

Justification is the “main hinge on which religion turns.” (Calvin, *Institutes* 3.11.1.)

Valentius Loescher, a 17th century Lutheran, insisted, *Iustificatio est articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*. (*articulus*: article, point, crisis, division, hinge {thumb})

Most religions repudiate this *articulus* formally (e.g., Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses); most church folk repudiate it informally – i.e., operatively.

Those who would never repudiate it formally are often found repudiating it subtly and thereby fall into one or another form of self-justification insofar as

- we are justified by our grasp of the doctrine of justification,
- by our ability to articulate the doctrine in private or public,
- by faith as the substance of our justification,
- by “grace” and “works” in that grace by provides an outer framework whose inner content is our achievement,
- by (in modernity with its psychological preoccupation and its emphasis on ego- strength, etc.) our awareness that “we need do nothing to be accepted.”

In other words, modernity tends to abstract justification from its rootage in Christ and turn it into an abstract truth, acknowledgement of which is deemed meritorious.