

Fr. John Thornhill. Letter of Nov. 10th, 1984.

But I want to get off a brief letter to you on an ARCIC matter which keeps coming to mind and which seems to deserve consideration at the Subcommission meeting.

At the Reception given by the Dean at Durham, I spoke briefly with James D.G. Dunn. He pointed out an important insight of contemporary Pauline scholarship concerning our topic. When Paul spoke of "justification by faith", his real concern was not a taking of sides in a debate "justification by faith" vs. "justification by works" such as the 16th century debates would lead us to assume. Rather he was arguing for a deeper issue: that God's plan of justification through faith was establishing a unity in Christ for the whole human race; and he was opposing a maintaining of the barriers of the law's observance by Judaism which was standing in the way of God's plan. The difference is somewhat subtle; but it seems important if our document is to make an impact in the contemporary world. If we introduced this perspective, a question which seems outdated and irrelevant could be shown to be very real. We could show that we are concerned with the manner in which the message of faith in Christ touches upon a most deeply felt concern of contemporary humanity.