



# *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: An Exposition and a Critique from a Reformed Perspective*

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## **I. Introduction**

The signing of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JD)* on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 1999 at Augsburg on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church represents, in itself, a considerable achievement.<sup>1</sup> This is so, insofar as the central, divisive question raised at the time of the Reformation, and thereafter, has seemed to prove capable of being answered in terms of a multi-faceted consensus. Thus, the *JD* declares:

The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this declaration shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics. In the light of this consensus the remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification ... are acceptable. Therefore the Lutheran and Catholic explications of justification are in their difference open to one another and do not destroy the consensus regarding the basic truths. (*JD* 40)

Further, and as a consequence of the consensus reached, the *JD* declares that the Lutheran teaching on justification ‘presented in this declaration’ no longer falls under the condemnations of the Council of Trent. In like fashion, Catholic teaching on justification, as ‘presented’ in the *JD* no longer falls under the condemnations of ‘the Lutheran Confessions’. (*JD* 41; *Official Common Statement* 1)



## II. *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: an exposition*

The *JD* begins by noting the significance of the doctrine of justification ‘for the Lutheran Reformation’ and that this doctrine ‘was the crux of all the disputes’. (*JD* 1) Thus, the doctrine has a ‘special status’ within the field of doctrine, and, as a consequence, in ecumenical dialogue involving Lutherans. (*JD* 2) An ongoing dialogue with the Catholic Church has reached the point where they ‘are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ’, albeit that the *JD* ‘does not cover all that either church teaches about justification’. (*JD* 5) Thereafter, the *JD* (8–12) sets out the Scriptural foundations for this ‘common understanding’, and does so in a form that stresses the shared nature of the ‘understanding’ without making any differentiation in emphasis. Having done so, it later notes that it is precisely opposed to ‘interpretations and applications of the biblical message of justification’ that were the cause of ‘division’ and ‘doctrinal condemnations’ between churches. (*JD* 13)

### *‘A consensus in the basic truths’*

The *JD* claims that a renewed listening to Scripture has enabled the realisation of ‘a consensus in the basic truths’ of the doctrine of justification, albeit that there are ‘differing explications in particular statements’ of the doctrine. Nevertheless, those ‘differing explications’ are ‘compatible’ with the doctrinal consensus stated in the *JD*, (*JD* 14) and *JD* 14–18 set out the answer to the question: What is that doctrinal consensus? The *JD* states:

Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works. (*JD* 15)

Of particular significance is the statement of a shared ‘conviction that the message of justification directs us in a special way towards the heart of the New Testament witness to God’s saving action in Christ’. (*JD* 17) Equally, there is now a common agreement that the doctrine

of justification ‘is more than just one part of Christian doctrine’. The *JD* states:

It stands in an essential relation to all truths of faith, which are to be seen as internally related to each other. It is an indispensable criterion which constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ. (*JD* 18)

This is stated in bold, but nevertheless qualified terms, insofar as there is an acknowledgement of ‘several criteria’, alongside the doctrine of justification which bind the Church when making the confession of Christ. (*JD* 18) This qualification, and the ensuing ambiguity as to the precise status of the ‘indispensable criterion’, is clarified in the *Annex to the Official Common Statement* where it is reaffirmed that:

The doctrine of justification is measure or touchstone for the Christian faith. No teaching may contradict this criterion ... As such, it has its truth and specific meaning within the overall context of the Church’s fundamental Trinitarian confession of faith. (*Annex to the Official Common Statement* 3)

### **‘Differing explications’**

It is at this point that we turn to the core of the *JD*, (*JD* 19–39) for we move from the previously, undifferentiated ‘consensus’ into an explication of those areas where ‘the basic truths’ are capable of yielding a differentiated understanding. The pattern of the *JD* is to offer, under seven headings, a ‘consensus’ paragraph followed by a ‘differing explications’ paragraph each, on behalf of Catholics and Lutherans. Thus, the *JD* sets out the doctrine of justification in the following terms:

‘4.1 *Human powerlessness and sin in relation to justification*’ (*JD* 19–21)

The *JD* stresses the complete dependence of ‘all persons’ upon ‘the saving grace of God for their salvation’, (*JD* 19) whilst noting that Catholics ‘say that persons “cooperate” in preparing for and accepting justification by consenting to God’s justifying action’. However, this

‘cooperation’ is to be understood as ‘an effect of grace’ and not as a consequence of ‘innate human abilities’. Equally, it is not to be understood as a contradiction of the Lutheran stress on the fact that ‘human beings are incapable of cooperating in their salvation’. (*JD* 20–21)

‘4.2 *Justification as forgiveness of sins and making righteous*’ (*JD* 22–24)

In the forgiveness of sin by grace, God ‘frees human beings from sin’s enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ’. Further, ‘God no longer imputes to them their sin’ and through the Spirit ‘effects in them an active love’. (*JD* 22) Thus, the Lutheran insistence on ‘the sinner’ being ‘granted righteousness before God’ only ‘in Christ’ is not denied by the Catholic emphasis on the actuality of ‘the renewal of the interior person through the reception of grace’. For this ‘reception’ is ‘a gift’ and ‘remains independent of human cooperation’. (*JD* 23–24)

‘4.3 *Justification by faith and through grace*’ (*JD* 25–27)

The ‘saving action of God in Christ’ is mediated to us by ‘the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism’, (*JD* 25) and baptism is further understood as the medium and event through which justification is received and experienced. Thus: ‘Persons are justified through baptism as hearers of the word and believers in it.’ (*JD* 27) The primacy of faith is stressed by Lutherans who affirm that: ‘God justifies sinners in faith alone (*sola fide*)’. Equally, Catholics see ‘faith as fundamental in justification. For without faith, no justification can take place’. (*JD* 26–27) Therefore, it may be said that whilst ‘a distinction’ may be made ‘between justification itself and the renewal of one’s way of life that necessarily follows from justification’, there can be no ‘separation’. (*JD* 26)

‘4.4 *The justified as sinner*’ (*JD* 28–30)

The significance of baptism is further emphasised in affirming that it is through baptism that the justified person is united with Christ. (*JD* 28, 29) This necessarily involves us in an ever-renewed turning ‘to God’s unconditional justifying grace’, for we ‘are continuously exposed to the power of sin’. (*JD* 28) The Lutheran understanding of the ‘condition’ of the Christian as being “at the same time righteous

and sinner” is balanced by the Catholic stress ‘that the grace of Jesus Christ imparted in baptism takes away all that is sin “in the proper sense” and that is “worthy of damnation”’. (*JD* 29–30)

In affirming the compatibility of Lutheran and Catholic understandings on this issue, the *JD* notes that this affirmation is possible ‘despite the difference in understanding sin in the justified’. Thus, the Lutheran position affirms the reality of sin in the life of the Christian and that this ‘contradiction to God is as such truly sin’. Thereafter, the *JD* continues:

Nevertheless, the enslaving power of sin is broken on the basis of the merit of Christ. It is no longer a sin that ‘rules’ the Christian for it is itself ‘ruled’ by Christ with whom the justified are bound in faith ... Thus, when Lutherans say that justified persons are also sinners and that their opposition to God is truly sin, they do not deny that, despite this sin, they are not separated from God and that this sin is a ‘ruled’ sin. (*JD* 29)

The Catholic understanding of sin in the life of the baptized person turns, as stated, on the reality of ‘the grace of Jesus Christ imparted in baptism’ for that grace has destroyed, in a profound sense, the reality of sin. Nevertheless, there does ‘remain in the person an inclination (concupiscence) which comes from sin and presses toward sin’. However, this ‘inclination’ lacks the ‘personal element’ that is integral to the nature of sin, such that ‘Catholics do not see this inclination as sin in an authentic sense’. This ‘inclination’ does, of course, stand in contradiction to God’s will, but it ‘does not merit the punishment of eternal death and does not separate the justified person from God’. (*JD* 30)

#### ‘4.5 Law and gospel’ (*JD* 31–33)

The relationship between law and gospel is stated in terms of the fact ‘that persons are justified by faith in the gospel’ and that this is not dependent on the fulfilment of any works demanded by the law. The ‘teaching and example’ of Christ becomes the ‘standard for the conduct of the justified’ along with the commandments of God which ‘retain their validity for the justified’. (*JD* 31) The Lutheran understanding of

the law is such that its continuing ‘demand and accusation ... uncovers ... sin’ in the life of the Christian, and turns them ‘unreservedly to the mercy of God in Christ’. The Catholic understanding emphasises ‘that the righteous are bound to observe God’s commandments’, whilst not denying the promise of grace in Jesus Christ. (*JD* 32–33)

‘4.6 *Assurance of salvation*’ (*JD* 34–36)

Reliance ‘on the mercy and promises of God’ is the foundation of assurance, which is established ‘on the strength of Christ’s death and resurrection’, and the ‘promise of God’s grace’ is made sure to us ‘in Word and Sacrament’. (*JD* 32) Lutheran and Catholic emphases complement each other in virtual unanimity on this question, such that the *JD* states:

Catholics can share the concern of the Reformers to ground faith in the objective reality of Christ’s promise, to look away from one’s own experience, and to trust in Christ’s forgiving word alone ... (*JD* 36)

‘4.7 *The good works of the justified*’ (*JD* 37–39)

The significance of ‘good works’ is understood in terms of the fact that they ‘follow justification and are its fruits’, with this ‘consequence of justification’ being ‘an obligation’ which must be fulfilled. (*JD* 37) In Catholic thought ‘good works’ are understood as having a “‘meritorious” character’ and are linked to the ‘reward in heaven ... promised to these works’. The intention at this point ‘is to emphasize the responsibility of persons for their actions’. However, this should not be seen as in any way a denial ‘that justification always remains the unmerited gift of grace’. (*JD* 38) Further, Catholics hold that ‘good works ... contribute to growth in grace, so that the righteousness that comes from God is preserved’, with this ‘concept’ also being ‘held by Lutherans’, whilst emphasising ‘that righteousness as acceptance by God and sharing in the righteousness of Christ is always complete’. (*JD* 38–39)

### ***The conclusion of the Joint Declaration***

We have already alluded in the Introduction to the significance of the ‘consensus’ as understood by its signatories, especially in terms of the compatibility of Catholic and Lutheran understandings of justification and the consequential lifting of ‘the doctrinal condemnations of the sixteenth century’. (*JD* 40–41) Further, the *JD* is understood as a ‘decisive step forward on the way to overcoming the division of the church’ and the goal of ‘visible unity’. (*JD* 44) Nevertheless, whilst it is the case that the ‘consensus in basic truths ... must come to influence the life and teachings of our churches’, the *JD* makes it clear that ‘there are still questions ... which need further clarification’, (*JD* 43; *Official Common Statement* 3) and we may recall the qualifications entered alongside the ‘indispensable criterion’ of the doctrine of justification in *JD* 18. Thus, the *JD* states that amongst the questions in need of further clarification there is to be found:

[T]he relationship between the Word of God and church doctrine, as well as ecclesiology, ecclesial authority, church unity, ministry, the sacraments, and the relation between justification and social ethics. (*JD* 43)

Thereafter, the *JD* affirms that the ‘consensus’ reached on justification ‘offers a solid basis for this clarification’. (*JD* 43)



### **III. A critique from a Reformed perspective**

The considerable achievement which the *JD* represents ought to be acknowledged without reservation. Further, as a contribution to ecumenical dialogue, it compels a response; of affirmation, and of critique, and it is to the latter that we now turn.

#### ***The Reformed doctrine of justification: a ‘criterion’?***

That Lutherans hold the doctrine of justification to be an ‘indispensable criterion’ should not, of course, lead to the conclusion that all the churches of the Reformation understand the doctrine in the same sense. Indeed, from the perspective of the Scottish Reformation, it should

be noted that the *Scots Confession* (1560) has no separate chapter on justification, and the sole reference to justification occurs in Chapter X where it speaks of ‘our Lord Jesus Christ . . . who descended into hell, did rise again for our justification’. John Knox was certainly conversant with the Lutheran teaching on justification and had received in 1548 a treatise by Henry Balnaves on the doctrine, in response to which Knox essayed *A Brieve Sommarie of the work by Balnaves on Justification*.<sup>2</sup> Balnaves has been described as having ‘enjoyed considerable success as a transmitter of Luther’s influence to Scotland’, and his treatment of justification by faith termed ‘typically Lutheran’.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, in terms of an ‘explicit formal appearance’ there is no mention of ‘justification by faith’ or of *sola fide* in the *Scots Confession*.<sup>4</sup> That is not to say that the theological correlates associated with the doctrine of justification are absent, and the essence of the doctrine is stated, for example, in Chapter XV. However, it is to say that the doctrine does not function in any sense as an ‘indispensable criterion’.

The adoption of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (*Confession*) by the Church of Scotland in 1647 provided a formal statement “Of Justification” (XI), and here we find the doctrine rooted in “God’s Eternal Decree” whereby the elect are effectually called and justified, (III.6; XI.1, 4) before being made ‘partakers by the grace of adoption’ in becoming ‘children of God’. (XII) Justification in the *Confession* is understood in terms of the pardoning of sins and the ‘accounting and accepting’ of a person as righteous ‘by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them’, and the forensic dimension of the doctrine in the *Confession* is found when it states that:

Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to His Father’s justice in their behalf. (XI.3)

Thereafter, this dimension is balanced by the statement:

Yet, inasmuch as He was given by the Father for them; and His obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead; and both, freely, not for anything in them; their justification is only of



free grace; that both the exact justice, and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. (XI.3)

The *Confession* makes it clear that God does not justify a person ‘by imputing faith itself, the act of believing’. Rather, faith is understood as ‘the alone instrument of justification’ whereby a person receives and rests ‘on Christ and His righteousness’. (XI.1,2) Equally, the *Confession* stresses that ‘faith’ is ‘not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love’, (XI.2) with ‘good works’ seen as ‘the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith’. (XVI.2)

Therefore, just as the *Scots Confession* does not make the doctrine of justification a ‘criterion’, neither does the *Westminster Confession*. Equally, we note again that there is no mention of ‘justification by faith’ or of *sola fide* in the *Confession* when it treats the doctrine of justification. Nor, are these formulations found in the treatment “Of Saving Faith”. (XIV)

In turning to other Reformed sources, we note that John Calvin’s articulation of the doctrine makes use of ‘justification by faith’ and *sola fide* in his treatment in the *Institutes* III.11–18. Indeed, he says that justification:

[I]s the main hinge on which religion turns, so that we devote the greater attention and care to it. For unless you first of all grasp what your relationship to God is, and the nature of his judgement concerning you, you have neither a foundation on which to establish your salvation nor one on which to build piety toward God. (*Institutes* III.11.1)

At the same time, he nowhere elevates the doctrine to the status of a ‘criterion’, and his positioning of the doctrine in the overall structure of the *Institutes* is hardly indicative of its having a controlling function. Nevertheless, it has an integral place in the overall system of doctrine which he enunciates.

In like fashion, Karl Barth affirms in his treatment of the doctrine of justification in *Church Dogmatics* IV/1 § 61 that:

There never was and there never can be any true Christian Church without the doctrine of justification. In this sense it is indeed the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*.<sup>5</sup>

However, Barth is careful to accent this affirmation to the effect that, whilst the doctrine of justification is integral to theology, it does not have a controlling function. Thus, his articulation of the doctrine continues the Reformed reticence to afford the doctrine a preferred status, although he does concede that at particular times in the history of the church the theological focus that the doctrine offers was necessary. However, as stated, Barth resists a preferred status, and does so in the name of ecumenism!<sup>6</sup>

Thus, we may suggest that the Reformed position on the doctrine of justification can be characterised as one in which the doctrine is an *integral criterion*, and this, in fact, is what the *JD* itself affirms. (*JD* 43) Equally, the clarification offered by the *Annex to the Official Common Statement* (3) to the effect that the doctrine ‘has its truth and specific meaning within the overall context of the Church’s fundamental Trinitarian confession of faith’ is one that resonates with a Reformed self-understanding.

### ***Reflections on the ‘consensus’ achieved in the Joint Declaration***

In focusing on the ‘consensus’ paragraph under each of the seven headings in the ‘differing explications’ section of this paper, an opportunity is given, from a Reformed perspective, to highlight the particular accents which such a perspective brings.

The statement on the nature of human powerlessness as a consequence of sin, under 4.1: *JD* 19, accords well with a Reformed understanding such as that stated in the *Westminster Confession*. (IX.3) Thereafter, the consensus paragraph, under 4.2: *JD* 22, is clearly at pains to ensure that ‘forgiveness of sins’ and being made ‘righteous’ are understood as correlated aspects of justification. At this point a Reformed perspective would wish to stress that these integral elements of the Christian life are correlated in terms of the inseparable relationship between justification and sanctification which is realised through our union with Christ (*mystica unio*), as in Calvin. (*Institutes* III.11.1, 6, 10).

Barth follows Calvin in noting the significance of the relationship between justification and sanctification, and suggests that the correlation between the two is more fully stated in the later Luther.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Calvin and Barth might well critique this ‘consensus’ paragraph to the effect that it fuses justification and sanctification to the detriment of the former and the neglect, by absence, of the latter. Thus, we may suggest that the doctrine of justification in *JD* 22 is being made to carry too heavy a load in terms of theological correlates which might be more helpfully analysed under another heading.

In turning to 4.3: *JD* 25, we may suggest that the Reformed perspective would be largely in accord with the ‘consensus’ on justification by faith through grace, always stressing the primacy of grace as the prior correlate of the reception by faith, such that ‘justification is only of free grace’. (*Confession* XI.3) However, a caveat would be that the precise relationship of baptism to ‘the gift of salvation’ might better be stated in terms of the dialectic between the ‘sign’ and that which is signified. (*Confession* XXVII.1–3; XXVIII.1)

The ‘consensus’ paragraph on the nature of sin in the life of the justified person, under 4.4: *JD* 28, is perhaps the least satisfactory in the *JD*. This is not so much because of what it says, but for the diversity of the ‘differing explications’ which follow. Indeed, in reading the ‘differing explications’, it is difficult to see how their diversity is helpfully reconciled under the stated ‘consensus’. Thus, the Lutheran *simul iustus et peccator* and the Catholic view of sin as concupiscence seem not to have been reconciled satisfactorily at this point. That is not to say that such a reconciliation and a ‘consensus’ is impossible. Rather, it is to say that it has not been achieved here. It might be thought that evidence to this effect is to be found in the *Annex to the Official Common Statement* (2: A–B) which was required to affirm that such a reconciliation had, in fact, been achieved.

The acknowledgement of a continuing diversity is not, in itself, an insuperable barrier to a shared doctrinal statement. That is, a doctrinal compatibility may be possible, even in the face of continuing diversity, where the complementary character of diverse doctrinal formulae is recognised. Compatibility ought not to be confused with ‘consensus’, but where, in truth, it is only the former that is a genuine possibility then

a shared doctrinal statement that affirms this compatibility will have a coherence and credibility as compared to a ‘consensus’ statement that masks the, as yet, unreconciled. The *JD* is certainly aware of the distinction, (*JD* 14) but would seem here to claim ‘consensus’ where only potential compatibility is to be found.

We note that the formula *simul iustus et peccator* is not one used by Calvin in the *Institutes*. Further, we may suggest from a Reformed perspective that the distinction between justification and sanctification might help in addressing this issue. That is, the complete and final act of justification; in which sin is defeated, is correlated to the ongoing process of sanctification in the life of the justified person. The dialectic inherent in the Lutheran *simul iustus et peccator* compresses justification and sanctification into too narrow a formula, and offers a premature synthesis whose existential power clouds the theological analysis which is required for a statement of the doctrine of justification. That is not to say that there is no established Lutheran doctrine of sanctification.<sup>8</sup> Rather, it is to say that this doctrine is not deployed here.

The formula ‘*simul peccator et iustus*’ is used by Barth,<sup>9</sup> insofar as he wishes to stress that the justified person is ‘*totus iustus*’, such that he may speak of ‘the totality of completed justification’. Equally, he acknowledges that the justified person is also ‘*totus peccator*’.<sup>10</sup> Barth writes of this person that:

He lives by the constant projection of his future, the constant prevailing of the promised forgiveness of sins and divine sonship against the accusation and menace from which he comes, by the superiority, the forward-pointing thrust of the divine sentence: *totus iustus*, in the face of the backward-pointing *totus peccator*.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, by delineating a doctrine of justification that is not compressed in a premature synthesis with the doctrine of sanctification, and by stressing the totality of God’s justifying action, Barth seeks to use the formula ‘*simul peccator et iustus*’ in a manner consonant with the Reformed perspective.

Thereafter, the consensus paragraph on the relationship between the Law and the Gospel, under 4.5: *JD* 31, offers a balanced account which accords well with a Reformed account of that relationship. (*Confession* XIX.5–7) In similar fashion, the paragraph on the assurance of salvation, under 4.6: *JD* 34, resonates with the Reformed perspective, with one exception however. The *Westminster Confession* (XVIII.3) holds that such assurance does ‘not belong to the essence of faith’, and we note that *JD* 34 makes no such statement, nor is one to be found in the following explications. However, the *Westminster Confession* itself conflicts with the *Scots Confession* at this point, where the latter speaks of our spiritual rebirth being ‘wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost creating in the hearts of God’s chosen ones an assured faith in the promise of God’. (XIII) Likewise, Calvin speaks of faith in the following terms:

Now we shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit. (*Institutes* III.2.7)

Further, Calvin links assurance to the doctrine of election, such that our assurance of salvation is not grounded in our own faith, but in our being ‘effectually called, and incorporated into the communion of Christ’. (*Institutes* III.24.1–7) Thus, in noting our exception within the Reformed communion, we have nevertheless affirmed the resonance which we noted earlier.

Finally, we note that, under 4.7: *JD* 37, the ‘consensus’ on the good works ‘that follow justification and are its fruits’ is in perfect accord with a Reformed perspective. (*Confession* XVI) However, we note again a fusion of justification and sanctification in this paragraph where it speaks of the Christian’s ongoing ‘struggle against sin’. A clear distinction between justification and sanctification, allied to an immediate correlation of the relationship between the two doctrines, remains essential if we are to properly formulate a doctrine of justification.

***‘The absence of the theme of justification in contemporary consciousness’***

At this point however we should, in all truthfulness, acknowledge that there is an absence in contemporary consciousness of the meaning and significance of justification. Indeed, the treatment of the doctrine by the *JD* itself does not necessarily help to translate that meaning and significance into a contemporary idiom.<sup>12</sup> Thus, we need to remain conscious of the fact that the resolution of historic doctrinal disputes by the use of formulae drawn from a particular period in the history of the Church does not, in itself, guarantee the revivification of that doctrine in contemporary discussion. The Reformation principle *ecclesia reformata sed semper reformanda* obliges us to continually clarify our doctrinal expression in the light of our ever-renewed reception of the Word of God.<sup>13</sup> This obligation falls upon the Reformed communion in order that it may more fully comprehend the Word of God within the bounds of that communion. At the same moment, such clarification is required that the Word of God may be communicated beyond those boundaries.

Barth is conscious of the need to move beyond the statement and re-statement of the doctrine of justification in the terms bequeathed to us by the sixteenth century, and suggests that ‘we need a rather greater freedom than that which is allowed to us if we only move within the framework of the Reformation doctrine of justification’. He continues:

All honour to the question: How can I find a gracious God? But for too long it has been for Protestantism – at any rate European and especially German Protestantism – the occasion and temptation to a certain narcissism, and a consequent delay in moving in the direction we have just indicated.<sup>14</sup>

What is ‘the direction ... just indicated’? Barth suggests that ‘there is a third element in the reconciling work of God in Jesus Christ which, like sanctification, cannot be subsumed under the concept of justification’. Thereafter, he contends that:

[T]he reconciling grace of God has a dimension and form which cannot simply be equated with justification and sanctification, the form and dimension of the calling of man, his teleological setting in the kingdom of God which comes and is present in Jesus Christ, the form of mission in relation to the community and in relation to the individual Christian the form of hope.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, according to Barth, the Reformed communion, and the Church Catholic, needs to recover its sense of vocation in terms of its teleological orientation to the kingdom of God, and its consequent engagement with human society and the actualities of history.<sup>16</sup>



## Conclusion

The *JD* marks a significant step on the journey ‘toward that visible unity which is Christ’s will’, (*JD* 44) and which is our ultimate *telos*. However, it does not, in itself, satisfy all of the criteria required for the expression of ‘full church communion’ (*Official Common Statement* 3) and the realisation of that ‘visible unity’. Nevertheless, it does represent, from the standpoint of the Lutheran and Roman Catholic communions, a formal resolution of an historic doctrinal difference, and the satisfaction of one of the criteria. From a Reformed perspective, we must recognise the immense concentration of energy which has been invested in the process which ultimately led to the *JD*. An ongoing engagement in the issues that divide us from our fellow Christians is required of us at all times, and this is especially the case where those issues relate to our origin and identity as a Church of the Reformation. The insights offered from a Reformed perspective may yet be of value in the further work which undoubtedly requires to be done. Equally, we have to acknowledge that these insights call us to orient ourselves toward the *telos* who is Jesus Christ, and to engage in dialogue with our partner churches in order that together our calling and vocation may be fulfilled.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The text of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification is found in Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue*, 239–259.
- <sup>2</sup> Laing, *The Works of John Knox*, 1–28, 431–542.
- <sup>3</sup> McGoldrick, “Lutheranism in Scotland,” 500 f.
- <sup>4</sup> Hazlett, “The Scots Confession 1560,” 301.
- <sup>5</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 523.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 522 f.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 526 f.
- <sup>8</sup> Dieter, “Justification and Sanctification in Luther,” 87–96; Lindberg, “Do Lutherans Shout Justification But Whisper Sanctification?” 97–112.
- <sup>9</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 517, 596, 602.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 594–605.

- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., 602.
- <sup>12</sup> Ratzinger, “The Augsburg Concord on Justification,” 5–20.
- <sup>13</sup> Weatherhead, *The Constitution and Laws of the Church of Scotland*, 19.
- <sup>14</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 527.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Heron, “Justification and Sanctification in the Reformed Tradition,” 122.