Christian faith is an introduction into Christ. Believing, we are baptized into Him. This means that we are to live as He lived towards the world of sin and towards God. It means that we surrender ourselves in a spirit of glad obedience to be moulded after his pattern. If our believing does not lead us to this new living, beyond all question it is a spurious thing and none of the Christian privileges attach to it.\(^1\)

No word or idea in the New Testament carries so much significance to men as does faith and its cognates. No word has been more abused. No word better ties into the whole concept of moral as it is beginning to develop in this study. No word is more important to the whole of redemption than this one.

A good synonym would be "appropriation". On one side of faith lies the objective atonement. Into that "mystic" realm where God has done so much for us, we cannot penetrate with our finite intelligence. The full truth of what God has done must always escape our rational grasp. We have pictures and analogies which help to relate it to our world of understanding; the law court, the temple sacrifice, war techniques, family relationships, and many more, none of them the whole truth, all of them together helping us to know that God loves us and desires our redemption. All this is grace.

On the other side of faith lies a great world of sin and defeat and despair and fear and death. In this world live people whose capacity for good and evil is their unique raison d'être. They know themselves to be responsible to God and to fellowmen. The capacity for nobility is itself the sharpest judgment for what they are. And great evil in men

is called sin because that same genius could have been used for good. Men are moral and this is their condemnation. They loved darkness rather than light.

God's grace is on one side, men's love is on the other. Salvation is offered -- to sinners who are morally responsible. To keep the integrity of both of these truths is the heart of the Gospel message.

The church early saw the dangers in a failure to keep these truths intact. God's forgiveness, they saw, could be too lightly regarded and so the problem of how to handle sins committed after baptism had to be met. How many times could one sin and be forgiven? How far does forgiveness reach - past sins only? or to all sins reaching into the future? If God's forgiveness could be implored for sins after baptism, how would it be known that repentence had been sincere enough? In other words, the danger of a moral insensibility creeping into the hearts of those who could too easily presume on God's mercy was recognized. Whatever one thinks of the whole penitential system, certainly the insight of our Church Fathers into the human peril immanent in the divine judicial acquittal unguarded from unprincipled human appropriation is to be sincerely respected. Easy, cheap, shoddy ideas of God's mercy were deeply deplored. But gradually there arose a well-organized and detailed system of penance that missed the proper moral point of the early church and stressed too much the ability of the penitent to earn merit -- to pay for his own sins. The commercialized aspect of this, we believe, is a distortion of the true intent, even today, of the Catholic church.

However, when Luther failed by all his efforts to find peace with God, and he saw that righteousness was by faith, not works, he recovered
the Biblical message preached so strongly by Paul in particular. But, as is true with so many insights which correct old extravagences, the pendulum swung too far.

The term "By Faith" took on an extreme either/or antithesis with "works", in the Reformation period. In absolute contrast to the abuse of the Catholic system of human merit stood the reformation doctrine of "by faith alone", and no human effort could be granted as of having value in any sense. So great was the contrast between faith and works that all moral relevancy -- all subjective desire -- all human striving -- was denounced as itself sin. This characterizes much evangelical theology today.

Of course, this reflects a definition of faith which recognizes the objective aspect of atonement but which fails to do justice to the moral experience of men. It stressed the forensic meaning only of righteousness and justification. Unrighteousness is imputed guilt and righteousness is the cancellation of that guilt, irrevocably and eternally by God's decree. This tends to make justification abstract and lacking in human relevancy. Faith then would be, and is so conceived, as intellectual assent or the acceptance of an idea which, apart from all subjective considerations, permanently places the "faithee" in a position of absolute safety from the wrath of God and judgment by virtue of the imputed merit of Christ. Not only logically, but actually, this position forces one into antinomianism on the one hand which reevaluates sin in the believer, or, on the other hand, affirming the unrealistic and difficult position of automatic sinlessness or perfectionism.

This extreme faith/works antithesis, occasioned by controversy with the Roman Church has made it difficult for the Calvinist, particularly,
to appreciate the holiness interpretation of theology. To the Calvinist, holiness theology and testimony is liberal and arrogant and in the light of the historical development of the reformation, it is easy to understand his attitude. The excesses of the Catholic idea of merit and the moral irresponsibility of some Arminianism and Unitarianism makes a less rigid distinction between faith and works unthinkable and seem to be a complete capitulation to humanism.

Wesley, again concerned with the problem of how to maintain the balance between grace and the moral nature of men, saw that not only justification but sanctification as well was "by faith". This added the moral dimension to justification which reformation theology had failed to retain and yet it was saved from playing into the hands of the Pelagians who would see no need for grace at all.

But "sanctification by faith" raises different kinds of problems than those raised by Luther's emphasis on justification by faith and it is these problems which we want to examine in this chapter.

Christian righteousness is "by faith". The pseudo-righteousness to which this is the only alternative is self-righteousness or salvation by works. To this basic affirmation evangelical Christians adhere and in it lies the basis for theological unity. But in respect of it there exists also differences of opinion that keep Reformation groups clearly distinguished theologically from those who follow "holiness doctrine." It is at this point, namely, the meaning of faith, that holiness theology begins to take its form and defines itself against other evangelical bodies.

Holiness theology presupposes a vital relationship between faith and works. This does not mean that it teaches that any man can in any
way merit salvation by what he does or thinks. It does hold that faith is an act which engages the whole of man, not simply his intellectual faculty alone, or his emotions or will but all the personality interacting as a unit. An abstract idea of personality is rejected in favor of a dynamic one, that is, men are only essentially men as they are moral creatures. Hence, faith, or lack of it, is a moral fact. The antithesis to saving faith is not innerness, or passivity, but active rejection. Holiness theology presupposes a unitary view of man as does Calvinism generally but stresses the spiritual relationships as the determining element rather than causal, non-personal elements. This, of necessity, adds to the forensic meaning of justification, an ethical dimension also (which does not imply incidently, that we have it in our power, by good works, to reform and make ourselves righteous.) Unrighteousness is more than imputed guilt. It is a person rejecting God who by this rejection incurs guilt and culpability. How he comes to do this — original sin or carnality or inherited sin — is not here the question. That he does reject is both a Biblical declaration and a fact of human experience. Righteousness or justification is most certainly the removal of guilt and is hence, juridical, but it also has a subjective aspect which is the concern of this chapter. At this point it is well to be reminded that if "moral" means any serious thing, we may expect to find that God's dealings with men will strengthen rather than weaken the concept of moral integrity and this fact will have a bearing on justification and faith and the security of the believer.

We are saved "by faith", but what does it mean to believe? And what is it that is believed? Is saving faith different in kind than the other experiences of faith which every person excercises? Is it
faith itself, that saves? Is faith a gift or is it a faculty over which a moral person has responsible control? These and other factors in the problem lie before us.

We have related faith to appropriation. At least, it may be said that faith is the link between grace and man’s need.

Now faith is a distinctly human reaction, that is it is something that men do. It is significant that righteousness (or justification) is "by faith". This means that God's approval of us awaits in some way our appropriation of His approval. Apparently, the objective (to us) act of God in Christ by which reconciliation was made a fact, remains tentative and potential until faith materializes it in experience. Whether saving faith is different in kind or source ("the gift of God") than other expressions of believing is not here the question. The fact remains that, so far as men are concerned, salvation is not by divine decree, nor even by the work of Christ (though its possibility is only through Christ) so that whoever He died for would inevitably be saved (unconditional atonement), but "by faith". Salvation, therefore, cannot be wholly objective, unrelated to human character or personal response. This certainly does not mean that any degree of human character or goodness is necessary to salvation or merits it in any sense, but it does mean that in excercising faith for salvation, something begins to happen to character. Salvation is not merited by any human excellence but it is impossible to be its recipient apart from a consideration of moral integrity. "By faith" is the beginning of God-centeredness in contrast to self-centeredness. It is a moral commitment and has moral implications in life. One cannot believe in God in the intellectual area of personality without all parts of his being sharing in that commitment. "By faith" is the shift from one
basic pre-supposition to another — from self as God, to God as Lord — and life and thinking proceeds out of the new pre-suppositions and is given character by it. In other words, "by faith" is dynamic, not formal and static.

Faith is dynamic. Jesus usually required faith of the sick for healing. Often he said, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Justification is by faith and the just shall live by faith not the works of the law. The heart is purified by faith, not circumcision (Acts 15:9). Sanctification is by faith in Jesus (Acts 26:18) Propitiation is by faith in Christ's blood (Rom. 3:25). Our access into "this grace" in which we stand is by faith (Rom. 5:2). By faith we stand (II Cor. 1:24). We walk by faith (II Cor. 5:1). We receive the promise of the Spirit by faith (Gal. 3:14). We are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26). Christ dwells in the heart by faith (Eph. 3:17). The life Paul lived in the flesh he lived by faith in the Son of God (Gal. 2:20). Faith shields us from the fiery darts of the enemy (Eph. 6:16). These are a few of the benefits of grace actualized by faith. It is exegetically impossible to interpret these and other passages eschatologically only, which would define faith in terms of hope and defer the benefits to another life. Faith and hope are never confused in Scripture. Faith is not a merely intellectual affirmation. It is a moral commitment with moral consequences. It is a this-life concern.

Faith or Works

Works and faith represent two ways — and opposite ways — to achieve a legitimate — and necessary — acceptability by God which is what justification or righteousness really is. If we keep in mind the central
import back of all the various figures of speech having to do with redemption we can say that the intended goal is fellowship with God - the end of alienation - in which by the blood of Christ cleansing is realized (I Jn. 1:7). "Works" is one way to achieve this proper relationship with God. Faith is another way. The question arises as to whether either one, alone, is adequate, provided the two can be separated in fact. That is, is one without the other actually what it purports to be?

The philosophy back of "works" is built upon the presupposition that the estrangement between God and man is forensic and not moral. It cannot see that sin is a degeneration of moral integrity which destroys the possibility of spiritual affinity. Love for God-Personal has been short-circuited in favor of love for law and the impersonal and deceptive approval of law to the conscience. It may be said that moral integrity has become an end in itself - a god - rather than a means to the end, namely, of being right with God. This is a subtle difference but a very real one. In no case does Paul - or Jesus - intimate that moral law is wrong, or that it can be dispensed with - ever. It is the form, structure, pattern of knowledge and truth (Rom. 2:20). It is never suggested that obedience to it is to be neglected or superceded. What is taught is this, that the keeping of law, alone, cannot achieve righteousness -- or the personal approval of God and cleansing fellowship with Him. In a word, the philosophy of works procedes on the assumption that legal impeccability can substitute for personal moral relationship. It is thoroughly objective, discounts all subjective, spiritual considerations and lives on a plane below the personal. It raises the non-personal to the status of duty. Law becomes Lord. It is easy to "manage" law by human
interpretation and hence human standards of approval. The Lord of the law who can and must interpret the law in inner experience is imprisoned in His law and hence reduced to servanthood. "Works as deplored by Paul in Romans, has made a God of law and a servant of God.

Faith, on the other hand, refers to an attitude toward God which the philosophy of works has neglected or rejected. It seeks the same approval of God, the same fellowship with Him but it operates on a personal, not an impersonal level. Faith is personal through and through. The philosophy of faith represents an entirely different approach to truth than that of works. It sees the Law-giver back of the law. Or if there be no objective law it sees the Person and respects the integrity of that Person in terms of response to Him. Faith, interpreted as a mental acceptance only of some proposition or idea, falls far short of the Biblical teaching regarding it. Abraham, the father of the faithful, had no proposition to accept. He had no revealed law to keep. He trusted God and the trust not only issued in but was expressed by obedience. Faith and obedience were, to him, inseparable. Faith which terminates in concepts and not in action is not the kind of faith Abraham had which has become a pattern of righteousness for both Jew and Gentile for the Christian age.

Faith and Works

Biblical faith as a way to righteousness is classically illustrated by reference to Abraham. Hence, a brief study of what constituted righteousness and faith in relation to him is in order. In Romans 2:14, the absolute contrast is drawn between the Jewish ritual righteousness which was external and moralistic wholly, and the spiritual nature of righteous-
ness which was of the spirit — or inner man, primarily. One was a de­
pendence on and obedience to the letter of the law, the other was a
heart attitude toward God even in the absence of written law. One local­
ized the possibility of acceptability by God to a chosen people. The
other opened that possibility to universal experience. The advantage
of being a Jew was offset by the responsibility it entailed in knowledge
and opportunity. The disadvantage of being a Gentile was offset by the
basic law of righteousness which, back of it all, was true for the Jews
as well as the Gentile. By law or without it, righteousness is only
possible by faith in God. And Abraham, before there was a Jew or law,
in believing God was considered righteous in God's sight. This effective­
ly reduces all people everywhere to the same standard of responsibility
and sin and the possibility of redemption.

It is a mistake to consider this section, primarily a philosophy
of sin. It is, centrally, a presentation of the grace of God in Christ
Jesus which is available to every man by faith. The fact that all have
sinned is simply to show that atonement has been made for all sin, by
Christ, and that the universal condition of receiving the benefits of
grace is faith in God — not works. None are saved by works.

Now, it is also a mistake to identify all human effort and co­
operation with works on the basis of this passage and contrast it to
faith. The disparagement of works in this section is not a rejection
of human activity and response as such but a dependence on them without
faith and all faith means. It is not true to fact to define faith, in
contrast to works, as cessation of activity, or passive "acceptance".
This is a false comparison. The writer to the Hebrews with another
purpose in mind for speaking of faith gives us what Paul had no occasion
to say in Romans, "By faith Abraham when he was called, obeyed . . . and he went out not knowing whether he went" (Heb. 11:8). The need for clear definition is evidenced by the possibility of error in the use of the word "works" and in the word "acceptance" as will be seen.

It is a mistake to define faith as "acceptance" if acceptance be too narrowly understood. It is often taught that salvation is by "accepting Christ", or accepting what He has done for us. Geo. Ladd says in an article in *Eternity* (July, 1958), entitled, "Justification",

The means of justification is faith . . . It is received by faith, by acceptance of what God has done for us in Christ . . . when a man has received the work of Christ upon the cross and has exercised saving faith, for him, the future judgment has already taken place (italics, his). . . . . . . . . . .

Freedom, release, peace came only from the acceptance, by faith, of what God in Christ has done for me . . .

L. Nelson Bell in *Christianity Today* (June 9, 1958) says,

"Righteousness is not a matter of doing but of accepting that which has been done for us," and "Righteousness is not a matter of achieving but of receiving." (p. 19).

Interesting enough, no New Testament passage gives the slightest hint that we are to "accept" Christ or "what He has done for us." We are exhorted to believe in Him. In the occasions where "accept" refers to a relationship of men and Christ (or God) it is man who is to make himself acceptable. The tremendous exhortation of Romans 12:1 is to the effect that we present ourselves, holy and acceptable, to God. In 11:18 it is said that he who in specified ways serveth Christ is acceptable by God. Peter says our task as lively stones in a spiritual house, or (to change the figure with Peter) as a holy priesthood is to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God (I, 2:5). The writer to the Hebrews exhorts (12:28), "Let us have grace where-by we may serve God
acceptably." In none of the several places is a sinner ever asked or exhorted to accept Christ. (Phil. 4:18; II. Cor. 5:10; Eph. 1:6). It would be quite inaccurate to equate "accept" and "believing". Such problems are raised by doing so, as, What does it mean to accept Christ? Is it to simply believe in the historical Christ and that he died for men? How can our acceptance be a determinative factor in salvation? Is this not works? If, as Ladd points out, our acceptance is of the verdict, "Acquitted," and the consequent man of faith is on the "heavenward side of the day of judgment," and, "it is as though [he] had already entered heaven," and; as L. Nelson Bell says, "when God looks down from above and sees the Lamb of God over me I am then righteous in his sight," why are the most morally demanding exhortations in the New Testament addressed to believers? Is not "acceptance theology" dangerously near perfectionism?

Faith is Moral-Obedience

The moral structure of faith is indicated by two key words, obedience and love. It is obvious that obedience alone is not itself a semantic or moral synonym for the faith which is requisite to justification. Obedience must have the ingredient of faith in it to result in righteousness. Conversely, faith must include obedience to make it saving faith. James' vivid and dramatic teaching that "faith without works is dead," is not antithetical to Paul's theology. To the Roman church Paul writes (6:16) that righteousness lies in the path of obedience and he thanks God (6:17) that they had "obeyed from the heart." "Obedience of faith" is twice mentioned in the same letter, once of Paul himself (1:5) and once of the gospel message (16:26). Paul's deepest concern for
the Corinthians was that every thought should be brought captive to the obedience of Christ (II, 10:5). The writer to the Hebrews virtually identifies faith and obedience in 5:8-9: "Though he were a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered, and being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. To substitute "they who believe on him" would not be out of keeping with the whole of New Testament teaching.

That faith is morally oriented and not some magical, morally disjunctive method of assuring ourselves of salvation is further indicated by another consideration relative to human attitudes. We mean by magic, any confidence in the power of word, thought or act to effect super-historical results or any attempt to achieve effects without a cause. When Ladd says that "the future can hold no possible condemnation," for the man who has "received the work of Christ upon the cross and has exercised saving faith because for him the future judgment has already taken place," he is interpreting faith as magic in that by it moral men are thought to by-pass moral responsibility by verbal symbols. Magic is always a-moral and a-causal whether it is religious or otherwise. Some critics of evangelicalism have called supernaturalism belief in magic. This charge cannot stand up under scholarly investigation but supernaturalism that supposes it can by-pass the moral dimension of human experience is belief in magic. The Bible stands squarely opposed to just such perversions of truth. Its supernaturalism is preserved from the a-morality of speculation precisely by the Incarnation and the involvement of human experience in truth. Faith as taught in the Scripture, is not credulity, but is intellectually and morally relevant. Supernaturalism is not super-history but God's grace met by human faith.
Maintaining Faith

The moral relevance is indicated in several ways none more interesting than by grammar and verb forms. The need for maintaining faith is indicated by the overwhelming preference for the present indicative or participle in referring to believing and indicates the dynamic character of faith in contrast to any static view. A few examples of this will suffice. John's gospel is notable for its teaching about believing on Jesus. 1:12 says that the power to become children of God is given to those who continue to believe. The 3rd chapter has several such passages (e.g., v. 15, 36), with the familiar 16th verse a striking example, "whosoever continues to believe in him . . .," not, "shall have" eternal life, but, subjunctive, "may have" it. That is, eternal life is dependent upon the continuance of faith. The Greek makes dramatically clear what the English fails to quite fully reveal. This contingency of effect to the continuing qualification of believing is expressed in a number of passages, e.g. 6:35; 40; 20:31. In Acts we are told that those believing persons of the circumcized were amazed that the Holy Spirit was given to Cornelius (10:45), and Paul in preaching at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:39) states clearly that those who are believing are justified. Paul says, in Rom. 1:16, that the gospel is the power of God to salvation to those believing (see also 3:20-26), and this same tense is used in Rom. 4:5 and 24. The tenth chapter is a commentary on the faith/works tension making clear that it is a continually believing heart that is considered righteous. In this chapter no obedience is recognized as valid that does not have in it the "heart that believes." If one takes the time and effort to trace the tenses of the Greek in relation to believing he will find the above observations are borne out in the majority of cases. These examples of aorist or perfect tenses
seem to refer to the fact that those in the faith had had a beginning of faith and that having begun they continued into the present to believe.

Every New Testament teaching strengthens one's understanding of the necessity for a "walk" of faith and discourages any reliance on an a-moral, intellectual definition of faith. Whatever is involved in faith, it certainly makes a difference in life. It is this difference that holiness theology is interested in.

Faith and Holiness

Not all persons by any means who believe in the contingency of faith - or some real measure of freedom of will - subscribe to holiness theology but it is, perhaps, significant that all who hold to the doctrine of holiness, also hold to the contingency of faith. It is a fact which guards holiness from philosophical necessity and absolutism as well as opens the door to its possibility when Biblically understood. It keeps holiness, morally structured and preserves it from perfectionism.

The contingency of faith determines the continuance of the Christian walk. This is clearly taught in the New Testament. John's "if" (15:6) cannot be lightly regarded. If a man does not abide in Christ, he is cut off from the branch. No interpretation of Paul's "if" in Romans 8 and 11, which assumes it to be simply a rhetorical hypothesis quite does justice to the moral earnestness of these passages, "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit keep mortifying the deeds of the body, ye shall live,"(8) "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but
toward thee, goodness, if than continue in his goodness: otherwise than also shall be cut off"(11). Again, "You . . . hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprovable in his sight, if ye continue in the faith . . . ." (Col. 1:20-23). No Biblical passage when taken in context gives the slightest ground for assuming that by a single act of faith (which has not gone deeper than an intellectual assent) eternal salvation is assured. Believing must be both a moral act and continuing moral commitments. That is, faith is a life not merely an affirmation. It is hard to see how D. G. Barnhouse can say, "God's promises to a believer are unconditional" (Eternity, Jan. 1958, p. 27), or that Ladd can write, Justification "has nothing at all to do with the correction of my conduct; it concerns my relationship with God" (Ibid., July, 1958, p. 10).

Faith is not Irrational

Faith as active obedience is not necessarily or even properly to be confused with the irrationalism of some contemporary theology which defines faith as commitment only, with no intelligible object of faith. Biblical faith is rational without being rationalistic. It is the whole man response to an appeal that engages the approval of the whole gamut of human consciousness. (See discussion of Biblical interpretation). Abraham did not abandon his comfortable family heritage to venture into a strange country on a vapid whim or a nameless, vague "feeling". He may not have known where he was going but he knew why he went - that He believed God and His promises. Faith is neither the exclusive activity of the mind in "accepting" a proposition, apart from the rest of the
personality, nor is it any activity of the personality apart from the mind. It is a motivation for all action which is based on confidence in a Person. Being personal through and through it is, therefore, moral in the most ultimate way.

Faith is Moral - Love

The moral structure of faith is also indicated by its relation to the heart and to love. The heart is a common symbol for the moral center of the personality. The heart is never, in the Bible, distinguished from the seat of thinking by an emphasis on mere feeling. It is the "inner man" where moral considerations are tested and where the "atmosphere" of the whole person is determined. It is the seat of moral judgment and the arbiter of action. God makes all moral appeals to the heart. Jesus said it was out of the heart that evil proceeded and it was the heart which was to love God wholly. Paul speaks of the heart as being darkened and foolish and lustful and hard and impenitent (Rom. 1-2) and the heart into which the Holy Spirit sheds love (Rom. 5). To him it is the heart that obeys (6:17) and the heart that believes (10:9) unto righteousness. That Christ may dwell in the hearts of the Ephesians, by faith, was Paul's prayer (3:16) and this is related to a "rooting and grounding in love." To the Galations Paul said it was not the external things whether circumcision or no circumcision - but "faith working by love" (5:6) that availed with God. Faith is put in the context of love in I Cor. 13, not contrariwise.

One of the most remarkable and significant teachings about the Christian life is that it is not faith that satisfies the law, but it is love that is the fulfilment of the whole law. This does not mean,
obviously, that one could love without faith but that in love faith comes into its moral significance. It is remarkable the number of times these two words are conjoined. Paul had heard with delight about the Ephesians faith in Christ and love to the saints (1:16) and his parting blessing is, "love with faith from God" (6:23). The Thessalonians were to put on the "breast plate of faith and love" (I, 5:8). To Timothy he wrote that the grace of Christ had been abundant to him in faith and love (I, 1:14) and that Timothy was to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (I, 6:11). Philemon was highly commended for his love and faith toward Christ and all the saints (5).

If faith is a moral act and its maintainance a moral concern, the righteousness which it brings is related most directly to the moral life. It is commonly said that righteousness, or justification, is a purely a legal and eschatological matter, that is, (1) atonement is objective only and not in any sense at all connected with human renovation or human sin or human will or actions. Donald Barnhouse in Eternity (Jan. 1958) says, "God cannot improve human nature (italics his) . . . God will not improve the old sinful nature of man. God has never been interested in moral reform" (p. 26). And (2) the future judgment, for the one who"accepts Christ," is past so that nothing can be charged against him no matter what he does, and that in the next life full redemption will be experienced. To put it in a modern metaphor - a believer enters a sort of time capsule which insulates him against all the cause/effect relationship of sin to life and puts him into a sort of pre-mature heaven where temptation's force is lost by a re-evaluation of sin. As Ladd says, "It is as though we had already entered heaven." This is perfectionism.
Now, it must be conceded that justification is a forensic matter. It, with righteousness and unrighteousness is a legal term. They are borrowed from the court-room. Though we cannot force a full analogy from the halls of justice for the tremendous spiritual truth of God's redemptive work, still some real light is shed on it by our experience with law. One of the most central truths is that the terms of the court-room are symbols of the facts of human experience. The symbols may be objective and impersonal but the situations they describe are thoroughly real. These terms have moral connotations or they are bloodless and totally irrelevant. An "acquitted" young criminal who continues to sin, makes the court a farce when that "acquittal" ties the hands of the court from further trial of him. Everyone knows that the court terms are attempts to describe facts of experience. When the terms no longer describe the real, truth no longer exists, and the terms are irrational—actually immoral.

This truth must be clearly distinguished from the corrolary truth in soteriology that no sinner can atone for his own sin or commend himself to God by anything that he can do. He stands condemned for his own sin and, by disposition, inclined to commit more sin. He is a sorry figure and entirely helpless so far as his relation to law is concerned. But here, in redemption, the analogy of the law court breaks down. It is not primarily the law that we have broken, but a Person whom we have hated. The relationship is primarily personal, not legal. It is here that the pregnant phrase "by faith" transcends the law court and enters the moral realm. Justification cannot be "by law", no matter how willing the Judge or repentant the prisoner. "By faith" breaks the legal logic which so often dominates soteriological theories. "By faith" means that
the prisoner now lives in "newness of life" because he "reckons himself
dead to sin and alive to God" and has yielded himself to God "from the
heart" (Rom. 6) in the obedience of faith. Righteousness, then, which is
the ruling of the divine court regarding him, is not a reversal of all
the revealed moral law of God, and a violation of truth but an example
of the righteousness of God. The sinner was not confirmed in his im-
morality by an amoral judgment but compelled to be what God says he is.
The legal judgment describes a real, by the grace of God.

It is popular to brand this kind of thinking as liberal and
humanistic. A recent article in a popular religious paper (Bell, Ibid.),
in stressing the legal righteousness which Christ provides as being
unsullied by any effort on man's part to achieve it, said that human
pride glories in its supposed ability to achieve goodness and its power
for personal reformation and to make the self righteous. But rather
than this sort of alternative being the only other one to a wholly supine
and a moral reliance on the merit of another, the Biblical teaching seems
to make us uncomfortably aware that God requires the ultimate of us when
we meet Him in the encounter of grace. How easy it would be to relax
all moral effort and expect Christ to do for us what in all good conscience
we know we owe Him. Salvation is of grace and no human excellence can
achieve it. We cannot initiate salvation. We cannot commend ourselves
to God. "Our best" is looking to the wrong source for righteousness
and it results in ugly self-righteousness. But faith is not the cessa-
tion of all effort or the relaxing of all moral tensions, or the loss
of any personal integrity. Faith is a reversal of all dependencies from
other than God - to God Himself. It involves obedience, not primarily
to law but to God whose spirit interprets law spiritually to the inner
heart. "By faith" is a new direction of all of life's activities and love. It initiates the life-long, yea, eternity-long, serving of God. Faith is not the surrender of moral responsibility but the beginning of real moral maturation. It is not necessarily a change in activity (it is conceivable, though not likely, that one could keep all written law), but it is a change in the moral atmosphere of the person — a change of the object of affection. It means that instead of living for the approval of others, or the self, or pride of personal integrity measured by the letter of the law, we now look beyond these things -- not to despise them, for they are right in their places -- to God who has been made Lord of the whole life. There is a growing sensitivity to His approval or disapproval. We "take orders from God," without taking advantage of that apparent freedom from external restraint. Taking orders from God does not liberate us from social obligation and Biblical teaching and common human responsibilities. It does not permit us to disentangle ourselves from the interlocking human relations that constitutes normal and proper humanhood. We cannot fly in the face of convention and push away the hands that cling to us for strength and help. "Taking orders from God," in the life of faith means that all our thoughts, words and actions, stand under the constant judgment of God as to the motivation, intention, moral quality of our obedience. Paul describes this life of faith in a clear and forceful way (I Cor. 4:1-5) when he said it is required of a steward that he be found faithful. The faithfulness was not a judgment which another could make, either favorably or otherwise. It was not even enough for the personal conscience to approve. The final word must be spoken by the Lord.

"By faith" is the moral link between the provision of Calvary and sinful men. It makes the juridical term justification a true
description of the redeemed life. It prevents moral complacency by demanding moral relevancy. It undercuts all possibility of spiritual pride or the possibility of a religious aristocracy. It prohibits isolation from the world and forces full participation in it. It robs of any comfort from verbal symbols, or intellectualism, and compels a continuing, faithful, patient, prayerful, sensitive growing awareness of God's Spirit and His directive for daily life. Some kind of idolatry is the only alternative to the Lordship of Christ and idolatry is the essence of sin. Justification is a false-hood if it is imputed to an idolatrous man. No idolatrous person can say, "I accept Christ as my Saviour and Lord." The saving Christ is not a proposition to be accepted but a Person to be loved and obeyed.

Faith, then, is the continuing atmosphere in which all the benefits of grace and steps in salvation are made possible. We could say with Hannah Whitehall Smith that the believer has everything provisionally but nothing is actually his until by faith he appropriates it (Christian's Secret, p. 52). And this appropriation is morally structured. It is of the essence of obedience and love. That is faith gears into moral experience.