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# JUSTIFICATION AND REDEMPTION: PROTESTANT PERSPECTIVES

Grace

## NOMINALISM: EXTERIOR GRACE

- Emphasis on Exterior Grace
- Nominalism *in se*
  - Denial of universals
  - General ideas are mere names
- William of Ockham (1280-1349)
  - Human reason is limited
  - Reason cannot know the will of God
  - Right and wrong is determined by the divine will
    - Supremacy of the divine will
    - Importance of every act of the human will
  - There is no natural law knowable to human reason
- Questioning of the sanctifying effect of created grace in regard to salvation
  - *Facientibus quod in se est Deus non denegat gratiam*: the problem of merit
  - Detachment of God's will from reason and from nature
- Gabriel Biel (1425-1495)
  - The love of God merits grace

## THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood. Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, Peace and safety: now they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows. The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell. O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.

—FROM JONATHAN EDWARDS "SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD" (1741)

## LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVES

### MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546)

- Forensic justification
  - There is nothing in sinful human nature that can merit grace
- Salvation by faith alone: Sola fide
  - Righteousness in Christ (*iustitia Dei*)
- Justification
  - *simil justus et peccator*
- Blessed assurance
  - Goodness in one's own eyes
  - Goodness in the eyes of God (*iustitia Christi aliena*)
- Denial of created grace as justifying
  - Sanctifying grace
    - Works: fruit and evidence of salvation
  - Transmission of grace
- Role of the law
  - Restraint of sin through political authority
  - Conviction of the sinner

1. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
O what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

*This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior, all the day long;  
This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior, all the day long.*

2. Perfect submission, perfect delight,  
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;  
Angels descending bring from above  
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

3. Perfect submission, all is at rest  
I in my Savior am happy and blest,  
Watching and waiting, looking above,  
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

### AUGSBURG CONFESSION

- "We receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith"
- The ministry facilitates faith
- Good works show God's favor but do not earn us righteousness
- Free will allows for an honorable life but without grace does not make one acceptable to God
- Good works are important, but they do not make us righteous before God
- Faith is confidence in God and in the fulfillment of his promises.
- The saints are important examples, but prayer to them is not supported in Scripture.

### PHILIP MELANCHTHON (1497-1560)

- Modified Lutheranism
- Cooperation in salvation
  - We can earn eternal life by our works
  - Monkish errors
- Indwelling of Christ

## REFORMED THEOLOGY

### JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564)

- Election, Justification, Sanctification, Glorification
- Adherence to Christ: Justification by Christ alone
- Predestination
- *Ordo salutis*

### REFORMED PERSPECTIVES

- Moderate Calvinism: Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609)
  - Rejected predestination
    - Christ died for all
    - Salvation comes through belief in Christ
    - God's grace is given to all; many resist it
    - Predestination is not in Scripture
  - Remonstrants

- Ultra-Calvinism: Theodore Beza (1519-1605)
  - Five Articles of the Synod of Dort (1618-1619)
    - Total depravity
    - Unconditional election
    - Limited atonement
    - Irresistible grace
    - Perseverance of the elect by grace alone

## WESTMINSTER CONFSSION

- Some are predestined to everlasting life, others to everlasting death
- Christ died only for the elect.
- God directs all things towards the salvation of the elect and the free rejection of him by the damned
- Sin corrupted humanity fully
- Corrupt nature remains in the regenerated
- Faith is the condition of the second covenant
- The call of God achieves what it wishes: Irresistible Grace
- The unelect can never be saved; non-Christians can never be saved no matter how naturally righteous their lives are
- Justification is not the infusion of righteousness but a non-accounting of sins
  - They are covered over by Christ's righteousness
- Sanctification follows upon justification
- Perseverance is through the decree of election
- Assurance of faith is accessible to the elect
- The law is the judge of righteousness, the protector of society, and the guide for the elect

## COUNCIL OF TRENT

### BACKGROUND

- Called by Paul III in 1545, 25 years after Martin Luther's breaking away from Rome
- Disbanded by Paul IV
- Concluded in 1563 by Pius IV
- Promulgated by Pius V

### DOCTRINAL CRITICISM

- Extreme understandings of grace
- Predestination
- Forensic grace

### DECREE ON ORIGINAL SIN

- Corruption
- Infant baptism
- Remission of sin and concupiscence/state of sin

### DECREE ON JUSTIFICATION

- The act of justification (chapters 1-9)
  - Incapacity for a people to save themselves
    - Neither the gentiles by nature or the Jews by law could be saved (1)
    - Christ, through his blood, propitiates God for the sins of the whole world (2)
    - Though he died for all, the merits of his passion must be communicated in order for salvation to reach each individual (3)
    - The beginning of justification and the preparation for it is due to the prevenient grace of God, calling people without regard for merit (5)
  - Necessary cooperation of free will with divine grace

- Justification occurs when the person freely accepts, assents to, and cooperates with this grace
    - The manifestation of this acceptance and cooperation is penitence and longing for baptism (6)
  - Justification includes sanctification
    - The inward person is sanctified when justified (7)
    - Cause of justification: final cause is the glory of God and life everlasting; efficient cause is the merciful God; the meritorious cause is the action of Christ; the instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism; the formal cause is the justice of God whereby he makes us just.
    - “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 Ghost distributes to everyone as He wills, and according to each one's proper disposition and co-operation.”
  - Faith must be combined with hope and charity (7)
    - Faith is the beginning of justification (8)
    - Yet faith is nothing if works do not flow from it (8)
  - Confidence in justification is contrary to the humble recognition of the sovereign act of God in justification (9)
- Perseverance in justification (chapters 10-13)
  - Those who have been justified now advance in holiness (10)
    - Justification gives the ability to follow the commandments (11)
    - Good works are necessary and possible after justification (11)
  - Predestination cannot be known in this life (12)
  - Perseverance comes from grace, thus we must work out our salvation in fear and trembling by doing works and acts of charity and prayer (13)
- Loss of grace (chapters 14-16)
  - Grievous sin results in a loss of grace unless countered with the sacrament of penance (14)
  - Grievous sin is not just loss of faith but also a mortal sin, in which faith remains (15)
  - Salvation is a gift and a reward for the fulfillment of the law in the grace of Christ (16)

#### THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

- Unbloody sacrifice
- Continuing Christ's sacrifice
- Salutary effects
- Truly propitiatory
- Offered for sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities for the living as well as for the purification of the dead

#### POINTS OF AGREEMENT

- No one can do good without grace
- Justification rests upon being born again and is linked to baptism
- Justification is an act of God, not of human works
- People are not saved by nature or by the law, but by God; this is due to sin
- *Merely extrinsic justification is false*

#### POINTS OF DIVERGENCE

- Adults must accept justification, even though the disposition comes from grace
- Justification and sanctification are linked
- Assurance of salvation is false
- The fear of hell is not a sin
- Temporal punishment is necessary, once sin is forgiven
- Cooperation with God's grace merits further justification
- Initial justification by grace may be increased through acts of charity
- Grace is mediated by the sacraments
- The Church can dispense grace

## MODERN PROGRESS IN DISCUSSION OF JUSTIFICATION

### *JOINT DECLARATION ON JUSTIFICATION (1999)*

Purpose: “namely, to show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ. It does not cover all that either church teaches about justification; it does encompass a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations.”

- Biblical Message of Justification
  - traces the biblical roots of the action of God on behalf of humanity in Christ
- The Doctrine of Justification as an Ecumenical Problem
  - the interpretation of the biblical message was a chief divider at the time of the Reformation
- The Common Understanding of Justification
  - Shared understanding of basic truths, with a difference in explications of particular statements (14)
  - Justification is the work of the triune God: grace alone (15)
  - All people are called to salvation in Christ & we receive salvation in faith. (16)
  - Faith is God's gift through the Holy Spirit which leads to a renewal of life (16)
  - Our new life is due solely to the forgiving and renewing mercy of God (17)
  - The doctrine of justification has an essential relation to all doctrines (18)
- The Significance and Scope of the Consensus Reached
  - The dialogue partners declare that sufficient agreement exists and that the differences that remain are not church dividing. (40)
  - They declare that the doctrinal condemnations of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in regard to justification do not apply to the current teachings of the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches. (41)
  - The condemnations themselves retain their force as doctrinal statements. (42)