



Living and Sharing the Gospel

Weekly bulletin
December 6, 2020

Worship services are being cancelled until further notice because of Covid-19. However, we will have worship services through the Internet Zoom platform every Sunday at 10:30 AM in NB, NS and PEI. The Zoom link for this service will be sent to you by email. The telephone numbers for Zoom always remains the same but the Meeting ID and password number change every week.. Please let Mr. Vautour know if you would like to be added to the weekly email list. See the bottom of the bulletin for the contact information

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

For more information about special activities happening in GCI international, please see the website at www.gci.org. On the left-hand upper side of the screen, click on "PARTICIPATE". Click on it. A drop-down menu will appear. Click on "GCI UPDATE".

Please note that audio and video sermons are available at gcinewbrunswick.org . Video sermons are also available on YouTube – GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL-MONCTON (see link below)

Prayer Meeting Thursday, December 17 at 7:30 PM

**Excerpts from an update to all GCI Canadian Ministers from Mr. Bill Hall, Canadian Director, December 4, 2020
New Management Structure:**

There are some changes in our management structure for 2021. Beginning in January, we will be retiring the position of Western and Eastern RD for the time being. I'll be taking on that responsibility.

Bill Rabey is stepping down from his position to concentrate on pastoring Montreal English beginning in 2021. And because of the size of our ministry, and the fact you are all maxed out in your responsibilities I didn't want to burden anyone else with this added responsibility.

Since we are not replacing Bill, it was decided we will also eliminate Steve Posiak's position in the West so he can also concentrate on his pastorate roles.

I want to thank both Bill and Steve for their hard work in the role of RD over the years. I have valued their help, input, and the collegiate atmosphere they have brought to the management team.

Discussions with Regent College: (Note from EV - Purpose to train and recruit ministers)

One of the items that has come up during our ZOOM calls is the need to actively search for replacements for our aging ministry. I've done some work in this area, but because of COVID things kind of ground to a halt.

However, I have continued to work on this project which I feel is perhaps my main priority in the coming couple of years.

Gary Deddo knows the President of Regent College in Vancouver and he and I had an hour ZOOM call on the 23rd of November to introduce GCI to the President and a couple of the faculty members who are involved in their ministry training programs.

It was a good first step and I imagine there will be many more discussions in the future.

Jack Kost Retirement

I wasn't sure where to put this announcement. But maybe this is a good way to end. Jack, after 47 years of service, will be retiring from the paid ministry on December 31st. I want to thank Jack and Betty for all their years of service and wish them the best in their retirement.

Jack isn't going away, but will now become a part of a local ministry team who will lead services and manage the congregation. So that is it for now.

I want to again thank you for your faithful service to our Lord Jesus during this most difficult of years. My prayer is that 2021 will be a year of opportunity and hope that is possible by the lead of our great Triune God.

To see specific prayer requests from the church, please go to www.gcine Brunswick.org – under “Members Only” and type the password.

- Let us pray for the Church to put first things first which is **to love God with all of our heart, with all of our soul and with all of our mind**. The secondary commandment and flowing from the first is **to love our neighbour as ourselves**.
- Let us pray according to God’s will as per his instructions: “**1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**” (1Ti 2:1-4 ESV)
- **Right now, 40 people are dying in the USA every 40 second. Please pray that God’s people will stay steadfast in the faith during this difficult time. The same is true for every Christian in Canada and all over the world. May more and more people respond to the Good News found in Jesus as God adds to his church.**

Offerings: you can send your offering directly to the following address: **Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7S1 6W5**. If you prefer, you can also call **1-306-653-2705**. Thank you for your continued generous giving to God by giving to this part of God’s church, his body.

From Mr. Bill Hall – GCI Canadian Director “*We will continue to process the donations we receive in Saskatoon. Members are urged to mail them directly to our office for the time-being. They can also donate via phone using a credit card, or via Canada Helps using **the donate button** on our website www.gcicanada.ca located at bottom of the page on the right side as you scroll down. We are waving the provision that all donations given via Canada Helps go toward national expenses for the time being. We will credit all donations received via Canada Helps to a member’s local congregation, if we can identify where they attend.*”

The article “The Radical Consequences of Justification” is Part III of Thomas F. Torrance’s longer article “Justification: its Radical Nature and Place in Reformed Doctrine and Life” published by *The Scottish Journal of Theology* (1960), Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 225-246. Part III is found at pp. 237-246.

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Thomas F. Torrance was born in Chengdu, China, in 1913 to missionary parents. He was professor of Christian Dogmatics (“Systematic Theology”) at the University of Edinburgh for almost 30 years until his retirement in 1979. From 1976-1977 he was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

In a lifetime of scholarly work he published more than 650 articles, papers and books, including *Kingdom and Church* (1956), *The School of Faith*(1959), *Theological Science* (1969), *God and Rationality* (1971), *Theology in Reconciliation*(1975), *The Trinitarian Faith* (1988) and *The Christian Doctrine of God* (1996). In 1978 he was the recipient of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion.

The Radical Consequences of Justification, by Thomas F. Torrance (From <https://learn.gcs.edu/>)

Justification means justification by Christ alone—that is the reference of the expressions *sola fide, sola gratia, sola scriptura*, used in Reformed theology. Justification means that we look exclusively to Christ, and therefore that we look away from ourselves altogether in order to live out of Him alone.

That radical nature of justification is expressed and its radical consequences drawn by the Scots Confession: “*We willingly spoil ourselves of all honor and glory of our own salvation and redemption, as we also do of our regeneration and sanctification.*”

This is something that very badly needs to be reiterated today within the Churches of the Reformation. Justification by Christ alone means the rejection of all forms of self-justification and all forms of justification by anything or out of any source other than Jesus Christ. Let us consider what this means in several areas of doctrine and life.

Natural goodness

(a) At the Reformation, Justification by the Grace of Christ alone was seen to set aside all natural goodness, and all works-righteousness; but this applies to all goodness, Christian goodness as well, that is, to “sanctification” as it came to be called.

This is powerfully driven home by the Scots Confession in several articles, such as the twelfth and the fifteenth. All that we do is unworthy, so that we must fall down before you and unfeignedly confess that we are unprofitable servants—and it is precisely Justification by the free Grace of Christ alone that shows us that all that we are and have done even as believers is called in question.

Justification by Grace alone remains the sole ground of the Christian life; we never advance beyond it, as if justification were only the beginning of a new self-righteousness, the beginning of a life of sanctification which is what we do in response to justification. Of course we are summoned to live out day by day what we already are in Christ through His self-consecration or sanctification, but sanctification is not what we do in addition to what God has done in justification. And yet that is the tendency of the Westminster Catechisms, where we have a return to the Roman notion of infused sanctification that has to be worked out through strict obedience to legal precepts—hence the exposition of the Ten Commandments takes up the greater part of the Catechisms.

But the Scots Confession laid the axe to the root of any such movement when it insisted that we have to spoil ourselves even of our own regeneration and sanctification as well as justification. What is “axed” so radically was the notion of “co-redemption” which in our day has again become so rampant, not only in the Roman Church, but in Liberal and Evangelical Protestantism, e.g., the emphasis upon existential decision as the means whereby we “make real” for ourselves the kerygma [proclamation] of the New Testament, which means that in the last resort our salvation depends upon our own personal or existential decision. That is the exact antithesis of the Reformed doctrine of election, which rests salvation upon the prior and objective decision of God in Christ. It is Justification by Grace alone that guards the Gospel from corruption by “Evangelicals,” “Liberals,” and Romans alike.

Natural knowledge

(b) Justification by the Grace of Christ alone calls in question not only all natural goodness but all natural knowledge. Natural knowledge is as much the work of the flesh as natural goodness; it is a work of the natural man. It is at this point that Karl Barth has made such an immense contribution to the Reformation. We cannot separate knowing and being for they belong to the same man, and it is the whole man, with his knowing and his acting, with the whole of his being, who is called in question by Justification. Justification puts us in the right and truth of God and therefore tells us that we are in untruth.

Now, let it be clear that Justification by Grace alone does not mean that there is no natural goodness in man, but that man with his natural goodness is called in question. Jesus Christ died for the whole man (with his good and his evil) not for part of him, the evil part, but for the whole man. He died for all men, the good and the bad, and all alike come under the total judgment of His Death and Resurrection; all alike have to be born again in Him, and made new creatures.

That is the radical nature of the Gospel, which becomes so clear to us when we communicate at the Holy Table in the Body and Blood of our Lord, for there we feel ashamed for our whole being, for our good as well as for our evil. But the same applies to our natural knowledge.

Justification by the Grace of Christ alone does not mean that there is no natural knowledge—what natural man is there who does not know something of God even if he holds it down in unrighteousness or turns the truth into a lie? But it does mean that the whole of that natural knowledge is called in question by Christ, who when He comes to us says: **“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.”**

The whole man with his natural knowledge is there questioned down to the root of his being, for man is summoned to look away from all that he is and knows or thinks he knows to Christ who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one goes to the Father but by Him.

The theology of Barth can be described, then, as the application of Justification of the whole realm of man’s life, to the realm of his knowing as well as the realm of his doing. In that, he has sought to follow through the radical consequences of the Reformation from which our forefathers resiled [def: recoiled, withdrew] led when they took refuge again, like the Romans, in the works of the natural man, for justification.

But if we are to take the Scots Confession seriously, then we have to apply this not only to natural knowledge but to all Christian knowledge; we have to learn to spoil ourselves of our own vaunted knowledge, we have to let our own theology be called into radical question, by Christ.

If we translate the word “justification” by the word “verification,” we can see the startling relevance of this to modern theological and philosophical discussions. Justification by Grace alone tells us that verification of our faith or knowledge on any other grounds or out of any other source, than Jesus Christ, is to be set aside.

Justification has an epistemological as well as an ethical reference—epistemologically (the theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope. Epistemology is the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion – added by Mr. Vautour from Microsoft Bing). it insists that the only legitimate demonstration of Christian truth is that which is in accordance with its nature, which is Grace, and that to seek justification of it on any other ground is not only fundamentally false in itself but to falsify the Gospel at its very basis.

But apart from the contemporary debate on “verification,” Justification means that at every point in our theological inquiry we have to let our knowledge, our theology, our formulations, our statements, be called into question by the very Christ toward whom they point, for He alone is the Truth.

Justification means that our theological statements are of such a kind that they do not claim to have truth in themselves, for by their very nature they point away from themselves to Christ as the one Truth of God. Therefore whenever we claim that our theological statements or our formulations have their truth in themselves we are turning back into the way of self-justification.

Out of sheer respect for the majesty of the Truth as it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures, we have to do our utmost to speak correctly and exactly about it—that is the meaning of orthodoxy and the way of humility—but when we have done all this, we have still to confess that we are unfaithful servants, that all our efforts fall far short of the truth.

Far from seeking justification on the ground of our “orthodoxy,” we can only serve the Truth faithfully if we point away from ourselves and our statements to Christ Himself, and direct all eyes to Him alone. He who boasts of orthodoxy thus sins against Justification by Christ alone, for he justifies himself by appeal to his own beliefs or his own formulations of belief and thereby does despite to the Truth and Grace of Christ. Once a Church begins to boast of its “orthodoxy” it begins to fall from Grace.

Tradition

(c) Justification by the Grace of Christ alone calls in question all tradition. The radical consequence of Justification was keenly felt in this direction at the Reformation. Concentration upon the Word of God, the self-utterance of the Truth, and the acknowledgment of its primacy, cut the strings of prejudice and prejudgment and made clear the path of faith and obedience.

Justification here meant that faith is determined by the objective Word of God as its ultimate authority, and so it was freed from the shackles of every lesser authority, for devotion to the Truth of the Word (the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth) inculcated a readiness to rethink all preconceptions and to put all traditional ideas to the test face to face with the Word.

In other words, sheer attachment to the Word of God as the real object of knowledge meant detachment from all other sources and norms of knowledge, and the demand that all traditional ideas and notions had to be tested at the bar of the Word. That did not mean that tradition was to be despised, but that it was to be subjected to the criticism of the Word and the Spirit, and corrected through conformity to Jesus Christ.

The Reformation stood, therefore, for the supremacy of the Word over all tradition, and for theological activity as the repentant rethinking of all tradition face to face with the Revelation of God in Jesus Christ. But that applies no less to the Reformed and Evangelical tradition; to our Presbyterian tradition as well as to the Roman tradition.

When we examine our own position today, it is astonishing to find how close we have come to the Roman view even in the Church of Scotland. How frequently, for example, we find that appeal is made to “Christian instinct” or to “the mind of the Church” over against the plain utterances of Holy Scripture, and often just at those places where the Word of God offends our will, opposes our habits, or cuts against the grain of our desire!

And how massive is the effect of our several traditions upon the interpretations of the Bible! How easy it is to allow the Presbyterian tradition to determine our reading of the New Testament, especially when it is a question of justifying our tradition before the critique of others!

There can be no doubt that every one of the great Churches of the Reformation—the Lutheran, the Anglican, and the Reformed—has developed its own masterful tradition, and that that tradition today exercises massive influence not only over its way of interpreting the Bible and formulating its doctrine but over the whole shape and direction of its life.

Those who shut their eyes to this fact are precisely those who are most enslaved to the dominant power of tradition just because it has become an unconscious canon and norm of their thinking.

It is high time we asked again whether the Word of God really does have free course amongst us and whether it is not after all bound and fettered by the traditions of men. The tragedy, apparently, is that the very structures of our Churches represent the fossilization of traditions that have grown up by practice and procedure, have become so hardened in self-justification that even the Word of God can hardly crack them open. There is scarcely a Church that claims to be *ecclesia reformata* [church reformed] that can truthfully claim to be *semper reformanda* [always reformed].
Systems and orders

(d) Justification by Christ alone calls in question all systems and orders, and calls them in question because Jesus Christ alone is central and supreme in the one Church of God. In any true theological system, Justification is by reference to Christ alone, for conformity to Christ as the Truth of God for us is the one ultimate principle of unity.

Likewise Justification in ecclesiastical order or polity ought to be through appeal to Christ alone. Our quarrel with the Church of Rome in doctrinal matters concerns the centrality of Jesus Christ, the primacy and supremacy of Christology which is so obscured and compromised by Roman doctrines of merit and tradition, and above all by Mariology.

In our debate with the Church of England over questions of order, we are also concerned with the centrality of Christ, and the primacy of Christology—and therefore the doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ is in the forefront.

It is Justification by Christ alone that makes it so, for He alone is the ground and Head of the Church, and in Him alone is the Church's unity constituted and its order maintained. But for that very reason Justification by Christ alone disallows any appeal from one Church to another for recognition of its orders, as it also rebukes the self-justification of a Church in calling in question the orders of another Church.

Justification by Christ alone means that we renounce the way of the flesh in seeking honor from men, or justification from one another; and therefore Justification by Christ alone means that in any movement for reconciliation between Churches, the question of the recognition of orders cannot have priority without radical betrayal of the Reformation, nay, without radical betrayal of Christ for He is thereby ousted from His place of centrality.

It becomes more and more clear that in the ecumenical movement it is the doctrine of Justification by Christ alone that is at stake, and that it can just as easily be sinned against by those who shout loudest that they are upholding the Reformation tradition as by those who make no such boast. He is truest to the Reformation tradition who is always ready to subject it to the ruthless questioning of the Word of God.

Ministry and worship

(e) Nowhere does Justification by Christ alone have more radical consequences than in regard to the pastoral ministry. Justification by Christ is grounded upon His mighty act in which He took our place, substituting Himself for us under the divine judgment, and substituting Himself for us in the obedient response He rendered to God in worship and thanksgiving and praise.

In Himself He has opened up a way to the Father, so that we may approach God solely through Him and on the ground of what He has done and is—therefore we pray in His Name, and whatever we do, we do in His Name before God. Thus the whole of our worship and ministry reposes upon the substitutionary work of Christ.

Now the radical nature of that is apparent from the fact that through substituting Himself in our place there takes place a displacement of our humanity by the humanity of Christ—that is why Jesus insists that we can only follow Him by denying ourselves, by letting Him displace us from a place of centrality, and by letting Him take our place.

At the Reformation this doctrine had immediate effect in the overthrow of Roman sacerdotalism—Jesus Christ is our sole Priest. He is the one and only Man who can mediate between us and God, so that we approach God solely through the mediation of the Humanity of Jesus, through His incarnate Priesthood.

When the Humanity of Christ is depreciated or whenever it is obscured by the sheer majesty of His Deity, then the need for some other human mediation creeps in; hence in the Dark and Middle Ages arose the need for a human priesthood to mediate between sinful humanity and the exalted Christ, the majestic Judge and King.

There was of course no denial of the Deity of Christ by the Reformers—on the contrary, they restored the purity of faith in Christ as God through overthrowing the accretions that compromised it; but they also restored the place occupied in the New Testament and the Early Church by the Humanity of Christ, as He who took our human nature in order to be our Priest, as He who takes our side and is our Advocate before the judgment of God, and who once and for all has wrought out atonement for us in His sacrifice on the Cross, and therefore as He who eternally stands in for us as our heavenly Mediator and High Priest.

The Church on earth lives and acts only as it is directed by its heavenly Lord, and only in such a way that His Ministry is reflected in the midst of its ministry and worship. Therefore from first to last the worship and ministry of the

Church on earth must be governed by the fact that Christ substitutes Himself in our place, and that our humanity with its own acts of worship, is displaced by His, so that we appear before God not in our own name, not in our own significance, not in virtue of our own acts of confession, contrition, worship, and thanksgiving, but solely in the name of Christ and solely in virtue of what He has done in our name and on our behalf, and in our stead.

Justification by Christ alone means that from first to last in the worship of God and in the ministry of the Gospel, Christ Himself is central, and that we draw near in worship and service only through letting Him take our place. He only is Priest. He only represents humanity. He only has an offering with which to appear before God and with which God is well pleased. He only presents our prayers before God, and He only is our praise and thanksgiving and worship as we appear before the face of the Father. Nothing in our hands we bring—simply to His Cross we cling.

But what has happened in Protestant worship and ministry? Is it not too often the case that the whole life and worship of the congregation revolves round the personality of the minister? He is the one who is in the center; he offers the prayers of the congregation; he it is who mediates “truth” through his personality, and he it is who mediates between the people and God through conducting the worship entirely on his own.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of the popular minister where everything centers on him, and the whole life of the congregation is built round him. What is that but Protestant sacerdotalism, sacerdotalism which involves the displacement of the Humanity of Christ by the humanity of the minister, and the obscuring of the Person of Christ by the personality of the minister?

How extraordinary that Protestantism should thus develop a new sacerdotalism, to be sure a psychological rather than a sacramental sacerdotalism, but a sacerdotalism nonetheless, in which it is the personality of the minister which both mediates the Word of God to man and mediates the worship of man to God!

Protestant Churches are full of these “psychological priests” and more and more they evolve a psychological cult and develop a form of psychological counseling which displaces the truly pastoral ministry of Christ. How frequently, for example, the minister’s prayers are so crammed with his own personality (with all its boring idiosyncrasies!) that the worshipper cannot get past him in order to worship God in the name of Christ—but is forced to worship God in the name of the minister!

How frequently the sermon is not an exposition of the Word of God but an exposition of the minister’s own views on this or that subject! And how frequently the whole life of the congregation is so built up on the personality of the minister that when he goes the congregation all but collapses or dwindles away!

There can be no doubt that the whole concept of the ministry and of worship in our Reformed Churches needs to be brought back to the criticism of the Word of God in order that we may learn again the meaning of Justification by Christ alone in the midst of the Church’s life and work.

Jesus Christ must be given His rightful place by being set right in the center, as Head and Lord of the Church, as its sole Prophet and Priest and King, and that means in the midst of our preaching, in the basic notion of the ministerial office, in the fundamental mode of worship, and in the whole life of the congregation as the Body of Christ alone.



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GCI principle website and Moncton Websites—a) www.gci.org , b) gcinewbrunswick.org , c) <https://www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton> ; d) *Grace Communion International-Moncton* <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgKazyWhmKmDZy69vJcFfPg>

For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website.

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