As Mark 13:24-27 as referring not to the Second Coming but to the destruction of Jerusalem, an event of truly cosmic importance described by Jesus in pictorial OT language. He doubts if Jesus spoke of himself as the future coming Son of man.

In his conclusion Borg tries to relate his understanding of Jesus' mission to Jesus' own understanding of himself and his work. He sees Jesus as a Jewish 'holy man' with a deep knowledge of God whom he experienced as merciful, and as a 'sage' who learned in his own experience (e.g. at his baptism) that what is needed is to die to oneself and to receive a new heart from God. In speaking of the 'kingdom' Jesus was referring to the reality of God that he had experienced and to which he called others to experience.

The interest of Borg's book will, I hope, be evident from my description of it, though I have not, of course, been able to do more than describe his position in general; there is also a great deal of fresh and valuable detailed exegesis. Some parts of the book and some details are less satisfactory than others. In particular, his last two chapters and his treatment of eschatology and Christology - significant issues to say the least - may be seriously questioned. Borg over-reacts to the views of those who have seen Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet who expected an imminent end to all things by denying that Jesus had any vision of the end of the age and the ushering in of the perfect kingdom of God; but this is to ignore the tremendous note of excitement about the breaking-in of God's new age which is present both in the gospels and in the epistles (e.g. Mt. 11:2-15, important verses not commented on by Borg). His understanding of Jesus' person is also deficient in a similar way: the Jesus of the NT is not just a holy sage offering an alternative programme to the Pharisees, but is someone far more significant: he is the Son of man bringing salvation to God's people (cf. Dn. 7); he is the Son of the divine owner of the vineyard (cf. Mk. 12:1-12); he is the powerful presence of God on earth (cf. Mk. 2:1-11).

But despite these significant weaknesses and other less serious details which may be questioned, Borg has undoubtedly offered us an illuminating perspective on Jesus in the social context of his day. His main argument is not, I think, seriously weakened by the deficiencies of his eschatology and Christology, but could just as well be married with more traditional views of those matters: Jesus is the divine Son who brings in the new age of God's forgiving love and who calls his people to the path not of separation and self-preservation, but to the way of self-denial and to a mission of mercy for the world.

Borg does not react with some of the other recent and significant works on the historical Jesus, such as A. Harvey's Jesus and the Constraints of History and B. Meyer's The Aims of Jesus: perhaps this is to be explained by delays in bringing out a book that was originally an Oxford doctoral thesis completed in 1972. But this does not prevent his book being an important contribution to an important ongoing debate. The original hardback edition was prohibitively expensive (especially for a book printed from typescript), but the appearance of the paperback edition should make the work much more accessible. Students and scholars alike need to take the book seriously, building on those insights that are sound and seeking to improve on Borg's treatment where it is weak.

1 New York & Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984, 497 pp., $95.95 hardback. Textbook edition $45.95 direct from the publisher at PO Box 450, Lewiston, New York 14092, USA.

Justification: the new ecumenical debate*

Alister McGrath

We are grateful for this article to Dr McGrath, who is a particular expert on the subject of justification, having written a major two-volume work Justitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification (CUP, 1986). He is also author of ARCIC II and Justification: an Evangelical Anglican Assessment (Lutmer House, Oxford, 1985) and of the new Justification by Faith: An Introduction (Zondervan/Marshall, 1988). Dr McGrath, who teaches at Wycliffe Hall in Oxford, has written several other significant works in recent years which Themelios readers should be aware of, including Luther's Theology of the Cross (Blackwells, 1985), The Making of Modern German Christology (Blackwells, 1980) and The Enigma of the Cross (Hodder, 1987).

In recent years a number of ecumenical discussions have focused on the doctrine of justification by faith. On 30 September 1983 the US Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue group released a 24,000-word document which represented the fruit of six years of discussions on the doctrine of justification. This document, entitled Justification by Faith, is by far the most important ecumenical document to deal with the theme of justification to date, and represents a landmark in ecumenical discussions. Anyone who wishes to deal with the dialogue between Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians on justification will have to make this document his point of departure. This has been followed by the report of the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II), entitled Salvation and the Church, published on 22 January 1987. In this article we propose to examine some difficulties in the modern discussion of justification, with particular reference to these documents.

The European Reformation of the sixteenth century saw the battle-lines drawn between Roman Catholics and Protestants over the doctrine of justification by faith alone. For the Protestant Reformers, the doctrine of justification was the 'article by which the church stands or falls'. The Roman Catholic church, in their view, had fallen over this doctrine and had lost its credibility as a genuinely Christian church. For the Reformers, this was more than adequately justified breaking away from the medieval church, in order to return to the authentic teaching of Scripture. The Reformers, by reclaiming the insights of the NT and Augustine of Hippo, were able to claim that they had recovered the biblical doctrine of justification by faith.

But what were the differences between Roman Catholic and Protestant teachings on justification in the sixteenth century? We may make an immediate distinction between two types of differences: differences which were actually nothing more than misunderstandings (where both sides were saying more or less the same thing, but misunderstanding each other); and differences which were disagreements (where both sides were actually precisely what the other was saying, and regarded it as unacceptable). We shall consider both these types of differences.

Sixteenth-century misunderstandings

It is obvious that both Protestants and Roman Catholics agreed on the following, although their discussion of them was confused by some difficulties which we shall note below.

1. We cannot take the initiative in beginning the Christian life - it is God who moves first. Original sin prevents our finding our way back to God unaided by grace. Popular Catholic religion in the later Middle Ages was obsessed with the doctrine of justification by works, however, pointing to a radical divergence between what theologians taught and what the common people believed!

2. The foundation of the Christian life is the work of Christ, and not anything which we ourselves can do. Once more, popular Catholic piety tended to lay considerable emphasis upon merit, and showed an obsessionist interest in the various ways in which this merit could be gained and stored, rather like funds in a bank account.

3. Although the Christian life is not begun on the basis of good works, good works are the natural result and expression of genuine Christian faith.

4. The Christian life takes place at the communal, and not just the individual, level. By beginning the Christian life, the believer finds himself within a community of faith.

None of these points was the subject of dispute between theologians in the sixteenth century - the difficulties arose primarily in relation to how these points were expressed.

An excellent example of these difficulties is provided by the term 'justification' itself. Following St Augustine of Hippo, the Council of Trent defined justification in terms of 'making righteous'. Trent's comprehensive definition of justification makes it clear that 'justification' included both the initiation and the subsequent development of the Christian life, as the believer grows in holiness and righteousness. Augustine's interpretation of the post-classical Latin term justificare as justus facere reveals his celebrated etymological shortcomings, although the importance of this point would not be appreciated until the sixteenth century.

On the basis of the new advances in philology associated with the Renaissance, and especially the new interest in the Hebrew text of the OT, both Lutheran and Reformed theologians recognized that the verb 'to justify' was forensic, meaning 'to declare or pronounce to be righteous', and not 'to make righteous'. Although the Reformers had a great respect for Augustine, they had no hesitation in criticizing him when the direct study of the Hebrew and Greek texts of Scripture
showed him to be wrong — and Augustine’s definition of what justification actually was came to be recognized as a classical case of an error arising from the use of the Latin version of Scripture, rather than Scripture in its original language.

The Reformers therefore rejected the predominant tradition of the Latin West, in favor of understanding the term ‘justification’ — and by doing so, added considerably to the difficulties of the sixteenth-century debates on justification. For one thing, the fact that both Protestants and Roman Catholics used the term ‘justification’ to mean rather different things. For the Protestant, ‘justification’ refers to the act of being declared ‘right’ or ‘just’ in the sight of God. For the Roman Catholic, ‘justification’ refers to the act of being declared ‘right’ in the sight of God, beginning with the beginning of the Christian life. For the Roman Catholic — who, in this matter, continues the common teaching of the West — Augustine’s definition of ‘justification’ means both the event by which the Christian life is initiated and the process by which the believer is regenerated. In other words, the Latin word ‘justificatio’ in Protes-
tant understands by ‘justification’ and ‘sanctification’ or ‘regeneration’ taken together. This semantic difference led to enormous confusion at the time, as it still does to this day.

To illustrate this point, consider the following two statements: 1. We are justified by faith alone. 2. We are justified by faith and by holiness of life.

In terms of popular polemics, the former is generally identified as the Protestant, and the latter as the Roman Catholic, position. To the Protestant, the first statement stipulates that the Christian life is begun through faith alone — which means that faith is the only NT teaching on the matter. To the Roman Catholic, however, the same statement implies that the Christian life is begun through faith alone and continues in life alone — which means that faith is the only NT teaching on the matter, which makes explicit reference to the Christian life being continued in holiness, obedience and good works.

Now consider the second statement. To the Roman Catholic, this would mean that the Christian life is begun through faith alone and continues in holiness of life — which is obviously an excellent summary of the NT teaching on the matter. To the Protestants, however, the same statement stipulates that the Christian life is begun through faith alone and continued in life alone — which is obviously Pelegian, and a gross distortion of the NT teaching on the matter. Thus, one might say that the first statement (understood in the Protestant sense) and the second (understood in the Roman Catholic sense) are actually saying more or less the same thing — but the convergence is obscured by their different usage of the term ‘justification’. This point has been made frequently in most ecumenical discussions of justification, ARCIC II included.

It will, of course, be obvious that Protestant theologians were not for one moment suggesting that it was possible to be justified without being sanctified: they were simply insisting upon a notional distinction between the two concepts, distinguishing at the conceptual level two ideas which had hitherto been regarded as essentially the same thing. On the basis of their new and more reliable knowledge of Hebrew philology, the new understanding of justification was totally justified, making correction of Augustine on this point acceptable. Although the Reformers vigorously upheld Augustine’s idea on grace, they felt perfectly free to correct his interpretation of Scripture where it was based upon bad Hebrew!

Sixteenth-century disagreements

As we noted in the previous section of the article, there was an important degree of agreement between Protestants and Roman Catholics on the doctrine of justification in the sixteenth century. Perhaps we could summarize the situation by suggesting that both were committed to anti-Pelagian Christocentric theologies of justification. Nevertheless, whereas the Lutherans, for instance, saw the matter of justification in terms of the ‘double process’ of justification, where each side understood perfectly well what the other was saying, and took exception to it. It is here that the real focus of the Reformation controversies is to be found. Two matters were regarded as being of central importance at the time:

1. The nature of justifying righteousness (sometimes also referred to in the period 1575-1700 as the ‘formal cause of justification’).
2. The question of assurance (which is closely linked with the notion of justifying righteousness).

We have space only to consider the first of these two points.

The nature of justifying righteousness

Luther insisted that justifying righteousness was iustitia instaurativa (‘restorative righteousness’) — a righteousness which was extrinsic to the believer, covering him protectively in much the same way as a mother hen might cover her chick. This protective stance was taken up by both Luther and Reformed theologians, who held that justifying righteousness is not a righteousness inherent to the individual, but one outside him. God effects our justification from outside us, prior to effecting our renewal within us. The righteousness of justification was perfect and imputed, whereas that of sanctification was imperfect and progressive. This was the point on which the Reformers wished to emphasize was that the righteousness of the saints was permanently imperfect, and therefore could not be the source of assurance as a basis for eternal justification. We are accepted on the basis of a perfect righteousness — the righteousness of grace.

The Council of Trent, however, meeting in 1546-7 to formulate the Roman Catholic response to the Reformation controversies of justification, insisted that the single formal cause of justification was an inherent righteousness, a righteousness within the believer. Although stressing that this righteousness was not perfect in itself, it would have to be based upon a perfect righteousness — and if this righteousness was inherent to the believer, how could Trent speak of a believer growing in righteousness when he already possessed a perfect righteousness? It seemed to the Reformers that any inherent righteousness was, by its very nature, imperfect and in need of supplementation — and the imputation of the alien righteousness of Christ dealt with this difficulty.

For the Reformers, it was necessary to know that one was a Christian. For the Reformers, this had indeed begun, that one had been forgiven and accepted by God — and on the basis of this conviction, the living of the Christian life, with all its opportunities for growth and change, could begin. Being justified on the basis of the external righteousness of Christ meant that all that needed to be done for an individual’s justification had been done by God — and so the believer could rest assured that he had been accepted and forgiven. The Reformers could not see how Trent ensured that the individual was accepted, despite being a sinner. For if the believer could rest assured that his external righteousness had ensured his justification, he could no longer be a sinner — and yet experience (as well as the penitential system of the Catholic church!) suggested that believers continually sinned. For the Reformers, the Tridentine doctrine of justification was profoundly inadequate, in that it could not account for the fact God accepts us, even after we have sinned before God while still remaining a sinner. The Reformers were convinced that Trent taught a profoundly inadequate doctrine of justification as a result. The famous phrase, ‘Lutherus sumus tibi praecipue intuitus cum beatitudine et verba salutis: simul iustus et peccator, righteous and a sinner at one and the same time’, Luther is one of the few theologians who were present by God, Trent articulated the simple fact that God loves and accepts us just as we are — not as might be, or will be, but as he finds us.

As the Tridentine debates on justification make clear, Trent recognized exactly what Protestant theologians were saying and rejected it. The problem was, that a number of theologians present at Trent clearly sympathized with the Protestant position, they were outnumbered and outvoted. This in itself was not surprising, but what was surprising was the deliberate, weighted and explicit rejection of the Protestant position.

Here, then, is an area where there was genuine and apparent agreement between Trent and the Reformers in the sixteenth century. As even the most super-

ficial survey of Protestant and Roman Catholic polemical writings from 1530 onwards makes clear, it is in relation to the question of assurance as a basis for eternal justification and the question of assurance — that the real divisions were perceived to lie. It is thus of some considerable interest to note that it was precisely these two questions (originally not on Trent’s agenda, incidentally — they had to be added later, when it was obvious that they could not be avoided) which caused the most division in the discussions of justification. (Indeed, at one point it seemed that Trent would not be able to say anything about the question of assurance, so difficult was it proving to reach agreement.)

It will therefore be clear that any attempts to engage with the question of assurance in the sixteenth century are bound to be bound up with the question of justification. Both the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics over the doctrine of justification must be addressed to these two questions, which historically were regarded as central. There is little to be gained from recapitulating what was agreed in the sixteenth century (although that agreement was, of course, obscured by polemics and terminological differences), unless it can be shown that these two issues are no longer of any importance.

But what did the Anglican theologians of the Elizabethan Settlement do regarding assurance? The first chapter of this book has already referred to the need for us to have at our disposal an excellent study of this question from the pen of the Anglican Bishop of South Carolina, Fritz Allison. In his book, The Rise of Morality, Allison shows how the English church in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries declares that the doctrine of justification (and, more specifically, the question of the nature of assurance as the very first aspect of the matter of justification). Similarly, John Davenant’s Disputation of Jusiticia habitudini et actuall (1631) — noted, incidentally, by the writers of Salvation and the Church — represents a sustained attack upon the Roman Catholic polemicist Robert Bellarmine’s views on the nature of justification. Both Bellarmine and Davenant agreed that the crucial question dividing Catholics and Anglicans was that of the nature of justification.

A central disagreement which must therefore be dealt with thoroughly in any ecumenical discussion of justification is this: is justification righteousness external (the Protestant position), or is it a spiritual experience (the Roman Catholic position)?

So what has the recent ecumenical debate on justification actually shown? First, that the most recent contribution to this debate is the ARCIC II document Salvation and the Church, we shall attempt to answer this question with some insight into how this document was written. This document illustrates recent trends in this discussion, and the comments which follow will be of relevance beyond the limits of the Anglican-Roman Catholic discussion of justification.

Earlier, we noted two main types of controversy concerning justification in the sixteenth century: those which reflected simple misunderstandings (in which both sides were simply ignorant of the other’s position), and those which represented genuine disagreement (where each side knew what the other was saying, and didn’t agree with it). The document Justification and Reconciliation (2003) of the World Council of Churches attempted to deal with — not necessarily leading to their resolution, but at least setting them in perspective in order that real points of convergence may be identified.

Salvation and the Church greatly assists contemporary dialogue between Anglicans and Roman Catholics by summarizing the main points of agreement between the churches, which were often obscured by controversy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is very helpful to have these misunderstandings clarified. It is shown that both churches are agreed that ‘even the very first movements which lead to justification, such as repentance,
showed him to be wrong — and Augustine's definition of what justification actually was came to be recognized as a classical case of an error arising from the use of the Latin version of Scripture, rather than Scripture in its original language.

The Reformers therefore rejected the predetermined view of justification, which encompasses the meaning of the term 'justification' — and by doing so, added considerably to the difficulties of the sixteenth-century debates on justification. For the Reformers, the fact that was that Protestants and Roman Catholics used the term 'justification' to mean rather different things. For the Protestant, justification 'refers to the saving grace or the forgiveness or remission of sins, starting with the beginning of the Christian life. For the Roman Catholic — who, in this matter, continues the common teaching of the western church' — it means the same thing but it means both the effect by which the Christian life is initiated and the process by which the believer is regenerated. In other words, the fundamental issue during the sixteenth century is that the Protestant understands by 'justification' and 'sanctification' or 'regeneration' taken together. This semantic difference led to enormous confusion at the time, as it does still to this day.

To illustrate this point, consider the following two statements:

1. We are justified by faith alone. 2. We are justified by faith and by holiness of life.

In terms of popular polemics, the former is generally identified as the Protestant, and the latter as the Roman Catholic, position. To the Protestant, the first statement stipulates that the Christian life is begun through faith alone — which is essentially the same as it does not affect the NT teaching on the matter. To the Roman Catholic, however, the same statement implies that the Christian life is begun through faith alone and continued in life alone — which is obviously a travesty of the NT teaching on the matter, which makes explicit reference to the Christian life being continued in holiness, obedience and good works.

Now consider the second statement. To the Roman Catholic, this would mean that the Christian life is begun through faith alone, and continued in holiness of life — which is obviously an excellent summary of the NT teaching on the matter. To the Protestant, however, the same statement stipulates that the Christian life is begun through faith alone and continued in life alone — which is virtually Pelagian, and a gross distortion of the NT teaching on the matter. The issue is that the first statement (understood in the Protestant sense) and the second (understood in the Roman Catholic sense) are actually saying more or less the same thing — but the convergence is obscured by the difference in language. This linguistic point has been made frequently in more ecumenical discussions of justification, ARCC II included.

It will, of course, be obvious that Protestant theologians were not for one moment suggesting that it was possible to be justified without being sanctified; they were simply insisting upon a notional distinction between the two concepts, distinguishing at the conceptual level two ideas which had hitherto been regarded as essentially the same thing. On the basis of their new and more relevant knowledge of Hebrew philology, the new understanding of justification was totally justified, making correction of Augustine on this point acceptable. Although the Reformers vigorously upheld Augustine's idea on grace, they felt perfectly free to correct his interpretation of Scripture where it was based upon bad Hebrew!

Sixteenth-century disagreements

As we noted in the previous section of the article, there was an important degree of agreement between Protestants and Roman Catholics on the doctrine of justification in the sixteenth century. Perhaps we could summarize the situation by suggesting that both were committed to anti-Pelagian Christocentric theologies of justification. Nevertheless, although the Reformers generally accepted the Trinitarian dispute as a whole, they found themselves in disagreement, where each side understood perfectly well what the other was saying, and took exception to it. It is here that the real focus of the Reformation controversies is to be found. Two matters were regarded as being of central importance at the time:

1. The nature of justifying righteousness (sometimes also referred to in the period 1575-1700 as the 'formal cause of justification').
2. The question of assurance (which is closely linked with the nature of justifying righteousness).

We have space only to consider the first of these two questions.

The nature of justifying righteousness

Luther insisted that justifying righteousness was justitia impartita — a righteousness which was extrinsic to the believer, covering him protectively in much the same way as a mother hen might cover her chicks. No one in the position was taken up by both Luther and Reformed theologians, who held that justifying righteousness is not a righteousness inherent to the individual, but one outside him. God effects our justification from outside us, prior to effecting our renewal within us. The righteousness of justification was perfect and imputed, whereas that of sanctification was imperfect. The point is that the Reformers wished to emphasize was that the righteousness of the saints was permanently imperfect, and therefore could not be considered as perfectly justifying righteousness, and the question of assurance — that the real divisions were perceived to lie. It is thus of some considerable interest to note that it was precisely these questions (originally not on Trent's agenda, incidentally — they had to be added later, when it was obvious that they could not be avoided) which caused such enormous difficulties in the interpretation of the doctrine of justification. (Indeed, at one point it seemed that Trent would not be able to say anything about the question of assurance, so difficult was it proving to reach agreement.)

Here, then, is an area where there was genuine and apparent disagreement, both between Trent and the Reformers in the sixteenth century. As even the most superficial survey of Protestant and Roman Catholic polemical writings from 1550 onwards makes clear, it is in relation to the question of justifying or basis of justifying righteousness, and the question of assurance — that the real divisions were perceived to lie. It is thus of some considerable interest to note that it was precisely these questions (originally not on Trent's agenda, incidentally — they had to be added later, when it was obvious that they could not be avoided) which caused such enormous difficulties in the interpretation of the doctrine of justification. (Indeed, at one point it seemed that Trent would not be able to say anything about the question of assurance, so difficult was it proving to reach agreement.)

It will therefore be clear that any attempts to engage with both sides of the debate — the schismatical viewpoint of the Roman Catholics over the doctrine of justification must be addressed to these two questions, which historically were regarded as central. There is little to be gained from recapitulating what was agreed in the sixteenth century (although that agreement was, of course, obscured by polemics and terminological differences), unless it can be shown that these two issues are no longer of any importance.

But what did the Anglican theologians of the Elizabethan Settlement do? The answer is that they had no choice but to have at our disposal an excellent study of this question from the pen of the Anglican Bishop of South Carolina, Fitz Allison. In his book The Rise of Monism,4 Allison shows how the controversies of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries declare that the doctrine of justification (and, more specifically, the question of the nature and extent of the justifying or basis of justifying righteousness) between the Church of England and Rome. Thus for Richard Hooker, 'the grand question, which hath yet in controversy between us and the Church of Rome, is about the matter of justifying righteousness'. Similarly, John Davenant's Dejustitia humilium et actuali (1631) — noted, incidentally, by the writers of Salvation and the Church — represents a sustained attack upon the Roman Catholic polemicalist Robert Bellarmine's views on the nature of justifying righteousness. Both Bellarmine and Davenant agreed that the crucial question dividing Catholics and Anglicans was that of the nature of justifying righteousness.

A central disagreement which must therefore be dealt with thoroughly in any ecumenical discussion of justification is this: is justifying righteousness external (the Protestant position), or internal (the Roman Catholic position)? The Catholic position adopted at the abortive Diet of Regensburg in 1541, and repudiated by both Protestants and Roman Catholics in the sixteenth century?

So what has the recent ecumenical debate on justification actually accomplished? Well, it seems that the most recent contribution to this debate is the ARCC II document Salvation and the Church, we shall attempt to answer this question with the help of our colleagues. This document, however, illustrates recent trends in this discussion, and the comments which follow will be of relevance beyond the limits of the Anglican-Roman Catholic discussion of justification.

Earlier, we noted two main types of controversy concerning justification in the sixteenth century: those which reflected simple misunderstandings (in which both sides were supposed to be in denial of the other's views), and those which represented genuine disagreement (where each side knew what the other was saying, and didn't agree with it). The document Justification and Reconciliation (1995), it is hoped, will help to have these misunderstandings clarified. It is shown that both churches are agreed that 'even the very first movements which lead to justification, such as repentance,
the desire for forgiveness and even faith itself, are the work of God' (24); that justification is an 'unnurtured' gift of God (24); that our justification leads to our recreation and hence to good works as the fruit of our new freedom in Christ (19); and that the community or the church is the community of the oneness of Christ (25), rather than a solitary life of faith. Although none of these points was actually the subject of real discussion, certainly, it is not the case that the Reformers have had abstract curiosities of the both Reformations view of justification and its Roman Catholic counterpart disregarded. Furthermore, if the text so discusses caricatures or stereotypes of doctrines with which one disagrees (8), and it is to be hoped that this document will diverge from the caricatures of both both Roman Catholic and Anglican circles concerning each other's ideological heritage. Incidentally, most of these absurdities, it must be said, date from the sixteenth century. Personally, I regard ecumenical discussions of this type to be so important that it is inappropriate to 'rock the boat' by implying that 'certain pressing questions have not been discussed adequately, or perhaps have been quietly set to one side. I have not always felt that the Roman Catholic church was a church of Rome. I would not like to suggest that they questions imply criticism of the Roman Catholic church, but I simply need for clarification. If these questions can be clarified satisfactorily, then no criticism need result; if, on the other hand, it is evident that no clarification is forthcoming, or that the Roman Catholic position is, for instance, a weakening of the position 'Salvation and the Church apparently brings into the debate at §22, for reasons which are not clear — all these ideas and practices, brought into the discussion on account of the need to clarify the doctrine of justification to salvation and the church', point to areas of continuing diversity. As one leading Lutheran ecumenist points out, the question of how the Catholic church understands the idea of justification during the modern period is an inevitable part of any genuine engagement with the doctrine of justification. 'Catholics interpret the words of the Council of Trent as meaning that: was Christ's work insufficient, and do our works somehow have merit?' Paul VI may have refined Trent's statements in the basic framework it presupposes (purposive and purgatorial penalities, for instance) remains as unacceptable to Protestants, whether Anglican or otherwise, as it has always been. Moreover, the wisdom of Justification by Faith must be noted. We have shown that a sixteenth-century understanding of the nature of justification, of such central importance to late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Anglican criticisms of Roman Catholicism, is substantially set to one side.

2. Merit
The document's statements on merit require considerable clarification. The following paragraph (24) apparently explicitly excludes the possibility of meritizing justification.

The language of merit and good works, therefore, when properly understood, means not that good works are able to put God in their debt. Still less does it imply that justification itself is anything but a totally unearned gift. This statement, however, avoids a serious difficulty dating from the Reformation. The Roman Catholic church's doctrine on merit distinguishes between two types of merit. This is critical, but complicated, requiring attention.

The medieval period saw a distinction develop between merit in the strict sense of the word ("condign merit") and merit in a weaker sense of the word ("congruous merit"). No medieval theologian suggested that an individual could merit his justification in the strict sense of the word — in other words, earning justification. But some theologians, especially Franciscans and that a new sort of meritizing of works (such as performing good works) which made it 'appropriate' for God to justify him. God was placed under a moral, rather than a rational, obligation to exercise mercy and grace, and the Reformers were, as might be expected, totally opposed to the idea that one could merit justification, in either sense of the word. With these points in mind, let us consider the statement of ARCC II cited above.

Does this statement mean that the Commission excludes the traditional and contemporary Franciscan teaching that it is possible to merit justification? If so, then the Fraticans must raise a question about the membership of ARCC II; while fully recognizing the difficulties attending the selection of members, the history of the doctrine of justification, especially the proceedings of the Council of Trent, would indicate the need for a Franciscan theologian to be included. The Franciscan's fiercest opponents at Trent on such questions as whether justification can be merited and the possibility of assurance were, of course, the Dominicans. The Commission is fortunate to have two Dominican members — but why exclude Franciscans, when they have such a distinctive contribution to make to such a debate? Is not the Roman Catholic church contingent somewhat unrepresentative as a result? When we turn to the discussions at the Tridentine debates on justification? In the present writer's opinion, the exclusion of Franciscans from ARCC II is just as unparochial as the continuing misunderstandings about the nature of justification, of such central importance to late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Anglican critiques of Roman Catholicism, is substantially set to one side.

3. Indulgences
In an earlier document, the document moves on to deal with 'The Church and Salvation'. This is by far the weakest section of the document. The entire discussion of the bearing of the doctrine of justification upon the life of the church — in other words, the practical questions, which so aroused the Reformers — is abstract and unsatisfactory. It is to be hoped that we have every right to look for, and find, a discussion of indulgences. After all, the historical origins of the Lutheran Reformation were discussed at the Council of Trent, and it is to be some degree of confusion within modern Catholic theology as to what the role of indulgences actually is. It is therefore of great importance to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church as to what the function of indulgences actually is. ARCC II cannot flee from history: although the commission is not specifically dealing with the question of what was actually at stake in the indulgences controversy of the sixteenth century, and how such differences may be, or have been, resolved.

As John Firth, the great historian of indulgences, Reformers pointed out, the doctrine of justification by faith necessarily led to the doctrine of purgatory into question. Indeed, this is a problem for the Commission: Salvation and the Church apparently brings into the debate at §22, for reasons which are not clear — all these ideas and practices, brought into the discussion on account of the need to clarify the doctrine of justification to salvation and the church', point to areas of continuing diversity. As one leading Lutheran ecumenist points out, the question of how the Catholic church understands the idea of justification during the modern period is an inevitable part of any genuine engagement with the doctrine of justification. 'Catholics interpret the words of the Council of Trent as meaning that: was Christ's work insufficient, and do our works somehow have merit?' Paul VI may have refined Trent's statements in the basic framework it presupposes (purposive and purgatorial penalities, for instance) remains as unacceptable to Protestants, whether Anglican or otherwise, as it has always been. Moreover, the wisdom of Justification by Faith must be noted. We have shown that a sixteenth-century understanding of the nature of justification, of such central importance to late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Anglican criticisms of Roman Catholicism, is substantially set to one side.

4. The relation to history
This point brings me to my fourth observation and request for clarification. The document appears somewhat reluctant to address the contemporary impact of these questions on the way modern theologians perceive to exist between themselves and Rome. The emphasis placed by Anglican theologians of the last two centuries on the nature of justifying righteousness as the central issue, even the 'grand question which hangs yet in controversy',
The desire for forgiveness and even faith itself, are the work of God (§24); that justification is an "unmerited" gift of God (§24); that our justification leads to our recreation and hence to good works as the fruit of our new freedom in Christ (§19); and that we are justified by faith and not by works (§19). We have not yet seen that the community of the church (§25), rather than a solitary life of faith. Although none of these points was actually the subject of recent discussion in the Roman Catholic church, we have had abundant caricatures of both the Reformation view of justification and its Roman Catholic counterpart discussed. By the term "caricature" I do not mean to caricature or stereotype doctrines of which one disagrees (§8), and it is to be hoped that this document will demonstrate that in many instances both the Roman Catholic and Anglican circles concerning each other's ideological heritage. Incidentally, most of these absurdities, it must be said, date from the sixteenth century.

Personally, I regard ecumenical discussions of this type as so important that it is inappropriate to "rock the boat" by implying that certain pressing questions have not been discussed adequately, or perhaps have been a bit set aside in the course of other discussions. I would not like to suggest that these questions imply criticism of ARCIC II, but simply a need for clarification. If these questions can be clarified satisfactorily, then no criticism need result; if, on the other hand, it is evident that no clarification is forthcoming, then perhaps the criticism of ARCIC II is taking refuge in a lack of a solution for the problem. Let us try to minimize theological disagreement, then criticism is both demanded and deserved. Let me identify these questions.

1. What sort of justifying righteousness are we talking about?

Earlier, we noted the centrality of this question to the sixteenth-century debates on justification. ARCIC II seems to treat this question as unimportant. It is not dealt with in the Declaration on Justification (§23). The briefing paper on Justification states that the debate on justification makes no reference to the importance of this question. It is simply not addressed. Certainly, ARCIC II allowed "justifying" to be considered, but would the Pelagianism, as both sides knew. The debate, especially as it involved Luther and Calvin, centred on the concept of concomitance, that is, on the subtle concept of merit. If on the other hand, ARCIC II is to be understood on this point to have merited congruously, we may naturally ask why those who happen to disagree with this view on the Roman Catholic side appear to be so little interested in the question of whether ARCIC II's statement on this aspect of the doctrine of justification may in any sense be said to be representative of the church, and speaking for the church, as it were. Perhaps ARCIC II would care to clarify its position on a concomitance of merit. I think that, until ARCIC II clarifies this point, we cannot regard them as having made any contribution to this aspect of the debate on justification.

2. Merit

The document's statements on merit require considerable clarification. The following paragraph (§24) apparently explicitly excludes the possibility of meriting justification.

"The language of merit and good works, therefore, when properly understood and practiced, are to be applied to God in their debt. Still less does it imply that justification itself is anything but a totally unmerited gift."

This statement, however, avoids a serious difficulty dating from the time of the Reformation. The Roman Catholic doctrine of merit between two types of merit. This is criticism, but requires attention.

The medieval period saw a distinction develop between merit in the strict sense of work ("condign merit") and merit in a weaker sense of work ("congruous merit").

No medieval theologian suggested that an individual could merit his justification in the strict sense of the word—other words, earning justification. But some theologians, especially Franciscans and Dominicans, believed that a person's good works (such as performing good works) which made it 'appropriate' for God to justify him. God was placed under a moral, rather than a physical, duty to grant forgiveness. ARGERSReformers were, as might be expected, totally opposed to the idea that one could merit justification, in either sense of the word. Evidently, therefore, behind the compromise of 1980, let us consider the statement of ARCIC II cited above.

Does this statement mean that the Commission excludes the traditional and contemporary Franciscan teaching that it is possible to "earn" justification? In other words, does the Commission require that we must raise a question about the membership of ARCIC II: While fully recognizing the difficulties attending the selection of members, the history of the doctrine of justification, especially the proceedings of the Council of Trent, would indicate the need for a Franciscan theologian to be included. The Franciscans' fiercest opponents at Trent on such questions as whether justification can be merited and the possibility of assurance were, of course, the Dominicans. The Commission is fortunate to have two Dominican members—but why exclude Franciscans, when they have such a distinctive contribution to make to such a debate? Is not the Roman Catholic contingent somewhat unrepresentative as a result? The nature of the debate at the Trinitarian debates on justification in the present writer's opinion, the exclusion of Franciscans from ARCIC II is just as unparliamentary as the continuing unmerit of merit in the context of the Anglican-Roman Catholic understanding of justifying righteousness, of such central importance to late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Anglican criticisms of Roman Catholicism, is castiously set to one side.

3. Indulgences

In an earlier document, the document moves on to deal with 'The Church and Salvation'. This is by far the weakest section of the document. The entire discussion of the bearing of the doctrine of justification upon the life of the church—in other words, the practical questions, which so aroused the Reformers—is abstract and uninteresting. This means that we have every right to look for, and find, a discussion of indulgences. After all, the historical origins of the Lutheran Reformation can be traced not to a discussion of justification but to some degree of confusion within modern Catholic theology as to what the role of indulgences actually is. It is therefore good for us to lift the veil of mystery that has cloaked this magisterial pronouncement on indulgences—in other words, not just the views of some individual Roman Catholic theologians (which varies considerably), but an authoritative statement by the teaching office of the Roman Catholic church as to what the function of indulgences actually is. ARCIC II cannot find escape from history; anything less would be the denigration of what was actually at stake in the indulgences controversy of the sixteenth century, and how such differences may be, or have been, resolved.

As John Frith, the greatest of the neglected English Reformers, pointed out, the doctrine of justification by faith necessarily called the doctrine of purgation into question. Indeed, the whole Reformation for the sake of the doctrine of Salvation and the Church apparently brings into the debate at §22, for reasons which are not clear—all these ideas and practices, brought into the discussion on account of the breach of the promise of the justification to salvation and the church, point to areas of continuing divergence. As one leading Lutheran ecumenist points out, the question of how this understanding of justification was interpreted by the modern period is an inevitable part of any genuine engagement with the doctrine of justification. "Catholic interpreting the world," he writes, "involves questions: was Christ's work insufficient, and do our works somehow have merit?" Paul VI may have refined Trent's teaching on this question. But the basic framework it presupposes (purgatory and purgatorial penalties, for instance) remains as unacceptable to Protestants, whether Anglican or otherwise, as it has always been.

Once more, the wisdom of Justification by Faith must be noted. If we are to make an attempt at the modern-day controversy, in true ecumenical spirit, the only way in which we can hope to bring together the two sides is to ask the question very specifically, to which we have a right to a very specific answer; are the 1983 canons on indulgences an adequate expression of this answer? I think ARCIC II would say 'No'. But as a historian, I have to say that the sixteenth-century answer given by the Roman Catholic church and by the Protestant church, and elsewhere, was rather different. After all, John Frith was burnt at Smithfield in 1533 for denying that purgatory was a necessary dogma.

4. The relation to history

This point brings me to my fourth observation and request for further information. The document appears somewhat reluctant to address the issue of the question of justification, as theologians perceived to exist between themselves and Rome. The emphasis placed by Anglican theologians of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries on the nature of justifying righteousness as the central issue, even the "grand question which hangs yet in controversy",