

## CONTROVERSY

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HE Church is the bride of Christ; the Gospels are her wedding jewels, the treasure guarded by her vigilant love. The bride is more precious than her raiment . . .<sup>1</sup>

The fundamental dogma of professedly undogmatic Protestantism is "justification by faith alone." This doctrine is satisfactorily substantiated, to the thinking of the followers of the Reformers, by various texts contained in the New Testament. Our motive for addressing ourselves to a study of this question is twofold: first, in order to examine into many pertinent texts both in support (presumedly) and in denial of the doctrine and through this examination to see in some measure why the Tridentine Fathers condemned it, and secondly, in order that, when we are accosted, we may give a reason of that hope which is in us.<sup>2</sup>

We present the following texts in support of the heretical doctrine: "And he said to the woman: Thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace."<sup>3</sup> "For God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting."<sup>4</sup> "But they said: Believe in the Lord Jesus: and thou shalt be saved and thy house."<sup>5</sup> "Even the justice of God by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe in Him: for there is no distinction."<sup>6</sup> "For we account a man to be justified by faith without the works of the law."<sup>7</sup> "For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and to the Greek. For the justice of God is revealed therein from faith unto faith, as it is written:

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<sup>1</sup> Huby, Joseph, *The Church and the Gospels*, trans. by Fenton Moran, (New York, 1931), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. III, 15.

<sup>3</sup> Luke VII, 50.

<sup>4</sup> John III, 16.

<sup>5</sup> Acts XVI, 31.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. III, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. III, 28.

'The just man liveth by faith'.<sup>8</sup> "But knowing that man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; we also believe in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."<sup>9</sup>

Even from these passages it is difficult to see how "justification by faith alone" can be deduced. Granted that they indicate that faith is the *sine qua non* for eternal life, yet good works in no case are specifically outlawed. Even a cursory perusal of the Gospels will show what "works of the law" St. Paul was referring to. The invective used by Our Lord Himself against the Pharisees, ". . . like to whitened sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness,"<sup>10</sup> should show us what exactly St. Paul was speaking of when he said no flesh shall be justified by them.

Supposing that the above texts did establish the doctrine and with this in mind we studied other texts which seemed to give the lie to it, might we not justly and logically relegate the whole New Testament to the "fiery furnace" because of the contradictions it contained? Not a few Protestants have been logical at least in this regard, and by being so, their Protestantism has become humanitarianism. "Live a decent life and treat your fellow man kindly because it is the right thing to do." It is a far cry from the first error, "justification by faith alone," to the last one. However, we are not addressing ourselves to this modern heresy at the present moment, so we return to our thesis.

Innumerable passages from the New Testament indicate that belief in the Name of Jesus Christ is not sufficient for the attainment of eternal life. "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say: Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."<sup>11</sup> Why should He preach penance if His death was to purchase heaven for all who merely believed in Him? "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."<sup>12</sup> "But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven: where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor

<sup>8</sup> Rom. i, 16-17.

<sup>9</sup> Gal. ii, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Matt. xxiii, 27.

<sup>11</sup> Matt. iv, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Matt. v, 16.

steal.”<sup>13</sup> “Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of My Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>14</sup> What precisely is the will of His Father? Is it not our sanctification? Has not His Father made manifest His holy will through the precepts given to us by His only-begotten Son? What could be more explicit than this text to tell us that faith alone is not sufficient? “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like to it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these.”<sup>15</sup> “The excellency of charity teacheth us that faith only is not sufficient,” says the Venerable Bede. Even St. Paul, to whom the defenders of this doctrine go as to their chief authority, even St. Paul confutes them. “And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”<sup>16</sup>

Need we go further? Need we pursue this line of argument *ad nauseam*? Need we show that from a quantitative standpoint texts in favor of the Catholic position far outnumber those which possibly lend themselves to the doctrine of “justification by faith alone”? We leave off here with these few observations. It is no obscure fact that the Church of Christ teaching speaks objective truth. Our Lord, when He sent His apostles to teach the nations, knowing as He did how prone to error man is, gave them proof against that pitfall. “. . . And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.”<sup>17</sup> When will men understand what they read in Holy Writ? When will they learn that He sent men with authority to teach His doctrine and never taught that the faithful should interpret that doctrine to suit their own fancy? Even mere men, the founders of our nation, saw that without a Supreme Court to interpret the Constitution life in the land would be chaotic. How much more Christ, the Word of God and very Wisdom Itself!

<sup>13</sup> Matt. vi, 20.

<sup>14</sup> Matt. vii, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Mark xii, 30-31.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Cor. xiii, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Matt. xxviii, 20.