

Historical Theology

*A review of the principal doctrinal
discussions in the Christian Church
since the Apostolic Age.*

By William Cunningham

VOLUME 2

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CHAPTER XXI.

JUSTIFICATION.

WE now proceed to the consideration of the important subject of Justification; and it will be proper to enter somewhat more fully into the investigation of this topic than those which we have hitherto examined. This was the great fundamental distinguishing doctrine of the Reformation, and was regarded by all the Reformers as of primary and paramount importance. The leading charge which they adduced against the Church of Rome was, that she had corrupted and perverted the doctrine of Scripture upon this subject in a way that was dangerous to the souls of men; and it was mainly by the exposition, enforcement, and application of the true doctrine of God's word in regard to it, that they assailed and overturned the leading doctrines and practices of the Papal system. There is no subject which possesses more of intrinsic importance than attaches to this one, and there is none with respect to which the Reformers were more thoroughly harmonious in their sentiments. All who believe that the truth on this subject had been greatly corrupted in the Church of Rome, and that the doctrine taught by the Reformers respecting it was scriptural and true, must necessarily regard the restoration of sound doctrine upon this point as the most important service which the Reformers were made instrumental by God in rendering to the church.

It is above all things important, that men, if they have broken the law of God, and become liable to the punishment which the law denounces against transgression,—and that this is, indeed, the

state of men by nature is of course now assumed,—should know whether there be any way in which they may obtain the pardon and deliverance they need; and if so, what that way is. And it is the doctrine of justification as taught in Scripture which alone affords a satisfactory answer to the question. The subject thus bears most directly and immediately upon men's relation to God and their everlasting destiny, and is fraught with unspeakable practical importance to every human being. It is assumed now that the condition of men by nature is such in point of fact,—that some change or changes must be effected regarding them in order to their escaping fearful evil and enjoying permanent happiness; and it is in this way that the doctrine of justification is connected with that of original sin, as the nature and constituent elements of the *disease* must determine the nature and qualities of the *remedy* that may be fitted to cure or remove it.

There is, indeed, as must be evident even upon the most cursory survey of what Scripture teaches concerning the recovery and salvation of lost men, a great subject or class of subjects, that is intermediate between the general state of mankind as fallen and lost, and the deliverance and restoration of men individually. And this is the work of Christ as mediator, and the general place or function assigned to the Holy Spirit in the salvation of sinners. The Scripture represents the whole human race as involved by the fall in a state of sin and misery. It represents God as looking with compassion and love upon the lost race of man, and as devising a method of effecting and securing their salvation. It describes this divine method of saving sinners as founded on, or rather as consisting substantially in, this—that God sent His Son into the world to assume human nature, and to suffer and die in order to procure or purchase for them salvation, and everything which salvation might involve or require. And hence, in turning our attention from men's actual condition of sin and misery to the remedy which has been provided, the first great subject which naturally presents itself to our contemplation and study is the person and the work of the Mediator, or the investigation of these three questions,—viz., first, Who and what was this Saviour of sinners whom the Scriptures set before us? secondly, What is it that He has done in order to save men from ruin, and to restore them to happiness? and, thirdly, In what way is it that His work, or what He did and suffered, bears upon the accomplishment of

the great object which it was designed to effect? Now, the first two of these subjects,—*i.e.*, the person and the work of Christ, or His divinity and atonement,—did not form subjects of controversial discussion between the Reformers and the Romanists. The Church of Rome has always held the proper divinity and the vicarious atonement of Christ; and though these great doctrines have been so corrupted and perverted by her as to be in a great measure practically neutralized, and though it is very important to point out this, yet these subjects cannot be said to constitute a point of the proper controversy between the Church of Rome and the Protestants, and they were not in point of fact discussed between the Romanists and the Reformers. In all the controversies between them, the divinity and the vicarious atonement of Christ were assumed as topics in which there was no material difference of opinion in formal profession,—doctrines which each party was entitled to take for granted in arguing with the other. The subject, indeed, of the divinity and atonement of our Saviour did not occupy much of the attention of any portion of the church, as subjects of controversial discussion, during the sixteenth century; for the works of Socinus, who first gave to anti-Trinitarian views, and to the denial of a vicarious atonement, a plausible and imposing aspect, did not excite much attention till about the end of this century, and the controversies which they occasioned took place chiefly in the succeeding one. I propose, therefore, following the chronological order, to postpone for the present any account of the discussions which have taken place concerning the divinity and atonement of Christ.

The sum and substance of the great charge which the Reformers adduced against the Church of Rome was, that while she proclaimed to men with a considerable measure of accuracy who Christ was, and what it was that He had done for the salvation of sinners, she yet perverted the gospel of the grace of God, and endangered the salvation of men's souls, by setting before them erroneous and unscriptural views of the grounds on which, and the process through which, the blessings that Christ had procured for mankind at large were actually bestowed upon men individually, and of the way and manner in which men individually became possessed of them, and attained ultimately to the full and permanent enjoyment of them. This was the subject that may be said to have been discussed between the Reformers and the

Romanists under the head of justification, and I need say nothing more to show its paramount practical importance. There can be no difference of opinion as to the importance of the general subject which has been indicated; but there have been occasionally discussions in more modern times upon the question whether the errors of the Church of Rome upon this subject are so important and dangerous as they are often represented to be, and whether they were of sufficient magnitude to warrant the views entertained by the Reformers upon this subject, and the course of practical procedure which they based upon these views. When more lax and unsound views of doctrine began to prevail in the Protestant churches, some of their divines lost their sense of the magnitude of the Romish errors upon the subject of justification, and began to make admissions, that the differences between them and the Romanists upon this point were not so vital as the Reformers had supposed them to be; and the Romanists, ever on the watch to take advantage of anything that seems fitted to promote the interests of their church, were not slow to avail themselves of these concessions.*

There are two different and opposite lines of policy which Romish controversialists have pursued upon this subject, according as seemed to be most expedient for their interests at the time. Sometimes they have represented the doctrine of the Reformers upon the subject of justification as something hideous and monstrous,—as overturning the foundations of all morality, and fitted only to produce universal wickedness and profligacy; and at other times they have affected a willingness to listen to the grounds on which Protestants defend themselves from this charge, to admit that these grounds are not altogether destitute of weight, and that, consequently, there is not so great a difference between their doctrine in substance and that of the Church of Rome. They then enlarge upon the important influence which the alleged errors of the Church of Rome on the subject of justification had

* Archbishop Wake, in his *Exposition of the Doctrine of the Church of England*, in reply to Bossuet's *Exposition of the Catholic Church*, gives up our whole controversy with the Church of Rome on this subject; and to give a specimen of modern High-

churchmen, Perceval, in his "*Roman Schism Illustrated*" (p. 365), says, that "ground for condemnation of the Church of Rome, as touching the main positions of this doctrine, is not to be found in the decrees of the Council of Trent."

in producing the Reformation,—quote some of the passages which show the paramount importance which the first Reformers attached to this subject,—and proceed to draw the inference that the Reformation was founded upon misrepresentation and calumny, since it appears, and has been admitted even by learned Protestants, that the errors of the Church of Rome, even if they were to admit for the sake of argument that she had erred, are not nearly so important as the Reformers had represented them to be.*

It is only to this second line of policy, which represents the difference on the subject of justification as comparatively insignificant, and makes use, for this purpose, of some concessions of Protestant writers, that we mean at present to advert. In following out this line of policy, Popish controversialists usually employ an artifice which I had formerly occasion to expose,—viz., taking the statements of the Reformers made in the earlier period of their labours, and directed against the general strain of the public teaching, oral and written, that then generally obtained in the Church of Rome, and comparing them with the cunning and cautious decrees of the Council of Trent upon the subject of justification. We are willing to confine our charge against the Church of Rome, as such, at least so far as the sixteenth century is concerned, to what we can prove to be sanctioned by the Council of Trent; and, indeed, there was not in existence, at the commencement of the Reformation, anything that could be said to be a formal deliverance upon the subject of justification to which the Church of Rome could be proved to be officially committed. But we must expose the injustice done to the Reformers, when their statements, expressly and avowedly directed against the teaching then generally prevalent in the Church of Rome, are represented, as they often are, by modern Popish controversialists,—and Möehler, in his *Symbolism*, with all his pretensions to candour and fairness, lays himself open to this charge,—as directed against the decrees of the Council of Trent, which were prepared with much care and caution after the subject had been fully discussed, and in the preparation of which no small skill and ingenuity were

* Jurieu, in his "*Prejugés Légitimes contre le Papisme*," Part ii., c. xxv., pp. 307-10, points out the inconsistency between the course taken by Nicole, and that taken by Arnauld, upon this subject.

employed to evade the force of the arguments of the Reformers, and to conceal or gloss over *what* they had most successfully exposed. I had occasion formerly to quote or refer to an extract from Melancthon, written in 1536, when he was invited by Francis I. into France, in which he states the great improvement which had taken place, and the much nearer approach which had been exhibited to Protestant principles, in the statements *then* commonly made by Romanists upon justification and other subjects, as compared with those which prevailed when Luther began his work; and though the application which Melancthon made of this consideration was far from being creditable to his firmness or his sagacity, yet it was undoubtedly true, to a large extent, as a statement of a fact.

I may mention one striking and important instance in which the Council of Trent may be said to have modified and softened the erroneous doctrine which was previously prevalent in the Church of Rome upon this subject. It was the general doctrine of the schoolmen,—it was universally taught in the Church of Rome at the commencement of the Reformation,—it was explicitly maintained by most of the Popish controversialists who, previously to the Council of Trent, came forward to oppose the Reformers, that men in their natural state, before they were justified and regenerated, could, and must, do certain good things by which they merited or deserved the grace of forgiveness and regeneration,—not indeed with the merit of condignity,—for that true and proper merit, in the strictest sense, was reserved for the good deeds of men already justified,—but with what was called the merit of congruity,—a distinction too subtle to be generally and popularly apprehended. Now, of this merit of congruity,—so prominent and important a feature of the Romish theology before and at the commencement of the Reformation, and so strenuously assailed by Luther,—the Council of Trent has taken no direct notice whatever. The substance, indeed, of the error may be said to be virtually retained in the decisions of the council upon the subject of what it calls dispositives or preparatives for justification; but the error cannot be said to be very clearly or directly sanctioned; and the council has made a general declaration, that * “none of those things which precede justification, whether faith or works,

* Sess. vi., C. viii.

merit the grace of justification itself,”—a declaration, however, it should be observed, which has not prevented most subsequent Romish writers from reviving the old doctrine of *meritum de congruo* before justification. If it be fair on the one hand that the Church of Rome, as such, should be judged by the decisions of the Council of Trent,—at least until it be shown that some other decision has been given by which the church, as such, was bound, as by the bull *Unigenitus*,—it is equally fair that the Reformers, who wrote before the council, should be judged, as to the correctness of their representations, by the doctrine which generally obtained in the Church of Rome at the time when these representations were made. But while this consideration should be remembered, in order that we may do justice to the Reformers, and guard against the influence of an artifice which Popish controversialists in modern times often employ in order to excite a prejudice against them, yet it is admitted that the question as to what is the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon the subject of justification must be determined chiefly by an examination of the decisions of the Council of Trent; and we hope to be able to show, that notwithstanding all the caution and skill employed in framing its decrees, they contain a large amount of anti-scriptural error, and that they misrepresent and pervert the method of salvation in a way which, *when viewed in connection with the natural tendencies* of men, is fitted to exert a most injurious influence upon the salvation of men’s souls. Turretine,* in asserting the importance of the differences between Protestants and the Church of Rome on the subject of justification, and adverting also to the attempts which have been made by some Protestant writers to represent these differences as unimportant, has the following statement: “*Licet verò nonnulli ex Pontificiis cordatioribus vi veritatis victi sanius cæteris de hoc articulo senserint et locuti sint. Nec desint etiam ex Nostris, qui studio minuendarum Controversiarum ducti, censeant circa illum non tantam esse dissidii materiam, et non paucas hic esse logomachias. Certum tamen est non verbales, sed reales multas, et magni momenti controversias nobis cum Pontificiis adhuc intercedere in hoc argumento, ut ex sequentibus fiet manifestum.*”

Perhaps the fullest and most elaborate attempt made by any

* Loc. xvi., Quæst. i., sec. ii.

Protestant writer of eminence to show that the difference between Protestants and Romanists on the subject of justification is not of very great importance, is to be found in the "Theses Theologicæ" of Le Blanc, often called the Theses Sedanenses, because their author was Professor of Theology in the French Protestant University of Sedan, at a period, however, shortly before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, when the French Protestant Church in general had very considerably declined from the doctrinal orthodoxy of the Reformation, though it still contained some very able opponents of Popery, men qualified to contend with Bossuet, Arnauld, and Nicole. Le Blanc's Theses is a work of much ingenuity and erudition; and it contains much matter that is fitted to be useful in the history of theology, though it should be read with much caution, as it exhibits a strong tendency on the part of its author to explain away, and to make light of, differences in doctrinal matters, which are of no small importance in the scheme of divine truth. The course of argument adopted by Le Blanc, in order to prove that there is no very material difference between Protestants and Romanists on this point, is not of a very fair or satisfactory kind, and gives us much more the impression of a man who had laid it down as a sort of task to himself just to exert all his ingenuity, and to employ all his erudition, in explaining away the apparent differences among contending parties, than of one who was candidly and impartially seeking after the truth. It consists not so much in comparing the declarations of the Reformed confessions with those of the Council of Trent, as in collecting together all the best or most Protestant passages he could find in any Popish authors, and all the worst or most Popish passages he could find in any Protestant authors; and then in showing that there was really no very great difference between them. The unfairness of this mode of argument is too obvious to need to be dwelt upon. It is easy to show that there have been Popish writers whose views upon religious subjects were sounder than those of their church, and Protestant writers whose views were less sound than those of the Reformers and their genuine followers. But the only important questions are: What is the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject? in what respects does it differ from that taught by the Reformers, and embodied in the confessions of Protestant churches? in what way does the word of God decide upon these differences? what is

their real value or importance? and how does it bear upon the general scheme of Christian truth, and upon the spiritual welfare of men?"*

The more general considerations on which Le Blanc, and Grotius, and other men who have laboured to show that there is no very material difference between Protestants and the Church of Rome on the subject of justification, have mainly proceeded, are these,—that the Church of Rome ascribes the justification of sinners to the grace of God and to the merits of Christ, and denies merit to men themselves in the matter. Now, it is true that the Council of Trent has made general statements to this effect; but, notwithstanding all this, it is quite possible to show that their general declarations upon these points are virtually contradicted or neutralized,—practically at least, and sometimes even theoretically,—by their more specific statements upon some of the topics involved in the detailed exposition of the subject; and that thus it can be proved, that they do not really ascribe the justification of sinners wholly to the grace of God and to the work of Christ,—that they do not wholly exclude human merit, but ascribe to men themselves, and to their own powers, a real share in the work of their own salvation; and that while this can be proved to be true of their doctrine as it stands theoretically, their scheme, as a whole, is also, moreover, so constructed as to be fitted, when viewed in connection with the natural tendencies of the human heart, to foster presumption and self-confidence, to throw obstacles in the way of men's submitting themselves to the divine method of justification, and to frustrate the great end which the gospel scheme of salvation was, in all its parts, expressly designed and intended to accomplish,—viz., that, as our Confession of Faith says,† "both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners."

* It is amusing and instructive to observe the use to which Nicole turns the labours of Le Blanc in this matter, in his "Préjugés Légitimes contre les Calvinistes," tome i., pp. 269, 274-6. Animadversions on Le Blanc in this matter are to be found in Witsius De Econ. Fœd., Lib. iii., c. viii., secs. xlix.-lv., and De Moor Comment. in Marck. Compend., tom. iv., pp. 732-3, 753; Owen, vol. xi., pp. 84-5, 161

(or, in original edition, pp. 87, 179). For an exposure of other attempts to represent the differences between Protestants and Romanists on the subject of justification as unimportant, see the controversy between Grotius and Andrew Rivet.—Rivet's "Vindiciæ Evangelicæ," and Heidegger's "Dissertationes," tom. i., Dissertatio xi., p. 290.

† West. Con., c. xi., sec. 3.

Sec. I.—Popish and Protestant Views.

In dealing with the subject of justification, we must, first of all, attempt to form a clear and correct apprehension of what is the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this topic, as opposed to that which the Reformers deduce from the word of God. Justification, it is admitted on both sides, is descriptive generally of the change or changes, in whole or in part, that must take place in respect of men individually, in order to their escaping from the evils of their natural condition, and attaining to happiness and heaven. The nature of the change or changes necessary must depend upon the actual features of men's natural condition, the evils from which they must be delivered. And the way and manner in which they are brought about must be somewhat regulated by the natural powers or capacities of men themselves to procure or effect them, or to assist in procuring or effecting them. It is admitted, also, that the two leading features of men's natural condition, which render salvation necessary, and must in some measure determine its character, are guilt and depravity,—or liability to punishment because of transgression of God's law, and a tendency or inclination, more or less powerful and pervading, to violate its requirements and prohibitions. The corresponding changes, called graces, because admitted to be in some sense God's gifts, and called the blessings or benefits of redemption, because admitted to be in some sense procured for men by what Christ has done for them, are an alteration upon men's state or condition in relation to God and His law, whereby their guilt is cancelled, their sins are pardoned, and they are brought into a state of acceptance and favour; and a change upon their actual moral character, whereby the tendency to sin is mortified and subdued, and a state of heart and motive more accordant with what God's law requires is produced. Thus far, and when these general terms are employed, there is no material difference of opinion; though the second change,—that upon men's moral character,—is usually called by Protestants the regeneration or renovation of man's moral nature, and by Papists the infusion of righteousness or justice,—righteousness or justice denoting, in their sense of it, actual conformity to what God requires, either in point of internal character (*justitia habitualis*) or of outward actions (*justitia actualis*).

It is admitted, further, that these changes upon men's state and character, necessary to their salvation and ultimate happiness, are to be traced, in general, to the grace or kindness of God, who confers or produces them, and to the work of Christ, who in some way has procured or purchased them for men. And the sum and substance of all that the Reformers demanded, as necessary to the pure preaching of the gospel,—the scriptural exposition of the leading principles of the method of salvation,—was, that the conceded ascription of these changes to the grace of God and the work of Christ, should be literally and honestly maintained, according to the proper import of the words, and should be fully carried out, in the more detailed exposition of the subject, without any other principles or elements being introduced into it which might virtually and practically, if not formally and theoretically, involve a denial or modification of them; while the great charge which they adduced against the Church of Rome was, that, in their fuller and more minute exposition of the way and manner in which these changes were effected upon men individually, they did introduce principles or elements which, more or less directly, deprived the grace of God and the work of Christ of the place and influence which the sacred Scriptures assigned to them.

As the change upon men's state and condition from guilt and condemnation to pardon and acceptance is, substantially, a change in the aspect in which God regards them, or rather in the way in which He resolves thenceforth to deal with them, and to treat them, it must, from the nature of the case, be an act of God, and it must be wholly God's act,—an act in producing or effecting which men themselves cannot be directly parties; and the only way in which they can in any measure contribute to bring it about, is by their meriting it, or doing something to deserve it, at God's hand, and thereby inducing Him to effect the change or to perform the act. It was as precluding the possibility of this, that the Reformers attached so much importance to the doctrine which we formerly had occasion to explain and illustrate,—viz., that all the actions of men previous to regeneration are only and wholly sinful; and it was, of course, in order to leave room for men in some sense meriting gifts from God, or deserving for themselves the blessings which Christ procured for mankind, that the Council of Trent anathematized it.

The other great change is an actual effect wrought upon men

themselves, of which they are directly the subjects, and in producing or effecting which there is nothing, in the nature of the case, though there may be in the actual character and capacities of men, to prevent them from taking a part. The Protestant doctrine of men's natural inability to will anything spiritually good, which has been illustrated in connection with the doctrine of original sin, of course precludes them from doing anything that can really improve their moral character in God's sight, until this inability be taken away by an external and superior power; while the doctrine of the Council of Trent about man's freedom or power to will and do good remaining to some extent notwithstanding the fall, which forms part of their decree on the subject of justification, paves the way, and was no doubt so intended, for ascribing to men themselves some real efficiency in the renovation of their moral natures.

From the view taken by the Church of Rome of the nature and import of justification, the whole subject of the way and manner in which both these changes are effected, in or upon men individually, was often discussed in the sixteenth century under this one head; though one of the first objects to which the Reformers usually addressed themselves in discussing it, was to ascertain and to bring out what, according to Scripture usage, justification really is, and what it comprehends. The decree of the fathers of Trent upon this important subject (session vi.), comprehended in sixteen chapters and thirty-three canons, is characterized by vagueness and verbiage, confusion, obscurity, and unfairness. It is not very easy on several points to make out clearly and distinctly what were the precise doctrines which they wished to maintain and condemn. Some months were spent by the Council in consultations and intrigues about the formation of their decree upon this subject. And yet, notwithstanding all their pains,—perhaps we should rather say, *because* of them,—they have not brought out a very distinct and intelligible view of what they meant to teach upon some of its departments.

The vagueness, obscurity, and confusion of the decree of the Council of Trent upon this subject, contrast strikingly with the clearness and simplicity that obtain in the writings of the Reformers and the confessions of the Reformed churches regarding it. There were not wanting two or three rash and incautious expressions of Luther's upon this as upon other subjects, of which, by a policy I formerly had occasion to expose, the

Council did not scruple to take an unfair advantage, by introducing some of them into their canons, in a way fitted to excite an unwarrantable prejudice against the doctrine of the Reformers. And it is true that Luther and Melancthon, in some of their earlier works, did seem to confine their statements, when treating of this subject, somewhat too exclusively to the act of faith by which men are justified, without giving sufficient prominence to the object of faith, or that which faith apprehends or lays hold of, and which is the ground or basis of God's act in justifying,—viz., the righteousness of Christ. But though their views upon this subject became more clear and enlarged, yet they held in substance from the beginning, and brought out at length, and long before the Council of Trent, most fully and clearly the great doctrine of the Reformation,—viz., that justification in Scripture is properly descriptive only of a change upon men's legal state and condition, and not on their moral character, though a radical change of character invariably accompanies it; that it is a change from a state of guilt and condemnation to a state of forgiveness and acceptance; and that sinners are justified, or become the objects of this change, solely by a gratuitous act of God, but founded only upon the righteousness of Christ (not on any righteousness of their own),—a righteousness imputed to them, and thus made theirs, not on account of anything they do or can do to merit or procure it, but through the instrumentality of faith alone, by which they apprehend or lay hold of what has been provided for them, and is freely offered to them.

Let us now attempt to bring out plainly and distinctly the doctrine which the Council of Trent laid down in opposition to these scriptural doctrines of the Reformers. The first important question is what justification is, or what the word justification means; and upon this point it must be admitted that the doctrine of the Council of Trent is sufficiently explicit. It defines* justification to be “*translatio ab eo statu, in quo homo nascitur filius primi Adæ, in statum gratiæ et adoptionis filiorum Dei per secundum Adam Jesum Christum, salvatorem nostrum,*”—words which, in their fair and natural import, may be held to include under justification the whole of the change that is needful to be effected in men in order to their salvation, as comprehending their

* Sess. vi., C. iv.

deliverance both from guilt and depravity. But that this is the meaning which they attached to the word justification,—that they regarded all this as comprehended under it,—is put beyond all doubt, by what they say in the seventh chapter, where they expressly define justification to be, “non sola peccatorum remissio, sed et sanctificatio et renovatio interioris hominis per voluntariam susceptionem gratiæ et donorum.” Justification, then, according to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, includes or comprehends not only the remission of sin, or deliverance from guilt, but also the sanctification or renovation of man’s moral nature, or deliverance from depravity. In short, they comprehend under the one name or head of justification, what Protestants—following, as they believe, the guidance of Scripture—have always divided into the two heads of justification and regeneration, or justification and sanctification, when the word sanctification is used in its widest sense, as descriptive of the whole process, originating in regeneration, by which depraved men are restored to a conformity to God’s moral image. Now, the discussion upon this point turns wholly upon this question, What is the sense in which the word justification and its cognates are used in Scripture? And this is manifestly a question of fundamental importance, in the investigation of this whole subject, inasmuch as, from the nature of the case, its decision must exert a most important influence upon the whole of men’s views regarding it. At present, however, I confine myself to a mere statement of opinions without entering into any examination of their truth, as I think it better, in the first instance, to bring out fully at once what the whole doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject, as contrasted with that of the Reformers, really is.

It may be proper, however, before leaving this topic, to advert to a misrepresentation that has been often given of the views of the Reformers, and especially of Calvin, upon this particular point. When Protestant divines began, in the seventeenth century, to corrupt the scriptural doctrine of justification, and to deviate from the doctrinal orthodoxy of the Reformation, they thought it of importance to show that justification meant merely the remission or forgiveness of sin, or guilt, to the exclusion of, or without comprehending, what is usually called the acceptance of men’s persons, or their positive admission into God’s favour,—or their receiving from God, not only the pardon of their sins, or im-

munity from punishment, but also a right or title to heaven and eternal life. And in support of this view, these men appealed to the authority of the Reformers, and especially of Calvin. Now it is quite true, that Calvin has asserted again and again that justification comprehends only, or consists in, the remission or forgiveness of sin or guilt. But I have no doubt that a careful and deliberate examination of all that Calvin has written upon this point,* will fully establish these two positions,—first, that when Calvin asserted that justification consisted only in the remission of sin, he meant this simply as a denial of the Popish doctrine, that it is not only the remission of sin, but also the sanctification or renovation of the inner man,—this being the main and, indeed, the only error upon the point which he was called upon formally to oppose; and, secondly, that Calvin has at least as frequently and as explicitly described justification as comprehending, not only remission of sin in the strict and literal sense, but also positive acceptance or admission into the enjoyment of God’s favour,—“*gratuita Dei acceptio*,” as he often calls it,—including the whole of the change effected upon men’s state or legal condition in God’s sight, as distinguished from the change effected upon their character. This is one of the numerous instances, constantly occurring, that illustrate how unfair it is to adduce the authority of eminent writers on disputed questions which had never really been presented to them,—which they had never entertained or decided; and how necessary it often is, in order to forming a correct estimate of some particular statements of an author, to examine with care and deliberation all that he has written upon the subject to which they refer, and also to be intelligently acquainted with the way and manner in which the whole subject was discussed at the time *on both sides*.

When the Council of Trent defined regeneration to be a component part or a constituent element of Justification, along with pardon or forgiveness, they were probably induced to do so partly because they could appeal to some of the fathers, and even to Augustine, in support of this use of the word, but also because their real object or intention was to make this sanctification, or

* Bishop O’Brien’s Attempt to Explain and Establish the Doctrine of Justification by Faith only, in Ten Sermons; London, 1833; Note 12, pp. 346–7; (Note M., 2d ed., 1862 (Eds.). Bellarmine, “De Justificatione,” Lib. ii., c. i., admits this in regard to Calvin.

infused or inherent righteousness, as Romanists commonly call it, the cause or ground of the forgiveness of sin. A change of legal state, and a change of moral character, are things so manifestly different in their own nature, that they could scarcely avoid attempting some separate explanation of them, and of the way in which they were conferred or effected, even though they might regard them as both comprehended under the name justification. The question, Upon what ground or consideration does God forgive men's sins? or, in other words, To what is it that He has regard, when, with respect to any individual, He passes an act of forgiveness?—this question, viewed by itself as a distinct independent topic, is obviously one which requires and demands an answer, whether the answer to it may exhaust the exposition of the subject of *justification* with reference to its cause or not. The Reformers, after proving from the word of God that justification, according to Scripture usage, described only a change of state, and not a change of character, strenuously demanded that this question, as to the cause or ground of forgiveness, or as to what it was to which God had respect, when, in the case of any individual, He cancelled his guilt, and admitted him into the enjoyment of His favour and friendship, should be distinctly and explicitly answered; and, accordingly, Protestant divines in general, when they are discussing the subject of justification, understood in the limited scriptural sense of the word, and explaining the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon the subject, make it their object to extract from the decree of the Council of Trent any materials that bear directly upon this point.

The Council, indeed, have not presented this subject nakedly and distinctly, as in fairness they ought to have done, but have made use of their general definition of justification, as comprehending also regeneration, for involving the whole subject in a considerable measure of obscurity. What may be fairly deduced from their statements as to the cause or ground of forgiveness or pardon, viewed as a distinct topic by itself, is this: After defining justification to be not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renovation of the inner man, they proceed to explain the causes of this justification; and in doing so, they make a very liberal use of scholastic phrases and distinctions. The final cause, they say, is the glory of God and Christ, and eternal life; the efficient cause is God (*Deus misericors*) exercis-

ing compassion; the meritorious cause is Jesus Christ, who by His sufferings and death merited justification for us, and satisfied the Father in our room; the instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism; and “the only formal cause is the righteousness (*justitia*) of God, not that by which He Himself is righteous, but that by which He makes us righteous, by which we, receiving it from Him, are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and are not only reckoned or reputed, but are called and are truly righteous.” In this last statement of the Council about the formal cause of justification being only an actual righteousness which God gives us or infuses into us, and which thereby comes to be inherent in us, it would seem as if they had tacitly intended to describe, as they ought to have done openly and plainly, rather the formal cause or ground of forgiveness, or of the change of state, than of justification in their own wide sense of it; for it is evident that the righteousness, or actual personal conformity of character to God's law, which He bestows upon men by His Spirit, cannot be, as they assert it is, the formal cause of that sanctification or renovation of the inner man which they make a part of justification, and to which, therefore, everything that is set forth as a cause of justification must be causally applicable. This inherent righteousness, which God bestows upon men or infuses into them, might be said to be identical with the sanctification of the inner man, or, with more strict exactness, might be said to be an effect, or result, or consequence of it, but it cannot in any proper sense be a cause of it.

This personal righteousness bestowed by God might, indeed, be said to be the formal cause of *forgiveness*, if it were intended to convey the idea that it is the ground or basis on which God's act in forgiving rests, or that to which He has a regard or respect when He cancels a man's guilt, and admits him to the enjoyment of His favour. And this is indeed the meaning which accords best with the general strain of the council's statements. It is not necessarily inconsistent, in every sense, with their making Christ and His work the meritorious cause of justification. In making Christ and His work the meritorious cause of justification, they, of course, in accordance with their definition of justification, make this the meritorious cause, equally and alike of forgiveness and of renovation, the two parts of which justification consists, or, as Bellarmine expresses it, “*mortem Christi, quæ pretium fuit redemptionis, non solum causam fuisse remissionis peccatorum, sed etiam*

internæ renovationis.” * And this Protestants regard as in itself a great general scriptural truth, though they believe that it errs both by excess and defect, *when it is put forth as a part of the teaching of Scripture on the subject of justification.* It errs by excess, in comprehending renovation as well as forgiveness under the head of justification; and it errs by defect, in representing the work or righteousness of Christ as standing in no other or closer relation to forgiveness or acceptance than as being merely its meritorious cause. It is only with this second error that we have at present to do. The council not only makes the work or righteousness of Christ equally and alike the *meritorious* cause of forgiveness and renovation, but it expressly denies (can. x.) that men are *formally* justified by Christ’s righteousness, or, in other words, that Christ’s righteousness is the formal cause of our justification; and it expressly asserts, as we have seen, that the only formal cause of our justification is the personal righteousness which God bestows or infuses into men. Bellarmine carefully guards against the inference that, because the eleventh canon condemns the doctrine that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ alone, it admitted by implication that we are justified formally by it at all.†

Now, it is plainly impossible to make one consistent and harmonious doctrine out of these various positions, affirmative and negative, which the council has laid down, *except upon the assumption* that the council really meant to teach that there is no direct and immediate connection between the work or righteousness of Christ and the forgiveness of the sins of men individually; and to represent Christ as merely *meriting* the communication to men of personal righteousness, and thereby, or through the medium of this personal righteousness which He merited for them, indirectly or remotely meriting the forgiveness of sin, of which this personal righteousness, infused and inherent, as they describe it, is the direct and immediate cause. That the Council of Trent really intended to teach *this* doctrine, though it is brought out somewhat obscurely, and though we are obliged to infer it from a careful comparison of its different statements upon the subject, is clearly shown by Chemnitius in his valuable work, “*Examen Concilii Tridentini*,” not only from an examination of the decrees themselves, but from

* De Justificatione, Lib. ii., cap. vi.

† Ibid., Lib. ii., cap. ii.

the statements of Andradius, an eminent Popish divine, who was present at the council, and afterwards published a work in defence of its decisions.* That this is the doctrine which the council intended to teach, and that it is in consequence the ordinary recognised doctrine of the Church of Rome upon the subject, is confirmed, or rather established, by the consideration that the generality of Romish writers are accustomed, without any doubt or hesitation, to give *this* as *the state of the question* between them and Protestants upon this topic,—viz., Whether the cause of our justification be a righteousness inherent in us or not? or this, Whether the cause of our justification be a righteousness infused into and inherent in us; or an external righteousness,—that is, the righteousness of Christ,—imputed to us? And that in discussing this question, *so stated*, they just labour to produce evidence from Scripture that *that* to which God has an immediate respect or regard in forgiving any man’s sins, and admitting him to the enjoyment of His favour, is, not the righteousness of Christ, but an infused and inherent personal righteousness. As this is a point of some importance in order to a right apprehension of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon the subject, it may be proper to produce some evidence of this position.

Bellarmino says,† “*Status totius controversiæ revocari potest ad hanc simplicem quæstionem, sitne formalis causa absolutæ justificationis, justitia in nobis inhærens, an non?*” and then he proceeds to show that the determination of *this* question in the affirmative at once overturns all the leading errors of the Reformers upon the whole subject of the causes and grounds of justification: “*Omnes refutantur, si probetur justitia inhærens, quæ absolutè et simpliciter justificet;*” and more particularly, “*Si justitia inhærens est formalis causa absolutæ justificationis, non igitur requiritur imputatio justitiæ Christi.*”

In like manner, Dens, in his “*Theologia Moralis*,” says,‡ “*Probo contra hæreticos: quod justificatio formaliter fiat per infusionem gratiæ habitualis inhærentis animæ, non vero per justitiam Christi nobis extrinsecè imputatam.*” Perrone also, in his “*Prælectiones Theologicæ*,” § lays down this proposition, as taught

* Chemnitii Exam. Con. Trid., p. 144, Ed. 1609; see also Bp. Davenant, Prælectiones de Justitia Habituali et Actuali, c. xxvii.

† De Justificatione, Lib. ii., cap. ii.
‡ Dens’ Theol. Mor., tom. ii., p. 448.
§ Perrone, Prælec. Theol., tom. i., col. 1398.

by the Council of Trent, and as being, therefore, *de fide*, or an essential binding article of faith: "Impii formaliter non justificantur vel sola imputatione justitiæ Christi vel sola peccatorum remissione; sed justificantur per gratiam et caritatem, quæ in cordibus eorum per Spiritum Sanctum diffunditur, atque illis inhæret." And, in answer to the Scripture statements adduced to prove that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ, he admits that we are justified by it as the *meritorious* cause; but denies that we are justified by it as the *formal* cause.

The most eminent Protestant divines have been quite willing to admit that these statements of Popish writers give a fair account of the state of the question, and have had no hesitation in undertaking the defence of the positions which this view of the state of the question assigned to them. They have not, indeed, usually attached much weight in this matter to the scholastic distinctions about the different kinds of causes; because, as Turretine says,* "in the matter of justification before God, the formal cause cannot be distinguished from the meritorious cause, since the formal cause, in this respect, is nothing else than that, at the sight of which, or from a regard to which, God frees us from condemnation, and accepts us to eternal life." On these grounds Protestant writers have held themselves fully warranted in imputing to the Church of Rome the maintenance of *this* position,—viz., that *that* to which God has directly and immediately a respect or regard, in pardoning a man's sins, and admitting him into the enjoyment of His favour, is a personal righteousness infused into that man, and inherent in him; while they have undertaken for themselves to establish from Scripture the negative of this position, and to show that *that* which is the proper ground or basis of God's act in forgiving or accepting any man,—that to which alone He has a respect or regard when He justifies him,—is the righteousness of Christ imputed to him.

It may be proper to mention, that among orthodox Protestant divines who have agreed harmoniously in the whole substance of the doctrine of justification, there may be noticed some differences in point of phraseology on some of the topics to which we have referred, and especially with respect to the causes of justification. These differences of phraseology are not of much im-

* Loc. xvi., Quaest. ii., sec. v.

portance, and do not give much trouble in an investigation of this subject. Calvin sometimes spoke of justification as consisting in the remission of sins *and* the imputation of Christ's righteousness.* But, by the imputation of Christ's righteousness in this connection, he seems to have meant nothing more than acceptance or positive admission into the enjoyment of God's favour,—the bestowal of a right or title to eternal life, as distinguished from, and going beyond, mere pardon. In any other sense,—and, indeed, in the strict and proper sense of the expression,—the statement is inaccurate; for the imputation of Christ's righteousness does not stand on the same level or platform as the remission of sins, and of course cannot go to constitute, along with it, one thing designated by the one term,—justification,—as is the case with acceptance or admission into God's favour. The imputation of Christ's righteousness, correctly understood, is to be regarded as in the order of nature preceding *both* remission and acceptance, and as being the ground or basis, or the meritorious impulsive or formal cause, of them; or that to which God has respect when in any instance He pardons and accepts.†

Again, some orthodox divines have thought that the most accurate mode of speaking upon the subject, is to say that the formal cause of our justification is Christ's righteousness imputed; others, that it is the imputation of Christ's righteousness; and a third party, among whom is Dr Owen, in his great work on justification,‡ think that there is no formal cause of justification, according to the strict scholastic meaning of the expression; while all orthodox divines concur in maintaining against the Church of Rome, that, to adopt Dr Owen's words, the righteousness of Christ "is that whereby, and wherewith, a believing sinner is justified before God; or whereon he is accepted with God, hath his sins pardoned, is received into grace and favour, and hath a title given him unto the heavenly inheritance." §

Having thus brought out the doctrine of the Church of Rome on the subject of the meaning, nature, and ground of justification,

* A similar mode of speaking was adopted by some Lutheran divines. *Vide* Buddæus, *Instit. Theol. Dogm.*, Lib. iv., c. iv., sec. vi.

† Turret., *Loc. xvi.*, *Quaest. iv.*

‡ Orme's edition of Owen, vol xi., pp. 257-292.

§ For a full exposition of the differences of opinion and statement on the causes of justification, *vide* de Moor, tom. iv., pp. 682-90, and John Goodwin's *Imputatio Fidei*, P. ii., c. iv.; Davenant, *De Just.*; Appendix to Newman on Justification.

we proceed now to explain her doctrine as to its means and results. And first with respect to the *means* of justification. The Reformers were unanimous and decided in maintaining the doctrine that faith alone justified; that men were justified by faith only; and this gave rise to a great deal of discussion between them and the Romanists,—discussions bearing not only upon the import and evidence of this general position, but likewise upon the meaning and nature of justifying faith, and upon the way and manner in which faith justifies, or in which it acts or operates in the matter of justification. By the position that faith alone justifies, the Reformers meant in general that faith was the only thing in a man himself, to the exclusion of all personal righteousness, habitual or actual, of all other Christian graces, and of all good works, to which his forgiveness and acceptance with God are attributed or ascribed in Scripture,—the only thing in himself which is represented in God's word as exerting anything like causality or efficiency in his obtaining justification. They did not hold that faith was the only thing which invariably accompanies justification, or even that it was the only thing required of men in order to their being justified; for they admitted that repentance was necessary to forgiveness, in accordance with the doctrine of our standards, that, “to escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requireth of us repentance unto life,” as well as “faith in Jesus Christ.”* But as repentance is never said in Scripture to justify, as men are never said to be justified by or through repentance, or by or through anything existing in themselves, except faith, the Reformers maintained that faith stood in a certain relation to justification, such as was held by no other quality or feature in men's character or conduct,—that it justified them,—nothing else about them did; that men were justified by faith, and could not be said to be justified by anything else existing in themselves, whatever might be its nature or its source.

They did not teach that this faith which alone justified was ever alone, or unaccompanied with other graces; but, on the contrary, they maintain that, to adopt the words of our Confession,† “it is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.” Calvin, in explaining this

* In the Larger Catechism, Ques. 153, repentance is placed before faith.

† C. xi., sec. ii.

matter, says,* “Hoc semper lectoribus testatum esse volo, quoties in hac quæstione nominamus solam fidem, non mortuam a nobis fingi, et quæ per caritatem non operatur: sed ipsam statui unicum justificationis causam. Fides ergo sola est quæ justificet: fides tamen quæ justificat, non est sola.” It is a curious fact, that while many Romish writers, and others who have corrupted the doctrine of Scripture upon this subject, have misrepresented the great doctrine of the Reformation, that faith alone justifies, as meaning or implying that nothing but faith is in any sense required of men in order to their being forgiven, or does in fact invariably exist in justified men, Bellarmine accurately and fairly lays it down as one of the leading differences between the Reformers and the Church of Rome on the subject of justifying faith, that the Reformers held, “fidem solam justificare, nunquam tamen posse esse solam,” whereas the Romanists taught, in full and exact contrast with this, “fidem non justificare solam, sed tamen posse esse solam.”†

Again, the Reformers did not ascribe to faith, in the matter of justification, any meritorious or inherent efficacy in producing the result, but regarded it simply as the instrument or hand by which a man apprehended or laid hold of, and appropriated to himself, the righteousness of Christ; and it was only in that very general and, strictly speaking, loose and improper sense, which was consistent with this view of its function and operation in the matter, that they called it, as Calvin does in the extract above quoted from him, the cause of justification. Such were the clear and explicit doctrines of the Reformers on the subject of the means of justification, its relation to faith, and the place and function of faith in the matter.

On all these topics the Council of Trent has spoken with some degree of obscurity and unfairness, insinuating misrepresentations of the real doctrines of the Reformers, and bringing out somewhat vaguely and imperfectly what they meant to teach in opposition to them. In accordance with their principles, they could not admit that there was any sense in which faith alone justified, or in which men were justified by faith only; for, as we have seen, they held that inherent personal righteousness was the only formal cause, and that baptism was

* Calvini Antid. in Sextam Ses- sionem; in Canon. xi.

† Bellarm., De Justificat., Lib. i., c. iii.

the instrumental cause of justification. Accordingly, they denied* that a sinner is justified by faith alone, in such wise as to mean that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of justification. Now, this is quite equivalent to denying that *in any sense* faith alone justifies: for anything which acts or operates in order to obtaining justification, may be said to justify; and as the canon clearly implies that there is always something else conjoined with faith in the matter of justification, different from faith itself, and equally with it operating in order to obtain justification, it follows that *in no sense* does faith alone justify. And, in accordance with this view, they explain the sense in which they understand the apostle's ascription of justification to faith,†—in which alone they admit that faith justifies at all,—in this way, “We are therefore, or for this reason, said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and the root of all justification.” By this they mean that faith justifies, or is said to justify, because, or inasmuch as, it is the chief means of producing that personal righteousness which is the true cause or ground of justification; or, as it is thus rather oddly and awkwardly explained by Bellarmine: “Fidem non tam justificare, quam justificare, ut initium, et radicem primam justificationis; hinc enim sequetur non ipsam solam justificare, sed sic eam agere in hoc negotio, quod suum est, ut etiam ceteris virtutibus locum relinquat.” The title of the chapter from which this curious extract is taken‡ is, “Fidem justificare, sed non solam, idem enim facere timorem, spem, et dilectionem,” etc. And he had previously laid down this as one of the leading differences between Protestants and Romanists on the subject of justifying faith: “Quod ipsi (the Protestants) solam fidem justificare contendunt, nos ei comites adjungimus in hoc ipso officio justificandi, sive ad justitiam disponendi.”§

Indeed, the function or place which the Council of Trent assigns to faith in this matter, is rather that of preparing or disposing men to receive justification, than of justifying; and even in this subordinate work of preparing or disposing men to receive justification, they give to faith only a co-ordinate place along with half a dozen of other virtues. For the sake of clearness, I

* De Justificat., can. ix.
† Scss. vi., C. viii.

‡ Bellarm., De Justificat., Lib. i.,
cap. xiii.
§ Ibid., cap. iii.

shall explain this important point in the words of Bellarmine, rather than in the vague and obscure verbiage which the Council of Trent has thought proper to employ upon this subject. He says, “Adversarii . . . sola fide justificationem acquiri, sive apprehendi docent: Catholici contra, ac præsertim Synodus ipsa Tridentina (quam omnes Catholici, ut magistram sequuntur) sess. vi., cap. vi. Septem actus enumerat, quibus inipii ad justitiam disponuntur, videlicet fidei, timoris, spei, dilectionis, pœnitentiæ, propositi suscipiendi sacramenti, et propositi novæ vitæ, atque observationis mandatorum Dei.”* So that men, before they can obtain the forgiveness of their sins and the renovation of their natures—the two things in which, according to the Church of Rome, justification consists,—must exercise faith, fear, hope, love, penitence, and have a purpose of receiving the sacrament, and of leading a new and obedient life; and, even after they have done all this, they are not justified, for none of these things justifies, but only prepares or disposes to justification.

This subject, of men disposing or preparing themselves to receive justification, is an important feature in the theology of the Church of Rome, and may require a few words of explanation. First of all, it is needed only in adults: all baptized infants receive in baptism, according to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, forgiveness and regeneration, without any previous disposition or preparation,—God in baptism first renewing, and then forgiving them, and thus completely removing from them all the effects of original sin,—a doctrine, the falsehood and injurious influence of which has been already exposed; but all adults must be disposed or prepared, by exercising the seven virtues, as Romanists commonly call them, above enumerated, before they receive either forgiveness or renovation. We are not called upon at present to advert to the absurdity of the alleged antecedency of all these virtues or graces to the sanctification of the inner man, in which partly justification consists; but when we find faith placed in the very same relation to justification, as the other virtues with which it is here classed, and *even then* not allowed to justify, or to be that by which men are justified, but merely to prepare or dispose men for receiving justification, we are irresistibly constrained to ask, if this is anything like the place assigned to it, in the matter of

* Bellarm., De Justificat., Lib. i., cap. xii.

justification, by the Apostle Paul when *he* was expounding the way of a sinner's salvation to the Christians at Rome?

But we must at present consider what the modern Church of Rome teaches about this matter of disposing or preparing men for justification,—a subject on which the apostle certainly left the Roman Christians of his day in profound ignorance, though he seems to have intended to open up to them the whole doctrine of justification, so far as he knew it. The Council of Trent gives us scarcely any direct or explicit information as to what they mean by these seven virtues disposing or preparing men for justification, except that it is necessary that they should all exist, and be exercised, before men are forgiven and renewed, and that they exert some influence in bringing about the result. It tells us, however, that none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit or deserve the grace of justification itself; and this had so far an appearance of deference to plain scriptural principles. It is not, however, by any means certain,—nay, it is very improbable,—that the council, by this declaration, meant to take away from these preliminary and preparatory virtues anything but the strict and proper merit of condignity, which they reserved for the good works of justified men. The council does not, indeed, formally sanction, as I have already mentioned, the distinction which prevailed universally in the Church of Rome at the time when the Reformation commenced, between merit of congruity and merit of condignity. But neither has it formally nor by implication condemned it; and it is certain that most Romish writers *since* the council have continued to retain and to apply this distinction,—have regarded the decision which we are considering, merely as denying to these dispositive or preparatory works merit of condignity, and have not scrupled, notwithstanding this decision, to ascribe to them merit of congruity; or, in other words, to represent them as exerting some meritorious efficacy, though in a subordinate sense, and of an imperfect kind, in procuring for men justification. Bellarmine fully and explicitly asserts all this. He maintains that the decision of the council, that these dispositive and preparatory works do not merit justification, means merely that they do not merit it *ex condigno*,—contends that they *do* merit it *ex congruo*,—and asserts that this is the view taken by most, though not by all, Romish writers, both as to the truth of the case and the real import of the decision of

the council; from all which we are warranted in concluding, that the decision of the council, denying merit to those things which precede justification, *is* equivocal, and *was* intended to be equivocal and deceptive. Bellarmine for one,—and this is true also of the generality of Romish writers,—goes so far as to assert explicitly that these virtues are meritorious causes of justification; and he was fully warranted in doing so, if it be true that the Council of Trent did not deny, or intend to deny, to them merit of congruity; and if it be also the general doctrine of the Church of Rome, as he asserts it is, “*Potius fundari meritum de congruo in aliqua dignitate operis, quam in promissione.*”*

There was also a great deal of controversy between the Reformers and the Romanists on the definition and nature of justifying faith, and the way and manner in which it acted or operated in the matter of justification. The Reformers generally contended that justifying faith was *fiducia*, and had its seat in the will; and the Romanists that it was merely *assensus*, and had its seat in the understanding. This is a subject, however, on which it must be admitted that there has been a considerable difference of opinion, or, at least, of statement, among orthodox Protestant divines in more modern times; and which, at least in the only sense in which it has been controverted among Protestants who were in the main orthodox, does not seem to me to be determined in the standards of our church. While the Reformers unanimously and explicitly taught that faith which alone justified did not justify by any meritorious or inherent efficacy of its own, but only as the instrument of receiving or laying hold of what God had provided,—had freely offered and regarded as the alone ground or basis on which He passed an act of forgiveness with respect to any individual, viz., the righteousness of Christ,—the Council of Trent can scarcely be said to have determined anything positive or explicit as to the office or function of faith in justification, or as to the way and manner in which it can be said to justify, beyond what is contained in the statement formerly quoted, viz., that we are said to be justified by faith for this reason, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and the root of all justification. There is little information given us here except this,

* Bellarm., *De Justificat.*, Lib. i., c. xxi. See also Lib. i., c. xvii.; Lib. v., c. xxi.