

# Justification

## *Agreement in 1541 between Catholics and Protestants on Justification*

Printed below is a remarkable document, translated by Dr A.N.S. Lane of The London School of Theology, England. Before the Roman Catholic Council of Trent met and proceeded to reject the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone that was being confessed and taught in the Lutheran, Reformed and Anglican Churches in Europe, theologians from the Roman and Protestant sides met in Germany for study of their differences. Eventually, and amazingly, they came to a common mind on the doctrine of Justification—probably because they were all reading the New Testament in Greek not Latin, and seeking to understand it on its own terms.

Had this approach and agreement been accepted by the Council of Trent in 1547 then the whole history of European, and thus also worldwide, Christianity would have been very different. Protestant leaders such as John Calvin and Martin Bucer believed that it was a good and acceptable statement, but in the Council of Trent the majority was not much influenced by the study of the Bible in its original languages—a vocation made possible by the Renaissance—and it fell back into the safety of known medieval definitions and doctrines.

What then does the Article on Justification produced by the united theologians teach? Dr. Lane explains:

“Underlying the entire article is the idea of *duplex iustitia* or twofold righteousness — that conversion brings both inherent and imputed righteousness. The term itself (*duplex iustitia*) is not found in the article, but the article is built on the idea that there are these different ‘righteousnesses’ (inherent and imputed), which are clearly set out.

What is the significance of this idea of twofold righteousness? Catholics and Protestants were offering two contrasting models of justification. The Protestant teaching was that God accepts us as righteous (what Protestants understand by justification) because Christ’s righteousness is reckoned or imputed to our account. That is, we are acceptable to God not because of anything that we have done, nor indeed because of the change that God brings about within us, but because of what Christ has done for us on the cross. We are acceptable not for what we are or do (which remains imperfect) but in Christ. The Catholic teaching, by contrast, was that justification is about God changing us by the Holy Spirit and thus making us acceptable to himself. At baptism/conversion we are transformed within by the grace of God, by *gratia gratum faciens*, grace that makes us pleasing or acceptable, that brings about within us an inherent righteousness. Thus we have the contrast between

the Protestant view that we become acceptable on the basis of *imputed* righteousness (the righteousness of Christ reckoned to our account) and the Catholic view that we become righteous through Christ’s righteousness being imparted to us or infused in us, through an inner change which gives us an *inherent* righteousness. The key contribution of Regensburg was to insist that with conversion we receive *both* of these: inherent *and* imputed righteousness.”

We need to be aware that later Protestant Confessions of Faith did not speak of two different forms of righteousness, but rather of righteousness imputed and then of sanctification (= righteousness inherent and growing by grace).

### **The Regensburg Agreement (1541), Article 5 The Justification of Man**

1. No Christian should doubt that after the fall of our first parent all men are, as the apostle says, born children of wrath [Eph. 2:3] and enemies of God [Rom. 5:10] and thereby are in death and slavery to sin [Rom. 6:16-20].

2. Likewise, no Christian should question that nobody can be reconciled with God, nor set free from slavery to sin, except by Christ the one mediator between God and men [1 Tim. 2:5], by whose grace, as the apostle said to the Romans, we are not only reconciled to God [5:10] and set free from slavery to sin [6:18, 22], but also made sharers in the divine nature [2 Pet. 1:4] and children of God [Rom. 8:14-16].

3. (1) Likewise, it is quite clear that adults do not obtain these blessings of Christ, except by the prevenient movement of the Holy Spirit, by which their mind and will are moved to hate sin. (2) For, as St. Augustine says, it is impossible to begin a new life if we do not repent of the former one. (3) Likewise, in the last chapter of Luke [24:47], Christ commands that repentance and forgiveness of sin should be preached in his name. (4) Also, John the Baptist, sent to prepare the way of the Lord, preached repentance, saying [Matt. 3:2]: ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is drawing near.’ (5) Next, man’s mind is moved toward God by the Holy Spirit through Christ and this movement is through faith. Through this [faith] man’s mind believes with certainty all that God has transmitted, and also with full certainty and without doubt assents to the promises made to us by God who, as stated in the psalm [145:13], is faithful in all his words. From there he acquires confidence on account of God’s promise, by which he has pledged that he will remit sins freely and that he will adopt as children those who believe in Christ, those I say



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who repent of their former life. (6) By this faith, he is lifted up to God by the Holy Spirit and so he receives the Holy Spirit, remission of sins, imputation of righteousness and countless other gifts.

4. (1) So it is a reliable and sound doctrine that the sinner is justified by living and efficacious faith, for through it we are pleasing and acceptable to God on account of Christ. (2) And living faith is what we call the movement of the Holy Spirit, by which those who truly repent of their old life are lifted up to God and truly appropriate the mercy promised in Christ, so that they now truly recognise that they have received the remission of sins and reconciliation on account of the merits of Christ, through the free goodness of God, and cry out to God: 'Abba Father' [Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6]. (3) But this happens to no one unless also at the same time love is infused which heals the will so that the healed will may begin to fulfil the law, just as Saint Augustine said. (4) So living faith is that which both appropriates mercy in Christ, believing that the righteousness which is in Christ is freely imputed to it, and at the same time receives the promise of the Holy Spirit and love. (5) Therefore the faith that truly justifies is that faith which is effectual through love [Gal. 5:6]. (6) Nevertheless it remains true, that it is by this faith that we are justified (i.e. accepted and reconciled to God) inasmuch as it appropriates the mercy and righteousness which is imputed to us on account of Christ and his merit, not on account of the worthiness or perfection of the righteousness imparted to us in Christ.

5. (1) Although the one who is justified receives righteousness and through Christ also has inherent [righteousness], as the apostle says: 'you are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified, etc.' [1 Cor. 6:11] (which is why the holy fathers made use of [the term] 'to be justified' even to mean 'to receive inherent righteousness'), nevertheless, the faithful soul depends not on this, but only on the righteousness of Christ given to us as a gift, without which there is and can be no righteousness at all. (2) And thus by faith in Christ we are justified or reckoned to be righteous, that is we are accepted through his merits and not on account of our own worthiness or works. (3) And on account of the righteousness inherent in us we are said to be righteous, because the works which we perform are righteous, according to the saying of John: 'whoever does what is right is righteous' [1 John 3:7].

6. Although fear of God, patience, humility and other virtues ought always to grow in the regenerate, because this renewal is imperfect and enormous weakness remains in them, it should nevertheless be taught that those who truly repent may always hold with most certain faith that they are pleasing to God on account of Christ the mediator. For it is Christ who is the propitiator, the High Priest and the one who prays for us, the one the Father gave

to us and with him all good things [Rom. 8:32].

7. Seeing that in our weakness there is no perfect certainty and that there are many weak and fearful consciences, which often struggle against great doubt, nobody should be excluded from the grace of Christ on account of such weakness. Such people should be earnestly encouraged boldly to set the promises of Christ against these doubts and by diligent intercession to pray that their faith may be increased, according to the saying: 'Lord increase our faith' [Luke 17:5].

8. (1) Likewise, every Christian should learn that this grace and this regeneration have not been given to us so that we might remain idle in that stage of our renewal which we at first obtained, but so that we may grow in everything into him who is the head [Eph. 4:15]. (2) Therefore, the people must be taught to devote effort to this growth which indeed happens through good works, both internal and external, which are commanded and commended by God. To these works God has, in many passages from the Gospels, clearly and manifestly promised on account of Christ a reward — good things in this life, as much for the body as for the soul (as much as seems right to divine providence) and after this life in heaven. (3) Therefore, although the inheritance of eternal life is due to the regenerate on account of the promise, as soon as they are reborn in Christ, nevertheless God also renders a reward to good works, not according to the substance of the works, nor because they come from us, but to the extent that they are performed in faith and proceed from the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, free choice concurring as a partial agent.

9. The joy of those who have performed more and better works will be greater and more abundant, on account of the increase of faith and love, in which they have grown through exercises of that kind.

(1) Now those who say that we are justified by faith alone should at the same time teach the doctrine of repentance, of the fear of God, of the judgement of God and of good works, so that all the chief points of the preaching may remain firm, as Christ said: 'preaching repentance and the remission of sins in my name' [Luke 24:47]. (2) And that is to prevent this way of speaking [i.e. *sola fide*] from being understood other than has been previously mentioned.

[Two fascinating essays on this Agreement by Dr Lane are to be found in two recent collections of essays on Justification: (i) M. Huisbands & D.J. Treier (eds), *What's at stake in the Current Debates on Justification*, InterVarsity Press, Downer's Grove, 2004 & (ii) B.L. McCormack (ed), *Justification in Perspective*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 2006. These two books are necessary reading for anyone wishing to find a reasonably quick entry into the contemporary debate concerning Justification.]

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## **Modern Christian Marriage**

In great contrast, “Modern Christian Marriage,” following the cultural trends in law and society, sees marriage as instrumental, that is, as the means to various possible ends or objectives (which may be judged by others as good, bad or indifferent). Prominent in modern approaches to marriage are those wherein marriage is seen in terms of a voluntary contract (made before witnesses or before witnesses and “God”) between two persons primarily for their own happiness, fulfillment and satisfaction. Here the union as one flesh is seen not as an End in itself, a true, intrinsic and permanent Good, but as a means to various ends, primarily ones of erotic pleasure, and of friendship, and only sometimes one of procreation (as is well demonstrated by the low birth rate in the West). And the contract in place is not an enforceable one—as with contracts in most other areas of life—for it is governed by “no-fault” divorce law, which allows either partner to dissolve the instrumental union at will. Thus couples marry, recognizing that if it does not work out, then they can make use of divorce and start again, usually also knowing that they can go back to church a second or third time for counseling and then for the blessing of priest or bishop in a marriage service.

A study of the Canon Law of The Episcopal Church on Divorce and Re-Marriage (1973 and following), of its 1979 Marriage Service (cf., Canada 1985), and of the many Resolutions of its General Convention from 1970 to the present on Sexuality, clearly reveals that this Denomination is committed to “modern Christian marriage” (even though—thanks be to God—individual members may choose to live by the principles of “Holy Matrimony”.) In fact, The Episcopal Church has in practice—if not yet in Canon law—taken the logic of “modern Christian marriage” to its apparent conclusion.

Here is how that logic works in this particular area of human experience, sexual unions. Since the coming together of two persons in marriage is not any longer taught as for the one and only Good, Purpose and End of being two-as-one-flesh (an End with various implications and fruit) but, rather, for one or more possible purposes which are self-chosen and which focus on self-fulfillment, then there is no reason why two loving same-sex persons should not also be united as a partnership (whether it is called “marriage” or “civil union”) and given the blessing of a bishop or priest. This position makes very good sense when a Church

has abandoned Holy Matrimony and is seeking to take into account the full impact of human rights legislation and culture emphases on the therapeutic and autonomous self. Further, why should not God bless same-sex unions when apparently—says the modern Church—he blesses now heterosexual unions, which are clearly entered into for self-fulfillment and mutual support?

## **In conclusion**

From the point of view of the historical, received doctrine of Holy Matrimony, the real problem today is not what Bishop Gene Robinson and his partner are doing in New Hampshire. Rather, it is the rejection of Holy Matrimony in favor of diluted Christian Marriage by not only the Anglican Churches of the West, but, also, and regrettably, some of the provinces of the so-called Global South as well. These so-called “orthodox” Churches/Provinces use dumbed-down Marriage Services from the 1979 Episcopal Book (e.g., Southern Cone) or similar to it (e.g., Nigeria through its own “modern” Prayer Book of 1995). And, because of their concerns about large families and also the spread of HIV/Aids, not a few bishops and priests of the Global South are heavily involved in the distribution of artificial birth control.

The tragedy of the present crisis of Anglicanism is that at its center is a battle between on the one hand a conservative reading and application of “modern Christian marriage” and on the other a radical reading of the same. The so-called “orthodox” and “traditionalists” are not standing on the platform of “Holy Matrimony” but, rather, at the high end of the one platform of “modern Christian marriage.” This is most clearly seen in that all on the platform appear content with the 1979 Marriage Service of The Episcopal Church (or its equivalents in other prayer books). As the American-based homosexual advocacy group called Integrity has said recently in all seriousness and with basic rationality: “The 1979 Service is fine for a same-sex couple if we simply change the words ‘man’ and ‘woman’ and ‘he’ and ‘she’ where they occur in the Service.”

The tragedy is that the “orthodox” (be it “orthodox” in The Episcopal Church in the USA or as “the Global Primates” overseas) have abandoned the sound ship, “Holy Matrimony,” and are sailing—howbeit on a different deck—with their opponents on the unstable ship, “Modern Christian Marriage.”



# On obtaining Prayer Books and associated literature

## Where to obtain *The Book of Common Prayer* (1928)

*The Book of Common Prayer* (1928) in bonded leather is available from Oxford University Press in NYC—1-800-451-7556. However, the pew edition of this same Prayer Book is only available from Anglican Parishes Association, 800 Timothy Road, Athens, Georgia 30606. This press also has available in either leather or hardback the joint BCP 1928 & KJV 1611. See the advert at [www.anglicanmarketplace.com](http://www.anglicanmarketplace.com) or visit [www.anglicanbooks.com](http://www.anglicanbooks.com)

## Prayer Book Society 1928 Prayer Book Resources

The PBS office does not stock the BCP (1928) in any complete edition. Please obtain from the publishers. However, it does have:

- (a) the 1928 Service of Holy Communion with annotations as a booklet, and
- (b) the major 1928 Services in a paperback, wherein the classic text is on one side and a rendering into a contemporary form of English is on the other side
- (c) the major 1928 Services in Spanish in a booklet; and
- (d) The Altar Edition of the BCP with the Order for Holy Communion, plus Collects, Epistles and Gospels for the year.

The purpose of (a) and (b), and others which explain the content of traditional Common Prayer, is to help people enter into the doctrinal and devotional world of traditional public worship and prayer. They are available from [www.anglicanmarketplace.com](http://www.anglicanmarketplace.com) or by calling 1-800-PBS-1928

## Books on CD

Also, to assist with the understanding and right use of the traditional Prayer Book, the PBS has a growing number of CD's on which are multiple books in digital form, and these books are commentaries on the content of the Prayer Book, Ordinal and Articles of Religion. Again, to see the list visit [www.anglicanmarketplace.com](http://www.anglicanmarketplace.com)

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