

Poetry.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

Ah, whither dost thou stray,
Thou foolish sheep, and why,
From this safe fold away,
And from thy Keeper's eye?

Saviour, and dost thou speak
Such gracious words to me?
Dost thou the wanderer seek
Who basely fled from thee?

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.
A Discourse preached in Tavistock Chapel, London, BY THE REV. EDWARD BICKERSTETH.

ROMANS III. 28.
Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

WHEN requested to join my beloved brethren in the ministry, in the design of giving a Course of Sermons on the Points in Controversy between the Romish and Protestant Churches, I did not think it right; notwithstanding the labours of an arduous office, to decline taking a part in such a course.

The peculiar office which has been assigned to me, is to state and defend the doctrine of JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH. It is the very heart and core of common Christianity, and justly called by Luther "the article of a standing or falling church."

May the blessed Saviour, who has the fulness of all grace for his people, now send down the Holy Spirit upon us, to enable me clearly and distinctly to state the Scriptural truth, and to bless the statement to the good of his Church.

I. THE DOCTRINE OF THE ROMANISTS ON JUSTIFICATION;
II. THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH;
III. THE VAST IMPORTANCE OF THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE.

I. THE DOCTRINE OF THE ROMANISTS ON JUSTIFICATION.
There is some difficulty in stating their doctrine, from the want of an universally received standard in that Church; but it will be sufficient for our purpose to take their most generally approved writers, and their most generally received authorities, as the evidence of their doctrines.

God forbid that we should in the slightest degree attribute to them doctrines which they do not hold; we had infinitely rather find out, that, though under unscripural expressions, they held nothing but the truth. It is not in the spirit of controversy, and angry dispute, but in the spirit of tender love and pity, that we desire to preach these sermons.

Some of their writers have gone considerable lengths with the Protestant Church on this doctrine. Thus Bossuet, in his Exposition of the doctrine of the Catholic Church, says, "We believe, in the first place, that our sins are forgiven us gratuitously by the mercy of God, on account of Jesus Christ."

And when Dr. Wake in reply brought forward the contradictory declarations of that Council, the Vicar of Wakefield's exposition says in answer to Wake, "He imposes upon us as if we made our inward righteousness a part of justification; and so, by consequence, said that our justification itself is wrought also by our good works."

But in fact Bossuet almost immediately after the words already quoted, makes sanctification a part of justification. He says, still treating of justification, "the justice of Jesus Christ is not only imputed, but is actually communicated to his faithful; by the operation of the Holy Ghost; so that they are not only reputed; but are really made just by his grace."

We have here very cautiously expressed, the elements of the doctrine of the Romish Church on justification—which is, that it includes two things, forgiveness of sins and sanctification—not only our being pardoned,

but our being made holy. We will now bring further proofs that this is really their doctrine:

"On my text, the Rhemish Testament, authorized by Dr. Murray, has this note: "The faith to which the apostle here attributes man's justification, is not a presumptuous assurance of our being justified, but a firm and lively belief of all that God has revealed or promised (Heb. xi.), a faith working through charity in Jesus Christ. (Gal. v. 6.)" We agree to the statement thus far—we object to what then follows. "In short, a faith which TAKES IN hope, love, repentance, and the use of the sacraments. And the works which he here excludes are only the works of the law, that is such as are done by the law of nature, or that of Moses antecedent to the faith of Christ, but by no means such as follow faith and proceed from it."

It is clear from this note, that the present Romanists require Christian obedience previously and in order to our justification.

On another passage, (Ephes. ii. 8, 9.) By grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God, not of works that no man may glory. (Rhemish Version.) The note of the Romanists on the words "not of works" is, "as of our own growth, or from ourselves; but as from the grace of God;" thus intimating that we are saved by works performed by divine grace.

This doctrine, which has been called justification by inherent righteousness, in opposition to the Protestant doctrine of justification by imputed righteousness, runs through their catechisms, their books of devotion, and their elementary treatises of instruction.

In the abridgement of Christian Doctrine, the answer to the question, "Why does the Church command us to fast?" is this, "That by fasting we may satisfy God for our sins."

In the abstract of the Doway Catechism we have the following questions and answers: Q. How is mortal sin remitted? A. By hearty contrition and penance. Q. How is venial sin remitted? A. By the sacraments, by devout prayer and the like.

Hence prayers in the Roman Missal are offered up for forgiveness by the merits of the Saints, and by the oblation of the sacrament; and the sacrament of penance is considered to absolve the penitent sinner from his sins. Justification is thus sought in part, at least, from the prayers, the doings, and the goodness of men.

"Nay, in Bishop Baines' Sermon on Faith, Hope, and Charity, now circulated with such profusion and industry by the Roman Catholics, you will find that he glories in the statement that his Church insists on confession to the Priest and submitting to make atonement to God, by prayer, by fasting, and by works of self-denial, and by restitution, before the Romanist can obtain either absolution from the Priest, or forgiveness from God.

But let us proceed to quote the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent, which is, on doctrine, the highest authority of the Roman Church.

In the Sixth Session, ch. 7. we read this statement, "Justification itself is not only a remission of sins, but sanctification and renovation of the inner man by a voluntary reception of grace and of the gifts which accompany it, whence man from unjust is made just, and from an enemy a friend, that he may be made an heir according to the hope of everlasting life." (P. 44.)

In the 10th chapter the Council speaks of the increase of the justification which we have received by advancing from virtue to virtue. (P. 47.)

In the 14th chapter mention is made of those who by sin fall from the grace of justification, and it is said that they cannot rise again but by the sacrament of penance which is called a second plank after a shipwreck. (P. 51.)

After the Chapters there are Canons against what the Council decrees to be erroneous, at the end of every one of which a solemn anathema is pronounced.

The 9th Canon is as follows, "If any one shall say that the wicked man is justified by faith alone, by which is meant, that to obtain the grace of justification, there needs no other thing to co-operate with it, and that it is not so much as necessary that he should prepare and dispose himself by the motions of his will, let him be accursed." (P. 53.)

The 11th Canon is, "If any one shall say, that men are justified either by the alone imputation of Christ's righteousness, or only by the remission of sins, excluding grace and charity, which is diffused in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and inheres in them,—or that the grace by which we are justified is only the favour of God, let him be accursed." (P. 53.)

The 24th Canon is, "If any one shall say that the righteousness received is neither preserved nor increased by good works, but that those good works are only signs and fruits of justification received, and not a cause that increases it, let him be accursed." (P. 62.)

The 32d Canon says, "If any one shall say that the good works of a justified man are so the gifts of God that they are not also the merits of the same justified person; or that he, being justified by the good works which are performed by him through the grace of God and merits of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is, does not truly merit increase of grace and eternal life, and the attainment of that eternal life, if he shall depart in grace and even the increase of glory, let him be accursed." (P. 64.)

I feel persuaded that humble and contrite hearts are shocked and deeply grieved; that the intelligent Christian is struck with horror at such tremendous curses, pronounced on him

who holds the life-giving doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thought will be observed that the Decrees and Canons are expressed with much subtlety, and leave on the mind an impression that Protestants denied sanctification as consequent to justification, a doctrine which every sound Protestant strenuously holds, yet the doctrine of justification by inherent righteousness is distinctly asserted.

That this is the deliberate doctrine of the Roman Church is confirmed by the treatment of those Romanists who have held different sentiments. An eminent Roman writer, Ferrus, says, "We are justified before men on account of the law and works, but before God, who looks into the heart something greater is required, namely, faith. Observe a double justification of faith and works, both necessary to the Christian, that he may be just before God, and approved before men." This Protestant doctrine, expressed by a Romanist, is condemned in the Index Expurgatorius.

The devout Quesnel, in his Reflections on the New Testament, says, "God does not save us gratuitously, if there is any good thing in us which does not come from his grace, or which could merit it." But the Pope issued a Bull, condemning one hundred and one propositions, in this work; and Dr. Doyle asserts, "The very names of Pascal and Quesnel would cause every Catholic to revolt from you."

In fact, the Roman priests are required, by the Bull of Pius IV, to make a public profession of the faith which they embrace and receive each and all of the things which are declared by the Council of Trent, concerning justification, and to confirm the profession by a solemn oath.

Here then is the doctrine of the Roman Church: they assert that sanctification is a part of our justification. On this point the Protestant Church is wholly at issue with them; and against this doctrine we, at this time, solemnly renew our Protest, because we consider it to be directly contrary to multiplied express testimonies, and to laboured and lengthened statements of the word of God, and destructive of true faith and godliness.

Let us then proceed to consider, II. THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

The true meaning of the term justification must first be cleared and established. The Romanists consider it to be the same as to pardon and make holy; we assert, on the other hand, that it is opposed to condemnation, and signifies to account and accept as righteous, in judgment.

We prove the assertion by the use of the word. Thus in the case of controversy, by the law of Moses, when they came to judgment, the judges are directed to justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked. (Deut. xxv. 1.) Here justification is distinctly opposed to condemnation, and stated as the sentence founded on a judgment entered into. Thus David prays, Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. (Psalm cxlii. 2.) Justification has here a clear reference to God's approval of the soul, as free from guilt. Thus again St. Paul asks, Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? (Rom. viii. 33, 34.) Here justification is God's accounting us free from the charge of sin, and accepting us as righteous.

To imagine that the word justify signifies to make holy, would reduce many passages of Scripture to absurd conclusions. Thus it is said, He that justifieth the wicked; and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord. (Prov. xvii. 15.) Can it be an abomination to the Lord to make the wicked holy? Isaiah says, Woe unto them . . . that justify the wicked for reward, (Isaiah v. 22, 23.) but does not God rather pronounce a blessing than a woe on him who converteth a sinner from the error of his ways? (James v. 19, 20.)

Hence we conclude that justification is being accounted just, and not being made holy. In the case of fallen man, therefore, to be justified before Almighty God, is to be approved of him as free from the guilt of sin and its deserved punishment, and as having that righteousness which entitles to the reward of life.

But how can sinful man be just with the holy God? He will by no means acquit the guilty; his Law is holy, just, and good; it declares, The soul that sinneth it shall die. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. A law necessarily requires perfect conformity to it, in order to our being justified by it: a single failure forfeits the blessing, and incurs the curse; but we have sinned. We are, therefore, under sentence of the death and the curse of the Law. The wrath of Almighty God is impending over us; how shall we escape?

The convinced sinner says, "I feel this; I am in this tremendous condition; I am under the load of guilt, I am impotent to fulfil even present duty, how can I be justified?" It is a heart thrilling question. Eternity depends upon it. Shall I attain the life of eternal bliss and glory, or sink to be the companion of accursed spirits in the dreary regions of eternal woe? My brethren; it is not a mere topic of controversy, a subject only to manifest our skill and triumph over an adversary; it is our life, or our death, our eternal life or our eternal death.

And here we must have, not man's word to support us, but God's word; the word of our Creator, our Governor, and our final Judge; that word which will stand when heaven and earth pass away—we must have not man's devices, but God's own wisdom to help us, or we sink, and that for ever.

Blessed, for ever blessed be our God, the Gospel reveals to us a satisfaction made to the

divine justice by the death of the only Son of God, and a righteousness for sinners, and reckoned theirs through faith in him. Those who believe the testimony of God concerning Christ Jesus are justified. And this faith is itself the gift of God, and the fruit of the quickening and regenerating Spirit of Christ Jesus. (John i. 12, 13; vi. 44. Eph. i. 19.)

The true meaning of that faith which justifies must now also be cleared. St. James plainly demonstrates that it is not a dead faith, unproductive of obedience, nor a vain profession of our belief. The faith which justifies implies a real acknowledgement of those truths which are connected with the mediation of Christ—such as the holiness, goodness, and justice of the Divine Law, our guilt and unworthiness, our total ruin, the tremendous evil of sin, the divine equity in our condemnation, the impossibility of help in ourselves, and of salvation by our own goodness; and these things being acknowledged and felt through the operation of the Holy Ghost, it is believing the divine record concerning Christ (1st John v. 9—12); such a belief as leads us to turn to, and wholly rely upon him as the only and complete Saviour, and to live to his glory. It is in short, a lively faith in Christ Jesus, a faith which is fruitful in love and good works. But, observe, it does not justify as a virtue, or as the parent of every virtue, but it justifies as it forsakes and gives up all hope in our own goodness, and our own virtues, receives the only Saviour and connects the soul with him who was made sin for us—that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, (2 Cor. v. 21.) according to that declaration, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

We will now endeavour more fully to establish the doctrine of our justification before God by faith in Christ from the Holy Scriptures. It would not be difficult to establish it by the concessions of the Romanists themselves; even Bellarmine, who was so earnest a defender of justification by works, is said, upon second and more serious thoughts, to have said, "On account of the uncertainty of the present life, it is most safe to rely on Christ alone." It would be easy to prove this doctrine by multiplied testimonies of the Fathers, but the time is too short, and if I had more time I would not do it. We wish your faith to stand not in the word of man, but in the word of God.

There are two Epistles, that to the Romans and that to the Galatians, the scope of both of which is to confirm the doctrine of our free justification by faith in Christ. In the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle first proves the sinfulness of man, of every man without exception; for he asserts every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. The law of nature leaves the Gentiles without excuse, the law given by Moses leaves the Jew condemned. Thus St. Paul says, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. So far from the law helping, it only discovers our sin.

The Apostle then shows that divine method by which alone sinners can be justified. But now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets—observe his clear definition of it, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, (observe the redemption of the expression denoting the freedom of justification,) through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

The Apostle triumphantly asks, where is boasting then? he answers, it is excluded! he asks again, by what law? of works? and replies, nay, but by the law of faith, and so comes to the most comfortable conclusion of the text. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law.

Can any thing be more explicit, full, and decisive? The whole train of argument centres in one point, and beautifully introduces and immovably establishes the final deduction. The concluding questions fix and confirm the meaning, justification by faith alone, excluding boasting.

But the subject is so important, and the testimonies of Scripture are so numerous and so decisive, that we will add some other passages to illustrate and confirm the doctrine. Justification cannot be of works, for the Apostle says (Rom. iv. 5.) To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. So he tells the Ephesians (ii. 8.) By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.

It cannot be by our obedience, for it is attributed simply to the obedience of Christ. Rom. v. 18, 19. By the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.

It cannot be by faith as a work, for St. Paul asserts, Rom. iv. 16: Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace: to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed. And he shows that grace and works are in this matter quite opposite and inconsistent. (Rom. xi. 6.)

Justification cannot be attained by our own righteousness, for the Apostle condemns the Jews for seeking it in this way, Rom. x. 3, 4. They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God; for Christ is the end of

the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Nor can there be a second justification before God by works, after a first justification by faith. From first to last the just live by faith, Rom. i. 17. Heb. x. 38, 39. The Apostle says we are made partakers of Christ; if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end. He tells the justified Roman, 'thou standest by faith. The scriptures know nothing of a double justification, and they so connect present justification by faith with eternal life and glory (Rom. v. 1, 2) as to leave no room for the dream of a second justification by works.

Nor yet, and weigh this well, can you seek to be justified partly by obedience to a law, and partly by Christ, without forfeiting all hope in Christ, (Gal. v. 2—4.) I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

If we seek righteousness therefore by works, we shall be left without righteousness." St. Paul says, Rom. ix. 31. Israel which followed after the law of righteousness hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.

Though justification has an ultimate reference to the day of judgment and is to be then openly declared, and its fruits testified and exhibited, yet it is still a blessing conferred in the present life, and of which we may now enjoy the comfort, for the Apostle says, (Rom. v. 1.) Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The faith that saves, however, is not a dead and vain, but a true and living faith. St. James says, (ii. 14.) What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and have not works, Can faith save him? Any man may profess to have faith, but real faith is proved to be such by its fruits.

Justification is continued by the same means by which it was first received. It is founded on his mediation, who was foretold as one to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousness. Who ever liveth to make intercession for us, and who hath declared his sheep shall never perish: he thus maintains the faith which he gave; (Luke xxii. 32) and thus, notwithstanding the daily sinfulness of the believer, his justification, as to his enjoyment of the blessing, is renewed and confirmed from day to day by constantly recurring faith in Jesus—so the Apostle describes his experience, The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal. ii. 20.)

Such is the doctrine of our free justification before God by faith. It is our being accounted righteous in his sight through Christ Jesus. It springs from divine grace; it is founded on the satisfaction made to the divine justice and the fulfilling of the divine law, by the sufferings and obedience unto death of our Lord; it is received by a lively faith in Christ, and it is manifested to our own conscience and the world, by a life of holy obedience. It is continued and maintained through the same faith by which it was first obtained, and it will be evidenced in the day of judgment by all those fruits of a holy life which ever spring from genuine faith.

To be continued.

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER.

Though this excellent book has been so long in use, there is reason to fear that it has received, and still receives the approbation of thousands, who understand it not; or at least do not clearly perceive in what its real excellence properly consists. Should the following essays be the means of throwing any additional light on the subject in the minds of any persons, who shall favour them with a perusal; should any, who have hitherto rested in the form, be brought to enter into the spirit of our service; should the ignorant find instruction; gainsayers be silenced; or the flame of devotion in any sincere worshippers be raised to a higher pitch, the author will have his reward. The following essays, however, are not designed as polemical pieces. The author has no desire to enter the field of controversy. There are too many men of war already in the world, and he is determined not to increase the number. All that he requests from his reader is a candour of judgment, and a permission to express in public his own approbation of the services of that church, of which he is an unworthy member. While he feels himself cordially disposed to embrace in the widely extended arms of Christian charity, all those of whatever denomination, who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; he may surely be allowed, without offence, to give a preference to that establishment, to the doctrines of which he has solemnly subscribed his hand.

The orthodoxy of our public services will be considered, by every friend to truth one of its strongest recommendations, if it should appear (as the author devoutly wishes it may) in the course of the following essays) that our forms of worship harmonize with the truth of God, as revealed in the Bible. Our liturgy is not like a nose of wax, that may be adapted to every face. It is not contrived, like Mr. Pope's universal prayer, to suit the taste of infidels and heretics. But its language on all the fundamental doctrines of Christianity is clear and decisive. This circumstance indeed will not recommend it to those, who have imbibed the spirit of the present day; in which indifference to all religious truth, misnamed charity and candour, has overflowed like a deluge, almost every rank and order of men. Our reformers sought not to please