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SALVATION AND GOOD WORKS

19. Mutual misunderstandings about the bearing of good

works on salvation are properly resolved when the person and work of Christ are seen to be central to the doctrine of salvation. God has brought a renewed humanity into being in the person of Jesus Christ, the 'last Adam' or 'second man' as St. Paul describes him (1 Cor. 15:45, 47). Salvation means participating in that humanity, living the human life as God has refashioned it. In so speaking of our humanity as new, we show the proper basis for the denial "not because of works" (Eph. 2:9). Nothing that our old humanity can do

(cf. Rom. 6:6), nothing even of our best achievement or good will, can give us any claim to God's gift of renewed humanity. His deed originates in Himself and nowhere else. At the same time, in speaking of God's new deed as the gift of humanity, we show the proper basis for the affirmation "for good works" (Eph. 2:10). For humanity was created to live in activity and freedom; and a renewed human existence cannot proceed entirely in an interior realm, but must manifest itself by displaying these objective hallmarks of human existence. The decisive verdict of God in our favour finds its correspondence in human lives to which the true shape of human freedom is restored. Living faith is inseparable from love and issues necessarily in good works (James 2:17,18).

From the divine work follows the human work: it is we who live and act in a fully human way, yet never on our own or in a self-sufficient independence. This fully human life is possible if we live in the freedom and activity of Christ, who in the words of St. Paul "lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

thus

20. To speak/of "freedom in Christ" is to stress that it is Jesus Christ who decisively discloses the shape of human life lived in total liberty before God not to deny that freedom of choice can be spoken of simply as a datum of human existence. Life in Christ is liberated from the demonic forces and the manifestations of group egotism which control and inhibit all of human society, especially from the restless urge for power, honour, wealth and sensuality. The growth of believers to maturity, and indeed the common life of the Church, is in practice often checked by continual lapses into sin, whether by habit, ignorance, neglect or even wilful resistance to the known will of God. "In this life our righteousness consists more in the forgiveness of sins than in the achievement of virtues" (Augustine, City of God XIX, 27). Even good works, done in God and under the grace of the Spirit, can be flawed by human weakness and self-centredness, and therefore it is by daily repentance and faith that we re-appropriate, celebrate and express our freedom from sin. Again, freedom in Christ does not imply a life lived in isolation or without determinate structure. Our liberation binds us to an order of social existence in which the individual finds fulfilment in community. We are freed and enabled to keep the commandments of God by the liberating power of the Holy Spirit, freed to exist authentically as God's people, to be shaped by our participation in that pattern of true humanity which Jesus discloses, and to grow in love within the discipline of his community, bearing the fruit of the spirit - love, joy, peace and more (Gal. 5:22-3).
21. The Christian believer's pilgrimage faith, which can never be a flight of the alone to the Alone (Plotinus) is lived out



with the mutual support of all the people of God. In Christ all the faithful, both living and departed, are bound together in a communion of prayer. To one who has fallen into sin and seeks repentance the Church is entrusted by the Lord with authority to pronounce forgiveness in his name. The Church may also help such a person to a deeper realisation of the mercy of God by asking for practical amends for what has been done amiss. Such penitential practices, and other devotional acts have moral worth, but are not in any way intended to put God under obligation. Rather, they provide a form in which one may embrace the free mercy of God.

21a. The works of the righteous performed in Christian freedom and in the love of God which the Holy Spirit gives us (Rom. 5:5) are the object of God's commendation and receive his reward. (Mt. 6:4; Heb. 10:35; Heb. 11:6; 2 Tim. 4:8). Those who have responded to the grace of God and borne fruit for the Kingdom are to be granted a place in the Kingdom when it comes at Christ's appearing. They will rejoice in the vision of God and the society of the redeemed. This reward is a gift depending wholly on divine grace. It is in this perspective that the language of "merit"<sup>1</sup> must be understood, so that we can say with St. Augustine: "When God crowns our merits it is his own gifts that he crowns" (Ep. 194.5). In contemplating ultimate destiny no Christian trusts in his or her merits, but rests confidence only on the power, mercy and loving kindness of God, and prays that the good work which God has begun He will in grace complete. God is true to His promise to "render to everyone according to his works" (Rom. 2:6), yet when we have

<sup>1</sup> Misunderstanding has been caused by the fact that the Latin mereor has a range of meanings, from "deserve" to "obtain".

done all that is commanded we must still say, "We are unprofitable servants, we have only done our duty". (Lk. 17:10).

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27. The Church, as koinonia, which in this world is always in need of renewal and purification, is already here and now a foretaste of God's kingdom. It is this foretaste in a world which is still awaiting its consummation (Rom. 8:18-23) - a world therefore full of suffering, injustice, division and strife. Thus Paul speaks of a fellowship which is called to transcend the seemingly insuperable divisions of the world; where all, because of their equal standing before the Lord, must be equally accepted by one another; a fellowship where, since all are justified by the grace of God, all may learn to do justice to one another; where ethnic, social, sexual and other distinctions no longer cause discrimination and alienation (Gal. 3:28). Those who are justified by grace, and who are sustained in the life of Christ through Word and Sacrament, are liberated from self-centredness and thus empowered to act freely and live at peace with God and with one another. The Church, as the Community of the justified, is called to embody the good news that forgiveness is a gift to be received from God and shared with others (Mt. 6:14f.). Thus the message of the Church is not a private pietism irrelevant to contemporary society, nor a political or social programme not subject to critical judgement in the light of the Gospel. Only a reconciled and reconciling community, faithful to its Lord, in which human divisions are being overcome, will speak with integrity to an alienated, divided world, and so be a credible witness to God's saving action in Christ and a foretaste of God's kingdom. Until the kingdom is realized in its fullness, the Church as koinonia and its service to the world is marked by human limitation and imperfections. It is the beginning and not yet the end, the seed and not yet the harvest.



28. The source of the Church's hope for the world lies in the fact that God has never abandoned the world, has never ceased to work within it, and has never given up his saving purpose for the whole created order. The Gospel affirms the sacredness and dignity of the person, of communities and of the human race as a whole. Thus the Church participates in Christ's mission. It is called, empowered, and sent to proclaim this hope by word and deed, and to communicate this conviction to the world until the end of time. It witnesses against the structures of sin in society, addressing individuals with the Gospel of repentance and forgiveness, and making intercession for the world. As an agent of justice and compassion it will challenge and assist society's attempts to achieve just settlements of its conflicts, even though these settlements are by nature provisional. While the Church pursues its mission and pilgrimage in the world, it looks forward to "the end, when having overcome every sovereignty, authority and power, ... (Christ) will hand over the kingdom to God the Father" (1 Cor. 15:24).

#### CONCLUSION

29. In our work we have rediscovered and expressed together the balance and coherence of the constitutive elements of the Christian doctrine of salvation which became partially obscured in the course of history and controversy.

We are agreed that this is not an area where any remaining differences of theological interpretation, ecclesiological emphasis or devotional practice, either within or between our Churches can justify our continuing separation. We believe that our two Communion's are agreed on the essential aspects of the doctrine of salvation and on the Church's role within it. We have also realized the central meaning and profound significance which the message of justification and sanctification within the whole doctrine of salvation continues to have for us today. This agreement should enable our two Communion's to witness together to God's salvation in the midst of the anxieties, struggles and hopes of our world.