

JOURNAL ARTICLE CRITIQUE

of

Stallard, Mike “Justification by Faith or Justification by Faith Alone?” *Conservative Theological Journal* vol. 3 no. 8 (April 1999): 55-73.

THEO 510 LUO (Summer 2012)

Survey of Theology

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary

Scott Fillmer (ID# xxxxxx)

May 25, 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

**I. Introduction .....3**  
**II. Brief Summary .....3**  
**III. Critical Interaction with Author’s Work.....4**  
**IV. Conclusion.....5**  
**Bibliography .....7**

## I. Introduction

Justification, which has a basic meaning of “to declare righteous,” is a particularly “Pauline term” found within Biblical Theology, and has deep Biblical roots in Paul’s letters to the Romans and the Galatians.<sup>1</sup> Within the topic of justification is the historically debated topic of whether Scripture teaches justification by faith, or justification by faith alone (*sola fide*). Stallard tackles this Pauline theology, and discusses the differences between the views of Protestant Evangelicalism and Catholicism on *sola fide*. This critique will evaluate the author’s point of view in examining *sola fide*, and provide an assessment of how the thesis of the journal article was, or was not, achieved.

## II. Brief Summary

According to his thesis, in the article “Justification by Faith or Justification by Faith Alone?,” the author writes in order to “analyze recent discussions attempting to bring evangelicals and Roman Catholics together especially as such discussions relate to the doctrine of justification by faith.”<sup>2</sup> To accomplish this Stallard evaluates the modern climate of *sola fide*, and how it has changed within the Doctrine of Salvation. The article starts by examining how the term justification by faith is defined under “Classic Protestantism,” and then by “Traditional Roman Catholicism.”<sup>3</sup> He moves on to discuss a dialogue between the Lutheran-Roman Catholics, and then looks at the areas where and how Evangelicals and Catholics can come together.

---

<sup>1</sup> Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, Revised and Expanded (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), 112.

<sup>2</sup> Mike Stallard, "Justification by Faith or Justification by Faith Alone?," *Conservative Theological Journal* (Tyndale Theological Seminary) 3, no. 8 (April 1999): 54.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 55, 57.

From this point forward the author concentrates on the current theological issues taking place in justification in the “so-called ‘new perspective,’” and how to best present his recommendations of unity among the different groups.<sup>4</sup> The author examines how these issues are viewed within our current modern culture, and in view of the “modern reevaluation of Pauline thought,” on *sola fide*. This view, he determines, has a “virtual consensus among scholars that the image of Paul as systematic theologian is inaccurate,” opting to see Paul only in light of his “social and religious context.”<sup>5</sup> Then Stallard concludes with a specific set of recommendations for those pastors and ministers “who believe in justification by faith and faith alone.”<sup>6</sup>

### **III. Critical Interaction with Author’s Work**

Stallard takes on a somewhat controversial, and historically complex, topic in justification by faith or faith alone. The author’s reason for tackling such a topic seems to stem from the current theological climate at the time, the very end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the post-modern culture the universal Christian Church finds itself confronted with as it moves into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The author maintains the importance of unity among Christian denominations when at all possible, even making the point to say, “we do need to stand together on moral issues in our culture,” when referring to the issue of abortion.<sup>7</sup> By bringing out the most stark differences between the doctrines of Catholicism and Evangelicalism the author can then show how these two groups in particular can be unity on even the most complex doctrinal disagreements such as justification by faith or by faith alone.

Stallard, a professor of Systematic Theology, whose main area of focus includes

---

<sup>4</sup> Stallard, 66.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 66.

dispensationalism, and premillennialism, would approach this subject from a clearly evangelical perspective.<sup>8</sup> This is evident from the author's section on justification as seen from Catholicism when explaining the responses to the Council of Trent (1547), which concluded the "Roman Catholic view is clearly an individual merit system for salvation. It cannot be harmonized with Paul's dichotomy: 'if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace' (Rom. 11:6)."<sup>9</sup> This, the author then points out, is simply in need of clarification where "justification is to Catholicism just a term for a variable status of the individual whose transformation is showing variable amounts of obedience and participation."<sup>10</sup> Even as written, from an evangelical point of view, the author does venture into the ultimate question of what to do when two very different Christian groups both think they are theologically and doctrinally correct, and both consequently conclude that the other is lost in their salvation.<sup>11</sup>

The strength in this article comes from the detailed clarification he gives to the Protestant and Catholic understandings of justification by faith. Often a very misunderstood theology between the two denominations, the article does an excellent job at showing where these two groups differ, and where they can come together. The weakness comes from the overall imbalance of a Catholic point of view, and realistic concessions either side might make at unity between those who stand by justification by faith alone and those who do not.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

This paper has critiqued the article of "Justification by Faith or Justification by Faith Alone?" by Dr. Mike Stallard, and the author's possible recommendations for unity among those who fall on one side or the other theologically. Overall, the author's recommendations were

---

<sup>8</sup> *Baptist Bible Seminary Academic Faculty*, 2012, <http://www.bbc.edu/seminary/faprofessors.asp> (accessed May 25, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Stallard, 58-59.

<sup>10</sup> Stallard, 59.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

slightly unbalanced to only include conclusions for those within evangelical theology, but this would be expected from the author's perspective. On the whole, this article did not completely work towards the author's thesis to "bring evangelicals and Roman Catholics together," but it did open a dialogue with which to start further discussions between the two groups.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Baptist Bible Seminary Academic Faculty*. 2012. <http://www.bbc.edu/seminary/faprofessors.asp> (accessed May 25, 2012).

Enns, Paul. *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. Revised and Expanded. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008.

Stallard, Mike. "Justification by Faith or Justification by Faith Alone?" *Conservative Theological Journal* (Tyndale Theological Seminary) 3, no. 8 (April 1999): 54-73.