

The Pastoral and Political Implications of Trent on Justification: a Response to the A.R.C.I.C. Agreed Statement *Salvation and the Church*¹

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The recent publication of *Salvation and the Church: An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission* invites discussion and suggestions and declares itself 'glad to receive observations and criticisms made in a constructive and fraternal spirit'.

To this end, the article proposes to examine the implications of the teachings concerning the doctrine of justification in the areas of pastoral relations and social responsibility.

The A.R.C.I.C. Agreed Statement encouragingly converges on several important issues, especially that the heart of the Christian message 'must be salvation through the grace of God in Christ'. 'It is through grace that God's new creation is realized. Salvation is the gift of grace; it is by faith that it is appropriated.'

The document remains, however, disappointingly ambiguous on what Richard Hooker called 'the grand question which yet hangeth between us and the Church of Rome' and on the specific issue that impinges upon the pastoral and political implications of the doctrine of justification.

The Council of Trent (1545–1563) defined the doctrine of justification in such a way that teaching by Roman Catholics since then has insisted that the righteousness of Christians, though given and infused by God, is nevertheless their own and is 'innocent, immaculate, pure, guiltless' (Session V).

The consequences of this teaching have far-reaching implications, especially in the areas of pastoral and social responsibilities. Because of the way the fifth and sixth sessions of the Council defined justification, there could be no acknowledgement of any sin in a regenerate person, no mixture of sin and grace in a person in a state of grace.

When a regenerate person sins, that person no longer abides in a state of grace and must be restored through the sacrament of penance. In contrast to Patristic and Mediaeval Catholicism, after Trent the Church taught that sin must involve full knowledge and consent of the will. Thus, there can be no acknowledgement of 'unconscious sin', for it would be tantamount to losing one's state of grace.

Ancient pastoral wisdom and contemporary depth psychology testify to the reality that many intractable patterns and compulsions are symptoms of unconscious roots. The redemption and healing of such patterns usually require the unconscious roots to be exposed and acknowledged for the damaging patterns no longer to have sway over a person's actions.

Dom Victor White, the English Dominican authority on C.G. Jung, saw this serious limitation in the way Trent was understood:

This idea of 'unconscious sin' is often a difficult one for the moral theologian to grasp. Especially if he has been brought up in the traditions of post-Reformation Catholicism (after the Council of Trent) he may find it particularly hard to square with his correct notions that mortal sin must be voluntary, performed with full knowledge and consent. But it is a fact that the psyche is much less indulgent to unconscious breaches of its own laws and demands . . . and will revenge itself for their disregard. . . .

He continues:

We know of a young woman who had lived for some time with a married man, fully aware that what she was doing was morally wrong in the eyes of her church and her parents, but with no psychopathological symptoms. Her parents came to hear of the liaison, brought strong pressure upon her to break it up, succeeded in doing so, and in bringing her home to the parental roof. At once, obsessive guilt took hold of her, and she became quite incapacitated for life. Her sense of guilt was clearly to be attributed, not to her having lived with her lover, but to her having left him and submitted weakly to paternal pressure and allowing herself to accept externally the parents' moral judgement in spite of her own convictions. Whatever the objective standards of right and wrong, she had 'sinned psychologically' in an infantile regression to dependence on the parents, in which she felt she had abdicated her adult autonomy and responsibilities.

He appends this valuable observation:

The exclusive emphasis of later theologians on 'full knowledge and consent' can have the unfortunate result of putting a certain premium on unconsciousness, irresponsibility and infantilism.²

White must put 'unconscious sin' in quotation marks because it seems to conflict with the 'correct notions' that, since Trent, mortal

sins must have full knowledge and consent. But clearly he feels quite unhappy with this restraint under which spiritual directors and psychiatrists must work to stay in accord with the Church's teachings.

The article on 'The Psychology of Guilt' in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* indicates the same direction but with new and even more awkward problems. Although it recognizes unconscious guilt to be a pervasively destructive phenomenon, it seemingly does not relate such guilt to one's salvation and distinguishes it from moral guilt by terming it 'material guilt'.

The issue of material guilt has no meaning to it other than its producing of a feeling of excessive fear of retaliation in interpersonal relationships about wrongdoing (due to ignorance, misconceptions, immaturity, or to repression, displacement, and substitution), which loses its significance at death since it vanishes then, or before death as one learns from experience. Moral guilt, however, binds one to an accounting for wrongdoing in the relationship with God, to be resolved in His judgment at death; therefore one must consciously seek to do good and avoid evil. Such bipolar terms describing guilt as genuine and irrational, logical and psychiatric refer simply to the moral and material and to the conscious and unconscious aspects.

This solution puts a premium on keeping material guilt unconscious while rewarding irrationality, ignorance, 'repression, displacement and substitution'. The article insists the unconscious aspects of guilt 'must be considered, for they are recognized as disruptive in personality function', but when they are '*once realized*' (italics mine) they become sin (Vol. VI, p.854). If true, this would mean all therapy jeopardizes one's state of grace at precisely those points where it successfully brings into consciousness the hitherto unknown roots of one's sins.

It would seem to follow that separating material guilt from moral guilt and claiming that material guilt is neither sinful nor something for which we must account, do exactly what Dom Victor White warns against: They invite repression and endeavour to keep such matters unconscious, where they do not endanger one's soul but merely infect one's 'psyche'. So separating matters of the psyche from matters of the soul has no theological or philological rationale. Bruno Bettelheim has argued somewhat convincingly that translators have made spurious use of Freud to make 'scientific' what was essentially humane.³ Translating the German to read 'psyche' instead of 'soul' is one such case. It would be a shame for Christians to continue this distortion by making separate arenas for psyche (material guilt) and soul (moral guilt).

Treating material guilt as having 'no meaning to it' in relation to our souls' health echoes the seventeenth century Jesuit teaching concerning 'sins' done in ignorance, which, as Pascal pointed out, put a *premium*

on ignorance. Surely the traditional recourse to distinguishing between vincible and invincible ignorance, can serve certain practical purposes in avoiding administrative and penal injustices that would punish people for what they were unable to alter. Nevertheless it falls short of positively approaching those areas of darkness in a person's soul (or psyche?) that need the light of grace for one to grow toward the perfect image that is Christ.

It is necessary to interrupt the argument at this point to insist that, in scripture, in St. Augustine, and St. Bernard, there is ample evidence to regard actual sin in the unconscious as no invariable cause for 'condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus'. Unless one can at least consider the possibility that sin can be consonant with a state of grace, any suggestion of 'unconscious sin' or 'corporate guilt' will sound to one nurtured in what Dom Victor White called 'post-Reformation moral theology' like the blackest of 'malign Jansenism'.

On the contrary, once one has allowed for the discrepancy between a regenerate person's righteousness and the righteousness that 'is to be' and has called this discrepancy 'sin', following St. Augustine's dictum that 'what is not of love is of sin', then acknowledging sin in the regenerate is a gracious matter of staking out areas for grace to do its work until we all attain 'to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:13).

Another example of the importance of embracing ignorant and unconscious actions in soteriology is that of marriage. A woman married to an alcoholic told a conference of clergy what Al Anon (for families of alcoholics) had done for her.

It was not until they helped me to see what I was doing that it began to be possible for Jim to stop drinking. By making excuses, by covering up, by doing all those things I thought were a Christian's conscientious responsibility to her husband, I was unwittingly being an enabler, enabling Jim to continue drinking.

To teach her that, so long as it remained unconscious or non-deliberate, she shared no complicity in the very complex tragedy of alcoholism is no kindness to her. Our universal temptation to self-righteousness scarcely needs any nurture that suggests we are without responsibility so long as our complicity is unconscious.

The very fact that *harmatia*, scripture's most prevalent word for sin, literally means 'missing the mark' indicates that 'falling short' characterizes all Christians, even the saints, which their own testimonies verify. It is no kindness in the long run to lower the mark of righteousness in the Kingdom of God to the level of the actual righteousness of regenerate people. Another word, *agnoema*, translated 'sin' in the New Testament, explicitly means 'ignorance of what one ought to have known'.

The casuistry of the Jesuits, at its best, was not what secondary sources have caricatured. It was often motivated by a pastoral desire to alleviate the guilt of conscientious persons suffering under the demand for perfection. The Augustinian and Reformation assertions, at their best, attempted to undergird persons with a confident foundation of 'no condemnation', instead of lowering the demands and sanctions to a level manageable by Christians, as contemporary liberal theologians seem to be doing.

At worst, subsequent Protestantism sometimes kept the absolute demands *and* removed the foundation of unity in Christ without condemnation. What had been the foundation of salvation became a goal to achieve by first meeting all the demands, making it the *worst* of both worlds and giving popular psychology the pejorative terms, a 'protestant' or 'puritan conscience'. Furthermore, much of the mysticism that the church condemned as heretical also transformed the unity given and begun in baptism into a goal achieved through a long pilgrimage of purgation. There seems to be any number of paths that would lead us back to the Adoptionist teachings of the Antiochene school that the Church condemned at the Council of Ephesus in AD 431.

Collective or Corporate Guilt

The logic deriving from the traditional interpretation of Trent in regard to denying *simul justus et peccator*, or sin in the regenerate, seems to preclude not only any recognition of unconscious sin but also any teaching of corporate or collective guilt.

An article entitled 'Collective Responsibility' in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* deals with this as a legitimate Old Testament phenomenon and teaching, but not one appropriate to the New Testament or to Church history. If sin to be sin must have 'full knowledge and consent of the will', citizens of a country where torture is practised have no culpable responsibility so long as they themselves neither perpetrate nor assent to the torture. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* acknowledges that, throughout the Old Testament, God holds Israel corporately responsible for justice and faithfulness. Is this corporate responsibility not also ascribed under the New Covenant? Are not the responsibility and accountability even loftier and more arduous in the New than the Old? The Old is not abrogated but fulfilled. Does not this claim, that the distinction between what is true for the Old Testament is not true for the New, border on Marcionism?

For Christians to share responsibility for the Holocaust and other horrors which they as individuals had no part in it, of course, an unbearable burden for one whose state of grace depends upon the absence of any culpability. William Wilberforce owned no slaves and gave no consent of his individual will to the institution of slavery, but his sense of corporate responsibility drove him and others to the

abolition of slavery. Surely it can be shown in both St. Augustine and St. Bernard that similar responsibilities were on the shoulders of Christians in regard to the Empire, papal schism, or the rescue of the Holy Land. This was, however, a bearable responsibility because such acknowledgement of culpability was not tantamount to the loss of grace. Sin was a much deeper and wider phenomenon in Patristic and Mediaeval theology than its post-Tridentine definition in the matter of justification would seem to encompass.

Since 1547 it seems to be assumed that any statements by St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Anselm, St. Bernard, or others concerning unconscious, unknown, non-deliberate, or corporate sin must be understood as venial sin because 'full knowledge and consent of the will' is not involved. If it were possible to regard unconscious fault or corporate guilt as sin, it would be virtually impossible to maintain the interpretation, since Trent, that sin and grace are mutually exclusive. Because of the principle of 'inhesion', they cannot, it is alleged, exist together in a state of grace. Aquinas' teaching regarding 'vincible ignorance' must be interpreted as a *venial* sin.

The article on 'Grace' in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* indicates how Trent has been traditionally interpreted.

For since sin and grace are diametrically opposed to each other the mere advent of grace is sufficient to drive sin away . . . immediately brings about holiness, kinship with God, and a renovation of spirit . . . and therefore a remission of sin without a simultaneous interior sanctification is theologically impossible. As to the interesting controversy whether the incompatibility of grace and sin rests on merely moral, or physical, or metaphysical contrariety, refer Pohle (. . . 1909), Scheeben (. . . 1898).

This denial of the possibility of sin in the regenerate seems to render heretical much of what had been considered orthodox in mediaeval theology. When St. Thomas states that 'there follows the remission of a sin of which a person is not conscious' (*Summa Theologia*, 3a.86) the post-Tridentine footnote explains this not as 'an "unconscious sin"', but [as one of] the multiple possibilities of venial sin'.⁴

Within the Eucharist of *The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, Christians have prayed for centuries, '. . . have mercy upon me and pardon my transgressions, voluntary and *involuntary*, in word and deed, both known and *unknown*, and consider me worthy; without condemnation. . . ' (italics mine). St. Augustine had taught many centuries of disciples that 'it is a sin, when either love is not which ought to be; or when it is less than it ought to be'. One is held accountable *not only* for what one has done and not done, but also for what one has not become.

This post-Tridentine denial of sin in the regenerate led to tortuous interpretations of scriptural texts: ‘. . . of sinners, I am the chief’; ‘if a man looketh upon a woman in lust he committeth adultery in his heart’; ‘be ye perfect, even as your father is heaven is perfect’; ‘God be merciful to me a sinner’; ‘I tell you that man went away justified’.

Denial of sin in the regenerate means that Romans 7:17–19, ‘. . . the good I would I do not; the evil that I would not, that I do’, *must* be interpreted as a pre-Damascus road experience or as Paul speaking of ‘man under the Law’ and not as a possible description consonant with a state of grace. The interpretation of Romans 7:17–19 is heatedly debated even today among New Testament scholars, but many, who claim for textual reasons that it describes ‘man under the Law’, nevertheless insist that it is also theologically and liturgically accurate to regard it as a description of a regenerate person. Thomas Cranmer’s General Confession in Anglican Morning Prayer, written for Christians and widely copied throughout Christendom, is based upon this passage.

It must be confessed that the very idea of corporate guilt is a very complex issue, and there are graceless ways it can be taught. However, it is crucial to recognize the possibility of its being seen as an authentic responsibility and bearable, not because we are sinless, but because as Christians in a state of grace we are not under condemnation. This would allow for the acceptance of our corporate and culpable responsibilities in each society in which we live. Without a teaching of corporate responsibility with its disturbing corollary, religious guilt, it is difficult to see how a culture can produce a responsible electorate.

Since the Medellin Conference, Roman Catholics have exemplified in Latin America a courageous commitment to responsibility for justice in society. Surely this keen conscience, historically associated with Jews and Quakers, is a response to a Catholicism deeper than that which teaches that one is sinless in a corrupt society if one’s will does not knowingly give assent to such corruption. An innocence purchased at the expense of responsible involvement is inauthentic and spurious.

The danger in Liberation Theology for it to become ‘another gospel’, separated from its Christian roots and its Christian ends, is in part due to its legitimate endeavours being separated from soteriology in the same manner that material guilt is separated from soteriology in post-Trent approaches to psychology. Politics is not salvation and salvation is not politics, as some Liberationists forget, but the religious nature of their passion for justice need not be unrelated to the legitimate claims of God’s justice upon them. But to connect and correlate one’s political complicity with one’s salvation requires a recovery of that pre-Trent acknowledgement of collective and corporate responsibility that does not by consequent guilt cause the loss of grace.

In a poem called 'Brother to Dragons', Robert Penn Warren has a line that succinctly expresses one of the astonishing paradoxes of grace: 'For the recognition of complicity is the beginning of innocence'. It would seem a common desire for Christian worshippers to be aware of the deepest level of their guilt and have it exposed in the act of worship. Much of our worship, especially that preserved in Roman Catholic liturgies, evokes realities deeper than those comprehended during the Enlightenment. Subsequent forms of worship often seem to be characterized by failure to evoke what Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Rudolph Otto called 'the numinous'. The traditional interpretation of the Council of Trent would seem to cut off the numinous roots of pastoral care and social responsibility, in as much as the mixed state of sin and grace among Christians is denied.

The Problem of Anti-Semitism

'Who did it?' has been asked over the centuries. And, 'The Jews!' too frequently has been the answer. The denial of corporate guilt exacerbates the dilemma of the responsibility for the death of Christ. 'He came unto his own and His own received Him not' (John 1:11) implicates humanity, not Jews.⁵ The anti-Semitism that sees Jews *qua* Jews as the agents of the crucifixion, instead of Jews and Romans *qua* humans as the agents, is not only objectively lamentable, but it deprives Christians of the great privilege of acknowledging their persistent human responsibility in this death and consequently their persistent restoration, as recipients of 'forgive them for they know not what they do'.

Our responsibility for the naked, hungry, sick, and imprisoned as described in Matthew 25 can leave none guiltless. Walter Russell Bowie's hymn 'Lord Christ when first thou cam'st to men' expresses this continuing transaction in these words:

And still our wrongs may weave thee now
New thorns to pierce that steady brow
And robe of sorrow round thee.

Here is an acknowledgement of the timeless and contemporary nature of our complicity and our forgiveness. 'Our only innocency is our penitency' was the quaint but effective way Bishop Lancelot Andrewes expressed it in the seventeenth century in his differences with Trent.

The centre of Christian faith is the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, and Christians are subsequently involved in that event so that we, too, are continually raised in his resurrection. In 1630 Johann Heerman wrote the following words which are now in the American Episcopal Hymnal.

Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon thee?
Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone thee.
'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee:
I crucified thee.

It would seem then that some acknowledgement of the presence of sin in the state of grace is necessary in order to include the area of human unconsciousness and collective responsibility as part of the legitimate arena in the Church's ministry of redemption of believers and its mission to the world 'for which Christ died'.

Historic Anglican Criticism of Trent

Richard Hooker's summary of the classical Anglican position in three short sentences is still hard to fault.

The righteousness, wherewith we shall be clothed in the world to come, is both perfect and inherent. That whereby here we are justified is perfect, but not inherent. That whereby we are sanctified, inherent, but not perfect.⁶

This is the position held by Archbishop Ussher, Bishops John Davenant, Lancelot Andrewes, George Downame, Joseph Hall, Robert Sanderson, Thomas Barlow, John Bramhall, William Beveridge, and William Nicholson, as well as John Donne, Isaac Barrow, and John Prideaux.⁷

The Bishop of Salisbury, John Davenant, together with Robert Cardinal Bellarmine defined the issue and agreed on the point of disagreement: *the formal cause* of justification. (The 'formal cause' is 'that which makes a thing to be what it is'.) Bellarmine sought to defend Trent's assertion of the 'single formal cause' as the infusion of inherent righteousness, the righteousness by which persons are righteous and declared so in justification because they are so.

We learn that to be justified by Christ is not to be accounted or pronounced just, but truly to be made and constituted just by the obtaining of inherent righteousness absolute and perfect.⁸

Davenant in contrast insisted:

We do not deny that inherent righteousness is infused into the justified by Christ . . . but we affirm that, whilst in this life it is inchoate and imputed, and therefore not the cause of our justification, but the appendage.⁹

The point of disagreement between Bellarmine and Davenant was whether there was sin yet remaining in the justified. Bellarmine denied it. Davenant affirmed it:

Whether by infusion or inherent grace, whatever hath the true nature and proper character of sin is forthwith eradicated and entirely taken away in the justified. We deny it, the Papists affirm it. . . . The questions involved in this one point lie at the foundation of all the other disputes concerning justification and works.¹⁰

For according to our adversaries the formal cause of justification expels by inhesion whatsoever is in itself hateful to God, or worthy of punishment.¹¹

Focussing the issue on 'formal cause' clears away much misunderstanding. Replying to Bellarmine's objection that Protestants wrongly teach that salvation is only by faith, Davenant agreed that faith cannot be the 'formal cause' (that by which our justification is what it is) any more than infused righteousness or good works can be. Faith is merely that which apprehends and applies to us the righteousness which alone makes us acceptable to God—the righteousness of Christ imputed to us.

There was agreement among Anglicans that there is indeed a righteousness in the justified, but it is not in this life adequate, *coram Deo* (face to face with God). Lancelot Andrewes was especially insistent that Bellarmine and the Schoolmen were 'nipping at the name of Christ' when they claimed that the formal cause of justification is our inherent righteousness. Nothing will adequately serve us in the final judgment but the righteousness of Christ imputed to us.

But let us once be brought and arraigned *coram Rege justo sedente in solio*, let us set ourselves there, we shall then see that all our former conceit will vanish straight, and righteousness in that sense (inherent) will not abide the trial.¹²

Astonishingly, the A.R.C.I.C. Agreed Statement omits any mention of that which *both sides* have agreed to be a central issue for centuries: the formal cause of justification. Paragraph number 15 quotes Richard Hooker, but the much more famous quotation is glaringly omitted: 'The grand question, which hangeth yet in the controversy between us and the Church of Rome, is about the matter of justifying righteousness'.

Hooker proceeds to list all the significant agreements culminating with the 'grand question', the issue of the formal cause. It is significant that the work of William Forbes, the only Anglican who attempted a sympathetic approach to Trent, is listed in paragraph number 2 of the A.R.C.I.C. statement. On the question of formal cause, Forbes could not accept the *unica formalis causa* as being the infusion of inherent righteousness and insisted that it must include the remission of sins ('nay by it [remission] principally').¹⁴

The crucial importance of including remission of sin, together with inherent righteousness, as that which makes our justification 'to be

what it is', is that this would allow for sin in the regenerate without lowering the righteousness of justification to the level of Christians' infused righteousness.

This position reproduces something like the position of Cardinal Contarini at Ratisbon in 1541 and the so called 'double justice' position held by Cardinals Seripando and Reginald Pole which was defeated in the Sixth Session when the phrase *unica formalis causa* won the day, and Pole rode away from the Council crushed in spirit.¹⁵

The force of the arguments of the minority at Trent was not unlike the Anglican criticism of inherent righteousness being the formal cause of justification. The Council's insistence that infused inherent righteousness is the 'single formal cause' (*unica formalis causa*) logically closed the door on *simul justus et peccator* for subsequent Roman Catholicism. If it had been possible to have included 'remission of sin' as a part of that which makes our justification 'to be what it is', much of the force of the Anglican objections would have been met, and it would have been possible for there to be *simul justus et peccator*.

John Henry Newman's nineteenth century treatment of justification adds further evidence to the crucial importance of 'formal cause'. His *Lectures on Justification*, published in 1838 as an attempt to bridge the Anglican Reformation views and those of Roman Catholicism, has many shortcomings, but it is exceedingly significant that the third edition, which he published as a Roman Catholic in 1874, changed *nothing* but his teaching on *formal cause* to make it acceptable within Roman Catholicism.

Newman's struggle to supplement or modify this crucial issue centred on Trent's fateful phrase, *unica formalis causa*. It is the subject of his preface of six pages and index of sixty-one pages, which are devoted solely to the issue of the formal cause. He had understood in 1838 the same point Contarini had conceded at Ratisbon, Seripando and Pole had fought for (and lost) at Trent, and William Forbes had managed to avoid with a double formal cause (and 'remission of sins and, yea, that chiefly') as the cause of our acceptance and non-condemnation.

The difference was that Newman had insisted that our inherent righteousness must be supplemented as the formal cause by 'the cognate presence of Christ in our souls'. If the very form of our righteousness before God were not only our inherent righteousness by which we have been 'made righteous', but also the presence of Christ within us, this too would obviate much of the Anglican criticism of Trent. In spite of much linguistic twisting to avoid Trent's anathema on double formal cause, Newman finally relinquished his attempt to include 'the presence of Christ in our souls' as a 'part of' the *unica formalis causa*. Anyone unconvinced of the cruciality of the question of formal cause should read carefully these six and sixty-one pages.

This is not to say that everything in the 1838 *Lectures* was acceptable to historic Anglicanism. James Bennett and James Garbett each attacked them in Bampton Lectures (1845 and 1848 respectively) even before the 1874 edition in which Newman submitted to the *unica formalis causa*. Bishop Charles McIlvaine of Ohio wrote an important criticism of Newman's Anglican *Lectures* in 1841. But Newman's difficulty does point up the continuing and abiding issue consonant on the effect of the Sixth Session's definition of the 'single formal cause' as precluding any *simul justus et peccator*.

This brings us to the intriguing contribution of Hans Küng in his work *Justification*. Seeing clearly the difficulties involved in the traditional interpretation of Trent, he maintains that it is wrong to interpret Trent as having denied the possibility of *simul justus et peccator* and that it is an authentic and legitimate position in Roman Catholicism to allow for this truly mixed state of real sin and grace in a regenerate person.

Küng's most telling point is his appeal to the authority of the Mass, which both implicitly and explicitly affirms and asserts the mixed situation of sin and grace throughout the whole liturgy, not only on the part of general worshippers, but on the part of the celebrant also. In fact he points out that the Mass was significantly revised in 1570 (only seven years after Trent), and the revision contains explicit recognition that worshippers and priests are sinners and yet in a state of grace.

This affirmation of *simul justus et peccator*, retained in the liturgy which had been celebrated for centuries, should surely, on the authority of *lex orandi, lex credendi*, be a very weighty point in any contemporary interpretation of Trent. Küng insists that 'what so greatly troubles the just man in this world [is that]: whoever looks upon himself as just is a sinner, and whoever looks upon himself as a real sinner is just. The latter goes home justified, the former does not.'¹⁶ He goes on to quote Karl Rahner: 'The Church is a sinful Church—that is a truth of faith, not a primitive fact of experience.'¹⁷

Küng's point is of the utmost importance, for, unless sin can be seen as part of the *status viatoris* (the not yet sanctified condition of all Christians), it is difficult indeed to imagine how one can accept the reality of unconscious sin or corporate guilt necessary for authentic pastoral care and responsible social engagement. Whatever else is important regarding the doctrine of justification, it has been of utmost importance to Anglicans that the doctrine not be described in any way as to deny the reality of sin in the regenerate. Sharing with Roman Catholicism a long and rich liturgical use of biblical and theological recognition in prayers and hymns of the persistent remnant of sin, Anglicanism can hardly jettison the reality of *simul justus et peccator*. By clearly and unambiguously retaining our heritage, we could in fact help in a reappraisal of Trent along the lines that Küng has opened up within Roman Catholicism.

Salvation and the Church

From this background we are able to make some comments on the Agreed Statement. Recognizing the traditional interpretation of Trent which denies the possibility of sin in the regenerate as shown in the above references from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Robert Cardinal Bellarmine's defence of Trent, John Henry Newman's agonized struggle with the 'single formal cause', the unanimous witness of classical Anglicanism, and Hans Küng's unique and unprecedented reconstruction of the Roman Catholic interpretation of Trent, it is disappointing that the Agreed Statement is so ambiguous on this point.

Paragraph number 5 states, '. . . while we are made truly righteous because we are forgiven, we know ourselves to be in continuing need of forgiveness'. One could hope that 'continuing' was carefully chosen instead of 'continual' (meaning 'renewed frequently' or 'often repeated'), which could have implied the traditional Tridentine assertion that when one sins one falls out of grace and can return only by the sacrament of penance. On the surface it would seem to accord with the Anglican insistence that our infused righteousness needs supplementing.

Paragraph number 21 admits that even good works 'can be flawed by human weakness and self-centredness' and 'by daily repentance and faith . . . we reappropriate our freedom from sin'. A footnote refers to the *simul justus et peccator* as not a characteristically Anglican expression. But the fact of sin in the regenerate was precisely the unanimous Anglican objection to Trent. This paradox, claimed by the Agreed Statement to be 'ultimately of Augustinian inspiration', is surely Pauline and scriptural.

Bellarmino and Davenant had agreed that if their respective interpretations of Romans 7 were wrong each would give up his argument. Romans 7 remains today a thorny question on a technical level, but can any contemporary scholar maintain that the Corinthian, Colossian, and Galatian Christians to whom Paul wrote were not sinners?

The clearest statement consonant with Anglican traditional teaching occurs in Paragraph number 23: 'Christians . . . pray that the good work which *God has begun* he will in grace complete' (italics mine). This thought is undergirded in Paragraph number 29 when it is acknowledged that 'the Church's witness is undermined by the sins of its members' and the 'Church is in constant need of repentance and renewal. . . .'

However, Paragraph number 15 states that our transformation is being worked out 'despite the imperfections and ambiguities of our lives. God's grace effects what he declares: his creative word imparts what it imputes. By pronouncing us righteous, God also makes us righteous. He imparts a righteousness which is his and becomes ours.'

Given the agreed preciseness of the historical argument, what excuse is there for this ambiguity? Can 'imperfections and ambiguities' be called *sin*? Does God 'impart' what he 'imputes' (the perfect righteousness of Christ)? 'By pronouncing us righteous', does he 'make us righteous?' And is 'the righteousness which is his' a perfect righteousness which becomes ours now, or does it only begin to become, what Hooker insisted in the glaringly omitted quotation, the perfect righteousness of our glorification? Paragraph number 17 goes on reassuringly to admit that 'our acceptance of this gift will be imperfect in this life' and correctly points out that 'Scripture speaks of the righteousness of believers as already effected by God through Christ'. But scripture makes equally clear that believers have tragically and sinfully not yet appropriated what God in principle has effected. It is clear that they have not yet become what they are to be, or they would not be exhorted 'to put away the works of darkness' (Rom. 12:13).

Whatever the reason is for the ambiguity in the Agreed Statement, William Temple has taught us to bring our distinctiveness to the arena of fresh ecumenical dialogue and not to sacrifice what God may use in the healing of our divisions. It would seem that so far we are missing an opportunity significantly to contribute by failing to deal with this particular issue which has been such a problem not only between Roman Catholic and Anglicans but also among Roman Catholics since before the Council of Trent.

On the other hand, there is a whole area undealt with by Roman Catholics in this consultation to which Anglicanism is lamentably vulnerable and needy. Anglicans need to hear the point which is forcefully made by Fr. H. McSorley:

If the doctrine of justification is the article on which the Church stands or falls, then the doctrine of the unfree will is the *FOUNDATION* of the article on which the Church stands or falls, or the article on which Luther's doctrine of justification stands or falls.¹⁸

McSorley's criticism of the semi-pelagianism of Erasmus is decisively applicable to Anglicanism after its classical period. Pelagian and semi-pelagian assumptions render the doctrine of justification irrelevant and account for its low priority among many contemporary Anglicans.

The recent history of Anglicanism has made it difficult for us to discuss this matter responsibly. It has become distressingly acceptable in Anglican circles to describe the continental and non-English reformers in caricatures that have little or no relationship to the men or teachings they purpose to represent.

Michael Ramsay has admitted that only two Anglicans in the nineteenth century understood Luther (see *From Gore to Temple*). F.J. Taylor has shown that justification as described by Dom Gregory

Dix could only apply to 'Quakers and Salvationists, who have no doctrine of the Church and do not administer the sacraments'.¹⁹

Even the indispensable *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, edited by F.L. Cross, in its first edition could describe 'imputation' in the following way:

IMPUTATION (from Lat. *imputare*, Gk. *logidzomai*)

In theology the ascription to a person by deliberate substitution of the righteousness or guilt of another. The idea plays an important part in the Lutheran doctrine of Justification by Faith, which asserts that a man is formally justified by the imputation of the obedience and righteousness of Christ without becoming possessed of any personal righteousness of his own. By a legal fiction God is thus held to regard the sinner's deeds as covered by the imputation of the sanctity of Christ. This doctrine seeks support in certain passages of St. Paul (notably Romans 3:21–50, 5:1f.; Gal. 3:21f.), and also from St. Augustine. It is opposed both to the traditional Catholic teaching, according to which the merits of Christ are not imputed but imparted to men and produce a real change from the state of sin to the state of grace, and to the doctrine of Liberal theologians to the effect that our highest vocation consists in the following of Christ who is our supreme example.

Revisions in subsequent editions have managed to change some of the pejorative and emotive language, but it still remains a travesty to Lutheran and Anglican teaching on imputation to claim that neither cared about good works or righteousness in the regenerate. Many modern Anglicans fail to appreciate that the reformers' denigration of Christians' good works of righteousness is in the context of *coram Deo*, 'before God', by comparison with whom our righteousness is as 'filthy rags'. Anglicans *never* failed to claim a real and true righteousness in the regenerate, but denied that it was sufficient to accomplish our justification.

John Donne and Joseph Hall counter the question of 'legal fiction' as an accusation against those who teach the necessity of imputation in justification. They show especially that the *real* legal fiction lies in claiming that anyone's inherent righteousness can sufficiently stand under the judgment of God's righteousness. Even the most recent revision of the *Oxford Dictionary's* article on imputation fails to correct the citation from Romans 3, in which the word imputation (*Logidzomai*) does not occur at all (it does appear 11 times in Chapter 4).

Imputation

The unnecessary barrier to more mutual understanding and agreement concerning justification is the use both sides make of the term 'imputation'. We have seen it simply dismissed as a 'legal fiction' by a pro-Trent Anglican editor of the *Oxford Dictionary*. But any

responsible study of the word indicates what a crucial part the concept plays in both the Old and New Testaments. (The article in Kittel, Vol IV, pp.284–292 is a good beginning.) Although it allows for discrepancy, ‘to word’ something or someone can and does effect real change. The very form of Logos (logidzomai) is a powerful word to express the way the Gospel works in redemption.

The accusation of ‘legal fiction’ has always been a part of hostile attacks on Reformation formularies which do indeed assert a wide discrepancy between the righteousness of God and the righteousness of Christians. But everyone must face the discrepancy somewhere. The historic alternatives would seem to be reduced to three:

- (1) The position taken by the reformers and classical Anglicans who insist that there is a discrepancy yet within Christians a state of grace which can only be bridged by the righteousness of Christ imputed to Christians.
- (2) Traditional interpretations of Trent which cover the discrepancy by defining a state of grace as incompatible with sin: venial expressions of concupiscence, ‘which have not the formal nature of sin’, are compatible with a state of grace; the discrepancy between conventional and heroic persons within the state of grace is accounted for by the doctrine of supererogation in which one can do more than is required for a state of grace.
- (3) The position of liberal theologians (as referred to in the *Oxford Dictionary*) who teach that the righteousness of our justification consists in following the example of Christ: it should be obvious to all that there yet remains some discrepancy between the righteousness even of the Saints and the righteousness of Christ.

Anglicans should recall that they certainly live in glass houses when casting stones at Trent. We have produced perhaps more than our share of adherents to alternative number three, which in effect denies any true baptismal unity of sinners with God and often projects that unity as a hope in the distant (and sometime Teilhardian) future. The connexion between Nestorian Christology and some modern soteriological attempts to place the discrepancy between our righteousness and God’s outside our sacramental unity with God would perhaps be more clearly perceived by Roman Catholics than by many Anglicans.

No attempt has been made in this paper to discuss the logically connected doctrines of supererogation or indulgences or the issue of merit. But each of these relates to and stems from the contrasting views of what Hooker called the ‘grand question’.

In the meantime it would be refreshing and salutary to Anglicans to have brought home to us McSorley’s affirmation of that teaching of Trent which he shows to disallow the semi-Pelagianism of Erasmus and, by implication, a good bit of post-seventeenth century Anglicanism.

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NOTES

- 1 Reprinted from the *St. Luke's Journal of Theology*, 1988, Vol. XXXI, No. 3, Sewanee, Tennessee, by permission of the author.
- 2 P. Mairet, Ed., *Christian Essays in Psychiatry* (London: Camelot Press, 1956), p.165.
- 3 Bruno Bettelheim, *Freud and Man's Soul* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1983), p.73ff.
- 4 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*, ed. Blackfriar, Eyre and Spottiswood, London 1966, p.84.
- 5 A.T. Mollegen, *Christianity and Modern Man* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961), p.112.
- 6 Richard Hooker, 'A Learned Discourse of Justification', *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (Everyman Edition), p.16.
- 7 C.F. Allison, *The Rise of Moralism* (London: S.P.C.K., 1966 and Morehouse Barlow, 1985).
- 8 Robert Bellarmine, 'de Justif. de Controversiis, Tomus Tertius, Ingolstadii, 1586, lib. 2, cap. 3.
- 9 John Davenant, *A Treatise in Justification*, trans. Josiah Allport (London, 1844), Vol. 1, pp.164-65.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p.18
- 11 *Ibid.*, p.227.
- 12 Lancelot Andrewes, *The Works* (Oxford: L.A.C.T., 1841-52), Vol. V, p.116.
- 13 Hooker, *op. cit.*, p.17.
- 14 Allison, *op. cit.*, p.46.
- 15 For a poignant, sympathetic, and scholarly treatment of Pole, see D. Fenlon, *Heresy and Obedience in Tridentine Italy: Cardinal Pole and the Counter Reformation* (Cambridge, 1972), pp.5-6.
- 16 Hans Küng, *Justification* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), p.245.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p.247.
- 18 H. McSorley, *Luther Right or Wrong* (Minneapolis, 1969), p.11.
- 19 F.J. Taylor, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith* (Mowbrays, 1954), p.23.