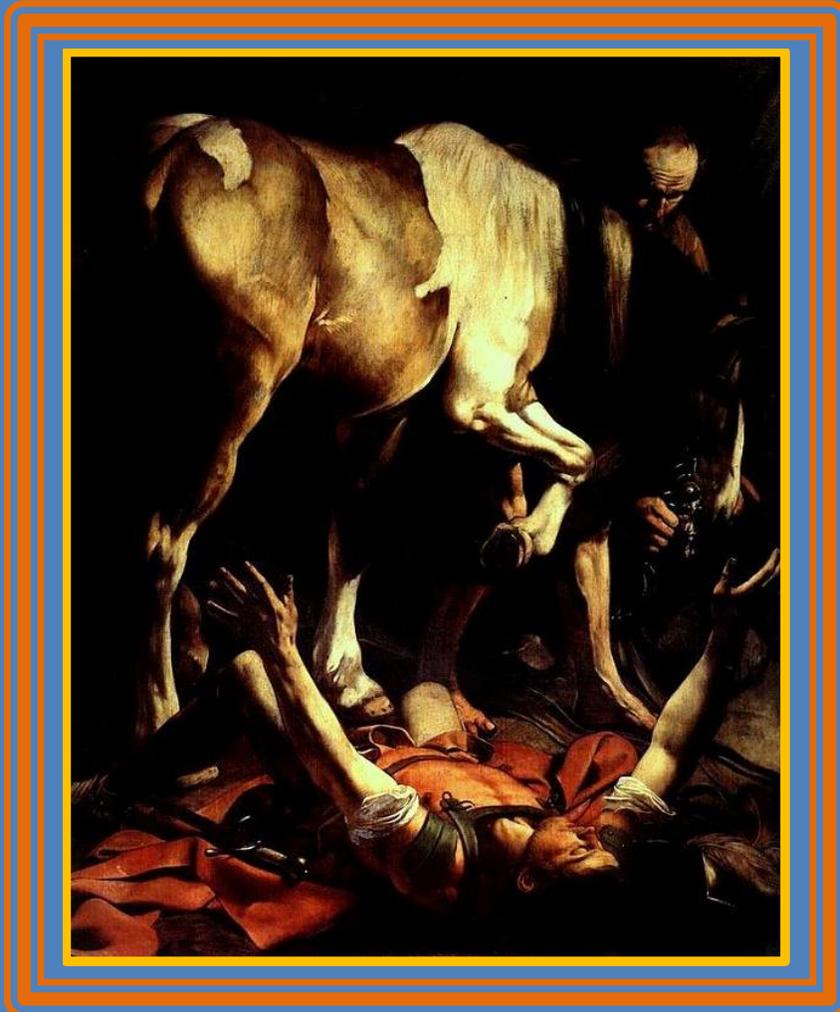


# THE CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING OF JUSTIFICATION, SANCTIFICATION, AND GRACE COMPARED WITH PROTESTANT UNDERSTANDING

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Above is a painting of the Conversion of St. Paul on the Road to Damascus by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio in the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome. Catholics and Protestants disagree substantially over the meaning of justification, sanctification, and grace, and that both parties rely heavily on St. Paul's writings to justify their position. This issue is thoroughly discussed in this essay.

# The Catholic Understanding of Justification, Sanctification, and Grace Compared with the Protestant

By Msgr. Lawrence Moran & Ronald J. Eldred

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## The Catholic Understanding of Justification Sanctification, and Grace Compared with the Protestant

By Msgr. Lawrence Moran & Ronald J. Eldred

Catholics and Protestants disagree substantially over the meaning of justification, sanctification, and grace, and that both parties rely heavily on St. Paul's writings to justify its position. When Adam and Eve sinned, not only was their image of God damaged, for they now possessed diminished intellects and weakened wills, but they also lost their holiness and justice, for God who is holy no longer dwelled in their souls and they were no longer in good standing with God, for they no longer lived in harmony with God, themselves, and the rest of creation. In other words, by their sin, our first parents lost sanctifying grace, which is the life of God dwelling in their souls. Also, they lost the state of original justice, because they had failed to give God his due, which is worship and obedience. But God still loved them and planned to one day send his only begotten son into the world to save them and their descendants.

### Salvation History

To fully understand the meaning of Justification, Sanctification, and Grace we must have knowledge of Salvation History. We will provide only a brief outline of the subject here. To begin, let's examine what is meant by Salvation History. Salvation History is the story of the creation, fall, and redemption of humankind. Central to this story is the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose story includes his conception, birth, life, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming. Salvation history is found in Holy Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, writings of the Church Fathers and Doctors, and the history of the Catholic Church. It is found especially in the Holy Bible and Tradition as interpreted by the Magisterium or teaching authority of the Catholic Church. Salvation history ties everything together for us; it relates the Old Testament with the New Testament.

**The Old Testament (Covenant)—the Creation:** Our story begins in the Book of Genesis of the Old Testament, which describes how God the Holy Trinity created the universe and all that is in it in six days and rested on the seventh. The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the most important mystery of our Faith, and the source of all other mysteries. The Holy Trinity is a perfectly happy family consisting of three divine persons that need nothing to fulfill themselves and who live in intimate loving communion. The Trinitarian Family is one of relationships. The Father eternally generates the Son; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son, each constituting separate Persons of the Holy Trinity. It is important to remember that the Holy Trinity is only one God consisting of three divine Persons, because they all share the same substance or being, which makes them co-equal in power, glory, majesty, and wisdom and all of them have existed from all eternity. God created everything out of his abundance, out of his goodness, wisdom, and love and a desire to demonstrate and communicate his glory, not out of

any deficiency. Of this the *Catechism* states, “God created the world to show forth and communicate his glory. That his creatures should share in his truth, goodness and beauty—this is the glory for which God created them” (No. 319).

After having created the heavens and the earth, Genesis tells us that on the sixth day God created the first humans in his image and likeness. Holy Scripture tells us that God said regarding the creation of man, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Genesis 1:26).

God created man to know, love, and serve him so he could be happy with him in Heaven forever. God placed Adam and Eve in an earthly paradise, the Garden of Eden, where they and their children were to till and keep it and cooperate in partnership with him to perfect it (Genesis 2:15). Originally God created our first parents and all of their descendants to be members of his family. They and their descendants were to be God's adopted sons and daughters and to share in the inner life of the Trinitarian Family. The Second Person is the Father's Son by nature; Adam and Eve were his son and daughter by adoption and by grace. God's intention was that they and their descendants were to live in happiness with him forever. They and all of their children were to be the Father's heirs. The natural family, consisting of husband, wife, and children, is patterned after the Trinitarian family; it should be the mirror image of the Trinitarian family.

### *Humans created in God's image and likeness*

**Humans in God's image:** What does it mean that God created man in his image and likeness: To make them worthy of being his adopted children, God created the first human beings, Adam and Eve, in his image and likeness. The *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* tells us:

[T]he term ‘image’ is a phrase used in Genesis 1:26-27 to designate the special superiority of man over the other works of God's visible creation. This ‘image of God’ is the spiritual part of man's nature, which includes his soul and its faculties of intellect and free will. In these natural perfections man reflects, in a limited and imperfect way, God, the Infinite Spirit, whose intelligence and freedom are supremely perfect. Man's faculties give him the ability to communicate and have relationships, abilities possessed by the Trinity at the supreme level. Intellect gives man the ability to think and free will the ability to make decisions. We shall discuss below how through sanctifying grace and the infused virtues man's nature is elevated to a supernatural plane of being and acting.

The *Catechism* states: Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And

he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead (No. 357). Humans are in God's image in that they possess a created immortal spirit or soul; an intellect that is finite, but possessed infused knowledge before the Fall; a human will that is finite, but possessed considerable strength before the Fall.

Adam and Eve received three types of gifts from God at their creation:

- **Natural:** What human beings are and have when they are born: a body and rational soul with the faculties of intellect and will.
- **Preternatural:** Includes infused knowledge, absence of concupiscence (integrity), and bodily immortality.
- **Supernatural:** Qualities possessed only by God, but shared with humans in the form of actual and sanctifying grace.

**Humans in God's likeness:** In likeness, God created Adam and Eve in Original Holiness and Original Justice. By holiness Adam and Eve were originally like God who is whole, perfect, sound, blessed, hallowed, sacred, and complete, possessing integrity, goodness, and righteousness. God possesses these qualities by nature; they possessed them only by God's sanctifying grace, which was God's life in them. Because they possessed sanctifying grace and were made holy by the Trinity dwelling in them, they lived at the supernatural level.

By Original Justice is meant that our first parents possessed an intensely intimate friendship with God and lived in harmony with themselves and with the creation around them. Justice is often defined as giving someone his due; to give him what he deserves, what he has coming. Man is most just when he renders to God love and obedience, when he obeys his commandments and does his will. In their original state, Adam and Eve were just with respect to God, thus they lived in a state of Original Justice. Of this the *Catechism* states, "By the radiance of this grace all dimensions of man's life were confirmed. As long as he remained in the divine intimacy, man would not have to suffer or die. The inner harmony of the human person, the harmony between man and woman, and finally the harmony between the first couple and all creation, comprised the state called 'original justice'" (No. 376).

**Life in the Garden of Eden:** Although life in the Garden of Eden was heaven on earth and Adam and Eve possessed sanctifying grace, experienced perfect natural happiness, and lived in close friendship with God, they did not yet possess the Beatific Vision, the vision of God himself. That was something they could enjoy only after passing a test of their love and devotion to him. He wanted his adopted children to love him by a free choice of their wills. If they had not possessed this ability, they would not have possessed God's image whose will is absolutely free.

**Adam and Eve fall from God's grace:** Tragically, our first parents lost Original Holiness and Original Justice for themselves and their children by freely choosing to commit the first sin—the Original Sin. God told them they could have everything for their enjoyment in their earthly paradise except the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Tempted by Lucifer in the disguise of a serpent, first Eve then Adam in their pride ate the forbidden fruit. Pride is the worst sin of all, because one guilty of pride is trying to be God. The serpent had tempted them by telling them that they would not die if they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, but instead would be gods, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5). Genesis states of the Forbidden Tree, “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die’” (Genesis 2:15-17). The *Catechism* says of this tragic event, “The entire harmony of original justice, foreseen for man in God's plan, will be lost by the sin of our first parents” (No. 379).

**The terrible consequences of Original Sin:** Upon discovering that Adam and Eve had disobeyed his commandment not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, God said to the woman:

I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. And to Adam he said, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:16-19).

In other words, as St. Paul says, “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). The *Catechism* nicely summarizes what was just quoted from Holy Scripture where it tells us:

Although it is proper to each individual, Original sin does not have the character of a personal fault in any of Adam's descendants. It is a deprivation of Original Holiness and justice, but human nature has not been totally corrupted: it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it, subject to ignorance, suffering and the dominion of death, and inclined to sin—an inclination to evil that is called concupiscence. Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, erases Original sin and turns a man back towards God, but the consequences for nature, weakened and inclined to evil, persist in man and summon him to spiritual battle (No. 405).

To quote the *Catechism* further on the consequences of Original Sin:

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The harmony, in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject 'to its bondage to decay'. Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will 'return to the ground', for out of it he was taken. Death makes its entrance into human history (No. 400).

As a result of their original sin, Adam and Eve fell from God's grace and were driven out of the Garden of Eden into a world of suffering and sorrow, death and destruction. When they were banished from the Garden, they entered into a world of darkness and despair, a world where war, famine, disease, pestilence, natural disasters, accidents, civil disorders, crime, and terrorism were to abound, a place where hatred, suffering, sorrow, death, and destruction were to triumph. It was not long before one of their sons committed the first murder in history; Cain, killed his brother, Abel. Worst of all, they no longer lived at the supernatural level, because the Trinity no longer dwelled in their souls; they were what we Catholics would call in state of mortal sin, their souls were dead because God no longer dwelled in them. They and all of their descendants would live only at the natural level.

**How Original Sin affects man's image to God:** In the fallen state, all human beings inherited diminished intellects and weakened wills as well as the desire to sin, called concupiscence, and to experience the wages of sin, which is death. They were no longer children of God or shared in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. They and all of their children were no longer the Father's heirs until redeemed by Christ. In the fallen state, all human beings inherited diminished intellects and weakened wills as well as the desire to sin, called concupiscence, and to experience the wages of sin, which is death. At death the soul is separated from the body and the body decomposes. The soul will be reunited at the end of time with a glorified body for those who are already in Heaven or going there. Even after committing Original Sin, humans still possess the image of God, because they were not totally corrupted when our first parents committed Original Sin.

Of the three types of gifts Adam and Eve had received at their creation, the natural gifts of intellect was diminished and of free will weakened. The preternatural gifts of infused knowledge, integrity, and bodily immortality were lost for good. The biggest loss of all was the loss of the supernatural gift of God's sanctifying grace, the very loss of God's indwelling in their souls.

**How Original Sin affects man's likeness to God:** Because of their sin, Adam and Eve no longer possessed the likeness of God, for they were no longer holy. God is holy and they were no longer holy because God no longer lived in their souls. Because human beings had lost their innocence and were no longer holy, they were no longer like God; however, they were still

basically in God's image, that is, they still had immortal souls, which possessed intellect and free will (although weakened by sin). They were no longer children of God or shared in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. They and all of their children were no longer the Father's heirs. However, there was still hope, for it was in the father's plan to send his son into the world some day to redeem humankind, to once again make them his children

Why did all of Adam and Eve's descendants inherit the stain of Original Sin? Some would say that this doesn't seem fair. In this regard, the *Catechism* says:

How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The whole human race is in Adam 'as one body of one man'. By this 'unity of the human race' all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice. Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. But we do know by Revelation that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature. By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a personal sin, but this sin affected the human nature that they would then transmit in a fallen state. It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called 'sin' only in an analogical sense: it is a sin 'contracted' and not 'commit-ted'—a state and not an act (No. 404).

Original Sin destroyed the harmony between God and man, the inner harmony of the human person, the harmony between man and woman, and the harmony between our first parents and all of creation. By their original sin, Adam and Eve lost their friendship with God and their place in the Trinitarian Family. Since they were banished from God's Family and disinherited, all they had to pass on to their descendants was the stain of Original Sin. Since by disobedience our first parents lost Original Holiness and Justice, we the children inherited the stain of their Original Sin, for they no longer possessed these qualities to pass on to us. In spite of this man remained in God's image, but was “deprived of the glory of his likeness.”

Humans still possess the image of God, although damaged: Even after committing Original Sin, man still possesses the image of God, because unlike the fallen angels who were cast into Hell when they rebelled against God, man was not totally corrupted when our first parents committed Original Sin. The angels possessed intellects so far above humans, and wills so much stronger, that God didn't give them another chance. Because human beings had lost their innocence and were no longer holy, they were no longer like God; however, they were still basically in God's image, that is, they still had immortal souls, which possessed intellect and free will. In this regard, the *Catechism* states, In spite of this “man remains 'in the image of God,' in the image of the Son, but is deprived 'of the glory of God,' of his 'likeness’” (No. 705). However, Original Sin diminished their intellects and weakened their wills, and they were to suffer from the urge to commit actual sin, which is called concupiscence. Moreover, in the fallen state they

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were subject to suffering, sorrow, and death. Yet God still loved them and considered them redeemable, capable of being freed from the power of Satan and the slavery of sin.

In other words, after the Fall, human beings remained in God's image, still possessing immortal souls with the faculties of intellect and free will (although reduced in capacity because of the effects of Original Sin), but they no longer possessed the likeness of God, for they were no longer holy. As a result, they lost God's friendship (justice). Moreover, they lost their place in the Trinitarian Family; therefore, they were no longer supernatural children of God and no longer possessed the privilege of inheriting eternal happiness.

**Reasons for hope:** Although humans had fallen from grace and had lost God's friendship, God continued to love them, so much so that it was in his plan—His divine providence—to one day send his Son into the world to redeem humankind. Redeem means to pay for something, and in this instance we mean that Jesus Christ paid for all of the damage caused by Original and actual sins. It was Jesus Christ, the son of God the Father, who restored the dignity of man by becoming a man himself. It was He who made it possible for man once again to become holy and friends with God, to once again become children of God the Father.

Salvation History is the story of God's plan to restore mankind to the Trinitarian family, to make human beings once again children of God, i.e., sons and daughters of the Father and brothers and sisters of his son Jesus. The *Catechism* says, "The Son Himself became man and assumed the human image and restored it in the likeness of the Father by giving it again its Glory." By taking on the image of man, Jesus was to restore man's likeness to its original glory. As it says in the Mass, he came to share in our humanity so that we might share in his divinity. Why did God allow sin to enter the world? The *Catechism* asked this precise question:

But why did God not prevent the first man from sinning? St. Leo the Great responds, "Christ's inexpressible grace gave us blessings better than those the demon's envy had taken away." And St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, "There is nothing to prevent human nature's being raised up to something greater, even after sin; God permits evil in order to draw forth some greater good." Thus St. Paul says, "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more"; and the Exsultet sings, "O happy fault . . . which gained for us so great a Redeemer!" (No. 412).

I used to teach religion in the St. Patrick Middle School, and I asked my 8<sup>th</sup> Grade students that question. One of my students answered very perceptibly that God let Adam and Eve sin so that he could one day show the human race how much he loved them by sending his only begotten Son into the world to suffer and die for their salvation (See John 3:16). One of the classrooms at John Paul II Catholic High School where I taught until retirement has above one of the boards, "The worst thing that ever happened caused the greatest thing that ever happened, for us."

### *God's covenants with a Chosen People*

After the Fall, God began to gradually reveal himself to humankind. To begin the process of restoration of the human race to the Trinitarian Family, he made covenants or agreements with a chosen people, the Israelites. The story of the old covenant is found in the Old Testament of the Bible. In the old covenant God promised to make the Chosen People a great and numerous people, provide them with land, and make them prosperous if they, in turn, worshipped him as the one true God and obeyed his commandments. God's revealed his commandments to Moses at Mt. Sinai, the Ten Commandments. The covenant was sealed by sacrificing animals. In the Old Testament God was preparing the world for the redemption of the world when he was to send his only begotten Son to save us.

**Old Testament (Covenant):** The Chosen People invariably broke their covenants with God when they prospered. God repeatedly sent prophets to remind them of their covenants with him, instruct and encourage them, call them to repentance, and to warn them what would happen to them if they didn't repent, which they seldom did until punished. After a period of punishment, they usually returned to God for a brief while, but as soon as they prospered again, the sordid cycle started all over again. Much of the Old Testament is taken up with describing these cycles of prosperity, backsliding, warning, punishment, and repentance. In time God tired of this repeating cycle and began to reveal through his prophets, such as Isaiah and Daniel, that he would one day send a Messiah who would save his people from their sins.

**New Testament (Covenant):** The prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled by the New Testament, the New and Everlasting Covenant. The New Testament is the story of the redemption of mankind. It describes the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven. God had always kept his side of covenant relationships, but the Chosen People rarely kept theirs. The only way that humans could keep their end of the covenant was for God himself to become a man and make a new and everlasting covenant on their behalf. The New and Everlasting Covenant, sealed by the Blood of the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, and made present at each Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, fulfills the covenants of the Old Testament, the covenants that God made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. God promises in the new covenant to provide faithful Christians the blessings described in the Sermon on the Mount, the Last Supper, and elsewhere in the Gospel. If we obey his commandments, our eternal reward is Heaven.

**The Incarnation:** The Holy Trinity, next to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation is the most important doctrine of the Catholic Faith. The Incarnation occurred when the Word became Flesh and dwelled among us. The prophecies of the prophets were fulfilled hundreds of years afterwards when the angel of the Lord, Gabriel, announced to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she was to conceive and bear a son who would save the world (Matthew 1:20-25, Luke 1:26-37). At her consent, the Word (the Second Person of the Holy Trinity) was made Flesh and dwelled

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among us (Luke 1:26-38); in other words, the Word become incarnate (from the Latin *incarnare*, which means to make flesh).

St. John begins his Gospel with the words: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (John 1:1-2; 14). John is here talking about the Incarnation, which means to embody or be made of flesh. At the Incarnation, Jesus Christ united his divine Person with a human body and soul. Thus, he possesses two natures, human and divine. The union of his divine and human natures is called the Hypostatic Union. This means that his two natures, divine and human, are united in one Divine Person. He is true God and true man. It is very important to stress here that even though Jesus possesses two natures, he is only one person, the same Person as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He possesses only divine personhood; he does not possess human personhood. He shares his divine intellect and will with the Father and the Holy Spirit; otherwise, if each of the persons of the Holy Trinity had separate intellects and wills, there would exist three separate gods, not one. This is what Jesus meant when he said, “I am in the Father and the Father in me” (John 14:10) or “I came from the father” (John 15:28) or “[He] who sees me sees him who sent me” (John 12:45).

The Incarnation was the most important event that ever occurred in history, because every event before was affected by it and every event that followed until the end of time was or will be affected by it. In fact, we even ascertain our time from the birth of Jesus Christ: before Christ, B.C., and *Anno Domini*, A.D. (in the Year of our Lord). The Incarnation was so important, because it raised the dignity and worth of every single human being. Being created in God's very image had already given humans inestimable dignity and worth; the Incarnation even raised this dignity and worth even further yet, because God himself had become a human, making it possible for all humans to elevate their status to the supernatural level, of course, by adoption and by grace, not by nature. Because God created us in his image and likeness, it gives us the motive for loving and caring for others. In fact, Jesus commanded us to love one another as he loves us (John 15:12), which is a tall order. It is much greater order than loving our neighbor as ourselves, because our capacity to love others depends on the degree to which we love ourselves. An added reason for loving others is the Redemption of humankind, because God loved the world so much that he sent his only Son into the world to redeem it (John 3:16). Moreover, the Incarnation increases our worth and dignity even further yet by restoring us to God's family.

Why did Jesus Christ become man? Jesus became a man for the following reasons: to restore us to God's Family; to elevate our human nature so we can share in his divinity; to redeem us by suffering and dying on the Cross; to suffer and die for our sins; to show how much he loves us; to give us hope; to set for us an example of perfect holiness and virtue; to help us reach perfection; and to give us an example and motive for loving others.

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Nonetheless, the Incarnation did not automatically restore humankind to God's likeness. We are made friends with him once again only at Baptism, whether of water, blood, or desire. The restoration of God's friendship is logically called justification, because it restores the justice lost by Adam and Eve by their original sin. Baptism makes us right with God as our Protestant brothers and sisters would say. Before Baptism we were dead to sin. At Baptism we died to sin and were given new life in Jesus Christ (Romans 6). Also, Baptism makes us holy, because God the Trinity, who is holiness itself, comes to dwell in our souls (John 14:23).

## The Catholic Understanding of Justification

Justification is “the process by which humans are moved by grace, turn towards God and away from sin, and accept God's forgiveness and righteousness”; it is the process by which they are made right with God, as Protestants would say. It is the process that restores the justice lost by Adam and Eve and transmitted to their descendants. God both forgives sin and infuses sanctifying grace into the souls of the justified beginning at baptism. Sanctifying grace is God's gratuitous gift to the justified of his own divine life, which makes the recipient pleasing to God. Those who die in the state of justification, that is sanctifying grace, go to heaven. The sixteenth century Council of Trent defined Justification as “the change from the condition in which a person is born as a child of the first Adam into a state of grace and adoption among the children of God through the Second Adam, Jesus Christ our Savior” (Denzinger 1524). Fr. John Hardon states in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that “justification is a true removal of sin, and not merely having one's sins ignored or no longer held against the sinner by God. On the positive side it is the supernatural sanctification and renewal of a person who thus becomes holy and pleasing to God and an heir of heaven.” The main cause of justification is God's mercy and baptism. He continues, “And that which constitutes justification or its essence is the justice of God, ‘not by which He is just Himself, but by which He makes us just,’ namely sanctifying grace.” Another term for justification is “regeneration.” Fr. Hardon completes his discussion of justification by saying:

The Catholic Church identifies five elements of justification, which collectively define its full meaning. The primary purpose of justification is the honor of God and of Christ; its secondary purpose is the eternal life of mankind. The main efficient cause or agent is the mercy of God; the main instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism, which is called the "sacrament of faith" to spell out the necessity of faith for salvation. And that which constitutes justification or its essence is the justice of God, “not by which He is just Himself, but by which He makes us just,” namely sanctifying grace.

Depending on the sins from which a person is to be delivered, there are different kinds of justification. An infant is justified by baptism and the faith of the one who requests or confers the sacrament. Adults are justified for the first time either by personal faith, sorrow for sin and baptism, or by the perfect love of God, which is at least an implicit baptism of desire. Adults who have sinned gravely after being justified can receive justification by sacramental absolution or perfect contrition for their sins. (Etym. Latin *justus*, just + *facere*, to make, do: *justificatio*.)

**St. Paul's Theology of Justification:** It was St. Paul who developed the term justification in the theology of the Church. Justification is a major theme in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans and he deals with the subject in Galatians and in other of his letters as well. According to one scholar:

## JUSTIFICATION, SANCTIFICATION, AND GRACE

Paul develops justification [in Romans] by first speaking of God's just wrath at sin (Romans 1:18 - 3:20). Then he presents Justification as the solution for God's wrath. Paul states in Roman 3:28 that one is said to be 'justified by faith apart from works of the Law.' Furthermore, "Paul warns the people not consider themselves justified by the Mosaic Law expounded in the book of Leviticus."

Another scholar says that "Because Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, St. Paul tells us that Christ's Passion has merited the gift of grace." In regards to this matter, St. Paul writes, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith" (Romans 3:21-25). In other words, Paul is explaining that it isn't the observance of the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament that justifies or saves, meaning the observance of the dieting laws, of the ritual washings of purity laws, of circumcision for men, and above all the laws that regulate the Temple sacrifices. What justifies or saves under the New Covenant or Testament is the saving grace of Christ merited by his suffering and death on the Cross. However, one scholar cautions us that St. Paul's reference "to 'the Law' does not include the works of righteousness done through grace and the theological virtue of charity." Put another way, St. Paul was not saying that the Ten Commandments and the other Mosaic laws that involved loving God and neighbor were no longer applicable under the New Covenant or Testament. To the contrary, they are the heart of the New Covenant.

St. Paul first developed the term justification in his theology of the Church. Justification is a major theme in his Epistle to the Romans and he deals with the subject in Galatians and in other of his letters as well. According to one scholar, "Paul develops justification [in Romans] by first speaking of God's just wrath at sin (Romans 1:18 - 3:20). Then he presents Justification as the solution for God's wrath. Paul states in Roman 3:28 that one is said to be 'justified by faith apart from works of the Law.' Furthermore, Paul warns the people not consider themselves justified by the Mosaic Law expounded in the book of Leviticus." Another scholar says:

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**The Mosaic Law compared with the Law of Grace:** Let's compare the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament with the Law of Grace of the New Testament. The Mosaic Law of the Israelites contained 613 *Mitzvot* commandments and hundreds, and even thousands of interpretations eventually incorporated in the *Mishnah*. The Israelites were God's chosen people, however unworthy they would prove to be over the centuries, a people to whom he revealed himself and with which he prepared the way for the Messiah. Therefore, he wanted them to be as holy a nation as possible by distinguishing and keeping them away from the surrounding pagan peoples who worshipped idols and engaged in all sorts of immoral behaviors.

Many of the *Mitzvot* or commandments were specific guides for the Israelites on how to carry out the Ten Commandments, which was the heart of their covenant with God, what we call the Old Testament or Covenant. Of course, the Ten Commandments are requirements for all people of all times; however, many of the 613 commandments and their interpretations were applicable only to the Israelites, especially those dealing with matters of diet, ritual purity, the Sabbath, Temple worship, circumcision, and the like. These laws were designed to set the Israelites apart from all of the pagan peoples who surrounded them; to distinguish them as God's special chosen people constituted as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Scott Hahn says that St Paul describes the Law of Moses as a "custodian" or tutor. He explains that in Roman times, well-to-do parents would have a private pedagogue or custodian for their son. The pedagogue was usually a slave that had been given absolute authority over the son, but when the son grew up and became an adult, the pedagogue no longer had authority over him, that as an adult he was subject only to his father. St. Paul tells us that the Law of Moses was the pedagogue until the coming of Christ, but with his coming justification was by faith. By justified meaning reconciled with God. Paul says in his letter to the Galatians:

Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor

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free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christs, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:23-29).

The *Catechism* states regarding this subject: "This divine pedagogy appears especially in the gift of the Law. God gave the Law as a 'pedagogue' to lead his people towards Christ (Gal 3: 24), But the Law's powerlessness to save man deprived of the divine 'likeness' along with the growing awareness of sin that it imparts enkindles a desire for the Holy Spirit" (No. 708). So the Mosaic Law had a purpose in preparing the Jews and the entire human race for the Law of salvation by Grace, which was fulfilled by Jesus Christ in the New Covenant or New Testament.

We discussed the Mosaic Law or Torah found in the first five books of the Bible in considerable detail in our series on the Old Testament. We looked at the six categories into which the Jewish legal scholars had broken down the Torah called the *Mitzvoth*:

- Commandments on agricultural matters
- Laws dealing with the Sabbath, Festivals, and Fast Days
- Requirements for Marriage and Divorce, etc., as well as with vows and other issues
- Civil and criminal law, including punishment for violations, as well as ethical teachings
- Requirements for ritual slaughter, sacrifices, offerings, and the Temple and its services
- Laws associated with diet, ritual purity, and impurity

The laws for each of these categories tell what, how, when, where, and why these activities must be performed. They totaled 613.

What did St. Paul mean when he said that Christians were not under or subject to the Law or *Torah*? This question is at the heart of the antinomian controversy within Protestant Christianity and the debate over faith and works among Catholics and Protestants, and other issues. Also, it gave rise to the issue of the Judaizers, which was resolved at the Council of Jerusalem in 49 A.D. One could cite many verses of St. Paul's letters as proof texts that he freed Christians from the burdens of the Law. I'll cite just a few examples, such as:

- **Romans 6:14:** "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."
- **Acts 13:38-39:** "Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses."
- **Galatians 3:23-24:** "Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under

restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith.”

- **Roman 7:6:** “But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.”

Even though St. Paul spoke often about Christians not being under the Law of Moses, he didn't mean that they were free from observing the Ten Commandments and the many commandments of the *Mitzvoth* that were related to them. He was referring to laws dealing with ritual purity, dietary regulations, Jewish liturgy, ritual, and temple sacrifices, some of the sabbatical laws, and above all the requirement that men had to be circumcised. In fact, Jesus refined and perfected the Ten Commandments in his Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, for he came not to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17). The 1913 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* states in an article on *Judaizers* that “Paul, on the other hand, not only did not object to the observance of the Mosaic Law, as long as it did not interfere with the liberty of the Gentiles, but he conformed to its prescriptions when occasion required (1 Corinthians 9:20). Thus he shortly after the Council of Jerusalem circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:1-3), and he was in the very act of observing the Mosaic ritual when he was arrested at Jerusalem (Acts 21:26).”

Implicit is that Gospel morality under the Law of Grace is more perfect than morality under the Law of Moses. Since the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old, the behavior of Christians is to be more perfect than was ever the conduct even of the Chosen People under the Law of Moses. Fr. John Hardon tells us that what most distinguishes Gospel morality from the Mosaic Law is that it is Christ-centered morality, that “unlike the Mosaic law with its inevitable stress on minute regulations, multiplied to cover every aspect of personal and social living, the morality of the Gospels is founded on Christ, inspired by Christ, made possible only through the grace of Christ, and leading to the possession of Christ in eternal life in His company.” Father says that all too often Christians look upon the moral teachings of the Church as just a later stage of the moral code of the pre-Christian Jews, so “it is no wonder so many of them react negatively to the Church's prescriptions, because they forget that the heart of the New Law is a Person, and that Person is the Son of God who became man in order to inspire our imitation and by His grace, give us the strength to follow in His footsteps.” Under the Old Covenant, which included the Law of Moses, the Israelites were saved by faith, not the fulfillment of the law, whereas under the New Covenant, which included the Law of Love of God and neighbor, all persons are saved by God's grace. For example, the sacrifices of the Old Covenant didn't confer grace, because they weren't sacraments. Only the sacrifice of Christ that sealed the New Covenant confers grace, because it is a sacrament.

Paul writes of sin and justification in terms of two men, Adam and Christ. He writes in Romans 5:12 that “just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” One scholar states that this means that “Through Adam,

sin came into the world bringing death; through Jesus, righteousness came into the world, bringing justification unto life.” He continues by pointing out how St. Paul connects justification with predestination and glorification in chapter 8. In this regard he states “those who are justified cannot be separated from the love of Christ.” One biblical scholar tells us that several of these passages are central in the debate between Roman Catholics, and various Protestant groups. He says that “while there is broad agreement on justification by faith, there is no complete doctrinal uniformity on Justification among all Protestant denominations, because they can understand them in quite different ways.”

Catholic Church has always taught that the justice bestowed on humans is a free gift which actually transforms them into persons pleasing to God. In 1 Corinthians 6:11 and Romans 6, St. Paul links justification with sanctification and purification and “sees the justified man as living a new life in Christ.” One source commenting on this matter says, “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.” He says, “This new life is indeed life in Christ, [is] so real.” He quotes St. Paul as saying, “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” (Galatians 2:19). He states, “The whole of Romans 6 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.” As we will see below, this really got to be a bone of contention between Catholics and Protestants during the sixteenth century Reformation.

**The *Catechism* on Justification:** The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states in paragraph No. 1987 that “The grace of the Holy Spirit has the power to justify us, that is, to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to us ‘the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ’ and through Baptism:” Then quoting St. Paul it says, “But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:8-11). The *Catechism* goes on to say in the next paragraph, “Through the power of the Holy Spirit we take part in Christ's Passion by dying to sin, and in his Resurrection by being born to a new life; we are members of his Body which is the Church, branches grafted onto the vine which is himself.” In this regard, it quotes St. Paul as saying, “[God] gave himself to us through his Spirit. By the participation of the Spirit, we become communicants in the divine nature. . . . For this reason, those in whom the Spirit dwells are divinized” (1 Corinthians 12). The *Catechism* closes the subject of Justification by saying:

Justification is the *most excellent work of God's love* made manifest in Christ Jesus and granted by the Holy Spirit. It is the opinion of St. Augustine that ‘the justification of the wicked is a greater work than the creation of heaven and earth,’ because ‘heaven and

earth will pass away but the salvation and justification of the elect . . . will not pass away.’ He holds also that the justification of sinners surpasses the creation of the angels in justice, in that it bears witness to a greater mercy” (No, 1994).

**The Council of Trent on Justification:** The Council of Trent during the mid-sixteenth century had quite a lot to say about the justification. The Council of Trent met in 25 sessions from 1545 to 1563 during which it issued many decrees and canons. The subject of Justification was considered by the Council during its 6<sup>th</sup> Session in January of 1547. The documents containing the canons or statements of Catholic doctrines of the Council concerning Justification number 33. The canons also contain anathemas or condemnations of those holding views in opposition to them. It would be interesting to have a series just on the Council itself, especially an examination of the 33 canons dealing with justification. The same is true of Vatican Council II. Recall I said above what Fr. Hardon had to say about the Council of Trent and justification: that the decree on justification of the Council of Trent was “almost a *tessera* [or mosaic] of citations from St. Paul, whose letters are the wellspring of Catholic doctrine on the ‘new man’ reborn in Christ Jesus.”

Justification was the main issue between Catholics and Protestants during the sixteenth century. The Council spent so much time and space on this issue in order to carefully clarify the differences between them on this issue. One scholar has written of this matter:

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. Furthermore, the Council states that justification's goal and purpose is God's glory, it declares that this inner transformation is brought about by God through the merits of our Redeemer, and communicated to man in faith and baptism.

To counteract the Protestant Reformation, the Council strongly asserted that justification and sanctification go together. Fr. John Hardon tells us that “the cardinal issue on the nature of justification was the familiar Protestant theory that when a man is justified two things happen to him. His sins are forgiven in the sense that they are covered over and not imputed [or lay the responsibility} to him, while internally he remains a sinner: And positively the justice he “acquires” is not his own as something inhering in his soul; but the alien justice of Christ or of God which is credited to him without being really his.” We’ll return to an evaluation of this matter below in this essay.

Trent defined justification as “a passing from the state in which man is born a son of the first

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Adam, to the state of grace and adoption as sons of God, through the second Adam, Jesus Christ our Savior. Since the Gospel was promulgated, this passing cannot take place without the water of regeneration or the desire for it.” (*DS* 1524; *CCC* 1996). Fr. Hardon writes:

[J]ustification implies the remission of sins, as a true, internal and unequivocal removal, and not a mere covering-over. The year before, and four months after Luther’s death, Trent had defined that through the grace of baptism “everything having the true and proper nature of sin is taken away,” and not “only brushed over (*radi*) or not imputed.” *DS* 1515; *CCC* 997-98, 1987. . . . It means that the guilt and stain of soul contracted by sin are completely taken away. There is also a sense in which our sins are no longer imputed to us, once we receive grace, for the good reason that the sins are gone; which is quite otherwise than the non-imputation of guilt for a sinful condition that still perdures.

Trent declared that sins are removed by justification. It declared that “if baptism is received, all sins are deleted: original and personal, mortal and venial. If remission takes place through the sacrament of penance or by an act of perfect love, the amount of venial guilt remitted depends on a person’s dispositions.” But Fr. Hardon reminds us that this is only the beginning. He states that unlike the Protestant Reformers, Trent emphasized that sanctification accompanies justification by declaring, “Besides remission of sins, when a person receives sanctifying grace there is also ‘sanctification and renovation of the interior man’” *DS* 1528; *CCC* 1266). He also says that “there is more. Renovation in the Tridentine sense means a positive and physical change in the soul through the voluntary reception of grace and gifts”( *DS* 1528).

### The Catholic Understanding of Sanctification

By baptism we are transformed in Christ, making us God's adopted children, brothers and sisters to his son Jesus, and heirs to Heaven if we persevere to the end of our lives. This transformation is brought about by God's grace, which is his life in us. Only God is holy, and we are holy only to the extent he actually dwells in our souls, which is called the state of sanctifying grace. This process is called sanctification, which is an actual internal renewal of the individual, a real transformation in Jesus Christ. The important thing to remember about the Catholic understanding of justification is that it is inseparable from sanctification. Justified persons undergo a process of sanctification or regeneration, which means that grace penetrates their souls and transforms them in Christ. Fr. Hardon says of this matter:

The first sanctification takes place at baptism, by which the love of God is infused by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Newly baptized persons are holy because the Holy Trinity begins to dwell in their souls and they are pleasing to God. The second sanctification is a lifelong process in which a person already in the state of grace grows in the possession of grace and in likeness to God by faithfully corresponding with divine inspirations. The third sanctification takes place when a person enters heaven and becomes totally and irrevocably united with God in the beatific vision. (Etym. Latin *sanctificare*, to make holy.)

Only God is holy and we are holy only to the extent that we are holy, to the extent God lives in our souls. God is holy, because he is whole, perfect, sound, blessed, hallowed, sacred, and complete, possessing integrity, goodness, and righteousness. God possesses these qualities by nature; we possess them only by sanctifying grace, which is the life of God within us. We have God's life in us when the Trinity dwells in our souls. Baptism washes away the stain of Original Sin and makes us Temples of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Holy Spirit dwells also dwells the Father and the Son. This is known as the doctrine of the indwelling Trinity (John 14:23). We want to emphasize that grace is not God; it is his life within us; it is our participation in his life, our participation in the inner life of the Trinity. As we will see later in our discussion, sanctifying grace restores the holiness and justice lost by Adam and Eve. Sanctifying grace makes us holy; it sanctifies us, as was Adam and Eve before their fall from God's grace. Sanctification is the process of being sanctified, of being made holy.

## The Catholic Understanding of Grace

Grace derives from the Latin *gratia*, which means “a gift freely given.” It is an entirely free gift from God. Fr. John Hardon says of grace: “In biblical language the condescension or benevolence (Greek *charis*) shown by God toward the human race; it is also the unmerited gift proceeding from this benevolent disposition. Grace, therefore, is a totally gratuitous gift on which man has absolutely no claim.” He goes on to say, “Grace is the supernatural gift that God, of his free benevolence, bestows on rational creatures for their eternal salvation.” Fr. Hardon explains grace as follows:

As the Church has come to explain the meaning of grace, it refers to something more than the gifts of nature, such as creation or the blessings of bodily health. Grace is the supernatural gift that God, of his free benevolence, bestows on rational creatures for their eternal salvation. The gifts of grace are essentially supernatural. They surpass the being, powers, and claims of created nature, namely sanctifying grace, the infused virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and actual grace. They are the indispensable means necessary to reach the beatific vision. In a secondary sense, grace also includes such blessings as the miraculous gifts of prophecy or healing, or the preternatural gifts of freedom from concupiscence. The essence of grace, properly so called, is its gratuity, since no creature has a right to the beatific vision, and its finality or purpose is to lead one to eternal life. (Etym. Latin *gratia*, favor; a gift freely given.)

Grace has been defined as the life of God within us. We have God’s life in us when the Trinity dwells in our souls. Baptism washes away the stain of Original Sin and makes us Temples of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Holy Spirit dwells also dwells the Father and the Son. This is known as the doctrine of the indwelling Trinity. I want to emphasize that grace is not God; it is his life within us; it is our participation in his life, our participation in the inner life of the persons of the Trinity. As we will see later in our discussion, sanctifying grace restores the holiness and justice lost by Adam and Eve. Sanctifying grace makes us holy; it sanctifies us, as was Adam and Eve before their fall from God's grace. Sanctification is the process of being sanctified, of being made holy.

The *Catechism* refers to Romans 8:14-17 when it states, “Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is *favor*, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life” (No, 1996). Then commenting on St. Paul’s passage, it says, “Grace is a *participation in the life of God*. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an “adopted son” he can henceforth call God ‘Father’, in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church (No. 1997). Making reference to St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:7-9, the *Catechism* states, “This *supernatural* vocation that leads to eternal life depends entirely on God's gratuitous initiative, for he alone can reveal and give himself. It surpasses the power of

human intellect and will, as that of every other creature” (No 1998). Continuing in this vein it says, “The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. It is the *sanctifying* or *deifying grace* received in Baptism. It is in us the source of the work of sanctification: (No. 1999). The *Catechism* concludes this theme by quoting St. Paul again from 2 Corinthians 5:17-18: “Therefore if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself.” St. Paul writes in Ephesians “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (2:8-10).

### *Sanctifying Grace*

When one is baptized, he or she receives Sanctifying Grace. To sanctify means to make holy. Only God is Holy, so we become holy only to the extent that God dwells in our souls. Sanctifying grace is that which makes us holy. God infused sanctifying grace into our souls at baptism. Sanctifying grace is the life of God within us; it is our sharing in God's life. We become temples of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity comes to dwell in our souls (John 14:23). Our baptism gives us the privilege of sharing in the inner life of the Holy Trinity; we truly become members of God's family by adoption and by grace. We become adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters of his son Jesus Christ. Jesus shared in our humanity so that we could share in his divinity. Fr. Hardon says of sanctifying grace:

The supernatural state of being infused by God, which permanently inheres in the soul. It is a vital principle of the supernatural life, as the rational soul is the vital principle of a human being's natural life. It is not a substance but a real quality that becomes part of the soul substance. Although commonly associated with the possession of the virtue of charity, sanctifying grace is yet distinct from this virtue. Charity, rather, belongs to the will, whereas sanctifying grace belongs to the whole soul, mind, will, and affections. It is called sanctifying grace because it makes holy those who possess the gift by giving them a participation in the divine life. It is *zo\_* (life), which Christ taught that he has in common with the Father and which those who are in the state of grace share.

As we discussed earlier, sanctifying grace is God's life in us; it is our participation in the inner life of the Trinity when God dwells in our souls, a condition that is called being in the “state of sanctifying grace”. Our friendship with God began at our baptism. It is then that we experienced the infusion of Sanctifying Grace and began to live at the supernatural level. St. Paul was responsible for the early development of identifying the effects of sanctifying grace, called the process of sanctification, which means becoming holy, that is, more like Jesus. At baptism we

experience several effects, which include:

- **Removal of the stain of Original Sin:** Baptism removes the stain of Original Sin inherited from our first parents (Romans 5:12-2; Romans 5:18-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; Ephesians 2:3). By stain is meant that we inherited the wounded nature of our first parents, not their sin, as such.
- **Temples of the Holy Spirit:** By washing away the stain of Original Sin, baptism prepares our souls for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Holy Spirit dwells also dwells the Father and the Son. This is known as the doctrine of the indwelling Trinity. In this regard, Jesus said, “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him” (John 14:23). St. Paul speaks of the indwelling Trinity several places. For example: “Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). In another place he says, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own” (1 Corinthians 6:19). And in another, “Guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us” (2 Timothy. 1:14). Jesus reveals to us the existence of the indwelling Holy Trinity and St. Paul guided by the Holy Spirit provides us of a deeper understanding of what Jesus meant by this.
- **Supernatural life:** Sanctifying grace elevates the human soul from the natural to the supernatural level, even above the angelic level, because the sanctified soul participates in God's very nature.
- **Just and pleasing to God:** Sanctifying grace restores holiness and justice lost by Adam and Eve. Sanctifying grace makes us holy; it sanctifies us, as was Adam and Eve before their fall from God's grace. Sanctification is the process of being sanctified, being made holy. Sanctifying grace also justifies us; it makes us friends with God and restores the harmony between us and God lost by our first parents. Justification is the process of being justified, that is being right with God, which establishes harmony between us, God, our neighbor, and the creation around us. It restores the justice originally possessed by Adam and Eve before their fall from grace.
- **Members of Christ's Mystical Body:** We become members of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Catholic Church at baptism. The Church is God's family (St. Paul speaks of all Christians as members of Christ, so that with Him, they form one Mystical Body (1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Colossians 1:18; 2:18-20; Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:19).

- **Adopted children of God the Father:** We became adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters of his son Jesus at baptism. Regarding this St. Paul said, “You did not receive a spirit of slavery leading you back into fear, but a spirit of adoption through which we cry out, ‘Abba!’ (that is, ‘Father’). The Spirit himself gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans. 8:15-16). Paul discusses our adoption in Romans 8; Ephesians 1:5; and Galatians 4:5-7) among other places. St. John in his prologue, St. Peter in his First Epistle 1, and St. James in his Epistle 1 make reference to our adoption as children of God. The 1911 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* says of our adoption, “According to these several passages we are begotten, born of God. He is our Father, but in such wise that we may call ourselves, and truly are, His children, the members of His family, brothers of Jesus Christ with whom we partake of the Divine Nature and claim a share in the heavenly heritage. This divine filiation, together with the right of co-heritage, finds its source in God's own will and graceful condescension. When St. Paul, using a technical term borrowed from the Greeks, calls it adoption, we must interpret the word in a merely analogical sense. In general, the correct interpretation of the Scriptural concept of our adoption must follow the golden mean and locate itself midway between the Divine Sonship of Jesus on the one hand, and human adoption on the other—immeasurably below the former and above the latter... Divine adoption, on the contrary, works inward, penetrating to the very core of our life, renovating enriching, transforming it into the likeness of Jesus, ‘the firstborn among many brethren’. Of course it cannot be more than a likeness, an image of the Divine Original mirrored in our imperfect selves. There will ever be between our adoption and the filiation of Jesus the infinite distance which separates created grace from hypostatical union. And yet, that intimate and mysterious communion with Christ, and through Him with God, is the glory of our adopted sonship:.” In other words, Jesus Christ is God the Father’s son by nature, an uncreated nature; whereas, we are his sons and daughters by adoption and by grace, because we possess a created nature.
- **Brothers and sisters to Jesus:** Since we become adopted children of God the Father at Baptism, we also become brothers and sisters to his son Jesus (Romans 8:28-29). St. Paul refers to his brothers and sisters in Christ in numerous places in his letters.
- **Coheirs with Christ:** Since sanctifying grace makes us participators in the divine life that Christ completely possesses, it follows that we are his brothers and sisters and coheirs with him, for as St. Paul tells us God has predestined us “to share the image of his Son, that the Son might be the first-born of many brothers” (Romans 8:29). Elsewhere in Romans he says, “Heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ, provided, however, we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him” (Romans 8:17). God loves us the way he loves his son and looks at Jesus as our brother and grants us the same heritage as he possesses.

- **Heirs of Heaven:** As God's children we became heirs to Heaven, for in this regard St. Paul says, "But if we are children, we are heirs as well: heirs of God, heirs with Christ" (Romans. 8:17). Moreover, on adopting us as his children, God infuses sanctifying grace into our souls, giving us a participation in the divine nature itself.
- **Capacity for supernatural merit:** We must be in state of sanctifying grace in order for our good works to earn merit toward eternal life. Supernatural merit requires the possession of the supernatural life. While in the state of mortal sin, our good works earn us nothing with respect to eternal life; how-ever, by good works we can earn actual graces that motivate us to repent and return to God's family. The 1911 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* states that, "Although St. Paul insists on nothing more strongly than the absolute gratuitousness of Christian grace, still he acknowledges merits founded on grace and also the reward due to them on the part of God, which he variously calls 'prize' (Philippians 3:14; 1 Corinthians 9:24) 'reward' (Colossians 3:24; 1 Corinthians 3:8), 'crown of justice' (2 Timothy 4:7 sq.; cf. James 1:12). It is worthy of note that, in these and many others good works are not represented as mere adjuncts of justifying faith, but as real fruits of justification and part causes of our eternal happiness. And the greater the merit, the greater will be the reward in heaven (cf. Matthew 16:27; 1 Corinthians 3:8; 2 Corinthians 9:6)."
- **Newness of Life:** One source says that, "Justification is synonymous with the communication of new life in Christ to the Christian", that "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." Paul writes to the Corinthians of this matter, "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17). He encourages the Ephesians to "put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:22-24).
- **Intimate union with God:** Although we are united to God before our baptism in a natural manner by virtue of his essence, presence, and power, sanctifying grace increases this union to an infinitely higher level of union, which is participation in the divine life itself. Sanctifying grace creates a loving relationship between God and us and makes us his friends and adopted children, for, "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16). Baptism restores the supernatural life that Adam and Eve possessed before their fall from God's grace. again"; he or she is no longer the old corrupt self covered over with the blanket of Christ's righteousness, but has become righteous himself or herself. Catholics believe that justification and sanctification go together, that the justified person is sanctified or made holy, because the Trinity which is

thrice Holy dwells in the souls of the justified. One source says that “the Scriptures teach not only that by faith man is justified and forgiven, but that Christ dwells in him, and through Christ the Holy Trinity. St. Paul declares of the Christians that they are in Christ (Romans 8:1) and again that Christ is in them (Galatians 2:20). They live in fellowship or communion with God (1 John 1:3). Not only does the Holy Spirit dwell and work within them, so that they have the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts (1 Corinthians. 1:22), the witness of the Spirit that they are God’s children (Rom. 8:16) and the sealing with the Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13), but the Father and the Son also come to the believers and take their abode in them (John 14:23). Christ is in the believers (Colossians. 1:27) and they in him (Romans 8:1). As many as have been baptized into Him have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27) and are in the Lord (Romans 16:11) and are made nigh because they are in Him (Ephesians 2:13) and are free from condemnation (Romans 8:1). They are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones (Ephesians 5:30), members of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15) and partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Christ lives in them (Galatians 2:20) and dwells in their hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17), is in them (Romans 8:10), and is to be formed in them (Galatians 4:19). The believers are members of His body (Romans 12:4,5); they are united with Him as the branch with the vine (John 15:5), and their life is His life flowing through them.

St. Paul had a lot to say about sanctifying grace, especially about gifts of the Holy Spirit that flow from persons in a state of sanctifying grace. One famous quotation comes from his first letter to the Corinthians:

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were heathen, you were led astray to dumb idols, however you may have been moved. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says ‘Jesus be cursed!’ and no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Corinthians 12:1-11).

Then Paul goes on to compare the various gifts or chrisms with different parts of the body. The *Catechism* comments on this theme by saying “Grace is first and foremost the gift of the Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us. But grace also includes the gifts that the Spirit grants us to associate us with his work, to enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the

growth of the Body of Christ, the Church. There are *sacramental graces*, gifts proper to the different sacraments. There are furthermore *special graces*, also called *charisms* after the Greek term used by St. Paul and meaning ‘favor,’ ‘gratuitous gift,’ ‘benefit’” (No. 2003).

Related to Sanctifying Grace is the term Sanctification. The term derives from the Latin *sanctificare*, which means to make holy. Fr. Hardon defines Sanctification as being made holy, and that the first sanctification takes place at baptism, “by which the love of God is infused by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Newly baptized persons are holy because the Holy Trinity comes to dwell in their souls [which makes them] pleasing to God. The second sanctification is a lifelong process in which a person already in the state of grace grows in the possession of grace and in likeness to God by faithfully corresponding with divine inspirations. The third sanctification takes place when a person enters heaven and becomes totally and irrevocably united with God in the beatific vision.” As we will see below, Catholics and Protestants have very different views as to the meaning of Sanctification.

In summary, sanctifying grace transforms the soul in Christ, making it capable of joining the infinite knowledge and love of God. This ability begins in this life at our baptisms. Baptism cleanses us of the stain of Original Sin and makes us temples of the Holy Spirit. The Trinity comes to dwell in our souls. This makes us adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters to his Son Jesus as well as heirs to Heaven. We become members of God's family, his Church. However, we can achieve full union with God only in the next life, and then only after our souls have undergone whatever cleansing that might be necessary in Purgatory. But since the vision of God is infinite, and we are finite, we have unlimited capacity to increase sanctifying grace in our souls. We can do this by a lifetime of study and meditation on the Faith, a frequent reception of the sacraments, the development of the virtues, the performance of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, continual prayer and penance, being good stewards of what God has entrusted us with, and by loving God with our whole hearts, minds, souls, and strength. A knowledge of all of the effects of sanctifying grace that we just discussed will be essential to understanding St. Paul's theology and subsequent developments of it by theologians, such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, as well as the theology of grace by Protestant Reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin, and the response of the Council of Trent to refute them. Fr. John Hardon informs us that the Tridentine decree on justification of the Council of Trent was “almost a *tessera* [or mosaic] of citations from St. Paul, whose letters are the wellspring of Catholic doctrine on the ‘new man’ reborn in Christ Jesus.”

### *The loss and restoration of Sanctifying Grace*

We can lose sanctifying grace by committing a mortal sin, which is the spiritual death of our soul. When one commits a mortal sin, the indwelling Trinity leaves his or her soul. When this happens, the person is spiritually dead. In order for a sin to be mortal it must be a serious

matter, one must know that it is a serious matter, and one must act with a free will. The meaning of sin: According to the *Catechism* sin “is an offense against God as well as a fault against reason, truth and right conscience. Sin is a deliberate thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the eternal law of God” (1849, 1853). In other words, sin is willfully rejecting good and choosing evil. In judging the degree of sin, it is customary to distinguish between mortal and venial sins. “Mortal sin,” the *Catechism* teaches, “destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law . . . Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it” (1855). Sin offends God, because it hurts others and is a rejection of his love and mercy.

**Mortal sin:** Mortal means death and mortal sin means spiritual death of the soul. It destroys the life of grace within one’s soul. When one deliberately disobeys God's commandments—does an act contrary to his will—with full knowledge that it is a serious matter and with full consent of the will and not due to any fear or coercion, he commits mortal sin; God leaves his soul and he dies a spiritual death. The person who has violated his friendship with God is no longer God's friend. He is no longer in good standing in God's family; he loses his place in his family; he is no longer his adopted child. One who loses his place in God’s family loses his inheritance of Heaven. He is on the road that leads to eternal death and separation from God forever. God simply will not live where he is not wanted and we can't live with him if we do not want to. Like the dead body, which cannot bring itself back to life, the dead soul in mortal sin can do nothing to rejuvenate itself; only God can give it life once again.

**Regaining God's grace and friendship:** Because of God's infinite love and mercy, we can readily regain sanctifying grace once it has been lost through mortal sin; he has made it easy to regain his friendship and our place in his family. We can again become his adopted children in good standing by being sorry for our sins, confessing them, having a firm purpose of amendment, and doing penance to pay for the damage caused by them. Like the father of the prodigal son, God is always waiting with open arms to receive his prodigal sons and daughters back into his family (Luke 15:11-32). God dwells in us as long as we remain in his sanctifying grace. We must be in his grace at our deaths to share in his life forever in Heaven. We can achieve and maintain this holiness only by living lives of faith, hope, and above all love of God and neighbor.

Achieving Heaven fulfills our longing for God. To quote the great St. Augustine in this regard, “O God you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you” (*Confessions*1,1). We often look forward to getting or achieving more things, foolishly thinking that they will satisfy us, but we soon tire of them or find them less satisfying than when we get or achieve them. Anticipation is always greater than realization. Nothing less than God himself can really satisfy us. Only those who go to Heaven will rest in peace. Those who fail to achieve Heaven and go to Hell never find rest.

### *Actual Grace*

Fr. Jordan Aumann, one of the world's greatest mystical theologians and spiritual directors, defines actual grace as "a transient stimulation or movement by which the soul is prompted [by God] to do or receive something relating to justification, sanctification, or salvation" (*Spiritual Theology*). Fr. Hardon defines actual grace as a "Temporary supernatural intervention by God to enlighten the mind or strengthen the will to perform supernatural actions that lead to heaven. Actual grace is therefore a transient divine assistance to enable man to obtain, retain, or grow in supernatural grace and the life of God." In other words, actual grace is a special help or inspirations from God to us to avoid sin and to continue in a state of sanctifying grace. It disposes us to receive the infused virtues (the habits of Faith, Hope, and Charity) for the first time or when we have lost them by mortal sin. In the case of mortal sin, actual grace can stimulate repentance for our sins, cause us to fear punishment, and produce in us confidence in God's mercy. Furthermore, actual grace helps us to put the infused virtues into action and if in the state of sanctifying grace helps us perfect the infused virtues and grow in the supernatural life. Moreover, actual grace helps us to overcome mortal sin and thus prevent the loss of sanctifying grace and the infused virtues. It does this by strengthening us when being tempted, provides us with an awareness of special dangers, helps us to mortify the passions, and inspires us with good thoughts and holy desires.

Once in a state of sanctifying grace, it can be lost. We lose sanctifying grace by committing serious sins. Although God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—lives in friendship with us from the time of our Baptism, like all friendships, it must be cultivated. We must spend a lifetime developing our friendship with God. The closer our friendship with him, the more he will increasingly make us aware of his presence and the more firm will be our faith in him and his promises, for he will infuse into our souls the theological virtue of Faith. However, we can lose this divine friendship by seriously sinning. This is true because of the consequences of Original Sin.

The *Catechism* tells us sin "is an offense against God as well as a fault against reason, truth and right conscience. Sin is a deliberate thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the eternal law of God" (1849, 1853). In other words, sin is willfully rejecting good and choosing evil. In judging the degree of sin, it is customary to distinguish between mortal and venial sins. "Mortal sin," the *Catechism* teaches, "destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law . . . Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it" (1855).

In summary, the fruit of baptismal grace washes away the stain of Original Sin and all personal sins. God infuses sanctifying grace into baptized persons and they become temples of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Holy Spirit dwells also dwell the Father and the Son. Baptism makes persons sons and daughters of God the Father, brothers and sisters to His Son Jesus, and heirs to Heaven.

## JUSTIFICATION, SANCTIFICATION, AND GRACE

Baptism is the sacrament of spiritual regeneration by which a person is incorporated in Christ and made a member of his Mystical Body (the Catholic Church), given grace, and cleansed of original sin. Actual sins and the punishment owed for them are remitted also if the person baptized was guilty of such sins (e.g., in the case of a person baptized after reaching the age of reason). The theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity are given with grace as well as the Cardinal Virtues and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The matter is the water and the pouring of water. The form is the words “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

### *Living a life of holiness and achieving sainthood*

The Incarnation did not automatically restore humankind to God's image and likeness. In spite of Original Sin, humans still possess the image of God, because unlike the fallen angels who were cast into Hell when they rebelled against God, humans were not totally corrupted when our first parents committed Original Sin. Because humans had lost their innocence and were no longer holy, they were no longer like God; however, they were still basically in God's image, that is, they still had immortal souls, which possessed intellect and free will. However, Original Sin diminished their intellects and weakened their wills, and they were to suffer from the urge to commit actual sin, which is called concupiscence. Moreover, in the fallen state they were subject to suffering, sorrow, and death. Yet God still loved them and considered them redeemable, capable of being freed from the power of Satan and the slavery of sin.

In other words, after the Fall, human beings remained in God's image, still possessing immortal souls with the faculties of intellect and free will (although reduced in capacity because of the effects of Original Sin), but they no longer possessed the likeness of God, for they were no longer holy. As a result, they lost God's friendship (justice). Moreover, they lost their place in the Trinitarian Family; therefore, they were no longer supernatural children of God and no longer possessed the privilege of inheriting eternal happiness.

What starts us on the road to living a life of holiness and achieving sainthood? We are made friends with God once again only at Baptism. The restoration of God's friendship is logically called justification, because it restores the justice lost by Adam and Eve by their original sin, for as the *Catechism* says, “The communion of the Holy Spirit in the Church restores to the baptized the divine likeness lost through sin” (No. 734). In this regard, Jesus said, “no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit” (John 3:5).

Before baptism we were dead to sin. At baptism we died to sin and were given new life in Jesus Christ. In this regard St. Paul states:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized

## JUSTIFICATION, SANCTIFICATION, AND GRACE

into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:3-11).

God infused sanctifying grace into our souls at baptism. Sanctifying grace is the life of God within us; it is our sharing in God's life. We become temples of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity comes to dwell in our souls. Our Baptism restores our image to the likeness of God's image and gives us the privilege of sharing in the inner life of the Holy Trinity; we truly become members of God's family by adoption and by grace. We become adopted children of God the Father and sons and daughters of his son Jesus Christ. Jesus shared in our humanity so that we could share in his divinity.

What does it mean to achieve sainthood? We think of sainthood as a status achieved only by persons in Heaven, and that's partly true; however, God created us for union—a close friendship—with him even in this life. Of this desire for union St. Augustine said in the fourth century A.D. “O God you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you” (*Confessions 1, 1*).

If we are to become more intimate with God, that is, if we are to become saints in this life, we must love him for his own sake with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, for the love of God. Loving God means doing his will, obeying his Commandments. Loving neighbor means putting into practice Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, to practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy with respect to our neighbor, that is, to do good works. Doing good works for our neighbor puts into practice Jesus' commandment at the Last Supper to love our neighbor as he has loved us (John 15:12).

## The Role of Baptism in Our lives

Baptism restores us to God's family; it makes us adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters to his son Jesus. It is through grace that we participate in the inner life of the Trinity. In Baptism we receive sanctifying grace, which is the life of God within us; it is our participation in the life of the Trinitarian Family; it is the Holy Trinity dwelling in our souls. The *Catechism* says that grace “is our participation in [God's] life. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an ‘adopted son he can henceforth call God ‘Father,’ in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church” (No.1997).

Another way of conceiving of grace is our participation in God's life. Grace is like a beam of light from God that penetrates our souls. It has been said that Jesus Christ himself is the sacrament, “because he gave his life to save mankind. His humanity is the outward sign or the instrument of his Divinity. It is through his humanity that the life of the Father and the Holy Spirit come to us as grace through the sacraments. It is Jesus Christ alone who mediates the sacraments to allow grace to flow to mankind.”

Jesus instituted his Church and gave us his Apostles and their successors to shepherd his flock after his Ascension into Heaven. The Church—Christ's Mystical Body—itself is a sacrament through which God's graces and mercy flow. The Apostles and their successors, the bishops and clergy down through the ages, minister the seven sacraments, including Baptism, to help us lead good lives in this world, and to help us reach Heaven in the next.

St Paul tells us that before baptism we were dead to sin. At baptism we died to sin and were given new life in Jesus Christ; we were born again. In this regard he states:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:3-11).

## Baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation

**Baptism by water:** The Nicene Creed that Catholics profess at every Holy Sacrifice of the Mass states: We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. John the Baptist told the crowds that the one who was coming after him would baptize not with water alone, but with water and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:15-16). The Bible says, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark. 16:16). Jesus said to the Pharisee, Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3-5). He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them (Matthew 28:19). The *Catechism* tells us that “The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. It states that “In accordance with the Lord's will, it is necessary for salvation, as is the Church herself, which we enter by Baptism” (No.1277). It states elsewhere that “The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are ‘reborn of water and the Spirit’” (No. 1257). Numerous other places in the Bible make reference to the need for Baptism (For examples see: Titus 3:5; Acts 2:37-38; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:4; Gal. 3:27; Hebrews 10:22).

**Baptism by Desire and Blood:** The Church teaches that for those, through who no fault of their own, who do not undergo baptism of water can achieve God's sanctifying grace and membership into his family by a Baptism of desire or of blood. The baptism of desire applies both to “those who, while wishing to be baptized, die before receiving the sacrament” and “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do His will as they know it through the dictates of conscience” (Constitution on the Church, Second Vatican Council). The *Catechism* states, “For catechumens who die before their Baptism, their explicit desire to receive it, together with repentance for their sins, and charity, assures them the salvation that they were not able to receive through the sacrament” (No. 1259). Furthermore, “Those who die for the faith, those who are catechumens, and all those who, without knowing of the Church but acting under the inspiration of grace, seek God sincerely and strive to fulfill his will, can be saved even if they have not been baptized” (No. 1281).

Regarding the Baptism of Blood, the *Catechism* says, “The Church has always held the firm conviction that those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received Baptism are baptized by their death for and with Christ. This Baptism of blood, like the desire for Baptism, brings about the fruits of Baptism without being a sacrament” (No. 1258). The Baptism of blood refers to the martyrdom of those believers who were killed for the faith before they had a chance to be baptized. This was a common occurrence in the early centuries of the Church, but also in later times in missionary lands. The baptism of blood has the same effects as the baptism of water.

### Growing in Holiness

The holiness we receive at baptism is just a start to our growth in holiness. Let's use an analogy to illustrate our point. Let's imagine that our souls are like containers that when full will hold only so much grace. This means at baptism the container holds all of the grace that one is capable of holding at that moment. However, since God is infinite there is still room for indefinite increases of his grace. This means that the size of the container can grow as we grow in holiness, as we acquire more of God's life in us. Assuming that we are in the state of sanctifying grace at our deaths, the size of the container, that is the amount of grace that we possess at that time, will determine the amount of happiness that we will forever experience in Heaven.

### *Mary, Full of Grace*

Unlike Mary who was full of grace at her conception, we are incapable of this because of the stain of Original Sin on our souls. Baptism removes the stain, but we still have to suffer the consequences of a wounded human nature. Because she was to become the mother of God, it was only fitting that she be perfect in every way, therefore, she was conceived without any stain of Original Sin; she was immaculately conceived. Moreover, she was so full of God's grace that she never committed an actual sin during her life. In fact, she never even committed an imperfection, because she always chose the best of good choices when confronted with several of them. The Catholic Church teaches that Mary was "full of grace" at her conception. This means that she had the maximum capacity of grace or the life of God in her soul at that moment. But since that vision is infinite, there was still room for indefinite increases even in one who is full of grace at the start. Using our analogy of the container representing the soul, her container simply got larger throughout her life. Her growth in holiness was exponential growth, or 2, 4, 16, 32, 64, and so on into infinity, instead of arithmetic growth, which is 1,2,3,4,5 etc., as only we are capable.

Of course, God does not grow in us; he is infinite; he has no potential for growth. In Scholastic terms he is pure act, he simply is, with no potency, no potential for growth. If God could grow, he wouldn't be perfect. So what does it mean to say that we grow in God's grace? Our way of conceptualizing a growth in grace is that growing in grace means a fuller participation in God's life, the life of the Holy Trinity. When the Trinity dwells in our souls we are said to be in a state of sanctifying grace; God's life is within us and we can participate in his life, in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. In fact, we can't grow in grace without possessing sanctifying grace; our good deeds have no merit without grace.

What does a growth of grace involve? Of course, God does not grow in us; he is infinite; he has no potential for growth. In Scholastic terms he is pure act, he simply is, with no potency, no

potential for growth. If God could grow, he wouldn't be perfect. So what does it mean to say that we grow in God's grace?

Our way of conceptualizing a growth in grace is that growing in grace means a fuller participation in God's life, the life of the Holy Trinity. When the Trinity dwells in our souls we are said to be in a state of sanctifying grace; God's life is within us and we can participate in his life. In fact, we can't grow in grace without possessing sanctifying grace; we can't grow in grace if God isn't dwelling in our souls; consequently, our good deeds have no merit without grace.

Practically speaking, the growth in holiness means that as one becomes more holy, he or she acquires more of the infused theological virtues of faith, hope charity, more of the moral virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit of knowledge, understanding, wisdom, counsel, and the others. At Baptism God infuses into our souls the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity. These are known as the Theological virtues. We will define and discuss the meaning of these terms later in this essay, but for now it is enough to know that the infusion of these virtues first happens at Baptism. However, during the early times of our lives these virtues lie dormant and the capacity for growth increases as we grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and above all spiritually. In other words, the size of our containers is expanding as well. This gives us the capacity for more grace, more Faith, Hope, and above all Love, love of God and neighbor.

Furthermore, at Baptism we receive an infusion of the moral virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude and all of the virtues that flow from them. These are called the Cardinal virtues, because all of the other virtues hinge on them. Cardinal derives from the Latin *Cardo*, meaning hinge. Although these virtues exist and operate at the natural level, which is the natural law, the law of God written on our hearts, they are also infused virtues existing and operating at the supernatural level when we possess God's grace. We will also discuss these virtues below in the essay.

Moreover, at Baptism we receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are Knowledge, Understanding, Wisdom, Counsel, Piety, Fortitude, and Fear of the Lord. The Sacrament of Confirmation is like a booster shot that reinforces and raises these gifts even to a higher level. Also we will discuss the gifts below in the essay.

As we said at the beginning of this discussion, this is our way of conceptualizing a growth in Sanctifying Grace. As we grow in God's grace, we achieve more of the Theological virtues, the Cardinal virtues, and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. When one achieves these virtue and gifts at a high level, with the help of God's grace, he or she is said to be living a life of heroic virtue. The main thing that is investigated at causes for beatification and canonization is the degree that one has lived a life of heroic virtue.

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In summary, at Baptism God infuses into our souls the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, the Cardinal or moral virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude, and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit of Knowledge, Understanding, Wisdom, Counsel, Piety, Fortitude, and Fear of the Lord. The infusion of these virtues and gifts first happens at Baptism.

### *Divine Filiation and Divinization*

Angels were created naturally superior to man. They have greater intellects and stronger wills than we. The good angels that remained faithful to God when Lucifer rebelled were rewarded by being made sons of God and experiencing the joys of Heaven. However, humans who are sanctified and justified are elevated from the natural to the supernatural level of existence. In this sense they are equal to, even greater than the angels. Why is this so?

The key is the Incarnation. When the Second Person of the Holy Trinity became a man, he came to share in our humanity so that we might share in his divinity. When we are baptized we receive the full benefit of Jesus' redemption. When we have the stain of Original Sin washed from our souls by the waters of Baptism, we become temples of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity comes to dwell in our souls. God living in our souls is what we call grace. It is our participation in God's life. Our baptism makes us adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters of his son Jesus, who is both human and divine; he is the Godman. This makes us heirs to Heaven.

Although the angels are created like us in God's image and likeness, and they too are part of his family, they cannot enter into as close a relationship with God as we can. We can become more like God by acquiring more of his life in us, more of his grace by living holy and virtuous lives. When humans become holy enough they achieve union with God, then God assumes their body and soul until they become one with him. Yet unlike eastern mystical religions when the individual finds the center of his being where the god within him lives (i.e., his being is annihilated and he becomes one in being with the universe), the divinized Christian maintains his personality and individuality. In other words, the personality of the divinized Christian is enhanced and affirmed, whereas the divinized Hindu or Buddhist is believed to no longer exist as a separate being; his personality simply ceases to exist as he becomes absorbed into the divinity.

One source defines "divinization", as, the process of "making divine", the "deification of an earthly entity, individual, group, or activity." The source states that in Christian theology, "divinization (or deification, or making divine, or *theosis*), [is] the transforming effect of divine grace." What the Catholic Church has in mind regarding divinization is divine filiation, or the process of being a "child of God", which means the divinized person comes in the words of one source "to share in the life and role of Jesus Christ." The term is best understood in the filial relationship between God the Father and the Son, and of the Father and all other human beings.

The Second Person of the Holy Trinity is the Father's son by nature; all human persons become the Father's sons and daughters by adoption and by grace. The *Catechism* states of the matter, "The Word became flesh to make us 'partakers of the divine nature': 'For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God.' 'For the Son of God became man so that we might become God.' 'The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods'" (No. 460; 2782).

Scott Hahn states in his *First Comes Love: Finding Your Family in the Church and the Trinity*, that "Divine filiation is the centerpiece of the Gospel, the Good News: it is the reason why man was saved. And is also the purpose behind baptism." Pope John Paul II said that divine filiation is "the deepest mystery of the Christian vocation" and "the culminating point of the mystery of our Christian life we share in salvation, which is not only the deliverance from evil, but is first of all the fullness of good: of the supreme good of the sonship of God." Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his *Jesus of Nazareth* that "The Fathers of the Church say that when God created man 'in his image' he looked toward the Christ who was to come, and created man, according to the image of the 'new Adam', the man who is the criterion of the human Jesus is 'the Son' in the strict sense—he is of one substance with the Father. He wants to draw all of us into his humanity and so into this Sonship, into his total belonging to God." St. Peter makes us "sharers in the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4).

**St. Paul and divinization:** St. Paul had quite a lot to say about divine filiation. It was he who first started to develop the idea of divine filiation. He writes in Romans 8 that "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (Romans 8:14-17).

**Church Fathers and divinization:** The early Church Fathers, especially the Fathers in the Greek Eastern Church, had a lot to say about deification of God's children. For example:

- St. Irenaeus of Lyons stated that God "became what we are in order to make us what he is himself."
- St. Clement of Alexandria says that "he who obeys the Lord and follows the prophecy given through him . . . becomes a god while still moving about in the flesh."
- St. Athanasius wrote that "God became man so that men might become gods."
- St. Cyril of Alexandria says that we "are called 'temples of God' and indeed 'gods', and so we are."
- St. Basil the Great stated that "becoming a god" is the highest goal of all. He describes

the effect of the gift of the Spirit by saying that the Christian is “made God.”

- St. Gregory of Nazianzus implores us to “become gods for (God's) sake, since (God) became man for our sake.”

**St. Augustine and divinization:** Divinization was a major theme in St. Augustine’s theology. He wrote in this regard, “I am the food of grown men, grow, and thou shalt feed upon Me, nor shalt thou convert Me, like the food of thy flesh, into thee, but thou shalt be converted into Me.” In one of his published sermons he says, “To make human beings gods, He was made man who was God.” He cautions us though that deification is given to us by grace, not by making us part of the divine essence. He states in this regard “It is clear that he called men gods being deified by his grace and not born of his substance. For he justified, who is just of himself and not from another, and he deifies, who is god of himself and not by participation in another. . . . If we have been made sons of god, we have been made gods; but this is by grace of adoption and not of the nature of our begetter.” St. Augustine said that Christians are deified by grace.

**St. Thomas Aquinas and divinization:** St. Thomas Aquinas wrote of this matter, “The gift of grace surpasses every capability of created nature, since it is nothing short of a partaking of the Divine Nature, which exceeds every other nature. And thus it is impossible that any creature should cause grace. For it is as necessary that God alone should deify, bestowing a partaking of the Divine Nature by a participated likeness, as it is impossible that anything save fire should enkindle.” Elsewhere he wrote, God’s “special love, whereby He draws the rational creature above the condition of its nature to a participation of the Divine good.” He approves St. Augustine’s statement that, “God was made man, that man might be made God.”

**The process of divinization:** Divinization begins at Baptism. One Catholic source says that divination starts, “when God-as-Uncreated Grace elevates the soul by means of sanctifying grace, making her a partaker in the divine nature. The devout soul will grow in grace and deepen her relationship with God through prayer, the Mass, fasting, almsgiving, works of mercy, devout use of sacramentals, etc. If [one] practices contemplative prayer she may experience a foretaste of theosis in the ‘unitive state’, the highest state of prayer and the closest one can come to full divinization in this life.” We considered in some detail the various stages of holiness, the purgative, illuminative, and unitive, in our series essay on the *Universal Call to Holiness*. The Unitive Way is the third and final stage of Christian perfection beyond the Purgative and Illuminative Ways. Of this stage Father Hardon says, “Its principal feature is *a more or less constant awareness of God’s presence, and a habitual disposition of conformity to the will of God.*” As we discussed in that series, the person who has reached the unitive stage prays ceaselessly by employing all of the forms of prayer, verbal, meditative, and especially contemplation. Contemplative prayer is a form of prayer that God provides for those who are especially holy and enjoy a close friendship with him. Great saints like St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross not only reached the unitive stage of holiness and perfection, but were made Doctors of the Church for their writings on the subject.

But even the unitive state doesn't compare with the Beatific Vision! The Beatific Vision is "the immediate knowledge of God which the angels and saints enjoy in heaven, and which we [hopefully] may enjoy, God willing, if we persevere in Grace. Since creatures cannot naturally contemplate Divinity, God elevates our minds by means of the light of glory and then unites our elevated intellects directly to the Divine Nature, so that we may see God 'face-to-face'". One Catholic scholar writes regarding this matter:

Our intimate union with God will enable us to participate to a limited degree in God's own Knowledge of creation. We will perceive in God the mysteries of the faith, the divine plan for our salvation, and the lives of our loved ones on earth. We, like the rest of the saints, will be able to hear any prayers they address to us and can pray for their needs. And since our divinized wills will be in perfect conformity with the Will of God, we will pray according to God's will for them.

Furthermore, divination will not only affect the soul, but as our source states, "At the resurrection the divinized soul will rejoin her former body which, now glorified and incorruptible, will be divinized *with* the soul and both will enjoy the bliss of Heaven forever."

St. Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:16 that God "dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has even seen or can see." His most famous saying on the matter is found in 1 Corinthians 13:12 where he states, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood." Another well-known statement he makes on the subject is I Corinthians 2:9 where he writes, "eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, (is) what God has prepared for those who love him."

Since the divinized person who achieves union with God in this life doesn't see God face-to-face, what are the chief benefits of the unitive stage of holiness and perfection? One source says of this matter, "Since the divinized always act according to God's will, their actions are not merely their own, for God works in them . . . . Thus their actions have a certain 'divine' quality. Even as 'the actions of Christ are both divine and human, theandric actions, so those of the just man are Godlike, performed at once by God and by man.'" Some of the principal benefits of reaching the summit identified by Fr. Thomas Dubay in *Fire Within* are as follows:

- Peace and refreshment of mind and soul
- Heroic virtue; the ability to practice virtue in an extraordinary way
- Innocence of evil
- Cessation of inner suffering
- Cessation of imperfections
- Remarkable delight in God's creation
- A constant awareness of God's presence

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- All actions are performed for God
- Fullness of joy

This doesn't mean that God overrides or replaces the creature's will:

It means that the will of a divinized person submits to and perfectly conforms to the Divine Will. It still exists and acts; the Divine Will neither annihilates nor renders it passive. Nor does the limited participation in God's Knowledge make the creature omniscient, for it is only a *partial* participation. A divinized soul only comprehends that which pertains to herself and to her place in the Divine Plan; the infinite Mystery of God's Nature remains incomprehensible to her finite mind.

Now that we have discussed what human deification means, what doesn't it mean! As one source maintains, we can't stress too much that:

Christianity does not teach that we are part of God; we are creatures through and through. Human nature and Divine Nature are infinitely different, not one and the same. So theosis [or divination] is not an identification of creatures with God. Yet created persons cannot become Divine Persons any more than created nature can become Divine Nature. God does not change (Malachi 3:6); there always has been and always will be only three Persons in God: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. No divinized creature could ever become another Member of the Godhead! Saint Augustine says that God "hath called men gods that are deified of His Grace, not born of His Substance."

We cannot become God *by nature*, yet in a certain sense the divinized do "become God" *by grace* since they participate in the Divine Nature) So theosis does not entail our humanity becoming divine. We should keep in mind that it was St. Paul, who more often than not, started the development on this and many other Catholic teachings.

**What divinization is and isn't:** Nonetheless, we have to be very careful when discussing this topic, because it can easily lend itself to misunderstanding. Although what the Fathers said about the divinization of man is true, they were not using the word "God" in precisely the same way one uses it when saying the Holy Trinity is God, which is probably why they said "man is made God", and not that "he is God." It must be made perfectly clear what is meant by humans becoming deified, and what is not meant. One orthodox Catholic source states that divination or theosis is:

a union of grace which mysteriously 'assimilates' a rational creature to the Creator. The divinized creature is conformed perfectly to the divine image and likeness, permeated with the Life and Love of God and possesses an immediate (though not comprehensive) vision of the Divine Nature and an intimate relationship with the Three Divine Persons.

Yet despite the profound intimacy of this union, the creature always remains essentially distinct from God.

In other words, divination doesn't change a person's human nature into a divine nature, but instead transforms and configures the person to Christ. The divinized person still possesses a human nature, but has become transformed in Christ, closely configured to Christ by grace or God's presence in him. The source says that the "The deified soul is filled with God, permeated with Divine Light, Life, Power, Glory and Love. Yet no confusion or change occurs between his created substance and the Uncreated Substance of God. Though in intimate contact, they remain distinct, so that the creature may enjoy the Beauty of God without the violation of her nature or selfhood." Then she goes on to describe how the Church Fathers had compared divination to the casting of metal in a furnace. She states that "As the metal will take on the color and heat of the fire while remaining metal, so the divinized soul radiates the Glory of God and resembles the Holy One as closely as a creature possibly can, yet she remains a creature, essentially distinct in both nature and person."

God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, became like us in all things but sin. In this sense God is like us for by his Incarnation he possesses a human body and soul. The angels do not enjoy this benefit; this resemblance to God. If man is even greater than the angels, we believe that it is this fact that would make him so. The best example of perfect virtue and holiness is this sinless God-man, Jesus Christ. To the extent we become like him we become godlike, we become divinized. Of course most of us, hopefully, will achieve this status only in Heaven where our souls will be united with glorified bodies much like that of our Risen Savior and the Blessed Mother. Then we will be truly "gods." But keep in mind that we shall become "gods" only because we will be filled with God's grace, his life within us, not because of any merits of our own, not because we will have been transformed into a divine substance. We will always remain creatures, created substances or beings, but creatures whose nature has been elevated to the supernatural level by the divine indwelling.

Quoting St. Augustine the *Catechism* says of the divinization of man, "the justification of the wicked is a greater work than the creation of heaven and earth, because 'heaven and earth will pass away but the salvation and justification of the elect . . . will not pass away.' He holds also that the justification of sinners surpasses the creation of the angels in justice, in that it bears witness to a greater mercy" (No. 1994).

The closer one achieves union with God, the more godlike he becomes. One must be purified before he can achieve union with God. Our union with God began at our baptism. At that time we became members of his Mystical Body—the Catholic Church—and to share in the life of the Holy Trinity. At that time, we became adopted children of God the Father and sons and daughters of his son Jesus, and as a result become members of his family. However, because of the consequences of Original Sin, baptism does not restore us completely to the Original

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Holiness and Justice possessed by Adam and Eve before the Fall. This is true because we possess diminished intellect, weakened wills, and our urge to sin called concupiscence. Just as we must be purified in Purgatory before we can experience union or intimate friendship with God in Heaven, we must be purified before we can achieve a closer union with him in this life as well. To experience union with God, one must become holy—to become more like Jesus, our example of perfect holiness and virtue. We can do these things only with the help of God's grace. As we grow in holiness we are gradually purged of sin and attachments to the things of this world. God gives only in proportion to our ability to receive his gifts. The holier we become the greater receptacle we become for God's infusion of grace.

The holier one becomes the more he becomes like God. This does not mean that he is literally becoming God, but that although he remains a creature, he is becoming more and more integrated into the life of the Trinitarian Family. Another way of putting this is that the holier one becomes, he possesses more and more of God's grace, his sanctifying grace, the grace that makes him holy, the grace that makes him more like God. Grace then is the life of God within us, it is our participation in his life. The more grace that one possesses, the more godlike he becomes. Since God is infinite, there is no limit to the amount of grace that one can possess. The Blessed Mother is full of grace, as holy as a human being can become. All other saints only approximate her holiness, because they started their journey toward union with God and Heaven from a state of Original Sin, which Mary did not possess, because she was immaculately conceived. The amount of grace that one possesses at death will determine his or her capacity for happiness in Heaven. Humans are most godlike when he achieves union with God either in this life or in the next. The more one achieves union with God, the more he shares his divinity with us in the form of grace.

Achieving union with God in this life and for eternity requires that we strive to be perfect as is our Heavenly Father (Matthew 5:48). Jesus is our model of perfect holiness and virtue. He is perfect by his nature. Mary was perfect because she was full of God's grace. Countless other saints throughout the ages achieved union with God by following Jesus' example. We too can become closer to perfection by overcoming mortal sin, venial sin, and imperfections with the help of God's grace. Achieving holiness and union with God is sainthood.

Achieving holiness and union with God: God made us to know, love, and serve him in this life so we can be happy with him in Heaven in the next life. We must first know him to love and serve him. The more we know him the more we can do these things. We cannot know God directly because of our fallen natures, which makes it harder to know him. We must spend a lifetime getting to know him better. We get to know him better by utilizing the means provided by Jesus with which to achieve union with God. We get to know God better by:

- Studying and meditating on our Faith (his teachings); to acquire knowledge of his teachings

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- Receiving the sacraments frequently; the principal means of his grace
- Living virtuous lives; the way to holiness
- Practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy; the way to show our love for him
- Prayer; the way to communicate with him
- Penance; the way to make satisfaction for our sins and the sins of others

Above all, we get to know God better by loving him with our whole hearts, minds, souls, and strengths for his own sake and loving our neighbors as ourselves (John 15:12).

### The Protestant Understanding of Justification, Sanctification, and Grace

As we discussed above in this essay, when Adam and Eve sinned, not only was their image of God damaged, for they now possessed diminished intellects and weakened wills, but they also lost their holiness and justice, for God who is holy no longer dwelled in their souls and they were no longer in good standing with God, for they no longer lived in harmony with God, themselves, and the rest of creation. In other words, by their sin, our first parents lost sanctifying grace, which is the life of God dwelling in their souls. Also, they lost the state of original justice, because they had failed to give God his due, which is worship and obedience. But God still loved them and planned to one day send his only begotten son into the world to save them and their descendants.

#### *Justification*

Recall that Justification has been defined as “the process by which humans are moved by grace, turn towards God and away from sin, and accept God’s forgiveness and righteousness”; it is the process by which they are made right with God, as Protestants would say. Catholics believe that it is the process that restores the justice lost by Adam and Eve and transmitted to their descendants. God both forgives sin and infuses sanctifying grace into the souls of the justified beginning at baptism. Sanctifying grace is God’s gratuitous gift to the justified of his own divine life, which makes the recipient pleasing to God. Those who die in the state of justification, that is sanctifying grace, go to heaven. The mid-sixteenth century Council of Trent defined Justification as “the change from the condition in which a person is born as a child of the first Adam into a state of grace and adoption among the children of God through the Second Adam, Jesus Christ our Savior” (Denzinger 1524). Fr. John Hardon says that, “justification is a true removal of sin, and not merely having one’s sins ignored or no longer held against the sinner by God. On the positive side it is the supernatural sanctification and renewal of a person who thus becomes holy and pleasing to God and an heir of heaven.” The main cause of justification is God’s mercy and baptism. Father continues to say, “And that which constitutes justification or its essence is the justice of God, ‘not by which He is just Himself, but by which He makes us just,’ namely sanctifying grace.” Another term for justification is “regeneration.”

By baptism we are transformed in Christ, making us God’s adopted children, brothers and sisters to his son Jesus, and heirs to Heaven if we persevere to the end of our lives. This transformation is brought about by God’s grace, which is his life in us. Only God is holy, and we are holy only to the extent he actually dwells in our souls, which is called the state of sanctifying grace. This process is called sanctification, which is an actual internal renewal of the individual, a real transformation in Jesus Christ. The important thing to remember about the Catholic understanding of justification is that it is inseparable from sanctification. Justified persons

undergo a process of sanctification or regeneration, which means that grace penetrates their souls and transforms them in Christ.

Now that we have completed our discussion of the Catholic understanding of Justification, Sanctification, and Grace, let's look at the Protestant understanding of these terms. To do this, I think it would be helpful to briefly review some basic Protestant beliefs, especially the Five Solas and the Five Points of Calvinism. Many, if not most, Protestants have adhered to the five solas since the Reformation in the early sixteenth century. The Reformers believed that, in the main, they derived these doctrines from their interpretation of St. Paul and St. Augustine. The Five *solas* are five Latin phrases that emerged during the Protestant Reformation and summarize the Reformers' basic theological beliefs. The Latin word *sola* means "alone" or "only" in English. The five *solas* are pillars of Protestantism, and one simply can't understand the Protestant religion without knowledge of them. To understand the Calvinist churches of the Reformation (Presbyterians, Congregationalists, etc.) also require knowledge of the Five Points of Calvinism symbolized in the acronym TULIP. I will briefly discuss only three of the most important solas: *sola gratia*; *sola fide*; and *sola scriptura*.

***Sola Gratia:*** Let's begin with *sola gratia*! *Sola gratia* means in English "by grace alone" and had been a Catholic teaching from the beginning, which was affirmed by the Second Council of Orange in 529 in response to the Pelagian heresy, which placed too much emphasis on man's ability to merit salvation on his own efforts without grace. The Council asserted that "salvation is the work of God's grace and that even the beginning of faith or the consent to saving grace is itself the result of grace. By our natural powers, we can neither think as we ought nor choose any good pertaining to salvation. We can only do so by the illumination and impulse of the Holy Spirit. Nor is it merely that man is limited in doing good." The Council affirmed that "as a result of the Fall, man is inclined to will evil. His freedom is gravely impaired and can only be repaired by God's grace." Following a number of biblical quotations, the Council states, "[W]e are obliged, in the mercy of God, to preach and believe that, through sin of the first man, the free will is so weakened and warped, that no one thereafter can either love God as he ought, or believe in God, or do good for the sake of God, unless moved, previously, by the grace of the divine mercy . . . . Our salvation requires that we assert and believe that, in every good work we do, it is not we who have the initiative, aided, subsequently, by the mercy of God, but that he begins by inspiring faith and love towards him, without any prior merit of ours." As a response to Protestant misunderstanding, the Catholic doctrine of grace was further clarified at the Council of Trent in the mid sixteenth century when it explained that "salvation is made possible only by grace; the faith and works of men are secondary means that have their origins in and are sustained by grace." Therefore, one can readily see from these documents and many others over the centuries that the Catholic Church has taught *sola gratia* or saved by grace alone, properly understood.

The Reformers were unwilling to admit that one's own works played any role in his or her salvation. They posited the view that "salvation is entirely comprehended in God's gifts (that is, God's act of free grace), dispensed by the Holy Spirit according to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ alone." As a consequence of this view, they argued that a sinner is not accepted by God on account of the change brought about in the believer by God's grace, but that the believer is accepted without any regard for the merit of his works, because no one deserves salvation. Both Catholics and Protestants believe that we are saved by God's grace, but Protestants believe that only grace saves, whereas Catholics believe that both grace and works (corporal and spiritual works of mercy, etc.) save.

In other words, as we will discuss below, Martin Luther and John Calvin and most of the early Protestants didn't believe that God's grace produced any internal change in the individual. The person who had faith that Jesus Christ is their Lord and Savior underwent no internal transformation in Christ, but were merely covered over by his righteousness, leaving the person's soul unchanged. Also, unlike Catholics who believe that works are needed in addition to grace for salvation (works meriting God's grace), Protestants believe that grace alone saves and that works are merely signs that one has already been saved by faith, not a cause of one's salvation. Although both Catholics and Protestants confess that grace alone saves, they each give entirely different meanings to the term. As we will discuss below, Catholics teach intrinsic grace, a grace that penetrated the soul, whereas Protestants teach, in the main, extrinsic grace, a grace that merely covers over the soul with Christ's righteousness.

***Sola Fide***: This brings us to the second sola, *sola fide*. *Sola Fide* means in English "by faith alone." By faith alone is the basic principle of Reformation Protestantism first developed by Martin Luther. He began convinced that salvation or redemption is a gift of God's grace, which was attainable only through faith in Jesus. He insisted that the doctrine of justification is "the chief article of the whole Christian doctrine." He believed that "If this article stands, the Church stands; if it falls, the Church falls." One scholar has said that "[Lutherans] believe justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ's righteousness alone is the gospel, the core of the Christian faith around which all other Christian doctrines are centered and based. Fr. John Hardon states that "[*Sola fide*] declares that humanity is justified only by a confident trust in God through the saving merits of Jesus Christ. [From a Protestant point of view] This confident trust, called *fides fiducialis* (trustful faith) is present in those who are predestined to be saved. It is, therefore, a work of predestination and excludes the possibility of good works that, on Catholic premises, are also necessary for salvation..." He continues, "actually this 'fiducial faith' is not so much a means of justification as a sure sign of a person's having been chosen to be saved. Those who have such confidence are thereby known to belong to the elect that is chosen by God for eternal salvation." Father goes on to say, "the Bible is declared to be the only norm of belief, to which even the historic creeds and other traditional statements of faith are to be subordinated. Yet the Bible itself is subordinated to the single basic principle of justification by

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faith without good works.” Father tells us, “This is so because when human beings lost their original innocence, which at creation was an essential part of their nature, they are no longer free to do spiritual good, but are under the slavery of sin.”

In other words, the Reformers believed that the nature of our first parents had been so corrupted by the Fall that they had not only lost original holiness and justice, but also had lost the freedom of their wills. They simply could do nothing to merit God’s grace except by faith in Jesus Christ as one’s personal Lord and Savior. Moreover, as we have seen, from the view of the Reformers, one would not be given the grace of faith unless he or she were elected or chosen by God from all eternity for salvation.

The Protestant idea of Redemption means being justified by faith, meaning in this case trust in Christ, whereby the sinner is considered pleasing to God without any co-operation on his or her part. According to Louis Bouyer, a convert from the French Reformed Church (Calvinist), who became a priest and theologian, in his great *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism* “the main thrust of the doctrine of *sola fide* was to affirm that justification was wholly the work of God and to deny any positive human contribution apart from grace. Faith was understood as man’s grace-enabled, grace-inspired, grace-completed response to God’s saving initiative in Jesus Christ. What the Reformation initially sought to affirm...was that such a response is purely God’s gift to man, with man contributing nothing of his own to receive salvation.” The Catholic view is that original sin damaged freedom of the human will, but didn’t destroy it as Luther and Calvin maintained.

From the beginning the Catholic Church has taught that salvation depends on faith and works. St. Paul explains to the Christians in Rome, “For we account a man to be justified by faith, without the works of the law (Romans 3:28).” In this epistle to the first Jewish Christians, Paul warns the people not to consider themselves justified by the Mosaic Law expounded in the book of Leviticus, which placed a lot of stress on works, such as the performance of dietary practices, ritual purity, sabbatical, and sacrificial commandments. Because Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, St. Paul tells us that Christ’s Passion has merited the gift of grace, and says “But now without the law the justice of God is made manifest, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Even the justice of God, by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe in him: for there is no distinction: For all have sinned, and do need the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption, that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:21-24). St. Paul explains that works of the law such as circumcision and ritual cleansing are not required for justification, because grace is the perfect gift of Christian justice and faith.

St. Paul’s reference to “the Law” does not include the works of righteousness done through grace and the theological virtue of charity. St. James’ epistle attempts to clear up the difficulties of those who mistakenly believe that justification is imputed by faith alone without consideration of works of righteousness in grace. James tells us, “What does it profit, my brethren, if a man

says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." (James 2:14-17). Because he believed that faith alone saved, Luther believed that James' letter was an "Epistle of straw", meaning that it wasn't worth much. Following St. Paul and St James, and above all Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, the Catholic view has always been that salvation requires faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, but it also requires repentance and works as well. Mark Brumley, a convert to the Faith, who is President of Ignatius Press, and a former staff apologist with Catholic Answers, and whose reading of Bouyer's book inspired him to study the Catholic Faith, states that Bouyer maintains that:

In a sense, the Reformation debate was over the nature of saving faith, not over whether faith saves. St. Thomas Aquinas, following St. Augustine and the patristic understanding of faith and salvation, said that saving faith was faith 'formed by charity.' In other words, saving faith involves at least the beginnings of the love of God. In this way, Catholics could speak of 'justification by grace alone, through faith alone,' if the 'alone' was meant to distinguish the gift of God (faith) from any purely human contribution apart from grace; but not if 'alone' was meant to offset faith from grace-enabled, grace-inspired, grace-accomplished love of God or charity."

Luther rejected the Catholic view in favor of "faith alone". From this perspective, Brumley says the Lutheran view means that "faith' is understood as mere assent to God's Word, apart from trust and love." He tells us that Bouyer writes, "[Luther's] object in disowning this formula was to reject the idea that faith justified man only if there were added to it a love proceeding from a natural disposition, not coming as a gift of God, the whole being the gift of God." Brumley continues to say of Bouyer's assessment of Luther, "Yet Luther's view of faith . . . seems to imply an element of love, at least in the sense of a total self-commitment to God. And, of course, this love must be both the response to God's loving initiative and the effect of that initiative by which man is enabled and moved to respond. But once again, this is Catholic doctrine, for the charity that 'informs' faith so that it becomes saving faith is not a natural disposition, but is as much the work of God as the assent of faith."

In this regard, Brumley writes, "The Reformation insisted that God does his part, which includes enabling and moving man to receive salvation in Christ. Man's 'part' is to believe, properly understood, but faith too is the work of God, so man contributes nothing positively of his own. As Bouyer points out, this central concern of the Reformation also happened to be defined Catholic teaching, reaffirmed by the Council of Trent." He concludes by saying, "Thus, Bouyer's point is that the doctrine of justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) was initially seen by the Reformers as a way of upholding justification by grace alone (*sola gratia*), which is also a fundamental Catholic truth. Only later, as a result of controversy, did the Reformers insist on identifying justification by faith alone with a negative principle that denied any form of coopera-

tion, even grace-enabled cooperation.” This brings us to the next sola, *sola scriptura*.

***Sola Scriptura*:** *Sola Scriptura* in English means “by Scripture alone”, which means that all that God has revealed is found only in the Bible and not in Tradition as well. The Protestant Reformation was a movement in Europe that began with Martin Luther's initial attempts to reform the Catholic Church in the early sixteenth century, but in short order ended up as a full scale revolt against the Church. It ended with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The Bible was extremely important for Protestants, because they had rejected Tradition as a source of revelation. The Bible alone, or *Sola Scriptura* in Latin, was their sole source of revelation. Having rejected the Latin Vulgate, which was the Church's official translation, they chose instead to return exclusively to the Greek and Hebrew texts. However, it wasn't so much the translations they made from the original sources that created confusion for Biblical scholarship, it was their commentaries on the text, because they ignored 1500 years of Tradition of the Church and the analogy of faith. By analogy of faith is meant the idea that “every individual statement of belief must be understood in the light of the Church's whole objective body of faith.” In other words, their commentaries placed a Protestant interpretation of the Bible, so Catholics should be wary of exclusively Protestant translations of the Bible for this reason.

Hartmann Greisar, a prominent Lutheran biblical scholar and theologian, makes the claim that Luther developed his doctrine of justification by faith alone, and from this inferred the absolute authority of Scripture in so far as it confirmed his theology. He goes on to add that it has been said:

[Luther's] critical attitude towards the books of the Bible is completely subjective and arbitrary. The value of the Scriptures is measured by the standard of conformity with his own teaching. He treats the ancient and respected canon, of inspired books with a lack of scruple that precludes any kind of certainty. . . . He endows religious sensibility alone with the right to decide which books form part of Scripture, which are dubious and which should be rejected.

This practice is what is called eisegesis, which means to impose one's presuppositions or preconceptions while interpreting the Bible. Jean Steinmann states in his *Biblical Criticism* that “Fundamentally Lutheranism did not spring from the Bible. It started off as Luther's reaction to his own interpretation of St Paul's Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans. Then the reformer began to judge the Bible by the criterion of his new theology.” Then he quotes the famous nineteenth century Lutheran Biblical scholar Adolf von Harnack as saying, “For Luther, the 'Word' did not mean Church doctrine; it did not even mean the Bible; it meant the message of the free grace.” As I stated earlier, Protestants are correct when they say that we are saved by God's grace and our faith, but not by faith alone as Martin Luther taught, but by faith and works. Germain Grisez, one of the greatest Catholic moral theologians of our time, says, “Christian faith is God's gift: But a Christian's actions are not replaced by grace; rather, grace takes shape in

works: 'For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life' (Ephesians 2.10). The first of these good works is the act of faith itself." Luther and other Protestant Reformers in the sixteenth century eliminated the deuterocanonical books from Protestant Bibles, because they didn't consider them inspired and because they did not support some of their new doctrines. By deuterocanonical or second canon is meant Old Testament books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees, and parts of Esther and Daniel. Moreover, Luther rejected some of the New Testament books, because they didn't square with some of his doctrinal notions. For example, because he regarded them as non-apostolic, he rejected from the New Testament Canon the books of Hebrews, Jude, Revelation, and James, the latter which he called an "epistle of straw", because he didn't like James's stress on the efficacy of good works. Regarding his German translation, it was not the first translation of the Bible into German as he claimed and I understand he added the word "alone" after faith to score a point.

There has been a lot of speculation over the centuries about why Luther interpreted the Bible the way he did. He and the other Reformers accused the Catholic Church of their day of placing too much emphasis on works in salvation, and too little reliance on God's role in the process, which seemed to them a form of Pelagianism, and unnecessarily contributing to creating "terrified" or overly anxious consciences. The overly anxious state of his own conscience had led Luther himself into a debilitating state of spiritual sickness of scrupulosity. It seemed that the harder he tried to achieve righteousness by his own efforts or works, the farther he sunk into despair and sin. As the story goes, his mind was put to rest when he read Romans 1:17, which states, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" He chose to interpret St. Paul as meaning as long as he had faith that Jesus Christ was his Lord and Savior he was saved. He conveniently overlooked the fact that Paul also talks a lot about the importance that works play in salvation. Now that we have discussed Martin Luther's view on the five *solas*, let's go on to look at John Calvin's view on the Five Points of Calvinism!

## The Five Points of Calvinism (TULIP)

John Calvin (1509 – 27 May 1564) was an influential French theologian and pastor during the Protestant Reformation. After he left the Catholic Church around 1530, he was a principal figure in the development of the system of Christian theology later called Calvinism. After religious tensions provoked a violent uprising against Protestants in France, he fled to Switzerland where he remained the rest of his life, except for a short stay in Germany. He published the first edition of his *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536. Calvin essentially agreed with Luther on the *solas*, but added to them his five points, most of which were further extensions of Luther's views. The Five Points of Calvinism are also known as the "five cardinal doctrines" or as the "doctrines of grace." Although they didn't originate with Calvin, they were reemphasized and taught anew by him at the time of the Reformation. The Five Points were first officially formulated into a creed called *Canons of Dordrecht* by all of the Reformed or Calvinist churches at the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618-19. The Points are often reduced to the acronym TULIP.

**T = Total Depravity:** T stands for Total Depravity, which means, because of the sin of Adam, the entire human race is depraved. Calvin believed that sin has affected all parts of man. The heart, emotions, will, mind, and body are all affected by sin. We are completely sinful. There is no one, not even a newborn infant, who is not corrupt and wicked. Furthermore, one Reformed source says that this also means that "every part of man's existence is filled with wickedness. In other words, not only his actions are wicked, but his speech, his thoughts, his motives, his wishes, his mind, his soul, his spirit—everything he is and does, inwardly and outwardly—are wicked. He cannot do, desire, or even understand what is good." To put it another way, total depravity means that "every part of man's existence is totally wicked, including his mind, which is not partly wicked and partly good, but completely wicked. The same is true of every other part of his existence, especially of his will. His will, too, is in bondage, so that he cannot even want what is good, nor is there any desire for good to be found in his life and thoughts."

Doctrinaire Calvinists believe that Total Depravity is derived from scriptures that reveal human character. One Calvinists source states "In light of the scriptures that declare man's true nature as being utterly lost and incapable, how is it possible for anyone to choose or desire God?" He says that the answer is "He cannot. Therefore God must predestine", citing St. Paul's Letters to the Ephesians 1:1-11 and Romans 8:29; 9:9-23 as proof. One Calvinist has written of Total Depravity, "In the Calvinist system, as a result of Adam's fall, man has no longer any internal freedom of the will; he is a slave of God. Everyone is eternally predestined, either for heaven or for hell, absolutely independent of his personal efforts. Consequently the elect cannot be lost.

The basic principles of Calvinism are set forth in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, where Calvin argues that "[S]ince God is absolutely infinite, he is the only real agent in the universe and creatures are merely his instruments." Needless to say, this Calvinist doctrine is totally at variance with Catholic teaching in every respect, because the Church teaches that although

humans have a fallen nature due to Original Sin—diminishing the intellect and weakening the will—they are not totally corrupted and still possess the ability to be transformed in Christ by the exercise of their will in cooperation with God’s grace. That brings us to U meaning Unconditional Election.

**U = Unconditional Election:** Unconditional Election in Calvinist terms means that God predestined every human being to Heaven or Hell from the beginning of the world, including humans, angels, and devils. By election, Reform Christians mean “the eternal choice by God of certain definite individuals in Jesus Christ unto salvation.” Citing Ephesians 1:4-8 and Romans 9:11 as proof, one Calvinist source says, “God does not base His election on anything He sees in the individual. He chooses the elect according to the kind intention of His will without any consideration of merit within the individual. Nor does God look into the future to see who would pick Him.” Then he quotes St. Paul further in Roman 9:15, which says, “For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’” He concludes from this that St. Paul meant, “As some are elected into salvation, others are not.” This is the doctrine of predestination.

### *The doctrine of predestination*

Predestination means a determining beforehand. The sixteenth century Reformer John Calvin was the first to develop a complete theology of predestination. He believed that he was basing his theology of predestination on the theology of St. Paul, St. Augustine, Martin Luther, and others. Calvinistic predestination is sometimes referred to as “double predestination”, which is the view that God chooses who goes to heaven, and who to hell, and that “his decision will infallibly come to pass.” The difference between those chosen for Heaven—the elect—and those chosen for Hell—the reprobate—is God’s sovereign decision to show mercy to some by saving them and not others. It is called double predestination, because “it holds that God chooses both whom to save and whom to damn, as opposed to single predestination, which holds that though he chose whom to save, he did not choose whom to damn.”

In this regard, one source has said, “God for His own glorification, and without any regard to original sin, has created some as ‘vessels of mercy’, others as ‘vessels of wrath’. Those created for hell He has also predestined for sin, and whatever faith and righteousness they may exhibit are at most only apparent, since all graces and means of salvation are efficacious [meaning effective] only in those predestined for heaven.” Calvinists believe that God’s omnipotence is too powerful to share with humans; that somehow if humans possess free wills and are given any role in their salvation, this would reduce the freedom of the God’s will and his omnipotence or powerfulness. Fr. John Hardon calls the Calvinist brand of predestination “predestinarianism”, which denies that, “God has the will to save all mankind, since he wants only the elect to reach heaven. There

is no place in this system for true internal freedom of the human will, but only for external freedom from coercion.

The eternal decree of God alone predestines to glory or damnation. The elect receive irresistible grace, meaning they can't turn it down; the others have an impulse of the will to sin and so are not given salvific grace." The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says that John Calvin, who was a second-generation reformer influenced by Luther and Zwingli, taught:

[T]he first and absolute intention of God at creation was that certain men should be saved and the rest condemned to eternal damnation. This will of God is incapable of being frustrated. It imposes on secondary causes, even man himself, a direct internal necessity. Freedom of the creature consists in mere immunity from extrinsic coercion. Only the elect are justified; grace cannot be lost. The rest of men God precludes from the possibility of life, since He refuses them grace, without which they are internally incapable of positing a morally good act. In fact, God actually wills that they sin and die in the state of aversion from Him.

How about Luther's view of the matter? The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* claims that at first Luther accepted the Catholic view on the matter, but after a thorough study of the Bible and St. Augustine, he gradually underwent a complete reversal of opinion and finally professed the doctrine of predestinarianism; in fact, holding as severe a view of Predestination as did Calvin. The *Encyclopedia* maintains that once Luther finally formulated his view on the matter, he never really lessened his extreme view. He like Calvin came to believe that God chose some souls for election to Heaven and others for damnation in Hell, that is, like Calvin he believed in double predestination, or predestinarianism. To offer proof, Luther refers to St. Paul's biblical stories of God's election and rejection of Isaac and Ishmael, of Jacob and Esau, and of David and Saul. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states that Luther dismissed all objections to predestination as he understood it, because the contrary view came from human reason rather than the wisdom of God. Moreover, Luther tied the doctrines of predestination and justification together. From his study of the Psalms, Hebrews, Romans, and Galatians, Luther became convinced that the Catholic Church corrupted several of the central truths of Christianity, the most important of which was [as we have seen,] the doctrine of justification—God's act of declaring a sinner righteous—by faith alone through God's grace.

St. Paul's position on predestination and other matters is difficult to ascertain. As Luke Timothy, who is an American New Testament scholar and historian of early Christianity at Emory University, says St. Paul is not easy to understand, which has led to much misunderstanding of his letters, where his theology is to be found, especially in his letters to the Romans and Galatians. St. Peter himself said that Paul was hard to understand, for he says in 2 Peter 3:15-16, "So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and

unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.” Lutherans and Calvinists claim that this is what the Catholic Church has done over the centuries, and this is what the Catholic Church has claimed Lutherans and Calvinists have done since the Reformation. Catholics and Lutherans have been trying to work out their differences on these and other subjects for the past 40-50 years with mixed results.

### *St. Paul’s Theology of Predestination*

Somehow St. Paul’s theology of predestination is tied in with his theology of justification. He writes in Romans 5 of sin and justification in terms of two men, Adam and Christ. Through Adam, sin came into the world bringing death; through Jesus, righteousness came into the world, bringing justification unto life. This is the typology of the Old Adam who lost for us salvation by his disobedience, and the New Adam, Jesus Christ, who earned for us salvation by his obedience. In chapter 8, Paul connects justification with predestination and glorification, but it’s my understanding that St. Paul doesn’t promote the idea of predestinarianism or double predestination formulated by the Reformers, especially Luther and Calvin, that is, the idea that God predestines some souls to Heaven or Glory and others to Hell, but only predestines those to Heavenly Glory. The Church has always taught that those who go to Hell go there as the result of their own choices, and not because God predestined them to go there. Paul further states that those who are justified cannot be separated from the love of Christ. One scholar has said that several of these passages are central in the debate between Roman Catholics, and the various streams of Protestantism, especially Lutherans and churches derived from Calvin. Most Protestant denominations agree on some form of justification by faith, but differ on the meaning of justification. Much of the differences between Catholics and Protestants over the meaning of principal Christian doctrines regarding Justification, Sanctification, Predestination, Grace, Salvation, and the Church can be traced, at least in part, to different interpretations of these and other subjects in Paul’s letters.

### *St. Augustine’s Theology on Predestination*

Some Lutheran scholars claim that St. Augustine taught double predestination, and that Luther simply followed him. They maintain that it was Luther’s colleague Philip Melancthon, not Luther, who propagated the doctrines of single predestination as reflected in the Book of Concord. Single predestination is the idea that God chooses those who go to Heaven, but it is individuals that choose Hell for themselves. I think that this is essentially the Lutheran view of the matter today. Lutheran scholars argue that Augustine clearly taught double predestination, that “from eternity God predestined those whom He would save and those whom He would not. Lutherans and Calvinists suggest that “according to Augustine, human beings are utterly depraved in nature. That humans are spoiled by the original sin to the extent that the very

presence of concupiscence . . . is already a personal sin. Augustine's doctrine about the . . . free will and its inability to respond to the will of God without divine grace is interpreted in terms of Predestination: grace is irresistible, results in conversion, and leads to perseverance. The Calvinist view of Augustine's teachings rests on the assertion that God has foreordained, from eternity, those who will be saved. The number of the elect is fixed. God has chosen the elect certainly and gratuitously, without any previous merit . . . on their part." A Lutheran scholar has stated that "In writing against the Pelagian heretics of his day, Augustine was prolific in his treatment of divine predestination. He taught that the Sovereignty of God was so great that even the hearts and wills of wicked men are directly controlled by God Himself. Because of the absolutely corrupt nature of man, he had no freedom of the will; therefore God in his absolute sovereignty choose whom he would elect to glory in Heaven and damnation in Hell." He goes on to say that, "In the late medieval era the scholastic theologians began to modify and deviate from Augustine's views on man's will and predestination."

Is there any truth to this Lutheran claim? That is difficult to ascertain, because Augustine's views on various matters changed as he got older. Generally it's true. According to several sources, St. Augustine "marks the beginning of a system of thought that denies free will (with respect to salvation) and affirms that salvation needs an initial input by God in the life of every person. While his early writings affirm that God's predestinating grace is granted on the basis of his foreknowledge of the human desire to pursue salvation, this changed after 396. His later position affirmed the necessity of God granting grace in order for the desire for salvation to be awakened." In other words, one needs God's help in the form of actual grace (prevenient grace) to believe in him in the first place, an idea that the Church has posited all along. One source tells us that Augustine believed in predestination, but only in single predestination, which means that "God actively chooses certain individuals to be the recipients of his grace, confers it on them in a way that altogether overpowers their own will to sin, and leaves them utterly transformed, to live a life of blessedness. But God does not choose beforehand to send others to hell." Quoting St. Paul in 1 Tim. 2:4 that God wills that all men be saved, he says "even as he takes actions that save only certain individuals. Those who are damned are damned by their own actions." Nonetheless, for the most part, the Catholic Church considers Augustine's teaching to be consistent with free will, and that anyone can be saved if he or she wishes.

Does the Catholic Church consider the theology of St. Augustine and other Fathers of the Church to be infallible? No it doesn't, but many, if not most, of the doctrines of the Church have resulted from their interpretations on matters where they were in unanimous agreement. We have to keep in mind that not everything written by St. Augustine and the other Church Fathers is infallible. Only the teachings of Jesus as found in the Gospels and interpreted by the Church's magisterium or teaching authority in Church councils and certain documents written by Popes are infallible, that is, free from all error. Much of what St. Augustine wrote about justification, sanctification, and grace was in response to the Manichean and Pelagian heresies, the latter which maintained that humans could be saved by their own free will without the assistance of

divine grace. As a consequence, perhaps he went too far in emphasizing the limits of free will to counter the extreme views of Pelagianism on the matter. Also, we must keep in mind that as circumstances changed; St. Augustine came to see some things differently and modified his views accordingly. He was a great theologian, and contributed to a much deeper understanding of the teachings of Jesus, much of which has been incorporated into Catholic doctrines, especially on the subject of Justification, Sanctification, Grace, and especially Original Sin, but he wasn't free from all error in his theological speculations and interpretations, which has made it possible for Catholics and Protestants alike to claim him for their own.

Augustine was challenged even in his own day on his theory of predestination and other matters. Fr. Hardon writes that:

St. Augustine of Hippo struck out fiercely against [the Pelagian heresy], and wrote out boldly: Nature can do *nothing* without grace. The controversy was on—with some monks in Africa, who felt Augustine had gone too far. St. Augustine clarified his position: nature can do *nothing salutary*, nothing conducive to salvation, without grace. But can human nature do *all things natural* to it—can it keep the whole moral law—without grace? We answer with St. Thomas and the Church: for a short time, yes; but for a long time, *no*.

Another scholar writes that, “Julian bishop of Eclanum, expressed that Augustine was bringing Manichee thoughts into the church. For Vincent of Lérins, this was a disturbing innovation. This new tension eventually became obvious with the confrontation between Augustine and Pelagius culminating in condemnation of Pelagianism (as interpreted by Augustine) at the Council of Ephesus in 431. The British monk Pelagius denied Augustine's view of "predestination" in order to affirm that salvation is achieved by an act of free will.”

### *The Catholic Teaching on Predestination*

Fr. John Hardon states in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, “the doctrine of predestination is proposed by the ordinary and universal teaching of the Church as a truth of revelation.” He proceeds to say that the reality of predestination is clearly attested by St. Paul who wrote in Romans 8:29-30 that “They are the ones he chose especially long ago and intended to become true images of the Son, so that his Son, might be the eldest of many brothers. He called those he intended for this; those he called the justified and with those he justified he shared his glory.” Father states that “All elements of complete predestination are given: the activity of God's mind and will, and the principal stages of its realization in time.” He says that “The main difficulty in the doctrine of predestination is whether God's eternal decision has been taken with or without consideration of human freedom. Catholic teaching holds that predestination by God does not deny the human free will.” He concludes by saying that, “Numerous theories have been offered

on how to reconcile the two, but all admit with St. Paul (Romans 11:33) that “predestination is an unfathomable mystery.”

There are various schools of thought among Catholic theologians and philosophers through the ages regarding the role Predestination plays in salvation. Most notably the views of St. Augustine, which we have looked at, as well as those of the thirteenth century Dominican St. Thomas Aquinas, the thirteenth century Franciscan Duns Scotus, the sixteenth century Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina, the sixteenth century Spanish Dominican Domingo Banez, the sixteenth century Spanish Jesuit Francisco Suarez, and St. Robert Bellarmine. To look at the various views of these theologians on the matters of Justification, Sanctification, and Grace would require an entire essay in itself. Fr. Hardon has wrote a wonderful book on the entire subject.

In order to understand how the Catholic Church views predestination, we must first understand at least four fundamental concepts: 1. It is God alone who initiates salvation; 2. that the human will is free to accept or not accept God’s offer of salvation; 3. that salvation is extended to each and every person, not limited to just some; 4. and that good works do play an active role in salvation, not just faith alone.

1. First, the Catholic Church unequivocally teaches that the source of all things is God. This includes grace, the act of faith, and according to St. Paul and St. James, even our good works (Ephesians 2:8-10; James 1:17, 18). It is God alone who initiates salvation. As *Catholic Answers* says of the matter, “He always turns toward man first and seeks him, as when God walked in the Garden (Gen. 3:8). Man does not seek God or turn to him without God first calling man to Himself (John. 6:37, 44; 1 John. 4:10, 19).” Another Catholic source states of the subject, “God alone is uncreated. All that is, including man, owes its existence to God. He created man freely and out of ‘sheer goodness.’” Man has nothing that he did not receive from God. Anyone who would charge the Catholic Church of teaching salvation by works alone or that salvation originates in any way in man, does so in contradiction to the whole history of authentic Catholic teaching. No one can come to Christ, except that the Father draw him (Jn. 6:37, 44). We love Him, because He first loved us (1 Jn. 4:10, 19). The fount and source of these things is the grace that comes from God alone.”

This is fully in tune with the Catholic doctrine that grace is an entirely free gift from God. Grace is God’s favor. It means “gift.” In other words, it is not something received in return for anything, but is free and unmerited.” The *Catechism* says that, “The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. It is the *sanctifying* or *deifying* *grace* received in Baptism. It is in us the source of the work of sanctification.” Therefore,

“this initiative which is freely made by God alone in revealing Himself is a gift we call grace. Because it is a gift, it can be rejected”, because the human will is free.

2. That brings up to the second concept: the role that freedom of the will plays in salvation. The *Catechism* says of this topic, “Believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. But it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act. Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed is contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason (No. 154). The *Catechism* goes on to say, “In faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace:” then quoting St. Thomas’ famous definition of faith: “Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace” (No. 155). The *Catechism* affirms this by stating, “The *preparation of man* for the reception of grace is already a work of grace. This latter is needed to arouse and sustain our collaboration in justification through faith, and in sanctification through charity” (No. 2001). The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) of Vatican II further affirms this where it states: “Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God.” As one Catholic scholar writes, “God created man for heaven, not hell. Hell is the ultimate isolation and a free choice by an individual.”
  
3. That leads to the third concept needed to understand the Catholic view on predestination: that salvation is extended to each and every person, not limited to just some. The Bible is replete with passages that reveal that “salvation is extended to each and every human person, not limited to just some, and one can fall away from grace” (Heb. 2:1-4; 6:4; 2 Pet. 1:10; 3:9; 1 Jn. 5:16, 17). Furthermore, the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church states, “it is imperative that once one is touched by grace, he perseveres in charity lest he forfeit the free gift of salvation.” It is equally true that “we need grace to sustain us in faith. Faith is not a once for all event . . . It must be preserved, nourished and be made to grow, as Holy Scripture reminds us often” (cf. 1 Cor. 16:13; 2 Cor. 10:15; Col. 1:23 2 Thess. 1:3). Jesus Christ died for all, not just the elect. Some Protestants have interpreted Matthew having Jesus saying to those who didn’t practice the works of mercy, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41), as meaning Christ didn’t die for everyone, but only the “elect.” But this entirely contrary to scripture, for as St. Peter says, “The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). As one Catholic source says of this matter, “Christ did die for the sins of the whole world, but it is necessary, enabled by grace, that one respond to the free gift and persevere until the end. We can have confidence that Christ can see us through to the end.” St. Paul encourages us that “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

4. And that leaves us the fourth one: that good works do play an active role in salvation, not just faith alone. Good works do play an active role in salvation; they are not simply signs that one is among the elect that God has chosen from all eternity for salvation. St. John tells us that good works are a fruit of God's grace by quoting Jesus as saying, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John. 15:5). St. Paul teaches that faith is necessary for salvation, but he also teaches the doctrine of good works in his Epistle to the Romans where he says, "But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. For he will render to every man according to his works (Romans 2:5-6). 14 St. James states of good works: "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2:15-17).

And above all, Jesus is recorded by St. Matthew as saying: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-46).

*Sufficient and efficacious grace*

We shouldn't forget that St. Paul told Timothy that "This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight

of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (I Tim. 2:3-4). He makes a similar claim in several other places in his letters as well. Although God wanted all people to be saved, and Jesus died for the sake all persons, he doesn’t force them to accept his saving grace; he leaves the choice up to the individual free will. What we here are discussing is the Catholic distinction between sufficient and efficacious grace. Fr. Hardon defines sufficient grace in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as “Actual grace considered apart from the supernatural effect for which it was bestowed. It may therefore mean the grace that does not meet with adequate co-operation on the part of the human recipient, and then it is merely sufficient grace. It is enough to enable a person to perform a salutary act, but who freely declines to co-operate. Or it may simply mean the grace that gives one the power to accomplish a salutary action, as distinct from an efficacious grace, which secures that the salutary act is accomplished.” All persons are given sufficient grace for salvation, but only the individual can accept God’s freely offered efficacious grace needed for salvation. By efficacious is simply meant that it is effective.

Fr. Hardon defines efficacious grace as “actual grace to which free consent is given by the will so that the grace produces its divinely intended effect.” Then he proceeds to briefly describe the debate between sixteenth century Dominican and Jesuit theologians over the issue, which I understand is still going on. Father tells us that “In the controversy between the Dominicans {led by Báñez (1528-1604)} and the Jesuits [led by Molina (1525-1600)] there was no agreement on what precisely causes an actual grace to become efficacious. In the Báñezian theory, the efficacy of such grace depends on the character of the grace itself; in the Molinist theory, it depends on the fact that it is given under circumstances that God foresees to be congruous or in harmony with the dispositions of the person receiving the grace. The debate got so bitter that the then reigning pope forbid them from excommunicating each other and to agree that either solution to the problem was acceptable to the Church. Father Hardon states that “In every Catholic theory, however, it is agreed that efficacious grace does not necessitate the will or destroy human freedom.”

To briefly summarize what we have had to say about the Catholic teaching on predestination: 1. It is God alone who initiates salvation; 2. that the human will is free to accept or not accept God’s offer of salvation; 3. that salvation is extended to each and every person, not limited to just some; 4. and that good works do play an active role in salvation, not just faith alone.

*Luther’s objection to the Catholic doctrine of predestination*

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1963 edition, lists his objections to the Catholic view of the matter are as follows:

- He counters the Catholic teaching that humans have been given free wills with which they can earn either merit or demerit by claiming that man's will isn't free, that he hasn't the least ability to secure justification, because the will itself is totally corrupt, totally unable or incapable of choosing anything but sin.
- Luther objected to the Catholic interpretation of St. Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 2:4 that "God our Savior . . . wishes all men to be saved" means what it says. His reply is that all such statements are realized properly only in the elect, those chosen by God for Heaven. He maintained that a distinction must be made between "the apparent will" and "the hidden will" of God. The author of the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* article says that it is interesting that Luther translated this passage in his German Bible to say, "God wills that all be assisted", rather than saved. He frequently translated passages to fit his theological opinions. He added the word "alone" after the word "faith" whenever the Bible connected faith with salvation. In fact, he even went so far as to leave out entire books of the Bible that weren't consistent with his views, such as the Book of James. One reason he excluded the Books of Maccabees from his translation of the Old Testament in the Bible into German was its references to praying for the dead and its implications for the existence of Purgatory.
- The Catholic Church would say that if men couldn't help but sin, it would be unjust for God to condemn them. It's like saying that God is the author of sin. Luther's reply is that men are sinners of necessity; therefore, they are under condemnation, that "man's will has been so corrupted by original sin that it interiorly always chooses evil and of itself is incapable of doing otherwise."
- The Church has said that the Lutheran idea of the hardening of the man's will makes God the cause of man's sin and condemnation. Luther's response is that "what God wills cannot be unjust. For what right has the clay to criticize the Potter? God's law exists that the elect may obey it."

Most of Luther's views on predestination and other matters related to salvation derive for the most part from his study of the Book of Romans. This is probably true of the Catholic view as well. Let me add that in his Commentary on Romans, written around 1515, Luther wrote, "All things whatever arise from, and depend on, the divine appointment; whereby it was fore-ordained who should receive the word of life, and who should disbelieve it; who should be delivered from their sins, and who should be hardened in them; and who should be justified and who should be condemned." The famed British historian of theology Alister McGrath, who has written extensively on the Reformation, states that here Luther is explicitly teaching a doctrine of double predestination, whereas Augustine was reluctant to acknowledge such a doctrine, no matter how logically appropriate it might appear. In other words, Luther clearly taught double predestination, whereas Augustine supposedly taught single predestination.

The *Catechism* tells us that the only proper framework to understand predestination must be rooted in the idea of a communion of persons in love. To explain how God created humans to share in his “blessed life”, it states:

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life (No. 1).

The Holy Trinity is a communion of Persons in love, and God created humans as persons to share in this communion. The Church teaches us that this communion of love demands freedom of the will, because love isn't something forced upon us, but offered as a free gift. Working from the premise that God created us to share in a loving communion with Him, the necessity of free will becomes apparent. The *Catechism* says of this: “God's free initiative demands *man's free response*, for God has created man in his image by conferring on him, along with freedom, the power to know him and love him. The soul only enters freely into the communion of love. God immediately touches and directly moves the heart of man” (No. 2002). Positing the need for freedom of the will for loving God and neighbor, the Church is implicitly denying the possibility of predestination. Jesus said that if you love me, obey my commandments, which is an act of will; it is a decision to do God's will out of love of God and neighbor. The ability to make decisions or choices requires freedom of the will.

A Catholic scholar says that some Protestants “narrowly understand the cooperation of the will with God as ‘helping God out’ as if He is somehow limited. Some find it objectionable that man has any free part to play in His eternal destiny, that somehow this would impinge on his sovereignty.” He continues to say, “If that eternal destiny is a communion of love, how else could it be but truly free.” He also says that “there is no logic in the notion that an absence of free will necessarily follows God's sovereignty, or that from free will it necessarily follows that God needs our help. God wills our free will in love. That is His design.” He concludes by saying, “man was created for love, to love God, to love others and to be loved. This ‘civilization of love’ or ‘communion of persons’ is central to man's being. Each and every person was created both to be his own end (“willed for his own sake”) and to make a gift of that self to others.”

So far we have discussed the first two of the Calvinist system of belief called TULIP: T = Total depravity and U = unconditional election; Now let's quickly complete the last three: L = limited atonement; I = irresistible grace; P = perseverance of the saints.

**L = Limited Atonement:** Limited Atonement means that only the sins of the elect were atoned for by Jesus' death. One source informs us that Calvinists believe for an inscrutable reason that God has chosen to provide efficacious atonement for only a portion of humanity, that the atonement is limited in the sense that it is designed for some and not all. Hence, Calvinists hold that the atonement is sufficient for all, but efficient only for the elect. The doctrine "is driven by the Calvinistic concept of the sovereignty of God in salvation and their understanding of the nature of the atonement."

**I = Irresistible Grace:** Irresistible Grace means that "God's grace and salvation cannot be effectively resisted. When God determines to save a man, that man is saved! Neither that man himself nor the devil, nor the wicked world are able to prevent his salvation. Nothing can stand in the way of God's saving purpose. Not only does God will to save him and work to save him, but he actually does save him." When God calls his elect into salvation, they cannot resist, because as we have discussed, they have no free will to do so. God offers to all people the gospel message. This is called the external call. But to the elect, God extends an internal call and it cannot be resisted. A Calvinist source states that "This call is by the Holy Spirit who works in the hearts and minds of the elect to bring them to repentance and regeneration whereby they willingly and freely come to God." Some of the verses used in support of this teaching are Romans 9:16 where it says that "it is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God who has mercy"; Philippians 2:12-13 where God is said to be the one working salvation in the individual; John 6:28-29 where faith is declared to be the work of God; Acts 13:48 where God appoints people to believe; and John 1:12-13 where being born again is not by man's will, but by God's. In other words, one cannot resist God's gift of grace, because he or she has no free will to do so. And, of course, we know that this isn't scriptural or in accordance with the Catholic understanding of the matter.

**P = Perseverance of the Saints:** Perseverance of the Saints means that, "those who are saved persevere to the end as a result of the grace of God, not as a result of their own strength or works, but always in the way of real, personal holiness." Many Protestants believe that one cannot lose his or her salvation, because in the words of one Calvinist, "the Father has elected, the Son has redeemed, and the Holy Spirit has applied salvation, [that] those thus saved are eternally secure [that] [t]hey are eternally secure in Christ." Some of the verses for this position are John 10:27-28 where Jesus said that his sheep will never perish; John 6:47 where salvation is described as everlasting life; Romans 8:1 where it is said we have passed out of judgment; 1 Corinthians 10:13 where God promises to never let us be tempted beyond what we can handle; and Philippians 1:6 where God is the one being faithful to perfect us until the day of Jesus' return. Luther, Calvin, and other Protestant reformers conveniently overlooked St. Paul's injunction in his Letter to the Philippians "to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (2:12).

We spent so much time on the doctrines of Justification, Sanctification, and Grace because they

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are so important to salvation, and because there has been so much controversy over them between Catholics and Protestants, between various Protestant groups, and even between Catholics themselves over the centuries. The main reason we discussed these topics at this point is that Luther's Five Solas and Calvin's Five Points or TULIP have played such a prominent role in disagreements between Catholics and Protestants since the sixteenth century Reformation over the proper interpretation of St. Paul and St. Augustine.

## Extrinsic Justification and Imputed Righteousness

**The Protestant view:** One subject that has always troubled Catholics is Luther's and Calvin's teaching on Extrinsic Justification and Imputed Righteousness. Many Protestant churches today, especially the ones derived from John Calvin, teach that when God declares a person justified, there is no real interior change in the justified person. Instead of an interior change in the justified, God the Father covers the justified person with the righteousness of Christ. This process is often called "imputing" Christ's righteousness to the justified one. This form of justification is called extrinsic justification in certain Protestant circles, because it involves no interior transformation of the person's inner self. This view is based on the idea that the individual person has been so corrupted by original sin that not even God can change him interiorly. There is no internal transformation of the justified one in Christ. Catholic biblical scholars say that this is unbiblical, that it is a notion introduced to Christianity by the Protestant Reformers, including Luther and Calvin. One source has said that Calvin was more precise than Luther when "spelling out the exchange notion of imputed righteousness: that the good works that Jesus did in his life (collectively referred to as the active obedience of Christ) are imputed to his people, while their sins were imputed to him on the cross." Protestant theologians have called this the substitution theory of salvation. Fr. John Hardon says of Extrinsic Justification and Imputed Righteousness that "God ceases to impute or lay the blame to a sinner the guilt of one's sins because the merits of Christ are imputed to one in justification. In other words, the blame is placed on Christ instead of the sinner. Mark Brumley says of this matter, "The Reformers, like the Catholic Church, insisted that justification is by grace and therefore originates outside of man, with God. But they also insisted that when God justifies man, man is not changed but merely declared just or righteous. God treats man as *if he were* just or righteous, *imputing* to man the righteousness of Christ, rather than *imparting* it to him."

**The Catholic view:** The doctrine of Extrinsic Justification and Imputed Righteousness was condemned by the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, which declared that, through justification, the sinner is not merely no longer considered sinful (because of Christ's imputed merits) but becomes a child of God, possessed of sanctifying grace and having a right to heaven." Mark Brumley states of the Catholic view:

Extrinsic justification is the idea that justification occurs outside of man, rather than within him. Catholicism, as we have seen, holds that justification is by grace alone. In that sense, it originates outside of man, with God's grace. But, according to Catholic teaching, God justifies man by effecting a change within him, by making him just or righteous, not merely by saying he is just or righteous or treating him as if he were. Justification *imparts* the righteousness of Christ to man, transforming him by grace into a child of God.

Catholics United for the Faith states:

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The Catholic and scriptural view is that God is powerful enough to blot out our sins and renew our inner selves through the ongoing sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The righteousness of Christ's eternal sacrifice satisfies God's wrath, and God responds by restoring our relationship with Him in a system of grace. In so doing, He forgives our sins and infuses grace into our souls, so that we become His righteous sons and daughters. And when God declares us righteous, He actually makes us righteous. The declaration is followed by the reality.

In other words, Catholics believe that the justified person undergoes a transformation in Christ and literally becomes “born again”; he or she is no longer the old corrupt self-covered over with the blanket of Christ’s righteousness, but has become righteous himself. Catholics believe that justification and sanctification go together, that the justified person is sanctified or made holy.

### *The logic of Extrinsic Justification and Imputed Righteousness*

Why did the Protestant Reformers hold to the idea of imputed righteousness and extrinsic justification? Louis Bouyer writes, “The further Luther advanced in his conflict with other theologians, then with Rome, then with the whole of contemporary Catholicism and finally with the Catholicism of every age, the more closely we see him identifying affirmation about *sola gratia* with a particular theory, known as extrinsic justification.” Brumley informs us that “The Reformers held this view for two reasons. First, because they came to think it necessary in order to uphold the gratuitousness of justification. Second, because they thought the Bible taught it. On both points, argues Bouyer, the Reformers were mistaken. There is neither a logical nor a biblical reason why God cannot effect a change in man without undercutting justification by grace alone. Whatever righteousness comes to be in man as a result of justification is a gift, as much [as] any other gift God bestows on man. Nor does the Bible's treatment of “imputed” righteousness imply that justification is not *imparted*. On these points, the Reformers were simply wrong.”

Other scholars inform us that logic behind the doctrine of Extrinsic Justification and Imputed Righteousness has to do with their notion of the corrupt nature of man due to original sin. Luther, Calvin, and the other early Reformers reinterpreted the teaching of St. Paul in a way that was consistent with their preconceptions of the nature of fallen man. As one scholar has said, “Since they regarded man himself as thoroughly corrupted by the sin of Adam, so that all his actions were intrinsically [impaired] and sinful, they logically conceived of man’s restoration as a purely extrinsic operation on the part of God. In the exercise of his will, man has no real power of free choice. Whatever good he does is attributable solely to God. Thus the whole process of justification is entirely God’s with no vital contribution on man’s side to change his status from the essential sinfulness to which original sin had reduced him.”

Extrinsic justification then means that there is no inner change in the one being justified, but considered righteous only by the imputed external righteousness of Christ, covering the person with a blanket of Christ's righteousness, leaving the justified person unchanged below. Luther taught that "the defilements of spirit and flesh cling to him. These are concealed and covered by the cleanness and purity of Christ, which we obtain by hearing the Word and by faith." He claimed that "this purity is an alien purity, for Christ adorns and clothes us with His righteousness." One scholar has written of this idea, "This is equivalent to saying that man is not righteous in himself, because the righteousness of Christ is communicated to him by imputation" By the Protestant doctrine of extrinsic justification, God chooses to see only the righteousness of his son, Jesus Christ, covering the justified one, not the "worm" of a man beneath the blanket. This doctrine is in contrast to the Catholic idea of a formal righteousness, whereby a man is not only considered righteous, but actually is made righteous, that is, made right with God. In other words, the intrinsically justified person of Catholic theology becomes sanctified, or made holy, when intrinsically justified, because the Holy Trinity comes to dwell in his soul. Catholics find the Protestant idea of extrinsic justification and imputed righteousness difficult to understand, and I would add repugnant.

### *The basis for Extrinsic Justification and Imputed Righteousness*

Catholic scholars tell us that the problem is due to Protestants identifying sin, including original sin, with concupiscence. Fr. Hardon defines concupiscence in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as, "the propensity of human nature to sin as a result of original sin." In other words, it is only the urge to sin due to original sin, not sin itself. Catholics United for the Faith says of this matter:

Where Catholics admit that concupiscence remains after a man is justified, but he is not *per se* stained by this inherent drive, here; Protestants represent concupiscence as sin in itself, and in fact as the yet subsisting original sin. They dismiss as unimportant and untrue the distinction between the mere feeling of that incitement to sin and the consent to the same. It is precisely on this ground that they rest their assertion that justification consists in the mere declaration of the remission of sin; but not in the purification from sin itself, because original sin (painfully recognized by everyone in the risings of concupiscence) still continues after baptism, and no amount of prayer or grace from God will just make it go away forever.

To put it another way, because concupiscence remains in the person even after baptism, and Protestants identify it with sin itself, because they believe that the justified person is incapable of undergoing any inner transformation in Christ. Equating sin, including the stain of original sin with concupiscence, the sin remains even after baptism; therefore, the person can never achieve sanctification or holiness.

It is difficult to ascertain whether or not Protestants still hold these ideas today, because Protestant churches don't have a central *magisterium* or teaching authority as do we Catholics, but according to a Catholics United for the Faith document, all the Protestant Churches follow the same tradition and profess it in their modern creeds. For example, the eleventh of the Thirty-nine Articles of the English Anglican Church, known as the Episcopal Church in the United States states: "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The Presbyterian Church, which is derived from John Calvin, defines justification in its Confession of Faith as "an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." The Lutheran Formula of Concord declares that "The word justification signifies the *declaring* anyone just, on account of the justice of Christ, which is by God *imputed* to faith, so that "our justice is not of us." Elsewhere the Formula of Concord states "the just are pronounced and reputed such on account of faith, through the obedience of Christ. But because of their corrupt nature they still are and remain sinners as long as they bear this mortal body." Karl Barth, the influential twentieth century Protestant theologian, taught the doctrine of extrinsic justification and imputed righteousness in all of his many books and articles. In one of his books he writes, "The act of the divine forgiveness is that God sees and knows this stain [of sin] infinitely better than the man himself, and abhors it infinitely more than he does even in his deepest penitence—yet He does not take it into consideration, He overlooks it, He covers it up, He passes it by, He puts it behind Him, He does not charge it to the man."

Catholics United for the Faith says that "Perhaps the best explanation is to conceive this justification as a judicial act of God, whereby the believing (trustful) sinner is delivered from the punishments of sin, but not from the sin itself. The great difference, therefore, between the Catholic and Protestant doctrines is that according to Catholic principles the justice of Christ is immediately appropriated by the believer to become part of his inward self and changes his whole moral existence; whereas by Protestant norms the justice remains in Christ, does not pass into the sinner's inward life and stays in a purely outward relation to him. His injustice is indeed covered, but has not been removed, since his will has not been healed." Somehow the Protestant Reformers chose to believe that their notion of justification was derived from the theology of St. Paul.

### *St. Paul's view of Justification*

Following St. Paul, Catholics believe that there is such a thing as perfection, because it is mentioned in Scripture many times. St. Paul has a lot to say about perfection. For instance, he says in Hebrews 6:1 that justified persons are to "go on to be perfected." In other words, the sanctification received at baptism is only the beginning of one's growth in holiness. How can it possible be done? We grow in holiness only with the help of God's grace. As we grow in holiness we are gradually purged of sin and attachments to the things of this world and become more

attached to the things of the next. We can grow in holiness only to the extent that we can detach ourselves from the things of this world and attach ourselves to the things of Heaven. God gives only in proportion to our ability to receive his gifts. The holier we become the greater receptacle we become for God's infusion of grace. Let's use an analogy to illustrate our point. Let's imagine that our souls are like containers that when full will hold only so much grace. This means at baptism the container holds all of the grace that one is capable of holding at that moment. However, since God is infinite there is still room for indefinite increases of his grace. This means that the size of the container can grow as we grow in holiness, as we acquire more of God's life in us. Assuming that we are in the state of sanctifying grace at our deaths, the size of the container, that is, the amount of grace that we possess at that time, will determine the amount of happiness that we will forever experience in Heaven. St. Paul advises us to move "Forward in Christ" in Philippians 3:12-16, meaning to grow in perfection as is our Heavenly Father, of course, acknowledging that only God is perfect.

Practically speaking, what does growing in holiness mean? It means that as one becomes more holy, he or she acquires more of the infused theological virtues of faith, hope charity, more of the moral virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit of knowledge, understanding, wisdom, counsel, and the others. At Baptism God infuses into our souls the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity. These are known as the Theological virtues. However, during the early times of our lives these virtues lie dormant and the capacity for growth increases as we grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and above all spiritually. In other words, the size of our containers is expanding as well. This gives us the capacity for more grace, more Faith, Hope, and above all Love, love of God and neighbor. Furthermore, at Baptism we receive an infusion of the moral virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude and all of the virtues that flow from them. These are called the Cardinal virtues, because all of the other virtues hinge on them. Although these virtues exist and operate at the natural level, which is the natural law, the law of God written on our hearts, they are also infused virtues existing and operating at the supernatural level when we possess God's grace. Moreover, at Baptism we receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are Knowledge, Understanding, Wisdom, Counsel, Piety, Fortitude, and Fear of the Lord. The Sacrament of Confirmation is like a booster shot that reinforces and raises these gifts even to a higher level yet.

St. Paul had a lot to say about growing in virtue and achieving holiness. He encourages us to arm ourselves with virtues to fight our enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil—where he writes in Ephesians:

[B]e strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to

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withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians, 6:10-20).

We could find numerous other passages in Paul’s letters where he links sanctification with justification.

How does one know that he is saved in the extreme Lutheran and Calvinist system? For the person who is tormented by the question as to whether or not he is saved or among the elect, Luther’s advised them to dismiss such thoughts and instead to trust in Christ. He taught that if one believes in Christ, that is, if one has faith, meaning that he trusts that Christ will save him, then “he may be assured that he is called; and if called, he may be sure that he is predestined to eternal salvation.” Also, Luther believed that as long as one had faith, he was assured of being among the saved; however, if he loses faith, he was mistaken about his salvation in the first place. Calvin, on the other hand, believed that even if one loses faith, he can still be assured of his election, if he had acquired faith in the first place. According to one source, he saw justification as a permanent feature of being connected to Christ: since, for Calvin, people are attached to Christ monergistically, it is therefore impossible for them to lose justification if indeed they were once justified.” By monergism the author of this quote means Calvin took the position that “God, through the Holy Spirit, works to bring about effectually the salvation of individuals through spiritual regeneration without cooperation from the individual.” This position is often contrasted to synergism, which is “the belief that God and individuals cooperate for salvation.”

Most Lutherans and Calvinists later rejected Luther’s and Calvin’s extreme predestinarianism and positions on other matters. One of Luther’s earliest and closest friends, Philipp Melancthon, originally held to the extreme position, but he also held humanist ideas that caused him to soften his view and adopt what became the standard Lutheran view on predestination by the seventeenth century, that “predestination is the will of God that all who believe are saved.” Although his foreknowledge deals with both the good and the evil, “predestination deals with salvation, but that the promise of salvation is made to all men and not to just a few. Those whom God foresees will believe, he eternally elects. If certain men are not elected, the fault is their own. This, of course, is directly opposed to the view of the founder of Lutheranism. I believe that this is the dominant view among Lutherans today. Another early friend, the famous Humanist Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, better known as Erasmus of Rotterdam,

who was a Dutch Renaissance humanist, Catholic priest, theologian, and scripture scholar, who was called the “Prince of the Humanists”, and has been called “the crowning glory of the Christian humanists”, objected to Luther’s extreme position on this matter. Using literary techniques for working on texts employed by humanists, Erasmus had prepared important new Latin and Greek editions of the New Testament. He also wrote *The Praise of Folly* and other famous works. He had lived during the Reformation period, but although he was critical of the Church, he could never bring himself to join the Reformer’s cause. He was especially concerned with reforming clerical abuses in the Church from within. He also held to Catholic doctrines such as that of free will, which eventually put him in conflict with Luther and others who denied free will and favored the doctrine of predestination. Erasmus disappointed and even angered Catholic and Protestant scholars alike, because of his middle of the road approach. He broke with Luther over this and other issues, and wrote two treatises bitterly attacking his former friend. One of the Calvinist groups who came to reject their extreme views was the Arminians.

### Arminianism

The biggest challenge to Luther and Calvin's extreme form of predestination, justification, and grace came from Jacob Arminius (1560-1609), who was a Dutch Reformed (Calvinist) theologian, whose studies of St. Paul's works led him to question Calvin's theories on these matters. Although the Calvinist controlled government in Holland charged him with heresy, his views influenced subsequent generations of Protestants to modify their views on these matters, especially in the English-speaking countries. The Arminians, as his followers were called, insisted that:

1. the divine sovereignty was compatible with man having a free will and that "God's predestination to salvation rests upon His foreknowledge that certain people will believe in Christ and persevere in this belief to the end;
2. Christ died for the whole human race and performed atonement for all men, though only believers share in His benefits;
3. the grace of God is not irresistible, for man can resist the Spirit of God;
4. it is not certain a man cannot fall from grace once he has received it.

In other words, Arminianism maintains that "God predestined, but not in an absolute sense. Rather, God looked into the future to see who would pick him when he offered them grace, and then he chose them. Jesus died for all peoples' sins who have ever lived and ever will live, not just the Christians. Each person is the one who decides if he wants to be saved or not. And finally, it is possible to lose one's salvation (some Arminians believed one cannot lose his salvation).

In summary, one scholar describes the system of justification of Arminius as follows:

They traced five stages in the history of a sinner who has already obeyed the divine call, been converted to faith and, under the assistance of grace, is obeying the divine precepts. The first stage is election, by which true believers whom God marks off as His own, are separated from the profane crowd of those who perish. After election comes adoption, whereby the elect are received into the family of God and admitted to the rights of a heavenly destiny, which they will finally achieve. The third is justification, which they described as the gracious absolution from all sin, by means of a faith "working by charity" in Christ Jesus, and by His merits. Sanctification goes beyond justification, to effect a perfect, inward separation of the sons of God from the children of this world. And lastly the sealing through the Holy Spirit is a firm and solid confirmation of a person in true confidence, in the hope of eternal glory, and in the assurance of divine grace.

**The Arminian position compared with the Catholic one:** Although this description of justification might sound remarkably close to the Catholic view, one source asserts that Arminianism is still Protestant in several ways. He states:

Justification is taken as only a step in the process of man's restoration to grace, whereas there are no partial justifications. A man is either wholly restored to God's friendship or not as Catholics believe. Moreover justification itself in the Arminian system is considered only a judicial act on the part of God; only later, through sanctification and the sealing, does the soul approach what Catholics believe is a unitary effect, occurring at the moment when sanctifying grace is infused. There may be growth in holiness, of course, but this means a development . . . from good to better, and not a drawn out [process which is started but not completed], that finally terminates in what we would call "the state of grace." We Catholics take to heart St. Paul's admonition to work out our salvation "in fear and trembling." Equally un-Catholic was the Arminian insistence that all of this movement from sin to grace happens under the unique impulse of trustful confidence (faith) and independent of good dispositions in the believer. They were inconsistent in making this concession to Reformed theology, but the inconsistency is part of their system.

### John Wesley and Methodism

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was considerably influenced by Arminianism. We have some idea of how influential Arminianism has been over the centuries by reading John Wesley (1703-1791), and was founder of the Methodists and considered by some to be the greatest figure in post-Reformation Protestantism. Reared in the Anglican Church, and steeped in its teaching on justification, sanctification, and grace, he sought to reform the prevalent theory of justification by adopting a type of Arminian theology which has since become known as perfectionism. He was also influenced by pietism, which “combined the Lutheranism of the time with the Reformed [or Calvinist] emphasis on individual piety and living a vigorous Christian life. One source states that “In 1764 he made a review of the subject in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, that stands poles apart from orthodox Protestantism and that has incalculably affected the lives and conduct of a large segment of non-Catholic Christianity. He described what he means by ‘rising above justification’ in a series of short propositions.”

In matters of doctrine, Wesley falls somewhere between Catholicism and Protestantism. In this regard, one source says that “Among the opinions on which his followers were free to dissent were the character of the priesthood, the nature of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist, and the role of the sacraments in the life of the church.” One of the most distinguishing aspects of his teaching apart from Protestantism was his teaching on sanctification, which according to one source, “so closely resembles the Catholic doctrine on grace that Wesley has been called a ‘papalist in disguise.’” Since he didn’t believe that the fall and original sin totally corrupted humans as Luther and Calvin maintained), he rejected the doctrine of predestination and irresistible grace and assumed “the power of man’s free will to cooperate with grace and [affirmed] that justification is an actual removal, not a concealment or covering over of sin. He thought there was no basis in scripture for the theory of predestination, mainly because it was inconsistent with what we Catholics call the analogy of faith, meaning the doctrine that every individual statement of belief must be understood in the light of the entire Bible. The difference of his idea of analogy from the Catholic one is the Church includes not only scripture, but the whole objective body of faith. His explanation of the process of justification is almost Catholic in many respects, which are as follows:

- Prevenient grace, which is the grace that goes before the free consent of the will, and spontaneously inclines it to God;
- Repentance, which is “voluntary sorrow because it offends God, for having done something wrong, together with the resolve to amend one's conduct by taking the necessary means to avoid the occasions of sin”;
- Justification, which is “the grace by which a person is restored to God's friendship, either for the first time, as in baptism, or after baptism”;

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- Sanctification, which is being made holy. “The first sanctification takes place at baptism, by which the love of God is infused by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Newly baptized persons are holy because the Holy Trinity begins to dwell in their souls and they are pleasing to God. The second sanctification is a lifelong process in which a person already in the state of grace grows in the possession of grace and in likeness to God by faithfully corresponding with divine inspirations”;
- The third sanctification or final salvation takes place when a person enters heaven and becomes totally and irrevocably united with God in the beatific vision..

Sanctification, according to the American *Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, is that renewal of our fallen nature by the Holy Spirit, ‘whereby we are not only delivered from the guilt of sin but are washed from its pollution, saved from its power, and are enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and to walk in His holy commandments blameless.’” Also, Wesley taught that humans could grow in perfection by living holy and virtuous lives. Moreover, he emphasized the social dimension of Christianity by stress-sing the importance of moral, economic, and racial justice as an integral part of living the faith. These practices resemble the Catholic view of intrinsic justification, which causes an internal transformation in Christ, rather than simply an external justification and imputation of Christ’s righteousness. Also his views on social justice approximates the Catholic view.

Wesley and Methodism is best seen as part of the twentieth century Romantic Movement, which was a response to the cold calculating intellectualism and rationalism of the eighteenth century Enlightenment. The Romantic Movement had political, economic, and social aspects, but it was in the main cultural, having literary, musical, architectural, artistic, philosophical, and theological aspects. To counteract the intellectualism and rationalism of the Enlightenment, Romanticism stressed experience, enthusiasm, the affections, and the emotional, intuitive, and imaginative. In religion it was manifested in a religion of the heart, which means a religion of experience, feelings, the affections, and enthusiasm, all of which Wesley included in his brand of religion. Although he was not opposed to doctrines, he accentuated the spiritual. He saw Christianity as a way of life, not simply a set of doctrines to be believed. He looked at creeds or confessions of faith as witnesses to the faith, not just rigid rules to be followed. He considered action more important than doctrines. For another thing, one scholar claims that “Wesley was convinced of his position and so critical of the opposition he urged that ‘all our preachers should make a point of preaching perfection to believers constantly, strongly, and explicitly; and all believers should mind this one thing, and continually agonize for it.’” He states, “His urgings produced results that have been far-reaching. It is a safe estimate that, except for Arminianism on the continent and Methodism in England and America, Protestantism would not have survived as a system to the present time. As it was, though, its compromise with the Catholic doctrine on sanctifying grace and growth in holiness has both kept the system alive and given it vigor which the negative theory of ‘extrinsic imputation’ could never have supplied.” Although

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Methodism began as a movement in the Anglican Church, the Church of England, it eventually split off to form a separate denomination.

## Joint Declarations on the Doctrine of Justification

### *Catholic and Lutheran Agreement*

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification is “a document created by and agreed to by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation in 1999, as a result of extensive ecumenical dialogue.” It optimistically states that the churches now share “a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ.” Supposedly “this essentially resolved the conflict over the nature of justification which was at the root of the Protestant Reformation.” Moreover, the two parties to the agreement rescinded the excommunications they leveled at each other during the sixteenth century.

According to one source, “The beliefs of the Roman Catholic church and of historic Protestantism agree that when a person is ‘justified,’ *they are brought into right standing and into a right relationship with God.* Lutherans ‘refer to justification as *“the chief doctrine upon which the church stands or falls.”*” As we discussed above, Martin Luther considered justification to be the “first and chief article of belief”, and the “ruler and judge over all other Christian doctrines”. Although the Joint Declaration was able to resolve some differences between the parties, they agreed that “the remaining differences were not sufficiently substantial for the sixteenth century condemnations to continue in force.”

The Declaration almost didn't get approved by either party. The Lutheran World Federation, which represents the majority of the world's Lutheran churches, said that “further consultation with the Vatican is needed before it can sign a major doctrinal statement drawn up by representatives of the two communions.” One news source a year after the announcement stated that “The Roman Catholic church announced that they would sign the document, but the Vatican was ambiguous on whether it would lift its condemnations of Lutheran teaching. Joint meetings finally led to a resolution which said: “The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Roman Catholic Church have reached agreement on an historic document which aims to resolve a theological controversy dating back to the sixteenth century split between Martin Luther and the papacy. The two communions are to declare officially on 31 October [1999] that mutual doctrinal condemnations pronounced at the time of the Reformation no longer apply. It is believed to be the first time that the Vatican has ever declared that Catholic doctrinal condemnations no longer apply to a Protestant communion.”

### *Response to the Joint Declaration*

Even then some Lutheran groups in this country failed to approve the Declaration. In 1997 the Department of Systematic Theology of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO issued an analysis

of the Joint Declaration, in response to a request by the President of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod which made the following points in their review:

- The declaration shows that the two groups have not reached a “shared understanding of justification.” As the declaration notes, there are differences of language, differences of theological elaboration, and “differences of emphasis in the understanding of justification.” Yet the document finds these differences are “acceptable.”
- The principal difference between Lutherans and Catholics remains unresolved: Lutherans believe that justification of the individual is “through faith” only. Roman Catholics believe that faith and church sacraments are both involved. Finally, the document extensively uses the phrase “in faith” which is not defined.
- The principal difference between Lutherans and Catholics remains unresolved: Lutherans believe that justification of the individual is “through faith” only. Roman Catholics believe that faith and church sacraments are both involved.
- Finally, the document extensively uses the phrase “in faith” which is not defined. The Document's description of the role of good works is ambiguous and self-contradictory. It says that good works “contribute to growth in grace, so that the righteousness that comes from God is preserved and communion with Christ is deepened.” Yet, it also says that “righteousness as acceptance by God and sharing in the righteousness of Christ is always complete.” It cannot be under development and complete at the same time.”

The analysis concludes: “[T]here remain very significant theological differences, in language, theological elaboration and emphasis, regarding the doctrine of justification. It is not a ‘break-through.’ In fact, the document shows that very little headway at all has been made.” By 1999, a group of more than 240 Protestant German theologians had signed a petition which criticized the agreement. One Catholic critic fumes: “this is a repudiation of Trent. Shame on the Vatican, shame on Kasper, and shame on the Fathers of Vatican II” Another Catholic critic acidly comments: “It's so nuanced, the statement is symbolic. Neither side is admitting to error, so unless they were both right to begin with (and that is heretical to believe in itself), this is just smoke and mirrors. And, more important, Methodists and Lutherans are, in the main, liberal Protestants, one step away from humanists and definitely not allies of the Church in the battle for respect for Natural Law.”

### *Catholic and Baptist Dialog*

There has been quite a bit of dialog going between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Baptist World Alliance for the past 25 years or so. The Alliance

represents over 100 million members, most of who live in the U.S. For the most part the meetings have been informal up to now, and mostly they have tried to clarify points suitable for discussion, one being justification and the other the Petrine Ministry. I don't think anything of substance will ever come out of these meetings, because Baptists have no confessional documents that apply worldwide. As one Baptist theologian says, "Strong emphasis on freedom of conscience, the independence of a local church, the lack of centralized authority and normative creeds have created a plurality of soteriologies. The strong insistence on *sola scriptura* discourages descriptive documents of Baptist beliefs."

Nonetheless, another prominent Baptist theologian believes that "there is sufficient theological ground for further conversations about justification", based on the Joint Declaration between Catholics and Lutherans. He says that Baptists would have liked to see more of an explanation in the Declaration on the matter of "*sola fides*", and that justification is "imputed", that is, "it is bestowed by God on persons who are without God and without any merit." Also he questions the theological justification of infant Baptism and the excessive stress the Declaration places on the role baptism in justification. I believe that he is referring to the fact that many Protestants don't believe that baptism is a sacrament that confers grace, but is merely a sign and affirmation that the person already has been justified by an act of faith. Rather than a sacrament, baptism is looked on more as an initiation rite into the church. This is the main reason that I question the Catholic Church's willingness to accept the validity of baptisms of certain Protestant denominations when former baptized members of these denominations enter the Catholic Church. These churches might have the proper matter and form of the sacrament, that is, use water and say the right Trinitarian words, but they don't have the same intention. Therefore, to be safe, I believe that such converts should be baptized conditionally in the Catholic Church.

### *Catholic and Presbyterian Dialog*

I am aware that the Church has dialoged with Presbyterians, who are Calvinists, or at least they originally were Calvinists. To my knowledge, not much has come out of this dialog, except to "broaden their ecumenical dialogue by asking the Reformed tradition denomination to join in the recent consensus on the key issue of justification, seeking a 'mutual recognition' of baptism and attempting to put aside five centuries of mutual hostility." A document regarding preliminary discussions states: "We agreed that the contemporary ecumenical spirit is part of a new situation which enables us to address in new ways the issues which have separated us." The statement recognized opportunities for "further exploration in dialogue at the international or national level 'the possibility of Reformed participation on the ecumenical consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification, building on the recent Catholic-Lutheran agreement.'"

### *Catholic and Methodist Dialog*

In July of 2006, members of the World Methodist Council, which was meeting in Seoul, South Korea, voted unanimously to adopt this document as well. The key provisions of the document states Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Methodist, and some other Christians, agree that:

- Individuals are initially hopelessly lost in sin and separated from God.
- Separation between God and man is overcome through Justification – "*the free and unmerited assistance or favor or energy or saving presence of God in his dealings with humanity...*").
- Justification is brought about through God's grace.
- Justification is in no way earned by the individual.

I am not as optimistic and hopeful as are others about the progress that has been made in ecumenical dialog. I think that the accomplishments of the ecumenical dialog between Catholics and Protestants, which have been going on for the past forty years, have been pretty sparse. Any real progress would require that both groups water down their doctrines to accommodate the other, which is, of course, what numerous Catholic and Protestant theologians have done, especially those who want unification of Christians at all cost. A source draws a conclusion that I am in full accord with: "All Christian faith groups use the same terms (baptism, grace, justification, sacrament, salvation, sanctification, etc.) but they often assign different meanings to the words. However, with a great deal of effort, and some creative editing, it is possible for two faith groups to create a single document that they can both agree on. However, the words themselves will often mean quite different things to followers of the two groups." That in a nutshell my view on why genuine unity is almost impossible of attainment. Another problem militating against unity of Christians is that many Protestant denominations are getting farther apart from the Catholic Church on matters of morality, such as abortion, homosexuality, contraception, and other family values.

## Appendix One

### *Paul vs James*

Protestants have generally interpreted St. Paul's reference to faith as meaning trusting in Christ for one's salvation and not on one's good works. They got this idea from Martin Luther. Paul tells us in his letter to the Ephesians, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not because of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9). However, James tells us seemingly to the contrary, "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him?" (James 2:14). Initially Luther had a low opinion of the Epistle of James, which he called "an epistle of straw", because of James' emphasis on the necessity of works for salvation.

Who are we to believe? Are the two in disagreement over this matter? The Catholic Church has always taught that both faith and works are essential for salvation, Sal Ciresi states in a fine article entitled "Bible says faith and works needed for salvation":

During the Protestant Reformation in the early 1500s, a familiar term regarding salvation was 'sola fide', Latin for "by faith alone." The reformers, at that time, accused the Catholic Church of departing from the "simple purity of the Gospel" of Jesus Christ. They stated it was faith alone, without works of any kind, that brought a believer to eternal life. They defined this faith as "the confidence of man, associated with the certainty of salvation, because the merciful Father will forgive sins because of Christ's sake." This view of salvation is a crucial issue because it strikes at the very heart of the Gospel message eternal life. Roman Catholicism teaches that we are not saved by faith alone. The Church has taught this since 30 A.D. as part of the Divine Revelation. The truth of the Catholic Church's teaching can be demonstrated from Sacred Scripture alone.

Many, if not most, Protestants have adhered to five *solas* since the Reformation in the early sixteenth century. The Five *solas* are five Latin phrases that emerged during the Protestant Reformation that summarize the Reformers' basic theological beliefs. The Latin word *sola* means "alone" or "only" in English. The five *solas* are pillars of Protestantism, and one simply can't understand the Protestant religion without knowledge of them. In addition to the five *solas*, the Calvinist churches (Presbyterian, Congregationalist, United Church of Christ, and numerous Reformed Churches) also require knowledge of the Five Points of Calvinism symbolized in the acronym TULIP. The five *solas* are as follows:

1. *Sola scriptura*, "by Scripture alone"
2. *Sola fide*, "by faith alone"
3. *Sola gratia*, "by grace alone"
4. *Solus Christus* or *Solo Christo*, "Christ alone" or "through Christ alone"
5. *Soli Deo Gloria*, "glory to God alone"

Although Catholics and Protestants differ over the meaning of the last three, they have diametrically opposed meanings for the first two. A Catholic apologist writes in the regard, “All who claim the title ‘Christian’ will be able to agree on the following two truths: salvation is by grace alone (Ephesians 2:8) and salvation is through Christ alone” (Acts 4:12). The main bone of contention over the centuries has been about the first two: *Sola scriptura* and *Sola fide*. The Catholic Church has always maintained that revelation is found in both the Bible and in Sacred Tradition., whereas Protestants claim it is found only in Scripture. In regard to Faith, the Church from the beginning taught that we are saved by both faith and works, while Protestants have taught that we are saved by faith alone. Luther thought he had made a break-through involving the correct understanding of God’s righteousness.

Luther had long struggled to keep God's Law in order to become righteous, but time and again he failed to do so. It seemed the harder he tried by doing works, such as fasting, praying, receiving the sacraments, and performing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, the more he failed to achieve righteousness. He thought he had found the answer to his problem one day when reading Romans 1:17, which states, “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’” Afterwards, he was terrified every time he came across the phrase “the righteousness of God” in Scripture”, for he said it struck his “conscience like lightning” and was like a “thunderbolt” in his heart, because “he knew that he was an unrighteous sinner who fell far short of God’s righteous, that is, perfect demands.” Not only did it terrify him, but it made him extremely angry and hateful toward God, because as he wrote, “I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners.” First God crushes us miserable sinners with his law, then if that isn’t enough, he threatens us with punishment through the Gospel as well. After meditating on this passage day and night, according to Luther he finally had a breakthrough when he came to realize that the verse wasn’t referring to “active righteousness”, but the passive righteousness that God freely gives to those who believe the Gospel; that is, those who have faith that Jesus Christ is their Lord and Savior. One scholar says of Luther’s experience:

The tower experience, according to Luther was a conversion experience. When he had discovered that God gives His righteousness as a gift in Christ, he felt that he “was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates . . . that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise.” Now his conscience was at rest, now he was certain of his salvation. Before there had been only unrest and uncertainty.

Luther commenting on the “righteousness of God”, states, “I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before hated the word ‘righteousness of God.’ Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise.” One scholar says of his conversion, “Thus fortified and converted by the Gospel, Luther was now a ready instrument to be used by God for reformation!”

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It is true that the Bible tells us we must have faith in order to be saved (Hebrews 11:6). Yet is faith nothing more than believing and trusting? A close examination of the Bible reveals that faith also involves assent to God's truth (1 Thessalonians 2:13), obedience to Him (Romans 1:5, 16:26), and it must be working in love (Galatians 5:6). One scholar says that "These points appeared to be missed by the reformers, yet they are just as crucial as believing and trusting. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3) should be heeded by all it's certainly an attention grabber."

Do our works mean anything? According to Jesus they do; people are rewarded and punished according to their actions. He is recorded as saying in Matthew 25:31-46):

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

Contrary to Luther, St. Matthew asserts in his Gospel that Jesus commands us to keep the commandments in order to be saved (Matthew 19:16-17. Even St. Paul, who Luther places so much emphasis on, states in 1 Corinthians 13:2 that "if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing." Paul says in Ephesians 2:10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Sal Cirelli says in his article "Bible says faith and works needed for salvation":

Paul speaks of faith as a life-long process, never as a one-time experience (Philippians 2:12). He never assumes he has nothing to worry about. If he did, his words in (1 Corinthians 9:24-27) would be nonsensical. He reiterates the same point again in his

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second letter to Corinth (2 Corinthians 13:5). He takes nothing for granted, yet all would agree if anyone was "born again" it certainly was Paul. Our Lord and Savior spoke of the same thing by "remaining in Him" (John 15:1-11). Paul tells us our faith is living and can go through many stages. It never stays permanently fixed after a single conversion experience no matter how genuine or sincere. Our faith can be shipwrecked (1 Timothy 1:19), departed from (1 Timothy 4:1), disowned (1 Timothy 5:8) wandered from (1 Timothy 6:10), and missed (1 Timothy 6:21). Christians do not have a "waiver" that exempts them from these verses.

The Epistle of Saint James says, "Do you see that by works a man is justified; and not by faith only? For even as the body without the spirit is dead; so also faith without works is dead." James 2:24 is notably clear: "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. James 2:14-17 states, "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

Historically, Protestants have had difficulty reconciling James' letter with their belief in salvation by faith alone. According to one scholar:

Martin Luther even suggested that the Epistle might be a forgery, and relegated it to an appendix in his Bible (although he later came to accept its canonicity). Though this may be interpreted through the word "justified." It speaks that faith in Jesus Christ is the first step and that faith is justified through good works, he goes on to say that without spreading your love and faith, it is dead. Works are the evidence of faith. It's not faith and works; it's faith that works. The sinner is justified (declared righteous) by God through faith in the work and death of Jesus, not by our work or keeping of the Law. Put another way, the sinner is justified by receiving (faith) rather than achieving (works). Later Luther would say that we are saved by the alien righteousness of Christ, not by a righteousness of our own doing.

Ciresi maintains that "the reformer's position cannot be reconciled with the Bible. That is why the Catholic Church has taught otherwise for over 1,960 years." He questions: Where does our assistance come from to reach our heavenly destination? He answers, "Philippians 4:13 says it all, 'I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.'" The Catholic Church has taught from the beginning, and is clearly found in the Bible, that both faith and works are necessary for salvation. Faith without grace and works is dead, just as works without faith and grace would be dead.

At the most, Protestants believe that doing good works are a sign that one is saved, rather than earning one any merit toward salvation. Whatever the case, Paul didn't mean that one merits

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salvation by faith alone, but as he states in many places by good works as well. In fact, doing good works is a sign and an act of faith. Faith without works is useless. Nor did Paul mean by being saved by faith means being lawless or not obeying the Mosaic law, if one means by the law the Ten Commandments. Paul had a lot to say about obeying the commandments. The 1911 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* article on “Judaizers” notes, “Paul, on the other hand, not only did not object to the observance of the Mosaic Law, as long as it did not interfere with the liberty of the Gentiles, but he conformed to its prescriptions when occasion required (1 Corinthians 9:20). Thus he shortly after the Council of Jerusalem circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:1-3), and he was in the very act of observing the Mosaic ritual when he was arrested at Jerusalem” (Acts 21:26).

In summary, although Protestants believe that we must perform good works, because Scripture commands that we do, they don't believe that they earn any reward for doing so. Good works are merely signs that one is among God's elect, i.e., those who are selected for Heaven. To the contrary, one doing bad deeds is a sign that he is among the reprobate or condemned. I believe that we have decisively shown that both faith (believing that Jesus Christ is our personal Lord and Savior) and works (receiving the sacraments, praying, being good stewards of the earth, and performing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy) are necessary for salvation.

## Appendix Two

### *Paul's treatment of the law*

St. Paul and Barnabas had great success in converting Gentiles in Antioch. It was there that the followers of the Way started calling themselves Christians. Unfortunately, St. Peter's experience with Cornelius and his family hadn't completely resolved all the issues involved in the conversion of Gentiles to Christianity (see Acts 10 for details of this matter). The problem wasn't simply over the issue of circumcision, but of the entire Mosaic Law.

The main question was whether Gentile converts had to observe the entire Law of Moses. Jewish law or the *Halakhah* was a comprehensive way of life, filled with rules and practices that affected every aspect of life: what one does when he woke up in the morning, what he could and could not eat, what he could or could not wear, how to groom himself, how to conduct business, who he could marry, how to observe the holidays and Sabbath, and perhaps most important, how to treat God, other people, and animals. The *Halakhah* came from three sources: the *Torah*, or first five books of the Old Testament called the *Pentateuch* in Greek translation; from laws instituted by the rabbis; and from long-standing customs. *Halakhah* from any of these sources was called a *mitzvah* (plural: *mitzvoth*) or commandment.

The heart of the *Halakhah* was the 613 *mitzvoth* that God gave to the Jewish people in the *Torah* or Law found in the first five books of the Bible. Of course, the *Torah* or Law included the Ten Commandments; but it also contained hundreds of regulations regarding ritual purity, morality, diet, sacrifices, the Sabbath, and the like. Circumcision was required of men, because God had made it a sign of his covenanted priestly people (Genesis 17:10) and strictly required it of Abraham's descendants. Many, if not most of these laws are listed in Leviticus and Numbers. Added to the *Mitzvoth* were thousands of oral commentaries or interpretations on the laws by various rabbis over the centuries. An Oral Law was needed in the words of a Jewish scholar "to mitigate certain categorical Torah laws that would have caused grave problems if carried out literally. . . . The Oral Law was a legal commentary on the *Torah*, which explained how its commandments were to be carried out." One scholar has said that originally the rabbis forbade that the various traditional interpretations be committed to writing, but when the sheer volume of these became too great to manage, they lifted the ban and organized and committed them into writing in what was called the *Mishnah*, the *Talmud*, and other rabbinic works.

The *Mishna* was the name given for the sixty-three tractates which set down the Oral Law in writing about 200 A.D. Eventually, some of the rabbis wrote down their discussions and commentaries on the *Mishna's* laws in a series of books known as the *Talmud*. The rabbis of Palestine edited their discussions of the *Mishna* about the year 400 in a work that became known as the *Palestinian* or *Jerusalem Talmud*. More than a century later, some of the leading

Babylonian rabbis compiled another edition known as the *Babylonian Talmud*, which was far more extensive than its Palestinian counterpart.

The Israelites were God's chosen people, however unworthy they would prove to be over the centuries, a people to whom he revealed himself and with whom he prepared the way for the Messiah. Therefore, he wanted them to be as holy a nation as possible by distinguishing and keeping them away from the surrounding pagan peoples who worshipped idols and engaged in all sorts of immoral behaviors. Many of the *Mitzvoth* or commandments were specific guides for the Israelites on how to carry out the Ten Commandments, which was the heart of their covenant with God, what we call the Old Testament or Covenant. Of course, the Ten Commandments are requirements for all people of all times; however, many of the 613 commandments and their interpretations were applicable only to the Israelites, especially those dealing with matters of diet, ritual purity, the Sabbath, Temple worship, circumcision, and the like. These laws were designed to set the Israelites apart from all of the pagan peoples who surrounded them; to distinguish them as God's special chosen people constituted as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

The *Mitzvoth* had been broken down into six categories by Jewish legal scholars as follows:

- Commandments on agricultural matters
- Laws dealing with the Sabbath, Festivals, and Fast Days
- Requirements for Marriage and Divorce, etc., as well as with vows and other issues
- Civil and criminal law, including punishment for violations, as well as ethical teachings
- Requirements for ritual slaughter, sacrifices, offerings, and the Temple and its services
- Laws associated with diet, ritual purity, and impurity

The laws for each of these categories tell what, how, when, where, and why these activities must be performed. They totaled 613. Scott Hahn says that St Paul describes the Law of Moses as a "custodian" or tutor. He explains that in Roman times, well-to-do parents would have a private pedagogue or custodian for their son. The pedagogue was usually a slave that had been given absolute authority over the son, but when the son grew up and became an adult, the pedagogue no longer had authority over him, that as an adult he was subject only to his father.

St. Paul tells us that the Law of Moses was our pedagogue until the coming of Christ, but with his coming we might be justified by faith, meaning reconciled with God. Paul says in his letter to the Galatians:

Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized

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into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christs, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:23-29).

The *Catechism* states regarding this subject: "This divine pedagogy appears especially in the gift of the Law. God gave the Law as a 'pedagogue' to lead his people towards Christ (Gal 3: 24), But the Law's powerlessness to save man deprived of the divine 'likeness' along with the growing awareness of sin that it imparts enkindles a desire for the Holy Spirit (No. 708). So the Mosaic Law had a purpose in preparing the Jews and the entire human race for the Law of salvation by Grace, which was fulfilled by Jesus Christ in the New and Everlasting Covenant or New Testament.

Since Jewish Christians understood that Christ was the fulfillment of the Jewish law, they wanted to recognize both Jewish and Christian traditions. There lay the source of the problem, because many of the Jewish Christians insisted that Gentile converts had to do the same. At the time, most followers of Jesus were Jewish by birth and even converts would have considered the early Christians as a part of Judaism. According to Alister McGrath, a prominent Anglican priest, theologian, and Christian apologist, who is currently Professor of Theology at Kings College London and formerly professor of the history of theology at Oxford University, states, "the Jewish Christians affirmed every aspect of then contemporary Judaism with the addition of the belief that Jesus was the Messiah." Extremist Jewish Christians who took this position were called Judaizers. In essence, this meant that Gentile converts had to become practicing Jews to be Christians, for hadn't Jesus said he came to fulfill the Law of Moses, not to abandon it.

Since most of Jesus' early followers were Jewish converts who would have considered early Christianity to be a part of Judaism, they celebrated the Eucharist and the other sacraments, but also attended Jewish Sabbath celebrations and followed the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law. In other words, Jewish Christians believed and did as they always had believed and done, except adding the belief that Jesus Christ was the Messiah and in celebrating the sacraments that he had instituted. They were simply following the Law of Moses that said, "No uncircumcised man will be one of my people"( Genesis 17:14). Following the Law of Moses, the Judaizers claimed that "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1-2). It's not without saying that it was very difficult for Gentile converts who hadn't been raised in the Jewish tradition, to learn and keep up with all the laws listed in the Jewish Scriptures.

The problem arose because St. Paul and Barnabas had established Christian communities in Asia Minor on the premise that faith in Jesus Christ implied freedom from the Jewish Law. In his epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul defended the New Law of grace against other early Jewish Christians who advocated the necessity of observing the Old Law. Now by being free from the

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Law of Moses, St. Paul didn't mean that Christians were no longer required to observe the Ten Commandments; there were later antinomians, meaning anti law, who erroneously took this position. Jesus made it perfectly clear in his Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere that he didn't mean the Law of Moses was no longer applicable for his disciples. In fact, Jesus perfected the Ten Commandments by making them even more comprehensive.

One could cite many verses of St. Paul's letters as proof texts that he freed Christians from the burdens of the Law. For example:

- **Romans 6:14:** "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."
- **Acts 13:38-39:** "Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses."
- **Galatians 3:23-24:** "Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith."
- **Roman 7:6:** "But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit."

Paul says something similar in several places in his letters to the Romans and the churches he established. Elsewhere he told his converts in Galatians 5:18, "But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law?" Paul says to the Romans, "So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God" (Romans 7:4). And in Romans 7:6 he says, "But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code." Romans 6:15 states, "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!". In Galatians 3:1-5 he describes the Galatians as "foolish" for relying on being observant to the Law: "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?" He states in Galatians 3:23-25 that the purpose of the Law was to lead people to Christ, but once people believe in Christ, they are no longer under the Law: "Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law."

It is easy to see how some might conclude that they didn't have to follow even the Ten Commandments. There have been those over the centuries who accused St. Paul of being antinomian, or against the Law, but there is nothing further from the truth. There are at least two meanings of antinomianism: one meaning being that anyone who holds that under the gospel dispensation of grace, the moral law is of no use or obligation, because faith alone is necessary to salvation. This was the view held by the antibaptists who carried out Luther's teaching of "salvation by faith alone" to its logical conclusion. The other meaning being one who rejects a socially established morality. Paul says in several places in his letters that we are saved by faith, not by good works. The problem is to know how to interpret these and other such statements. Even Peter, the first pope exercising his magisterium or teaching authority tells us in 2 Peter 3:16-19:

So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, beware lest you be carried away with the error of lawless men and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is all the reason more why we need the Church, which is guided by the Holy Spirit to interpret difficult passages of the Bible for us. Interpreting the Bible can't be left up to Luther's private judgment or the whims of biblical scholars. After all, look at the hundreds of different interpretations of the scriptures made by Protestants since the sixteenth century and the thousands of interpretations of various biblical passages made by biblical scholars over the past two centuries, many of whom we considered in our essay and series *Interpreting the Bible Through the Ages*. There can be only one true interpretation, not hundreds, and only the Catholic Church where Jesus deposited his teachings can ascertain their true meaning. The Church was there to witness the events described in the Bible, eventually wrote them down, and transmitted down through the ages for our benefit, and only it has the authority to interpret the Scriptures through its magisterium or teaching authority exercised by the Pope and the bishops in communion with him..

What does Paul mean by saying Christians are no longer under the law? Does he mean that they didn't have to obey the Ten Commandments? Why did he say that Christians were not under or subject to the Law or *Torah*? This question is at the heart of the antinomian controversy within Protestant Christianity and the debate over faith and works among Catholics and Protestants, and other issues. Also, it gave rise to the issue of the Judaizers, which was solved at the Council of Jerusalem in 49 A.D.

Even though St. Paul spoke often about Christians not being under the Law of Moses, he didn't mean that they were free from observing the Ten Commandments and the many commandments

of the *Mitzvoth* that were related to them. He was more referring to laws dealing with ritual purity, dietary regulations, Jewish liturgy, ritual, and temple sacrifices, some of the sabbatical laws, and above all the requirement that men had to be circumcised. In fact, Jesus refined and perfected the Ten Commandments in his Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, for he came not to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17). The 1913 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* states in an article on *Judaizers* that “Paul, on the other hand, not only did not object to the observance of the Mosaic Law, as long as it did not interfere with the liberty of the Gentiles, but he conformed to its prescriptions when occasion required (1 Corinthians 9:20). Thus he shortly after the Council of Jerusalem circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:1-3), and he was in the very act of observing the Mosaic ritual when he was arrested at Jerusalem (Acts 21:26).”

Implicit in this is that Gospel morality under the Law of Grace is more perfect than morality under the Law of Moses. Since the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old, the behavior of Christians is to be more perfect than was ever the conduct even of the Chosen People under the Law of Moses. Fr. John Hardon tells us that what most distinguishes Gospel morality from the Mosaic Law is that it is Christ-centered morality, that “unlike the Mosaic law with its inevitable stress on minute regulations, multiplied to cover every aspect of personal and social living, the morality of the Gospels is founded on Christ, inspired by Christ, made possible only through the grace of Christ, and leading to the possession of Christ in eternal life in His company.” He says that all too often Christians look upon the moral teachings of the Church as just a later stage of the moral code of the pre-Christian Jews, so “it is no wonder so many of them react negatively to the Church's prescriptions, because they forget that the heart of the New Law is a Person, and that Person is the Son of God who became man in order to inspire our imitation and by His grace, give us the strength to follow in His footsteps.” Under the Old Covenant, which included the Law of Moses, the Israelites were saved by faith, not the fulfillment of the law, whereas under the New Covenant, which included the Law of Love of God and neighbor, all persons are saved by God's grace. For example, the sacrifices of the Old Covenant didn't confer grace, because they weren't sacraments. Only the sacrifice of Christ that sealed the New Covenant confers grace, because it is a sacrament.

## Appendix Three

### *New Perspectives on St. Paul*

There has been a lot of discussion the last few decades among scripture scholars, especially Protestants, that seek to reinterpret St. Paul and his letters. This has been called the “New Perspectives” on St. Paul. The Lutheran and Reformed (Calvinist) views that we have been discussing on Paul's writings are called the “Old Perspective” by adherents of the “New Perspective”. One source says that “the ‘new perspective’ is an attempt to lift Paul's letters out of the Lutheran/Reformed framework and interpret them based on what is said to be an understanding of first-century Judaism, taken on its own terms”, that “the old perspective’ refers specifically to Reformed and Lutheran traditions, especially the views descended from John Calvin and Martin Luther.”

The New Perspective on Paul has been defined as “a system of thought in New Testament scholarship that seeks to reinterpret the Apostle Paul and his letters.” The heart of the matter is that in the Old Perspective, Paul seems to be arguing that it is “faith alone” that saves, not works. They especially cite Paul’s Epistle to the Romans where they believed he advocated “justification through faith in Jesus Christ over justification through works of the Law.” According to the New Perspective, Paul was questioning only observances such as dietary and purity laws, sabbatical laws and circumcision, but not good works in general. In this regard, one source states:

The Reformation perspective [the Old Perspective] understands Paul to be arguing against a legalistic Jewish culture that seeks to earn their salvation through works. However, supporters of the [New Perspective on Paul] argue that Paul has been misread. They contend he was actually combating Jews who were boasting because they were God’s people, the “elect” or the “chosen ones.” Their “works”, so to speak, were done to *show* they were God’s covenant people and not to earn their salvation. According to the [New Perspective on Paul], the result is a Judaism that affirmed *sola gratia* (grace alone).

Lutherans maintained in the Old Perspective that Paul, especially in his Epistle to the Romans, advocates justification through faith in Jesus Christ over justification through works of the Law. Over the past several years or so there has been developing in some circles of Protestant Biblical scholars a “New Perspective” on what St. Paul meant by justification. Luther, Calvin, and other early Protestant Reformers held what has been labeled the “Old Perspective”, whereby Paul was understood to be arguing that the good works of Christians’ would not earn merit for their salvation, that only their faith would do so. According to the “New Perspective”, when Paul speaks of “works”, he is questioning only observances such as circumcision, dietary laws, purification rites, and other such prescriptions of the Mosaic Law, and not good works in general. According to one Protestant scholar, “the ‘new perspective’ is an attempt to lift Paul's

letters out of the Lutheran/Reformed framework and interpret them based on what is said to be an understanding of first-century Judaism, taken on its own terms.”

What seems to have precipitated this debate? One scholar says that “the new-perspective movement is closely connected with a surge of recent scholarly interest in studying the Bible in the context of other ancient texts, and the use of social-scientific methods to understand ancient culture.” Scholars affiliated with this “Context Group” as they are called, as well as many others in the field, have called for various reinterpretations of Biblical texts based on their studies of the ancient world. Paul's letters contain a substantial amount of criticism of “works of the law”. According to one source, “The radical difference in these two interpretations of what Paul meant by ‘works of the law’ is the most consistent distinguishing feature between the two perspectives.”

Varying authors since the early 1900's have claimed that Luther and other Protestant Reformers had improperly interpreted St. Paul's writings. Of course, The Catholic Church had been saying this from the time of the Reformation. From what I have been able to gather, the debate heated up 1963 when a Lutheran theologian named Krister Stendahl published a paper where he argued that “the typical Lutheran view of the Apostle Paul's theology did not fit with statements in Paul's writings, and in fact was based more on mistaken assumptions about Paul's beliefs than careful interpretation of his writings.” The next major phase in the debate appears to have been when E. P. Sanders published *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in 1977 in which he argued that “the traditional Lutheran understanding of the theology of Judaism and Paul were fundamentally incorrect.” He claimed that “the Judaism of Paul's day has been wrongly criticized as a religion of ‘works-salvation’ by those in the Protestant tradition.” One scholar says, “He [Sanders] set out ‘to destroy the view of Rabbinic Judaism which is still prevalent in much, perhaps most, New Testament scholarship.’” James D. G. Dunn soon got into the act when he called the movement “The New Perspective on Paul”. Their work inspired a large number of scholars to research and debate the relevant issues, and many books and articles dealing with the subject have been published; literally hundreds. The Anglican Bishop and theologian N. T. Wright has written a large number of books and articles aimed at popularizing the New Perspective outside of academic circles.

Among the prominent biblical scholars engaged in this inquiry are E.P. Sanders, a New Testament scholar who taught at Oxford and Duke University until his retirement in 2005 and known as Ed to his friends and associates; James D.G. Dunn, a New Testament scholar and Methodist minister who teaches at the University of Durham, England and known as Jimmy to his friends and associates; and N.T. Wright, an Anglican bishop and a leading New Testament scholar known as Tom to his friends and associates. In 1977 Sanders published *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. In this book, in which he made an extensive study of Jewish literature and an analysis of Paul's writings, he argues that “the traditional Lutheran understanding of the theology of Judaism and Paul were fundamentally incorrect.” He was joined a little later by another noted Protestant Biblical scholar, James D. G. Dunn, who is credited with coining the phrase “New

Perspective on Paul” during his 1982 Manson Memorial Lecture. According to one scholar, he and Sanders “{redefined} Palestinian Judaism in order to correct the Christian view of Judaism as a religion of works-righteousness.” Sanders and Dunn have inspired a lot of scholars to study the topic and have published many books and articles dealing with the issues involved. Moreover, N. T. Wright has written a large number of books and articles popularizing the New Perspective.

Some have argued that the movement is not monolithic, that the title New Perspective on Paul gives a false impression of unity of belief among scripture scholars and theologians on the matter. In fact, there are many new perspectives on Paul, which has led many scholars to recommend that the movement should be called New Perspectives on Paul. One of them was N. T. Wright, who in 2003 wrote, “there are probably almost as many ‘new perspective’ positions as there are writers espousing it—and I disagree with most of them.”

The biggest issue between the advocates of the Old Perspective and those of the New Perspective has been a debate essentially over what St Paul means by “works of the “law”. St. Paul wrote in Galatians 2:16, “[yet] who know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

Protestants since the time of Luther and Calvin had interpreted Paul’s “works of the law” to mean he had severely condemned them as legalistic efforts to earn God’s favor and earn merit. Paul does contain a lot of criticism of “works of the law”. The Old Perspective interprets this phrase to mean that Paul is arguing against the idea that humans can merit salvation from God by their good works.” One scholar has said of this, “Due to their interpretation of the phrase ‘works of the law’, old-perspective theologians see Paul’s rhetoric as being against human effort to earn righteousness. This is often cited by Lutheran and Reformed theologians as a central feature of the Christian religion, and the concepts of grace alone and faith alone are of great importance within the creeds of these denominations.”

Although the New Perspective scholars agree that we cannot merit salvation, they maintain that Paul is saying that Christians are not obligated to observe the dietary, purification, sabbatical, and other laws required only of Jews, not condemning the laws dealing with good works or righteousness. One scholar says of this matter, “New-perspective interpretations of Paul tend to result in Paul having nothing negative to say about the idea of human effort or good works, and saying many positive things about both. New-perspective scholars point to the many statements in Paul’s writings that specify the criteria of final judgment as being the works of the individual.” This is a point that we made when we were looking at St. Paul’s theology of Justification, Sanctification, and Grace.

New Perspective advocates argue that Paul’s “works of the law” refers to “boundary markers that

set off Jews from Gentiles. By boundary markers is meant observances of the Mosaic Law such as circumcision, dietary and purity laws, sabbatical laws and the like. As we discussed in some detail above on the Old Testament, these laws separated the Jews from the Gentiles. One could clearly distinguish Jews from Gentiles by seeing who followed these laws. They established the boundaries that identifies who were and were not God's people. One source says that New Perspective biblical scholars claim that "Paul came to do away with these 'boundary markers' so that Jew and Gentile would be unified and so that the Abrahamic covenant could be actualized, where all nations are blessed.". Therefore, "when Paul criticized the Jews for adhering to 'works of the law', he was referring to these 'boundary markers' rather than a system of works-righteousness, as is presumed in the traditional understanding of Paul's arguments."

What has been the Catholic reaction to all of this? For the most part, the New Perspective has, by and large an internal debate among Protestant scholars. However, Catholic and Eastern Orthodox scholars generally look favorably to New Perspective ideas, because they see them as approximating the Catholic interpretation of St. Paul since the days of the Church Fathers. In his book *The Catholic Perspective on Paul*, Taylor Marshall:

draws out the continuity and discontinuities between the Protestant New Perspective and the traditional Catholic doctrines of the Council of Trent by emphasizing the doctrine of participation and the believer's union with Christ. From this Catholic point of view, the New Perspective is seen as a step toward the progressive reality of human salvation in Christ. Moreover, passages in the works of many early Church Fathers show that new-perspective-style interpretations were widely held among them.

Of course, the New Paul Perspectives Biblical scholars and theologians, mostly Protestants, deal with other topics in addition to works of the law, such as justification and imputed righteousness, but it would take an entire essay to examine the arguments for and against the New Perspectives regarding these and other subjects.