

Leif Grane, "Justification by Faith: An Unguarded Essay," *By Faith Alone. Essays on Justification in Honor of Geohard O. Forde*. Eds. Joseph A. Burgess and Marc Kolden (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004) 31-45.

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life, must be expressed, it goes without saying that any presumption of being able to prescribe in general how justification by faith must be expressed in our times is impossible. Instead of that, I shall try to mention finally some of the questions that should give those who want to speak (or write) assertively more than enough to do.

1. To speak about justification by faith is to speak Christologically.

The word "justification" belongs, as we all know, to a certain linguistic context that makes it impossible to use the word today without further explanation. The questions connected with this problem shall be left aside here. The main thing is that our language includes enough possibilities to make clear what is meant even without the pronounced legal connotations that cling to the word. But as soon as we say by *faith*, we have moved into the sphere of assertions. By saying that, we have said *Christ*, in the sense of the Gospel of John, where it is written, I am the truth, i.e., I alone am the truth. Thus faith is faith in Christ. In contrast, faith in a general sense would in this connection be, for instance, the belief that God is indulgent (*pardonner, c'est son métier* [to forgive, that's his business], Heinrich Heine). Faith in Christ means something totally different: that he is our only hope. Once in a while it is maintained that the difference between Luther's time and our own should be a change in the fundamental question: from the search for a gracious God to doubt about the very existence of God. Whatever the exact meaning of such remarks might be, at least they imply that Luther was in a better position than we are. Should it be more difficult to hear what justification by faith is when engaged in the problem of God's existence? Something like that, it seems, must follow. I am too ignorant about modern systematic theology to know whether a "theology of creation," for instance, depends on such considerations. However, if God first has to be made plausible before we can come to justification by faith, we shall have to wait a long time, and that would be rather unfortunate if justification by faith really is what it is! No matter how plausible God might become, he spoils everything when we come to justification by faith, for the assertion that Christ is our life cannot be made plausible, although we can understand it. It is no more acceptable to a so-called religious mind than it is to a non-religious mind. Christ is the stumbling block — just as he was in Luther's time, and at any other time.