

**THE JUSTIFICATION OF  
GOD; LECTURES  
FOR WARTIME ON A  
CHRISTIAN THEODICY**

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The justification of God; lectures for wartime on a Christian theodicy by P. T. Forsyth

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**P. T. FORSYTH**

**THE JUSTIFICATION OF  
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THE  
JUSTIFICATION OF GOD

Lectures for War-Time on a Christian Theodicy

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## P R E F A C E

I HAVE been warned that the appearance of an unfamiliar word like Theodicy on the title-page (even in the sub-title) may raise a certain prejudice in some minds that one would rather attract than repel. But it is hard to believe that the word can be so strange at a time when the passion for the thing has, by the magnitude of our present calamity, become for multitudes the keynote of their religion. We are all familiar more or less with one noble work, equally of faith and of art, whose object was stated on its front to be

To vindicate Eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to man.

That is a theodicy, the attempt to adjust the ways of God to conscience. But to His own conscience above all. That is the way taken in this book. Its object is not to bring God's ways to the bar either of man's reason or man's conscience, but rather to the bar where all reason and conscience must go at last, to the standard of a holy God's own account of Himself in Jesus Christ and His Cross. A philosophical theodicy or vindication of God's justice has not yet been found. And if faith wait for it, the soul may perish first. But a religious and theological theodicy (for here the one means the other) is not only not impossible; it is our only refuge. This is the kind of theology that retains much public interest or promise to-day—the justification of God

by Himself, and not by a course of history which is a dim mixture of His ways and our ways, and where the cross lights make it impossible to see life steadily and see it whole. The only vindicator of God is God. And His own theodicy is in the Cross of His Son Jesus Christ. The problem of God is the problem of history and of God in it. The doubts that unsettle men most to-day are those that rise not from science but from society, not from the irrational but the unjust. And the very nature of that question is a great step to the answer. Every great question is pointed in proportion as it is moralised—as we are made to discuss business rather than being, the doings rather than the laws of the world, soul rather than substance, and the conscience rather than the processes either of God or man. It will then be found that the justification of God to man is not possible except to the conscience of man as justified by God. We have God's justice as a gift and not as a conclusion. God vindicates His justice by saving man from the doubt of it, and not by demonstrating to him the truth of it.

I have to express my thanks to my colleague, Rev. H. H. Scullard, D.D., for his kind service in revising proof.

P. T. FORSYTH.

*August 1916.*



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## THEODICY

### OVERTURE AND OUTLINE

IN the crowd of modern problems the individual Christian may be content to leave everything simply and happily to the love of God, his Saviour, who has done for his past and present what may well be trusted with his future. But we cannot stop there. In the first place, the question at all great crises is not one of a soul's future but of the world's. The problem of his kind has laid hold of the Christian soul. 'Lord, and what shall this race do?' is a very Christian concern. And, in the next place, if the Christian man may rest in a very plain faith, the Christian Church cannot. The consciousness of the Church has the spiritual imagination. Its conscience is in the great style. Eternity is set in its heart, to say nothing of the note of Humanity. It thinks and feels both humanly and on the scale of Eternity. And one of the sources of difficulty and confusion to-day is that problems of the Church, collective problems, are constantly being treated amateurlly, that is on the mere individual scale, with a mere individual instinct, or a mere individual piety, and often without a due individual equipment. They are treated without the trained historic sense, or the universal and ethical, or the theological and eternal, without more than the domestic range of concern, whose ethic is but in the primary colours. Of course (though it is hard for any to evade these larger questions to-day) the individual need not always raise them; and to some it may be a dangerous hobby. But