

Present Truth

A magazine dedicated
to the restoration
of New Testament Christianity
in this generation

Sola Gratia Solely by Grace
Solo Christo Solely by Christ
Sola Fide Solely by Faith

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Vol 4 #5

UNDERSTANDING THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

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Present Truth

Present Truth is a magazine dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity and committed to upholding the great Reformation principle of justification by faith.

Editor: Robert D. Brinsmead
Publishing Editor: Norman Jarnes

Publishers: A group of Christian scholars and businessmen without denominational sponsorship who have united to uphold the objective gospel amid the present deluge of religious subjectivism. Multitudes are being caught up in the popular and frantic effort to find satisfaction in some sort of religious experience. *Present Truth* is a voice in this barren wilderness of groveling internalism, a voice which boldly proclaims those great principles upon which the Reformation was founded — namely:

1. *Sola gratia*. God's saving activity outside of us in the person of Jesus Christ is the sole *ground* of our salvation.

2. *Solo Christo*. Christ's doing and dying on our behalf is the sole *basis* of our acceptance and continued fellowship with God.

3. *Sola fide*. The Holy Spirit's gift of faith through the hearing of this objective, historical gospel is the sole *means* whereby Christ's substitutionary life and death are imputed to us for justification unto life eternal. He who is thus justified by faith and filled with God's Spirit will glory only in Christ's cross and make God's saving work in Christ the central affirmation of his Christian witness. Though he will be careful to obey God and please Him in all things, he will continue to repent rather than glory in the feeble attainments of his own Spirit-filled life.

4. *Sola Scriptura*. The Bible and the Bible only is the Christian's objective and infallible rule of faith and practice, alone sufficient that he may "be established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12).

Present Truth is not only committed to the task of upholding these founding principles of the Reformation, but it believes that we today must allow these principles to call all that we do and all that we teach into question. These principles call all traditions into question and all statements about the truth into question — even the ones set forth in this magazine. Our vision is a new Reformation that will recover what the Reformers bequeathed us and complete the restoration they so nobly began.

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“... the great proportion of professing evangelical Christians are basically Roman Catholic in their religious thinking — and they don’t know it.”

Editorial Introduction

“Most evangelical preaching is diametrically opposed to the fundamental emphasis of the Reformation.”

Present Truth is not interested in cheap polemics against Rome. We gladly acknowledge and salute those Christians who are found within the communion of the Roman Catholic Church. But we cannot ignore the stupendous issues of the Reformation. In this issue of *Present Truth* we will present some documents that will help us more clearly understand the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification by faith.

Some may quite reasonably ask, “What profit is there in studying that which we reject as error?” But we submit that there are reasons which justify the documentation in this issue of *Present Truth*.

1. Rome is a good mirror of the religion of human nature at its best. We have found that many people are awakened to the real force of the Reformation doctrine only after they have appreciated that their own thinking is reflected in Rome’s teaching on justification. We have taken surveys and proved beyond question that the great proportion of professing evangelical Christians are basically Roman Catholic in their religious thinking — and they don’t know it. We have on occasion presented lectures on the Roman Catholic doctrine of salvation and had people say, “Why, that’s really what I’ve always believed. Do you mean to say that I’ve been a good Catholic and haven’t known it?” Exactly!

2. An understanding of Rome’s doctrine of salvation will give us insight into current religious trends. For instance, three years ago we published a special issue on “Justification by Faith and the Charismatic Movement.” In this we showed how the spirituality of Pentecostalism is in basic harmony with the spirituality of medieval theology. Some of our charismatic friends received these submissions with great surprise and chagrin. Now that the charismatic movement has gained the pope’s approval, we hope that many of our charismatic friends will reconsider these issues.¹

Most evangelical preaching is diametrically opposed to the fundamental emphasis of the Reformation. It is thoroughly man-centered and experience-centered. In

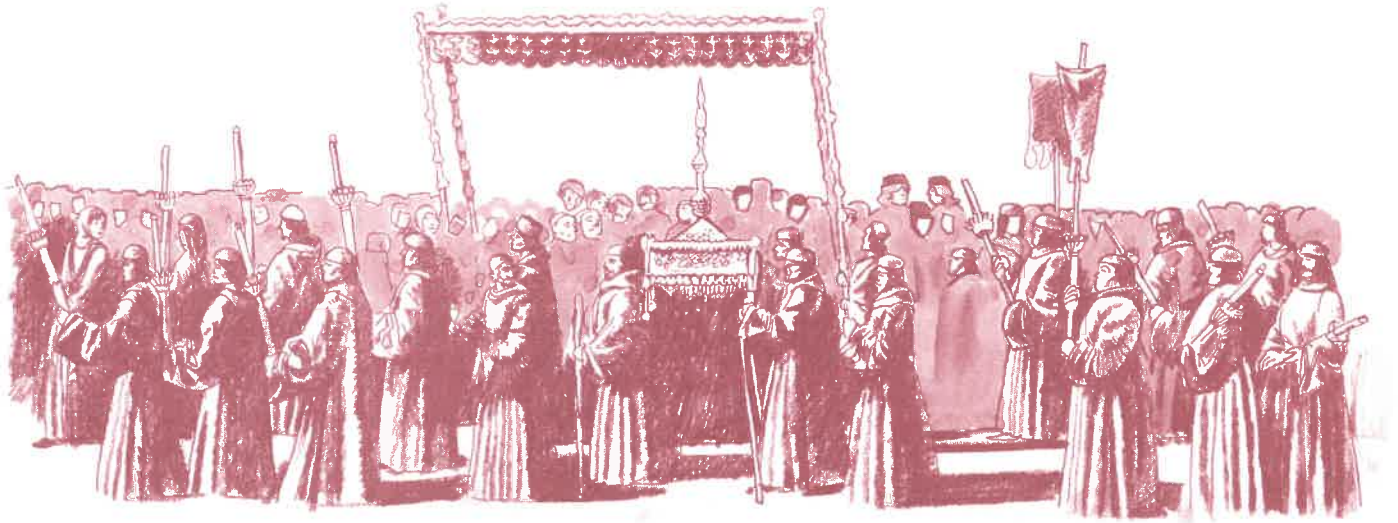
last year’s speaking itinerary in the United States, the Australian Forum put this simple and basic question to a number of seminary audiences: On what *basis* (ground) does God accept a person — (1) a life of perfect obedience or (2) faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? The overwhelming majority responded, “Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” In making the inward quality of faith the *basis* of acceptance with God, they gave, in reality, the classic Roman Catholic answer.² No Reformer or sound Protestant scholar has ever taught that faith is the basis of justification. The ground of salvation will always be perfect *righteousness*. To say that faith is the basis, or ground, of salvation is to put a personal, inward quality in the room of the vicarious work of Jesus Christ.

In the documentation in this issue of *Present Truth*, we want to present the doctrine of Rome at its best, for only then will we be sharpened to the real issues at stake. If our readers are well armed to discern the basic elements of the theology of Trent, they will be well equipped to detect the same theology being propounded from the most surprising places. “He that has ears to hear, let him hear.”

R.D.B.

¹See “On the Religious Front,” p. 45.

²See documentation in this issue.



The Grace Image of Rome's Doctrine of Justification

The New Testament writers, especially Paul, are so emphatic that salvation is *by grace alone* that it seems difficult to understand how a professedly Bible-believing Christian body could deny this cardinal doctrine of the New Testament (see Rom. 3:24, 28; 4:5; 11:6; Gal. 2:16-21; Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-8).

The first notable and open challenge to basic biblical teaching on salvation and grace came from the Pelagian heresy, which began about A.D. 400. Pelagius was a British monk and a rigorously ascetical man. He denied that man was born in sin, insisted that his will was entirely free, and taught that by its exercise man was able to live a holy life. In the real Christian sense Pelagius denied the need of grace, for he overlooked the profound struggle between good and evil within man.

Augustine was a contemporary of Pelagius and the greatest of the Latin fathers of the Church. He vigorously opposed Pelagian views and set forth the doctrine of man's inborn sinful depravity and his need of divine grace for inner renewal and power for obedience.

The early councils of the Church condemned Pelagianism as heresy and placed their benediction on the theology of Augustine. The attitude of Roman Catholicism to Pelagianism is expressed as follows in the authoritative Catholic book, *The Life of Grace*, by P. Gregory Stevens, O.S.B.

In a number of fifth-century councils the Church consecrated various Augustinian formulas and

statements, using them to express her own divine faith. The dependence of man on the transcendent divine causality, made real in the order of grace, is one of the things affirmed: "God works in man many good things which do not depend on man (which man himself does not produce), but man does nothing good which God does not give him the power to do." (D193; II Council of Orange, Can. 20, A.D. 529; taken from St. Augustine, *Against Two Letters of Pelagius*, IX, 21; PL44,586.) In this passage is affirmed the need on man's part of grace and divine assistance for all good works. Augustine did not clearly distinguish what we would call God's natural assistance, by which all beings in creation are maintained in existence and action, from his supernatural grace, by which men are enabled to do good works beyond the power and capability of nature. Yet in the context of the Pelagian controversy this text applies primarily to the need of genuine supernatural grace for good moral action. The council thus uses Augustine's words to affirm a fundamental element of Catholic teaching on the real need of grace.

The Council of Carthage condemns those (the Pelagians) who hold that grace "has the power only for the forgiveness of sins . . . and is not also an assistance to avoid sins in the future." (D103, Can. 3) This denies the Pelagian position that grace is only a forgiveness of sin granted after a wrong use of freedom; it likewise denies the Pelagian understanding of forgiveness as something merely external or juridical. The council goes on to affirm that grace is a gift and an aid in the

effort to avoid sin. In its fourth canon the council condemns the purely external Pelagian understanding of grace. Convicted of error are those who would say "that God's grace through Jesus Christ our Lord helps us avoid sin solely because it gives us a clear knowledge . . . of . . . the commandments, but deny that through this grace there is given to us an *ability* and a love of doing what we know should be done." (D104; TCT528)

The view of the Pelagians that grace is merely something which makes easier the doing of what is good, "as if to say that if grace were not given, it would be, not indeed easy, but truly possible to obey God's commandments without grace" (D105; TCT529, Can. 5) is likewise declared to be false and heretical. Thus grace is not something merely pleasant and helpful. *It is in fact demanded if man is to observe the commandments and lead a good life.*

The "Catalogue of Errors," called in Latin *Indiculus de Gratia Dei*, was a collection of statements drawn up perhaps by St. Prosper of Aquitaine and then universally accepted as giving true Catholic teaching. The following brief extracts oppose the Pelagian doctrine:

"No one is capable of rising from the depths of this loss (in original sin) by his own free will, if the grace of the merciful God does not lift him up." (D130; TCT368) "Unless He alone who is good (God himself) grants a participation of himself, no one of himself is good." (D131; cf. TCT534.) This document then affirms the need of the daily help of grace for the living of the good life (D132; TCT535), and goes on to say: "All the efforts, and all the works and merits of the saints must be attributed to . . . God, because no one can please God with anything that is not his own gift." (D134; TCT536) The whole matter is thus summarized: "God so works in the hearts of man and in free will that the holy thought, the religious purpose, and every movement of a good will are from God, because it is through him that we can do any good, and without him we can do nothing." (D135; cf. TCT537.)

The solemn voice of the Church here approves the intuitions of St. Augustine in condemning Pelagianism as a system which destroys the heart of the reality of divine grace. The Catholic, therefore, professes his dependence on the love and mercy of God, in virtue of which alone he is redeemed and given the real, internal help of grace to live a life pleasing to God. In his whole religious attitude the Catholic acknowledges that he is saved not by his own power, not through his "independent" free will and strength, but through the grace of Christ.

Thus in the fifth century did the Church through her councils and bishops, and through the profound religious mind of Augustine, reassert the basic truths taught in the New Testament. It is only in acknowledging by faith the truth of our own reality in relation to God that we become fully ourselves, and alive in the grace of God.

Semi-Pelagianism

In opposition to some of Augustine's thought, but owing also in part to misunderstandings of some of his polemical positions, there were those in the fifth century who felt that man's freedom had been excessively limited by Augustine and that his doctrine on predestination removed all possibility of an initial, free cooperation of man with grace. To defend their view of these questions, the so-called semi-Pelagians, centered in monastic circles of southern France, thought it necessary to reserve at least the first step toward grace to man: to see in the initial conversion of man to the life of grace a movement wholly dependent on man's free will and natural goodness. Put another way, the position of semi-Pelagians denied the need of grace for the initial conversion of man's free will and natural goodness. In other words, the semi-Pelagians denied the need of grace for the initial conversion of man to God. There was error in the failure to recognize that the whole process of man's salvation from the moment of first conversion to that of final perseverance is the result of God's grace. Salvation is an entirely gratuitous gift which enables man to take even the first step toward God; it enables him thereafter to act well and to persevere in grace. It is this total need for grace which the Church reaffirmed on the occasion of the semi-Pelagian heresy.

The Church's Teaching

The position of the Church is found in the "Catalogue of Errors" (*Indiculus*) previously mentioned. Again the fundamental insights of St. Augustine are used to express the Catholic teaching:

We profess that God is the author of all good desires and deeds, of all efforts and virtues, with which from the *beginning of faith* man tends to God. And we do not doubt that his grace *anticipates* every one of man's merits, and that it is through him that we *begin* both the will and the performance of any good work. To be sure, free will is not destroyed by this help and strength from God, but it is freed; so that from darkness it is brought to light, from evil to good, from sickness to health, from ignorance to prudence. For such is God's goodness to men that he wills that his gifts be our merits, and that he will grant us an eternal reward for what he has given us. Indeed, God so acts in us that we both will and do what he wills. . . . And he acts in this manner so that we are cooperators with his grace. (D141; TCT542)

The Second Council of Orange (in southern France, A.D. 529) made particularly clear the Church's condemnation of the semi-Pelagians. The decisions of the council were approved by Pope Boniface II in A.D. 531. The council teaches that "even the desire to be cleansed (from sin) is accomplished through the infusion and the interior working of the Holy Spirit." (D177; TCT544, Can. 4) Furthermore, the first beginnings of conversion to God are the work of his grace, so that the "grace of faith is not found in the free will of all

who desire to be baptized, but is conferred through the generosity of Christ.” (D199; TCT548; cf. D178f; TCT545f.) The true doctrine is summarized thus:

We also believe and profess for our salvation that in every good work it is not that we make a beginning and afterwards are helped through God’s mercy, but rather, that without any previous good merits on our part, God himself first inspires us with faith in him and love of him so that we may faithfully seek the sacrament of baptism, and so that after baptism, with his help, we may be able to accomplish what is pleasing to him. (D200; TCT549)

Thus it is clearly Catholic teaching that God anticipates our good works by his grace, and that our union with him is the effect of his gifts to us. God does not destroy free will, but so gives his grace that we cooperate freely with it. In the thought of St. Augustine, we thus acquire true freedom: a delivery from the slavery of sin. Yet if man cooperates, and is never merely a dumb or passive tool of God’s, he yet depends on God’s grace for the entire work of salvation. The Church in the fifth century thus gave definitive expression to the reality of man’s relationship of grateful dependence on the gratuitous love of God. — (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1963), pp. 46-49.



St. Augustine

Roman Catholic Teaching on Salvation by Grace

Many are surprised to learn that Roman Catholicism has a teaching on justification by faith. The Church does not explicitly deny those New Testament passages which teach salvation by grace alone. Following are extracts from representative Catholic books.

A Doctrinal Catechism, by Stephen Keenan

Q. What is justification?

A. It is a grace which makes us friends of God.

Q. Can a sinner merit this justifying grace?

A. No, he cannot; because all the good works which the sinner performs whilst he is in a state of mortal sin, are dead works, which have no merit sufficient to justify.

Q. Is it an article of the Catholic faith, that the sinner, in mortal sin, cannot merit the grace of justification?

A. Yes; it is decreed in the seventh chapter of the sixth session of the Council of Trent, that neither faith, nor good works, preceding justification, can merit the grace of justification.

Q. How then is the sinner justified?

A. He is justified gratuitously by the pure mercy of God, not on account of his own or any human merit, but purely through the merits of Jesus Christ; for Jesus Christ is our only mediator of redemption, who alone, by his passion and death, has reconciled us to his Father.

Q. Why then do Protestants charge us with believing, that the sinner can merit the remission of his sins?

A. Their ignorance of the Catholic doctrine is the cause of this, as well as many other false charges. — pp. 138, 139.

The Theology of Grace, by Jean Daujat

Certain people after hearing a sermon or reading a pious book have an idea that by grace is meant some sort of assistance which God gives us to facilitate our own efforts or complete the merits of our good actions. But since they do not know in what such assistance consists, or know only that it is something incomprehensible, they think vaguely that it is simpler not to concern themselves with it and that, on a last analysis, the surer means of saving their souls is to count upon themselves and the merits of their good deeds. So convinced are they that they can save themselves and gain eternal life through their virtuous lives, that they fall into the Pelagian heresy, which is explained later in this book, for many Christians are Pelagians without knowing it. . . .

Sinful man cannot, of himself, be pleasing to God. For that, he must receive a gift from God which transforms him interiorly, cleanses him and sanctifies him by adorning him with qualities that render him pleasing to his Creator.

Already, then, we see grace not only as a pure gift of God, which man does not deserve and cannot obtain by himself, but as something which, once given, com-

pletely changes him, by purifying him inwardly from sin, and rendering him good and holy. By his grace, God communicates to man the holiness of which he is himself the fountainhead.

This first analysis enables us to avoid the great heresies of which we shall treat later — Pelagianism, since grace is shown to be a pure gift of God, which man cannot of himself obtain or merit, and the Lutheran and Calvinist heresies, since through this grace man ceases to be a sinner and is made truly virtuous and holy. The Old Testament well says that grace is the gift of God: *And I will give favour to this people,*¹ *And the Lord will give favour;*² *And the Lord gave favour to the people.*³ To Judith it was said: *The God of our fathers give thee grace.*⁴ But this grace or “favour” is really goodness and interior holiness. *He that is good, shall draw grace from the Lord;*⁵ *the grace of God, and his mercy is with his saints.*⁶ The most complete example in the Old Testament, although the actual word “grace” does not occur in it, is to be found in Ezechiel: “I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness, and I will cleanse you from all your idols. And I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you.”⁷

The fact remains that the exact and fundamental meaning of these Old Testament texts can be grasped only because the New Testament has taught us to understand the full significance of the word “grace.” Prepared by the former, the full revelation of the reality belongs to the latter. The Gospel, in particular, uses the word to express the work of God in Jesus Christ, who is stated to be “full of grace,”⁸ and as having the grace of God in him,⁹ and in Mary, who is greeted as “full of grace.” Thus it is the sanctity of Jesus and Mary that is the work of God. But it is in the teaching of St. Paul that the word was used as a matter of course in the precise sense which came to be reserved for it in Catholic theology: that is, in the sense of a holiness which sinful man can neither have by any means of his own, nor merit by his works and his virtues, but which is given, or freely imparted to him, as a pure gift of God who, at the same time, both cleanses him and sanctifies him. For example, St. Paul tells us that we are “justified freely by his grace,”¹⁰ and that we are “saved according to the election of grace, and if by grace it is not now by works: otherwise grace is no more grace.”¹¹ To the Corinthians, he writes: “By the grace of God I am what I am,”¹² and speaks to the Ephesians of “Christ, by whose grace you are saved . . . for by grace you are saved . . . and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God.”¹³ He reminds Timothy that “God has called us by his holy calling, not according to our own

works, but according to his own purpose and grace”.¹⁴ And again: “To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ.”¹⁵ The same Apostle writes to Titus: “That being justified by his grace, we may be heirs according to the hope of life everlasting”,¹⁶ and again to the Ephesians that God has “predestinated us unto the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he hath graced us in his beloved Son”.¹⁷ . . .

God the Author of Salvation and Sanctification

We have already quoted St. Paul's words to the Romans: The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom we have received.¹⁸ Charity is the life of Christ present in us by the Holy Spirit. It is Jesus who, dwelling in us through the gift of the Holy Spirit, loves God perfectly in us through the Holy Spirit by whom we are animated and moved. So St. Teresa of Lisieux could write: “When I am charitable, it is only our Lord acting in me.” Of ourselves, we are incapable of a single movement of love, unless it comes to us by the grace of Christ abiding in us by the Holy Spirit.

So supernatural life is made real in us through acts inspired by charity, which are truly one act in which we love God with the perfect love wherewith he loves himself: in which, therefore, his whole divine life is communicated to us. But we perform these acts, of which we are incapable by ourselves, only through the action of grace moving us interiorly. By ourselves, we are capable only of natural or human good works, which are of no value for attaining the true object of our life which is life eternal. Our Lord has taught us: “Nobody can come to me without being attracted towards me by the Father”,¹⁹ that is, without the grace by which the Father adopts us in Jesus Christ as his children. Without that life of Christ engendered in us by the Father we cannot bear any supernatural fruit. Our Lord tells us again: “The branch that does not live on in the vine can yield no fruit of itself; no more can you; if you do not live on in me. I am the vine, you are its branches. If a man lives on in me, and I in him, then he will yeild abundant fruit; separated from me, you have no power to do anything.” That is why on the third Sunday after Pentecost, the Church prays: “O God, . . . without whom is nothing strong, nothing holy.”

St. Teresa of Avila has written: “Without grace nothing is possible to us, for of ourselves we cannot think one good thought.” The Council of Trent has proclaimed definitively: “As the head over the members and the vine over the branches, Christ Jesus continually exercises his influence upon souls that are justified, and this influence always precedes and

¹Exod. 3. 21.

²Exod. 11. 3.

³Exod. 12. 36.

⁴Judith 10. 8.

⁵Prov. 12. 2.

⁶Wisdom 4. 15.

⁷Ezechiel 36. 25-6.

⁸John 1. 14.

⁹Luke 2. 40.

¹⁰Rom. 3. 24.

¹¹*Ibid.* 11. 5-6.

¹²1 Cor. 15. 10.

¹³Ephes. 2. 5-8.

¹⁴2 Tim. 1. 9.

¹⁵Ephes. 4. 7.

¹⁶Titus 3. 7.

¹⁷Ephes. 1. 6.

¹⁸Rom. 5. 5.

¹⁹John 6. 44.

accompanies their good acts. Without it, these works can in no way be pleasing to God or meritorious." The same Council condemns as heretical "to say that a man may be rendered just before God by means of the works accomplished, whether by means of his natural and human capabilities, or by keeping the commandments, and without the grace of Christ"; and "to say that without the forestalling action of the Holy Spirit and his help, man can believe, hope, love or repent in the manner that is necessary if he is to obtain grace".

From these quotations it is clear that there exists no merit anterior to grace, of which man would be capable by himself, and by means of which he would obtain grace. A grace that we could deserve and obtain by ourselves would be ours by right, and so would not be a pure gift and therefore not grace.

Of ourselves, we have not, and cannot have, merit, virtue or holiness. It is Jesus Christ, living in us, substituting his life of grace for our natural, sinful life, who is our merit and our sanctity. We are capable of meritorious and holy living only in the measure in which we have renounced the sinful, natural life inherited from Adam, our desires and impulses that are purely sensuous, as also our own opinions and self-will, in order to live henceforth the "Christ-life" that must permeate everything in us. That is what is meant by "renouncing Satan, and all his pomps and works" at Baptism. — A Faith and Fact Book (London: Burns & Oates, 1959).

The Life of Grace, by P. Gregory Stevens, O.S.B.

St. Paul has summarized the plight of man without Christ and without grace in a single sentence: "For when we were in the flesh the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in our members so that they brought forth fruit unto death." (Rom 7, 5) Man without Christ is doomed to death because he is subject to and unable to control the sinful movements of the flesh, a principle of rebellion against God. In causing man to become more conscious of sin, the Law heightened his responsibility; but it gave no power to fulfill its own prescriptions. Even those Jews who, like the pharisees, took pride in their own ability to live out the Law are defeated by the Law, for grace comes only through Christ. Only through grace is man liberated from that bondage to Satan which leads to death. In his gracious mercy the Father has sent his Son to free man, to unite man with the living Trinity, to lead man to the plenitude of his destiny in the grace of Christ. (Ephesians 2 may be studied as a summary of this whole doctrine in Paul's own words and expression.) . . .

"For there is no distinction, as all have sinned and have need of the glory of God. They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. . . ." (Rom 3, 22-24)

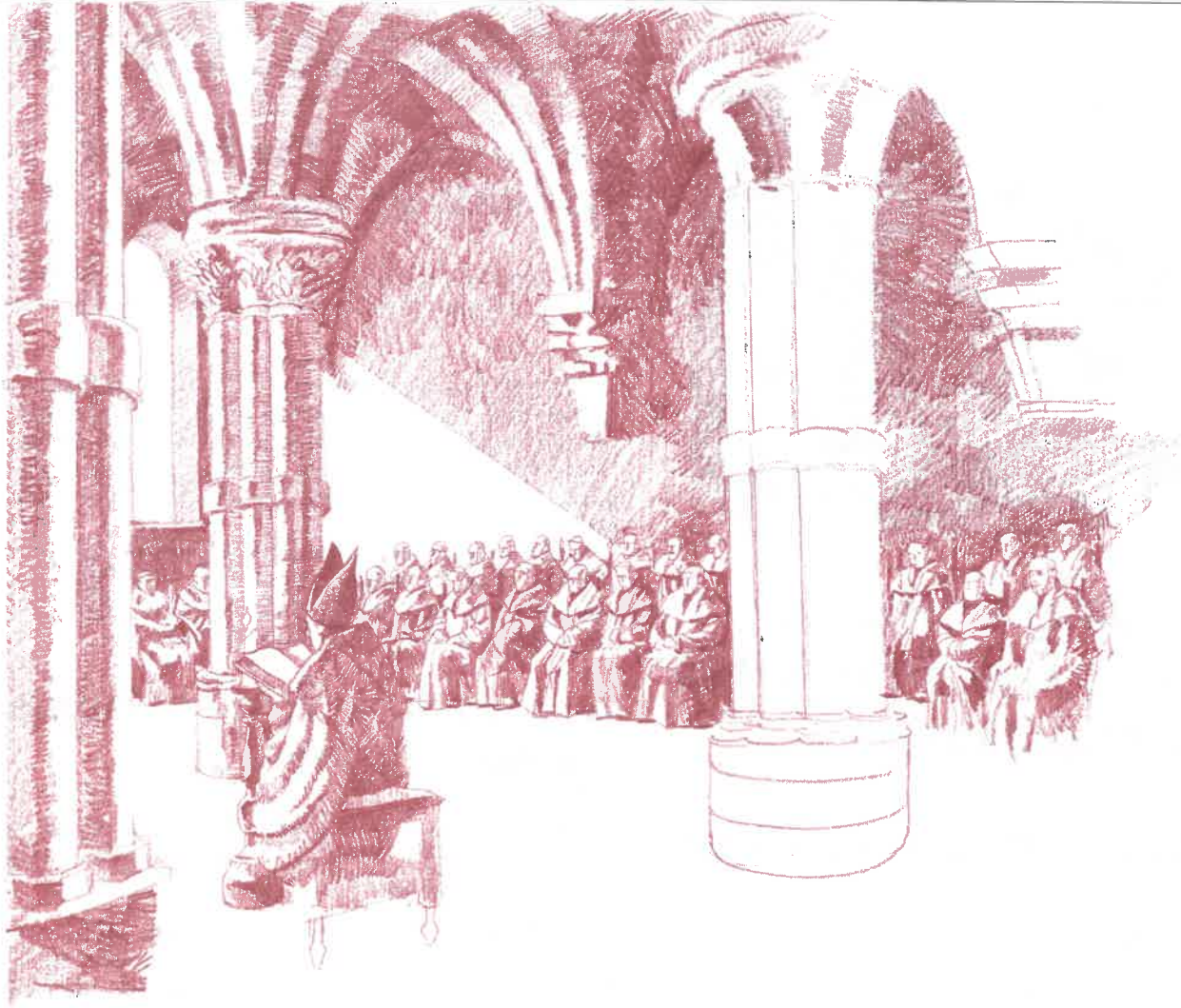
Paul is writing to oppose those Jews and Christians who saw justification as something to be ac-

complished by a person through his own good works. In this aberration, man was seen as bringing about grace as a reward or even as a salary from God for good deeds done. Paul vigorously opposes this religion of human self-sufficiency, denying, as we have seen, man's power to perform the good works of the Law, and constantly affirming that justification is a work of God bestowed on faithful men as a free divine gift. The Apostle strongly opposes a religion based on "boasting," on self-sufficiency before God. Such a religion is injurious to the divine goodness and is based on an unreal view of the human condition.

It is in this context that the example of Abraham is proposed. "What then shall we say that Abraham . . . acquired? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has reason to boast, but not before God. For what does Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as justice.' Now to him who works, the reward is not credited as a favor but as something due. But to him who does not work, but believes in him who justified the impious, his faith is credited to him as justice." (Rom 4, 1-5) Abraham was truly a just man before God. How had this come about? St. Paul describes two ways of receiving something: in the first, recompense is given for work accomplished; in the other a pure gift is bestowed. The justice of Abraham was a gift that was bestowed as really as a payment rendered for services, but was nevertheless in no way dependent on Abraham's merits or his work. Not even faith was a good work meriting grace: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not from yourselves, for it is the gift of God; not as the outcome of works, lest anyone may boast." [Eph 2, 8f] . . .

From its genesis at the beginning of man's life to its consummation at the end, the work of man's salvation is inseparably the gratuitous gift of God and the free cooperation of man.





The Tridentine Doctrine of Justification

The Council of Trent

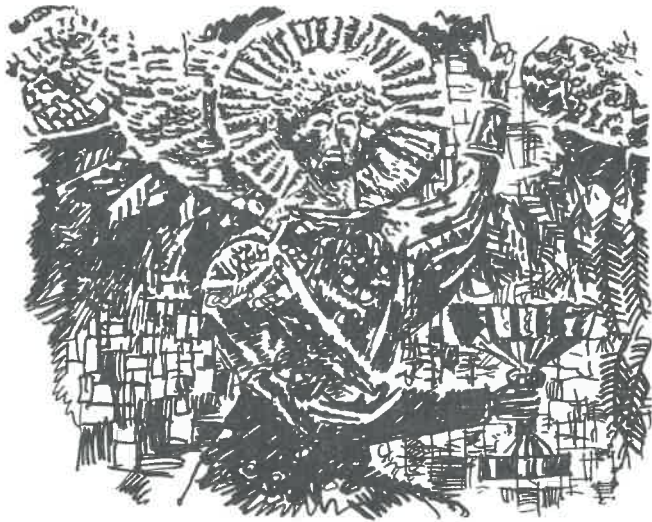
The Council of Trent was a general council of the Roman Catholic Church. Its sixth session, January, 1547, met to define the Catholic doctrine of justification. The council issued a series of thirty canons on justification. Following are two of them.

Canon 1. If anyone says that man can be justified before God by his own works, whether done by his own natural powers or through the teaching of the law, without divine grace through Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.

Canon 3. If anyone says that without the predisposing inspiration of the Holy Ghost and without His help, man can believe, hope, love or be repentant as he ought, so that the grace of justification may be bestowed upon him, let him be anathema.

The council also decreed that Christ merited our justification by His death on the cross, and also that "none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification. For, if by grace, it is not now by works, otherwise, as the Apostle says, grace is no more grace."¹

¹See "The Council of Trent," p. 29, for the entire "Decree Concerning Justification."



According to Roman Catholic Doctrine, What Is Justification?

According to the Council of Trent

... if they (men) were not born again in Christ, they would never be justified, since in that new birth there is bestowed upon them, through the merit of His passion, the grace by which they are made just.

... justification ... is not only a remission of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man through the voluntary reception of the grace and gifts whereby an unjust man becomes just and from being an enemy becomes a friend. ...

... the ... formal cause (of justification) is the justice of God, not that by which He Himself is just, but that by which He makes us just, that, namely, with which we being endowed by Him are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and not only are we reputed but we are truly called and are just. ...

... no one can be just except he to whom the merits of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ are communicated, yet this takes place in that justification of the sinner, when by the merit of the most holy passion, the charity of God is poured forth by the Holy Ghost in the hearts of those who are justified and inheres in them; whence man through Jesus Christ, in whom he is ingrafted, receives in that justification, together with the remission of sins, all these infused at the same time, namely, faith, hope and charity.

Canon 11. If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and remains in them, or also

that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema.

According to the Roman Catholic Douay Version

The editors of the Douay Version of the Bible have placed these words in the footnotes for Romans 3 and 4:

The justification of which St. Paul here speaks is the infusion of sanctifying grace which alone renders a person supernaturally pleasing in the sight of God.

But justification, that is, an infusion of sanctifying grace, cannot be merited by us; it is an entirely gratuitous gift of God.

Verse 5. Credited to him as justice: when God, who is infinite truth, credits something to man, it is equivalent to saying that He imparts it really to man; for there is no make-believe with God.

According to Modern Roman Catholic Authors

The following excerpt is from *The Life of Grace*, by P. Gregory Stevens, O.S.B., a representative modern Roman Catholic author.

Justification St. Paul often uses the words "just" and "justice" of genuine religion and its true followers. This use is in accord with the usual and general scriptural meaning of these terms. Justification, especially in Paul's epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians, is the process or the action by which God sanctifies man, that is, by which God makes man pleasing to him. The notion may be extended to the use of the term justice as a designation of the whole inner reality of the Christian life of grace. St. Paul recalls the sanctification or justification of Abraham, who appears as the symbol or the great example in the Old Testament of the bestowal of gratuitous grace by God: "Even thus, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as justice.' (Gen 15,6) Know therefore that the men of faith are the real sons of Abraham." (Gal 3,6f) An understanding of Abraham's faith and his justification before God is thus set forth by Paul as a way of seeing the sanctification of the Christian, who must be justified by God as was Abraham: "For there is no distinction, as all have sinned and have need of the glory of God. They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. . . ." (Rom 3, 22-24)

Paul is writing to oppose those Jews and Christians who saw justification as something to be accomplished by a person through his own good works. In this aberration, man was seen as bringing about grace as a reward or even as a salary from God for good

deeds done. Paul vigorously opposes this religion of human self-sufficiency, denying, as we have seen, man's power to perform the good works of the Law, and constantly affirming that justification is a work of God bestowed on faithful men as a free divine gift. The Apostle strongly opposes a religion based on "boasting," on self-sufficiency before God. Such a religion is injurious to the divine goodness and is based on an unreal view of the human condition.

What is the reality of the justification accorded by God when man cooperates in faith? Is it merely like a statement of God declaring the sinner just? Or is it a divine act by which the sinner is internally transformed and becomes a new reality before God? Catholic thought has always been that the justice bestowed on man is a gratuitous gift (Gal. 3,6ff), and a true justice which actually transforms man into a person pleasing to God. St. Paul links justice and justification with sanctification and purification (1 Cor 6,11), and sees the justified man as living a new life in Christ. (Rom 6,15-23; 3,21-26) The liberation from sin and death, already described, is a spiritual reality which is accomplished in man by grace at the moment of justification. Its effect is to introduce man into a genuine state of justice. This new life is indeed life in Christ, so real that Paul can say: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross. It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God." (Gal 2,19f)

Thus justification initiates a new life which is a sharing by the Christian in the life of Christ himself. St. Paul teaches as clearly as does St. John that grace is a new existence communicated in the power of the death and resurrection of Christ. The whole of Romans 6 may be read at this point. It summarizes Paul's realistic understanding of the incorporation into Christ, the dying to sin and rising to a new life, which is accomplished in the process of justification.

Newness of Life Justification is thus synonymous with the communication of new life in Christ to the Christian. St. Paul frequently contrasts the "old man" of sin and the flesh with the "new man" who is spiritual and dedicated to a fundamental holiness. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." (2 Cor 5,17; cf. Gal 6,15.) Because God has created us "in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2,10), the Christian is to live this new life. "But be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which has been created according to God in justice and holiness of truth." (Eph 4,23f; cf. Col 3,10.) The liturgy of Easter is especially devoted to this theme of new life won for us in Christ, and communicated to us in the sacraments. Entrance into the Christian life is truly a "regeneration" and a "renewal": the equivalent of being "justified by his grace." (Ti 3,6f) Just as in the third chapter of John's gospel we saw how real was the notion of rebirth, so Paul stresses this point, that the Christians to whom he writes may be thoroughly convinced of the mysterious and hidden, yet actual, presence of grace. This conviction in them will lead, in turn, to their living in the light (Eph 5,8f), to action which gives expression to the new "reality" which Christians have become. . . .

Pope Leo X



The Council of Trent

Catholic doctrine on these questions, formulated in opposition to Lutheranism, was presented in full at the Council of Trent, as it had been previously by Pope Leo X in the Bull "Exsurge Domine" of June 15, 1520. The teaching of Trent centers on two points of fundamental importance for the understanding of the Catholic doctrine on grace. First of all, *justification is a real and profound transformation of man, a genuine gift of sanctification to him.* It can in no way be reduced to something purely external. Second, *man is not deprived of freedom, but cooperates through grace in justification and the process of salvation.* Justification is not solely the action of God, in other words, but a process in which man participates. We may follow the order of the Council in expressing these doctrines.

The reality of the effects of original sin is that "all men had lost innocence in the sin of Adam" (D793; TCT557); this means that all are "born without justice." (D795; TCT559) That does not, however, connote a total corruption of men, for "their free will, though weakened and unsteady, was by no means destroyed." (*Ibid.*) Sinful man is estranged from God and unable to attain salvation except through Christ, for it is only in Christ that we "might secure justice and that all might receive the adoption of sons." (D794; TCT558)

We may note the Council's insistence on a genuine securing of justice by man, thus stressing the reality of the divine gift of grace. This redemption by Christ, the only means of salvation for man, comprises a genuine transformation. "So, likewise, they (men) would never have been justified except through rebirth in Christ, for this rebirth bestows on them, through the merit of his passion, the grace by which they are justified." (D795; TCT559) These solemn declarations reaffirm Catholic faith in opposition to Lutheranism, as well as to any revived Pelagian spirit (cf. D811f; TCT575f.) Man cannot save himself but is saved only in the transforming grace of Christ. A brief definition is then proposed: "Justification is a passing from the state in which man is born a son of the first Adam, to the state of grace and adoption as sons (Rom 8,15) of God through the Second Adam, Jesus Christ our Savior." (D796; TCT560) The Council immediately adds that this transformation demands baptism or at least the desire of baptism, thus affirming in the very heart of the work of salvation the basic principle of sacramental.

Justification

In a clear, religiously profound statement the Council defines the inner nature and structure of justification. It does so in direct opposition to the extrinsecist position of Reformation theology. The heart of Catholic teaching is contained in this passage. First of all comes the assertion that "justification is not only the remission of sins, but sanctification and renovation of the interior man through the voluntary reception of grace and the gifts, whereby man becomes just instead of unjust, a friend instead of an enemy, that he may be an heir in the hope of life everlasting." The Council then details the causes of this inner transformation: its goal and purpose is God's glory; it is brought about by God through the merits of our Redeemer, and communicated to man in faith and baptism.

Trent's Idea of Grace

As part of the Lutheran views of salvation, of the corruption of medieval thought, the Council states:

The unique formal cause is the justice of God, not the justice by which he is himself just, but the justice by which he makes us just, namely, the justice which we have as a gift from him and by which we are renewed in the spirit of our mind. Not only are we considered just, but we are truly said to be just, and we are just, each one of us receiving *within himself* his own justice, according as the measure of the Holy Spirit imparts to each one as he wishes, and according to the disposition and cooperation of each. (D799; TCT563)

In the solemn words of a condemnation, the Council rejects the notion that this grace is "through the imputation of Christ's justice alone" (D821; TCT585; cf. D820; TCT584.) Without giving a detailed theological explanation of formal causality, the Council affirms that the inner structure of the justification of man is not something identical with God or Christ, but is a gift bestowed by God in Christ by which man is made just; it is something proper to man transformed in Christ.

The whole Catholic theology of grace as a created reality, distinct from God himself, and bestowed upon man as something personal to him is here stated by the Council. Furthermore, this justice within man *inheres* within him as a permanent principle: "The charity of God is poured forth by the Holy Spirit into the hearts of those who are justified and *inheres* in them." (D800; TCT564) Again, in the words of a definitive condemnation: "If anyone says that men are justified . . . excluding grace and charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Spirit and *inheres* in them . . . let him be anathema." (D821; TCT585) What theology calls "sanctifying grace" is here determined and defined as opposite to the Lutheran teaching of a kind of justification which does not inwardly transform man but remains extrinsic to him.—pp. 33, 34, 56-59.

Summary of the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Justification

Roman Catholic theology professes that justification is by God's grace. It sees justification as God's act of regenerating a sinful man. God pronounces a man just only when he is just; the divine verdict is only a statement of what is actually true in the man himself.

Roman Catholic theology reduces justification to an operation within man. God's justification is simply man's sanctification.



Roman Catholic Teaching on Merit

Roman Catholicism teaches that Christ's merit initiates our salvation, but it views "infused grace" as merit that God puts within a man. In this way Christ's merit becomes human merit.

Catholic theologians clearly affirm that there is no merit in "good works" done by a sinner. But when "good works" are done by sanctifying grace in the man, they regard such works as truly meritorious.

In short, Catholicism affirms the saving merit of *infused righteousness* (the work of the Holy Spirit in man). Following are extracts from two representative Roman Catholic books.

A Doctrinal Catechism, by Stephen Keenan

Chapter III.

Q. Can any one, who is in a state of mortal sin, merit heaven by any good work or works?

A. No; he can neither merit justification, nor heaven; because, all the works he performs while in a state of mortal sin are dead works, and of course have no merit.

Q. Can one who is in a state of grace merit heaven?

A. The just, who are in a state of grace, may, by good works, merit an increase of glory, but even they can never, by any or every good work, merit the first degree of glory, that is, a right to heaven.

Q. To whom do we owe our permission to enter heaven?

A. Solely to the mercy of God and the merits of Jesus Christ: for it is by the sufferings and death of Jesus that we acquired heaven as our inheritance; and it is God's mercy alone, which gave us such a Mediator and Redeemer.

Q. Why have you said that the just may, by good works, merit an increase of glory in heaven?

A. Because, in Scripture, heaven is proposed to us as a recompense, and a recompense or reward is due only to merit.

Q. What does St. Matthew say on this matter? (Chap. v, 12.)

A. "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." In Prov. chap. xi, 18 — "But to him that soweth in justice, there is a faithful reward." St. James, chap. i, 12 — "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him." St. Paul, 2 Tim. chap. iv, 7, adds: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; as to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will render to me in that day."

Q. What have Protestants to object against this Scriptural doctrine?

A. Nothing that is either rational or Scriptural; for the learned among themselves have taught the very same. The *Apology for the Protestant Confession of Augsburg*, p. 96, says: "We teach, that good works merit a temporal and spiritual reward in this world, as well as in the next."

Q. What then have Protestants to say to Catholics on the subject of merit and good works?

A. All they have to say arises from their ignorance of the Catholic doctrine.

Chapter IV.

Q. What is that which gives their value to good works?

A. Sanctifying grace, which is within us.

Q. Is this sanctifying grace our own, or is it from God?

A. It is the pure gift of God's liberality to us.

Q. How does St. Paul express himself on this subject? (Rom., chap. v, 3.)

A. "The charity of God," he says, "is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us."

Q. What are the effects of sanctifying grace?

A. It makes us the friends and children of God.

Q. To whom do we owe this inestimable grace?

A. To the merits of Jesus Christ, and to these alone.

Q. Have you any thing to remark on the efficacy of the merits of Christ?

A. Yes; he was not satisfied with meriting heaven for us; he also, by his grace, put us in a condition to merit greater degrees of glory in heaven.

Q. Does not our Saviour say, Luke, chap. xvii, 10 — "So you also, when you shall have done all those things that are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants?"

A. This is quite in accordance with our doctrine; we are certainly unprofitable servants to God, whatever good we do; for nothing which we can do, either adds to, or takes from, his essential glory. We are not, however, unprofitable servants to ourselves, since these good works secure for us the rewards God has been pleased to promise.

Q. Could God order us to perform good works without promising us any recompense?

A. Certainly; because we are his creatures, and the grace which enables us is his. The Council of Trent, Sess. xvi, chap. 16, says: "God's goodness to man is so great, that he even desires his own gifts to be converted into our merit."

Q. Have we reason to trust much in our good works?

A. "God forbid," says the same Council, "that any Christian should glory, or confide in himself, and not in the Lord."

Q. How is it, then, that Protestants reproach Catholics with placing too much confidence in their good works?

A. They reproach us, because they do not know us; and the only return we should make for their ill-treatment of us, is to pray, as Christ did for the ignorant Jews, who put him to death: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Chapter V.

Q. Can a man satisfy for his own sins?

A. No; neither man nor angel, nor both men and angels, can ever satisfy for one mortal sin. Jesus Christ alone could and has satisfied for our sins.

The Life of Grace, by P. Gregory Stephens, O.S.B.

Merit

As part of the Lutheran views of salvation, of the corruption of man's nature and freedom, and of the extrinsecism of justification, there came a denial of the traditional Catholic doctrine of merit. Against this conclusion of Reformation theology the Council of Trent reasserted the reality of merit through grace, indicating again thereby the reality of man's action in the order of salvation. Because of his union with Christ in grace, man is enabled to work for his own eternal beatitude. He merits heaven by the power of grace and his free cooperation in performing good works.

Eternal life should be set before those who persevere in good works to the end and who hope in God. It should be set before them as being the grace that God, through Jesus Christ, has mercifully promised his sons . . . and as the reward which, according to the promise of God himself, must assuredly be given them for their good works and merits. (D809; TCT573)

It is because of God's creative love for man that he promises to reward the merit of man's good works. It is a proof of the efficacious reality of that love that human actions attain this high value before God.

Although in Holy Scripture high value is placed on good works (Mt 10,42) . . . nevertheless a Christian should have no inclination to rely on himself or to glory in himself instead of the Lord (cf. 1 Cor 1, 31; 2 Cor 10,17), whose goodness toward all men is such that he wants his gifts to be their merits. (D810; TCT574)

The work of man's salvation is invariably the work of God's grace, but the affirmation of the reality of grace necessarily involves, in Catholic thought, the corresponding affirmation of man's free cooperation. This cooperation is not a mere passive openness or receptivity; it is an active engagement in the life of justice and righteousness. The reality of this human activity is affirmed not only in its immediacy in this world but in its effects before God himself.

The doctrine of merit is a fitting way to conclude the treatment of the Council of Trent, for merit comes as a crown to man's acts. *This is not to imply that merit is an extrinsic reward, a sort of present given by God for good behavior.* The doctrine of merit is not added to the doctrine of man's inner cooperation with grace as an afterthought. It is merely the definition of a

property or quality inherent in the good works of grace, and demonstrates very clearly the totality of the Catholic affirmation of grace. Merit is not in any sense an arbitrary aspect of the good act. It is proof that in the good act man disposes himself before God, and that the reality of good works is of more than merely passing and terrestrial importance.

The doctrine of the Council is found in summary form in this condemnatory statement:

If anyone says that the good works of a justified man are gifts of God to such an extent that they are not also the merits of the justified man himself; or that, by the good works he performs through the grace of God and the merits of Jesus Christ (of whom he is a living member), the justified man does not truly merit an increase of grace, life everlasting and, provided that he dies in the state of grace, the attainment of that life everlasting, and even an increase of glory, let him be anathema. (D842; TCT606)

This is the essential Catholic teaching on the reality of merit. The first part of the condemnation is a direct refutation of a fundamental Reformation intuition: that God's action in justification and salvation really removes all genuine and intrinsic human cooperation with grace. The Council reaffirms the Catholic doctrine — which, as mentioned, is always a simultaneous affirmation of the reality of the divine causality and that of man. Because good works of the supernatural order are done with the aid of grace from beginning to end, it does not mean in any way that the reality of man's causality is diminished. Grace does not disregard or do away with human freedom. It heals it from within, so that man is able to perform freely and meritoriously good acts which are his.

Finally, the Council teaches that man, in this life, merits an increase of grace. This, of course, is not a quantitative matter but a question of both intensity and the deep-rootedness of grace in the very being of the justified man. In traditional theological terms, the state of grace is qualitatively intensified. This means that man is more closely assimilated to Christ with whom he is united. Looking to the final destiny of man, the Council affirms that good works performed in this life are meritorious of everlasting life in heaven; there man's assimilation to Christ will be complete, there the life of grace will find its inner and total development. — pp. 62, 63.

“Roman Catholic theology reduces justification to an operation within man.”



We again cite the two representative Roman Catholic books, *The Life of Grace* and *The Theology of Grace*, which give the Roman Catholic estimate of the Reformers' doctrine of justification.

The Roman Catholic Estimate of the Reformers' Doctrine of Justification

The Life of Grace, by P. Gregory Stevens, O.S.B.

Extrinsic¹ Justification This is the well-known doctrine of the extrinsic imputation of justice. Luther sees justification as merely an external imputing by God to man of the grace and goodness of Christ. Man, meanwhile, inwardly remains a sinner predisposed to evil. Justification changes the person's relationship to God, in this thought system, but in a purely extrinsic way. There is no real change in man, no genuine liberation from sin, the flesh, and death. Sin and sinfulness remain in man always, but for the justified God no longer imputes sin, only righteousness. Without any real, inner transformation, man remains corrupt and sinful. The merits of Christ, however, seem to cloak and cover this evil in man. The God of wrath becomes the God of mercy who no longer

¹"extrinsecist": in the context of the theology of grace, this is a view of God's action which does not see that God really acts within man; his action remains outside of or "extrinsic" to him. Nothing happens within man, he is not actually changed, in this view of his justification. God merely considers man justified without acting in him. Catholic theology would hold that in justification God enters into man and changes him from within by communicating the new life of grace.

considers man in any way except as covered with the mantle of Christ. Grace then is not a divine life bestowed on man, nor a healing light or transforming power. Grace is simply the gracious regard of the God of mercy.

Luther believed that grace was thus an imputation, something extrinsic to man which allowed him to remain the sinful child of Adam. Confusing concupiscence and the desire of sin with sinfulness, or more properly with original sin, Luther denied the reality of transforming grace. What the Christian had was an absolutely certain and profound religious experience giving certitude of justification. This was the moment of faith for Luther — not a faith in divine truth and teaching, but a complete commitment of oneself to Christ, an abandonment to the divine mercy. This was likewise the moment of justification; it brought man the absolute assurance of salvation and acceptance by God through Christ.

Assurance of Salvation Luther, who realized so completely the sinfulness of man, sought the assurance of acceptance before God in spite of sin and evil. In the moment of Lutheran justification, that zenith of religious experience in which man abandons himself in confidence and trust to the divine mercy manifest in Christ, this assurance is given. The

justified man has experienced the divine mercy. His faith is a confidence in the salvation of God. Justification is not a reality in him but an extrinsic matter, yet man is possessed of a full confidence in salvation. This supreme religious moment, for Luther, is purely individual. There is no question of entering into a relation with God by an entrance into the mystical body, the Church, for Luther will deny the profound and sacramental reality of the Church in the Catholic sense. What is essential is the individual aware of his incapacity for God, accepting the message of Christ, abandoning himself to Jesus in a unique, trusting act which assures him of his salvation.

Freedom Man's free will is denied its freedom in this outlook, for man is dominated by God (or by sin) in such a way that it is God alone who *acts* to save him. The impotence of free will is one aspect of Luther's mode of conceiving the *total* causality of God. In the process of salvation, God alone acts. He induces no internal change in the creature, and never renders man capable of acting in grace. Paradoxically, this assertion of the powerlessness of freedom leads to an exaltation of individualism. Lutheranism comes to be characterized by a building up of the individual at the expense of the Church. It involves a denial of the Church and its role in salvation as understood throughout Catholic tradition. Thus, Lutheran thought denies the power of freedom, and at the same time attributes salvation to the *sole* and total causality of God. His action *replaces* or substitutes itself for that of the creature. In the moment of justification by God, an act entirely unrelated to the Church, man receives an absolute assurance of his salvation directly from God. The individual is emancipated completely, in the Lutheran view, from all creatures in the order of salvation. Lutheranism thus appears to be a champion of individual religious liberty. This liberty can only be seen as ultimately unreal, however, if God's creative presence and immanence to man does not really transform him from within and bestow on him healing grace — the power to act freely and well.

A View of Lutheranism

Lutheranism is a religious system at variance with Catholicity on many points. Basically, it challenges the whole range of Catholic understanding of man's relationship with God. The far-reaching consequences of Luther's teaching called forth the pronouncements of the Council of Trent, in which the Church reaffirmed the Catholic teaching on grace and salvation. The position of the Church was centered around several aspects of Christian doctrine: the Lutheran understanding of original sin and its consequences, implying a total corruption of man's nature and the impotence of his will; the conception of grace and justification as merely external actions of God which do not affect man in his depths nor transform him from within; the Lutheran notion of justifying faith as a moment of confiding abandon to Christ, which gives assurance of salvation.



Martin Luther

The Council of Trent

Catholic doctrine on these questions, formulated in opposition to Lutheranism, was presented in full at the Council of Trent, as it had been previously by Pope Leo X in the Bull "*Exsurge Domine*" of June 15, 1520. The teaching of Trent centers on two points of fundamental importance for the understanding of the Catholic doctrine on grace. First of all, *justification is a real and profound transformation of man, a genuine gift of sanctification to him.* It can in no way be reduced to something purely external. Second, *man is not deprived of freedom, but cooperates through grace in justification and the process of salvation.* Justification is not solely the action of God, in other words, but a process in which man participates. We may follow the order of the Council in expressing these doctrines.

The reality of the effects of original sin is that "all men had lost innocence in the sin of Adam" (D793; TCT557); this means that all are "born without justice." (D795; TCT559) That does not, however, connote a total corruption of men, for "their free will, though weakened and unsteady, was by no means destroyed." (*Ibid.*) Sinful man is estranged from God and unable to attain salvation except through Christ, for it is only in Christ that we "might secure justice and that all might receive the adoption of sons." (D794; TCT558)

We may note the Council's insistence on a genuine securing of justice by man, thus stressing the reality of the divine gift of grace. This redemption by Christ, the only means of salvation for man, comprises a genuine transformation. "So, likewise, they (men) would never have been justified except through rebirth in Christ, for this rebirth bestows on them, through the merit of his passion, the grace by which they are justified." (D795; TCT559) These solemn declarations reaffirm Catholic faith in opposition to Lutheranism, as well as

to any revived Pelagian spirit (cf. D811f; TCT575f.) Man cannot save himself but is saved only in the transforming grace of Christ. A brief definition is then proposed: "Justification is a passing from the state in which man is born a son of the first Adam, to the state of grace and adoption as sons (Rom 8,15) of God through the Second Adam, Jesus Christ our Savior." (D796; TCT560) The Council immediately adds that this transformation demands baptism or at least the desire of baptism, thus affirming in the very heart of the work of salvation the basic principle of sacramentality.

Human Cooperation

In direct opposition to the Reformation theology of the sole agency of God, the Council solemnly proclaims the need for the adult to cooperate with grace by his free will. Although man "could not take one step toward justice in God's sight" without grace, he responds to the divine initiative by "freely consenting to it and cooperating with that grace." (D797; TCT561) It is clear, then, that divine action and grace do not destroy man's action or render it unnecessary. The Council solemnly condemns the real inertness of man in Lutheran thought: "If anyone says that the free will of man, moved and awakened by God, in no way cooperates with the awakening call of God by an assent by which man disposes and prepares himself to receive the grace of justification; or says that man cannot dissent, if he wishes, but like an object without life, does nothing at all and is merely passive; let him be anathema." (D814; TCT578; cf. D815f; TCT579f.)

Man is redeemed only in Christ's grace. God's initiative is always asserted, but it is not an initiative which takes away man's response; rather, the reality of God's gracious call and bestowal of grace demands the reality of man's deep, personal, and free cooperation. It is essential to see that Catholic doctrine, unlike the extremes of Pelagianism and Lutheranism, never sets up an either/or understanding of the reality of God's grace and man's cooperation. The very assertion for the Catholic of the primacy of God's mercy and grace is completed by the affirmation of man's cooperation and genuine human activity in the work of salvation.

The necessity and even the psychology of man's cooperation are expressed in a long passage which is a cogent summary of traditional Catholic teaching. God's summons of man to salvation is not man's work, but the free initiative of God; to it man assents, or from it he turns away. For the man who gives his free assent there is a passage from faith — not a mere confidence in the Lutheran sense but an assent to divine revelation — through sorrow and repentance for sin, to hope in God's mercy. On the basis of an initial love and in a spirit of sorrow for evil done, man seeks baptism and desires to begin a "new life" in Christ. (D797f; TCT561f) Clearly the reality of grace demands the reality of man's cooperation. The latter in no way

minimizes but properly exalts the love and mercy of God. From his first step to God to the last moment of life, man truly acts in the order of salvation, under grace. This description of coming to justification may be compared with the earlier affirmations, in the same divine tradition, of the councils that opposed Pelagianism. The Council of Trent, after this statement, comes to one of its most celebrated definitions.

Justification

In a clear, religiously profound statement the Council defines the inner nature and structure of justification. It does so in direct opposition to the extrinsic position of Reformation theology. The heart of Catholic teaching is contained in this passage. First of all comes the assertion that "*justification is not only the remission of sins, but sanctification and renovation of the interior man through the voluntary reception of grace and the gifts, whereby man becomes just instead of unjust, a friend instead of an enemy, that he may be an heir in the hope of life everlasting.*" The Council then details the causes of this inner transformation: *its goal and purpose is God's glory; it is brought about by God through the merits of our Redeemer, and communicated to man in faith and baptism.*

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As part of the Lutheran views of salvation, of the corruption of medieval thought, the Council states:

The unique formal cause is the justice of God, not the justice by which he is himself just, but the justice by which he makes us just, namely, the justice which we have as a gift from him and by which we are renewed in the spirit of our mind. Not only are we considered just, but we are truly said to be just, and we are just, each one of us receiving *within* himself his own justice, according as the measure of the Holy Spirit imparts to each one as he wishes, and according to the disposition and cooperation of each. (D799; TCT563)

In the solemn words of a condemnation, the Council rejects the notion that this grace is "through the imputation of Christ's justice alone" (D821; TCT585; cf. D820; TCT584.) Without giving a detailed theological explanation of formal causality, the Council affirms that the inner structure of the justification of man is not something identical with God or Christ, but is a gift bestowed by God in Christ by which man is made just; it is something proper to man transformed in Christ.

The whole Catholic theology of grace as a created reality, distinct from God himself, and bestowed upon man as something personal to him is here stated by the Council. Furthermore, this justice within man *inheres* within him as a permanent principle: "The charity of God is poured forth by the Holy Spirit into the hearts

of those who are justified and *inheres* in them.” (D800; TCT564) Again, in the words of a definitive condemnation: “If anyone says that men are justified . . . excluding grace and charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Spirit and *inheres* in them . . . let him be anathema.” (D821; TCT585) What theology calls “sanctifying grace” is here determined and defined as opposite to the Lutheran teaching of a kind of justification which does not inwardly transform man but remains extrinsic to him. The Church solemnly affirms the inner reality of grace as a principle inhering within each individual who is sanctified by God. It is the very reality of God’s action that implies the reality within man which is grace and justice.

Grace and Sin This justification involves negatively the remission of sins. Positively it means transformation into a new life in Christ. “Whence in the very act of being justified, at the same time that his sins are remitted, a man receives through Jesus Christ, to whom he is joined, the infused gifts of faith, hope and charity.” (D800; TCT564) In other words, *justification is both a destruction of sin and a union with Christ which effects the communication of a life expressed in the virtues of faith, hope, and charity.* This latter point is developed by the Council to contradict the Lutheran position of justification through trustful faith alone: “For faith without hope and charity neither perfectly unites a man with Christ nor makes him a living member of his body.” (*ibid.*)

Faith

Faith is, indeed, the beginning and the continuing foundation of new life in Christ, but it is the faith of the Church and not Luther’s absolute confidence in personal salvation. This point is expressly made by the Council, which states that, “no one can know with the certitude of faith admitting no error, that he has obtained God’s grace” (D802; TCT566); or again: “If anyone says that man is absolved from his sins and justified because he believes with certainty that he is absolved and justified . . . let him be anathema.” (D824; TCT588; cf. D823; TCT587.) The Council thus solemnly excludes the Lutheran error of absolute faith in one’s personal salvation, thereby rejecting both the individualism of this view and, specifically, the attempt to base justification on the inner subjective certitude of a private religious experience. The Council here does not condemn a reasoned and reasonable estimation of one’s personal state of grace but wishes to make two central points. The first is to deny the founding of a hope of salvation on the subjective experience of the individual and his feelings: the self-assertion of Lutheran “interior religion” is condemned. Second, the Council, with Sacred Scripture, centers the Christian’s hope and assurance not in man’s personal states but in the divine efficacy of Christ’s redemption and sacraments: “For no devout man should entertain doubts about God’s mercy, Christ’s merits, and the power and efficacy of the sacraments.” (D802; TCT566) It might be said that in the latter

connection the Church is reaffirming the words of St. Paul: “For in hope were we saved” (Rom 8,24), thereby establishing the faith and hope of the Christian in God and Christ, and not in man and his experiences no matter how profound or religious.

Growth In Grace

Further indication of the reality of the inner gift of grace is the declaration of the Council that man may grow in justice. We are therefore to admit degrees of justification which vary according to the gift of God and man’s dispositions and cooperation with grace. The justified man can advance “from virtue to virtue, renewed day by day” by good works; “the justified increase in the very justice they have received through the grace of Christ, and are justified the more.” (D803; TCT567) Indeed, the good works of the justified man are not mere signs of his religious conversion. Being done in grace, they are themselves the causes of an increase in the degree and reality of man’s sanctification. (D834; TCT598) The whole moral life of the Christian is the expression of the inner life of grace. Doing what is good is made possible by the power of grace. Although venial sin cannot be fully avoided, the justified man is capable of pursuing a life of goodness. The power to do so comes from grace. Besides the root power there is the inner drive of the life of grace, which naturally expresses itself in good action. So true is this that the Council affirms: “God ‘does not abandon’ those who have been justified by his grace, ‘unless they abandon him first.’ ” (D804; TCT568)

From its genesis at the beginning of man’s life to its consummation at the end, the work of man’s salvation is inseparably the gratuitous gift of God and the free cooperation of man. Having affirmed this of man’s preparation for justification, of the moment of justification itself, and of the whole life of the justified man, the Council also affirms this truth with regard to man’s perseverance to the last moment of life. “If anyone says that without God’s special help it is possible for a justified man to persevere in the justice he has received, or says that with God’s special help it is impossible, let him be anathema.” (D832; TCT596; cf. D806; TCT570.) The consummation of man’s life in the act of death — the final and decisive moment of earthly existence — is an act of salvation and justice in virtue of the grace of God. In a sense, the whole life of grace prepares for this crucial moment. In it the justified man turns to God to consecrate his life to him by dying in Christ. This moment is one of cooperation with the divine liberality. It is at the same time a moment of man’s cooperation with divine love. . . .

Conclusion

Man had been set free from God by Pelagianism to work out his own salvation on his own strength, independently of any genuine and healing internal grace. The heresy denied essential teaching on the reality of original sin and its effects, and considered

sinful man as capable of all goodness necessary for salvation; it was, in brief, a naturalistic denial of the need for grace. It rested on a false conception of man and his freedom, as if he were emancipated from God. The role of God and his grace in the order of salvation was minimized. Justification, good works, and merit were seen as the results of man's sole agency. Man, basically, was the agent in human salvation. The agency or causality of God and grace was denied.

From this point of view, Lutheranism represents the opposite extreme. The reality of original sin and its effects were maximized; man's nature and capacity for action in the order of salvation were denied or considered impotent. This radical incapacity of man was made up for by the sole agency of God, who is active in the process of justification without causing in man the reality of healing and elevating grace. This was a supernaturalism which was derogatory both to the reality of God's action and to human causality and freedom. God's action by grace is appreciated fully only when we profess, with the Council of Trent, that his grace is so real and so genuinely efficacious that it is able to transform sinful man into justified man through remission from sin and the bestowal of an interior gift.

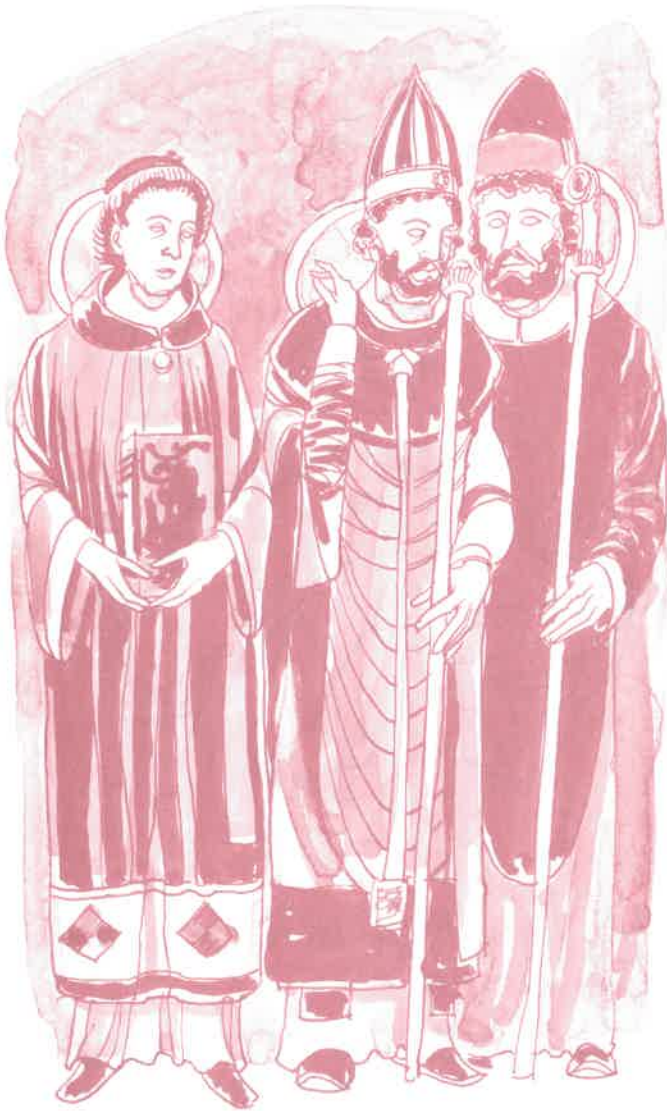
The Council of Trent likewise denied the epistemological dimension of the Lutheran affirmation of God's agency; that is to say, Luther's understanding of God's action in justification was such as to reverberate in human consciousness by an absolute inner certitude of personal salvation. Denying the basis for this view of God's action, the Council likewise denied its translation into the sphere of conscious knowledge: that is, its epistemological dimension. The certitude and hope of the Christian are to rest in God and in the power of his works. By thus relating grace and justification to the works and sacraments of the Church, the Council denied the isolated individualism of Lutheran salvation, and reaffirmed salvation's sacramental and ecclesial character. Grace comes to man through Christ in the Church, that is in the power of the Spirit and in the sacraments of faith. Grace makes man therefore a living member of Christ in his mystical body.

The agency of either man or God as the sole one in man's salvation, i.e., the either or position of the extremes of Pelagianism and Lutheranism is thus denied by the Church. Catholic doctrine assents to the reality and to the absolute primacy and sovereignty of God's grace. In that very assertion it simultaneously affirms the reality of man's free cooperation, made possible by the totally gratuitous gift of healing and elevating grace. — pp.54-61, 64, 65.



The Theology of Grace, by Jean Daujat

Luther and Calvin saw clearly, as against the Pelagians, that of ourselves we are incapable of any good, any merit: that left to our own strength we are irremediably sinners — fundamental truths expressed by the Church in her Lenten liturgy. But the two so-called reformers asserted these truths only to fall into another and equally serious heresy. They claimed that grace is only a forgiveness and a juridical title to salvation, granted to man though he remains a sinner; so that it does not transform us or render us really good and holy. In connection with sanctifying grace, we explained this erroneous teaching, but we must return to it in connection with actual grace for if the Catholic faith teaches that without grace we cannot merit and perform works that are supernaturally good, at the same time it teaches that grace does enable us to merit and to carry out such works. We really and truly merit, but our merits are the result of the grace in us, and are therefore given us by God. Therefore in the Preface of All Saints (used in some places) the Church prays: "O God, who in crowning their merits dost crown thy own gifts." Grace is not something external to us but something within us, causing us to act supernaturally or divinely. All the texts from Holy Scripture, from tradition and the Magisterium of the Church which



have been already cited emphasize that it is grace alone that makes us act aright, and that it really and truly makes us act that way. As our Lord says: "I have chosen you and appointed you (or rendered you such) that you should go and bring forth fruit", St. Paul tells us that God chose us in Christ from the beginning of the world, that we might be holy and spotless in his sight, whilst in his treatise on Nature and Grace, St. Augustine writes that God heals us not only to blot out our sins, but also to enable us to sin no more.

The heresies of Luther and Calvin were explicitly condemned by the Council of Trent in passages already quoted, and of which we repeat the principal: "Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and interior renovation of the man who is willing to accept God's grace and gifts; so that from being unjust or evil he may become just." "God justifies us and thus, having received this justice from him, we are spiritually and inwardly renewed and consequently are not merely considered and treated as

just, but really deserve to be called so, and are truly just." The same Council condemned as heretical the teaching that: "Men are justified either simply by having the justice of Christ imputed to them, or by the remission of their sins, but without grace and love being infused into their souls by the Holy Spirit." Finally, the condemnation of Baius defined that man, "being renewed by the Holy Spirit, is able in consequence to live a good life". . . .

To put it another way: this gift of God is the gift of an interior sanctity, that really sanctifies man in his inmost being, and not the gift of accomplishing an exterior work, which would not change the man inwardly. We repeat, therefore, that sanctifying grace is infinitely more than a miracle, a prophecy or a vision.

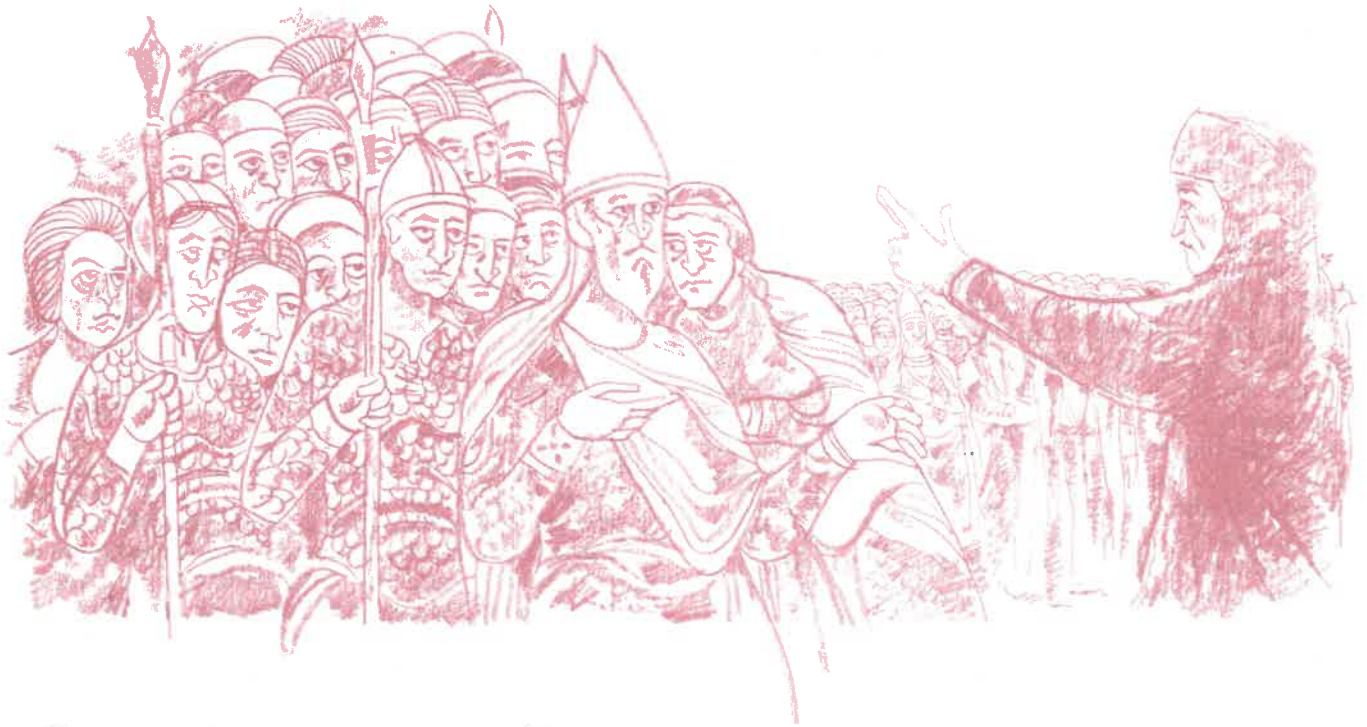
It is important to be clear about this matter in order to avoid the heresies of Luther and Calvin and a certain number of others following their lead, which have denied the presence in us of a quality bestowed by God that really makes us holy. Either they reduce grace to a juridical title, an attribution of something, like the designation of a man who is making a will; or else it is considered merely as the performance of external works, such as the keeping of a set of rules and commandments. The Council of Trent declared heretical the statement that: "Men are justified either by the imputation of the justice of Christ alone, or through the remission of sins alone, without that grace and charity which is infused in their souls by the Holy Spirit and inheres in them"; and against this heresy it says explicitly:

Justification is not only the remission of sins but also the sanctification and interior renovation of the man, who willingly accepts grace and the gifts of God, in such wise that an unjust or evil man becomes just, and passes from the enmity to the friendship of God, to become an heir in hope of eternal life. Here are the causes of this justification: its final cause that is, its object, is the glory of God and of Christ, and for us life eternal; its efficient cause is God's mercy, which freely cleanses and sanctifies² us by filling us with the promised Holy Spirit, by whom we inherit eternal life³; its meritorious cause is the only-begotten and beloved Son of the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, who when we were yet sinners, at enmity with God⁴ merited for us the justice, or the friendship of God, and made atonement for us in the sight of the Father through his passion on the cross, by reason of the "exceeding charity" wherewith he loved us. The instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism, which is the sacrament of faith without which no man can be justified. Finally, the unique, formal cause of this justification is divine justice, not inasmuch as God himself is just but in that he renders us just and so, receiving from him this justice, we are immediately spiritually renewed, and consequently are not only considered and treated as just, but truly merit to be called so and to be really so.

²1Cor. 6. 11.

³Ephes. 1. 13.

⁴Rom. 5. 10.



Three Central Issues in the Sixteenth Century Debate

James Buchanan

We here present an extract from Dr. James Buchanan's classic, *The Doctrine of Justification*.¹

First Issue: The Nature of Justification

According to Rome

In regard to the Nature of Justification, or what that is which is denoted by the term in Scripture, the fundamental error of the Church of Rome consisted in confounding it with Sanctification. It is not enough to say, that they employ the term Justification to denote the whole of that great change which is wrought on the soul of a sinner at the time of his conversion, and which includes both the remission of his sins, and the renovation of his nature, — for in this comprehensive

sense it was sometimes used by Augustine, and occasionally even by some Protestant writers; but it is further affirmed that, while Augustine distinguished these two effects of divine grace, as bearing respectively on a sinner's relation to God, and on his spiritual character, Popish writers confounded, and virtually identified, them; and thereby introduced confusion and obscurity into the whole scheme of divine truth. For if Justification were either altogether the same with Sanctification; or if, — not being entirely the same, but in some respects distinguishable from it, — it was founded and dependent on Sanctification, so as that a sinner is only justified, when, and because, and in so far as, he is sanctified; then it would follow, — that Justification, considered as an act of God, is the mere infusion, in the first instance, and the mere recognition, in the second, of a righteousness inherent in the sinner himself; and not an act of God's grace, acquitting him of guilt, delivering him from condemnation, and receiving him into His favour and friendship. It would not be a forensic or judicial proceeding terminating on man as its object, and rectifying his relation to God; but the exertion of a spiritual energy, of which man is the subject, and by which he is renewed in the spirit of his mind. Considered, again, as the privilege of believers, it would not consist in the free forgiveness of sins, and a sure title to eternal life; but in the possession of an

¹Born in 1804, James Buchanan became Professor of Systematic Theology at the Free Church College in Edinburgh. Buchanan's *The Doctrine of Justification* is a classic of English Protestantism. We highly recommend it to our readers. It is published by The Banner of Truth Trust, P.O. Box 652, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013.

Reprinted from James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), pp. 128-136. Used by permission.

inward personal righteousness, which is always imperfect, and often stained with sin, — which can never, therefore, amount to a full justification in the present life, as the actual privilege of any believer.

According to the Reformers

In opposition to these and similar errors on this point, the Reformers held and taught that Justification is 'an act of God's free grace, whereby He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight;' — that it is an act of God external to the sinner, of which he is the object, — not an inward work, of which he is the subject; — that it is a forensic and judicial change in his relation to God, such as takes place in the condition of a person accused, when he is acquitted, — or of a person condemned, when he is pardoned, — or of a person in a state of enmity, when he is reconciled and received as a friend, — not a change in his moral and spiritual character, although this must always accompany or flow from it; and that it is the present privilege of every believer, however weak his faith, and however imperfect his holiness, — for 'being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;' and 'in Him we have redemption through his blood, even the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace.' Thus widely did the two parties differ in regard to the nature of Justification.

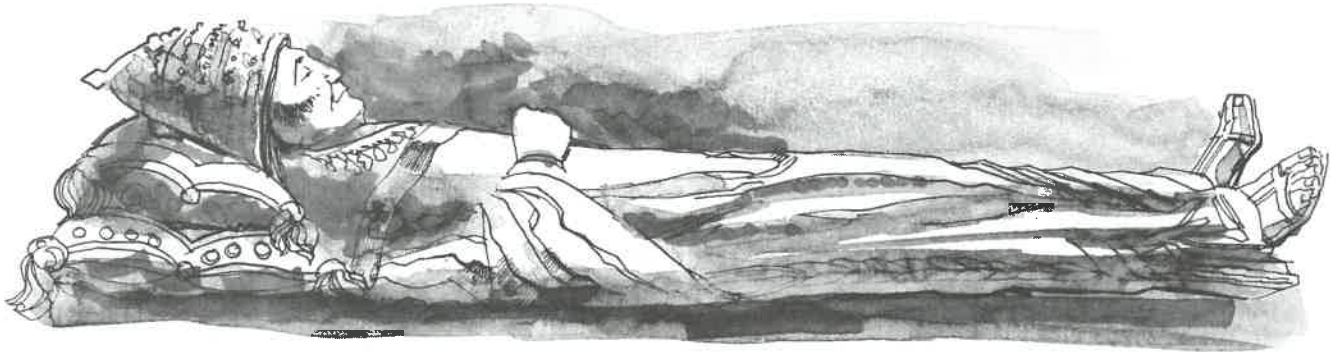


James Buchanan

Second Issue: The Ground of Justification

According to Rome

In regard, again, to the Ground of Justification, or what that is to which God has regard as the reason on account of which He 'justifies the ungodly,' and to which the believer also should look as the foundation of his hope, — the fundamental error of the Church of Rome consisted in substituting the inherent righteousness of the regenerate, for the imputed righteousness of the Redeemer. There might seem to be no room, in their system, for any question in regard to the ground of Justification, as something distinct from Justification itself; for if Justification be the same with Sanctification, and if Sanctification consists in righteousness, infused and inherent, then this righteousness is the matter and substance of both, rather than the ground of either. But when, instead of confounding, they made a distinction between, the two, they were in the habit of representing the infused righteousness which makes us acceptable to God, as the ground or reason of His acceptance of our persons, which is consequent upon it, — while they utterly rejected the imputed righteousness of Christ. It is true, they spoke of the merits of Christ, and ascribed some influence to His sufferings and death in connection with our justification; but they denied that His righteousness is imputed to us, so as to become the immediate ground of our acceptance with God, or the sole reason on account of which He pardons our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight. The merits of Christ were rather, according to their doctrine, the procuring cause of that regenerating grace by which we are made righteous; while the inherent personal righteousness, which is thus produced, is the real proximate ground of our justification. At the best, they only admitted Christ's righteousness to a partnership with our own, in the hope that whatever was defective in ours might be made up, and supplemented, by the perfection of His. But that His righteousness imputed is the sole and all-sufficient ground of our justification, which neither requires nor admits of any addition being made to it in the shape either of suffering or obedience, and which is effectual, for that end, without the aid of any other righteousness, infused and inherent, — they strenuously denied. This fundamental error in regard to the ground of a sinner's justification, explains and accounts for many collateral or subordinate errors, — such as, their doctrine of a first and second Justification: a first Justification, by the original infusion of righteousness; and a second Justification, by that same righteousness remaining inherent and become actual; — their doctrine that works done before faith are excluded by the Apostles, but not works done after faith; — and their doctrine that Paul and James can only be harmonized on the



supposition that Paul speaks of the one, and James of the other. All these doctrines rested on the same fundamental principle, namely, that the ground of our justification is a righteousness personal and inherent, — procured, it may be, by the merits of Christ, and infused into us by the regenerating grace of His Spirit, but becoming really and properly our own, just as any other attribute of character is our own, and securing our forgiveness and acceptance with God by its intrinsic worth.

According to the Reformers

In opposition to these and similar errors on this point, the Reformers held and taught, that we were justified 'only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us,' or put down to our account; and they based their doctrine on such considerations as these, — that a righteousness of some kind is indispensable, if God is to accept us as righteous, — that it must be such a righteousness as is adequate to meet and satisfy all the requirements of that perfect Law, which is God's rule in judgment, — that its requirements, both penal and preceptive, were fulfilled by the obedience, passive and active, of the Lord Jesus Christ, — that He thus became 'the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth in His name,' — that our inherent personal righteousness, even were it perfect, could not cancel the guilt of our past sins, or offer any satisfaction to divine justice on account of them, — that so far from being perfect, even in the regenerate, it is defiled by indwelling sin, and impaired by actual transgression, — and that the work of the Spirit in us, indispensable and precious as it is for other ends, was not designed to secure our justification in any other way than by applying to us the righteousness of Christ, and enabling us to receive and rest upon it by faith. Thus widely did the two parties differ in regard to the ground of Justification.

Third Issue: The Means of Justification

According to Rome

In regard, again, to the Means of Justification, — or what that is through which God bestows, and man receives, forgiveness of sin, and a title to eternal life, — the fundamental error of the Church of Rome consisted in denying that we are justified by that faith which 'receives and rests on Christ alone for salvation, as He is freely offered to us in the Gospel.' They affirmed that we are justified, not simply by faith in Christ, for faith might exist where there is no justification, but by faith informed with charity, or love, which is the germ of new obedience; — that this faith is first infused by baptism, so as to delete all past sin, — original sin, in the case of infants, and both original sin and actual sin in the case of adults, duly prepared to receive it, — while it is restored or renewed, in the event of post-baptismal sin, by confession and absolution, which effectually deliver the sinner from all punishment, except such as is endured in penance, or in purgatory. This general statement embraces their whole doctrine on this part of the subject, and comprehends under it several distinct positions, each of which became the occasion of intricate and protracted discussion. The main questions related to — the nature of saving faith, — the reason of its efficacy as a means of Justification, — and the respective uses or functions of faith and the sacraments. The real bearing of these questions, as to the nature and effects of Faith, on the general doctrine of Justification, will not be discerned or appreciated aright, unless we bear in mind, that they were all connected with, and directed to the establishment of, the fundamental principle of the Romish system respecting the ground of our forgiveness and accep-

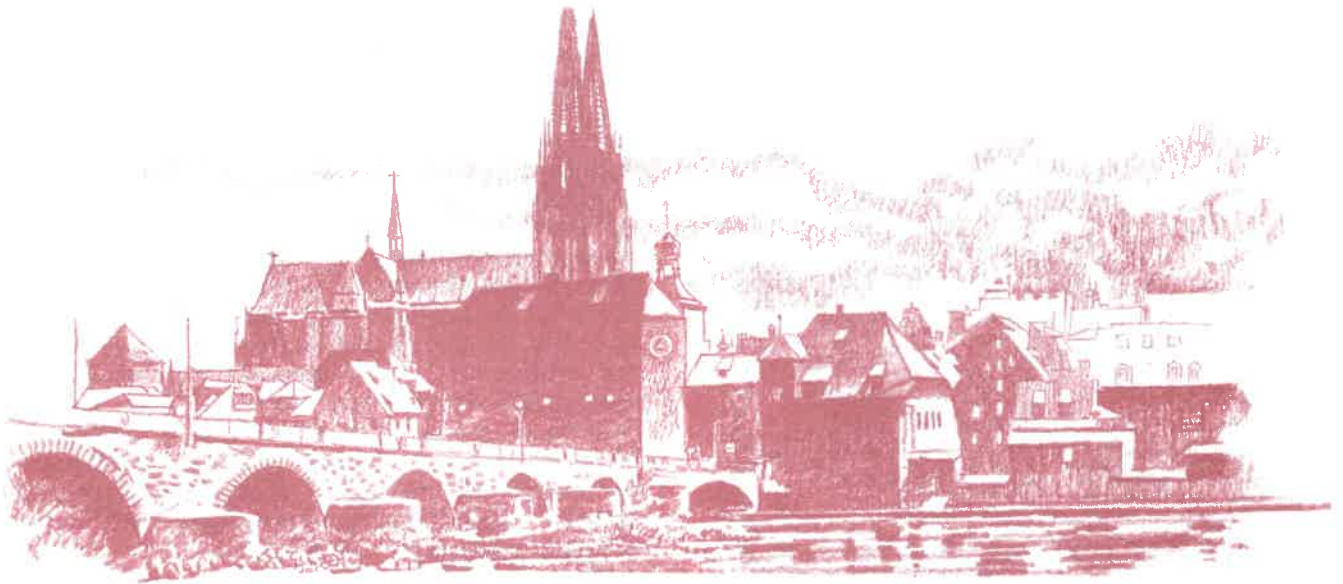
tance with God, as being a righteousness inherent in man, and not the righteousness of Christ imputed. This being the grand leading doctrine, every other must be brought in accordance with it, and so explained as to contribute to its support. Accordingly faith, to which so much efficacy and importance are everywhere ascribed in Scripture, was, first of all, defined as a mere intellectual belief, or assent to revealed truth, such as an unrenewed mind might acquire in the exercise of its natural faculties, without the aid of divine grace, and described as having, in itself, no necessary connection with salvation, but as being only one of seven antecedent dispositions or qualifications, which always precede, in the case of adults, but are not invariably followed by, Justification. This faith, in order to be effectual and saving, must be 'informed with charity or love;' and forthwith that which was barren before becomes fruitful, and, being fruitful, it justifies, not because it rests on the righteousness of Christ, but because it is itself our inherent personal righteousness, the product of a new birth, and the germ of a new creation. It was regarded as the seminal principle of holiness in heart and life, and, as such, the ground of our justification. Some admitted that it was procured for us by the merits of Christ, and is infused into us by the grace of His Spirit; but they held that it exists as a subjective principle in our own hearts, and secures by its own intrinsic worth, without any righteousness imputed, the forgiveness of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons and services. The 'faith informed by charity,' which constitutes our righteousness, cannot, of course, be a means of receiving Justification, since it is itself the substance of that Gospel blessing; and accordingly Justification was said to be conveyed on God's part, and received on man's, through the medium, not of faith, but of the sacraments. The sinner, being regenerated by baptism, and purified, from time to time, by confession and penance, was held to be justified, — not by faith in Christ, as the means, or by the righteousness of Christ, as the ground, of his forgiveness and acceptance, — but by inherent righteousness, sacramentally infused and nourished, with or without the exercise of an explicit faith in Christ and His finished work.

According to the Reformers

In opposition to these and similar errors on this point, the Reformers held and taught, that we are 'justified by faith alone,' simply because faith receives and rests upon Christ alone for salvation, and apprehends and appropriates His righteousness as the ground of acceptance. They admitted the existence of a mere historical faith, such as men might acquire in the exercise of their natural faculties; for this is recognised in Scripture; but they affirmed that there is a faith, — clearly distinguishable from it by sure scriptural tests, — which is immediately and invariably effectual

in securing the pardon of a sinner and his acceptance with God, — a faith, which does not consist in the bare assent of the understanding, but involves the cordial consent of the whole mind, — which not only apprehends, but appropriates, Christ and all His benefits, — receiving and resting upon Him alone for salvation, — and looking to His righteousness as its only prevailing plea; which, wherever it exists, and in whatever degree, though it were small even as a grain of mustard-seed, has an immediate and certain efficacy, simply because it unites the believer to Christ, and makes him a partaker of His righteousness; and which, when it has once been implanted in the soul, will never be suffered to die out, but will spring up unto life eternal. They held this faith to be necessary to salvation; but they held it also to be immediately, invariably, and infallibly effectual for salvation, inasmuch that he in whom it exists may be fully assured that 'he has passed from death unto life, and that he will never come into condemnation.' They did not deny, on the contrary they affirmed, that this faith 'worketh by love,' and through love, as the main spring of new obedience, produces all 'the peaceable fruits of righteousness;' but its justifying efficacy they ascribed, not, as the Church of Rome did, to its 'enclosing charity, as a ring encloses a diamond,' which enhances its intrinsic worth, but to its 'enclosing Christ, the pearl of great price,' whose righteousness alone makes it of any avail. They joyfully acknowledged it to be a spiritual grace, a gift of God, and one of the fruits of His Spirit, which is in its own nature acceptable and pleasing to Him; but they regarded the infusion of this living faith as the means by which God applies to men individually the redemption which was purchased by Christ; and as a means admirably adapted to this end, just because it directs the sinner to look out of himself to Christ alone as his Saviour, — to relinquish all self-righteous confidence in anything that he has done, or can do, — and to cast himself entirely on the free grace of God and the finished work of the Redeemer. They rejected the whole doctrine of sacramental Justification, because they learned from Scripture that, as Abraham was justified, under the Old Dispensation, before he was circumcised, and received circumcision only as 'a sign and seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised,'² so, under the New Dispensation, Justification is inseparably connected with faith, and not with baptism, insomuch that every believer is justified before, and even without, being baptized, while many are baptized who are neither regenerated, nor justified, nor saved. Thus widely did the two parties differ in regard to the means of Justification.

²Rom. iv. 11.



The Attempted Compromise of Ratisbon

James Buchanan

At Ratisbon in 1541 it appeared that the Roman party came very close to accepting the Protestant positions. They were even willing to adopt the Reformation slogan of *justification by faith alone*. But the concession was only in *form*, not in *substance*. Ratisbon illustrates how widely different theologies can use the same terms and mean totally different things.

We will again quote Dr. James Buchanan's *The Doctrine of Justification* on the fascinating events at Ratisbon. The reader is urged to give his closest attention to the arguments, which get right to the heart of the Rome/Reformation debate. We need to understand Ratisbon today, for in many places teachers are using the slogans of Protestantism with a Roman meaning.

... between the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, and that of Ratisbon in 1541, a marked and striking change occurred in the policy of the Romish party. Instead of denouncing the Protestant doctrine of Justification, as a dangerous novelty, directly opposed to the teaching of the Romish Church, they were now prepared ostensibly to adopt it as their own, — to claim it, even, as a part of that truth which they had always held and taught, — and to make it appear, that there was no real, or, at least, no radical, difference between the two parties, but only such as might be easily adjusted by mutual explanation and concession. Hence originated a long series of conferences, appointed by the Emperor, and attended by the Reformers, with the

avowed object, on the part of their powerful promoters, of effecting a settlement by means of conciliation and compromise. The way had been prepared for some such attempt by the work of Erasmus, 'On Concord in Religion,' in 1533, which aimed at the reconciliation of the two parties, and ascribed almost as much to grace and faith as the Reformers could desire, while it adhered to the Popish idea of Justification, as 'a purifying work on the heart,' and to the Popish doctrine also of reward and 'merit.' But the book which was the immediate occasion of the negotiations that followed, was compiled by Gropper, one of the Canons of Cologne, whose Archbishop, the pious Hermann, had attempted to reform his diocese by means of a Provincial Council in 1536. That Council drew up a number of articles, which were afterwards digested and published by Gropper, and which were mainly directed 'to palliate the Popish doctrines, and to colour them with new interpretations.' This worthless book, which Luther had seen before, and characterized as "crafty and ambiguous," and of which the mild Melancthon had said, 'There is nothing so monstrous, that it may not be made to appear plausible by dexterous management, and the magic touch of a skilful sophister,' came into the hands of the Emperor. It pleased him as a politician, because it recommended concessions, sometimes on one side, and sometimes on the other; and he presented it to the Diet at Ratisbon as a basis of agreement, naming three divines on each side — Eckius, Gropper, and Pflug, for the Romanists, — and

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Melancthon, Bucer, and Pistorius, for the Protestants, — to examine it, and report. Strange as it may seem, an article on Justification was agreed upon in the conference of divines, — subject, however, to the approbation of the Diet, — an article which was afterwards found to be satisfactory to neither party, but offensive to both; and as it throws an instructive light on the new policy which began to be adopted at that time by the adherents of Rome, and which has been pursued, more or less consistently, ever since, we may mark, *first*, the large concessions which were now made in favour of the Protestant doctrine of Justification; and, *secondly*, the careful reservation of one point, and only one, which was so ambiguously expressed as to be susceptible of different interpretations, while, according to the sense in which it was understood, it involved the whole difference between the Popish, and the Protestant, method of acceptance with God, — between Justification by imputed, and Justification by infused or inherent, righteousness.

The concessions which were made to the Protestants were apparently large and liberal; for the article, as preserved by Du Pin, expressly bears, — that 'since the fall of Adam, all men are born enemies of God, and children of wrath by sin,' — that 'they cannot be reconciled to God, or redeemed from the bondage of sin, but by Jesus Christ, our only Mediator,' — that 'their mind is raised up to God, by faith in the promises made to them, that their sins are freely forgiven them, and that God will adopt those for His children who believe in Jesus Christ,' — that 'faith justifies not, but as it leads us to mercy and righteousness, which is imputed to us through Jesus Christ and His merits, and not by any perfection of righteousness which is inherent in us, as communicated to us by Jesus Christ,' — and that 'we are not just, or accepted by God, on account of our own works or righteousness, but we are reputed just on account of the merits of Jesus Christ only.' That these statements contain the substance of the Protestant doctrine is undeniable; and had they stood alone, they might have justified the fond belief which Melancthon once expressed when he said, 'The times have much softened down the controversy respecting Justification; for the learned are now agreed on many points, concerning which there were at first fierce disputes.' But amidst all these concessions, one point was carefully reserved, or expressed in ambiguous terms, which was of such vital and fundamental importance that, according to the sense in which it was understood, it would determine the whole character of the article, as a deliverance in favour, either of the Popish, or the Protestant, doctrine of Justification.

That point was — the *faith* by which we are justified, — or rather the precise function which belongs to it, and the ground or reason of the efficacy which is ascribed to it. According to the Protestant doctrine, it is the means of Justification, simply because it receives and rests upon Christ alone, — because it apprehends and appropriates His righteousness as its only plea, — because it implies an absolute renunciation of all self-dependence, and

consists in an entire and cordial reliance on Christ as 'the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,' — as 'the propitiation for our sins through faith in His blood,' — and as 'the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth in His name.' But according to the Popish doctrine, faith justifies, not by uniting the sinner to Christ, and making him a partaker of Christ's righteousness, — but by 'working' in him, and 'sanctifying' him, — by being, in its own essential nature as one of the 'fruits of the Spirit,' and by producing, in its actual operation as a vital principle which 'worketh by love,' a real inherent righteousness, which is, on its own account, acceptable to God, and which constitutes the immediate ground of his acceptance; — in short, by *making him righteous*, subjectively, so that thereby, and on that account, he may be *reputed* righteous, and obtain at once the pardon of sin, and a title to eternal life. This cardinal point, which may be justly said to be the hinge on which the whole question turned, was carefully reserved, or wrapt up in ambiguous terms, at Ratisbon; — and these were only the more insidious, because they contained a truth respecting the nature and effects of justifying faith, which the Reformers held as strongly as their opponents. The article declared, that 'sinners are justified by a living and effectual faith, which is a motion of the Holy Spirit, whereby, repenting of their lives past, they are raised to God, and made real partakers of the mercy which Jesus Christ hath promised,' . . . 'which no man attains but at the same time love is shed abroad in his heart, and he begins to fulfil the law;' and that 'this is not to hinder us from exhorting the people to increase this faith and this charity by outward and inward works; so that, though the people be taught that *faith alone justifieth*, yet repentance, the fear of God and His judgments, and the practice of good works, ought to be preached unto them.' All this is true, but it is not relevant to the question at issue. It relates to faith, not as it justifies, but as it sanctifies, a sinner. It diverts the mind from the external object of justifying faith, which is Christ alone, and His perfect righteousness; and directs it to the inward effect of faith, in changing the character and conduct of the sinner, and producing an inherent, but imperfect, righteousness of his own. The doctrine is sound and wholesome in its own place, and in its proper connection; but it becomes unsound and dangerous, when it is mixed up with the truth which relates to the ground and reason of a sinner's pardon and acceptance with God. It virtually substitutes the work of the Spirit in us, in the place of the work of Christ for us; or, at least, it does not represent the work of the Spirit as the mere application of the redemption and righteousness of Christ, already wrought out by Him, and sufficient of itself for the immediate justification of every believer, but as being, either in whole or in part, the ground or reason on account of which God bestows His forgiveness and favour. And thus, by introducing the sanctifying effects of faith into their definition of it, as it is the means of justification, the Popish divines made provision for falling back on their favourite doctrine of an



Cardinal Cajetan

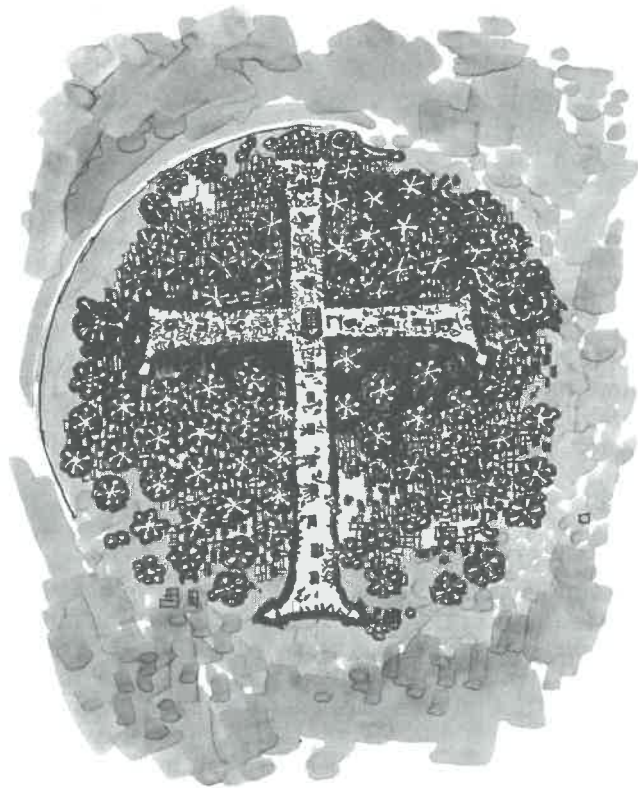
inherent, as opposed to an imputed, righteousness; and for ultimately setting aside all the concessions which they had apparently made.

The article thus carefully concocted, and couched in ambiguous terms, was satisfactory to neither party, and was openly denounced by both. It had too much of the Gospel in it to be palatable to the consistent adherents of Rome, and too much of disguised legalism to be acceptable to the Reformed. On the one side, the Legate, Cardinal Contarini, was charged by Cardinal Caraffa, who afterwards became Pope as Paul IV., with having betrayed the cause of the Church, especially on the question of justification. On the other side, the Elector of Saxony objected strongly to the article, and complained that 'the doctrine of justification by *faith alone*, was well nigh buried beneath appendages and explanations.'

From this narrative we may derive several important lessons. It shows that, between the Diet of Augsburg and that of Ratisbon, — or in the course of little more than ten years, — the same doctrine of justification which had been openly rejected as a 'novelty,' at direct variance with the teaching of the Church, came to be regarded in an entirely different light, and even to be claimed as a truth which had always been taught by the priests and bishops of Rome. Luther, marking this sudden change, could hardly restrain his indignant sarcasm, and exclaimed, 'Popish writers pretend that they have always taught, what we now teach, concerning faith and good works, and that they are unjustly accused of the contrary: thus the wolf puts on the sheep's skin till he gains admission into the fold.' That their original charge against the Protestant doctrine as a 'novelty,' and their subsequent claim to it as the 'old doctrine' of the Church, could not both be true, is evident, for they are manifestly contradictory; and it might seem incredible that they could have been adopted by the same parties in good faith. In the minds of some, there might have grown up a clearer perception of the Protestant doctrine and of its scriptural evidence than they had before the Reformation, — as in the case of Bishop Vergerio, who was converted in attempting to refute it, — of Cardinal Cajetan, whose commentary on the Epistle to the Romans bears traces of his having learned something from his conferences with Luther, — and even of the Emperor himself, of whom it has

been said that, 'as he drew near his end, and was more deeply impressed with the awful thought of appearing before the divine tribunal, he approximated more and more to some of the leading doctrines of Luther, and particularly that of Justification by faith.' In the case of others, there might be a change of policy and profession, where there was no corresponding conviction of the truth; and this seems to be the true explanation of the conduct which was pursued by the chief Popish agents at Ratisbon; for Melancthon, speaking of Eckius, complained of his 'sophisms and juggling tricks,' and said, 'He sports with terms of the most serious import, — continually conceals his real meaning, and only aims to embarrass an adversary. There is great danger in encountering sycophants of this kind.' And Bucer, speaking of Gropper, who afterwards wrote against the very doctrine which he had professed to receive, and actively promoted the deposition of the venerable reforming Archbishop of Cologne, affirmed that 'Gropper either sincerely assented to the Evangelical doctrine, or with solemn asseverations protested it.' Whether it proceeded from conviction or from policy, there was a striking change at this date in the treatment which the Romish Church bestowed on the Protestant doctrine of Justification; a change so great as to warrant the distinction, which still exists, between Old and New Popery.

We learn another lesson from what occurred at the Diet of Ratisbon. It shows the possibility of appearing to concede almost everything, while one point is reserved, or wrapped up in ambiguous language, which is found afterwards sufficient to neutralize every concession, and to leave the parties as much at variance as before. It has been justly said that, in controversies of faith, the difference between antagonist systems is often reduced to a line sharp as a razor's edge, yet on one side of that line there is God's truth, and on the other a departure from it. At Ratisbon, the difference between the Popish and Protestant doctrines of Justification seemed to resolve itself into one point, and even on that point both parties held some views in common. It might seem, then, that there was no radical or irreconcilable difference between the two; and yet, when they came to explain their respective views, it was found that they were contending for two opposite methods of Justification, — the one by an inherent, the other by an imputed, righteousness, — the one by the personal obedience of the believer, the other by the vicarious obedience of Christ, — the one by the inchoate and imperfect work of the Spirit in men, the other by the finished work of Christ for them, when 'He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' This fact shows the utter folly of every attempt to reconcile two systems, which are radically opposed, by means of a compromise between them; and the great danger of engaging in private conferences with a view to that end. In the open field of controversy, truth, so far from being endangered, is ventilated, cleared, and defined; in the secret conclaves of divines, and the cabinets of princes, it is often smothered, or silenced. It has far less to fear from discussion, than from diplomacy.



“We need to understand Ratisbon today, for in many places teachers are using the slogans of Protestantism with a Roman meaning.”

There can be no honest compromise between the Popish and the Protestant doctrine of Justification, — the one is at direct variance with the other, not in respect of verbal expression merely, but in respect of their fundamental principles, — and any settlement, on the basis of mutual concession, could only be made by means of ambiguous expressions, and could amount to nothing more than a hollow truce, liable to be broken by either party as soon as the subject was brought again into serious discussion. This was the abortive result of the apparent agreement at Ratisbon. . . .

The Council of Trent



We here include the entire "Decree Concerning Justification" from the Roman Catholic Council of Trent, Sixth Session, celebrated on the thirteenth day of January, 1547.

Decree Concerning Justification

Introduction

Since there is being disseminated at this time, not without the loss of many souls and grievous detriment to the unity of the Church, a certain erroneous doctrine concerning justification, the holy, ecumenical and general Council of Trent, lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, the most reverend John Maria, Bishop of Praeneste de Monte, and Marcellus, priest of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, cardinals of the holy Roman Church and legates Apostolic *a latere*, presiding in the name of our most holy Father and Lord in Christ, Paul III, by the providence of God, Pope, intends, for the praise and glory of Almighty God, for the tranquillity of the Church and the salvation of souls, to expound to all the faithful of Christ the true and salutary doctrine of justification, which the Sun of justice,¹ Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith² taught, which the Apostles transmitted and which the Catholic Church under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost has always retained; strictly forbidding that anyone henceforth presume to believe, preach or teach otherwise than is defined and declared in the present decree.

Chapter I

The Impotency of Nature and of the Law to Justify Man

The holy council declares first, that for a correct and clear understanding of the doctrine of justification, it

is necessary that each one recognize and confess that since all men had lost innocence in the prevarication of Adam,³ having become unclean,⁴ and, as the Apostle says, by nature children of wrath,⁵ as has been set forth in the decree on original sin,⁶ they were so far the servants of sin⁷ and under the power of the devil and of death, that not only the Gentiles by the force of nature, but not even the Jews by the very letter of the law of Moses, were able to be liberated or to rise therefrom, though free will, weakened as it was in its powers and downward bent,⁸ was by no means extinguished in them.

Chapter II

The Dispensation and Mystery of the Advent of Christ

Whence it came to pass that the heavenly Father, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort,⁹ when the blessed fulness of the time was come,¹⁰ sent to men Jesus Christ, His own Son, who had both before the law and during the time of the law been announced and promised to many of the holy fathers,¹¹ that he might redeem the Jews who were under the law,¹² and that the Gentiles who followed not after justice¹³ might attain to justice, and that all men might receive the adoption of sons. Him has God proposed as a propitiator through faith in his blood¹⁴ for our sins, and not for our sins only, but also for those of the whole world.¹⁵

³Rom. 5:12; I Cor. 15:22.

⁴Is. 64:6.

⁵Eph. 2:3.

⁶Cf. Sess. V at the beginning.

⁷Rom. 6:17, 20.

⁸Cf. II Synod of Orange (529), c.25. Hardonin, II, 1101.

⁹See II Cor. 1:3.

¹⁰Gal. 4:4.

¹¹Gen. 49:10,18.

¹²Gal. 4:5.

¹³Rom. 9:30.

¹⁴Ibid., 3:25; Dist. I De poenit., *passim*.

¹⁵See I John 2:2.

¹Mal. 4:2.

²Heb. 12:2.

Chapter III

Who Are Justified Through Christ

But though *He died for all*,¹⁶ yet all do not receive the benefit of His death, but those only to whom the merit of His passion is communicated; because as truly as men would not be born unjust, if they were not born through propagation of the seed of Adam, since by that propagation they contract through him, when they are conceived, injustice as their own, so if they were not born again in Christ, they would never be justified, since in that new birth there is bestowed upon them, through the merit of His passion, the grace by which they are made just. For this benefit the Apostle exhorts us always to *give thanks to the Father, who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light, and hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption and remission of sins*.¹⁷

Chapter IV

A Brief Description of the Justification of the Sinner and Its Mode in the State of Grace

In which words is given a brief description of the justification of the sinner, as being a translation from that state in which man is born a child of the first Adam, to the state of grace and of the adoption of the sons of God through the second Adam, Jesus Christ, our Savior. This translation however cannot, since the promulgation of the Gospel, be effected except through the laver of regeneration or its desire, as it is written: *Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*.¹⁸

Chapter V

The Necessity of Preparation for Justification in Adults, and Whence It Proceeds

It is furthermore declared that in adults the beginning of that justification must proceed from the predisposing grace of God through Jesus Christ, that is, from His vocation, whereby, without any merits on their part, they are called; that they who by sin had been cut off from God, may be disposed through His quickening and helping grace to convert themselves to their own justification by freely assenting to and

cooperating with that grace; so that, while God touches the heart of man through the illumination of the Holy Ghost, man himself neither does absolutely nothing while receiving that inspiration, since he can also reject it, nor yet is he able by his own free will and without the grace of God to move himself to justice in His sight. Hence, when it is said in the sacred writings: *Turn ye to me, and I will turn to you*,¹⁹ we are reminded of our liberty; and when we reply: *Convert us, O Lord, to thee, and we shall be converted*,²⁰ we confess that we need the grace of God.

Chapter VI

The Manner of Preparation

Now, they (the adults) are disposed to that justice when, aroused and aided by divine grace, receiving *faith by hearing*,²¹ they are moved freely toward God, believing to be true what has been divinely revealed and promised, especially that the sinner is justified by God by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;²² and when, understanding themselves to be sinners, they, by turning themselves from the fear of divine justice, by which they are salutarily aroused, to consider the mercy of God, are raised to hope, trusting that God will be propitious to them for Christ's sake; and they begin to love Him as the fountain of all justice, and on that account are moved against sin by a certain hatred and detestation, that is, by that repentance that must be performed before baptism;²³ finally, when they resolve to receive baptism, to begin a new life and to keep the commandments of God. Of this disposition it is written: *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and is a rewarder to them that seek him*;²⁴ and, *Be of good faith, son, thy sins are forgiven thee*;²⁵ and, *The fear of the Lord driveth out sin*;²⁶ and, *Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*;²⁷ and, *Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*;²⁸ finally, *Prepare your hearts unto the Lord*.²⁹

¹⁹Zach. 1:3.

²⁰Lam. 5:21.

²¹Rom. 10:17.

²²*Ibid.*, 3:24.

²³Cf. Sess. XIV, chap. 4.

²⁴Heb. 11:6.

²⁵Matt. 9:2; Mark 2:5.

²⁶Ecclus. 1:27.

²⁷Acts 2:38; cc. 13, 97, D. IV de cons.

²⁸Matt. 28:19 f.

²⁹See I Kings 7:3.

¹⁶See II Cor. 5:15.

¹⁷Col. 1:12-14.

¹⁸John 3:5.

Chapter VII

In What the Justification of the Sinner Consists, and What Are Its Causes

This disposition or preparation is followed by justification itself, which is not only a remission of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man through the voluntary reception of the grace and gifts whereby an unjust man becomes just and from being an enemy becomes a friend, that he may be *an heir according to hope of life everlasting*.³⁰ The causes of this justification are: the final cause is the glory of God and of Christ and life everlasting; the efficient cause is the merciful God who *washes and sanctifies*³¹ gratuitously, signing and anointing with the *holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance*;³² the meritorious cause is His most beloved only begotten, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, *when we were enemies*,³³ for the exceeding charity wherewith he loved us,³⁴ merited for us justification by His most holy passion on the wood of the cross and made satisfaction for us to God the Father; the instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism, which is the sacrament of faith,³⁵ without which no man was ever justified; finally, the single formal cause is the justice of God, not that by which He Himself is just, but that by which He makes us just, that, namely, with which we being endowed by Him, are *renewed in the spirit of our mind*,³⁶ and not only are we reputed but we are truly called and are just, receiving justice within us, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Ghost distributes to everyone as He wills,³⁷ and according to each one's disposition and cooperation. For though no one can be just except he to whom the merits of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ are communicated, yet this takes place in that justification of the sinner, when by the merit of the most holy passion, *the charity of God is poured forth by the Holy Ghost in the hearts*³⁸ of those who are justified and inheres in them; whence man through Jesus Christ, in whom he is ingrafted, receives in that justification, together with the remission of sins, all these infused at the same time, namely, faith, hope and charity. For faith, unless hope and charity be added to it, neither unites man perfectly with Christ nor makes him a living member of His body.³⁹ For which reason it is most truly said that *faith without works is dead*⁴⁰ and of no profit, and *in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by charity*.⁴¹ This faith, conformably to Apostolic tradition, catechumens ask of the Church

³⁰Tit. 3:7.

³¹See I Cor. 6:11.

³²Eph. 1:13 f.

³³Rom. 5:10.

³⁴Eph. 2:4.

³⁵C. 76, D. IV de cons.

³⁶Eph. 4:23.

³⁷See I Cor. 12:11.

³⁸Rom. 5:5.

³⁹Cf. *infra*, chap. 10.

⁴⁰James 2:17, 20.

⁴¹Gal. 5:6, 6:15.

before the sacrament of baptism, when they ask for the faith that gives eternal life, which without hope and charity faith cannot give. Whence also they hear immediately the word of Christ: *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*.⁴² Wherefore, when receiving true and Christian justice, they are commanded, immediately on being born again, to preserve it pure and spotless, as *the first robe*⁴³ given them through Christ Jesus in place of that which Adam by his disobedience lost for himself and for us, so that they may bear it before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ and may have life eternal.

Chapter VIII

How the Gratuitous Justification of the Sinner by Faith Is to be Understood

But when the Apostle says that man is justified by faith and freely,⁴⁴ these words are to be understood in that sense in which the uninterrupted unanimity of the Catholic Church has held and expressed them, namely, that we are therefore said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, *without which it is impossible to please God*⁴⁵ and to come to the fellowship of His sons; and we are therefore said to be justified gratuitously, because none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification. For, *if by grace, it is not now by works, otherwise, as the Apostle says, grace is no more grace*.⁴⁶

Chapter IX

Against the Vain Confidence of Heretics

But though it is necessary to believe that sins neither are remitted nor ever have been remitted except gratuitously by divine mercy for Christ's sake, yet it must not be said that sins are forgiven or have been forgiven to anyone who boasts of his confidence and certainty of the remission of his sins,⁴⁷ resting on that alone, though among heretics and schismatics this vain and ungodly confidence may be and in our troubled times indeed is found and preached with untiring fury against the Catholic Church. Moreover, it must not be maintained, that they who are truly justified must needs, without any doubt whatever, convince themselves that they are justified, and that no one is absolved from sins and justified except that

⁴²Matt. 19:17.

⁴³Luke 15:22; c. 31, D. II de poenit.

⁴⁴Rom. 3:24; 5:1.

⁴⁵Heb. 11:6.

⁴⁶Rom. 11:6.

⁴⁷Cf. *infra*, can. 12 and 13.

he believes with certainty that he is absolved and justified,⁴⁸ and that absolution and justification are effected by this faith alone, as if he who does not believe this, doubts the promises of God and the efficacy of the death and resurrection of Christ. For as no pious person ought to doubt the mercy of God, the merit of Christ and the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments, so each one, when he considers himself and his own weakness and indisposition, may have fear and apprehension concerning his own grace, since no one can know with the certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God.

Chapter X

The Increase of the Justification Received

Having, therefore, been thus justified and made the friends and domestics of God,⁴⁹ advancing from virtue to virtue,⁵⁰ they are renewed, as the Apostle says, day by day,⁵¹ that is, mortifying the members⁵² of their flesh, and presenting them as instruments of justice unto sanctification,⁵³ they, through the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, faith cooperating with good works, increase in that justice received through the grace of Christ and are further justified, as it is written: *He that is just, let him be justified still;*⁵⁴ and, *Be not afraid to be justified even to death;*⁵⁵ and again, *Do you see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only?*⁵⁶ This increase of justice holy Church asks for when she prays: "Give unto us, O Lord, an increase of faith, hope and charity."⁵⁷

Chapter XI

The Observance of the Commandments and the Necessity and Possibility Thereof

But no one, however much justified, should consider himself exempt from the observance of the commandments; no one should use that rash statement, once forbidden by the Fathers under anathema, that the observance of the commandments of God is impossible for one that is justified. For God does not command impossibilities, but by commanding admonishes thee to do what thou canst and to pray for what thou canst not, and aids thee that thou mayest be

able.⁵⁸ His commandments are not heavy,⁵⁹ and his yoke is sweet and burden light.⁶⁰ For they who are the sons of God love Christ, but they who love Him, keep His commandments, as He Himself testifies;⁶¹ which, indeed, with the divine help they can do. For though during this mortal life, men, however holy and just, fall at times into at least light and daily sins, which are also called venial, they do not on that account cease to be just, for that petition of the just, *forgive us our trespasses,*⁶² is both humble and true; for which reason the just ought to feel themselves the more obliged to walk in the way of justice, for being now freed from sin and made servants of God,⁶³ they are able, living soberly, justly and godly,⁶⁴ to proceed onward through Jesus Christ, by whom they have access unto this grace.⁶⁵ For God does not forsake those who have been once justified by His grace, unless He be first forsaken by them. Wherefore, no one ought to flatter himself with faith alone, thinking that by faith alone he is made an heir and will obtain the inheritance, even though he suffer not with Christ, that he may be also glorified with him.⁶⁶ For even Christ Himself, as the Apostle says, whereas he was the Son of God, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered, and being consummated, he became to all who obey him the cause of eternal salvation.⁶⁷ For which reason the same Apostle admonishes those justified, saying: *Know you not that they who run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air, but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection; lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway.*⁶⁸ So also the prince of the Apostles, Peter: *Labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election. For doing these things, you shall not sin at any time.*⁶⁹ From which it is clear that they are opposed to the orthodox teaching of religion who maintain that the just man sins, venially at least, in every good work;⁷⁰ or, what is more intolerable, that he merits eternal punishment; and they also who assert that the just sin in all works, if, in order to arouse their sloth and to encourage themselves to run the race, they, in addition to this, that above all God may be glorified, have in view also the eternal reward,⁷¹ since it is written: *I have inclined my heart to do thy justifications on account of the reward;*⁷² and of Moses the Apostle says; that he looked unto the reward.⁷³

⁵⁸St. Augustine, *De natura et gratia*, c. 43 (50), PL, XLIV, 271.

⁵⁹See I John 5:3.

⁶⁰Matt. 11:30.

⁶¹John 14:23.

⁶²Matt. 6:12.

⁶³Rom. 6:18, 22.

⁶⁴Tit. 2:12.

⁶⁵Rom. 5:1 f.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 8:17.

⁶⁷Heb. 5:8 f.

⁶⁸See I Cor. 9:24, 26 f.

⁶⁹See II Pet. 1:10.

⁷⁰Cf. *infra*, can. 25.

⁷¹Cf. *infra*, can. 31.

⁷²Ps. 118:112.

⁷³Heb. 11:26.

⁴⁸*Infra*, can. 14.

⁴⁹Eph. 2:19.

⁵⁰Ps. 83:8.

⁵¹See II Cor. 4:16.

⁵²Col. 3:5.

⁵³Rom. 6:13, 19.

⁵⁴Apoc. 22:11.

⁵⁵Ecclus. 18:22.

⁵⁶James 2:24.

⁵⁷Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Chapter XII

Rash Presumption of Predestination Is to be Avoided

No one, moreover, so long as he lives this mortal life, ought in regard to the sacred mystery of divine predestination, so far presume as to state with absolute certainty that he is among the number of the predestined,⁷⁴ as if it were true that the one justified either cannot sin any more, or, if he does sin, that he ought to promise himself an assured repentance. For except by special revelation, it cannot be known whom God has chosen to Himself.

Chapter XIII

The Gift of Perseverance

Similarly with regard to the gift of perseverance, of which it is written: *He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved,*⁷⁵ which cannot be obtained from anyone except from Him who is able to make him stand who stands,⁷⁶ that he may stand perseveringly, and to raise him who falls, let no one promise himself herein something as certain with an absolute certainty, though all ought to place and repose the firmest hope in God's help. For God, unless men themselves fail in His grace, as he has begun a good work, so will he perfect it, working to will and to accomplish.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, let those who think themselves to stand, take heed lest they fall,⁷⁸ and with fear and trembling work out their salvation,⁷⁹ in labors, in watchings, in almsdeeds, in prayer, in fastings and chastity. For knowing that they are born again unto the hope of glory,⁸⁰ and not as yet unto glory, they ought to fear for the combat that yet remains with the flesh, with the world and with the devil, in which they cannot be victorious unless they be with the grace of God obedient to the Apostle who says: *We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh; for if you live according to the flesh, you shall die, but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.*⁸¹

⁷⁴Cf. c. 17, C. XXIV, q. 3.

⁷⁵Matt. 10:22; 24:13.

⁷⁶Rom. 14:4.

⁷⁷Phil. 1:6; 2:13.

⁷⁸See I Cor. 10:12.

⁷⁹Phil. 2:12.

⁸⁰See I Pet. 1:3.

⁸¹Rom. 8:12 f.

Chapter XIV

The Fallen and Their Restoration

Those who through sin have forfeited the received grace of justification, can again be justified when, moved by God, they exert themselves to obtain through the sacrament of penance the recovery, by the merits of Christ, of the grace lost.⁸² For this manner of justification is restoration for those fallen, which the holy Fathers have aptly called a second plank after the shipwreck of grace lost.⁸³ For on behalf of those who fall into sins after baptism, Christ Jesus instituted the sacrament of penance when He said: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.*⁸⁴ Hence, it must be taught that the repentance of a Christian after his fall is very different from that at his baptism, and that it includes not only a determination to avoid sins and a hatred of them, or a contrite and humble heart,⁸⁵ but also the sacramental confession of those sins, at least in desire, to be made in its season, and sacerdotal absolution, as well as satisfaction by fasts, alms, prayers and other devout exercises of the spiritual life, not indeed for the eternal punishment, which is, together with the guilt, remitted either by the sacrament or by the desire of the sacrament, but for the temporal punishment which, as the sacred writings teach, is not always wholly remitted, as is done in baptism, to those who, ungrateful to the grace of God which they have received, have grieved the Holy Ghost⁸⁶ and have not feared to violate the temple of God.⁸⁷ Of which repentance it is written: *Be mindful whence thou art fallen; do penance, and do the first works;*⁸⁸ and again, *The sorrow that is according to God worketh penance, steadfast unto salvation;*⁸⁹ and again, *Do penance, and bring forth fruits worthy of penance.*⁹⁰

Chapter XV

By Every Mortal Sin Grace Is Lost, but Not Faith

Against the subtle wits of some also, who by pleasing speeches and good words seduce the hearts of the innocent,⁹¹ it must be maintained that the grace of justification once received is lost not only by infidelity, whereby also faith itself is lost, but also by every other mortal sin, though in this case faith is not lost;

⁸²Cf. *infra*, can. 23 and 29.

⁸³C. 72, D.1 de poenit.

⁸⁴John 20:22 f.

⁸⁵Ps. 50:19.

⁸⁶Eph. 4:30.

⁸⁷See I Cor. 3:17.

⁸⁸Apoc. 2:5.

⁸⁹See II Cor. 7:10.

⁹⁰Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Luke 3:8.

⁹¹Rom. 16:18.

thus defending the teaching of the divine law which excludes from the kingdom of God not only unbelievers, but also the faithful (who are) fornicators, adulterers, effeminate, liars with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, railers, extortioners,⁹² and all others who commit deadly sins, from which with the help of divine grace they can refrain, and on account of which they are cut off from the grace of Christ.

Chapter XVI

The Fruits of Justification, That Is, the Merit of Good Works, and the Nature of That Merit

Therefore, to men justified in this manner, whether they have preserved uninterruptedly the grace received or recovered it when lost, are to be pointed out the words of the Apostle: *Abound in every good work, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*⁹³ *For God is not unjust, that he should forget your work, and the love which you have shown in his name;*⁹⁴ and, *Do not lose your confidence, which hath a great reward.*⁹⁵ Hence, to those who work well unto the end⁹⁶ and trust in God, eternal life is to be offered, both as a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God through Christ Jesus, and as a reward promised by God himself, to be faithfully given to their good works and merits.⁹⁷ For this is the crown of justice which after his fight and course the Apostle declared was laid up for him, to be rendered to him by the just judge, and not only to him, but also to all that love his coming.⁹⁸ For since Christ Jesus Himself, as the head into the members and the vine into the branches,⁹⁹ continually infuses strength into those justified, which strength always precedes, accompanies and follows their good works, and without which they could not in any manner be pleasing and meritorious before God, we must believe that nothing further is wanting to those justified to prevent them from being considered to have, by those very works which have been done in God, fully satisfied the divine law according to the state of this life and to have truly merited eternal life, to be obtained in its (due)time, provided they depart (this life) in grace,¹⁰⁰ since Christ our Savior says: *If anyone shall drink of the water that I will give him, he shall not thirst forever; but it shall become in him a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting.*¹⁰¹ Thus, neither is our own justice established as our own for ourselves,¹⁰² nor is the justice of God ignored or repudiated, for that justice which is called ours, because we are justified by its inheritance in us, that

same is (the justice) of God, because it is infused into us by God through the merit of Christ. Nor must this be omitted, that although in the sacred writings so much is attributed to good works, that even *he that shall give a drink of cold water to one of his least ones*, Christ promises, *shall not lose his reward;*¹⁰³ and the Apostle testifies that, *That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory;*¹⁰⁴ nevertheless, far be it that a Christian should either trust or glory in himself and not in the Lord,¹⁰⁵ whose bounty toward all men is so great that He wishes the things that are His gifts to be their merits. And since in many things we all offend,¹⁰⁶ each one ought to have before his eyes not only the mercy and goodness but also the severity and judgment (of God); neither ought anyone to judge himself, even though he be not conscious to himself of anything;¹⁰⁷ because the whole life of man is to be examined and judged not by the judgment of man but of God, *who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall every man have praise from God,*¹⁰⁸ who, as it is written, *will render to every man according to his works.*¹⁰⁹

After this Catholic doctrine on justification, which whosoever does not faithfully and firmly accept cannot be justified, it seemed good to the holy council to add these canons, that all may know not only what they must hold and follow, but also what to avoid and shun.

Canons Concerning Justification

Canon 1. If anyone says that man can be justified before God by his own works, whether done by his own natural powers or through the teaching of the law,¹¹⁰ without divine grace through Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.

Can. 2. If anyone says that divine grace through Christ Jesus is given for this only, that man may be able more easily to live justly and to merit eternal life, as if by free will without grace he is able to do both, though with hardship and difficulty, let him be anathema.

Can. 3. If anyone says that without the predisposing inspiration of the Holy Ghost¹¹¹ and without His help, man can believe, hope, love or be repentant as he ought,¹¹² so that the grace of justification may be bestowed upon him, let him be anathema.

⁹²See I Cor. 6:9 f.; I Tim. 1:9 f.

⁹³See I Cor. 15:58.

⁹⁴Heb. 6:10.

⁹⁵Heb. 10:35.

⁹⁶Matt. 10:22.

⁹⁷Rom. 6:22.

⁹⁸See II Tim. 4:8.

⁹⁹John 15:1 f.

¹⁰⁰Apoc. 14:13.

¹⁰¹John 4:13 f.

¹⁰²Rom. 10:3; II Cor. 3:5.

¹⁰³Matt. 10:42; Mark 9:40.

¹⁰⁴See II Cor. 4:17.

¹⁰⁵See I Cor. 1:31; II Cor. 10:17.

¹⁰⁶James 3:2.

¹⁰⁷See I Cor. 4:3 f.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 4:5.

¹⁰⁹Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; Apoc. 22:12.

¹¹⁰Cf. *supra*, chaps. 1, 3.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, chap. 5.

¹¹²Rom. 5:5.

Can. 4. If anyone says that man's free will moved and aroused by God, by assenting to God's call and action, in no way cooperates toward disposing and preparing itself to obtain the grace of justification, that it cannot refuse its assent if it wishes, but that, as something inanimate, it does nothing whatever and is merely passive, let him be anathema.

Can. 5. If anyone says that after the sin of Adam man's free will was lost and destroyed, or that it is a thing only in name, indeed a name without a reality, a fiction introduced into the Church by Satan, let him be anathema.

Can. 6. If anyone says that it is not in man's power to make his ways evil, but that the works that are evil as well as those that are good God produces, not permissively only but also *proprie et per se*, so that the treason of Judas is no less His own proper work than the vocation of St. Paul, let him be anathema.

Can. 7. If anyone says that all works done before justification, in whatever manner they may be done, are truly sins, or merit the hatred of God; that the more earnestly one strives to dispose himself for grace, the more grievously he sins, let him be anathema.

Can. 8. If anyone says that the fear of hell,¹¹³ whereby, by grieving for sins, we flee to the mercy of God or abstain from sinning, is a sin or makes sinners worse, let him be anathema.

Can. 9. If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone,¹¹⁴ meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, let him be anathema.

Can. 10. If anyone says that men are justified without the justice of Christ,¹¹⁵ whereby He merited for us, or by that justice are formally just, let him be anathema.

Can. 11. If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost,¹¹⁶ and remains in them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema.

Can. 12. If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy,¹¹⁷ which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, let him be anathema.

Can. 13. If anyone says that in order to obtain the remission of sins it is necessary for every man to believe with certainty and without any hesitation

arising from his own weakness and indisposition that his sins are forgiven him, let him be anathema.

Can. 14. If anyone says that man is absolved from his sins and justified because he firmly believes that he is absolved and justified,¹¹⁸ or that no one is truly justified except him who believes himself justified, and that by this faith alone absolution and justification are effected, let him be anathema.

Can. 15. If anyone says that a man who is born again and justified is bound *ex fide* to believe that he is certainly in the number of the predestined,¹¹⁹ let him be anathema.

Can. 16. If anyone says that he will for certain, with an absolute and infallible certainty, have that great gift of perseverance even to the end, unless he shall have learned this by special revelation,¹²⁰ let him be anathema.

Can. 17. If anyone says that the grace of justification is shared by those only who are predestined to life, but that all others who are called are called indeed but receive not grace, as if they are by divine power predestined to evil, let him be anathema.

Can. 18. If anyone says that the commandments of God are, even for one that is justified and constituted in grace,¹²¹ impossible to observe, let him be anathema.

Can. 19. If anyone says that nothing besides faith is commanded in the Gospel, that other things are indifferent, neither commanded nor forbidden, but free; or that the ten commandments in no way pertain to Christians, let him be anathema.

Can. 20. If anyone says that a man who is justified and however perfect is not bound to observe the commandments of God and the Church, but only to believe,¹²² as if the Gospel were a bare and absolute promise of eternal life without the condition of observing the commandments, let him be anathema.

Can. 21. If anyone says that Christ Jesus was given by God to men as a redeemer in whom to trust, and not also as a legislator whom to obey, let him be anathema.

Can. 22. If anyone says that the one justified either can without the special help of God persevere in the justice received,¹²³ or that with that help he cannot, let him be anathema.

Can. 23. If anyone says that a man once justified can sin no more, nor lose grace,¹²⁴ and that therefore he that falls and sins was never truly justified; or on the contrary, that he can during his whole life avoid all sins, even those that are venial, except by a special privilege from God, as the Church holds in regard to the Blessed Virgin, let him be anathema.

¹¹³Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:5.

¹¹⁴Supra, chaps. 7, 8.

¹¹⁵Gal. 2:16; supra, chap. 7.

¹¹⁶Rom. 5:5.

¹¹⁷Supra, chap. 9.

¹¹⁸Supra, chap. 9.

¹¹⁹Ibid., chap. 12.

¹²⁰Ibid., chap. 13.

¹²¹Ibid., chap. 11.

¹²²Cf. chap. cit.

¹²³Supra, chap. 13.

¹²⁴Ibid., chap. 14.



Can. 24. If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works,¹²⁵ but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of its increase, let him be anathema.

Can. 25. If anyone says that in every good work the just man sins at least venially,¹²⁶ or, what is more intolerable, mortally, and hence merits eternal punishment, and that he is not damned for this reason only, because God does not impute these works unto damnation, let him be anathema.

Can. 26. If anyone says that the just ought not for the good works done in God¹²⁷ to expect and hope for an eternal reward from God through His mercy and the merit of Jesus Christ, if by doing well and by keeping the divine commandments they persevere to the end,¹²⁸ let him be anathema.

Can. 27. If anyone says that there is no mortal sin except that of unbelief,¹²⁹ or that grace once received is not lost through any other sin however grievous and enormous except by that of unbelief, let him be anathema.

Can. 28. If anyone says that with the loss of grace through sin faith is also lost with it, or that the faith which remains is not a true faith, though it is not a living one, or that he who has faith without charity is not a Christian, let him be anathema.

Can. 29. If anyone says that he who has fallen after baptism cannot by the grace of God rise again,¹³⁰ or that he can indeed recover again the lost justice but by faith alone without the sacrament of penance, contrary to what the holy Roman and Universal Church, instructed by Christ the Lord and His Apostles, has hitherto professed, observed and taught, let him be anathema.

Can. 30. If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world¹³¹ or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened,¹³² let him be anathema.

Can. 31. If anyone says that the one justified sins when he performs good works with a view to an eternal reward,¹³³ let him be anathema.

Can. 32. If anyone says that the good works of the one justified are in such manner the gifts of God that they are not also the good merits of him justified; or that the one justified by the good works that he performs by the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is, does not truly merit an increase of grace, eternal life, and in case he dies in grace, the attainment of eternal life itself and also an increase of glory, let him be anathema.

Can. 33. If anyone says that the Catholic doctrine of justification as set forth by the holy council in the present decree, derogates in some respect from the glory of God or the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, and does not rather illustrate the truth of our faith and no less the glory of God and of Christ Jesus, let him be anathema.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, chap. 10.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, chap. 11 at the end.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, chap. 16.

¹²⁸Matt. 24:13.

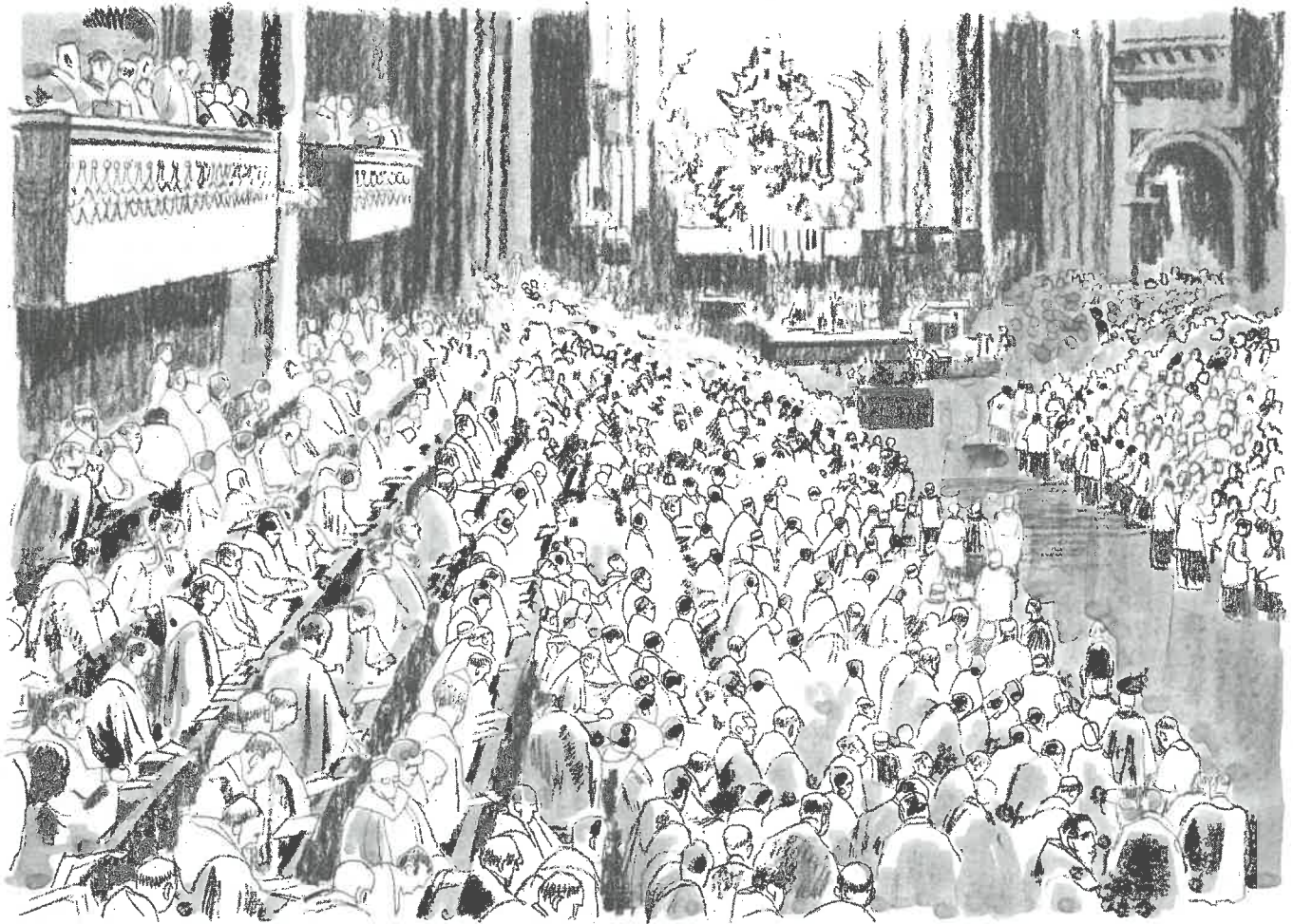
¹²⁹*Supra*, chap. 15.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, chap. 14.

¹³¹Cf. Sess. XIV, chap. 8.

¹³²Cf. Sess. XXV at the beginning.

¹³³*Supra*, chap. 11 at the end.



The Soteriology of the Council of Trent

W.G.T. Shedd

The Tridentine theory makes inward holiness in conjunction with the merits of Christ the ground of justification. It founds human salvation upon two corner-stones. The doctors of Trent construct their exact and formal definition of justification out of that one element of error which, we have seen, somewhat vitiated the soteriology of Augustine. The unintentional confounding of the distinction between justification and sanctification, which appears occasionally in the Patristic writers, becomes a deliberate and emphatic identification, in the scheme of the Papal Church.

The Anselmic and Protestant soteriologies mean by the term "justification," that divine act, instantaneous and complete, by which sin is pardoned. If we distinguish the entire work of redemption into two parts, a negative and a positive, justification in the Pauline and in the Reformed signification would

include the former and would include nothing more. Justification is the negative acquittal from condemnation, and not in the least the positive infusion of righteousness, or production of holiness. This positive element, the Reformers were careful to teach, invariably accompanies the negative; but they were equally careful to teach that it is not identical with it. The forgiveness of sin is distinct and different from the sanctification of the heart. It is an antecedent which is always followed, indeed, by its consequent; but this does not render the consequent a substitute for the antecedent, or one and the same thing with it.¹

¹The Westminster Confession thus states the distinction between justification and sanctification. "Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification imputeth the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification, his Spirit infuseth grace, and enableth to the exercise thereof; in the former, sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued; the one doth equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; the other is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection." (Larger Catechism, Q. 77.)

But the Council of Trent resolved justification into sanctification, and in the place of a gratuitous justification and remission of sins through the expiation of the Redeemer, substituted the most subtle form of the doctrine of justification by works that has yet appeared, or that can appear. For the doctors of Trent do not teach, in their canonical statements, that man is justified and accepted at the bar of justice by his external acts of obedience to the moral or the ecclesiastical law. This is, indeed, the doctrine that prevails in the common practice of the Papal Church, but it is not the form in which it appears in the Tridentine canons. According to these, man is justified by an inward and spiritual act which is denominated the act of faith; by a truly divine and holy habit or principle infused by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit. The ground of the sinner's justification is thus a divine and gracious one. God works in the sinful soul to will and to do, and by making it inherently just justifies it. And all this is accomplished through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ; so that, in justification there is a combination of the objective work of Christ with the subjective character of the believer. This statement is the more subtle, because it distinctly refers the infused grace or holiness to God as the author, and thereby seems to preclude the notion of self-righteousness. But it is fundamentally erroneous, because this infused righteousness, or holiness of heart, upon which remission of sins rests in part, is not *piacular*. It has in it nothing of the nature of a *satisfaction* to justice.² So far forth, therefore, as infused grace in the heart is made a ground and procuring cause of the pardon of sin, the judicial aspects and relations of sin are overlooked, and man is received into the Divine favor without any true and proper expiation of his guilt. The Papal theory of justification, consequently, stands upon the same level in the last analysis with the Socinian, or with any theory that denies the necessity of a *satisfaction* of justice.³

The following extracts from the *Canones* of the Council of Trent enunciate the Roman Catholic soteriology. "Justification is not the mere remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renovation of the inward man through the voluntary reception of grace and gifts of grace; whereby an unjust man becomes just, the enemy a friend, so that he may be an heir according to the hope of eternal life . . . The only formal cause of justification is the justice (*justitia*) of God, not that by which he himself is just, but that by which he makes us just, — that namely by which we are gratuitously renewed by him in the spirit of our minds, and are not only reputed, but really are and are denominated just, receiving justice into ourselves each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Spirit imparts to each as He pleases, and, also, according to each one's own disposition and co-

operation . . . When the Apostle asserts that man is justified by faith and gratuitously, his language is to be understood in that sense which the constant agreement of the Catholic Church has affixed to it; in such a manner, namely, as that we are said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification (i.e. of all virtue), without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. xi. 6). And we are said to be justified gratuitously, because none of those things which precede justification, whether faith or works, merits the grace itself of justification."⁴ These citations from the Canons of the Council of Trent are sufficient to show that the theologians there assembled regarded justification as a renewing and sanctifying act on the part of God, and not a declarative one. It is not that Divine act whereby sin is pardoned, but whereby sin is purged.

But that the doctrine of gratuitous remission of sin upon the sole ground of Christ's satisfaction was thrown out of the Tridentine theory of justification, is yet more apparent from the anathematizing clauses which were added to explain and guard the so-called catholic faith. "If any one shall say that the sinner is justified by faith alone, in the sense that nothing else is required which may co-operate towards the attainment of the grace of justification, and that the sinner does not need to be prepared and disposed (for the reception of the grace of justification), by the motion of his own will: let him be accursed . . . If any one shall say, that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the righteousness of Christ, or by the sole remission of sin, to the exclusion of that grace and charity which is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and which inheres in them, or shall say that the grace whereby we are justified is merely and only the favor of God: let him be accursed. If any one shall say that justifying faith is nothing but confidence in the divine mercy remitting sin on account of Christ, or that this faith is the sole thing by which we are justified: let him be accursed."⁵ It will be perceived from these extracts, that the Tridentine theologian regarded "justification" as prospective and not retrospective, in its essential nature. It is not the forgiveness of "sins that are past," but the cure and prevention of sins that are present and future. The element of guilt is lost sight of, and the *piacular* work of Christ is lost sight of with it; and the whole work of redemption is interpreted to be merely a method of purification. Thus the Tridentine theory implies, logically, that sin is not guilt, but only disease and pollution. Furthermore, according to the Papal theory, justification is not instantaneous but successive. It is not a single and complete act upon the part of God, but a gradual process in the soul of man. For it is founded upon that inward holiness or love which has been infused by divine grace. But this advances from one degree to another, never being perfect in this life, and never standing still. The consciousness of being

²"Then what is the fault of the church of Rome? Not that she requireth works at their hands which will be saved; but that she attributeth unto works a power of satisfying God for sin." Hooker: On Justification, Works II. 538.

³In this respect, Romanism and Rationalism are two extremes that meet. See the views of Sartorius on "the affinity of Romanism and Rationalism," in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Jan. 1851.

⁴Canones Concilii Tridentini: De Justificatione, vii. viii.

⁵Canones Concilii Tridentini: De Justificatione, ix. xi. xii.



justified before God, even if it could rest upon such an imperfect foundation at all, must fluctuate with all the changes in the internal experience. And as matter of fact, the Council of Trent declares that a man cannot be certain of being justified, and condemns those who affirm such certainty in the following terms: "Although it is necessary to believe that no sin is, or ever has been, remitted except gratuitously by the Divine mercy on account of Christ, yet no one who affirms with confidence and certainty (*jactat*) that his sins are remitted, and who rests in this confidence alone, is to be assured of remission." According to the Papal soteriology, the assurance of the remission of sins, and of acceptance at the bar of God, must rest upon the degree of holiness that has been infused, and not simply and solely upon Christ's oblation for sin. Hence it cannot in this life attain to certainty, because the inward holiness never in this life attains to perfection. Justification is not instantaneous and complete, but gradual and incomplete, because the infused righteousness out of which it issues is imperfect. This is distinctly taught in the tenth chapter of the "decree" concerning Justification. "Therefore being thus justified, and made friends of God and members of his household, and going from strength to strength, they are renewed, as the Apostle teaches, day by day: that is to say, by mortifying their fleshly members, and yielding them as instruments of righteousness unto sanctification, through the observance of the commands of God and the church, their righteousness itself being accepted through the grace of Christ, and their faith co-operating with their good works, they grow (in holiness), and are justified more and more. This increase of justification (*justitiae*), the Holy Church seeks when she prays: 'Give unto us, O Lord, increase of faith, hope, and charity.' " By these positions of the Council of Trent, the effect of justification is substituted for the cause. That inward holiness which succeeds the forgiveness of sins is made to take the place of the atoning death and the imputed righteousness of the Redeemer. The ground of justification is thus a personal and subjective one. It is, consequently, imperfect and incomplete, and must be supplemented by greater measures of holiness and attainments in piety, and also by the external penances and good works required by the Church. "If any one shall assert," says the 24th Canon concerning Justification, "that the righteousness received (in justification) is not preserved and also increased before God by good works; but that good works are only the fruit and signs of a justification already attained, and not the cause of an increase of justification: let him be accursed."

A Summary of Basic Catholic/Protestant Differences on Justification by Faith

Protestant	Catholic	Protestant	Catholic
1. <i>To justify</i> means to account as righteous.	1. <i>To justify</i> means to make righteous.	10. Justification is a declaration of the fact that Jesus, who stands in man's place, is righteous.	10. Justification is a declaration of what is a fact in the man himself.
2. Justification comes by the imputation of Christ's righteousness.	2. Justification comes by an infusion of grace.	11. Justification is so infinite that it cannot be reduced to an intra-human experience.	11. Justification is an act of grace within man.
3. The grace of God in Christ makes the believer acceptable and pleasing in God's sight.	3. Sanctifying grace in the believer makes him acceptable to God.	12. Justification is received by faith alone.	12. Justification comes by faith which has become active by charity.
4. Man is justified by an extrinsic righteousness (a righteousness wholly without).	4. Man is justified by an intrinsic righteousness (a righteousness which God puts within man).	13. Justification enables God to bring regeneration and sanctification to the heart of the believer.	13. Regenerating grace enables God to justify the believer.
5. God justifies the ungodly who believe.	5. God justifies only those who are born again.	14. Sin still remains in man's nature after justification and regeneration.	14. Justification wholly eradicates sin; only concupiscence and weakness remain.
6. Justification is God's verdict upon man in the Person of Christ.	6. Justification is God's regenerating act in man.	15. The believer can claim no merit for good works performed by God's enabling grace. Good works are acceptable only through the mediation of Christ's imputed righteousness, which covers all human deficiencies in the good works of the believer.	15. Sanctifying grace within the believer makes good works acceptable to God.
7. The sinner is justified by Christ's imputed righteousness alone.	7. The sinner cannot be justified by imputed righteousness alone, but by righteousness poured into his heart.	16. At all times the believer is accepted only in the Person of Christ, his Substitute.	16. Sanctifying grace within the believer makes him acceptable to God.
8. Justification enables God to treat the sinner as <i>if</i> he were just.	8. Justification means that the sinner is really made just.		
9. The believer is pronounced righteous because Christ, his Substitute, is found righteous before God.	9. The believer is pronounced righteous because the Spirit of grace has made him righteous.		

Some Reflections

1. It is true that Reformation theology taught that man is justified by an extrinsic righteousness and that, in itself, justification does not mean a process of renovation within man. But the Reformers, in the true evangelical sense, taught that justification bears the fruit of a regenerate life.

2. Whereas the Council of Trent condemned the Reformation for a theology that “reduced [justification] to something purely external,” the Reformers opposed Rome for reducing God’s infinite justifying grace to the dimensions of an intrahuman experience.

3. In the controversy it was Romanism that gave itself the stance of contending for a real, “within” righteousness rather than a “pasted on, as if” righteousness. It was the papacy that put itself forward as the champion of the reality of sanctifying grace, charging the Protestants with denying God’s sanctifying power in the heart. It was the Catholic party that appeared to be the advocate of internal righteousness.

4. The Reformation is a paradox in this respect: It wrought a mighty reformation, not by placing the main emphasis on the need for righteousness within man, but by placing its supreme emphasis on extrinsic grace and God’s work outside of man.

5. Catholicism is a paradox in this respect: It wrought a mighty deformation, not by placing its emphasis on grace external to man, but by placing supreme emphasis on God’s sanctifying grace within man.

6. Roman Catholic theology is a veiled righteousness by works for these reasons:

a. Infused righteousness is an active principle revealed in good works.

b. Justification by, or on the condition of, infused righteousness is justification by means of good works.

When Paul declares that we are saved apart from “works of righteousness” which we have done (Titus 3:5), he does not mean “works of self-righteousness” or “works of so-called righteousness.” He means exactly what he says — “works of righteousness” — and they include all those works wrought in the life by the Holy Spirit.

7. Roman Catholic theology utterly confounds the two aspects of redemption — Christ’s work of doing and dying and interceding *for us*, and Christ’s work *in us*. Thus it confounds gospel and law. Antinomianism falls into the opposite error and divorces the law from the gospel.



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Pinpointing the Issues in the Conflict with Rome

Editor

We agree with Berkouwer, who says:

The Reformation issue is as alive today as it was four hundred years ago. — G.C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Sanctification*, p. 12.

. . . at a time when everything seems to call for cooperation and union, the discussion again fully reveals the sharpness of the conflict. We do not regret this fact. It is the only way leading to decisions. The disposition to weaken the *anathema sit* or the *damnamus* would not be beneficial to the church. Any compromise would weaken the seriousness of the situation. The theological dispute penetrates the heart of religion. — G.C. Berkouwer, *The Conflict With Rome*, p. 240.

Yet we should never allow a polemical spirit to distort or exaggerate the position of those whom we feel take the wrong side of the controversy. Not only would this be a sin against charity, but distortions only blind us to the real issues. For instance, it is wrong to charge Roman Catholics with teaching that a sinner can merit salvation by his own works. Responsible Catholics affirm that salvation is due to the work of God's grace. On the other hand, Catholics do not gain anything when they distort the real Protestant position. As Berkouwer says, "The ancient feud of Rome with the Sola-fide doctrine, based as it is on the view that Sola-fide is subversive to sanctification, must be called Rome's most fundamental error." — Berkouwer, *Faith and Sanctification*, p. 14. So the issue is not a simplistic matter of whether a man is justified by grace or his own works. Of course, any informed Catholic will say justification is by grace!

Let us therefore pinpoint some of the main issues:

1. The Justification/Sanctification Relationship

The issue is not the depreciation or even the denial of sanctification, but the definition of its character and place. . . . Therefore in the conflict between Rome and the Reformation we want to point out especially that with Rome justification

is based on sanctification, or sanctifying internal grace. The judgment of pardon through divine justification was in principle understood as an "analytical judgment," i.e., a statement of that which was already found in man now or will be found in him in his future perfection later on. — Berkouwer, *The Conflict With Rome*, p. 238.

In the case of the Reformers, justification is in no sense an "analytical judgment" based on the state of the believer, but a judgment based on the righteousness of the Mediator in whom the sinner believes. While Rome contends for a justification on the basis of God's work of grace *in man*, Protestantism stands for a justification based solely on God's work of grace *in Jesus Christ*.

The justification/sanctification relationship may be expressed in terms of the *for us/in us* relationship. With Rome, justification is essentially a work of God's grace *in us* — a regenerating, renewing act within man. The work of the Holy Spirit in the heart therefore becomes the *formal cause*, or ground, of acceptance with God. With the Reformers, the sole ground of acceptance with God is what Christ has already done *for us* in the concrete historical acts of His life, death and resurrection. This means that one system has a subjective basis of justification while the other has an objective basis.

The justification/sanctification relationship finds its parallel in the relationship of the divine and human natures in the Person of Christ. Since Chalcedon, orthodoxy has maintained the distinct identity of the divine and human natures in the one Person of Jesus Christ. While there is union of the two natures, there is no fusion. Protestantism maintains that the principle of *union* without *fusion* holds good for soteriology as well as Christology. That is to say, justification and sanctification must always be kept together, but not confused. Says Spurgeon in his sermon on "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth":

Let the knife penetrate between the joints of the work of Christ for us, and the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Justification, by which the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, is one blessing; sanctification, by which we ourselves are made personally righteous, is another blessing.

And says James Buchanan:

There is, perhaps, no more subtle or plausible error, on the subject of Justification, than that which makes it rest on the indwelling presence, and the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. — James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification*, p. 401.

If we have grasped the foregoing argument, we ought also to be able to recognize that if we preach the popular evangelical “gospel” of being saved by the new birth, we are in fundamental harmony with Rome. “The fundamental error of the Church of Rome consisted in substituting the inherent righteousness of the regenerate, for the imputed righteousness of the Redeemer.” — *Ibid.*, p. 130.

2. Righteousness by Faith

The Roman Catholic understanding of the biblical “righteousness by faith” is summarized by Martin Chemnitz:

When it (obedience to the law) is done by the unregenerate, then it is called the righteousness of the Law, but the righteousness of faith is said to consist in this, that it leads the regenerate to the obedience and observance of those things which are written in the Law, so that the righteousness of faith is the obedience of the regenerate to the Law, when love, which embraces the whole Law, is infused into the believers through the Holy Spirit. — Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, p. 528.

Then Chemnitz contrasts the true Protestant understanding of “righteousness by faith”:

. . . the righteousness of faith is by believing to appropriate to oneself what Christ has done for us. Therefore the works by which the regenerate do those things which are written in the Law, either before or after their renewal, belong to the righteousness of the Law, though some in one way, others in another. . . . but . . . the obedience of Christ is imputed to us for righteousness. That glory cannot be taken away from Christ and transferred to either our renewal or our obedience without blasphemy. — *Ibid.*, p. 419.

The Reformers contended that the “indwelling of God is not the righteousness of faith.” — See *Book of Concord*, p. 254.

There are some Protestant groups who have fallen into the habit of including the operations of God's Spirit in the heart in the article of righteousness by faith. This, however, is a distinct Roman Catholic position. According to the Reformers, the righteousness which is by faith is outside the believer in the Person of Christ alone. Sanctification is neither a cause

nor a part of our saving righteousness before God, but is rather the inevitable fruit of it.

3. The Acceptability and Merit of Good Works

No responsible Roman Catholic has ever contended that the “good works” of an unregenerate man are acceptable to God, satisfy the law of God, or merit salvation. But what is said is that when good works are truly the result of sanctifying grace (the indwelling of Christ), then they do satisfy the divine law and truly merit an increase of justification with God (although not the initial justification).

The Protestant position is well stated by Martin Chemnitz:

It is indeed completely true that the Holy Spirit writes the Law into the hearts of the regenerate, so that by faith, through the Holy Spirit, they begin to keep the Law; but from Paul we add that the obedience to the Law, which is begun in us, is not that righteousness which we can plead against the judgment of God, in order that we may on account of it be justified before the tribunal of God to life eternal. For on account of the flesh it does not satisfy the Law in this life, because it is imperfect and defiled. — Chemnitz, *op. cit.*, p. 529.

The dispute with Rome was not so much about the value of works before regeneration, but the value of works done after conversion and the reception of the Holy Spirit. Chemnitz was quick to point out that this was the real issue in the church of Galatia too:

Nor were the Galatians disputing about their works which they had done as unregenerate men before their faith and conversion, whether these would justify, but the dispute was about justification by means of their works which they had done after their conversion and after they had received the Holy Spirit. — *Ibid.*, p. 487.

Calvin, who certainly understood the real points of controversy, made this observation: “For on the beginning of justification there is no quarrel between us and the sounder schoolmen.” — John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk. 3, chap. 14, sec. 11. Calvin went on to argue that the good works of the regenerate, even though performed under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, cannot satisfy the law's demand for perfect righteousness because they are always defiled by human imperfection.

. . . our righteous deeds are foul in God's sight unless they derive a good odor from Christ's innocence. . . . Works can only arouse God's vengeance unless they be sustained by his merciful pardon. — *Ibid.*, sec. 16.

We have not a single work going forth from the saints that if it be judged in itself deserves not shame as its just reward. — *Ibid.*, sec. 9.

Against Latomus, Luther declared:

Every good work of the saints while pilgrims in this world is sin. — Martin Luther, *Against Latomus*, published in the Library of Christian Classics, *Early Theological Works*, p. 318.

. . . a good work in itself is unclean if the covering cloud of grace is removed, and only if God's forgiving mercy is there may it be considered pure, worthy of praise and honor. — *Ibid.*, p. 326.

Both Rome and the Reformers agreed that good works are only possible by the indwelling Spirit. Rome said that on that same account they are not tainted with sin and are therefore acceptable to God. The Reformers, however, had such a view of "original sin" in the regenerate that they said that good works are acceptable to God only through the imputed merits of Christ. Thus, while Rome posited some saving merit in the operations of God's Spirit in the heart, the Reformers insisted that there is saving merit only in the work of Christ performed on our behalf 2,000 years ago.

This righteousness, — being the merit of a work, and not a mere quality of character, — may become ours by being imputed to us, but cannot be communicated by being infused; and must ever continue to belong primarily and, in one important respect, exclusively to Him by whom alone that work was accomplished. — Buchanan, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

To summarize this point:

If one says, "There is saving merit in my good works," he is neither Catholic nor Protestant, but pagan:

If one says, "All my good works, except those wrought in me by the indwelling of Christ, are defiled by sin and human imperfection," he is neither pagan nor Protestant, but Catholic.

If one says, "All my good works, not excepting those wrought in me by the indwelling of Christ, are defiled by sin and human imperfection," he is neither pagan nor Catholic, but Protestant.

4. Perfectionism

"There is considerable agreement between Perfectionism and Catholicism." — Berkouwer, *Faith and Sanctification*, p. 53. Rome contends that the grace given in baptism wholly removes "original sin"; only weakness and concupiscence remain. Therefore it is said that by the indwelling of Christ, believers are able to obey the law so perfectly that nothing of the nature of sin remains in their good works.

The whole Reformation was thoroughly antiperfectionistic. It was undergirded by such a view of "original sin," even in the regenerate, that it was considered heresy to teach "that a Christian who is truly regenerated by God's Spirit can perfectly observe and fulfil the Law in this life." — *Book of Concord*, p. 232. Chemnitz argues against the "papal rule, namely that the regenerate can in this life satisfy the Law of God." — Chemnitz, *op. cit.*, p. 343. He says that the regenerate, "through the Holy Spirit, . . . begin to keep the Law." But he adds, ". . . on account of the flesh it [their obedience] does not satisfy the Law in this life because it is imperfect and defiled." — *Ibid.*, p. 529.

Protestantism stands on the concept that life is not fulfilled in the historical process. Therefore the believer's completeness is realized only in Christ (Col. 2:10) and is possessed here and now by faith alone. Says Calvin:

We accordingly teach that in the saints, until they are divested of mortal bodies, there is always sin; for in their flesh there resides that depravity of inordinate desiring which contends against righteousness. — Calvin, *op. cit.*, sec. 10.

In his treatise, *Against Latomus*, Luther pinpoints a real difference between Rome and the Reformation in the understanding of the remnants of sin in the regenerate. Both agreed that something remains in the saints after baptism that is less than ideal. Rome called it concupiscence; the Reformers called it sin. Both agreed that the believing saint is not condemned on account of what remains. The difference lay in the reason why the remaining depravity is not held against the saints. The Roman Catholic scholars maintained that it does not condemn them because it does not have in it the nature of sin. The Reformers said that it is truly sin and would merit damnation except that God does no longer impute this remaining sin to the believer.

5. Emphasis

The greatest difference between the two streams of thought is not in areas of specific points of soteriology, but in the matter of overall emphasis. This fact is often overlooked. Therefore it is entirely possible to subscribe to a Protestant creed in the formal sense, but be Catholic in overall spirituality — or vice versa.

In the case of Rome, the great emphasis always falls on the work of sanctifying grace within man. Romanism is therefore subjective, experience oriented and man-centered. In the case of true Protestantism, sanctification is not denied, but its central affirmation always remains God's work for us in Christ. Protestantism is therefore objective in its emphasis, gospel oriented and Christ-centered.

We should bear this principle in mind when we seek to evaluate the current religious scene, which makes the inward experience of the believer the supreme concern and central point of Christian witness.



In the June 8, 1975, edition of the *Los Angeles Times* appeared a news article headlined "Charismatics Gain Pope's Approval; Controversial Catholic Movement Blessed During Pentecost." Reported Russell Chandler, *Times* religion writer:

On the Religious Front

In eight years the Roman Catholic charismatic movement has moved all the way from a small prayer meeting at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh to the basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican and has gained approval of the Pope himself.

The high-water mark of the controversial movement was manifested during Pentecost weekend last month when Pope Paul VI unofficially — but unmistakably — conferred his blessing on a historic gathering of Catholic charismatics.

"You have to live in the Spirit," the Pontiff told some 10,000 delegates to the third International Conference on the Charismatic Renewal attending a Mass at the high altar of St. Peter's. "The church and the world need what you have — your new joy and enthusiasm. Now go and give it to them."

There were other signs of papal approbation. Through them the Pentecostal, or charismatic, renewal — characterized by tongues-speaking, prophetic utterances, spiritual healing and other "gifts of the Holy Spirit" enumerated in the New Testament — received its greatest acceptance to date by officialdom of either Protestant or Catholic faith.

In previous years the conference had met at Notre Dame University. Leadership this year, as then, was by the Word of God Community in Ann Arbor, Mich. But the conference was convened in Rome in conjunction with the Holy Year proclaimed by Pope Paul. The

theme of both the conference and the Holy Year was "Renewal and Reconciliation."

Participants from more than 60 nations represented a million Catholics from several thousand prayer groups, according to observers. (Catholic sociologist Andrew Greeley estimates that 2 million Catholics have attended charismatic meetings.)

Protestant Pentecostal and mainline denominational leaders also attended the five-day conference as "official ecumenical observers," though they were not recognized during the proceedings.

Protestant observers included Dr. J. Rodman Williams, president of Melodyland School of Theology in Anaheim, and the Rev. Louis P. Sheldon, administrator of the new charismatic school.

"This occasion portended an extraordinary breakthrough in the history of the church," commented Dr. Williams, the only American core-team member of a continuing dialogue on the charismatic movement involving Catholic, Protestant and Anglican theologians.

Dr. Williams and Mr. Sheldon pointed to "four major historic precedents" at the Rome conference:

— Cardinal Josef Suenens, primate of Belgium and the ranking Catholic exponent of the charismatic renewal, received special permission from the Pope to celebrate the Eucharist on the high altar of St. Peter's Basilica on May 19, the day after Pentecost. He was



assisted by 12 "Spirit-filled" bishops and about 400 priests in what apparently was the first specifically charismatic service ever held in St. Peter's.

— There was strong emphasis on lay involvement: "Lay people read Scripture, gave prayers and brought forth a word of prophecy from a select group of 70 prophets and prophetesses who had been spiritually approved by the conference coordinating committee," Mr. Sheldon said. Twelve lay persons also took an active part in the celebration of the Eucharist.

— Women spoke, read Scripture and prophesied from the "Pope's altar," said to be unprecedented.

— During the pontifical Mass on Pentecost and the one the following day, the sound of tongues-speaking and "singing in the Spirit" filled the massive nave of the ancient church — also, it is believed, for the first time.

After the mass said by Cardinal Suenens, Pope Paul embraced the cardinal and greeted about 20 of the leading charismatics. Many wept openly, observers said.

The setting for the opening days of the conference was the Catacombs of St. Callixtus, where 11 Popes and many martyrs are buried. A large tent, seating 8,000, was erected there.

"Amidst all the speaking, testimonies, workshops

and singing," noted Dr. Williams during an interview here last week, "there was a prevailing sense of God's rich presence — somehow as if the blood of many martyrs buried at St. Callixtus was the seed of a new and revived church."

Dr. Williams, a member of the Presbyterian Church, U.S., also noted a eucharistic celebration at a leaders' session "in which the Spirit ran so high that before the evening was done the cardinal, archbishop and other bishops at the table not only were singing but also dancing in the Spirit!"

Pope Paul, however, cautioned the charismatic wing of the church during his address, stressing the need for orthodoxy and loyalty to "authentic doctrines."

And Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, leader of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, warned of the dangers of individualism, separatism and triumphalism that could emerge from the movement if its perception and practice of the charismatic gifts were made normative in the life of the entire church.

Dr. Williams traveled on from Rome to Venice for the four-day dialogue of theologians. The topic of the session — the fourth of five annual meetings organized by the Secretariat for Christian Unity — was "the psychological dimension of the Pentecostal experience."

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