

§ i The doctrine of justification follows well after the discussion of the universality* of Christ's death and the grace given through it, since some of the sharpest debates concerning justification among those who call themselves Christians arise from this point. In fact, if everyone would focus their mind on what justifies, there would be less noise¹ concerning notions about justification. I will briefly review this controversy as it is taking place among others and as I have often seriously observed it. Then I will describe the current controversy about us Quakers and explain our sense and judgement about it; and finally I will prove our judgement (if the Lord wills) by some biblical testimonies and by the certain experience of all who were ever truly justified.

§ ii We do not question that the doctrine of justification has been and still is greatly corrupted by the church of Rome, though our adversaries, who often take refuge in lies because they don't have any better arguments, have not hesitated to stigmatize us with Popery; later it will be clear how untrue this is. To speak a little of their *meritum ex condigno*,² without doubt it was a very common doctrine of the Romish church, especially before Luther, although most of their modern writers, especially in their controversies with Protestants, partly deny it and partly minimize it, and seem to talk about it as if they were the advocates and promoters of good works which others deny. But if we look

¹ Latin: *cavillatio*, quibbling.

² *Meritum ex condigno* (merit or good works which are fully deserving) is a term in Catholic theology, related to the concept of indulgences.

at the effects of this doctrine among the majority of their church members,³ not looking at things which are disapproved but rather things which are highly approved and commended by their father the Pope and all his clients (since they are the most beneficial source of all his revenue), we shall find that Luther opposed himself to them in this matter on substantial grounds. If Luther had not gone astray to the other extreme (more of that later), his work would have lasted longer.* In this, as in most other things, he deserves more credit for the part of Babylon he pulled down than for what he built on his own.

Whatever the Papists may pretend, or what some good men among them may have thought, experience shows, and it is also very plain by the universal and approved practice of their people, that they don't put their justification so much in works that are truly and morally good and in being truly renewed and sanctified in the mind, but rather they put their justification in things that are neither good nor evil or in things may truly be called evil; things that cannot be considered good for any reason except because the Pope chooses to call them good. So if the matter is thoroughly examined one will find that most of their justification depends on the authority of the Pope's bulls and not on the power, virtue and grace of Christ that is revealed in the heart and renews it. This is evident from the Papal doctrine* concerning their sacraments, which they say confer grace *ex opere operato*.⁴ So if a man simply partakes of them, he obtains remission of sin by that action although he remains the same as he was before; the power of the sacrament makes up for what is lacking in the man. This act

³ Latin: *qui fidem Papalem profitentur*, "who profess the Papal faith."

⁴ *Ex opere operato* (from the work which is done) is a term in theology which refers to the efficacy of the sacraments, which depends on the action being done rather than on the virtue or the intention of the Priest or minister. Even if the priest is sinful, the sacrament is considered effective if it is properly done.

of faith and submission to the laws of the church, and not any real inward change, is what justifies him. For example, if someone makes use of the sacrament (as they call it) of penance, and recites his sins to a priest — although he does not have true contrition, which the Lord has made absolutely necessary for penitent sinner, but only has attrition⁵ (an invention of theirs), that is, if he is sorry he has sinned because he fears punishment and not because he loves God, still the power of the sacrament (they say) obtains for him the remission of sins and, having been absolved by the priest, he is accepted and justified in the sight of God. In that case, the person's justification doesn't come from his being truly penitent, or in any degree changed and renewed inwardly by the work of God's grace in his heart, but merely from the power of the sacrament and the authority of the priest who has pronounced him absolved. So his justification comes from something outside him, and not within him.

Secondly, this is even more evident in the matter of indulgences, where remission of all sins, not only past but for years to come, is connected with visiting such and such churches and relics, or saying such and such prayers, so that the person who does these things is immediately cleared from the guilt of his sin and justified and accepted in the sight of God. For example: someone who goes to Rome during the great Jubilee and presents himself before the gate of Peter and Paul to receive the Pope's blessing, or someone who goes on a pilgrimage to James's tomb in Spain or to Mary of Loretto is promised forgiveness of sins⁶ when

⁵ Attrition is imperfect contrition in Catholic theology, a desire not to sin for a reason other than the love of God, such as fear of punishment.

⁶ Here Barclay repeats a misinterpretation common among Protestants, which claims that an indulgence is for forgiveness of sins. The Catholic Church distinguishes between "eternal punishment" and "temporal punishment." Forgiveness of sins happens in the sacrament of penance, in which the "eternal punishment" is remitted, that is, the eternal deprivation of communion with God.

he does these things. Now if we ask them the reason why such things which are not morally good in themselves come to have such power, they have no other answer but “because of the church and the Pope’s authority.” Since he is the great treasurer of the storehouse of Christ’s merits, he disburses them on such and such conditions....

Luther and the Protestants then had good reason to deny and oppose this doctrine, though many of them ran to another extreme and denied that good works are necessary for justification, preaching not only remission of sins but justification by faith alone, without any works, however good. They said that people do not obtain their justification because they are inwardly sanctified and renewed, but are justified merely by believing that Christ died for them, and so some people may be perfectly justified though they remain in gross wickedness, for example in the case of David, who they claim was fully and perfectly justified while he remained in the gross sins of murder and adultery.

The Protestants have good grounds for arguing with and refuting the Papists concerning many abuses in the subject of justification; but on the other hand the Protestants have not rightly established and supported the doctrine of justification as it is set forth in the Holy Scriptures, and so they have opened a door for the Papists to accuse them as if they neglected good works and were enemies of mortification⁷ and holiness, people who assert* that they are justified while they remain in great sin. The reformation has been defamed and hindered, and many

The absolution in the sacrament of penance does not remove the necessity of purifying the soul from unhealthy attachment to created things, which happens either here on earth or in Purgatory after death. An indulgence lessens or removes only the “temporal punishment,” so that the sinner can spend less time in Purgatory. See #1471-1473, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1995) pp. 411-412.

⁷ Subjection and denial of physical passions and appetites by abstinence or self-inflicted pain, as a form of devotion or penitence.

souls have been ensnared by that kind of accusation, for which the writings of some rigid Protestants have given too much evidence. But anyone who examines the matter closely can see that these debates are more *in specie* than *in genere*,⁸ because both come to the same thing at the end, like two people walking in a circle who, going in different directions, yet meet at last at the same center.

The Papists say they obtain remission of sins and are justified by the merits of Christ, because these merits are applied to them by the sacraments of the church, and are dispensed in the performance of various ceremonies, pilgrimages, prayers, and other actions, although the mind is not inwardly renewed nor is Christ known inwardly. Still they are pardoned and made righteous *ex opere operato*, because of the power and authority of the sacraments and those who provide them.

The Protestants say that they obtain remission of sins and are justified in the sight of God by the merits and sufferings of Christ. This does not happen because righteousness is infused into them, but rather because their sins are pardoned and they are accounted and accepted as righteous. They rely on him and his righteousness by faith. But this faith, the act of believing, is not imputed to them as righteousness.⁹

Neither one places justification in any inward renewing of the mind,¹⁰ or by the power of any spiritual birth or formation of Christ *within* them, but only by a bare application of the death and sufferings of Christ performed for them outwardly.

⁸ Latin terms often used in Catholic theology of the sacraments, meaning “in detail” (*in specie*) vs. “in general” (*in genere*).

⁹ That is what the Westminster Confession of Faith says, Chapter 11, section 1. RB

Written in 1646, the Westminster Confession of Faith was intended for use in the Church of England; it was later adopted by Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists.

¹⁰ Romans 12:2.

Source: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition VII § i & ii (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 168-172; and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 122-125.

Christ determined what special **graces** were to be conferred by means of external **rites**: for some sacraments (e.g. **Baptism**, the **Eucharist**) He determined minutely (*in specie*) the **matter** and **form**: for others He determined only in a general way (*in genere*) that there should be an external **ceremony**, by which special **graces** were to be conferred, leaving to the **Apostles** or to the **Church** the power to determine what Catholic encyclopedia.

Chapter XI Of Justification I. Those whom God effectually calls, He also freely justifies; 234 not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, 235 they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.

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