

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Comments on the Durham

NOTES ON ARCIC II DRAFTS

Text - ARCIC-II 30/1 (84)

ON "CHURCH AND SALVATION"

PREAMBLE

The purpose of these notes is, firstly, to recognize and to identify both the formal and informal requests for an Anglican/Roman Catholic Statement on Justification. Second, to consider the classical statements on Justification in the Anglican tradition, and thirdly, and in consequence, to offer suggestions on the "Final Durham Text" (ARCIC II 30/1-84).

Justification has been a continuing issue in the discussion between those Churches whose origins lay in, or whose traditions were modified by, the 16th Century European Reformation on the one hand, and the Roman Catholic Church on the other. One notes, for example, the recent U.S. Lutheran/Roman Catholic statement on Justification. For Anglicans the issue is a more significant one for some than for others. Thus one may note the absence of any major mention of Justification in a reasonably comprehensive survey of Anglican/Roman Catholic relations, such as "Rome and the Anglicans" (Ed. W. Haase. De Gruyter, 1983).

There have been a number of requests for some clarification of the issue (1). Communications from the Anglican Consultative Council constitute a formal request on the Anglican side for consideration of the issue.

JUSTIFICATION AND THE ANGLICAN TRADITION

The task, first, of defining Justification, second, of formulating a doctrine of Justification by Faith, and third, of identifying the place of such a doctrine in the Anglican tradition, is no easy one. Inadequate definition may fail in not dealing fully with the controverted issues. Excessive definition may lead one into the trackless wastes of Reformation scholasticism.

Further, the place and importance of any statement on Justification will depend on the place one occupies within the Anglican spectrum. Those Anglicans who look for a statement on Justification will tend to give it high priority. Thus one may in consequence ask, where might the *locus classicus* of this doctrine be found in the Anglican tradition?

Perusal of the requests for clarification referred to above will show repeated reference to the Thirty-Nine Articles, particularly Articles IX to XVIII and especially Articles XI and XII. Our attention has been rightly drawn to the varying places given to the Articles of Religion in the Provinces of the Anglican Communion, both in formulary and

by custom (2). Yet, for our present purpose, the Articles may rightly serve as a point of reference.

It would seem to be our present task, to see to what extent a real problem exists between our two Churches. These present notes do not attempt to discuss the Roman Catholic viewpoint, but rather to identify the Anglican concerns referred to earlier and then to consider to what extent such concerns may have been met in the Final Durham Text (ARCIC II 30/1-84). The starting point would seem to be Article XI, noting the "Homily on Justification" therein cited.

Justification would appear to be defined in the Article in the phrase, "We are accounted righteous before God", which phrase speaks of humanity's forgiveness by God and acceptance by God. The nature and cause of our justification is conveniently set out in the following extracts from the Homily:-

"... the Grace of God doth not shut out the justice of God in our justification, but only shutteth out the justice of man, that is to say, the justice of our works as to be merits of deserving our justification .. and yet that faith doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread and the fear of God to be joined with faith in every man that is justified, but it shutteth them out from the office of justifying." (3)

and

"The true understanding of this doctrine ... is ... not that it is our own act to believe in Christ or this our faith in Christ which is within us doth justify us and deserve our justification unto us, (for that were to count ourselves to be justified by some act or virtue that is within ourselves) but that the true understanding or meaning of it is this ... we must renounce the merit of all our said virtues ... of faith, hope, charity ... and all ... good deeds ... and ... we must trust only in God's mercy ... and that sacrifice .. once offered for us upon the Cross." (4)

and

"That faith which bringeth forth ... no good works ... is not a right faith ... but a dead, counterfeit and feigned faith." (5)

However, the nature of the faith spoken of in this extract may need to be amplified in the associated Homily, "A Short Declaration of the True, Lively and Christian Faith", noting particularly the following quotations:-

"Faith is taken in the Scripture in two manner of ways. There is one faith which in Scripture is called 'dead faith' which bringeth forth no good works ... This faith ... is compared to the faith of devils which believe God to be true and just and tremble ... yet they do nothing well but all evil." (6)

and

"Another faith there is in Scripture which is not ... idle, unfruitful or dead, but worketh by charity ... so this may be called a quick or lively faith. Of this faith three things are specially to be noted. First, this faith doth not lie dead in the heart ... it will break out and show itself by good works." (7)

Certain things need to be noted. First, that the faith here spoken of is inseparable and can in no sense be dissociated from hope and love, and is indissolubly connected with good works. The point that the Homily would most clearly make is that humanity is justified by faith, which faith is, of its essence, bound up with hope and love and all good works, but that these latter virtues are 'shut out from the office of justifying'.

While not having a status equivalent to the Homily on Salvation, Hooker's "Learned Discourse on Justification" remains a classic Anglican statement which would be applauded and endorsed by all those who look for the affirmation of the doctrine of Justification by Faith. In Hooker's Discourse, the following passages may be noted:-

"Yet sith no man is justified except he believe, and no man believeth unless he have faith, and no man have faith unless he hath received the spirit of adoption, for as much as these do necessarily infer justification but justification doth of necessity presuppose them ... which thing ... showeth plainly how the faith of true believers cannot be divorced from hope and love; how faith is a part of sanctification yet unto justification necessary; how faith is perfected by good works, and yet no works of ours good without faith." (8)

and

"... we teach that faith alone justifieth: whereas we by this speech never mean to exclude either hope and charity from being always joined as inseparable mates with faith in the man that is justified; or works from being added as necessary duties required at the hands of every justified man; but to show that faith is the only hand which putteth on Christ to justification." (9)

While considering Hooker it is also helpful to consider his comments on "alone", which word is so frequently attached to descriptions of the doctrine of Justification by Faith. Thus he asks:-

"How, then, is our salvation wrought by Christ alone?" (10)

The whole answer deserves study, but here it is sufficient to note that the word "alone" attached to the phrase "Justification by Faith" appears both ambiguous and unsatisfactory, and should be either explained or omitted.

Further, for a most concise statement from the 16th Century Anglican Reformers, the following quotation from Tyndale may be noted:-

"... by justifieth understand no other thing than to be reconciled to God and to be restored into his favour and to have thy sins forgiven thee, and when I say God justifieth us understand thereby that God for Christ's sake, merits and deservings only receiveth us ... and forgiveth us our sins.

And when I say Christ justifieth us, understand thereby that Christ only hath redeemed us ... and hath with his works only purchased us the merit, the favour and Grace of God and the forgiveness of our sins.

And when I say that faith justifieth, understand thereby that faith and trust in the truth of God and in the mercy promised us for Christ's sake and for his deserving and works only, doth quiet the conscience and certify her that our sins be forgiven." (11)

This has been described as the classical Reformation statement on the subject by P. E. Hughes in his "Theology of the English Reformers." (12)

Thus we may say what is being affirmed here, *inter alia*, is that humanity's justification, that is, acceptance and forgiveness by God, springs from God's mercy based on Christ's death and Christ's merits and that all our virtues and works are excluded from being, in whole or in part, the grounds of our justification.

When considering the doctrine of Justification, it needs to be borne in mind that at the time of its strongest articulation in the Anglican tradition, that is, in the 16th Century, this concept was related in the minds of those so affirming to other issues, namely, predestination and confidence or assurance of salvation. These are each disputative questions, and are not our primary concern here.

## JUSTIFICATION AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

The foregoing is an attempt to set out the essence of the concept of Justification by Faith in its classic form in the Anglican tradition at the time of the 16th Century Reformation. The language is at times harsh. Those who, at that time asserted the doctrine, moved in the battlefields of the theology and controversies of their day. In some cases their cause was weakened by excessive dependence on argument by slogan. One would observe that the 16th Century writers quoted above would have claimed their understanding to have rested wholly on Scripture. They looked to and cited the Fathers, no doubt selectively, for affirmation, but also to demonstrate that they taught no novelties. Also, by Scripture they would have stood ready to be corrected.

It is beyond one's present purpose here to turn to the pages of the New Testament touching on Justification. However, one would dare to affirm that the weight of linguistic and exegetical evidence at best supports the writers of the 16th Century, and at worst does not contradict them. One notes by way of illustration:-

"... there seems to us to be no doubt that *dikaion*, as used by Paul, means simply 'acquit', 'confer a righteous status on', and does not in itself contain any reference to moral transformation. This conclusion is surely forced upon us by the linguistic evidence. It would also seem to be borne out by the structure of Paul's argument in Romans. But, while sanctification is distinct from justification, the two things are not to be separated; for, as Calvin insisted, to 'imagine that Christ bestows free justification upon us without imparting newness of life' is shamefully to 'rend Christ asunder'. Justification is indeed basic for Paul, but it is not the whole of what God does for us in Christ, and 'we cannot receive righteousness in Christ without at the same time laying hold on sanctification'." (13)

The whole passage in the work cited is not without relevance, touching, as it does, both the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions.

## CONCLUSION

The foregoing serves as a background to the suggestions set out in the following notes on the Final Durham Text.

## COMMENTS ON DURHAM DRAFTS

- (1) Page 2, par. 4, line 3. Is "must" too strong? What about "are best"? It is of some interest that this conclusion has been reached elsewhere. ("Reformation theology is largely dominated by two questions, 'How can I obtain a gracious God?' and 'Where can I find

the true Church?' These two questions are inseparably related ..." ("The Church in the Theology of the Reformers", p. 1. P.D.L. Avis, London, '81.)

- (2) Page 3, par. 6, lines 7 and 8. It may be that my earlier suggestions kindly included on ARCIC II 34 (84), will be sufficient. I do not wish to appear to have an *idée fixe* on this matter, even though that may be the case! Reference to "justification" in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary both illustrates and underlines this point.
- (3) Page 3, par. 6, lines 11-13. The sentence starting, "Belief in the God who has ..." seems to need rephrasing. It is surely not "belief in the God" which provides "assurance of worth", but God himself in his love and acceptance.
- (4) Page 7, par. II.1. Suggestions here relate to the treatment of "faith" in this paragraph. I think it would clarify our overall concerns to indicate that the New Testament, while speaking of "Justification by Faith" also speaks of a faith which does not justify. (See Jas. 2:19, 20.) This distinction is specifically taken up in the Homily referred to earlier. (See page 2.)

Hooker also makes this distinction in his "Learned Discourse" ch. 26. This point also is made in the Comments on the Final Drafts, ARCIC II 34 (84), (last note on page 2.)

- (5) Page 8, par. II.3, last sentence. "In fact the polemics ..." As an historical statement this could be questioned. From the Anglican side the polemics indulged in by both Hooker and Cramner touch on the respective places of works and merit.
- (6) Pages 9 and 10, par. II.6. May I cite again the quotation from Cranfield referred to earlier. (See page 5). The Calvin references are to the 1961 translation of Calvin's Commentary on Romans. I think that paragraph 6 needs re-drafting. There does seem to be some confusion of categories. I would suggest: "Misunderstandings have occurred in the past through the separation of Justification from complementary terms and notably where a distinction has been drawn between Justification and Sanctification in a way that is foreign to the thought of the New Testament." I would then ask whether the final sentence is necessary?

A greater misunderstanding seems to me to have arisen from the emphasis on the word "alone". If this word is to be used, it must be in an explanatory context as is partly found in Article XI. Hooker is worth noting on this point, (#31 of the "Learned Discourse".)

- (7) Page 10, par. II.7, line 5. Could the sentence beginning, "For the remission of sins ..." be better if phrased thus, "For the remission of sins is, of its nature, a part of God's gracious act, which is a renewal, a rebirth to newness of life ..."?
- (8) Page 10, par. II.8. I suspect that the paragraphs II.8 and II.9 may need some attention. The controversies of the 16th Century in the matter of "rewards" appear to be concerned both with salvation as a reward, and also with rewards associated with the good works of the Christian person. So concerned were some of the writers in the Reformed tradition to deny the possibility of reward in relation to salvation, that they appeared to attempt to abolish the concept of reward altogether. One would suggest for citing, with the Scripture references mentioned, e.g., Matthew 25:14 ff, etc., Hebrews 6:10, which might well stand as the most unambiguous New Testament statement on the matter.

Calvin takes a very firm and positive view on rewards for good works, citing Heb. 6:10. Yet his citation of Augustine on this subject is also of interest, "The Lord is faithful who made himself our debtor, not by accepting anything from us, but by promising us all things." (Augustine, cited Calvin. Institutes III. XVIII.7.)

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END NOTES

- (1) e.g., "Justification Today: The Roman Catholic and Anglican Debate", R. G. England, 1979; "Rome, Canterbury and Armagh", D. O'Callaghan, 1984; "Evangelical Anglicans and the Final Report", J. R. W. Stott, 1982.
- (2) "Justification by Faith - A Perspective" by H. Chadwick, (ARCIC II 19/1(84) p. 35, footnote (i).)
- (3) Homily on "The Salvation of Mankind". Prayer Book and Homily Society, London, 1851, p. 1.
- (4) *ibid.* pp. 24/25 cf. Hooker, "Learned Discourse." Ed. C. Morris, Lond., 1963, p. 67.
- (5) *ibid.* p. 21.
- (6) *ibid.* p. 31. "A Declaration of the True, Lively and Christian Faith."
- (7) *ibid.* pp. 32/3 cf. Article XII.
- (8) Hooker, "Learned Discourse", ch. 21. Morris edition. p. 38.
- (9) *ibid.*, ch. 31, Morris edition, pp. 58/59.
- (10) *ibid.*, ch. 31, Morris edition, p. 60.
- (11) Tyndale. Prologue to the Epistle to the Romans, Vol. I., pp. 508 ff. Cited Hughes' "Theology of the English Reformers" 1965, pp. 48/49.
- (12) Hughes' "Theology of the English Reformers", p. 41.
- (13) "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans", C.E.B. Cranfield, 1975, p. 95. (See also "Romans", Sanday and Headlam, 1914, ed. pp. 30 ff. and p. 59 *inter alia.*)