

II. 1 All human beings stand in need of salvation and forgiveness, which can come only from God. The entire hope of the Christian rests on God's incarnate Son and on the Gospel of God's freely given and merciful action in Him. God's gracious action in Christ is proclaimed to us by the Gospel. Our God-given response to the Gospel is faith. By faith we accept the effects of Christ's saving action on our behalf. This faith, expressed in the reception of baptism, unites believers with Christ, makes them members of Christ's body, and enables them to participate in the life of the Church. Faith is sustained and deepened by the life of the eucharistic community. Faith is the obedient assent by which human beings offer up to God their whole self, intellect, feeling and will. Faith is not to be identified with merely intellectual assent to credal propositions, though it includes intellectual assent to such propositions. Faith, expressed in repentance, includes/is a sure confidence in God's mercy and in the efficacy of Christ's saving work on behalf of each ('I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me' : Gal. 2:20). Faith is not at all a presumptuous confidence which removes the necessity of working out one's salvation in fear and trembling. Faith is inseparable from hope and love and issues in good works which are pleasing to God (cf. Eph.2:8-10).

II. 2 In describing this merciful action we use the language of grace. Grace is not to be conceived as a thing or substance. Grace refers to God's saving action as a free gift which is totally undeserved on our part. Grace also refers to what, in this saving action, God bestows: viz. the Holy Spirit who dwells within us and confers on us his gifts. By grace we become sons and daughters of God. The power to respond to God's saving action is itself a gift of grace. This response is nevertheless a truly human and free response. We are not passive under God's grace.

II. 3 The Scriptural images we have spoken of in paragraph 3 combine two contrasting but complementary aspects of God's saving love: that which is once for all and the continuing process. Thus Scripture speaks both of God's eternal will, realised in the once-for-all Paschal event, and of his abiding presence and action through the Holy Spirit in the Church; both of God's decisive act of reconciling each sinner and of his continuing gift of grace; both of God's saving act in Christ and of our continuing response; both of our initial response to the Gospel and of our continuing life and growth in grace. This last instance is reflected in the relation between baptism, which is the unrepeatable 'sacrament of justification' (St. Augustine, Sermon 152.3) and of incorporation into the Church, and the eucharist, which is the repeated sacrament by which the life of the body of Christ is nourished.

II. 4 Many examples can be given of the polarity of the biblical language of salvation. Thus St. Paul, using the metaphor of putting on clothing, speaks of his hearers as men and women who have put off the old nature and put on the new humanity, and at the same time speaks of a nature which is being renewed, telling them to put on the qualities which belong to this new humanity, such as compassion and the peace of Christ (Col. 3:10-13). Again, sanctification on the one hand denotes consecration to God and is associated with the moment of baptism (1 Cor. 6:11); on the other hand it denotes constant re-appropriation of this consecration by holiness of life (1 Pet. 1:15-16). Yet again, while we are said to be already saved (Eph. 2:8), we are also told to work out our salvation (Phil. 2:12).

II. 5 Misunderstandings have occurred in the past* through the dissociation of justification from the complementary terms, notably when an unreal distinction

*FOOTNOTE. In the sixteenth century discussion of these issues was confused by a misunderstanding between Protestants, who followed the NT in referring justification (dikaiosis) primarily to the act of salvation, and Catholics, who followed medieval usage in referring justification (justificatio) also to the process.

is drawn between justification and sanctification. This misunderstanding has been compounded when the act of justification has been seen not so much as God's decision to justify the ungodly as the beginning of a temporal process continued by sanctification.

II. 6 The term Justification speaks of a divine declaration of acquittal. God declares that we are forgiven and accepted, and that through the blood of Christ we are reconciled with God (Rom. 5:1,9). This declaration is not so rigidly forensic as to be impersonal, nor divorced from Christian life in the Spirit. For the remission of sins is also a renewal, a rebirth to newness of life. This new life begins from the moment the believer receives the forgiveness of sins, and to that forgiveness he contributes only the will (or willingness) to be delivered. The culmination of the process of sanctification is salvation; that is the making in the believer of that righteousness and holiness without which no man may see the Lord. Our entire hope of justification and salvation rests on Christ Jesus and on the gospel of God's gratuitous and merciful action in him. The prerequisite of final salvation is righteousness, which is both a judgement made by God in favour of the sinner declaring him righteous, and at the same time a gift which God bestows on him making him righteous. God's judgement is therefore not to be seen as a mere legal fiction: God's grace effects what he declares.

II. 7 The language of merit and reward has caused difficulty and misunderstanding in the past, because it has been thought to imply that human beings are the authors of their own salvation. Neither of our two churches has ever held that justification itself is anything but a gift. Even the very first movements, such as repentance and the desire for forgiveness, which lead to justification, are God's work in us touching our heart by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. 'What have you that you did not receive?' (1 Cor. 4:7). On the other hand,

Scripture speaks of the good works of the justified performed in grace as recognized by God, the righteous judge (Mt. 25:14-46; 2 Tim. 4:6).

II. 8 The eternal reward promised to the righteous is itself a gift, depending wholly on God's grace. It is only with this understanding that following St. Augustine we can speak of the believer's merits: 'When God crowns our merits it is his own gifts that he crowns' (Ep. 194.5). While he is true to his promise to 'render to everyone according to his works' (Rom. 2:6), when we have done all that is commanded we must still say, 'We are unprofitable servants, we have only done our duty'. (Lk. 17:10).

II. 9 Thus the believer cannot rely on his good works as though these were not entirely the fruit of God's grace, or boast of his own merits as though he were not still in need of mercy. Sin no longer reigns in one who is justified, yet he remains liable to sinful inclinations, continues to fall repeatedly, and may even depart from the grace God has given. The Christian, even though he actively participates in the life and worship of the Church, may never presume on the gift of final perseverance, yet he should live his life with a sure confidence in God and with the firm hope that God will bring him to final salvation.

II. 10 We have spoken of God's once-for-all declaration that a person is righteous. We have spoken also of the effects of God's grace in human lives. These two sayings in the past have often been held to be contradictory. We have tried to show that they are not only compatible but both are indispensable for the fulness of Christian faith. The first statement places the believer in reverence before the mystery of God's eternal and free decision on our behalf; the second reminds us that God's plan, achieved through the Incarnation of the eternal Son, restores and makes God's own all that is authentic in human existence. The very fact that these positions were held with such passion indicates their

lasting importance for the understanding of the Christian faith and the living of the Christian life.

II. 11 That faith cannot be held with consistency and that life cannot be lived with authenticity without conviction both of God's forgiveness and human need of that forgiveness, a sense of acceptance by God, incorporation into a Divinely ordained community and an awareness of God's love freely given and joyfully received. If these issues were the cause of division in the past, our reflection on them has enabled us to become more deeply aware of their eternal significance. This applies also to our mutual understanding of the role of the Church. To show in what way the Church of Jesus Christ is a sign or instrument of God's saving action in the world helps us to understand what we mean when we say 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church'. To show that the Church is not only the Sign but also the Steward of God's gifts helps us to appreciate the responsibility of all Christians to spread the word of God and to give witness to Christ in the world of today. For if the Sign is to be truly effective, if the stewardship is to be truly faithful, then Christ's will that the Church should be united is crucial. For our two churches, growth towards unity is not for our own sakes but "so that the world may believe that it was God who sent me".