

as the father remained faithful to the prodigal son, in spite of guilt, error and ungodliness; it means that he changes the fallen and apostate into new creatures, that in the midst of the world of sin and death he once more raises up and fulfils the promises we have misused. All his separate gifts are pointers towards these self-manifestations of his in a world which has turned away from him. But where he appears, he also meets us as our lord and judge; we experience his gifts, but also the power which lays claim to us, the sovereign rights of the creator to his whole creation.

This means that in justification it is simply the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus which is at stake. His right to us is our salvation, if he does not let it drop. It will be our misfortune if we resist him. Paul's doctrine of justification is about God's *basileia*. The apostle generally expresses it in anthropological terms because he is concerned that it should determine our everyday lives. God's *basileia* seizes territory wherever we are and will be entirely human. Otherwise it would be illusion. The Christology inherent in the doctrine of justification corresponds to the existence led in the everyday life of the world. Justification is the stigmatization of our worldly existence through the crucified Christ. Through us and in us he simultaneously reaches out towards the world to which we belong. Paul's doctrine of justification means that under the sign of Christ, God becomes Cosmocrator, not merely the Lord of the believing individual or the god of a cult; it is not by chance that the doctrine has its roots in apocalyptic.

That is why Rom. 9-11 can describe God as also reaching out towards unbelieving Israel. He does so in accord with the eschatological law of the revaluation of earthly values, a law revealed in Christ, according to which the first is last and the last first. Israel, too, falls under the justification of the ungodly, not, as the Jews (including Qumran) suppose, the justification of the godly. The doctrine of justification dominates Rom. 9-11 no less than the rest of the epistle.²⁶ It is the key to salvation history, just as, conversely, salvation history forms the historical depth and cosmic breadth of the event of justification. Since creation, God has acted no differently with Jews and Gentiles. His being is the justification of the ungodly and hence the raising of the dead and creation out of nothing. For he acts under the token of the crucified Christ, whom Israel, too, cannot escape. Because this is so, salvation history is not the consummation of, let²⁸

G. Bornkamm, *Paulas*, p. 160.

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alone the substitute for, justification, but its historical depth, i.e., one of its aspects. Neither the scriptures nor the world can be adequately grasped except through belief in the justification of the ungodly. It is impossible to play off justification and salvation history against one another. To do so would be to fall a victim to individualism or ideology; and in either case God would cease to remain for us the creator of the world. Justification and salvation history belong together. But everything depends on the right coordination of the two. Just as the church must not take precedence over Christ, but must be Christ-determined without itself determining Christ, so salvation history must not take precedence over justification. It is its sphere. But justification remains the centre, the beginning and the end of salvation history. Otherwise the cross of Jesus would also inevitably lose its central position and then everything would be distorted - anthropology and ecclesiology as well as Christology and soteriology. For our God would then be once more the God of the 'good' and would cease to be, as the Father of Jesus Christ, the God of the ungodly.²⁷

²⁷ I have purposely left my account in its original form, as a lecture for a general audience. We must not merely talk esoterically, especially at the very centre of theology. Moreover, because I adhered strictly to the antithesis of the theme, I was unable to enter in detail into the present German debate about the Pauline doctrine of justification, especially among Bultmann's adherents. The tendency of the essay and its conclusions ought to be enough to show that I still participate in our common heritage. On the other hand, the debate shows that I apparently stand between two fronts in refusing either to subordinate the apostle's doctrine of justification to a pattern of salvation history or to allow it to turn into a mere vehicle for the self-understanding of the believer. I would recognize both as necessary.

What I would dispute are the respective emphases which are associated with these aspects. Perhaps it is best to consider the complicated historical and philological problems involved (in which I continue, broadly speaking, to agree with P. Stuhlmacher's book, *Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus*, 1966) from the aspect of the basic decisions which have to be made.

These questions are forced inexorably upon us through Hans Conzelmann's essay, 'Die Rechtfertigungslehre des Paulus. Theologie oder Anthropologie?', *EvTh* 28, 1968, pp. 389-404. Even if the alternatives formulated here were already suggested earlier, as Conzelmann says on p. 390, they are still accepted on p. 393 and are identified in sharpened form with the antithesis between mysticism and justification. The apparent presupposition - and it is characteristic of our present situation - is that metaphysics and mysticism can only be avoided through an anthropological approach. My objection to this alternative is that it bypasses the problem and the relevance of Christology. My partners in debate force me to move into the center with increasing deliberation and decision what was once if only hesitatingly, touched on in relation to the earthly Jesus. Paul's doctrine of justification is more than a logical conclusion; it is the specific Pauline interpretation of Christology in its relation to man and the world: that is the theme of this essay - in a nutshell, but maintained in all seriousness. His teaching about justification gives a clear definition of what the apostle understands by the lordship of Christ.