

A  
DEFENCE  
OF THE  
DOCTRINE  
OF  
Eternal Justification  
FROM SOME  
EXCEPTIONS made to it  
BY  
Mr. BRAGGE, and others.

---

By JOHN BRINE

---

LONDON:

Printed and sold by A. WARD at the King's-Arms  
in Little-Britain; and H. WHITRIDGE, at the Corner  
of Castle-Alley, near the Royal-Exchange, 1732.  
[Price One Shilling.]

---

Reprinted 1987 by:

THE BAPTIST STANDARD BEARER, INC.

No. 1 Iron Oaks Drive

Paris, Arkansas 72855

(From whence it is available in printed form)

---

PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

"Nobody has understood Christianity who does not understand. . . the word 'Justified'. . ."

John R. W. Stott, quoted from John Blanchard, compiling editor, *Gathered Gold*,  
(Welwyn, England, Evangelical Press, 1984), vol. 1, p. 178.

Taken strictly by itself, this statement might lead one to believe that Mr. Stott was unbalanced and extremist in his views of the IMPORTANCE of the doctrine of Justification. The Publisher of this tract does not know everything that Mr. Stott believes about Justification, and we want to be very careful not to give our readers the impression that we AGREE with him in ALL theology, for we do not. Nevertheless, with emphasis, we would point to the fact that his statement above reiterates the consistent witness of some of the most well-known theological writers of the last four hundred years. For example, in 1580, Martin Luther said: "This article [of Justification] is the head and cornerstone which alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves and protects the church; without it the Church of God cannot subsist one hour." *Luther's Works*, (St. Louis, Concordia Pub. House, 1960), vol. 14, p. 168. Again, Luther said: "If this doctrine stands, the church stands . . . diligently learn the article of justification, as I often admonish

you. For all the other articles of our faith are comprehended in it, and if it remains sound, then all the rest are sound." Works, vol. 9, p. 376. Once more, Luther said: "It has been urged that the Papacy still confesses 'fundamental articles' of the Christian faith, such as the article of the Trinity and the theanthropic Person of Christ. We answer: These 'fundamental articles' save no man if at the same time he denies and curses the Christian doctrine of justification. Without the article of justification all other doctrines are empty husks." Works, vol. 8, p. 629. William Cunningham states that in Luther's view about the importance of Justification we find THE NORM among all the Reformers. In speaking about the Reformers' views of Justification, Cunningham said: "This was the great fundamental distinguishing doctrine of the Reformation, and was regarded by all the Reformers as of primary and paramount importance. . . . There is no subject which possesses more intrinsic importance than attaches to this one, and there is none with respect to which the Reformers were more thoroughly harmonious in their sentiments." Historical Theology (London, Banner of Truth, 1969), vol. 2, p. 1. In 1692, we find another example of the consistent, historical witness to the importance of the doctrine of Justification: the Puritan, Thomas Watson. He said: "Justification is the very hinge and pillar of Christianity. An error about justification is dangerous, like a defect in a foundation." A Body of Divinity (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 1978), p. 226. Moving up in history to 1768, Abraham Booth wrote:

"The doctrine of justification makes a very distinguished figure in that religion which is from above, and is a capital article of that 'faith which was once delivered to the saints.' Far from being a merely speculative point, it spreads its influence through the whole body of divinity [theology], runs through all Christian experience, and operates in every part of practical godliness. Such is its grand importance, that a mistake about it has a malignant efficacy, and is attended with a long train of dangerous consequences --- nor can this appear strange, when it is considered, that this doctrine of justification is no other than the way of a sinner's acceptance with God. Being of such peculiar moment, it is inseparably connected with many other evangelical truths, the harmony and beauty of which we cannot behold, while this is misunderstood. Till this appears in its glory, they will be involved in darkness. It is, if any thing may be so called, a fundamental article; and certainly requires our most serious consideration." The Reign of Grace (London, Griffin Wright, 1768), pp. 117,118.

In 1769, Dr. John Gill said:

"The doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ, is a doctrine of great importance; the apostle speaks of it as if the essence of the gospel lay in it; and calls the opposite to it, justification by the works of the law, another gospel; see Gal. 1:6,7 and 3:8. It is a fundamental article of the gospel; some have called it, the basis of Christianity; it was the great doctrine of the reformation; what our first reformers made their chief study; and by it cut the sinews of popery, the anti-christian doctrines of penance and purgatory, of pardons and indulgencies, of the merit of good works, works of supererogation, etc. Luther used to call it, articulus stantis vel cedentis ecclesiae, the article of the church, by which it stands or falls; as this is, the church is; if this obtains, the church is in a well-settled and prosperous state; but if this loses ground, and is rejected, it is in a ruinous one: if this is a rule to judge by, it may be easily discerned, in what case the church, and interest of religion, now are. This doctrine is the ground and foundation of all solid joy, peace, and comfort, in this life, and hope of eternal glory hereafter." A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity (London, Mathews and Leigh, 1809), p. 503.

Moving on in history, in 1836, we have the witness of Dr. John Dick:

"An error upon this point is fundamental . . . . If we entertain right views of the doctrine of justification, we cannot go far wrong with respect to any other essential truth of Christianity; but a mistake here will affect the whole system, and give rise to false conceptions of the character of God, of the mediation of Christ, of the law, of the gospel, of grace, and of works. It was justly termed by Luther, *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae*, the article of a standing or falling church; because, according to the views which are adopted in any church with respect to the means of regaining the favour of God, true piety and holiness will flourish or decline in it." Lectures in Theology (New York, M. W. Dodd, 1836), vol. 2, p. 184.

In 1878, Dr. R. L. Dabney wrote:

"It is obvious to the first glance, that it is a question of the first importance to sinners, 'How shall man be just with God?' The doctrine of justification was the radical principle, as we have seen, out of which grew the Reformation from Popery. It was by adopting this, that the Reformers were led out of darkness into light. Indeed, when we consider how many of the fundamental points of theology are connected with justification, we can hardly assign it too important a place. Our view of this doctrine must determine, or be determined by, our view of Christ's satisfaction; and this, again, carries along with it the whole doctrine concerning the natures and person of Christ. And if the proper deity of Him be denied, that of the Holy Ghost will very certainly fall along with it; so that the very doctrine of the Trinity is destroyed by extreme views concerning justification. Again: 'It is God that justifieth.' How evident, then, that our views of justification will involve those of God's law and moral attributes? The doctrine of original sin is also brought in question, when we assert the impossibility of man's so keeping the law of God, as to justify himself. . . . Hence, the propriety of Luther's decision, when, taught by his personal, as well as his theological, experience, he declared justification to be the cardinal doctrine of the Church's creed." Lectures in Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1972), pp. 618,619.

And, as a final witness, in 1882, Dr. James P. Boyce said:

"No doctrine of Scripture is more important than that of justification. It involves the whole method of the salvation of sinners. It is vitally connected with all other fundamental doctrines. A correct conception of it cannot exist when other truths are ignored, or only partially received. The opinions held upon this point control in great part the theological views in general of all Christian individuals and parties. The importance of a correct knowledge of what God has taught on this subject cannot therefore be exaggerated." Abstract of Systematic Theology (Louisville, C. T. Dearing, 1882), p. 394.

Therefore, based upon the testimonies we have now considered, we can see that Mr. Stott's statement, "Nobody has understood Christianity who does not understand the word, 'Justified' . . ." is NOT unbalanced or extremist; rather, it is worthy of our prolonged and prayerful consideration. Truth is truth, no matter where it is found. The vital importance of the doctrine of Justification has been testified to in the above quotations by men who are Anglican, Lutheran, Puritan, Strict and Particular Baptist, Scotch Presbyterian, Old School Southern Presbyterian and Southern Baptist. The Apostle Paul said: "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Cor. 13:1). The earlier witnesses we have given certainly did not contrive with the later ones to connive all who would listen to their words. There is no reason for the later witnesses to agree on the subject, seeing they represent obviously different religious groups, unless the truth is so obvious that it cannot be gainsaid! Knowing somewhat of the integrity and Christian character of the witnesses involved, we are forced to the latter conclusion. Therefore, it appears to the Publishers that the doctrine of

Justification by the righteousness of Christ, is a doctrine of great vital importance. Right views of Justification will serve to assist us in right views of all the other essential truths of Christianity. If, "Nobody has understood Christianity who does not understand. . . the word 'Justified'. . .," then the importance of a correct knowledge of what God has taught on this subject cannot be exaggerated!

There are two conclusions that force themselves upon our minds from the foregoing facts: (1) he who understands Justification best, must necessarily understand Christianity best, and (2) anything that will facilitate my understanding of Justification will also facilitate my understanding of Christianity and, therefore, will be a great blessing to my soul.

"As a general rule, the most effective way of getting rid of darkness is to let in the light." A. W. Pink, *The Doctrines of Election and Justification* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1974), p. 185. There is a lot of darkness regarding the doctrine of Justification by the righteousness of Christ, and a lot of darkness surrounding the life, character and theological views of John Brine, the author of the following tract. Therefore, we deemed it advantageous to the saints for us to republish Brine's *A Defense of the Doctrine of Eternal Justification*, in order to shed some light upon the life and times of John Brine himself, and upon the doctrine of Justification, also. We are not unmindful of the fact that Eternal Justification has been denied by many theologians (for example, James H. Thornwell, *Works*, vol. 2, p. 282; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 517-519; etc., etc. ). Nor are we unaware that John Brine has been criticized as an Antinomian Hyper-Calvinist, even by some of the Baptists themselves (i.e., Richard Cook, *A Story of the Baptists*, pp. 189-190; J. M. Cramp, *Baptist History*, Part 7, ch. 1, p. 499; ch. 2, pp. 505-506). Nevertheless, we are also mindful of what the Scriptures state: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Ex. 23:2); ". . . that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God" (Lk. 16:15); "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21); and "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 Jn. 4:1).

The Publishers wish to make their readers aware (if they are not, already) that regardless of the criticism, of the past or the present, leveled at John Brine, there are, and there were, competent judges of a different opinion. For example, HOW has John Brine himself been evaluated in America? Wm. Cathcart said: "Mr. Brine was a great man measured by his intellect, his usefulness and his influence. He was a man of deep piety; he was intimately acquainted with the Holy Scriptures. He had an enthusiastic love for the doctrines of grace." *The Baptist Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia, Louis H. Everts, 1881), p. 135. In England, John Brine received similar praises. John Ryland "enumerates him among the seven noble divines . . . . These were, Dr. John Owen, Mr. Stephen Charnock, Dr. Herman Witsius, Mr. James Hervey, Dr. John Gill, Mr. George Whitfield and Mr. John Brine." J. A. Jones, *A Brief Memoir of Mr. John Brine* (London, James Paul, 1851), p. 5. HOW was John Brine received among the Baptist people of his day? "John Brine and Dr. Gill were chief men in the denomination for nearly half a century." J. M. Cramp, *Baptist History* (Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society, 1869), p. 499. Wm. Cathcart said: "Next to Dr. Gill . . . he [Brine] was for years the most influential leader in the Baptist denomination." *The Baptist Encyclopedia*, p. 135. HOW were his writings and doctrinal views evaluated? Joseph Ivimey said: "Mr. Brine wrote in the most powerful and evangelical manner." *A History of the English Baptists* (London, B. J. Holdsworth, 1823), vol. 3, p. 218. Concerning his writings, John Ryland said: "Mr. Brine entertains us with the most manly reasoning on all branches of doctrinal and practical religion, and teaches us the most intense personal holiness by his own example." Jones, *Brief Memoir*, p.

5. Again, John Ryland said: "Brine's treatises are singularly excellent." S. A. Allibone, *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors* (Philadelphia, J. B. Lippencott and Co., 1874), vol. 1, p. 247. Concerning John Brine's doctrinal views, Wm. Cathcart said: "His doctrinal sentiments were in exact harmony with those of Dr. Gill." *Op. cit.* Joseph Ivimey, a critic of Brine and Gill, characterized these two men and their doctrines as follows: "The religious views of these truly great men were perfectly congenial upon religious subjects; they were both Calvinists of the supralapsarian scheme, and believed the doctrine of the elect being actually justified from eternity." *Op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 367.

For emphasis, we repeat that these men and their views have been severely criticized as Hyper-Calvinistic and their views as leading to Antinomianism. However, even their critics were forced by the word of their testimony and the godliness of their lives to witness to the contrary on their behalf. Listen to what Ivimey wrote:

". . . in the opinion of the writer, the notion of justification, antecedent to a living faith upon the son of God, is the root of all the Antinomian errors, yet he is far from believing that Mr. Brine or Dr. Gill, or those who think with them upon that subject, are Antinomians: this they fully prove by their zeal for the necessity of practical godliness, as the fruit of sanctification and the evidence of justification; and by their so strenuously contending that the law is a rule of life to believers." *History of the English Baptists*, vol. 3, p. 367.

If some people have misunderstood the eternal love, eternal union and eternal Justification views of John Brine and John Gill, if those people have so misconstrued these concepts as to live ungodly lives or if other erroneous deductions were made from those doctrines, Brine and Gill can no more be held accountable or accused than the Apostle Paul can, because some people "wrest" the Scriptures he wrote, "to their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16).

More information about Mr. John Brine can be found in the Publisher's Foreword and Brief Memoir of John Brine in the paperback book, *A Treatise on Various Subjects*, now available from this Publisher. Many have criticized the eternal Justification views of Tobias Crisp, John Brine and John Gill as leading to Antinomianism. Yet, each of these men has been personally vindicated --- repeatedly --from Antinomian habits of life. It seems that either these men were inconsistent with their own so-called "Antinomian" (?) principles, or their critics (both past and present) "darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge" (Job 38:2), because the evident facts do not align with the criticism. We now ask our readers to study the following tract thoroughly, with the Scriptures in hand, and let truthfulness judge.

In conclusion let us now listen to one last witness in the matter; one who was not who was not a Baptist and who was noted for his understanding of salvation by grace, and his godliness, the Anglican clergyman --- Augustus Toplady. (Remember that John Brine's "doctrinal sentiments were in exact harmony with those of Dr. Gill." This you will see in the following tract. ) Mr. Toplady said: "I have given Dr. Gill's tract on Justification another reading; not without MUCH edification and comfort. I do think that this great man's arguments for the proper ETERNITY of this blessing, *ex parte Dei*, are unanswerable." John Rippon, *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Reverend and Learned, John Gill, D. D.* (London, J. Bennett, 1838), p. 21.

In 1949, Professor Louis Berkhof wrote: "The study of doctrinal truth, apart from its historical background, leads to a truncated theology. There has been too much of this in the past, and there is a great deal of it even in the present day. The result has been a lack of a sound understanding and a proper evaluation of the truth. . . . Surely, a theologian must take account of the present situation in the religious world, and ever study the truth anew, but HE CANNOT NEGLECT THE LESSONS OF THE PAST WITH IMPUNITY." *The History of Christian*

Doctrine (London, Banner of Truth, 1969), preface, p. 5. Such is exactly the view of the Publishers, regarding Eternal Justification.

The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc.

Ps. 60:4,5; Is. 59:19; 62:10-12

Stonehaven

Paris, Arkansas

July 28, 1987

NOTE: Material in this Foreword that is emphasized by the use of ALL CAPITALS or bold print is by the discretion of the Publisher.

---

A  
DEFENCE  
OF THE  
DOCTRINE  
OF

Eternal Justification.

The doctrine of Eternal Justification has been lately objected to by Mr. [Robert] Bragge in some sermons of his on that subject, published with some other sermons preached at Limestone [Lime Street Lecture, London, 1732], by several ministers wherein they propose according to the general title, to state and defend the great doctrines of the gospel, and to answer such objections as are usually advanced against them.

As I have reason to believe Justification from Eternity to be a scriptural doctrine, I think myself under obligation to appear in its defense; and therefore have determined to communicate my thoughts on that subject in this public manner.

I hope that my attempt to establish what I apprehend to be a truth of the gospel, though opposed by Mr. Bragge, will not be interpreted as an instance of disrespect towards him; who, I am sensible deserves well of all who are friends to the interest of Christ, for his longstanding and eminent service in the church of God.

I am humbly of opinion, that it would have been to much better advantage, if Mr. Bragge had spent those pages which are taken up in treating about the time of Justification, in more fully proving that Christ's righteousness is the matter of it, instead of militating against Justification from eternity; which he cannot but know has been asserted by some able and judicious divines. It is generally allowed, that in refuting any opinion, it is necessary not only to raise objections against it, and to consider with what difficulties it is clogged; but also to answer the arguments offered in defense of it, by those who believe it a truth. The latter of which Mr. Bragge has wholly neglected: his reasons for it he best knows. I am persuaded he could not be insensible, that there are several arguments made use of, to clear up and defend that important truth, which deserve consideration, and therefore his passing them over in silence gives just reason to conclude, that he thought those arguments too cogent and forcible to admit of a real answer.

This great doctrine has been fully stated, and strongly defended, by Mr. [John] Gill, and others before him; whose arguments ought to be considered, and answers given to them, if anything is done to purpose in this controversy.

In the vindication of this great point, it is not necessary that I should treat of the matter or form of justification, for in neither of these do I differ from Mr. Bragge. The matter of our Justification I firmly believe to be the righteousness of Christ; and the form of it, the imputation

of His righteousness to us: though I must confess, that some expressions have fallen from this gentleman's pen, which do not very well consist with his own sentiments with respect to the form as we shall have occasion to observe hereafter. Nor is it needful, that I should largely treat of Justification, as it is eternal, seeing it has not long since been set in a good light by the author whose name is mentioned above; that would be *actum agere*, doing the same thing over again, which cannot be judged necessary: yet it may not be improper to mention briefly those arguments, by which this truth is confirmed. The method I shall observe, in treating on this subject, will be as follows:

FIRST, I shall enquire what it is to be justified by faith.

SECONDLY, mention those arguments which have been advanced for the proof of eternal Justification. And,

THIRDLY, attend to Mr. Bragge's objections against that point, as well as some additional objections from other persons.

FIRST, I am to inquire what it is to be justified by faith. Very great controversies have been moved concerning this. Some affirm, that we are so, in a proper sense; or that faith is the matter and cause of our Justification, as the Arminians and Socinians: this others justly deny; and assert, that Christ's righteousness alone is the matter and cause of our Justification. I shall here endeavor to prove, that Justification by faith has no causality in this affair; it is not the impulsive, material, nor instrumental cause thereof.

1. Faith is not the impulsive or moving cause of Justification. It is an act of pure and free grace, without any motive in the creature: therefore the Apostle saith, "being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:7). But this benefit would not be of grace, but of works, was our faith the impulsive cause of it; because faith is a work or act of ours, as we learn from the words of Christ: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29). Salvation is not of works, in any branch of it; "for by grace are ye saved, through faith; that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9). From whence it is evident that Justification, which is a considerable part of salvation, cannot be by works. The grace of God eminently appears in contriving the way of our Justification by Christ's righteousness, and in sending Him into the world to work out a righteousness for us, in which we stand complete in His sight: hence we are said to be, "justified by his grace, that we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit. 3:7). No other cause can be assigned why sinners are justified in the sight of God, than His free favor and sovereign pleasure, as the effect of which He determined to justify them in the righteousness of His Son.

2. Neither is faith the matter of our Justification; which appears by these arguments.

(1) Because that righteousness by which we are justified before God is not our own. All true believers, as the great Apostle did, esteem "their own righteousness and works but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord; and desire to be found in him, not having their own righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). It is manifest, that the Apostle excluded everything from the business of his Justification which might be accounted his own; and, consequently, faith itself, which though it is a fruit of special grace, may properly be reckoned our own, as we are the subjects of it. Hence it is that the Holy Ghost speaks of faith as ours: "But the just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4). All dependence on faith for Justification is laid aside by the saints, who are sensible that many deficiencies attend it, and that nothing which is imperfect can recommend them to God.

(2) A perfect righteousness is required, in order to our Justification in God's sight. His law insists upon a complete obedience to all its precepts, and condemns where it is wanting; for the language of it is, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them" (Gal. 3:10). Nor will God, in any instance, act contrary to His own law, which cannot be made void; for it is the eternal standard and rule of righteousness, according to which he will always proceed in judgment. Faith is not a righteousness free from imperfection, and therefore it is not such as is demanded by the Law; wherefore we cannot be justified by it.

(3) Faith receives that righteousness by which we are justified, and therefore cannot be that righteousness itself. That which is laid hold on, and embraced by faith, must needs be something different from it, as the act and the object are distinct. Christ's righteousness is that to which the faith of a believer looks, and on which it wholly depends for Justification before God: therefore faith is not the matter of his justifying righteousness.

(4) Justification is not by works; for if so, boasting will not be excluded, as it must eternally be in the whole of our salvation: for "it is not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:9), as was observed before. Faith is an act and work of ours, and therefore cannot be the matter of our Justification.

(5) We are justified by the obedience and sufferings of Christ, and consequently not by faith. The Apostle expressly asserts that we are justified by His blood; "Much more then being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:9): and also, that we are made righteous by His obedience; "As by the offense of one many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19): therefore not by faith.

3. Faith is not the instrumental cause. In this I am entirely of Mr. Baxter's opinion, who reasons thus: "If faith be an instrument, it is the instrument of God or man; not of man, for man is not the principal efficient, he doth not justify himself; not of God, for it is not God that believeth." Aphorisms, Thesis 56, Richard Baxter, p. 219. No act of man can be an instrument in those acts of God which are immanent: Justification is such an act; and as Justification is not an act of man's, or he doth not justify himself, faith cannot be his instrument in an act which is none of his. Upon the whole, it may be strongly concluded, that the *tocredere*, or act of believing, is not imputed to us for righteousness, but the object of faith. That this was the Apostle's meaning when he thus expresses himself, "for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness," is justly observed by Maresius: "This faith, which is imputed to us for righteousness, ought to be taken metonymically for Christ being apprehended by faith; inasmuch as faith apprehends and applies the righteousness of Christ to us, not simply, or as altogether another's, but as ours: as Paul, his own inherent legal righteousness being rejected by him, sought that which is through the faith of Christ, and of God by faith; whence also it is called the righteousness of God, as that fear by which Jacob swore, was called the fear of his father; where fear is metonymically put for God, whom he feared." *Hydra Socin.*, Vol. III, Maresius, Ch. xxi., p. 604. Thus far he. It is evident, that sometimes by faith Christ must be understood; as when it is said, "but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:25); that is to say, since Christ, the object of faith, is come into the world, we are no longer under the law as a schoolmaster. Faith is not so much as *causa sine qua non* in this affair, as appears by the eternal justification of the elect; it has not the least concern herein, if Justification is properly taken. But,

If Justification be considered in the knowledge or perception of it, it is by faith; and that is intended when we are said to be justified by faith, if faith is to be taken in a proper sense. By this grace we behold our natural pollution and inability to perform that which is good; the



perfection and spirituality of the law; the necessity of an interest in Christ's righteousness, in order to our acceptance with God; the glory and excellency of it: in consequence of which we renounce our own works, and wholly depend upon the spotless righteousness of Christ. At some times, also, we by faith view that we are all fair, and without spot in the sight of God, as He considers us in the glorious robe of His Son's righteousness, though full of impurities and spots in ourselves. In those seasons we are filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; and can draw nigh to God, as our Father, with a holy freedom and liberty. This is the concern which faith has in our Justification: it beholds and views it, but doth not give being to it, or impute the righteousness of Christ to us, that is God's act without us; and therefore Justification by faith, is only the comfortable knowledge or perception of that gracious privilege.

Two reasons may be offered why we are said to be justified by the grace of faith, even in our apprehension thereof.

1. Because faith is the eye of our souls, by which we view it, or discern the justifying righteousness of Christ, as imputed to us.

2. This grace is of a soul-humbling and Christ-exalting nature, as Mr. Bragge observes: "Of all the graces of the Spirit, faith is the most emptying, and accordingly goes poor and indigent to Christ; other graces bring as it were something along with them, whereas faith brings nothing to Christ but a naked back." *Sermons Preached at Limestreet*, Vol. II, p. 153. And so it is eminently suited to the design of God in the justification of sinners: "For it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed" (Rom. 4:16). It may not be improper to observe here, that it is asserted, that "elect infants dying in infancy, are justified by faith in the habit, though not by faith in the act." Vol. II, p. 170. If this is true, it follows, that God doth not justify all His elect in one and the same way, but some by the habit, and others by the act of faith: for the proof of which, I am of opinion that no solid argument can be offered. Again, a principle or habit cannot see, or receive an object: now if Christ's righteousness is to or upon us, in a way of believing, and it cannot be ours till actually received by faith, both which are affirmed by our author; how come elect infants, who die in infancy, to be actually interested in that righteousness, seeing they cannot act faith, and consequently are incapable of receiving Christ's righteousness? Therefore it must necessarily be concluded, that the gift of Christ's righteousness becomes actually theirs, without any receiving act in them: and unless it can be proved that God justifies His elect in a different manner, that is to say, some by the habit, and others by the act of faith; the same must be granted concerning those of the elect, who live to riper years. Farther, from hence I cannot but conclude, that no act of faith is necessary to the being of Justification; for, if so, those of the elect who die in infancy, cannot be justified. But why an act of faith should be required to the actual Justification of some of the elect, and not to the Justification of others, I am not able to conceive.

The grace of faith, by which we apprehend our Justification is of the operation of God, it is an effect of powerful and efficacious grace, and not the produce of human power, skill, or industry. It is not gotten, but given, as is evident from those words of the Apostle: "By grace are ye saved, through faith; that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2: 9). And the grace of God is abundantly displayed, in working faith in our souls; over which, as I take it, a veil is drawn by our author in this exhortation of his, "With all your gettings, get faith." Page 173.

Dead sinners, or such as are void of spiritual life, cannot act spiritually, and therefore it is not in their power to get faith; and as they have no ability to believe, they have no inclination to it, for their hearts are full of enmity against God. Besides, if faith is gotten, or acquired by men, they make themselves to differ, and have whereof to boast, for then they have something which they

did not receive as a gift of free grace; which is constantly denied in Scripture, and will never be owned by the saints. Again: it may as well be required of sinners to form divine and supernatural principles in their souls, or to create spiritual life in themselves, as to get faith, for the meaning is the same, which is a work proper to God. Moreover, such an exhortation is not likely to debase and humble proud sinners, or to convince them that they are impotent to good; but rather to swell their haughtiness and pride, and occasion them to imagine they are possessed of a power which they are not: thereby also, it is not improbable, but many saints, who are sensible of their weakness, and of the strength of unbelief, may be dejected in their souls, because they cannot, many times when they desire it, exercise that faith which is wrought in their hearts by the Spirit of God. But this by the by.

SECONDLY, I now proceed to mention those arguments, by which the truth of eternal Justification is confirmed.

1. Justification is an immanent, and consequently an eternal act. This argument must be allowed conclusive, unless it can be proved that Justification is a transient act.

2. The elect were by God considered and viewed in Christ from everlasting; which is excellently expressed by Dr. [Thomas] Goodwin in these words: "Look, as God did not, in his decrees about creation, consider the body of Adam singly and apart from his soul, nor yet the soul without the body (I speak of his creation and state thereby) neither should either so much as exist, but as the one in the other: so nor Christ and his church in election, which gave the first existence to Christ as a head, and to the church as his body, which each had in God's decrees." Exposition of the First Chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, London, 1681, Pt. 1, p. 72. Now as God considers His elect in Christ, they are either objects of condemnation, or Justification. The former must be denied, and therefore the latter evidently follows; except, as God beholds the elect in Christ, they are neither objects of condemnation, nor Justification; which is an absurdity that none will admit.

3. The elect were blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ before the foundation of the world; and therefore with Justification, for that is a spiritual blessings "This grace by which we are justified, was given us in Christ from eternity, because from eternity God loved us in Christ, and made us accepted in him." De Natura Dei, Jerome Zanchii, Heidleberg, 1577, Bk. 4, c. 2, p. 355.

4. When Christ, as a surety, engaged for the elect, they were justified. "At the same time in which Christ became a surety for us, and our sins were imputed to him, we were absolved from guilt, and reputed just; that is, actively justified": (Armin., Johannes Maccovius, or Makowsky, c. 10, p. 120.) which was from everlasting, or before the foundation of the world.

5. God eternally decreed not to punish sin in His people, but in His Son. His decree to punish sin in His Son, includes His will to impute it to Him; and His purpose not to punish it in His elect, takes in His will not to impute it to them, and must be their Justification from all sin in His sight.

6. "Christ's atonement and bearing sin was in the eye of God from eternity, as if already done: hence the patriarchs were actually and personally justified by it," as Dr. [Isaac] Chauncy well observes. Neonomianism Unmasked, London, 1692, Part 2, p. 53. Therefore why may it not be concluded that the elect were justified from everlasting, since God had the atonement of Christ then in His eye? I should be glad to see these arguments thoroughly examined, and solidly refuted, if they do not sufficiently prove what they are brought for.

THIRDLY, I shall now go on to answer those objections which are advanced against eternal Justification.

Here I shall, first attend to those raised by Mr. Bragge and, secondly to various objections made by some other persons.

I am, first, to begin with those objections which Mr. Bragge has advanced against eternal Justification. Now he objects thus:

Objection 1. (P. 156) "Faith must be more than a manifestation of our Justification, because the saints are said in Scripture to have access, by faith, into the grace wherein they stand;" "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access, by faith, into this grace wherein we stand" (Rom. 5:1,2). That is, we stand actually pardoned, and actually justified before God, as well as actually reconciled with God. In the opinion of our author, this text is a sufficient proof that the saints, by faith, enter into a justified state, and consequently cannot be justified before they believe. In order to show that he mistakes the sense of the text, I would observe these things:

If by faith we are actually brought into, or fixed in a justified state, it will follow that this grace has a causal influence on our Justification; which it is evident it has not, because Justification is no other than the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, which is an act proper to God. If our actual Justification is by faith, it is either by the habit, or the act of faith: now, as I apprehend, there is no ground to assert that Justification is by the habit of faith, because no action can be ascribed to faith as a habit; and should any assert that it is by the act of faith, I would inquire of them, whether Justification is only by the first act of faith, and not also by renewed acts? If it is only by the first act of faith, it then evidently follows, that faith has not the same concern or use in our Justification, in its renewed acts, as in the first act of it. Besides, if our actual Justification depends upon, or is by repeated acts of faith; this, as a necessary consequence, will arise from thence, that when faith is not in exercise, believers are not justified; because, according to this, faith gives actual being to Justification. Wherefore, I cannot but conclude, that if Justification be the benefit designed by that grace, into which the saints are said to have access by faith, thereby is not intended, that Justification, as to its actual being, commences when they believe, but only that at that time they have the comfortable apprehension of it. But I am persuaded that upon a due consideration of that strict connection which these words have with the first verse, we shall see reason to conclude, that some other privilege, and not Justification, is intended by that grace, into which the saints are said to have access by faith: for it is to be observed that the Apostle, in the first verse, asserts that we are justified by faith; "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, if we suppose that He intends the same thing in the second verse, we shall make him guilty of a gross tautology, and shall then be obliged to take the words in this view; "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access, by faith, into the grace of Justification;" or thus, "being justified by faith, by faith also we are justified." But I imagine, that none will allow that the Apostle could possibly be guilty of such a needless repetition; and, if not, it must be granted that some other privilege, and not Justification, is to be understood by that grace, into which the saints are said to have access by faith. Now our access to the throne of grace is usually intended, when the Greek word for access is made use of in other places. And I can see no reason why that may not be allowed to be the sense of it in this. The design of the Apostle in the words, seems to me to be this; that through Christ we have freedom of access unto the throne of grace: the preposition eis may as well be rendered unto, as into; whereat we stand; for en may be translated at, as it sometimes is: as for instance; "at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12: 2). So that the words strongly imply, that our access to the throne of grace, is a standing privilege or benefit,

of which we shall never be deprived, because our liberty of access to God depends upon, or is secured by the infinite merit of Christ's blood and righteousness, which will eternally remain the same. From the whole, it is evident, that this text affords nothing for the proof of what is collected from it by Mr. Bragge that the elect of God are not actually justified before they believe, or that their actual Justification is by faith.

Objection 2. (Pp. 159,160) "Was faith only a manifestation, i.e., of our Justification, why is it compared to a hand, as well as to an eye?"

I answer: Faith, as an eye, views that it is necessary we be furnished with a righteousness which is perfect, and that we have no such righteousness of our own. It also beholds the perfection and glory of the righteousness of Christ; and, as a hand, it lays hold on and receives that righteousness for our Justification in the sight of God. But our act of receiving this righteousness, is not the imputation of it to us, which is the ratio formalis of our Justification, and is God's act alone; our receiving act can have no concern therein. Besides, we receive Christ's righteousness as justifying, and consequently are justified before our reception of it. Further, if the act of receiving Christ's righteousness is our actual Justification, we justify ourselves; whereas Justification is an act of God's grace towards us in Christ, as has been before observed. Moreover, if actual Justification is by our receiving Christ's righteousness, it is repeated as often as we act faith on the justifying righteousness of Christ, except this grace, after the first act of it, ceases to have the same concern in Justification as it has in its first act; which, if any take the liberty to assert, I hope they will make it fully appear. To conclude: when it is said that Justification by faith is the comfortable knowledge of it, therein is included the act of renouncing our own righteousness, and applying to Christ's, as that which alone can justify us before God. But what proof this affords, that Justification by faith is to be understood in a proper sense, and cannot precede it, I am at a loss to understand.

Objection 3. (P. 100) "Faith, in the business of Justification, must be more than a manifestation; because, was it no other, other graces would share with faith, in its use and office, as it respects our Justification, for they all speak by way of manifestation, and evidence our being loved, and chose in Christ from everlasting."

In this objection there are several grand mistakes: there is something in it which is perfectly irreconcilable to what our author has before asserted. Here he tells us, that faith, and other graces, are a manifestation of God's everlasting love, and His choice of us in Christ; which are immanent acts, or I know not what acts of God must be looked upon to be such: Nay, he himself allows they are, in these words; "All the purposes of God, as they are in him, are immanent acts." (p. 169). Therefore, God's purpose or will to love His people from everlasting, and His eternal election of them in Christ, must needs be such acts. He elsewhere asserts, that it is impossible the immanent acts of God should be known by any creature: for, concerning them, he delivers himself in this manner; "As he must be a man, and not an inferior being, who knows what the immanent acts in man are, or how things lie in his mind and will; and he must be an angel, who knows what the immanent acts of an angel are; so he must be God, who knows what the immanent act of God are, or how things lie in the divine mind and will. Thus God himself speaks of them; 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord: For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'" (Pp. 95, 96).

It must be allowed, that it is a most palpable contradiction to assert, that the immanent acts of God cannot be known, and yet that faith, with other graces, is a manifestation of those acts. Again, let us consider what Mr. Bragge has said about the impossibility of knowing the

immanent acts of God. Now, that no creature below man can understand his immanent acts, must readily be granted; because no creature inferior to man is endued with reason: but that no creature, unless an angel, can know the immanent acts of angels, is a mistake. Their acts are rational acts, and may be understood by a principle of reason, with which the mind of man is furnished; not but the immanent acts of angels must be discovered to man, in order to his knowledge of them; and so likewise the immanent acts of men must be declared, before they can be known by others. The same also is to be observed concerning the immanent acts of God; they, in some measure, are to be understood by rational or intelligent creatures, as our author himself is obliged to allow in another place, though he is so unhappy as to contradict himself here. It is certain that God's immanent acts could never have been understood by us, if God Himself had not revealed them: but have we not, in the Bible a clear discovery of His immanent acts, which relate to the salvation of His elect; and are they not revealed, in order to be known by them for their peace and comfort? Further: are not God's purposes to save the elect, and the contrivance of proper ways or methods to effect such a gracious design, His immanent acts? And are not they declared to us in the Holy Scriptures? And also are they not, in some degree, known by us, as we are illuminated by His grace? Besides, if it is impossible for us to conceive of God's immanent acts, we must remain eternally ignorant of them, for we shall not be deified in heaven.

Add to this, if it is absolutely impossible for us to know the order of things in the divine mind, we shall not, to eternity, be able to resolve this question, whether God, in His decree of election, foresaw that we would believe, prior to, and independent on His purpose, that we should believe, and be holy? And therefore all disputes with the Remonstrants about it must needs cease and be acknowledged vain and impertinent. Whence it appears, that this observation favors eternal election no more than eternal Justification. I also add, that how much soever it may be thought, upon a cursory view of this text ("My ways are not as your ways," etc.), that it affords sufficient evidence to support what it is brought in favor of; I doubt not, but upon a close inquiry into it, the judicious reader will easily see that the true meaning of the words is this: that God's mercy, which is displayed in the remission of our sins (and is spoken of in the verse before) is not to be limited by our narrow conceptions, but that it infinitely exceeds those notions which we are too ready to entertain concerning it. To this purpose are those words of [John] Calvin upon the text: "I am not a mortal man, that I should act towards you as one severe and implacable." Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, John Calvin, Geneva, 1583, c. 55, vs. 8,9; Vid. Calvin in loc. If our author intends that God's immanent acts cannot be comprehended, I believe none will oppose him in that. But there is a wide difference between conception and comprehension; we are capable of conceiving, or forming ideas of God's love, but shall never be able to comprehend it. I observe, that faith is not a manifestation of God's love to us, and choice of us in Christ from everlasting. This grace cannot pry and search into God's heart, and acquaint us with His secrets, any farther than they lie open to our view in divine revelation; our knowledge of them arises wholly from the discovery God Himself makes about them. The manifestation of these things, is either external or internal. The external manifestation of God's favor to His elect, and His eternal designs of grace concerning them, is in the Gospel: "That is the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:9). Herein are made known God's eternal love to His chosen, and the secret actings of His goodness to them before the world was, His covenant transactions with Christ their Head, to secure their eternal salvation and happiness. For what is the gospel but a manifestation of the contrivance of our

redemption, and the actual accomplishment of it by Christ? Upon this account it is called the "wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world to our glory" (I Cor. 2:9). There is also an internal manifestation of these things to our souls, of which the Spirit of God is the author: "For he searches all things, yea, even the deep things of God," and reveals them to us, or enables us spiritually to understand them; as is evident from those words of the Apostle: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit" (I Cor. 2:9,10). It is therefore very obvious that faith is not the manifestation of these things, neither externally, nor internally. It may be farther observed, that other graces, as well as faith, are manifest proofs of our interest in God's eternal love, and of our being the objects of His eternal choice in Christ; because they are effects which flow from thence. But though they are an evidence of these things, as effects are clear proofs of the existence of the cause by which they are produced, that ought not to be confounded with the manifestation of God's everlasting love to our souls, and of our eternal election in Christ: for then we must be supposed to have a constant sense of God's love to us, and choice of us, because our graces, at one time as well as another, are evidence of these things. Besides, the revelation of God's love to us, is only received by faith. For neither love nor fear, nor repentance, can embrace the witness of God's Spirit; that is peculiar to the grace of faith, which alone is "the substance of things hoped for," and "the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1): that is, it is by faith only that we view invisible things. Therefore this grace has its peculiar use distinct from all others, in the sense or apprehension of our Justification, and, consequently, this objection vanishes.

Objection 4. (P. 161) "If faith, in the business of Justification, is no more than a manifestation one believer may be more justified than another, as his manifestation thereof may be clearer and fuller."

I answer, that Justification is God's act, not ours. He only justifies the ungodly by imputing Christ's righteousness to them. Therefore Justification by faith is not to be understood properly, i.e., the being of Justification is not designed for that has no dependence on faith, but the knowledge of this benefit is intended when it is said we are justified by faith. Nor is it any absurdity to affirm, that one believer has a fuller discovery of his Justification by Christ than another; and that the saints, at one time, may have a stronger assurance of their Justification, than at some others. Farther, Mr. Bragge suggests, under this head, that the doctrine of eternal Justification smells rank of the Arminians. Everyone knows they are no friends to it, any more than some others. And I am well assured, if those who embrace it, could once discover what connection there is between that doctrine and Arminian principles, they would, with the greatest freedom, part with it: for, in their opinion, that scheme is wholly contrary to Scripture. To conclude: if Justification is by faith, in a proper sense, or if it has a dependence on faith as to its actual being and faith has always the same use in Justification, I may take leave to return our author's words upon himself: "That a believer in the dark would be no more justified, than whilst he was shut up in unbelief." All which is unscriptural, and smells rank of the Arminians, who hold a falling from grace. This absurdity is a natural consequence, which arises from the opinion of actual Justification by faith; because, when that is not in being, upon which anything depends, that which has its dependence on it cannot then exist; but faith, on which actual Justification depends (according to this author) is not always in the act, though it is in the habit. The consequence is easy to be understood.

Objection 5. (P. 164) "To talk of God's actually imputing a thing of that worth, as is Christ's

righteousness, to nothing, or to that which as yet has not actual being; that he should actually impute Christ's righteousness to a non ens, or to one who as yet is not, is to talk, not only unscripturally, but unintelligibly."

To this objection I answer: the immanent and transient acts of God are to be distinguished; the later produce a real change in their subjects, and necessarily require their existence; but God's immanent acts are not productive of any physical change in their objects, and consequently it is not necessary that they should exist, when those acts take place. Justification is not a transient, but immanent act; it is the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, which is an act in God's mind, and effects no real change in us; therefore our existence is not necessary to our Justification before God. Let it be farther observed, that if the imputation of righteousness requires our actual existence, the imputation of sin does also. There is the same reason for asserting the one, as the other. That sin was imputed to us before we had an actual being, is evident; for sin was imputed to us when we were made sinners, which we were immediately upon, or by the fall of Adam, as we may justly collect from those words of the Apostle: "For by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Rom. 5:19): that is, all the posterity of Adam were by God reputed sinners, because they sinned in him as their public head. This clearly proves the imputation of sin to us long before our actual existence. Again: that sin was imputed to the elect (as considered in themselves) from everlasting, is fully demonstrated by the covenant of grace, which God and Christ entered into in eternity, to save them from the dismal consequences of their sins. Sin must be first imputed, before any penal evil can be inflicted on us. The corruption of our nature follows the imputation of sin: that is the cause why we are shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin. Therefore we stand charged with sin in God's sight, before our conception in the womb. For, as Maccovius well observes: "This sin, i.e., original sin, arises from sin imputed, as the desert of it; or, as some love to speak, the demerit. For God, on account of this imputation, most justly punisheth all who are propagated in Adam in a natural way." *Loci Communes*, Johannes Maccovius, or Makowsky, 1650, P. 463. And elsewhere he answers this question, "When, or at what time, is sin imputed?" after this manner: 1. "To impute," says he, "is a moral act; that is to say, that this or that thing is accounted as done by one for another, as though the other had done it." He adds: 2. "That this act may be, where the object, or rather the subject, to which something may be imputed does not exist; and that it may have respect to this future subject; or, that sin may be imputed to anyone, who doth not as yet exist, but whose future being is certain. Thus, for instance: our sins were imputed to Christ the Saviour, as man, and were imputed to him as soon as he was promised as a Mediator; hence it was that believers, who lived before Christ was incarnate, were delivered from eternal death. These things being thus, we now answer to the question, that sin was imputed to all who were to be propagated from Adam as soon as Adam sinned. For as to what [D. Johannes] Scharpius supposes, that sin is imputed when man first exists, or begins to be, that is refuted from hence; that the matter of which man is to be born, is already polluted with inherent sin. Hence the Holy Spirit is said to have sanctified the mass of which Christ was to be born; which is taken from Luke 1:35. So then sin inherent is later than sin imputed." *Anti-Socin.*, Johannes Maccovius, or Makowsky, c. 6, p. 76. And in his book of metaphysics, he makes use of this as an argument for Justification preceding regeneration. He asks this question, whether or not Justification goes before regeneration? And answers: "Thus it is; for as sin inherent supposes that sin is imputed, so also inherent righteousness presupposes righteousness is imputed." *Metaphysics*, Johannes Maccovius, or Makowsky, p. 118. Now as sin may be, and actually is, imputed to us, before we exist; so righteousness may be, and actually is, imputed to us, prior to

our existence.

Objection 6. (P. 169) "All the purposes of God, as they are in him, are immanent acts; his whole counsel is so, as it takes in his works of nature, grace and glory. Now if this, without the intervention of his power, gives actual being to anything, to our Justification, for instance, it should, by a parity of reason give actual being to everything, to this world, and to all that is therein; to the church militant, and to the church triumphant." answer:

All transient acts of God are put forth in time, and they give being to something which did not exist before, and therefore cannot be eternal. Creation is such an act; it is an act, without God, not in Him: therein His infinite power is exerted, for the production of that which had no existence, till such a creating act takes place. His decree to create, and creation itself, are different acts; the former is an immanent, the latter a transient act; the one is eternal, the other is in time. But Justification is an immanent act, not without, but in God; and is not expressive of any real or physical change in its objects: it therefore must be eternal. Again, it is altogether impertinent and inconclusive to argue thus: if God's decree gives actual being to anything, to our Justification, for instance, by a parity of reason, it should give being to everything, etc., for God's bare decree gives not actual being to anything out of Himself; but His will, purpose, or decree, as it respects an act in His own mind, is not other than the act itself: as for instance, His will or immutable purpose to love His elect, is His actual love to them, and His will to elect, is election; or it gives actual being to the thing itself, which has no existence but in His infinite mind. So His will or purpose not to impute sin, and to impute righteousness, is His real non-imputation of the one, and actual imputation of the other; and is the complete Justification of the elect which has no being but in God's breast. I add, it ought to be proved that Justification is a transient act, by which actual being is given to something out of God Himself; or that it is effective of some real and physical change in its objects, as it needs must be, if there is an intervention of God's power between His decree to justify, and Justification itself. If this is not done, as I am of opinion it can't be, it will evidently appear that it is far from solid reasoning to infer, that as God's mere decree to create, gives not actual being to anything; so His will and purpose to justify doth not give being to Justification.

Objection 7. (P. 165) "Paul was a chosen vessel before he believed but where is he said to have been pardoned, or justified, or reconciled, or adopted, whilst lying out from, and persecuting of the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Why should it be inquired whether these things were spoken concerning Paul, before he believed? If they are declared of God's elect in general, that is sufficient to support the doctrine of their actual Justification, reconciliation, and adoption before faith. It would no way affect the argument, if we nowhere read any of these blessings about Paul in particular, whilst he was a persecutor of Christ. But, because Paul was justified, reconciled, and adopted, even when in a state of unbelief, therefore he was converted in God's appointed time. If Christ's righteousness had not been imputed to him when he was dead in sin, he would never have received spiritual life from Christ; for regeneration is the effect of Justification, or follows upon it. Agreeably to which this gentleman himself asserts, "That Christ first is made righteousness, and so sanctification;" and adds, that "this order ought not to be inverted." (P. 92). Had he always delivered himself consistent with what is here said, he would have prevented this publication. Again: Paul was actually reconciled, or God was so to him, when a persecutor; "for peace was made," for Paul, as well as other elect persons, "by the blood of Christ's cross" (Col. 1:20). If God was not really reconciled to His elect before they believe, and He was full of anger and wrath against them, they never would believe; for wrath in God, is His purpose to inflict the



desert of sin on guilty sinners; which cannot consist with designs of love and favor to them. Therefore those who are the objects of God's wrath, in this sense, never will believe. The death of Christ did not render God reconcilable to sinners, as some say, but actually reconciled. And it may be observed, that it is said of Paul, that he was reconciled, whilst an enemy; that is, a persecutor of Christ; for he speaks it of himself, in these words: "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life," (Rom. 5:10). Moreover, he was in a state of adoption, when he persecuted Christ in his members: for, because he was a child of God, "the Spirit of God's Son was sent into his heart;" by whose influences he was enabled "to cry, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). Regeneration doth not make us sons; but because we are sons, we are regenerated. That the elect "are by nature children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:2), is certain; and that they are the children of God by grace, is equally so. And both these may be said of them at one and the same time, but in different respects. As the descendants of Adam, they are children of wrath; that is, they are under a sentence of condemnation by the law: as in, and members of Christ, they are the children of God, and free from condemnation in His sight; yea, they are the objects of His special love and delight, and were so from everlasting; which is the reason why they are regenerated in God's due time, when their adoption becomes open and visible. Junius hath this note on Gal. 4:5, *Adoptio filiorum aeterna, sed suo tempore exhibetur*; that is, the adoption of sons is eternal, but is manifested in time.

Objection 8. (P. 166) "A sinner's Justification may, and should be considered as the birth of time, and so personal and actual, in the joyful and blessed application thereof." I answer: Justification, as it is an act in God, or as it is taken for His non-imputation of sin, and imputation of righteousness, ought not to be considered as the birth of time, but is eternal, because all His immanent acts are so. Again: is actual Justification the same with personal, and cannot persons be justified before they exist? Then they cannot be personally elected, before their actual existence. If there is a personal election from eternity, there also may be a personal Justification from eternity, because the latter requires our existence no more than the former. Those who object against eternal Justification, that the existence of the persons justified is necessary to Justification, would do well to consider, that the Remonstrants, in the same manner, object against eternal election. For, say they, "It cannot be, that anyone should be actually elected, who doth not as yet actually exist, for as much as no qualities belong to a non ens." *Amic. Col. cum Piscat., Conradus Vorstius, p. 231.* Let our opponents see how they can remove this difficulty, which is raised against eternal election; and closely examine if that answer, which removes it, as levelled against a personal election from everlasting, doth not also fully take off its force against the personal Justification of the elect before time. I am persuaded they will: for as election is an act in God, and is not effective of any real change in us; so is Justification, and works no physical change in us, as has been before observed. If by actual Justification, or the application of that benefit, is intended the discovery of it to God's elect, for their consolation and joy, it certainly follows faith; and is that Justification by faith which the Scripture speaks of, when faith is taken in a proper sense, but is no evidence that Justification itself is not eternal.

Objection 9. (Pp. 166,167) "The distinction of virtual and actual, has its use and place in Scripture, as well as in nature. In nature the case is plain; for the earth virtually contains all the fruit that will be brought forth and ripened, not only the next summer, but a hundred years hence; whence it follows not that trees are now full of ripe fruit. The sea also virtually contains all fountains and rivers that can possibly flow from it, as eternity contains all possible time.

And no less plain is the case as to Scripture, where Christ is said to be a lamb slain from the foundation of the world: which cannot be understood of Christ's being actually crucified, before he was born; but the slaying there must be virtual, not actual."

This distinction of virtual and actual I cannot well understand, especially as it is used in the affair of Justification. Virtual seems to me to signify something which has esse in potentia, being in power, or that which is possible to be effected; and may be considered as uncertain, with respect to actual being. Thus all possible things may be said to be virtually in the divine mind, or to lie before God as things which may be produced by His infinite power, though never brought into real being: "For ens is divided into ens in power and act." Ibid., p. 18.

Wherefore I conceive it may be as well to make use of the word potential as virtual, when the actual being of anything, which may be, is not designed, but only its being in power. I will not pretend to say what farther may be designed by virtual (than potential imports) when it is made use of in the business of Justification. But I am not able to understand that the term itself signifies anything more. Again: it appears very strange to me that anything, which has no being but in God Himself (as Justification has not), should be said to have only a virtual being till time, and that its actual being commences in time; because, whatever is in God, must needs be eternal. Therefore it is an improper way of reasoning to infer, that because trees are not now full of ripe fruit, that God doth not actually, but only virtually justify His people before faith. Justification, as it is an act in God's mind, ought not to be considered as future, but as it always has been in Himself, though not known to us till we believe. I add, that virtual, as standing opposed to actual, seems to be made use of by some in such a way, as, in a great measure, destroys the true notion of a public head and representative. Whatever is done by a public head, as so considered, is reckoned as done by those whom he represents; or, what he acts, as such, is looked upon as acted by them. This was the case with all mankind, who sinned in Adam, their public head; they were accounted really guilty of his transgression, though not in actual being, which is the cause why they are conceived in sin. And the elect were as really justified in Christ their public head, when He was justified from all their sins: as He, in God's account, was discharged from all guilt, so were they also: for He was not acquitted without respect had to them, as the persons whom He represented. To talk of being virtually justified, in opposition to a real or actual discharge from sin in God's account, is directly contrary to all just notions of Christ being the representative of His people. To conclude: how Christ could be virtually slain, in the common acceptation of the word, which is taken to signify the being, action, or suffering of a person in another, I can by no means understand: know of none who could represent Christ, and in whom He might be said to do or suffer anything. It must therefore be understood as that which certainly should be, according to the divine decree; and that His sufferings and satisfaction was then in the eye of God, as if He had already suffered, and atoned for our sins, as was before observed. But because Christ did not actually suffer from everlasting, it follows not that the elect were not justified from everlasting; because the same is not to be concluded of God's immanent, as is of His transient acts. Justification is an immanent act, and is eternal; the punishing of Christ was a transient act, and could not be eternal.

I shall now observe some things concerning the use of the word actual in Justification, as it is said to be so upon believing, and not before. And if it is intended, when it is said that the elect were not actually justified from everlasting, that God did not acquit them of their sins in His mind, it is a mistake, as appears by what has been already observed; or if it is designed that they are not declaratively discharged from them before they believe, it is not true, for that they are by the gospel in general, though that declaration cannot be received till faith is wrought in

their souls. But if the meaning is, that they have no evidence of the remission of their sins, and the Justification of their persons, till they believe, that is readily granted: but it is denied that this is Justification itself, for it is only the manifestation of Justification. This seems to be all which is intended by some, who say that the elect are actually justified when they believe. Dr. [William] Twisse takes actual Justification in no other sense; for, says he, "What is it that the remission of sins, and our acceptation, signify, if not inward and immanent acts in God; acts of which kind do not arise in God anew?" *Vindiciae Gratiae*, William Twisse, Amsterdam, 1632, Book 2, p. 79. A little after, he speaks of actual Justification, and expresses himself thus: "God erects his tribunal in our hearts; our own conscious, according to the law of God, accuses, terrifies, and wounds us: at length the mercy of God thus showing itself, the Spirit of God, by the voice of the gospel, raises, comforts, and refreshes us, and pronounces that our sins are forgiven us, for Christ's sake." This is what he intends, when he afterwards says actual Justification is not, unless to such as believe; which, in his sense, is certainly true, for only believers have a sentence of Justification pronounced in their consciences by the Spirit of God. Objection 10. (P. 165) "Actual possession, be it of a crown, takes place, according to the constitution of the kingdom, and the methods of government, which in all wise administrations are settled, and not left uncertain and precarious: now is the order of civil governments great, and God's government of the world of nature yet greater; and is there no such thing as order in the gospel?"

I answer, that without doubt there is a beautiful order in the gospel; and that this gentleman has offered nothing, which in the least degree proves that eternal Justification breaks in upon that order. I hope it will not be said that God's immanent acts do follow upon, or in order succeed, His transient acts, but on the contrary; as for instance, creation follows God's decree to create: Justification is an immanent act, and doth not follow any transient act; nor is there any transient act of God that is our Justification, or which is the execution of His decree to justify us, as creation is the execution of His purpose to create. Again, I can't apprehend what the actual possession of Justification is, unless it be the sense and knowledge of it, which certainly follows faith, for none of the elect can know they are justified till they believe; the consequence of which may easily be gathered from what has been said before.

Objection 11. (P. 163) "How expressly are we told in Scripture, that in point of actual existence, that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual?" "And, if so, the elect not only actually exist, but are actually condemned by the law of God, before they are actually justified."

The answer is, that the inference drawn from the words is not just; for they intend that we first receive a depraved nature from the first Adam, and afterwards holiness, or spiritual life, from Christ, the second Adam. Besides, the existence of the elect is no more necessary to their actual and personal Justification, than it is to their actual and personal election. [Samuel] Rutherford, speaking of election, hath these words: "But this, i.e., election, is an immanent and eternal act; for no act of God's will is in time, or transient; what God wills, He willed from eternity."

*Exercitationes Apologeticae pro Divina Gratia*, Samuel Rutherford, Amsterdam, 1636, c. 2, p. 25. He observes the very same concerning Justification, in these words: "These acts of imputing, and not imputing, are immanent acts in God, and therefore eternal." *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Farther, we grant that the elect are sententially condemned by the law of God, but this is not inconsistent with their Justification in Christ, and freedom from condemnation in him: for, as the author just now quoted observes, "The elect always, yea, before they believe, are free from condemnation, for, and on the account of the death of Christ." *Ibid.*, p. 56. To conclude: that

which is called their actual Justification, is no more than the discovery of it, as was before observed.

Objection 12. (P. 163) "Though now we are glorified in Christ, we who believe, hope one day to be glorified together with Christ."

The design of our author, in these words, is to suggest, that as our glorification in Christ from everlasting is not actual, so the Justification of the elect in Him from everlasting is not actual. In answer to which it may be said, that glorification is a work of God upon us, and is expressive of a real change in us, and therefore requires our actual existence; but Justification is not such an act, therefore our actual existence is not necessary to it.

Objection 13. (P. 170) "Christ's righteousness is not upon us, in the sense of the gospel, before faith; for the gospel is express, that it is to, or upon us, in a way of believing; and should men or angels tell us the contrary, let us not regard them."

In order to remove this objection, I would observe, that this author himself allows, that the imputation of Christ's righteousness is our Justification, and that this is God's act; which he strongly expresses in these words: "None, save God the judge of all, could make Christ to be sin for us; and none, save God the judge of all, can make any of us the righteousness of God in him." (Pp. 106,107). I apprehend him to mean, that as Christ was made sin, by God's imputing our sins to him, so we are made righteous, by God's imputing Christ's righteousness to us: which, if He does, He is not consistent with Himself: for then it follows, that Christ's righteousness is to, or upon us, in a way of imputation, and not in a way of believing.

Therefore, should it be granted that only believers are the objects of Justification (which cannot be, because God justifies the ungodly), yet it would not follow that Christ's righteousness is upon them in a way of believing, or that it is by their faith imputed to them; for if so, they make themselves the righteousness of God in Him; which our author justly denies, and grants, that Justification is God's act, and not theirs. Farther, I admire that a person of Mr. Bragge's humility should express himself with so assuming an air as he does, in saying, should men or angels tell us the contrary, let us not regard them. Had an anathema been pronounced against such as assert Justification before faith, this sentence would have had the same force and degree of resentment in it, as that of the Apostle against the perverters of the gospel: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:9). However, it must be allowed, that his delivering himself in as positive a manner as if he had the infallible guidance of an inspired writer, is going far enough in all reason, without pronouncing any dreadful anathemas against those who differ from him. What is the reason why those must not be regarded, who affirm that the elect of God are justified before faith? Is not Mr. Bragge as likely to be mistaken as they are? I am indeed tempted to think that he has not much regarded what has been offered for Justification before faith, for if he had, certainly his resentments could never have carried him these lengths.

Objection 14. (P. 157) "Gifts, how freely soever they may be designed for us, and given to us, they are not ours, before we receive them: there must be the receiving, as well as the giving hand, before the poor are actually possessed of the rich man's gift."

I answer to this, it is a mistake, that gifts are not ours before received; for the donor's act of giving makes them ours, and not our receiving act; and we receive them as what we have a proper right to, because given us by him whose they are to bestow. Therefore it is not the poor man's receiving a gift that makes it become his, but the act of the giver. Besides, legal possession depends upon a prior right to the thing possessed, for otherwise our possession of it cannot be just and lawful; because legal right is founded either upon purchase or free gift, and

not on our receiving anything we enjoy. Again: this makes our right to, and interest in pardoning, justifying, and sanctifying grace, and glory itself, to depend as much upon our act of receiving these benefits, as on God's act of giving them to us; which is absurd. Moreover, it follows hence that heaven is not the saints', or that they have no right to it whilst here upon earth; which is apparently false, for they are now heirs of the kingdom. To conclude: that which is given by any person's friend into the hand of another for him (he not being present) is as much his, as if he had actually received it at the hand of the donor. Thus all grace and glory were given to the elect in Christ before the world began; and both as much became theirs, by virtue of God's gift, as if they had been present, and actually received the one and the other at God's hand. I hope it will be allowed that the doctrine of eternal Justification stands unshaken, notwithstanding this author's attack; for all his objections have not weight enough to bear it down. If many of the similies he makes use of, in treating about the doctrine of Justification should lie buried in some dark cavern of the earth, where he makes a supposition of putting the sun, I imagine the danger will not be much to the churches.

Secondly, I shall now consider some objections which are raised by others against this doctrine. And it is objected:

Objection 1. "To this purpose, that as sanctification, and all the fruits of the Spirit, perseverance in grace, and eternal glory, were granted to the elect in Christ from everlasting, no less than Justification; so they were not then justified, in any other or farther sense, than they were sanctified, etc., which they could not actually be."

I answer, that sanctification, and glorification, are transient acts of God, and do produce a real change in us. To these acts our personal existence is necessary; we must first be, before we can be made holy by God's grace: therefore the gift of sanctifying grace, in the eternal covenant, could be no other than a representative sanctification in Christ, not actual. Justification is an act of God's free grace toward us in Christ, and is not productive of any real or inherent change in us; whence it follows, that our personal existence is not necessary to it. Now as Justification is not the implantation of grace in us, but is the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, which is an act in God Himself, the grant of Justification was not a lodging of grace in Christ's hand for us, to be communicated to us, by which we might become justified, as the gift of sanctification was: nor could it be a promise to Christ, that God at any certain time would begin to justify us, because Justification is an immanent act, and consequently must be eternal. As the nature of this grace greatly differs from sanctification, it ought not, in the promise of it, to be considered in the same light.

Objection 2. "If Adam's sin, and our own personal sins, were imputed to us in time, we were not personally justified from eternity, but do need a true and real Justification in time. But the former is true, therefore the latter. The reason of the consequence is this; where the guilt and charge of sin is, and law-condemnation for it, there Justification is not."

I answer, that Adam's sin was imputed to the elect, as well as to the non-elect, before they had a being; and that the elect are under a charge of sin by the law, and a sentence of condemnation for it, as soon as they exist. But all this is not inconsistent with their secret Justification before God, as He considered them in the righteousness of Christ; that being as really imputed to them for their Justification before Him, as their sins were to their guiltiness in His sight. Therefore they need no farther justifying act in time, than passed towards them from everlasting.

Objection 3. "God's eternal will to justify or pardon, or non-impute sin, is not Justification." For the support of which two reasons are offered; as, First, "that act or benefit, which is not the fruit of Christ's death, and bloodshed, is not Justification; but God's will not to impute sin, is not the

fruit of Christ's death and bloodshed, and therefore it is not Justification."

In answer, God's will to save, and make His elect happy, is not the fruit, but the cause of Christ's death. But though God's will not to impute sin, and His will not to pardon it without a satisfaction from Christ, to secure the honor of His law, and the glory of His justice, may be distinguished, yet they ought not to be separated; for His will not to impute sin to His elect, includes His will to impute it to Christ, and to punish it in Him, without any abatement.

Therefore it cannot be said that God ever absolutely willed not to charge sin on His people, or without respect to their redemption from it by Christ. Again: God had in His eye, even from everlasting, the atonement made by Christ; and, on the account of Christ's engagement to suffer for the sins of the elect, He acquitted them as really as though Christ had actually suffered the penalty demerited by their transgressions.

The second thing, which is offered, is this: "That act of God which is no discharge or freedom from the law, or the charge thereof, wherein God proceeds not by an external rule, as a law-giver, is not Justification; but God's will not to impute sin to His elect, is no discharge from the law, therefore it is not Justification.

In answer to this, let it be observed, that the charge of sin upon men by the law, is no other than a manifestation that they were under the secret imputation of sin in God's mind, before the open charge of it: and so also the declaration which is in the gospel of believers' freedom from a law-charge of sin, is no other than a discovery of their discharge from all sin in God's eternal mind. God does not then begin to look upon, or consider them as clear from guilt, when the gospel declares they are so in His account. Besides, as on the score of God's imputing sin to us, we are accounted guilty in His view, and not by the declaration of that act; so, on the score of His non-imputation of sin, and imputation of righteousness, we are accounted justified in His sight, and not by the discovery of those acts. If it is not thus, men before their personal existence are neither accounted guilty, nor righteous, in God's view. Let it farther be observed, that the discharge of the elect from sin, in God's mind, was acted by Him as a lawgiver, or with a view to that satisfaction which the law was to receive from Christ, their surety. Herein therefore, He proceeded according to the external rule, which He has published, that is to say His law, and not in the least contrary to it.

Objection 4. "The covenant of redemption or grace, as with Christ, is not that whereby sin was charged, or laid upon Christ by the Father, and therefore is not our discharge."

To this it may be answered, that a surety's engagement to pay a debt makes it become his in the eye of the law, and in the account of the creditor, and therefore he expects payment at his hand. Thus when God was reconciling the world to Himself, or forming the glorious plan and model of our reconciliation by Christ, which was in eternity, He did not then impute sin to His people; for the Apostle says expressly, "not imputing their trespasses to them"(2 Cor. 5:19): therefore He imputed sin to Christ, their surety; or else it was then imputed to none, neither to the principal debtor, nor the surety, which I imagine none will assert. The imputation of sin is an act in God's mind, and so it might be, and actually was, imputed to Christ upon His undertaking for the elect; for if God did not look upon our sins as Christ's, by virtue of His suretyship engagements, and we were not discharged from sin in God's sight upon that account, how could the Old Testament saints have been acquitted from their sins? For if we cannot be discharged, unless our sins be imputed to Christ, and they could not be placed to His account, till He "was made of a woman, and made under the law," (Gal. 4:4,5), as is suggested; then not one soul was justified before Christ's incarnation; than which, there is nothing more false. As Christ stood secretly charged with sin from everlasting, as the elect's surety, so the open charge of it upon

Him was in time, when He was incarnate, and made under the law: but what is collected from thence, in these words, is no just inference: "The charge of sin on Christ was by the law: and I think none should venture to say, that Christ was made under the law from eternity: I am sure the Scripture speaks otherwise (Gal. 4:5; Is. 53:6). So that neither was He charged, or under any imputation of sin; neither were we discharged from eternity." I answer, it doth not follow, that because Christ was not openly charged with sin by the law from eternity, which indeed He could not be, that He was under no imputation of sin, unless it be denied that there is any such thing as a secret, but real imputation of sin to Christ, or sinners in God's breast, which I am sure ought not to be denied; for imputation is properly an act in God, and must be eternal, as was before observed. Besides, Christ's suretyship engagements were the proper foundation of the imputation of our sins to Him, as they are of the imputation of His righteousness to us. Therefore the charge of sin on Christ bears date from His covenant transactions with the Father, and must needs be eternal.

Objection 5. "Suretyship of this sort bringing the charge on Christ from eternity, would prevent our being under the law, and the charge of sin on us thereby and consequently our redemption therefrom."

This is an objection which has, of late, been made use of against the doctrine of eternal Justification: but that it is a great mistake, or that this consequence drawn from eternal Justification is not just, will appear from hence. It is many hundred years, since all the sins of the elect were openly charged on Christ by the law, and He atoned for them, and also was actually acquitted of them by God: now as all this doth not prevent those of the elect, who have lived since His incarnation, coming under the law, and a charge of sin by it, and also a sentence of condemnation for their sins, the secret charge of sin on Christ from eternity, certainly cannot be attended with any of these consequences. But farther: redemption is necessary, even where there is no charge of sin by the law, if sin has been committed by such who now stand clear of all guilt. This is evident in the case of Old Testament saints who were actually glorified when Christ suffered, and consequently were under no imputation of sin; yet their redemption was no less needful than the redemption of other elect persons; and it was actually effected by Christ, when they were in glory, as is manifest by those words of the Apostle; "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. 3: 25). It may therefore be strongly concluded, that Justification from eternity doth not set aside redemption in time, since the actual glorification of Old Testament saints did not make their redemption by Christ unnecessary. Besides, our redemption from the law was what Christ undertook in the covenant of grace; and our discharge from sin in God's mind, did not make it unnecessary for Him to fulfill His own engagements, but rather laid Him under obligation to perform what He had promised. Upon the whole, it is plain, that this objection has no weight or force in it.

Objection 6. "That is Justification to which the definition of it belongs; but the definition of it belongs to some declared act, or sentence of God."

I answer: if the imputation of sin to us, and a sentence of condemnation conceived in God's mind, is our guiltiness and condemnation in His account, which I hope will be granted; then it ought to be allowed, that the non-imputation of sin, and imputation of righteousness to us, or a sentence of absolution conceived in God's breast, is our real Justification in His sight. Again: as on the score of God's imputing sin we are accounted sinners, so on the score of His imputing righteousness we are accounted righteous; not by the declaration of that act. Under this head of objection it is said that, "the inward thoughts of a judge concerning a criminal, are neither his

condemnation nor justification, but his passing sentence according to law is so." As an answer to this I would observe, that a sentence of condemnation, conceived in the mind of a judge, is the secret condemnation of a criminal; for when a sentence of condemnation is passed by a judge upon a malefactor, he doth not then begin to look upon him as guilty; but because he concluded him guilty, he formed a sentence of condemnation against him in his mind, and therefore pronounces it according to law. Now, as Dr. [William] Ames observes, "A sentence of Justification was, as it were, conceived in the mind of God by the decree of justifying." (*Medulla Theologica*, William Ames, Amsterdam, 1623, Bk. 1, c. 27, p. 117: which sentence of Justification in God's mind, was as real a Justification of the elect before God, as a sentence of condemnation, conceived in the mind of a judge, is the secret, though not open condemnation of a malefactor. As Christ was really made sin by God's act of imputing our sins to Him, and not by the declaration thereof in the gospel; so we were really made righteous, or justified by God's imputation of His righteousness to us, and not by the discovery of that act in the gospel. Mr. Eyere thus answers an objection, that is much like what is here advanced: "Though the forgiveness of magistrates be by some published act of oblivion, yet it doth not follow, that God must proceed in the same manner; because the promulgation of an act of grace, is for the direction and limitation of judges and ministers of state, that they do not execute the sentence of the law. Now in the Justification of a sinner, God hath no need of such an act, because He is the sole judge and justifier Himself; and therefore the purpose of His will secures the person sufficiently, though his security be not declared, and makes the law of condemnation (which depends wholly on the will of God) to be of no force, in regard of the real execution of it, whether he plead it or no; as in infants, and doubting Christians, whose hearts do condemn them." He adds: "A judge, that hath the legislative power in his own breast, needs no published edict to absolve an offender. Now God is such a judge, as doth not receive, but gives laws unto all. The publishing of acts of grace is for the comfort of the offender, rather than for any need that the supreme magistrate hath thereof, as to the completing of his act; as for instance, the act of oblivion was a real pardon when it passed the house; for though delinquents had no knowledge of their immunity, from the penalties which they had incurred before it was published in print, yet the vote or sanction of the house did secure them from danger, and invalidate the statutes that were in force against them; otherwise delinquents would be more beholden to the printer that published the act, than to the parliament that made it. So the publication of the new covenant was for the comfort of God's elect, and not for their security, in foro Dei." *Free Justification, etc.*, pp. 153, 154. Wherefore, I cannot but conclude, that it is a mistake, that Justification before God is the declaration of our being righteous in His sight, and consequently that there is no force in this objection.

Objection 7. "If there is some justifying act of God passing upon a man when he believes, then that is the true and very time of his Justification; but the former is true, and therefore the latter." Several things are offered for the proof of this: As, (1) "Our being in covenant is the rule and measure of our Justification. So far as men are under the covenant of grace, so far they are justified: now God makes covenant with souls at believing, in their own persons."

I answer, that it is a mistake that God actually makes covenant with His elect when they believe, or that at that time they are in the covenant of grace in a farther sense than they were before; for the covenant is only revealed to them at the time of their new birth, and is not then made with them, as will appear from these following things. Those who are not in the covenant of grace, cannot partake of any blessings in that covenant; for their right to the benefits of it, depends upon their interest therein. Again: if God actually makes covenant with His elect, it is



either before or after they are regenerated. It cannot be before, for they are full of enmity against God, and are not subject to His law, neither can they be, as the Apostle declares: therefore at that time they are altogether incapable of entering into covenant with God. Dr. [William] Ames, in showing the difference between the old and new covenant, observes that they differ in the efficient cause. His words are these: "For in that, i.e., the old covenant, there were two parties, namely, it was the compact of God and man; but in this, the new, God alone contracts; i.e., for man is now dead in sins, and hath no power of entering into a spiritual covenant with God." *Medulla Theologica*, William Ames, Amsterdam, 1623, Bk. 1, c. 24, p. 102. Dr. [Isaac] Chauncy asserts, that the elect are interested in the covenant of grace before they believe, in these words: "All the elect have a real right and interest in the covenant, even before believing; such a right as entitles them to believing: for Christ hath undertaken, that all that the Father hath given him, shall come to him; and it's therefore absolutely necessary they should, as promised in the covenant; not as a condition, as a leading benefit, and no otherwise." *Neonomianism Unmasked*, pp. 2, 156. Elsewhere he expresses himself thus: "It's mightily to derogate from the covenant of grace, to make the promise thereof to depend on a stipulation on our parts: for, if we stipulate with God, we also promise to him, as well as he to us, before performance, and likewise that we do our part before he doth his; for the stipulating is covenanting; and for any man to talk of any such thing, runs upon multitudes of rocks. Our radical stipulation was in Christ; all other stipulations are effects of it." *Ibid.*, p. 164. He adds, "The covenant of grace is the act of God; in the person of the Father with us, in the person of Christ in him, we did restipulate. He was the great covenanter on our part, and the condition of this covenant; and when we, by virtue of the promise, take hold of this covenant, we stand upon this condition with God, and God dispenseth all benefits upon this condition to us: and it is a free and absolute covenant to us, a covenant of promise; because not only the promise is bestowed, without federal conditions performed by ourselves, and the great federal condition, the Lord Christ, is freely bestowed on us."

To these things I subjoin, that all the posterity of Adam were actually in, or under, the covenant of works, when that covenant was made with him, because he then represented them as their public head; wherefore their personal consent was not required to that covenant. If this is not granted, it must be denied that we were guilty of Adam's sin; and also, that the corruption of our nature is the consequence of his transgression. Now, if all Adam's offspring were actually under the covenant of works, immediately upon his consenting to it, and from thence his sin became as really theirs, as though they had been actually present when he committed it, and upon that account they receive inherent sin from him; why may it not be allowed, that the elect were actually interested in the covenant of grace, when Christ, as their public head, entered into that compact with the Father? And also, that His righteousness was really imputed to them for their Justification, by virtue of their interest in the covenant of grace, though they did not then exist, as Adam's sin was imputed to all his seed, before their personal existence, by virtue of their interest in the covenant of works? Not after, or upon believing, doth God make covenant with them, for then they must be supposed to partake of one eminent blessing of the covenant of grace, before they are interested in it; for faith, yea, all regenerating grace, is contained in, and promised by that covenant; as is evident from those words, "A new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:24). Therefore because they are interested in the covenant of grace, even when unregenerate, they are born again in God's appointed time. Now who can imagine, that if the elect are interested in the covenant of grace before they believe, and that it is from thence they

do believe, or receive faith, that that covenant is made with them after, or upon believing? That would be no less absurd, than to suppose an effect gives being to its cause. Therefore when we read of God's making covenant with His people, it only intends the manifestation of covenant promises and blessings to their souls; which is evident from those words, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant" (Ps. 24:14). This author observes,

(2)"Our Justification follows our union with Christ: now as there is a legal and a representative union of the elect in Christ, which infers their being justified in him; so there is a vital and influential union brought about at believing.

As an answer, let these things be observed. Our vital union with Christ is not the effect, but the cause of our faith; as the union of the scion with the stock, is the cause of its bearing fruit.

Again: vital union with Christ is not the foundation of our Justification, but that legal union which is between Christ and us; that is, as He is our Surety, and we are the principal debtors: for it was by virtue hereof that our sins were imputed to Him; and from hence it is that His righteousness becomes ours, or is imputed to us. This union is eternal; and so is the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, which arises from that union. That which was not necessary to the imputation of our sins to Christ, is not necessary to the imputation of His righteousness; vital union to Christ was not required to the former, therefore it is not to the latter. He farther adds,

(3)"Justification goes with our possession of Christ; that is, all blessings of the covenant go with him."

I answer, that the elect are interested in Christ before they believe, though till then they are ignorant of their interest in Him. They are His by choice and acceptance, and also by redemption and purchase; and He is theirs by a gracious donation of Himself to them, in the everlasting covenant. Farther; Justification depends not upon our possession of Christ, or an application of His grace and righteousness to our souls, by the Spirit of God, though our knowledge of it does; for that is an act in God towards, and not the infusion of grace in us, and is therefore eternal; for no new acts do, or can arise in God, He has the same view of us in Christ before we believe, as after believing. He subjoins,

(4)"That believers have a farther discharge from the law, and are not so under the sentence of condemnation therein, as unbelievers, though elect."

I answer: the elect are under a sentence of condemnation by the law, as was before granted; yet, this notwithstanding, they are justified in their head Christ, as was before observed. The elect who are not called, are justified in God's sight; the called elect are justified, not only secretly, but openly: a declared freedom from condemnation, is no more than Justification revealed. He adds,

(5)"Believers are under the justifying discharge of the gospel."

It is true, they are so; but this is no more than the manifestation of Justification, and not the thing itself. Under this objection it is farther said, "That when souls are brought under this, i.e., the covenant of grace (which mode of expression I cannot but disapprove, as improper, because they are in the covenant before they believe) then the filthy garments are taken away, and they are clothed with a change of raiment." Which, if true, it follows, that their sins are imputed to them, at least till after the first act of faith is put forth: and also, that Christ's righteousness is not imputed till after the exercise of faith; which makes Justification to follow both the habit and act of faith; and is directly contrary to the express words of the Apostle: "but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly" (Rom. 4: 4); for no regenerate person is an ungodly person.

These objections are to be met with in Mr. Beart's Vindication of the Eternal Law and Gospel, Second Part. I hope the answers here given to them, will take off all that force which they may seem to carry with them, against the doctrine of eternal Justification.

There are some other popular objections which have lately been advanced against this important truth, which I shall endeavor to answer.

Objection 1. "There cannot be a Justification from sin, till there is a charge of sin; but the one is in time, therefore the other."

I answer, this objection is as much levelled against the imputation of sin before time, as against eternal Justification. That God from everlasting did impute sin to His elect, as in themselves considered, is evident by the covenant which God and Christ entered into. Again: the charge of sin upon them by the law, is no more than a discovery of their standing secretly charged with sin in God's sight long before, as has been already observed. neither is their open acquittance by the gospel, any more than a manifestation of their secret Justification in God's mind, as He beheld them in Christ from eternity. It is granted that their open discharge from sin follows the declarative charge of it by the law, and that the one and the other is in time; but this militates not with eternal Justification in Christ.

Objection 2. "If the elect are justified without faith, they may be saved without faith."

I answer: it is very bad logic to argue from a part to the whole; that which is true of the whole, is of a part, but not on the contrary; that which is true of a part, may not be so of the whole. Again: it may justly be said, that in some sense the elect are saved before they believe, and consequently without faith, as appears by these words: "who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9). Salvation in a sense precedes vocation; for the elect are saved with many temporal salvations, before, and in order to, calling; or they are preserved by God's kind providences from many dangers, and recovered out of many afflictions, in order to be called; which I take to be included in those words: "preserved in Jesus Christ, and called" (Jude 1). Besides, they are saved in a spiritual sense before calling; for Christ hath redeemed them from the curse of the law, the wrath of God; and also has conquered all their enemies, sin, Satan, death, and hell. This was the work which the Father gave Him to do, and He came into the world to accomplish; for "he came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:10). The distinction of the impetration and application of salvation, which is commonly made by divines, perfectly agrees with this; the impetration of salvation is before, the application of it begins when we believe.

If glorification, or the consummation of salvation, is intended in this objection, as I suppose it is; it follows not that because we are justified without faith, that we may also be taken to heaven without faith: for it is not only necessary that we have a title to glory, which is the justifying righteousness of Christ; but that also grace be implanted in us, in order to fit us for the actual possession of everlasting life.

Objection 4. "Some have said they will never believe the doctrine of eternal Justification, unless it can be made appear that we were sinners from everlasting."

If there is anything of weight in this trifling objection, it must be this: that we cannot be justified from sin before we have committed it. I answer, were not the elect of God considered as sinners in the act of election? I am sure the Sublapsarian doctrine necessarily supposes it; and I am inclined to believe that the authors of this objection do not much favor the Supralapsarian notion. Now how the elect of God could be considered as sinners, in God's eternal counsels, and yet no sin be imputed to them, I freely confess that I am not able to

conceive: but if sin was imputed from everlasting to the elect, as in themselves considered; why may it not be allowed that they might be discharged from all sin, as God viewed them in Christ in eternity? Again, the actual commission of sin was not necessary to the imputation of it to Christ; this is so manifest, it needs no proof. Now let the authors of this objection make it appear, that though our sins might be, and actually were, imputed to Christ before we had committed them; yet that we cannot be justified from our sins before the actual commission of them, I am tempted to think that this a task they will not undertake, because they can't hope to succeed in it. Farther, this objection lies as strong against the complete Justification of believers; for if we cannot be discharged from sin before it is actually, committed, we are not perfectly justified upon believing: but Justification is progressive, as sanctification is, which does not suit well with Protestant doctrine.

Objection 5. "Some have farther said, that this doctrine is only speculative, and of no great moment; and that they think it safest to go in the common beaten path of Justification by faith." I answer, the same may be objected against other great truths of the gospel. It may as justly be said, what need we trouble ourselves about such speculations as the doctrines of election, the eternal covenant of grace; the imputation of our sins to Christ, and His righteousness to us; and of God's eternal love, as the spring and source of these blessings? What reason can be offered why the doctrine of eternal Justification should be called speculative, any more than these important truths? Again: for any to flirt against a doctrine as speculative, without taking notice of those arguments which are made use of to support it, is, in my opinion, a tacit acknowledgement that they are not able to answer them; or at least that they are unwilling to be at any pains that way, and therefore think to bear down their weight with a magisterial air. This, indeed, is taking the shortest method to end a controversy; but is no instance of a generous temper, or a mind open to conviction. Let such objectors show us why it is safest to go in the common beaten path of Justification by faith; with submission it may be told them that some divines, of no less penetration than themselves, could see no danger of holding the doctrine of Justification before faith. Dr. [John] Owen speaks very honorably of some that did, though he differed from them, in these words: "I am imposed on to lay the foundation of all Antinomianism (as Mr. Burgess is also) to maintain Justification from eternity, or at least in the cross of Christ, of all that should believe and Justification by faith to be but the sense of it in our consciences (which last I know better and wiser men than myself that do, though I do not.)" Vindication from the Animadversions of Mr. R. B., p. 4. It is very well known that those, who hold the doctrine of eternal Justification, are reproachfully called Antinomians, by some who differ from them in that point; and it may be equally observed, that many of their opponents are very fond of being thought men of catholic and charitable tempers; to maintain a due respect to such as are not altogether in the same way of thinking with themselves (which is what they ought to do) but their loading those who are for eternal Justification, with the heavy charge of Antinomianism on that account, is no instance of their justice or charity: for, if I am not greatly mistaken, those who believe that doctrine, are far more clear of what is objected against them, than many of those charitable persons who are forward to asperse, and labor to bring them under contempt. It may be presumed, that some of these persons are of opinion that such as be moderate Calvinists, or are somewhat inclined to Arminianism and Pelagianism, are not to be treated as enemies, but friends; whilst those that embrace the doctrine of eternal Justification, are to be esteemed dangerous adversaries to truth, although they profess to agree with them in almost all other respects. How well it becomes any men, professing Calvinism, to discover an unkind and rancorous disposition towards such as believe, and endeavor to defend this doctrine,

let the unprejudiced and impartial reader determine. My design in this, is not to court the favor and respect of such persons, but to observe to them how agreeably they conform their conduct to that moderation and charity, which they sometimes earnestly recommend.

Objection 6. "It is objected by some, that many who have embraced this doctrine, have been a reproach to religion by their disagreeable conduct, and therefore they cannot judge favorably of the doctrine itself."

In answer to this I observe, that we ought not to determine in favor of, or against, any opinion by the conversations of those who believe it; for a regular life is no proof of a person's principles being just, nor is an irregular deportment always an evidence of mistakes in the judgment. Besides, many who never believed this doctrine, have brought an odium upon the gospel by a sinful course and practice; now are we to object against and recede from, the truths of Christ on that account? Surely we ought not. Moreover, corrupt nature abuses the law of God, as well as the gospel of Christ, as appears from those words of the Apostle: "But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence; for without the law, sin was dead" (Rom. 7:8). The strict prohibition of sin by the law, irritates our depraved minds; and lust works in us with the greater force and violence. "We strive for that which is forbid, and always desire those things which are denied us," as Pareus observes (Pauli epist. ad Romanos Commentarius, David Pareus, 1608, Romans 7:8; vid Par. in loc.) Therefore should this objection take place, we must regard neither law nor gospel. Farther, I hope it may be justly allowed, that the far greater number of those who believe this doctrine, do adorn their profession by a conversation becoming the gospel. Upon the whole, it appears that neither candor, nor impartiality to truth, is discovered in this objection.

Objection 7. "Say, some suppose this doctrine is true, what use or service is it of to men?"

I answer, it is our indispensable duty to make diligent search after divine truths. We cannot be excused in slight inquiries into what God has revealed in this world by this vain pretense, that we are unable to conceive what advantage may arise to us from the discoveries we make of some truths contained therein. Again: this objection is a very unbecoming reflection on the infinite wisdom and goodness of God; for it supposes that He has revealed something that is not profitable to His people, which must be esteemed a foul imputation on the divine perfections: for it is not to be imagined that God would, or can, reveal any doctrine to men, which is not in itself advantageous to them, however they may abuse it; wherefore this objection deserves to be treated with contempt. Farther, this doctrine, in my opinion, stands and falls with the important truths of God's everlasting love to His people; their eternal election in Christ, and the eternal covenant of grace. That Christ loved and delighted in His people from everlasting, is evident from these words, "my delights were with the sons of men" (Pr. 8:31). When did Christ thus delight in His people? The answer is, "before the mountains were settled, before the hills were brought forth; while as yet the earth was not made, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the earth" (Pr. 8:24-26): that is to say, before the world was formed. And the Father then took the same delight in these persons. Now as they stood charged with sin, and under condemnation, or, as considered in themselves, they were not the objects of the divine Person's pleasure, but as clear from guilt, and justified in the perfect righteousness of the Mediator. That they were chosen in Christ, cannot be disputed; and, as viewed in him, they were never objects of condemnation, but always of Justification. If there is an eternal covenant of grace, in which Christ engaged to pay their debts, by virtue of such His engagement they really became His, and the persons of the elect were acquitted of them by God and Christ, and also were justified in their account: whence it appears that eternal Justification is of the same

weight and use as these doctrines are, for it is inseparably connected with them.

Objection 8. "Those who are objects of God's wrath, cannot be justified at the time they are so. All the elect are objects of God's displeasure and wrath, before conversion, is evident from these words: "And were by nature children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3). Therefore they are not justified before they believe.

I answer, that they are children full of wrath, or enmity against God, whilst in unbelief: and in that sense they may be called children of wrath, as they are of disobedience. It is therefore true of them in an active sense. Farther, I grant that they are also children of wrath in a passive sense, or that they are under a sentence of condemnation by the law before regeneration.

Zanchius well observed, in his excellent book *De Natura Dei*, that the wrath of God is to be taken in different senses: "First, it signifies the certain and most just will, and decree of God, to avenge or punish the injuries done to Himself and His church; thus with John 3:36. He that believeth not on the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him: that is, just vengeance against him is confirmed by the decree of God." The elect are not objects of God's wrath in this sense, but "are vessels of mercy, which God has afore prepared to glory" (Rom. 9:23).

Secondly, it intends the threatenings of punishment. Lastly, it imports the effects of wrath, or penalties, and the avenging of injuries." Book 4, c. 6, p. 407. Now the elect are secured from the punishment due to their sins, by God's decree; for "they are not appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:9): and also by Christ's satisfaction, "who has made peace for them by the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20). Therefore it is only in the second sense that they are children of wrath; which is perfectly consistent with their interest in God's love and delight, as they are in, and members of Christ, and with their complete Justification in Him, their federal head. The law doth not consider men as elect, or non-elect, but as transgressors; and, as such, condemns them. But as God put the elect into Christ, or united them to Him in eternal election, He views and considers them in Him, and so justifies them, and takes infinite pleasure in their persons as members of the Mediator, in whom He always had the fullest satisfaction and delight; though they are under a sentence of condemnation by the law, as violators of it while in unbelief.

Thus I have considered all the objections which I have met with, that seem to have any weight in them against the doctrine of eternal Justification; and have, as I hope, fully answered them; though that I freely submit to the judgment of candid and impartial readers; and shall think myself obliged to any such, if they will take the pains to inform me of any mistakes I have been guilty of: but I shall not, in the least, be concerned at the treatment which this performance may meet with, from a warm and censorious adversary; having this inward pleasure, that it was the cause of truth, and no lower view, which moved me to this undertaking.

---

Reprinted 1987 by:  
THE BAPTIST STANDARD BEARER, INC.  
No. 1 Iron Oaks Drive  
Paris, Arkansas 72855  
(From whence it is available in printed form)

---

