

## SALVATION AND THE CHURCH

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The will of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is to reconcile to himself all that he has created and sustains, to set free the creation from its bondage to decay, and to draw all humanity into communion with himself. Though we, his creatures, turn away from him through sin, God continues to call us and opens up for us the way to find him anew. To bring us to union with himself, the Father sent into the world Jesus Christ, his only Son, in whom all things were created. He is the image of the invisible God; he took flesh so that we in turn might share the divine nature and so reflect the glory of God. Through Christ's life, death and resurrection, the mystery of God's love is revealed. We are saved from the powers of evil, sin and death and receive a share in the life of God. All this is pure, unmerited gift. The Spirit of God is poured into the hearts of believers - the Spirit of adoption, who makes us sons and daughters of God. The Spirit unites us with Christ and, in Christ, with all those who by faith are one with Christ. Through baptism we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection. We are by the power of the Spirit made members of one body, and together participate in the life of God. This fellowship in one body, sustained through word and sacrament, is called in the New Testament koinonia. "Koinonia with one another is entailed by our koinonia with God in Christ. This is the mystery of the Church". (F.R. Introduction (5)). The community of believers, united with Christ, gives praise and thanksgiving to God, celebrating the grace of Christ as they await his return in glory when he

will be all in all, and will deliver to the Father a holy people. In the present time, the Church is called to be a sign to the world of God's will for the healing and re-creation of the whole human race in Jesus Christ. And as the Church proclaims the good news which it has received, the heart of its message must be salvation through the grace of God in Christ.

2. But the doctrine of salvation has in the past been a cause of contention between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Disagreements, focussing on justification, had already surfaced in the Church of the later Middle Ages, and in the sixteenth century became a central matter of dispute between Roman Catholics and Continental Reformers. Though the matter played a less crucial role in the English Reformation, the Church of England substantially adopted the principles expressed in the moderate Lutheran formulations of the Augsburg and Wurtemberg Confessions. The Decree on Justification of the Council of Trent was not directed against the Anglican formularies, which had not yet been compiled, but Anglicans widely came to understand that Decree as a repudiation of their position. Since then various debates on the doctrine of justification and on related issues (such as predestination, original sin, good works, sanctification) have been pursued within each of the divided Communions.

3. In the area of the doctrine of salvation, including justification there was much agreement. Above all, it was agreed that the act of God in bringing salvation to the human race and summoning individuals into a community to serve him is due solely to the

mercy and grace of God, mediated and manifested through Jesus Christ in his ministry, atoning death and rising again. It was also no matter of dispute that God's grace evokes an authentic human response of faith which takes effect not only in the life of the individual but also in the corporate life of the Church. The difficulties arose in explaining how divine grace related to human freedom, and these difficulties were compounded by a framework of discussion that concentrated too narrowly upon the individual.

4. One difficulty concerned the understanding of the faith through which we are justified, in so far as this included the individual's confidence in his or her own final salvation. Everyone agreed that confidence in God was a mark of Christian hope but some feared that too extreme an emphasis on assurance, when linked with an absolute doctrine of divine predestination, encouraged a neglect of the need for justification to issue in holiness of life. Catholics thought that this Protestant understanding of assurance confused faith with a subjective state and would actually have the effect of undermining hope in God. Protestants for their part suspected that Catholics, through lack of confidence in the sufficiency of Christ's work and over-reliance on human efforts, had lapsed either into a kind of scrupulosity or mere legalism and so lost Christian hope and assurance.

5. A second difficulty concerned the understanding of justification and the associated concepts, righteousness and justice. In their fear that justification might seem to depend upon entitlement arising from good works, Reformation theologians laid great emphasis on the imputation to human beings of the righteousness of Christ. By this they meant that God declared the unrighteous to be accepted by him on account of the obedience of Christ and the merits of his passion. Catholics took them to be saying that imputed righteousness was a legal fiction, that is, a merely nominal righteousness that remained only external to the believer. This, they complained, left the essential sinfulness of the individual unchanged, and excluded the imparted, or habitual and actual, righteousness created in the inner being of the regenerate person by the indwelling Spirit. Anglican theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw imputed and imparted righteousness as distinct to the mind, but indissoluble in worship and life. They believed, that while we are made truly righteous because we are forgiven, we know ourselves to be in continuing need of forgiveness.

6. A third difficulty concerned the bearing of good works on salvation. Reformation theologians understood the Catholic emphasis on the value of good works and religious practices and ceremonies to imply that justification in some degree depended upon them in a way that compromised the sovereignty and unconditional freedom of God's grace. Catholics, on the other hand, saw the Reformation's understanding of justification as implying that human actions are of no worth in the sight of God. This, in their judgement, led to the negation of human freedom and responsibility, and to the denial that works, even when supernaturally inspired, deserved any reward. The Anglican theologians of the Reformation age held good works to be not irrelevant to

salvation: they are the necessary demonstration of faith, and faith itself is inseparable from hope and love.

7. Although the sixteenth century disagreements centred mainly on the relationship of faith, righteousness and good works to the salvation of the individual, the role of the Church in the process of salvation constituted a fourth difficulty. As well as believing that Catholics did not acknowledge the true authority of Scripture over the Church, Protestants also felt that Catholic teaching and practice had interpreted the mediatorial role of the Church in such a way as to derogate from the place of Christ as 'sole mediator between God and man' (1 Tim. 2:5). Catholics believed that Protestants were abandoning or at least devaluing the Church's ministry and sacraments, which were divinely appointed means of grace; also that they were rejecting its divinely given authority as guardian and interpreter of the revealed word of God.
  
8. It must be borne in mind that the break in communion between Anglicans and Roman Catholics encouraged each side to produce caricatures of the other's beliefs. There were also extremists on both sides whose words and actions seemed to confirm the anxieties of their opponents.
  
9. However, the renewal of biblical scholarship, the development of historical and theological studies, new insights gained in mission, the growth in understanding within the ecumenical movement enable us to see our divisions in a new perspective. We have explored our common faith in the light of these shared experiences and are able to affirm that the four areas of difficulty outlined above should no longer be matters of dispute between us.

SALVATION AND FAITH

10. When we confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, we praise and glorify God the Father, whose purpose for creation and salvation is realised in the Son, whom he sent to redeem us and to prepare a people for himself by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This wholly unmerited love of God for his creatures is expressed in the language of grace, which embraces not only the once for all death and resurrection of Christ, but also God's continuing work on our behalf. The Holy Spirit makes the fruits of Christ's sacrifice actual within the Church through word and sacrament: our sins are forgiven, we are enabled to respond to God's love and we are conformed to the image of Christ. The human response to God's initiative is itself a gift of grace, and is at the same time a truly human, personal response. It is through grace that God's new creation is realised. Salvation is the gift of grace; it is by faith that it is appropriated.
11. The gracious action of God in Christ is revealed to us in the Gospel. The Gospel, by proclaiming Christ's definitive atoning work, the gift and pledge of the Holy Spirit to every believer, and the certainty of God's promise of eternal life, calls Christians to faith in the mercy of God and brings them assurance of salvation. It is God's gracious will that, as his children, called through the Gospel and granted participation in the means of grace, we should be confident that the gift of eternal life is assured to each of us. Our response to this gift must come from our whole being. Faith therefore, not only includes an assent to the truth of the Gospel but also involves commitment of our will to God in repentance and obedience to his call; otherwise faith is dead (James 2:17). Living faith is inseparable from love, issues in good works and deepens in the course of a life of holiness. Christian assurance does not in any way remove the responsibility of Christians to work out their salvation in fear and trembling.

12. Christian assurance is not presumptuous. It is always founded upon God's unfailing faithfulness and not upon the measure of our response. God gives the faithful all that is needed for their salvation. This is to believers a matter of absolute certitude. The word of Christ and his sacraments give us this assurance. The Christian tradition is dominated by the certainty of the infinite mercy of God, who gave his Son for us. Even the baptized and justified may sin. However grave our sins may be, we are sure that God is always ready to forgive those who truly repent. The Gospel itself contains a warning note: "Not everyone who says 'Lord, Lord', will enter the Kingdom of heaven". (Matt. 7:21). Christians may never presume on the gift of God's final mercy; yet they may live their lives with a sure confidence in God. Because of what God has revealed of his ultimate purpose in Christ Jesus, faith and hope are inseparable.

#### SALVATION AND JUSTIFICATION

13. Baptism is <sup>the</sup> / sacrament of faith. In baptism we confess Christ together with the whole Church, enter into communion with him in his death and resurrection, and through the gift of the Holy Spirit we are delivered from our sinfulness and raised to new life. Scripture speaks of this salvation in many ways. It tells of God's eternal will fulfilled in Christ's sacrifice on the cross <sup>and</sup> / of God's decisive act in overcoming the power of evil and in reconciling each sinner who believes. It also speaks of the abiding presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the Church, of his present gifts of grace, of our continuing life and growth in this grace as we are transformed into the likeness of Christ. Finally, it speaks of our entry with all the saints into our eternal inheritance, of our vision of God face to face and of our participation in the joy of the final resurrection.

14. In order to describe salvation in all its fullness, the New Testament employs a wide variety of language. Though some terms are of more fundamental importance than others, there is no controlling term or concept; they complement one another. The concept of salvation has the all-embracing meaning of the deliverance of human beings from all evil and their establishment in that fullness of life which is God's will for them (e.g. Luke 1:77; John 3:17). The idea of reconciliation and forgiveness stresses the restoration of broken relationships (e.g. 2 Cor. 5:18f; Eph. 2:13-18). The word expiation, drawn from the language of sacrifice, denotes the forgiveness of sin and the re-establishment of a right relationship with God (e.g. Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). To speak of redemption or liberation is to speak of rescue from bondage so as to become God's own possession, and of freedom bought for a price (e.g. Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18f; Mk. 10:45). The notion of adoption speaks of our new identity as children of God (e.g. Rom. 8:15-17, 23, 29). Terms like regeneration, rebirth and new creation speak of God's work of re-creation and the beginning of new life (e.g. 2 Cor. 5:17; Jn. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:23). The theme of sanctification underlines the fact that God has made us his own and calls us to holiness of life (e.g. John 17:17; 1 Cor. 3:17; 6:11; 1 Pet. 1:16). The concept of justification relates to the removal of condemnation and to a new standing in the eyes of God (e.g. Rom. 3:24; 4:5; 5:1f). Salvation in all these aspects comes to each believer as he or she is incorporated into the believing community.

15. Roman Catholic interpreters of Trent and Anglican theologians alike have insisted that justification and sanctification are acts of God which are neither wholly distinct from, nor unrelated to one another. The discussion, however, has been confused by differing understandings of the word justification and its associated words. The theologians of the Reformation tended to follow the predominant usage of the New Testament, in which the word dikaioun usually means "to pronounce righteous". The Catholic theologians, and notably the Council of Trent, tended to follow the usage of patristic and medieval Latin writers, for whom justificare (the traditional translation of dikaioun) signified "to make righteous". Thus, the Latin understanding of the process of justification tended to include elements of salvation which the Reformers would describe as belonging to sanctification rather than justification. As a consequence, Protestants took Catholics to be emphasising sanctification in such a way that the absolute gratuitousness of salvation was threatened. On the other side, Catholics feared that Protestants were so stressing the justifying action of God that sanctification and human responsibility were gravely depreciated.

16. Justification and sanctification are two aspects of the same divine act. This does not mean that when God pronounces the removal of our condemnation and gives us a new standing before him, this justification is a reward for faith or works: rather it is indissolubly linked with his sanctifying recreation of us in grace. This transformation is worked out, despite the imperfections and ambiguities of our lives, in the course of our pilgrimage. God's grace effects what he declares; his creative word imparts what it imputes. He imparts a righteousness which is his and becomes ours.

17. God's declaration that we are accepted because of Christ and his gift of continual renewal of the indwelling Spirit are the pledge and first instalment of the final consummation and the ground of the believer's hope. In the life of the Church, the finality of God's declaration and this continuing movement towards the ultimate goal are reflected in the relation between baptism and the Eucharist. Baptism is the unrepeatable sacrament of justification and incorporation into Christ (1 Cor. 6:11; 12:12f.; Gal. 3:27; cf. Augustine, Sermon 152.3). The Eucharist is the repeated sacrament by which the life of Christ's body is constituted and renewed, when the death of Christ is proclaimed until he comes again (1 Cor. 11:26).

18. Sanctification is the actualizing in the believer of the righteousness and holiness without which no one may see the Lord. It involves the restoring and perfecting in humanity of the likeness of God marred by sin. We grow into conformity with Christ, the perfect image of God, until he appears and we shall be like him. The law of Christ has become the pattern of our life. We are enabled to produce works which are the fruits of the Holy Spirit, so that God's final judgement, as it is invariably presented to us in Scripture, rests upon these works which the justified have performed through grace.

Thus the righteousness of God our Saviour is not only declared in a judgement made by God in favour of sinners, but it is also bestowed as a gift to make them righteous. Even though our acceptance of this gift will always be imperfect in this life, Scripture speaks of the righteousness of the believer as already effected by God: 'God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:6).

19. The term 'justification' speaks of a divine declaration of acquittal, of the love of God manifested to an alienated and lost humanity prior to any entitlement on our part. Through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, God declares that we are forgiven, accepted and reconciled to him. Instead of our own strivings to make ourselves acceptable to God, Christ's perfect righteousness is reckoned to our account. God's declaration is sometimes expressed in the New Testament in the language of law, as a verdict of acquittal of the sinner. The divine court, where the verdict is given is the court of the judge who is also Father and Saviour of those whom he judges. While in a human law court an acquittal is an external, even impersonal act, God's declaration of forgiveness and reconciliation does not leave repentant believers unchanged but establishes with them an intimate and personal relationship. The remission of sins is accompanied by a present renewal, the rebirth to newness of life. Thus, the juridical aspect of justification which expresses an important facet of the truth, is not the exclusive notion in the light of which all other biblical ideas and images of salvation must be interpreted. For God sanctifies as well as acquits us. He is not only the judge who passes a verdict in our favour, but also the Father who gave his only Son to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. By virtue of Christ's life and self-oblation on the Cross we are able with him to say through the Holy Spirit, 'Abba, Father' (Rom. 3:26; 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

SALVATION AND GOOD WORKS

20. Just as justification and sanctification are aspects of the same divine act, so also faith and love are inseparable in the believer. Faith is no merely private and interior condition of the believer's feelings, but by its very nature is acted out: good works necessarily spring out of a true and living faith (James 2:17-18). They are truly good because they are done in God and in dependence on God's grace. These good works are the fruit of the freedom God has given us in his Son. God confers freedom on fallen humanity in restoring us to his likeness. This is not the natural freedom to choose between two alternatives, but freedom to do his will; "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from sin and death... in order that the just requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom. 8: 2,4). We are freed and enabled to keep the commandments of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, freed to exist faithfully as God's people and to grow within the discipline of the community bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22ff). Thus/<sup>from</sup>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).

20. To speak thus of 'freedom in Christ' is to stress that it is in Jesus Christ that the shape of human life lived in total liberty before God is decisively disclosed. Our liberation commits us to an order of social existence in which the individual finds fulfilment in relationship with others. Thus freedom in Christ does not imply an isolated life, but rather one lived in a community governed by moral and social obligations. Life in Christ sets us free from the demonic forces manifested not only in individual but also social egotism.

21. The growth of believers to maturity, and indeed the common life of the Church, are characterised by repeated lapses into sin. 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 our freedom from sin. This insight has sometimes been expressed by the affirmation that we are at once just and sinners.

22. The Christian believer's pilgrimage of faith 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. The Church is entrusted by the Lord with authority to pronounce forgiveness in his name to those who have fallen into sin and repent. The Church may also help them to a deeper realization of the mercy of God by asking for practical amends for what has been done amiss. Such penitential practices, and other devotional acts, are not in any way intended to put God under obligation. Rather, they provide a form in which one may more fully embrace the free mercy of God.

24. The works of the righteous performed in Christian freedom and in the love of God which the Holy Spirit gives us are the object of God's commendation and receive his reward (Mt. 6:4; Heb. 6:10; 10:35; Heb. 11:6; 2 Tim. 4:8). In accordance with God's promise, those who have responded to the grace of God and consequently borne fruit for the Kingdom will be granted a place in that Kingdom when it comes at Christ's appearing. They will be one with the society of the redeemed in rejoicing in the vision of God. This reward is a gift depending wholly on divine grace. It is in this perspective that the language of 'merit' 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). Christians rest their confidence for salvation<sup>on</sup> the power, mercy and loving kindness of God and pray that the good work which God has begun he will in grace complete. They do not trust in their own merits but in Christ's. God is true to his promise to 'render to everyone according to his works' (Rom. 2:6); yet 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).

25. The language of merit and good works, therefore, when properly understood, in no way implies that human beings, once justified, are able to put God in their debt. Still less does it imply that justification itself is anything but a totally unmerited gift. Even the very first movements which lead to justification, such as repentance, the desire for forgiveness and even faith itself, are the work of God as he touches our hearts by the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

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1. Misunderstanding has been caused by the fact that the Latin mereor has a range of meanings, from 'deserve' to 'obtain'.

THE CHURCH AND SALVATION

26. The doctrine of Salvation is intimately associated with the doctrine of the Church which "is the community of those reconciled with God and with each other because it is the community of those who believe in Jesus Christ and are justified through God's grace" (Final Report Introduction 8). The Church proclaims the good news of our justification and salvation by God in Christ Jesus. Those who respond in faith to the Gospel come to the way of salvation through incorporation by baptism into the Church. All those who respond are called to witness to the Gospel as members of the Church.
27. The Church itself is a sign of the Gospel, for its vocation is to embody and reveal the redemptive power contained within the Gospel. What Christ achieved through his cross and resurrection is communicated by the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. In its life the Church signifies God's gracious purpose for his creation and his power to realize this purpose for sinful humanity. The Church is thus a sign and foretaste of God's Kingdom. In fulfilling this vocation the Church is called to follow the way of Jesus Christ, who being the image of the Father took the form of a servant and was made perfect by suffering. When for Christ's sake the Church encounters opposition and persecution, it is a sign of the compassion of God who chose the way of the Cross to save the world.
28. This once for all atoning work of Christ, realized and experienced in the life of the Church and celebrated in the Eucharist, constitutes the free gift of God which is proclaimed in the Gospel. In the service of this mystery the Church is entrusted with a responsibility of stewardship. The Church is called to fulfil this stewardship by proclaiming the Gospel and by its sacramental and pastoral life. The Church is required to carry out this task in such a way that the Gospel may be heard as good news in differing ages and cultures, while at the same time seeking neither to alter

its content nor minimize its demands. For the Church is servant and not master of what it has received. Indeed, the Church's power to affect the hearer comes not from our unaided efforts but entirely from the Holy Spirit, who is the source of the Church's life and who enables the Church to be truly the steward of God's design.

29. The Church is also an instrument for the realization of God's eternal design, the salvation of humankind. While we recognize that the Holy Spirit acts outside the community of Christians, nevertheless it is within the Church that the Gospel becomes a manifest reality where the Holy Spirit gives and nurtures the new life of the Kingdom. As this instrument, the Church is called to be a living expression of the Gospel, evangelized and evangelizing, reconciled and reconciling, gathered together and gathering others. In its ministry to the world the Church seeks to share with all people the grace by which its own life is created and sustained.

30. The Church is therefore called to be, and by the power of the Spirit actually is, a sign, steward and instrument of God's design. For this reason it can be described as sacrament of God's saving work. However, the credibility of the Church's witness is undermined by the sins of its members, the shortcomings of its human institutions and not least by the scandal of division. The Church is in constant need of repentance and renewal so that it can be more clearly seen for what it is: the one, holy body of Christ. Nevertheless, the Gospel contains the promise that despite all failures the Church will be used by God in the achievement of his purpose: to draw humanity into communion with himself and with one another, so as to share his life, the life of the Holy Trinity.

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30. The Church 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; racial, 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 can it be reduced to a political or social programme. Only a reconciled and reconciling community, faithful to its Lord, in which human divisions are being overcome, can speak with full 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 imperfection. It is the beginning and not yet the end, the seed and not yet the harvest.)

32. The Church is called to participate in Christ's mission to the world by proclaiming the Gospel of salvation through its words and deeds. It is called to affirm the sacredness and dignity of the person and of the human race as a whole; to witness against the structures of sin in society, addressing individuals with the Gospel of repentance and forgiveness, and making intercession for the world, and to be an agent of justice and compassion challenging, and assisting Society's attempts to achieve just settlements of its conflicts, never forgetting that in the light of God's justice all such settlements are provisional. In fulfilling this task the Church is inspired by hope in God who has never abandoned the world, has never ceased to work within it, and has never given up his saving purpose within it. It is called, empowered, and sent to proclaim this hope by word and deed, and to communicate this conviction to the world to the end of time. 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

33. The balance and coherence of the constitutive elements of the Christian doctrine of salvation had become partially obscured in the course of history and controversy. In our work we have tried to rediscover that balance and coherence and <sup>to</sup> express it together. We are agreed that this is not an area where any remaining differences of theological interpretation or ecclesiological emphasis, either within or between our Churches, can justify our continuing separation. We believe that our two Communion<sup>s</sup> 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. We offer our agreement to our two Communion<sup>s</sup> as a contribution to reconciliation between us, so that together we may witness to God's salvation in the midst of the anxieties, struggles and hopes of our world.