

'JUSTIFICATION' an extract from Anglican/
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III Doctrinal Issues: Agreements and Convergences

Justification

17 It is in view of our common situation that the doctrine of Justification takes on a fresh relevance. Today, as at all times, there are people who are burdened by their awareness of personal guilt or their sense of estrangement from God. Their troubled conscience leads them to ask whether there is a merciful God. But in addition there are now many people in our societies who suffer in a different way under a burden of fear, frustration and alienation. They have lost any sense of meaning in life. They have no confidence in the future. The reasons for this sense of despair are well known: the threat of nuclear destruction, economic instability, disappointment with the belief that technology and science are able to master our human destiny, a loss of personal certainty and identity, and a refusal to continue to serve the idols of progress, achievement, success and status.

When applied to this human condition, the Gospel of God's free and gracious initiative and acceptance is a power which liberates human beings from their burdens and sets them free to be God's co-workers in serving and preserving our world—his creation.

18 The doctrine of Justification is a fundamental part of our Anglican and Lutheran heritage, rooted in the Reformation rediscovery of important aspects of the biblical witness. Throughout the centuries this doctrine and its role have been interpreted in a variety of ways both within our Churches and between them. Today we share a common understanding of its fundamental thrust and also note with gratitude an increasing agreement with Roman Catholic theologians in the understanding of this doctrine.

Doctrinal Issues

19 Anglicans and Lutherans believe that by baptism the baptized person is received into a gracious relationship with the Triune God, and thereby incorporated into the community of God's adopted sons and daughters, his Church. This new relationship is continually sustained and renewed by God's forgiveness of sins on account of Christ's death and resurrection *for us* and is received in faith, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

20 We therefore share a common understanding of God's justifying grace, i.e. that we are accounted righteous and are made righteous before God only by grace through faith because of the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and not on account of our works or merits (cf. LED 1980, pp. 22-3). Both our traditions affirm that justification leads and must lead to 'good works'; authentic faith issues in love. We understand sanctification in relation to justification not only as an expression of the continuity of justification, the daily forgiveness of sins and acceptance by God, but also as growth in faith and love both as individuals and as members of the Christian community.

21 It is the individual person who is called to believe that he or she is accepted by God. There can be no substitute for this direct, personal relationship between a human being and God. Yet both our communions also agree that justification of the individual believer cannot be isolated from the corporate life of the community of faith. This double dimension—individual and corporate—is already rooted in baptism. It is in the Church that God's justifying grace is proclaimed and received through the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments, and that the fruits of justification are manifested in acts of love and service. The Church is, indeed, the community of justified sinners, empowered by the Holy Spirit to lead a life of service to all human beings and of praise to God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.