

The Ecclesiology of Reconciliation

## 1) SALVATION AND THE CHURCH: GROUP A

1. The Church as the reconciled and reconciling community

Quote Final Report Intro. para. 8, last two sentences.

Scripture requires a wide range of images to express the significance and comprehensiveness of what God has done in Christ for the salvation of the world. These images are complementary and cannot be taken wholly in isolation.

e.g. Reconciliation - stressing restored relationships

Adoption - belonging to God's family

Regeneration - a new beginning and the seed of a new life

New creation - radical change

Redemption - freedom at a price and new ownership

Justification - a new standing in the eyes of God

Sanctification - Christ-likeness of life

All that avails for man's salvation is through God's grace and for God's glory. All is God's gift to his Church, to be embodied in its life and ministered to the world.

2. Salvation as complete and in process

The differing ways within our two Communion of speaking of salvation arise, at least in part, from our selection and emphasis upon one or other of these Biblical images. Such selectivity affects interpretation, with polemics causing further polarisation.

Controversy concerns what we believe to be complete and needing no addition in the saving work of Christ that has been realised in us and what we believe to be the essential, God-given process of growth. Whilst then two aspects of salvation are distinct, they cannot be severed. They are given sacramental expression in the life of the Church - baptism, the unrepeatable

appropriation of the benefits of Christ's passion; eucharist, a continuing means of grace, but only because it is an anamnesis of Christ's saving work. Initiation and spiritual growth are all of grace through the gift of God's Son and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

### 3. Justification

In the writing of Paul Justification, a forensic image, emphasises the new standing of believers in Christ. It is God's declaration of acquittal for sinners because of what Christ has already done. Justification stems wholly from the grace of God, is made possible by the death of Christ and must be appropriated by faith, whereby the justified are received into the body of Christ (Romans 3:24; 5:9; 5:1). Whereas justification in Paul is a more comprehensive term than has often been argued, yet there is a logical priority in the language of acquittal over the ensuing process of sanctification, which is equally intrinsic to the divine purpose of salvation. It is to this evidence of justification that James refers (James 2: 18-26). Christian assurance of salvation is thus founded upon the work of Christ and the promise of God.

### 4. Growth in the Life of Grace

While the whole process of spiritual growth of the members of the body of Christ depends on the grace of God, this does not over-ride human freedom but rather carries it to a new level of realisation. This illuminates the New Testament teaching about rewards, in which God crowns his own gifts (Matthew 25:23; 2 Timothy 4:8)

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Further Work

In preparation for the next meeting we need three papers:

1. The Scriptural teaching on justification and salvation;
2. A historical paper on sixteenth century controversies concerning justification and modern re-evaluation of them;
3. A report on the discussions concerning justification between Lutherans and Roman Catholics.

It seems wise to delay consideration of moral issues for the time being, but later it will be necessary to consider questions of moral teaching authority **and** method.