

Editor's Notes: From John A. Battle

During the past several years a growing and important controversy has descended upon many conservative Presbyterian and Reformed churches. This controversy is part of a wider debate that has been going on for decades, even centuries. At issue is what it means to be justified by God, and the manner in which we obtain justification.

The traditional Protestant position is that justification is an act of God; it is his declaring us to be righteous in his sight. This is done by imputing our sins to Christ, and his righteousness to us. We receive this justification by simple faith—believing the gospel truths. Once justified, no one can leave that state. However, there are many Bible passages that speak of the necessity of good works, of the necessity of perseverance and faithfulness to God. There are stern warnings in the Bible, threatening destruction to those who are not faithful. Recent biblical scholars have shown that the law of God in the Bible is gracious, a way of life that points to Christ—that people can live in “evangelical obedience” to that law. How are we to understand these apparently contradictory views?

We believe the answer lies in the consistent theology of the Bible, best represented in the Reformed faith. The writers in this issue of the *WRS Journal* agree that our best obedience falls far short of what God's law requires; Christ's righteousness is our only plea.

We especially welcome three guest writers for this issue: Ken Orr, John Dyck (WRS graduate, 1990), and current WRS student Laurie Copeland. This issue contains lengthy expositions by Chris Lensch and me on some of the most important OT and NT portions in this controversy, critical analyses of modern evangelical departures from the traditional belief (by John Dyck) and of the attempt of Lutheran and Roman Catholic scholars to reconcile the differences on this doctrine (Dennis Jowers shows their failure to do so). We have a lengthy book review section, emphasizing some of the most helpful works on this subject (special thanks to Laurie Copeland for reading and reviewing massive amounts of material). You will be blessed and your soul warmed by reading the sermon by Ken Orr, originally preached before the Northwest Presbytery of the Bible Presbyterian Church this past fall.

May the Lord bless you as you read the *Journal*. Let us know what you think!