

# The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, December 26. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**Herber there's any such thing as the imputed Righteousness of Christ, by which we are justified, since the *Quest* can find no mention thereof in the new Testament?

*Answer.* It's for want of looking in the right place then, or indeed one wou'd think looking not at all, since 'tis the very chief design, and whole Tenor of the Gospel, or New Law of Jesus, that we are sav'd by his Merits, and for his sake, not our own, which we look on to be the same in other words with Christs imputed Righteousness. But since there are on both sides very dangerous Errors on this point, the *Papists* making their own works or Merits the proper Cause of our Justification, and the *Antinomians* denying any necessity of Good Works, we must carefully proceed between both Extreams to find the Truth; which to do, we must enquire what's the meaning of being Justified, and of Christs imputed Righteousness, and then we shall easily reconcile all mistakes about either of 'em, and show in what Sense they are to be put together. By God's justifying a Sinner then, as the great Dr. Barrow most clearly expresses it, is meant, *his looking upon us, and treating us as just and innocent persons, altho' before we stood guilty of heinous Sins, and thereupon liable to grievous punishments.* Accordingly we say, as Gods Word has directed us, that we are justified or accepted with God in several Sences, and by several ways — as a Means by Faith, or a true Belief of what God reveals, and trusting in his Mercy thro' his Son, which is so plain in the Scripture, that there are every where found places to prove it. To instance in a few, *Rom. 3. 30. God who justifieth the Circumcision by Faith, and the uncircumcision thro' Faith; and ch. 3. v. 20. By the deeds of the Law shall no Flesh be justified, — and 28. A man is justified by Faith without the Deeds of the Law: What Law? the Law of works, as the Apostle tells us the verse before, or Jewish Law, wherein they so much trusted, as appears both from its being oppos'd to the Law of Faith, or the Gospel, both here and all thro' the Epistle to the Galatians, who were inclin'd to Judaism, and by v. 29. of this same Chap. Is he the God of the Jews only, is he not also of the Gentiles? But this Law of Faith is oppos'd both to the Ceremonial Law, which was thereby quite abolish'd, and even to the rigid moral Law, a sincere obedience being accepted by the Gospel, whereas the legal Dispensation requir'd that which was perfect, or Blood for its Transgression; for as the same Apostle, *If there had bin a Law which cou'd have given Life, Righteousness should have bin by the Law; the rigid Moral, not the Ceremonial, Do this and live, as is further clear from his arguing v. 23. of the forenam'd Chap. All have sinn'd, and come short of the Glory of God. And that 'tis by the Law of Faith, or by Faith as a means, that we are justified or accepted with God, not by a rigid observation of all the precepts of the Law, now impossible for us to observe, he proves from the instance of Abraham in the next Chap. Abraham believ'd God, and that was counted unto him for Righteousness; from which Text, unless we are mistaken, may be inferr'd a clearer Definition of Faith than all the Thorny niceties of the Schoolmen ever yet produced, namely, that 'tis a firm dependance on God's Goodness and Truth, that whatever he has promis'd, he is both able and willing to perform: And this sence thereof is confirm'd and explain'd quite thro' the 4th. chap. He against hope believed in hope — being not weak in Faith, he consider'd not his own Body being dead, Sec. He stagger'd not at the promise of God thro' unbelief, but was strong in Faith, giving Glory to God; and being fully perswaded that what he had promis'd he was able also to perform — and therefore it [Faith] was imputed unto him for Righteousness: Tho' he was not without Fault, yet God accepted this confidence of his in his promise, instead of a perfect Righteousness or Obedience. Observe what is added v. 23. and**

24. that this was written not for his sake alone, for his Honour, but for our sakes also, for our Direction and Comfort, to whom it shall be imputed, Faith for righteousness, as 'twas to him, if we believe in him that raised up Jesus from the dead, as Abraham did in him that cou'd raise up Isaac a Type of Christ. From all this it appears that we are, and how 'tis that we are justified by Faith, as a means of our Reconciliation with God: — But then this very Faith must be justify'd by works, as Abraham's was, for't had been in vain for him to have pretended he had believ'd Gods former promise to him, had he not in obedience to his Command also offer'd up his Son Isaac. So faith the same Apostle in the 11th. to the Hebrews, *By Faith Abraham when he was try'd offer'd up Isaac; whence we may learn to reconcile him and St. James, who speaks of the self same thing, owns that Abraham was justified by Faith, or accounted Righteous before God: Abraham, says he, believ'd in God. He plainly speaks of true Faith, the Nature of which he shows, namely, that Good Works was of the Essence and Perfection thereof: Faith without works is dead — By works is Faith made perfect. Abraham was justified by works, that is, as just after 'tis explain'd, Faith wrought with his works.* Thus far we are then come, Faith justifies as a Means or Instrument, Works justifie that Faith. Then 3dly, We are also justified by Baptism, as a Sign, a Pledge, an earnest of our acceptance with God. Its the Door of the Church, (*extra Ecclesiam non est Salus*, in an ordinary way) as Faith is the Hand that opens and admits us in. And this many Learned men believe is intended in that washing which the Apostle refers to, *1 Cor. 6. 11. And such were some of you, but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the Name of our Lord, and by the Spirit of our God; where is a clear allusion to, if not a distinct mention of the three adorable Persons of the sacred Trinity into whose Name we are baptiz'd, our Lord Jesus, and the H. Spirit of our God; which perhaps relates to Father and Son both, since it proceeds from them both. In the same sence is Baptism call'd by the same Apostle, *λειτουργία πλυστηριακή, the Laver of Regeneration; accordingly our Church not only lawfully but commendably uses the word Regeneration for Baptism, and in the Offices for that Sacrament, more than once mentions the child's being Regenerate, which it explains by its being grafted into the Body of Christs Church, and so admitted into the Communion of Saints, as all those are call'd who are Members thereof, and appears so to the World, tho' they may be Hypocrites in their Hearts, and before God. They have then a foederal Holiness, as Children of believing Parents, and as the first-born among the Jews were dedicate, devoted, or Holy in the Lord, and in that sence they are Holy, in that sence they are Regenerate, as 'tis in the other Sacrament, and as even ill men in a sence eat and drink the Body and Blood of the Lord; that is, Christ and the Church have done their parts, and Holiness, Justification and Regeneration are actually conferr'd by their Sacraments, if the persons receiving be not wanting to themselves, for they work not as Charms, but by a rational way as well as in a Spiritual manner. And tho' the Apostle says, *Baptism does now save us; and a greater than he, our Saviour himself, that he that believeth and is baptiz'd, shall be sav'd; making Salvation the effect of both, yet as our Saviours words intimate, there must be something besides Baptism, namely, Faith, which as is prov'd, includes Obedience: and the Apostle adds, 'Tis not only the Ceremony which must save us, removing the filth of the Flesh, or outward ceremonial washing with water, but the answer of a good Conscience towards God, through the resurrection of Jesus. Thus much of the Justification by Baptism, which in the sence we have explain'd it, not only the Church of England, but all the Primitive Ch. did unanimously believe.***

lieve. For the last and chief sense in which we are justifi'd, or accounted Righteous before God, the sole, true, proper, meritorious Cause thereof is the Merits or Righteousness of Christ, and we wonder how any can deny this who have ever seen the Bible; by which we mean all his active and passive Obedience, tho' more especially the inestimable Sacrifice of his most precious Death, by which, as the Apostle tells us, *he became the Author of Eternal Salvation to those that believe*: Tho' his very Death was in a sense justifi'd, or acceptable with God by the obedience and Holiness of his Life, as well as the dignity of his Person; for had he not been the *Lamb without spot*, his Death cou'd have been of no value to atone for the Sins of the World, all the World were lost in *Adams* transgression. Now if this Righteousness, or Obedience, or Merits of our Saviour, which we take to signify the same thing, be not imputed to us, how come we to be sav'd by it, or by him who is the *second Adam*? or is't only his Example that saves us, as the *Socinians* very rationally dream? We shou'd have perfectly obey'd Gods will, we cou'd not, we have *all sinn'd, and were guilty of Death*. — Christ did perform it, Christ dy'd, how come we not to dye, if not by his Death? how was that acceptable as Man but by his Obedience? How come we to escape but by his dying in our stead, as well as finishing and fulfilling all Righteousness before he dy'd? and what's all that to us, unless imputed to us, that is, *accounted* as if we had really done it, since 'twas done by our Surety for us, tho' this still we are to obtain a share in by those means before prescribed, *viz.* Faith and Obedience; yet still not for that Obedience, for that Faith as a meritorious Cause, only as an Instrument are we sav'd, justifi'd, or accepted, or accounted righteous before God. We have advanc'd nothing on this Head but what we think we have express warrant for in the very words of Scripture. Therefore not to heap up many, from the Old Testament we shall only produce one, *Isa. 53. 11. My righteous Servant shall justify many, for he shall bear their Iniquities.* If he bears our Iniquities, the punishment of 'em, we by parity of Reason must bear his Righteousness, must be justified thereby. In the New Testament we'll only take our Arguments out of one Chapter, the 5th. of the *Rom.* where v. 9. 'tis said, *We are justified by his Blood*, there's his passive Obedience; v. 19. *By the Obedience of one shall many be made righteous* — there's both active and passive, because oppos'd to *Adams* Disobedience: But shou'd it be deny'd, the preceding verse we think will place it beyond doubt: *As by the offence of one Judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the Righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of Life.* *Adams* offence is imputed to us, or why do we dye, Christs Righteousness is imputed to us, or how do we live? By whose Righteousness its plainly affirm'd in the words mention'd, *all men* have a Title to Justification of Life, or such a State of favour and acceptance with God, as, if it be't their own faults, if they hearken to the offers of peace and pardon, before the *Day of Grace* is pass'd, will certainly by Gods Mercy bring them to eternal Life. — And thus we have endeavour'd to answer this Gentlemans Question: for the other, concerning the *odd Inclinations* of an Acquaintance of his, whom he takes to be a good Man, we think it more fit for a private Letter than such a publick Paper.

Quest. 2. *Seeing 'tis undeniably allowable by the Laws of God for the Clergy to marry, how comes it to pass that their Wives and Children above all others shou'd prove most unhappy?*

Ans. As the Question is propos'd, that their relations are generally and remarkably unhappy more than others, we are certain 'tis not true, but believe it only an old piece of Popish Superstition, which they have subtilly spread, and prevail'd to make it pass like one of their own Traditions, tho' 'tis indeed like them, no better than an old wives Fable, which to confute, we need send the Querist no farther than to the Parsons Sons Feast, where he may by the very sence of seeing be convinc'd of the contrary. This we say against their being generally unhappy, as if Heaven shou'd have plac'd some mark of displeasure upon them more than others, but yet if they should sometimes, nay not seldom prove more unhappy than others, there might be an

easy natural Reason to be assign'd for't. — They have had ingenious Education, they are left poor, the State takes no care of 'em, as it does in other Nations; hence they are expos'd to more Temptations than almost any others, for which reason 'tis rather a wonder that more of 'em take not ill Courses, and an honour that so many of 'em come to good, than at all strange if some of 'em prove no better than they shou'd be.

Quest. 3. *Whether there be any example of an Extempore Prayer made before a publick Congregation met together for the publick Worship of God in all the New Testament?*

Ans. The Querist knows as well, or better than we, that there is no such thing, if we take Extempore prayers for the immediate production of the Preacher, not the miraculous Gifts of Gods Holy Spirit, which was then pour'd out on the Apostles and other Christians. They, its true, might, and we believe did, pray without premeditation, both word and matter, being immediately inspired by God, which sure none but the wildest *Enthusiast* will now pretend to; or if they do, we must take the Liberty not to believe 'em 'till we see 'em work other Miracles. But here we must own, we think there is a Medium to be found between all Form and all Extempore, namely, premeditated prayer, we mean as to the things, not the words; — which seems at least as allowable as well as feasible, as a Sermon thus utter'd; which way of preaching, as the Querist knows, is the method of some Great Men in the Church of *England*, and even the same way of praying, as we think most grant, is allow'd before Sermon in their Pulpits, as the Writer of the *CASE of Prayer* owns, tho' cautiously; — and we also believe, that there are very few who have command of words enough to express themselves as they ought on such an occasion, and therefore a Form is the safe way.

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