced this picture of Judaism as a religion of grace with a sharp polemic against Christian (esp. German) scholars' distortion of ancient Judaism as a legalistic religion of works-righteousness and their interpretation of the Pauline doctrine of justification by projecting the medieval church's doctrine of merits on to Judaism.

Then, it was J. D. G. Dunn and N. T. Wright who launched the "New Perspective on Paul" movement, coining the very term itself and reinterpreting Paul's doctrine of justification on the assumption of Judaism as "covenantal nomism" as Sanders had defined it.[7] Now that Judaism was understood fundamentally as a religion of grace, Dunn and Wright argued that in the Pauline for-

[7] Cf. N. T. Wright, "The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith," *TynBul* 29 (1978): 61–88, reprinted in idem, *Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul, 1978–2013* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2013), 3–20; J. D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," *BJRL* 65 (1983): 95–122, reprinted in idem, *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 99–120. In their numerous subsequent writings, they repeated the points summarized in this paragraph as some of the main features of their New Perspective. See conveniently their other essays collected in J. D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, and in N. T. Wright, *Pauline Perspectives.* See also J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 317–89; N. T. Wright, *What St. Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 113–33; idem, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009).