

Grace, Justification, Trent – and Controversies Thereafter

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1. What Grace is

Biblical description. The greatness of the gift of grace may be judged from the Biblical declarations of the effect of justification. Justification is a passage from the state of sin to the state of grace; from the old to the new man; from the mere flesh to the life of the spirit; from injustice to justice; from condemnation to liberation; from slavery to freedom; from sordidness to purity; from darkness to light; from death to life. The soul of the just man reflects the very light of the Godhead; it shines with a radiance like that of Christ Himself in His Transfiguration on the mountain.

Justification involves a negative effect and a positive one; and the two always go together: the remission of sin, and the infusion of grace.

Grace is favour or good-will. God's favour or goodness to us, is God Himself, as all things in God *are* God. That is Uncreated Grace – which some say was forgotten in the controversies over grace after Trent.

SANCTIFYING GRACE. Sanctifying Grace is a supernatural gift of God by which the soul is made pleasing to Him. In Latin it is called *gratia gratum faciens: grace making one pleasing* – pleasing to God, that is. It removes all stain of serious sin; it gives the soul a new and higher life and prepares the soul for that union with God destined for it in the blessedness of Heaven. It is called *Sanctifying* Grace, because it sanctifies, makes holy, with the Holiness of God Himself. It is a *supernatural* gift, because it is something to which no creature as such can ever have any natural right or claim, or attain by its own powers. It is called *Habitual* Grace, because it dwells and endures in the soul as a habitual, i.e., permanent and constant, quality. It is also called *Justifying* Grace because by it the sinner is “justified”, i.e., made just or righteous.

SANCTIFYING GRACE, A HIGHER LIFE, A PARTICIPATION IN THE DIVINITY. The soul of man gives him a three-fold life. It enables him to grow, mature and reproduce, like a plant (*vegetative life*); to feel and perceive with the five senses, and move and follow instincts, like animals (*sensitive life*); and to think, reason, understand, contemplate, love and choose freely (*intellectual life*). But there is still a higher life, a *divine life*, a life which, by a true and real change, raises man above the natural excellence of the most exalted creatures, and sets him, so to speak, on a level with God Himself; *a life which gives us a share in what is special to God Himself, a share in the knowledge God has of His own perfections and in the happiness He derives therefrom.* This life is given to us by Sanctifying Grace. The state of grace is not merely the absence of mortal sin; it is a positive acquisition and elevation. “Therefore, if any one is in

Christ”, says St Paul, “he is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). Scripture uses three participles: re-created, re-born, renewed. St Peter says the Father “has granted to us His precious and very great promises, that through these you may ... become *partakers of the divine nature*.” (2 Pet 1:4). So Sanctifying Grace is also called Divine or *Divinising* Grace. Some of the Fathers speak of man’s divinisation or deification—as St John of the Cross uses the phrase, “We become God by participation”—which must be understood rightly of course! St John the Apostle says, “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 Jn 3:2), and the Church prays at the Offertory of the Mass that “we may be made sharers in the Divinity of Him who deigned to participate in our humanity.”

SANCTIFYING GRACE MAKES US CHILDREN OF GOD. A rational creature as such is not a *child* of God but a *servant* of God. Through Grace, God adopts us as His sons; and so brothers of Christ. It makes each of us an *alter Christus*, another Christ. We often use that phrase to speak of the effect of ordination, but in the early Fathers it refers to any Christian.

SANCTIFYING GRACE ENTHRONES THE HOLY TRINITY IN OUR SOUL. We speak of the Divine Indwelling. The change in the soul caused by Grace is wrought by all Three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity, but, being a work of Divine Love, it is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. His presence is incompatible with serious sin, “for”, as the Church prays in the Liturgy, “He is Himself the remission of all sins”—that phrase is in both the old and new Roman Missal.¹ The Holy Spirit is the Divine Artist who makes our soul like the soul of Jesus. Making us other Christs, the Holy Spirit takes up His dwelling in our body and soul: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you?” (1 Cor 6:19). The Father and the Son are with the Holy Spirit in this indwelling: “If anyone loves me”, says Christ, “he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him.” (Jn 14:23)

SANCTIFYING GRACE CAUSED IN US BY GOD THROUGH THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST. God is the *principal* cause of Grace; Christ as Man is the *instrumental* cause. His humanity is the instrument of the divinity. He is grace’s transmitter. According to St Thomas,² the entire humanity of Christ co-operates in the production of Grace. The humanity of Christ is joined to God in inseparable union, and is always used by Him in the production of Sanctifying Grace. – God may or may not employ a Sacrament as a means. He often gives Sanctifying Grace outside the Sacraments: “God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but He Himself is not bound by His own sacraments.” (CCC 1257. Cf. St Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, III, q. 64, a. 7: “God did not bind His power to the Sacraments, so as to be unable to bestow the sacramental effect without conferring the Sacrament”.)

With Sanctifying Grace we receive virtues and gifts. These are the necessary concomitants (accompaniments) of grace. They are not grace but always accompany it:

THE DIVINE VIRTUES. With Grace we receive the three Divine Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity: we believe in God because of His truthfulness; we hope in God because of His power and willingness to help us; we love God because of His own goodness and love.

THE MORAL VIRTUES. The Moral Virtues are all those other virtues which are necessary for a good Christian life, which may be grouped under the four headings: Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude. (cf. Wis 8:7)

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Just as sanctifying grace makes our souls *to be* like that of Jesus, the virtues and gifts enable us *to act* like Jesus. A Christian virtue is a power of acting in a Christ-like way.

¹ “... quia ipse est remissio omnium peccatorum”: *Roman Missal*, 1969: 7th week of Easter, Saturday, Prayer over the Gifts. *Missale Romanum*, 1962, *Postcommunio*, Tuesday after Pentecost.

² *Summa Theol.*, III, q. 8, a. 2

*Theological points on grace*³

- *Sanctifying Grace is a created reality.*

Some, such as Peter Lombard (in the *Sentences*, written 1155-57), held that Grace *is* the Holy Spirit. This opinion has long been abandoned; St Thomas comments on it to reject it. Uncreated Grace is God Himself, is God's benevolence toward us; created grace is something distinct. So, as Trent says, it can be increased, and received within us, each according to his own measure, which the Holy Spirit distributes to everyone as He wills.

- *Sanctifying Grace is an interior reality.*

This is a doctrine opposed to Luther and his followers. Scripture speaks with terms such as *seal, gift, seed, charity infused*. The *Roman Catechism* of 1566 expresses it: "Grace is not only that by which the remission of sin occurs, but a divine quality inhering in the soul".

- *Sanctifying Grace is a permanent reality.*

Actual Grace is a transient reality but we are speaking of Sanctifying Grace. One of the errors of Baius (Michael de Bay) condemned by Pope Pius V in 1567 was to say that sanctifying grace "consists formally in obedience to the commandments ... and not rather in a grace infused into the soul through which man is adopted as a son of God and interiorly renewed".⁴ So, for example, we speak of keeping the Baptismal robe unstained until Judgement: because of its enduring quality. Another reason for upholding this enduring quality is that infants are baptized when manifestly they, as yet, receive no grace to do good works. If birth confers a nature and life, then re-birth must similarly communicate something continuous and stable – a new principle of supernatural life.

- *Sanctifying Grace is an ontological reality.*

We add this to distinguish it again from actual grace or from human actions – since some have said that grace is the moral quality of good acts pleasing to God and conducive to eternal life. If infants receive something from Baptism, then it is not transient, and it is not their morally good actions – of which they are incapable when below the age of reason. Again, to speak, as Trent does, of grace being increased or lost or re-acquired, means it is an ontological reality, not merely a mental or moral concept. The Bible speaks of it as a *seed*, as *light*, as *water welling up*.

Monsignor Antonio Piolanti (1910-2001) teaches "it is a doctrine theologically certain that Grace is a created, internal, permanent and ontological reality." (p. 533)

Philosophical points on grace

After identifying the concept of grace as it emerges from the teaching of the Church, we can further specify the inner nature of this gift of which we have been speaking, this gift which God bestows upon the soul: that is, the *metaphysical essence*: whether it be a substance or an accident; and if an accident, to what category it belongs, what is the subject to which it inheres, and whether it is distinct from the soul or charity.

- *Sanctifying Grace is not a substance but an accident.*

Every reality, in fact, is either a substance or an accident. Grace cannot be an incomplete substance with which the human soul unites to form a being of a different species – as for example, hydrogen is joined to oxygen to form water, which is neither hydrogen nor oxygen. A child, when baptized, remains in the species of human being, but with a difference. Grace cannot be a complete substance. If that were so, grace could not communicate its being to

³ The following paragraphs on theological & philosophical points on grace are summarised from Mons. Antonio Piolanti, *Dio nel Mondo e nell'Uomo* (2nd ed. Vatican City 1994) pp. 522-43 (espec. 533-9), 570, 774. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange O.P., *Grace – Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St Thomas, Ia IIae, q. 109-14* (Herder, St Louis 1952) pp. 117-24 covers many of the same points in a different order.

⁴ Proposition 42 of Baius condemned in the Bull *Ex omnibus afflictionibus*: DS 1942

another complete substance, such as man is, but would simply be an efficient agent, and not “inhering” (*inhaerens*) in the soul as Trent says (ch. 16; canon 11) or “infused” (*infunditur*: ch. 16). Such terms can be applied only to accidents.

- Sanctifying Grace is a *quality*.

We can arrive at this by exclusion. *Accidents*, according to Aristotle, are divided into 9 categories: 1. quantity 2. quality 3. relation 4. time 5. place 6. situation (*or posture*) 7. action 8. passion 9. dress (*or habit or condition*).

4 of these 9 are applicable to *material bodies* only (*quantity, place, situation, dress*).

3 of them (*time, action & passion*) relate to *movement or change*, which is transient, whereas grace is a permanent reality.

That leaves only *relation* and *quality*.

Grace cannot simply be a *relation*, since the Bible and the Church and the Fathers speak of grace as a *gift*, a *virtue*, a *habit* and other terms to indicate something absolute which renews and elevates the soul to the supernatural level. Further, to call grace a *relation* merely postpones the question, because this new relation needs a foundation in the soul: “It is not a relation, since relation demands a foundation, and sanctifying grace is itself the foundation of the relationship by which we are called children of God and it ordains us to glory, inasmuch as it is the seed of glory.”⁵

That leaves one only: *quality*. Grace is a quality.

What category of quality? Aristotle divides the predicament *quality* into four species: powers, habitual states (*habitus*), alterations (*passiones*), geometrical formations (*figurae*).

It is not a *geometrical figure*, for it is not a body.

It is not a *passion or passible quality*, which is in the sensitive part of the soul; further, a passion is transient – and sanctifying grace is not transient (ruled out earlier).

“Nor is it a ... natural *power* or impotence, because grace is above nature and does not regard good *and evil*, as does natural power.”⁶ I think Aquinas’ meaning is that a power may be put to good or evil use: whereas grace cannot be used for an evil purpose.

Aquinas concludes: “Therefore it must be in the first species, which is *habit*”.⁷

- Sanctifying Grace is a *habit*.

To specify further:

- Habits can be *entitative* or *operative*. *Entitative* habits dispose an individual *to be* good or bad, while *operative* habits dispose him *to act* well or badly. So we say Grace is an *entitative habit* which disposes the soul in itself, elevating it to the supernatural order, while the *operative habits* are the virtues: faith, hope and charity, which also being supernatural, dispose the soul *to act* conformably with its elevated nature.

- Sanctifying Grace is *located in the soul*.

Grace is not simply in the powers of the soul, but in the soul itself, the essence of the soul. This is affirmed explicitly by St Thomas: “As man in his intellectual power participates in the divine knowledge through the virtue of faith, and in his power of will participates in the divine love through the virtue of charity, so also in the nature of the soul does he participate

⁵ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, p. 117

⁶ St Thomas, *Summa*, I-II, q. 110, art. 3, obj. 3.

⁷ St Thomas, having said grace is a *quality* (*Summa*, I-II, q. 110, art. 2), analyses the four species of *quality*, and concludes grace is not the same as *virtue*, as some had said, but belongs to the species of *habit*: I-II, q. 110, art. 3, obj. 3 & ad 3.

in the divine nature, after the manner of a likeness, through a certain regeneration or re-creation.”⁸

- Sanctifying Grace is *really distinct from* the soul and its *powers*, and from *charity*. Grace does not destroy nature but perfects it and elevates it. As man has a human *nature*, so man in a state of grace has a participation in the *divine nature*; as man has *faculties*, so a Christian man has *infused virtues* in his faculties; a man has *operations* and a *reward*, so a baptized man has *actual graces* guiding his *operations* to perform actions meriting a *supernatural* reward.⁹

Further philosophical analysis leads to the conclusion, given by Garrigou-Lagrange, that “sanctifying grace is a participation in the divine nature, not only moral but physical, not only virtual but formal; analogical, however, imperfectly imitating as an accident what, in God, is substance.”¹⁰

Good works cannot be performed without Actual Grace. Without a help from God, known as Actual Grace (God’s *action* upon the soul), the virtues given with Sanctifying Grace will never produce the fruit of good works. Deprived of this help, we should be unable to keep God’s Commandments, and so should lose Sanctifying Grace, which would thus prove a useless gift. So Actual Grace is the due accompaniment of Sanctifying Grace.

THE NATURE OF ACTUAL GRACE. Actual Grace is a supernatural gift of God, enabling us to do something towards eternal life. It is supernatural, because it is a help towards happiness to which we, as creatures, can have no claim. It is a transient, or passing, aid, and is present in the soul only while the soul is acting. It is like the electric current which, passing for an instant through the wire wound round an iron bar, gives the bar a momentary magnetic power. Sanctifying Grace, on the other hand, is something permanent, and is like the electric power in a storage battery. Sanctifying Grace makes us friends of God, while Actual Grace enables us to act the part of friends.

Actual Grace works on our souls in a twofold manner: (1) it enlightens the understanding, and (2) it strengthens the will and reduces the attractiveness of evil.

Actual Grace helps the sinner and the unbeliever to acquire Sanctifying Grace. The state of Sanctifying Grace is opposed to the state of sin. Both cannot exist in the soul at the same time. One excludes the other, as light excludes darkness. But there is no such opposition between Actual Grace and sinfulness, because Actual Grace is given to the sinner and the unbeliever as well as to the just. It is in fact the very means God uses to draw all erring souls to Him. To the unbeliever, He gives sufficient light to know the truth, and sufficient strength to embrace it; to the sinner, He gives the grace of repentance.

Complete definition of Actual Grace. Actual Grace is a supernatural help from God, which, working within us, enlightens our mind and moves our will to do good and avoid evil for the sake of eternal life. It is a help from God which enables us to perform acts that lead to the acquisition of Sanctifying Grace, or its preservation and increase, or its recovery.

Actual grace is not a *habitual quality* but a certain *motion* of the soul – a gratuitous effect of God upon the soul towards something to be known or willed or done.¹¹

External graces

The grace of which we have been speaking so far is *internal* grace, so called because it dwells or acts *within* the soul. All the other helps which God gives us towards heaven are included

⁸ *Summa Theol.*, I-II, q. 110, art. 4

⁹ Piolanti, p. 774

¹⁰ *Grace*, p. 128

¹¹ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, pp. 117, 119. To be more technical: action, as transitive, producing a correlative passion in the patient, belongs to the category of *action*, but actual grace belongs to the category of *quality*, being an immanent action.

under the term *external* grace. Thus, the Incarnation, the Scriptures, and the Church, and Providential things leading us to God, are external graces, because they are not actually present within our soul.

Some remarks on Orthodox teaching on grace

I read a book, *Our Orthodox Christian Faith*, a little manual of dogma by a Greek Orthodox priest in Athens, translated into English, written in 1973. The author has a chapter headed, “Divine Grace” and in 14 pages he says just as we would say about the effects of grace, and the necessity to have faith and charity and to keep the commandments to be saved. At the same time, he insists on the gratuitousness of grace, and its necessity to make the first step towards God and to be pleasing to Him. He criticises the Protestant error of denying the role of good works. Then in an endnote he adds polemical remarks against the Catholic notion of merit and supererogatory works, and indulgences.

But I notice that, in him, as in other Eastern Orthodox authors, there is no distinction between habitual and actual grace. They pass from talking about one to the other without noticing. They reject scholastic categories when presented to them. For example, a Russian Orthodox monk of recent times, Fr Seraphim Rose, writes: “This [Catholic] idea of supernatural (created) grace is to be distinguished from the Orthodox understanding of grace as the Uncreated Energy of God, through which man participates in God’s life.”¹² He then quotes Russian Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky: “For Eastern tradition the created supernatural has no existence. That which Western theology calls by the name *supernatural* signifies for the East *Uncreated*—the Divine Energies ineffably distinct from the Essence of God.”¹³ In the book by Fr Seraphim, he quotes the Fathers extensively and calls them “Saint” but he always refers to “Blessed Augustine,” never “Saint”. His explanation of Original Justice and Original Sin are so different from Augustine and Aquinas. He only quotes Aquinas to disagree with him.

2. The teaching of the Council of Trent: *Decree on Justification*

In *doctrinal* matters (as opposed to *disciplinary*—decrees of reform), Trent began by professing the *Nicene Creed* (Session 3 in 1546), and then dealt, first, with the *Canon of Scripture* (Session 4 in 1546: defining the full canon for the first time); then *Original Sin* (Session 5 in 1546); then came the major topic of *Justification* (Session 6 in 1547).

In a sense, Justification was the major thing to be resolved – before the Council could talk about the number of the Sacraments, their nature and effects, Purgatory, and so on.

At Vianney College, in my lectures on Grace, we read the complete Decree of Trent on Justification - 17 small chapters and the 33 canons. I said this to Fr Richard Aladics of Yorkshire diocese (he’s at this Good Shepherd Seminary) – and he said they read the decree fully at the English College of Valladolid, Spain. Anyway, in case you haven’t seen it or read it, I’ve left copies here to collect at the end of the talk.

The theological note, *De fide*, applies to Trent’s entire Decree on Justification, as the expressions of the Preface make clear:

“the Council of Trent ... intends ... to expound to all the faithful of Christ the true and sound doctrine of ... Justification; ... most strictly forbidding that anyone henceforth

¹² Fr. Seraphim Rose (1934-1982), *Genesis, Creation, and Early Man – The Orthodox Christian Vision* (2nd ed. 1143 pages, St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, California 2011) p. 715

¹³ Quoted in Fr. Seraphim Rose, p. 715, from V. Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 88. I can follow the first half of the last sentence but I have no idea what Lossky means by “the Divine Energies ineffably distinct from the Essence of God.”

presume to believe, preach, or teach otherwise than is defined and declared in this present decree.”

When a Council speaks infallibly; the case of Vatican II

People ask, “Is Vatican II infallible?” There was a debate over this in the *Letters to the Editor* of *AD2000* about a year ago. Vatican Council II made no proclamations infallibly, but it did *repeat* many teachings already proclaimed infallibly by the Church.

A General Council only speaks infallibly when promulgating a Creed, or doctrinal canons, or a doctrine or decree to which it attaches a note expressing, in some way, that the teaching therein is the faith of the Church and no one may teach or hold otherwise: another example of such is Trent’s preface to its 1551 *Decree on the Holy Eucharist*:

“... forbidding all the faithful to presume to believe, teach or preach henceforth concerning the Holy Eucharist otherwise than is defined and declared in this present decree.” (DS 1635)

Remember there are 3 ways that the Church teaches infallibly: 1. Ordinary universal teaching declared by the Pope and Bishops unanimously in their day-to-day teaching. 2. Definitions of Councils. 3. Definitions of Popes.

Vatican II quoted or paraphrased or re-asserted teachings given infallibly by earlier Popes or Councils or Bishops. For example:

- it mentioned the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist (defined by Trent);
- it re-asserted the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption (defined by Popes in 1854 and 1950);
- the Council also repeated the teaching delivered infallibly by the ordinary and universal magisterium, when, for example, it said that Christ founded the Church.

When Pope Benedict on Easter Sunday morning proclaims to the crowds at St Peter’s Piazza, “Christ is risen,” he is not speaking infallibly, but is *repeating* what has already been proclaimed infallibly by Councils, in Creeds.

The two dogmatic constitutions of Vatican II (on the Church and on Revelation), in themselves, were not proclaimed infallibly, but are on the same level as Papal and Episcopal ordinary statements—not solemn, not infallible, but authoritative (or *authentic – authenticus* in mediæval Latin means *authoritative*). And just as Papal statements can be graded as higher and more serious when addressed to the universal Church, or having lesser authority when delivered to select audiences, for example, so too, a statement from Vatican II has a higher authority within the ordinary level, since it comes from a Council; and within the Council itself there are rankings of “dogmatic constitutions” above the “pastoral constitution” and the “declarations.”

A General Council can err when not defining. For instance, the Council of Florence, in its *Decree for the Armenians* (returning to union with Rome) issued in 1439 said: “The sixth sacrament is Order, the *matter* of which is that through the handing over (*traditio*) of which the Order is conferred, just as the priesthood is transmitted through the presentation (*porrectio*) of the chalice with the wine, and the paten with bread ... The *form* of this priesthood is: «Receive the power to offer sacrifice in the Church for the living and the dead, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit».” (DS 1326)

Pius XII in 1947, in *Sacramentum Ordinis*, differed on both the matter and the form of Priesthood—but how could he over-ride a decree of a General Council? We have to explain by saying that the Council’s decree was not a solemn (& therefore infallible) *definition*, but a convenient *presentation of doctrine* on the seven Sacraments, presenting the common theology of the time, without the intention to define. It is lacking the marks of a solemn definition. Looking closely at the decree of the Council, we see it contains first a Creed, and then acceptance of the definitions of Chalcedon, and other things; and then, fifth in line, a section on each of the Sacraments, which is described as a “very brief formula...for the sake of an easier instruction of the Armenians”. It is almost *verbatim* from an *opusculum* (*De articulis fidei*) of St Thomas.

The bars of the Second Vatican Council: I had a lecturer in dogmatic theology in Rome, Father Renzo Lavatori, a great theologian and writer, a good Thomist, and he told us that when he was a seminarian during Vatican II, he had the job with others of distributing papers to the Council Fathers at the start of each session, and in between sessions, everyone could go for a coffee or refreshment at the two bars set up at each end of St Peter's Basilica—and because of the types that gathered at each one, they became known as *Bar-Jonas*, and *Bar-rabbas!*

Trent has highly developed teaching on the bestowal or increase or loss or re-acquisition of *grace*—yet, interestingly, it never *defines* grace; it never explicitly distinguishes between sanctifying grace and actual grace; it never says whether grace is a substance or an accident, whether it is a habit or a quality, and so on. I read in Hubert Jedin that two men who contributed greatly to the text were Cardinal Cervini, and the General of the Augustinians, Father Seripando.

Chapter 1: The inability of Nature and of the Law to justify man

All men had lost innocence in the sin of Adam and were under the power of the devil and of death. Neither the Gentiles, by force of nature, nor the Jews by the law of Moses, were able to be liberated therefrom; even though free-will remained in them, though weakened.

Chapter 2: The Dispensation and Mystery of Christ's Advent

God the Father sent His own Son Jesus Christ, both to redeem the Jews who were under the Law, and the Gentiles, that all might receive the adoption of sons.

Chapter 3: Who are justified through Christ

“Though He died for all (2 Cor 5:15), yet not all receive the benefit of His death, but only those to whom the merit of His passion is communicated.” Only through being born again in Christ is there bestowed upon us, through the merit of His passion, the grace whereby we are made just and transferred to the kingdom of light.

Obiter dictum: on all being saved

Trent's decree rules out von Balthasar's opinion that all will be saved: the decree declares, at the start of chapter 3, quote: “Although ‘He died for all’, not all, however, receive the benefit of His death, but only those to whom the merit of His Passion is communicated.” (DS 1523). Therefore, if you say *all will be saved*, you have incurred the anathema of Trent which declares in the preface to the decree, that it is “most strictly forbidding that anyone henceforth presume to believe, preach, or teach otherwise than is defined and declared in this present decree.” Some had reservations about von Balthasar getting the red hat – and so did God: God let him receive nomination as Cardinal, but He took him by death before he got to receive the red hat.

Chapter 4: A brief description of the Justification of the sinner, and its mode in the state of grace

Justification of the sinner is a transferral from that state wherein man is born a child of the first Adam, to the state of grace, and of adoption as sons of God through the second Adam, Christ our Saviour. Since the promulgation of the Gospel, this transferral cannot be effected without Baptism or desire for it, as it is written: *Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.* (Jn 3:5)

Chapter 5: The necessity, in adults, of preparation for Justification, and whence it proceeds

“The Synod furthermore declares, that in adults the beginning of the said Justification is to be derived from the prevenient [pre-disposing] grace of God through Jesus Christ, that is, from His calling whereby, without any existing merits on their part, they are called; that they who by sin were alienated from God, may be disposed through his arousing and assisting grace, to convert themselves to their own justification, by freely assenting to and co-operating with that said grace: so while God touches the heart of man by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, man himself is neither utterly inactive while he receives that inspiration, inasmuch as he is also able to reject it; yet he is not able, by his own free will, without the

grace of God, to move himself unto justice in His sight. Hence when it is said in the Scriptures: *Turn to me and I will turn to you* (Zach 1:3), we are admonished of our liberty; and when we answer: *Convert us, O Lord, to You, and we shall be converted* (Lam 5:21), we confess that we are anticipated [‘pre-vented’ – preceded] by the grace of God.”

Chapter 6: The manner of preparation

Adults are disposed to that justice, when, aroused and aided by divine grace, they come to faith, and are freely moved towards God.

Chapter 7: In what the Justification of the sinner consists, and what are its causes

This disposition or preparation is followed by Justification itself, which is not merely remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inner man, through the voluntary reception of grace and of the gifts whereby an unjust man becomes just, and from being an enemy becomes a friend and an heir to everlasting life.

Trent then applies the four causes of Aristotle regarding the bestowal of grace—except that a *material* cause (which cannot be for a spiritual reality) is replaced by an *instrumental* cause, namely, Baptism.

“The causes of this Justification are:

the *final* cause, namely, is the glory of God and of Christ, and life everlasting;

while the *efficient* cause is the merciful God who *washes and sanctifies* (1 Cor 6:11) gratuitously, sealing and anointing *with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance* (Eph 1:13-14),

but the *meritorious* cause is His most beloved Only-begotten, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, *when we were enemies* (Rom 5:10), *for the abounding charity wherewith He loved us* (Eph 2:4) merited Justification for us by His most holy Passion on the wood of the cross, and made satisfaction for us to God the Father;

now the *instrumental* cause is the Sacrament of Baptism, which is the sacrament of faith, without which [faith] no man is ever justified; (Heb 11)

finally, the sole *formal* cause is the justice of God, not that by which He Himself is just – [*thus the error of identifying grace with the Holy Spirit is rejected*]¹⁴ – but that whereby He makes us just, that, namely, with which we, being endowed by Him, are *renewed in the spirit of our mind* (Eph 4:23) and we are not only reputed, but are truly called, and *are* just, receiving justice within us, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Spirit distributes to every one as He wills (1 Cor 12:11) and according to each one’s disposition and co-operation. For, although no one can be just, but he to whom the merits of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ are communicated, yet this is done in the said justification of the sinner, when by the merit of that same most holy Passion, *the charity of God is poured forth by the Holy Spirit in the hearts* (Rom 5:5) of those who are justified, and inheres in them; whence, man, through Jesus Christ, in whom he is ingrafted, receives, in that justification, together with the remission of sins, all these [gifts] infused at once: faith, hope, and charity. For faith, unless hope and charity be added thereto, neither unites man perfectly with Christ, nor makes him a living member of His body. For which reason it is most truly said that *Faith without works is dead* (Jam 2:17) and profitless; and *In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision, but faith that works by charity* (Gal 5:6).”

Chapter 8: How the gratuitous justification of the sinner by faith is to be understood

“And when the Apostle says that man is justified by faith and freely (Rom 3:24; 5:1), those words are to be understood in that sense which the perpetual unanimity of the Catholic Church has held and expressed; namely, that we are therefore said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and the root of all

¹⁴ Piolanti, p. 523; Garrigou-Lagrange, p. 120.

Justification; *without which it is impossible to please God* (Heb 11:6); and we are therefore said to be justified freely, because none of those things which precede justification—whether faith or works—merits the grace itself of justification. *For, if by grace, it is not now by works, otherwise, as the same Apostle says, grace is no more grace.*” (Rom 11:6)

Chapter 9: Against the vain confidence of heretics

But, though it is necessary to believe that sins neither are remitted, nor ever were remitted except gratuitously by divine mercy for Christ’s sake; yet is it not to be said that sins are forgiven, to anyone who boasts of his confidence and certainty of the remission of his sins, and rests on that alone; seeing that it may exist, indeed does in our troubled days exist, among heretics and schismatics; and with great vehemence is this vain confidence, alien from all godliness, preached in opposition to the Catholic Church. But neither is this to be asserted—that they who are truly justified must, without any doubting whatever, settle within themselves that they are justified, and that no one is absolved from sins and justified, but he that believes for certain that he is absolved and justified; and that absolution and justification are effected by this faith alone: as though whoever lacks this belief, doubts the promises of God and the efficacy of the death and resurrection of Christ. For even as no pious person ought to doubt of the mercy of God, of the merit of Christ, and of the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments, even so each one, when he considers himself, and his own weakness and indisposition, may have fear and apprehension concerning his own grace; seeing that no one can know with the certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God.

Chapter 10: On the increase of Justification received

Having, therefore, been justified, and made friends of God, advancing *from virtue to virtue* (Ps 83:8) they are *renewed*, as the Apostle says, *day by day* (2 Cor 4:16), through the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, faith co-operating with good works, and so they *increase* in that justice received through the grace of Christ, and are further justified, as it is written: *He that is just, let him be justified still* (Apoc 22:11). The Church begs for this increase of justification when she prays, “Grant unto us, O Lord, an increase of faith, hope, and charity.” (Roman Missal, Sun 13 post Pentecost; now Collect of Sun 30)

Chapter 11: On keeping the Commandments, and on the necessity and possibility thereof

But no one, however much justified, should think himself exempt from the observance of the commandments; no one should use that rash saying, one prohibited by the Fathers under an anathema, that the observance of God’s commandments is impossible for one who is justified. “For God does not command impossibilities, but, by commanding, both admonishes you to do what you can, and to pray for what you can not,” (St Augustine, *On Nature and Grace* 43:50) and aids you that you may be able; *whose commandments are not heavy* (1 John 5:3), whose *yoke is sweet, and burden light* (Matt 11:30). For they who are the sons of God love Christ; but they who love Him keep His commandments (John 14:15, 23), as He Himself testifies; which indeed with divine help they can do. For though during this mortal life, men, however holy and just, at times fall into at least light and daily sins, which are also called venial, they do not on that account cease to be just. For that cry of the just, *forgive us our trespasses* (Matt 6:12), is both humble and true. For God does not forsake those who have been once justified by His grace, unless He be first forsaken by them.

Wherefore, no one ought to flatter himself with faith alone, thinking that by faith alone he is made an heir, and will obtain the inheritance, even though he not *suffer with Christ, that he may also be glorified with Him* (Rom 8:17). For which reason, the same Apostle admonishes the justified, saying: *Do you not know that they who run in the race all run indeed, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may win. I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air, but I chastize my body, and bring it into subjection; lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway* (1 Cor 9:24, 26-27). So also the prince of the Apostles, Peter: *Labour the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election.* (2 Pet 1:10). They are

opposed to the orthodox doctrine of religion who assert that the just man sins at least venially in every good work, or (what is more intolerable) that he merits eternal punishments; as also those who state that the just sin in all their works, if in order to arouse their laziness and to encourage themselves to run the race, they, in addition to this, that above all God may be glorified, have in view also the eternal reward.

Infallibly proclaimed moral teaching

By the way, whoever says that the Church has never *defined* any moral teaching (in a decree or a canon) has never read Trent (in other words, never studied at Vianney College, Wagga Wagga – or Valladolid). Chapter 11 of this Decree is all about the relevance of the Ten Commandments to Christians, and their binding force in the New Law (denied by Luther). Also, Canon 2 after Trent’s *Decree on Matrimony* (1563) says, “If anyone say it is lawful for Christians to have several wives at the same time; and that this is not prohibited by any divine law, *anathema sit.*” – A dogmatic canon regarding morality.

Now, the American Jesuit, who taught at the Gregorian University for a number of years, Fr Francis Sullivan, and others following him, say that the Church has never taught any moral doctrine infallibly. They even deny the Church *could* ever define a moral teaching (or only a revealed moral doctrine, not a point of the natural law). That error, is technically what in theology is called the error of a *drongo*. Vatican I defined the conditions for Papal infallibility, saying that the Pope speaks infallibly, under certain conditions, “when he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals”: the phrase is “*de fide et moribus*”.

Chapter 12: Rash presumption in the matter of Predestination is to be avoided

No one, so long as he lives in this mortal life, ought to presume for certain that he is assuredly in the number of the predestined; as if he that is justified either cannot sin any more, or, if he does sin, ought to promise himself an assured repentance; for except by a special revelation, it cannot be known whom God has chosen for Himself.

Chapter 13: The gift of Perseverance

So also as regards the gift of perseverance—which cannot be derived from any other but Him who is able to establish him who stands that he stand perseveringly, and to restore him who falls:—let no one herein promise himself anything as certain with an absolute certainty; though all ought to place and repose a most firm hope in God’s help. For unless men be themselves lacking in His grace, God, as *He has begun the good work, so will He perfect it, working (in them) to will and to accomplish.* (Phil 1:6; 2:13) Nevertheless, *let those who think themselves to stand, take heed lest they fall* (1 Cor 10:12), and, *with fear and trembling work out their salvation* (Phil 2:12), in labours, in watchings, in alms-deeds, in prayers and oblations, in fastings and chastity: for, knowing that they are born again unto a hope of glory, but not as yet unto glory, they ought to fear for the combat which yet remains with the flesh, with the world, with the devil, wherein they cannot be victorious unless with God’s grace they be obedient.

Chapter 14: The fallen, and their restoration

As regards those who by sin have fallen from the received grace of Justification, they can again be justified, when, God, arousing them, they shall by Christ’s merits and through the sacrament of Penance recover the grace lost. For those who fall into sins after baptism, Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance, when he said, *Receive the Holy Spirit: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.* (Jn 20:22, 23).

Chapter 15: By every mortal sin, grace is lost, but not faith

The grace of Justification is lost, not only by unbelief whereby even faith itself is lost, but also by any other mortal sin whatever, even when faith is not lost. The divine law excludes from the kingdom of God not only the unbelieving, but also believers who are *fornicators, adulterers, perverts, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, slanderers, extortioners* (1 Cor 6:9-10) and all others who commit deadly sins; from which, with the help of divine grace, they can refrain.

Chapter 16: The fruit of Justification, that is, the merit of good works, and the nature of that merit

Therefore, before men who have been justified in this manner—whether they have preserved uninterruptedly the grace received, or whether they have recovered it when lost—are to be set the words of the Apostle: *Abound in every good work, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord* (1 Cor 15:58), for *God is not unjust, that He should forget your work, and the love which you have shown in His name* (Heb 6:10) and, *do not lose your confidence, which has a great reward.* (Heb 10:35) And, for this cause, life eternal is to be offered to those working well *unto the end* (Matt 10:22) and hoping in God, both as a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God through Jesus Christ, and as a reward which is according to the promise of God Himself, to be faithfully rendered to their good works and merits. For, since Christ Jesus Himself continually infuses His virtue into the said justified—as the head into the members, and the vine into the branches—and this virtue always precedes and accompanies and follows their good works, which without it could not in any way be pleasing and meritorious before God—we must believe that nothing further is wanting to the justified, to prevent their being accounted to have, by those very works which have been done in God, fully satisfied the divine law according to the state of this life, and to have truly merited eternal life, to be obtained also in its due time. Thus, neither is our own justice established as our own as from ourselves (Rom 10:3; 2 Cor 3:5), nor is the justice of God ignored or repudiated: for that justice which is called ours, because we are justified from its being inherent in us, that same is (the justice) of God, because it is infused into us by God, through the merit of Christ. Neither is this to be omitted—that although in the sacred writings so much is attributed to good works, that Christ promises, that *even he that shall give a drink of cold water to one of His least ones, shall not lose his reward* (Matt 10:42), and the Apostle testifies that, *That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, works for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory* (2 Cor 4:17), nevertheless far be it that a Christian should either trust or glory in himself, and not in the Lord (1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17), whose bounty towards all men is so great, that He will have the things which are His own gifts to be their merits. And since *in many things we all offend* (Jam 3:2), each one ought to have before his eyes not only the severity and judgment, as well as the mercy and goodness (of God); neither ought anyone to judge himself, even though he be not conscious to himself of anything (1 Cor 4:3-4); because the whole life of man is to be examined and judged, not by the judgment of man, but of God *who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall every man have praise from God* (1 Cor 4:5), who, as it is written, *will render to every man according to his works* (Matt 16:27; Rom 2:6; Apoc 22:12).

Journet on merit

God sets in us the sap of grace and of charity, with which we can produce repeated acts of grace and charity with growing intensity; they are the fruits, and the final fruit will be entrance into the heavenly kingdom. Merit is a title to reward in justice. But can God be obliged in justice towards us? Can there be any proportion between what we give Him—we who have received all we possess from Him—and the supreme gifts of His grace and His love? Not, indeed, if we are left to ourselves and our own efforts. But there is, if He sets in us the sap of His grace and love, and asks us to make it bear fruit in still further grace and love. Our very merits are the gifts of God. Hence the saying of St Augustine: “When God crowns our merits, He crowns His own gifts.”¹⁵

But are they our merits or the merits of Christ? The Protestant procedure, here as elsewhere, is to oppose instead of to subordinate. To the merits of *Christ alone* it opposes the merits of *man alone*. It pronounces for salvation by the merits of Christ alone, and imputes to us the theory of salvation by the merits of man alone, the Pelagian view condemned by the Church as heretical. What, then, is the real Catholic doctrine? It is summed up in one sentence: our merits are from God and Christ as first cause, and from us as second cause: God gives us, in Christ, the power to assent to Him. We recur to Christ’s comparison: “I

¹⁵ “cum Deus coronat merita nostra, nihil aliud coronet quam munera sua?” Letter 194 to Pope Sixtus, no. 19

am the vine, and you the branches. He that abides in me bears much fruit.” Does the fruit come from the *trunk* (Christ) or the *branches* (us)? From the trunk through the branch.

We cannot merit the *first* grace of all; it is always an antecedent gift. But once in the state of charity, we can always, through charity, merit an ever greater degree of charity and, at the moment of death, eternal life.

Trent then summarises the chief points of the decree, in 33 canons, all ending with “anathema sit.”

3. The Protestant errors regarding grace & justification

Now I don't mind saying, as part of ecumenical exchange, that Luther (1483-1546) was a maniac, and Calvin (1509-64) was a raving maniac. Luther had been a priest and Augustinian monk; Calvin was reared a Catholic, but was never ordained or took vows. The two men never met.

Justification by faith alone

Luther taught, as everyone knows, justification by faith alone. No other disposition, such as hope or charity (contrition?) is needed. Apart from the error of “faith *alone*,” there are three other differences from us within that proposition “justification by faith alone”:

- By “faith” he meant not really the theological virtue of *faith* as we define it, but a *fiducial* faith, a *trust* that for the sake of Christ's merits God will not punish us as we deserve.
- Further, he also meant by “justification,” *permanent and irreversible justification*; in other words, once justified you are saved; you can never lose that state of justification, no matter what you do. Evangelicals and other Fundamentalists today hold the same. Some say that apostasy alone can destroy it; others, when pushed, say that later abominable sins show that one did not really have faith to begin with.
- In contrast to the idea that grace and justification are interior realities, Luther and Calvin held grace is a merely extrinsic imputation by God of the grace merited by Christ. In other words, there is no interior renewal but you are treated differently by God, though you have not changed. That is the basis for Luther's saying, “Simul iustus et peccator” – “Righteous and sinful at the same time.” In this system, justification does not demand an infusion of habitual grace or the theological virtues.

Further, for Luther the justice conferred is *equal* for all; it cannot increase through good works.

We need to know how to reconcile the texts of St Paul who said such things as “For no human being will be justified in God's sight by works of the law” (Rom 3:20); with Rom 2:6: “For He will render to every man according to his works”. In the first quote, St Paul is talking about the Old Law. So the quote provides no difficulty. Luther was applying it to the New Law—a complete misinterpretation.

When researching the life of St Edmund Campion, I discovered a book published in 1999, the full text of the transcripts of his four debates in the Tower of London with the Protestant theologians. Those transcripts were taken down privately by Catholics present. One exchange was very enlightening for me. For I never knew how to reconcile the texts of St Paul who said such things as, “we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law” (Rom 3:28) and Rom 5:1: “since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God”—with such texts as Rom 2:6: “For He will render to every man according to his works”. The way to reconcile them is to make a distinction between the works *before* faith, and the works *after* faith; between the initial justification (all a work of grace) – and the life of grace lived thereafter, where you are held to account for the gift of grace entrusted to you, where you

must invest your gift and make a return. *Before* faith, your works have no supernatural value; *after* faith your works are crucial and have value.

Campion on works before faith and after faith

Charke. If there be anything specially laboured and therewithal plain and evident in all the Scriptures, it is this profession: *sola fides justificat* [faith alone justifies]. And here I protest in the Lord that in the behalf of this audience to whom, as Campion lately said but feignedly to the doctors, I am ready in the Lord God to do all the service I may. I will allege 11 places out of the Scripture which do manifestly prove it to be the plain and true sense of God's Word that faith only doth justify.

Campion. This position, that faith only doth justify, is not in all the Word of God.

1. *Charke.* There are eleven places negative that works do not justify. [Which he then enumerated].¹⁶

Campion. Of all your places there is none that doth probably [probatively] prove your position. And because you do generally vouch them, I will answer them generally. The cause why St Paul urges faith so much was because he was troubled with two kind of people, the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews thought they might not be justified without the performance of the ceremonies of the Old Law, and the performance thereof was the cause of their election. And likewise the Gentiles attributed so much to the moralities [the natural moral law], thinking them to be the cause of their election, to avoid which errors was the scope of that epistle to the Romans, and to exclude works going *before* faith, and not to exclude works done in grace *after* faith. And this is my answer generally to those places alleged, reserving their several answers to every place incidently as they are alleged. (*Edmund Campion*, 2010 ed., p. 423)

Predestination

What undoubtedly prompted Luther to invent his novel doctrines regarding salvation and how to achieve it was his obsession over whether he was saved or would be saved. He wanted to know whether he was among the predestined. Usually it's better to avoid that word "pre-destined" even though it is Biblical and is in St Paul. Recently, I read a short book by Swiss theologian Fr Charles Journet, talks by him given in 1956, *The Meaning of Grace*. The book is a little masterpiece – most of it is in simple and colloquial terms, but backed by a lot of learning. He treats of predestination concisely and ably.¹⁷

¹⁶ Here are the 11 passages in full:

1. Romans 3:20: "For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law".
2. Romans 3:21-22: "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, ... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe".
3. Romans 3:28: "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law."
4. Romans 4:6: "David pronounces a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works".
5. Romans 4:13: "The promise to Abraham and his descendants ... did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith."
6. Romans 9:11: "though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call".
7. Romans 11:6: "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace."
8. Galatians 2:16: "We ourselves ... know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified."
9. Ephesians 2:8-9: "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."
10. 2 Timothy 1:9: "who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus".
11. Titus 3:5-7: "he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy ... through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that we might be justified by his grace".

¹⁷ Some of the paragraphs following are taken from him, adapted & shortened.

In short, if anyone is not among the predestined, it is in consequence of a refusal for which he bears and always will bear the responsibility. I remember Father Peter Little S.J. saying, “Everyone is predestined—predestined to Heaven. All are predestined to heaven—but that plan of God can be thwarted by human sin and refusal.” We reconcile God’s will or plan with the outcome by speaking of God’s *antecedent* will and *consequent* will. As a teacher, I want all my students to pass and even excel—but when I mark them after the exams, I can pass some and fail others.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, at par. 1037: “God predestines no one to go to Hell; for this a wilful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end.” Par. 600 says: “To God, all moments of time are present in their immediacy. When therefore He establishes His eternal plan of ‘predestination’, He includes in it each person’s free response to His grace”.

Calvin on predestination

Calvin’s doctrine in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is that, just as some are predestined to Heaven, so are others to Hell. God Himself therefore leads them to Hell, and they cannot escape it. This is the thesis of *double predestination*: one to Heaven, which is just—but even in that they understood it wrongly; for Luther and Calvin, the good act comes solely from God, and not from God through man. So there is a two-fold error here: predestination to Heaven is misconceived, and the idea of predestination to Hell is introduced—a still worse aberration. Generally, Protestants today no longer defend Calvin on this point; Swiss Calvinist theologian Karl Barth (pronounced ‘Bart’) (1886-1968) declared frankly that he cannot find this idea of predestination to Hell anywhere in St Paul. Moslems also believe in double predestination: some are fated by Allah for Heaven; others are fated by Allah for Hell.

As we know, some Catholics are deeply troubled by the problem of predestination. A man may ask himself: “Am I saved? If I am predestined whatever I do, I am sure of salvation; and if I am not predestined, whatever good I do is no use at all.”

The (15th century) *Imitation of Christ*, Book 1, chapter 25, mentions a case briefly:

A certain man being in anxiety of mind, continually tossed about between hope and fear, and being one day overwhelmed with grief, cast himself down in prayer before the altar in a church, and meditated within himself, saying, “Oh! if I but knew that I should persevere,” and presently heard within him a voice from God, “And if you did know it, what would you do? Do *now* what you would do *then*, and you shall be very secure.” And straightaway being comforted and strengthened, he committed himself to the will of God and the perturbation of spirit ceased, neither had he a mind any more to search curiously to know what should befall him hereafter, but studied rather to inquire what was the good and acceptable will of God, for the beginning and perfecting of every good work.

For the question of predestination, the saints managed to find answers that resolved it, not theoretically, but concretely. The devil tried to trouble Saint Teresa with the thought that all was fore-ordained: “Why give yourself all this trouble?”, he asked her, “The die is cast!” In her spirited way, she replied: “Then it was not worthwhile for you to take the trouble to come and tell me!”

Catholic-Lutheran reconciliation?

In 1999 was issued a Lutheran-Catholic *Common Declaration on Justification* (Cardinal Ratzinger said at the time that it has no authority). Of course, to clear up the differences definitively or to establish them clearly, all we should do is to ask Lutherans to go through Trent’s decree line by line, and say what they *can* accept, and what they *cannot* accept, and *why not*: what reason they have exactly. Or likewise, go through the 33 canons, and say which they can accept and which they cannot, and why not exactly (Biblical arguments, or emphasis, or their own doctrines).

In the year 2000, leaders of the Catholic and Lutheran churches in Sydney signed a small one-page *Joint Declaration on Justification*.

A press release said:

A central dispute during the Protestant Reformation was whether believers were justified and saved by grace alone or whether salvation required a combination of grace and good works.

Now that press release combines and confuses two things: being justified and being saved. We are justified at the start by *grace* alone (prior works have no role)—but we are *saved* if we *continue* in a state of justification by *also* producing good works.

Now that *Joint Declaration on Justification* made by Cardinal Clancy, on behalf of the Australian Bishops, and Rev. Dr Lance Steicke, President of the Lutheran Church of Australia, was defective; it said nothing false, but it spoke only of the removal of sin while saying nothing about any positive acquisition, nothing about the new life of grace.

4. The controversies between the Dominicans & Jesuits in the 16th century & beyond

The great controversies that would ensue in the decades and centuries after Trent were focused not on *sanctifying grace* but *actual grace* and its divisions and nature and efficacy and distribution, its compatibility with free-will, and so on. The more you read on the topic, the more confused you become. Only great minds could pretend to have mastered the controversy, but diligent study will enlighten you on some aspects of it.

A theologian in Paris I have mentioned already, called Michael de Bay – better known by his Latin form, Baius – had 79 errors on the nature of man and of grace condemned by Pope Pius V in 1567—only 4 years after the Council of Trent had closed.¹⁸ Baius was a rigid Augustinian and his thinking would lead eventually to what we call Jansenism, sparked by the posthumous work *Augustinus* (1640) of Bishop Cornelius Jansen (d. 1638).

Baius taught an attenuated form of Protestantism:

1. The grace accorded to Adam was due to nature, and hence did not exceed the requirements of nature.
2. Faith is therefore necessary even for natural good, so that all the virtues of infidels are vices.
3. Sanctifying grace is so necessary that all the works of sinners are sins.¹⁹

Jansenism retained these errors in substance, as evident from the 5 propositions of Jansen, condemned in A.D. 1653. (DS 2001-5)

Followers of the ideas of Baius at the Universities of Louvain and Douai became such fierce opponents of the Jesuits, that one of the great Jesuit theologians, the holy and learned Fr Lessius, a friend of Bellarmine, lamented in 1588: “I doubt whether Catholics were ever so zealous in opposition to heretics as the Louvain and Douai theologians are against us [Jesuits]”.²⁰

The schools of thought developed over how to reconcile *two* things which all Catholics must accept:

1. God does not ask the impossible, and sincerely wills the salvation of all (contrary to Protestantism, Calvin, Baianism, Jansenism).

¹⁸ Propositions of Baius condemned in the Bull *Ex omnibus afflictionibus*: DS 1901-1980.

¹⁹ Taken from Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, p. 17

²⁰ James Brodrick S.J., *Robert Bellarmine – Saint and Scholar* (Newman Press, Maryland 1961) p. 190.

2. As Christ said, “Without Me, you can do nothing.” St Paul said, “What have you that you have not received.” (1 Cor 4:7). St Thomas says,²¹ “Since God’s love is the cause of things’ goodness, nothing is in any respect better if God does not will greater good to one than to another.”²² (Contrary to Pelagianism, and all forms of presumption).

Garrigou-Lagrange says: “These two principles are most certain, but their intimate reconciliation remains hidden, for it is the intimate reconciliation of infinite mercy, infinite justice, and supreme liberty in the sublime depth of the Deity.”²³

Then comes the argument over the actual graces given to all men for salvation, and the mystery of consent to grace and dissent from grace.

Molina

That argument was sparked ironically by a book whose title opens with the word, Harmony: *Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis*: “The Concord (or Harmony) of Free Will with the Gifts of Grace.” After thirty years of wrestling with the deep problems of grace, free-will and predestination, the Spanish Jesuit, Father Luis Molina, issued this book in 1588. It has been described as profound but badly written.²⁴ It had passed the Portuguese Dominican censors in Lisbon where it was printed.

On one side of the mammoth controversy that ensued was Father Molina, and his defenders – and opposite him was the charge led by Father Domingo Banez (not Baius – a different man). Banez was an eminent Dominican theologian at Salamanca in Spain, well-known also as a defender and spiritual director of St Teresa of Avila. But, unlike her, he had a great antipathy to the Society of Jesus.

“Grace is intrinsically efficacious”—was the proposition upheld by Banez, and those who proudly called themselves “Thomists”.

“Grace is not intrinsically efficacious”—was the proposition upheld by Molina, his Jesuit supporters, Suarez, and others, some of whom also claimed to be Thomists.

Long before this controversy, St Ignatius had written, in his *Rules for Thinking with the Church*, at the end of the *Spiritual Exercises*: “We ought not to speak of, or to insist on the doctrine of grace so strongly as to give rise to that pernicious teaching that takes away free-will. Hence, we may treat of faith and grace ... but not in such a way, especially in these dangerous times of ours, that works or free-will receive any detriment or come to be accounted for nothing.” (no. 17 of 18 *Rules*)

In another of these *Rules*, Ignatius advises preachers and writers to be careful: not to speak much of predestination lest one induce fatalism, and negligence in works which lead to salvation.

Background on Bellarmine

Now I must admit that I learnt first about this controversy via Father James Brodrick’s biography of St Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) – and so from that Jesuit point of view, I broadly saw the Jesuits in the right and the Dominicans in the wrong. “Broadly” only, because I adopted the viewpoint of Bellarmine (my hero and Confirmation patron) who never sided with either party completely. He was one of the few in that intense controversy who looked to doctrines and not personalities, who looked for the truth, regardless of who

²¹ *Summa*, I, q. 20, art. 3

²² Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, p. 18

²³ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, pp. 18-9

²⁴ My account of the dispute and some of the quotations below come from Brodrick’s *Bellarmino*, chapter VII – or from chapter XIX of his larger 2-volume biography of Bellarmine: *The Life and Work of Blessed Robert Francis Cardinal Bellarmine, S.J. 1542-1621* (Burns Oates and Washbourne, London 1928)

said it. In some things he regarded the Jesuit Molina as mistaken, and in other points, he regarded the Dominican Banez as mistaken.

When the first volume of Bellarmine's *Controversies of the Christian Faith* was issued in 1586, it overwhelmed the enemy with its erudition, exhibiting such extraordinary knowledge of the Scriptures, Fathers, Councils, theologians, historians, philosophers, humanists and Protestant writers—so that a French Calvinist theologian, François du Jon (Junius), charged that “Bellarmine” was not a real man at all, but a pen-name used by a team of scholars: “Methinks it is not one Bellarmine who speaks in these pages,” said the man in his panic. “It is the whole Jesuit phalanx, the entire legion of them mustered for our destruction.”²⁵

In the *Controversies*, Bellarmine was so extraordinarily fair in argument, accurately presenting each objection its full force before demolishing it, that some Catholics charged him with furnishing arguments to the Protestants, for he put their arguments better than they could themselves!²⁶

Unable to respond with arguments, in England they gave the name of *bellarmines* to a type of pot-bellied jug with the effigy of a bearded man at the top and spout. The design was originally a French one, and there they had a different name, but in England, as a form of mockery of him, they fancied it resembled St Robert—and it became known as the *bellarmine*. There are hundreds from the 16th century. I saw one once on display.²⁷

Of course, many mediocre Jesuits live off the reputation of the brilliant ones in their Society. I remember an Indian nun telling me that in her city (in India) a woman asked a Jesuit priest about her son, who wanted to be a priest, and where she should recommend him to go. The Jesuit priest advised her: “Well, the diocesan priests study for 6 years before ordination; the Dominicans study for about 8 years before they are ordained; the Salesians sometimes do even more and are not ordained till possibly 10 years after entering the novitiate; whereas the Jesuits have the longest study of all: we are not ordained till 12 or 13 years after becoming novices.” “Well,” the mother said, “I think the Jesuits will suit my son best – because he is a bit of a slow learner”!

The conduct of the controversy

Back to the theological controversy! – In his life of Bellarmine, Brodrick says that Bellarmine and Lessius strove “to show how the will’s freedom remains intact even under the impulsion of efficacious grace, an article of Catholic faith fiercely attacked by Lutherans, Calvinists, Baianists and [later] Jansenists alike” (p. 191)

Here are some sentences from Molina’s *Concordia* which aroused the ire of Banez and other Dominicans:

“It may happen that a person anticipated and called with greater help by far, is not converted on account of his free will, while another with far less [help] is converted.” (p. 51)

“With equal help it may happen that one of those called is converted and the other is not.” (p. 656, 617)

“A person aided by less help from grace may rise, while another with more help does not, but continues in his obduracy.” (p. 618)

Molina’s idea was that “sufficient grace” is rendered “efficacious grace” by our consent.

Now, my reaction, when first hearing these propositions (years ago) was to say: “That’s sounds reasonable.” After all, Our Lord Himself said, “Alas for you, Tyre and Sidon, if the

²⁵ Brodrick, *Bellarmino*, p. 76

²⁶ Brodrick, *Bellarmino*, p. 76

²⁷ Brodrick, *Bellarmino*, p. 87

miracles done in you had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would be standing yet.” (Matt 11:21) What converts one fails with, or would fail with, another.

But these sentences were condemned by some theologians, as Garrigou-Lagrange in the 20th century condemned them,²⁸ as denying the efficacious nature of grace. Garrigou and Banez and others teach that efficacious grace is efficacious of its own intrinsic nature, that it works infallibly on the person, while the person remains free.

In 1594, six years after *Concordia* was published, the Apostolic Nuncio in Spain wrote to Rome, asking for an intervention over the controversy. By that time, the Dominicans in Spain, in their public discourses and lectures, were calling the Jesuit teaching heretical and the members of that Order as tainted with heresy. The Nuncio was instructed to tell the superiors of the Jesuits and Dominicans that the whole affair had been taken over by the supreme tribunal of the Church, that they were to present their respective cases to Rome, and, pending a decision, were, by Pope Clement VIII’s express command, to refrain from all further discussion, private and public, of the matter in dispute.

Father Robert Bellarmine (not a Cardinal until 1599) wrote a private report on the controversy, at the Pope’s request. On the question of efficacious grace, Bellarmine said there are 3 opinions.

1. Some scholastics taught that actual grace owes its efficacy to the consent of the will, and Molina seems to agree with them. They uphold this so as to preserve the sufficiency of sufficient grace and the freedom of the will. St Robert said “This opinion seems to me to be false and rightly reprehended in the censure of the Dominicans.”
2. The efficacy of grace in no way depends on the consent of the will, but that consent is physically and intrinsically determined by grace, *physically* in the sense that it wreaks its effects by its own nature, *physis*. The Dominicans teach this because they think this was held by St Thomas, and that the true efficacy of grace cannot be defended on any other hypothesis. “It seems to me to be no less false and dangerous than the first opinion; ... it destroys sufficient grace ... it appears to contradict the Council of Trent (Session 6: chapter 5, and canon 4 [*Decree on Justification*: where it speaks of man’s free will under the influence of grace] ... this opinion does not seem to save free will, nor can it be distinguished from the expressions used by the modern heretics. ... I do not, however, dare to condemn it absolutely, as I know it is defended by great men,” said St Robert. Bellarmine believed it was *not* taught by St Thomas, and that according to this theory, God would be the cause also of men’s sins as well as their virtuous deeds.²⁹
3. Bellarmine, like his friend Lessius, believed both opinions to be wrong. They believed the difference between sufficient and efficacious grace lay in another factor, namely, the circumstances accompanying its bestowal. If the same help or grace is accorded to two persons, with the result that one resists temptation while the other does not, then this is due to the fact that the person who avoided sin received the impulse of grace in the manner and place and time which God saw were suited or congruous to his dispositions and would unfailingly lead to acceptance. The sufficient grace is not so perfectly suited to the person’s character and circumstances. Suarez and Vasquez and many others adopted this school of thought that became known as *Congruism*.³⁰

Molina spoke, as all theologians spoke, of God’s *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* – God’s simple knowledge of whatever is possible; and the *scientia visionis* – His knowledge of whatever is real, including what is future to us. He added a third knowledge, *scientia media*, a mid-way

²⁸ *Grace*, pp. 419-20

²⁹ Brodrick, *Bellarmino*, pp. 199-200

³⁰ By the 20th century, Tanqueray could say, “However, few teach this system today.” *Brevior Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae* (7th ed. Desclée, Paris 1931) par. 935, p. 547

knowledge by which God knows what choices a free agent would make in any conceivable set of circumstances.

A key term on the Dominican side was *praemotio physica*. But if I am not mistaken, the term *praemotio physica*, *physical predetermination or intervention*, adopted by the Thomists to designate divine action upon the soul, is not in St Thomas at all. Hence, some theologians say “Banezians” rather than “Thomists” teach this *physical intervention or determination* by God.³¹

The end of the affair

In 1597, Pope Clement VIII appointed a special seven-man commission in Rome, the “Congregatio de Auxiliis,” to deal with the disputes on the manner in which divine grace operates. The name “de Auxiliis” means “concerning helps” – i.e., divine helps to salvation. The Congregation reported for the first time on 19 March 1598, advising that the circulation of Molina’s book be forbidden and 61 propositions extracted from it be condemned—but the Pope declined to ratify the decision. One reason for the Pope’s reticence was that they had reached a decision within 3 months, whereas at the same time a big wooden box of relevant materials, memoranda, books and pamphlets had been brought to Rome by Spain, and the Pope knew the commission could not possibly have done a thorough job of examination. They reduced the offending propositions to be censured to 42, but still no Papal confirmation came. Eight months later, in 1600, when the number of offending propositions had been reduced to 20, a third attempt to secure Papal condemnation also failed. In 1601, in the midst of this intense and bitter controversy which had public once again, Cardinal del Monte had a little conversation with Cardinal Bellarmine (now a Cardinal since 1599):

Del Monte: I believe His Holiness is going to issue a definition on this matter of efficacious grace.

Bellarmino: His Holiness will do no such thing.

Del Monte: Why are you so sure, Your Eminence? You must admit the Pope has the power to define the question, and I know that his mind is made up to define it.

Bellarmino: Yes, he has the power but he will not exercise it.

Del Monte: How on earth do you make that out?

Bellarmino: Because he will die before he gets the opportunity.

Next day, Cardinal Bellarmine wrote a letter to the Pope, whose theologian he was, earnestly urging him not to try to resolve a complex tangled question imprudently by his private lights.

Perhaps this led to the multiple meetings of the special Congregatio. Between 1602 and 1605, there were 68 sessions held of the Congregatio de Auxiliis, and, in addition, the matter was thrashed out in 37 debates conducted before the Congregation.

Molina died in 1600. In 1603, Pope Clement died, without having ruled on the controversy. Then came Pope Leo XI, who reigned only a few weeks. Cardinal Borghese, closely connected with the dispute, succeeded him as Pope Paul V, while the Congregatio continued its meetings and debates. Banez died in 1604. At a crucial time, in December 1604, Cardinal du Perron, from France, a convert from Calvinism, came to Rome and spoke frankly to Pope Paul V: “If Your Holiness forbids as erroneous the Jesuit method of reconciling grace and free-will, all the Calvinists and Lutherans of France and Germany will applaud your sentence, and see in it a formal approbation of their own sentence.” Being neither Dominican nor Jesuit, his opinion could be accepted as that of a non-interested party.

Finally, two years into his Papacy, on 28 August 1607, feast of St Augustine, the Doctor of Grace, the Pope asked each of the eight cardinals of the Congregatio for their opinion. Only

³¹ “The Thomistic Theory of Grace. – The true founder of the Thomistic system is not St. Thomas Aquinas, who is also claimed by the Molinists, but the learned Dominican theologian Bañez (1528-1604).” Pohle-Preuss, *Grace Actual and Habitual* (Dogmatic Theology, vol. VII: 1924. Herder, London 12th impression, 1946) p. 232

one, a Dominican, was firmly in favour of a condemnation of Molina. The other seven, of varying personal opinions, favoured no condemnation of either side. On 5 September 1607, Pope Paul V gave his final decision. He decreed that both sides were free to teach their respective doctrines, and that mutual recriminations were to cease: that the Dominicans could not call the Jesuits “Pelagians,” and the Jesuits could not call the Dominicans “Calvinists.” That decision was exactly what St Robert Bellarmine had recommended to the previous Pope ten years earlier.

The authority of St Augustine

The argument over predestination and grace and liberty went back to the early Church. About 400 A.D., a non-ordained monk named Pelagius, of Irish or Scottish extraction, attacked the dogma of grace and became exasperated one day when he heard a bishop quote Augustine’s saying: “Da quod jubes et jube quod vis.” “Grant what You command, and command what You will.”³² Different African local Councils, and Bishops, including Augustine, wrote to Rome, asking for a condemnation of the doctrines of Pelagius and his supporters, which they had already condemned locally.

In the 16th and 17th century controversy over grace, both sides claimed to be true to Saint Augustine, and that the other side was not. Since that time, the Church has had to declare the limits of St Augustine’s authority against those who make his writings an *absolute* rule of faith. The Jansenists, for example, did say that a single phrase from Augustine must be preferred to the most solemn decisions of the Church. Cornelius Jansen himself laid the foundations of this absurdity in the second volume of his book *Augustinus* with repeated chapter titles, “The evangelical, apostolic teaching of Augustine on God’s grace, unsurpassed in authority, written in the name of the whole Church, with the silent consent of all other authors.”³³ When he found in Augustine the 53rd proposition of Baius condemned by the Pope, Jansen refused to condemn it, but said that the Pope must have condemned it—not as false, for Augustine’s teaching is always true—but because it was “disturbing the peace”.³⁴ A later Jansenist, Havermans, formulated proposition 30 among Jansenist errors condemned by the Holy Office under Pope Alexander XII in 1690: “Whatever doctrine one finds clearly founded in Augustine can be held and taught absolutely, without regard for any Apostolic Bull.”³⁵ During the controversies *De Auxiliis*, the Molinists were accused by Diego Alvarez of not accepting the following principle in its full rigor: “Any teaching of Augustine on grace or predestination must be considered as a dogma of the Catholic Church.”³⁶

St Thomas says however, in the *Summa Theologica*: “The custom of the Church has very great authority and ought to be jealously observed in all things, since the very doctrine of Catholic Doctors derives its authority from the Church. Hence, we ought to abide by the authority of the Church rather than by that of an Augustine or a Jerome or of any Doctor whatever.”³⁷

Molina uncensored

The full title of Fr Molina’s book was:

Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione, et reprobatione, ad nonnullos primae partis D. Thomae articulos

(Olyssipone [Lisbon] 1588, Apud Antonium Riberium typographum regium. 512 pages & indices).

³² *De dono perseverantiae*, bk I; four times in book X of *Confessions*.

³³ Eugène Portalié S.J., *A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Henry Regnery Co., Chicago 1960) p. 322 [a trans. of his article “Augustine, Saint” in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, tom. I, col. 2268-2472, Letouzey, Paris 1902]

³⁴ *Augustinus*, ch. 30

³⁵ DS 2330

³⁶ Portalié, *A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine*, p. 323

³⁷ II-II, q. 10, art. 12, c.

“The Harmony of Free Will with the Gifts of Grace, Divine Foreknowledge, Providence, Predestination, and Reprobation, according to several articles of the First Part [of the Summa] of St Thomas.”

You can see the whole original book online on *Google books*. The book is divided into questions, articles and disputations. I saw too the title of a book printed a few years ago: someone had translated its fourth part into English.

In the end, Molina’s book was never censured by the Holy See in any way, and when the final decision of 1607 allowed his opinions to be taught, and he had escaped the censure so ardently sought by so many enemies, in Spain at Salamanca University, Spanish Jesuits or their friends posted bills on the walls of Salamanca with two jubilant words: MOLINA VICTOR ! In other towns they had masques and fireworks to celebrate. In Villargarcia, the Spanish Jesuits had a bull-fight to celebrate the occasion!

5. A passage from Matthias Scheeben on grace

To keep today’s confusion and complexity to a moderate amount, I will not speak of divine foreknowledge, and predestination and reprobation. So let us return to the beauty of divine grace with reflections from German theologian Father Matthias Scheeben (1835-1888) who wrote a magnificent work, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, translated into English in 1951.

Fr Scheeben writes:

Whoever regards participation in the divine nature in man, along with its concomitant perfections, as obviously intelligible or as the object of natural experience, shows by that very fact that he does not understand it at all, that he has not the slightest notion of it. He confuses the higher with the lower, the supernatural with the natural, and so draws the former down from its celestial heights to the lowliness of the latter; or else he thrusts nature up to such an exalted level that the supernatural and the divine seem natural to it, and so confuses nature with God. If we have a correct appreciation of the lowliness of created nature and of the infinite majesty of the divine nature, this sort of confusion is impossible; then we shall regard the communication of the divine nature to creatures as an infinitely sublime marvel of divine omnipotence and love, and shall know how to treasure it as such.³⁸

[Referring to Genesis, creation of Adam]: Since the entire Old Testament was a figure of the New, natural things could be made to serve as types of supernatural things. So the spiritual sense of the words in which Moses relates the production of natural man suggests that the same words refer also to man’s supernatural creation. As God makes man to His natural likeness by infusing a spiritual soul into the body as an image of His own spiritual nature, so He elevates man to His supernatural likeness by stamping upon his soul an image like to Himself, the image of His Son; and as God breathes a rational soul into man’s body in order to give him natural life, so He breathes His own Spirit into the soul in order to impart to it His own divine life.

The words do not in themselves reveal this. Otherwise there would be no spiritual sense, no *sensus spiritualis*, such as is proper to Sacred Scripture. The types did not become manifest until the anti-types had appeared in the New Testament. Although in the present case the typified supernatural object actually existed in Adam, it could not be discerned in the words of Moses until the idea of this object had again become vivid in the New Testament. Pervaded and exalted by this idea, the Christian Fathers had no difficulty in unearthing the mystery hidden in those words. Especially in the forceful emphasis of the phrase “image and likeness” they discern a higher similarity of man with God than man could have or claim by virtue of his nature, and in the breath by which God animated Adam they descry the Holy Spirit Himself, who pours forth His own life upon man. (*Mysteries*, p. 215)

The Fathers as a rule state that grace, sanctity, the Holy Spirit, participation in the divine nature, and charity were given to man at the outset, along with his nature. St. Basil employs

³⁸ M.J. Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity* (trans. Cyril Vollert S.J., Herder, London, 1951) p. 208

an expression that is very much to the point when he says that of old (at the creation of Adam) God breathed the Holy Spirit into man together with his soul, whereas now He breathes the Holy Spirit into the soul. (*Mysteries*, p. 227)