

NOTES AND SUGGESTIONS ON THE PLESHEY DRAFT

ARCIC II 36/1(85)

GENERAL NOTE

The undermentioned notes have been restricted to what seem to be major points. No comments are being offered on ambiguities in construction, even though there appear, on a first reading, to be some present. I assume that such ambiguities and possible misconstructions will be tidied up in the course of final editing.

I have tried to read the documents in the same way that a "receiving Church" might read them, namely, taking as far as possible the text as it stands, and making no assumptions about minds or intentions of the writers.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS

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| <u>Page 2</u> | par. 3 | line 6 | For clarification, insert after the word "Church", "in its task of proclamation and in its nurturing of the faithful". |
| | par. 4 | line 2 | Suggest delete "thought" and insert "appeared to think". |
| <u>Page 3</u> | par. 5 | line 7 | One is aware that the term, "legal fiction" is commonly used in this discussion, but I am never quite sure what this phrase means and indeed, whether it means the same to all those who use it. |
| | | line 9 | "which". The antecedent of "which" is not clear to me. |
| | par. 7 | line 2 | "Reformation theologians ... own salvation." Does the phrase "assurance of his own salvation" refer to personal certitude in this matter? If so, I am a little surprised at this sentence. It may be that some of the Continental Reformers took this approach. I am not aware that any Anglican writer of significance and influence adopted this concept. |
| | | line 8 | I wonder whether the word "certitude" needs some explanation? I take it that "certitude" refers to a state of mind as opposed to "certainty" which applies to propositions or statements. |
| <u>Page 8</u> | par. 15 | ff. | It is at this point in the Draft that I find a major difficulty. Insofar as we are dealing with the issue of Justification by Faith (cf par. 2) the Draft proceeds to touch on justification in the context of the wider ideas of the New Testament, but it does not touch on the issue of faith until par. 22. This would seem to me to be sufficiently far on in the progression of thought as not to deal satisfactorily with the concept of Justification by Faith as a unity. |

Each of the concepts touched on here, such as adoption, re-birth, etc., become realities in the life of the individual when they are received by and in the context of his or her faith. Naturally, as the Draft goes on to indicate, that faith must be sacramentally attested and also involves incorporation into the believing community. My point at this stage is that the concept of faith needs a place in the discussion of the variety of images discussed in par. 15. I would suggest at this point a transfer of the sentence as here amended, from page 13, par. 22. line 2 to page 9, par. 15, line 6:-

"Our God-given response to the offer of salvation in the Gospel is faith, by which we accept the effects of God's saving action on our behalf", thus concluding the paragraph.

Page 9 par. 17 lines 8-10 Is this a "justification" concept in the strict sense of the word? Though congnate, it seems that the verb has a narrower sense than the adjective.

Page 11 par. 19 lines 19-22 "The prerequisite ... faith and love." Again, I am not at ease with this sentence. I do not quarrel with it as it stands, but it seems to exclude the sinner's acceptance by God in that sinner's penitence and faith. Suggest as an alternative:-

"The prerequisite of final salvation is righteousness. God's last judgement is presented to us paradoxically in Scripture, with our merciful acceptance by God as his forgiven and adopted children on the one hand, and his judgement according to our works on the other."

Page 12 par. 20 line 1 After the phrase, "unrelated acts of God", suggest "but are inseparable parts of the one process of salvation."

line 8 "In the act of justifying God infuses ... a righteousness.." This is a crux, and the sentence appears to me to read ambiguously. I would suggest: "In the course of salvation, God both justifies and infuses or imparts a righteousness..."

Page 13 par. 22 I would suggest consideration be given to including some mention here to that reference in the New Testament to a faith which carries with it no receipt or conveyance of forgiveness or justification. As I mentioned in my Notes (ARCIC II 35/85), p. 6, Note 4, I think it would clarify our overall concerns to note that the New Testament, while speaking of "Justification by Faith" also speaks of a faith which does not justify. I would suggest for consideration as a final sentence to par. 22, the following:-

"The New Testament recognizes (James 2:19, 20) a faith which appears to be no more than intellectual recognition and provokes no response nor is conjoined with repentance. Faith as primarily seen in the New Testament is, as mentioned above, inseparable from love and issues in good works."

Page 16 par. 25 lines 3, 4

"His confidence is based ..." Not at all easy about this though not overlooking the Scriptural roots. This statement may lead us into areas of necessary controversy. The point could easily be made by re-phrasing the sentence thus:-

"His confidence is based on God's unfailing mercy and the assurance that none who turn to him will be turned away."

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