

The Doctrine of Justification: A Biblical and Historical Analysis of the Doctrine and its
Ecumenical Reception by Lutherans and Catholics in their Joint Declaration of 1999

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ABSTRACT

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Brian Cordeiro

The doctrine of justification is a central Christian doctrine. In the sixteenth century, justification was at the core of major dispute, which eventually resulted in the Reformation movement and the schism within the Catholic Church. Lutherans and Roman Catholics issued mutual condemnations related to the doctrine of justification. These events were driven by theological differences as well as by political and social factors.

In the twentieth century, Lutherans and Catholics arrived at agreement on the same doctrine of justification, which had divided them for over four hundred years. Their Joint Declaration of 1999 represents a major success within the ecumenical movement, which strives to promote unity among Christians. By it, the mutual condemnations of the sixteenth century were withdrawn by Lutherans and Roman Catholics thereby opening the door for peace between the two churches and in society as a whole. Further, the Joint Declaration gives useful pointers for future ecumenical dialogue which can be used to promote ecumenism in the future. The Joint Declaration thus is a beacon of hope for the entire ecumenical movement.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Effie and my sons André Joseph, Pierre Bosco and Jean Vianney who made great sacrifices to enable me to undertake this work.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abbreviations	viii-ix
Introduction	1
Statement of the Question	4
Methodology and Structure	5
Status Quaestionis	8
Chapter 1: A Biblical and Historical Analysis of the Doctrine of Justification	
from Paul to its Reception in the Medieval Period	12
Introduction	12
Paul's letters	12
Augustine of Hippo (354-430)	22
Reception of the Doctrine of Justification during the Medieval Period	29
Introduction	29
Bonaventure (1221-1274) and the Early Franciscan School	30
Thomas of Aquinas (1225-1274) and the Dominican School	31
Gabriel Biel (1425-1495) and the <i>Via Moderna</i>	34
Conclusion	36
Chapter 2: Luther and Lutheranism	38
Introduction	38
Martin Luther (1483-1546)	38
Augsburg Confession (1530)	44

Table of Contents continued

Formula of Concord (1577) and the Book of Concord (1580)	49
Conclusion	56
Chapter 3: The Roman Catholic Church and Justification	58
Introduction	58
Council of Trent (1545-63)	59
Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and the Decree on Ecumenism	70
Catechism of the Catholic Church	74
Conclusion	76
Chapter 4: The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the	
Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church (1999)	79
Introduction	79
The Joint Declaration on Justification	80
Methodologies and Processes used by the Joint Declaration	90
Significance and Scope of the Joint Declaration and a Brief Overview	
of Ecumenism since the Joint Declaration	99
Conclusion	105
Summary and Conclusion	107
Bibliography	113

ABBREVIATIONS

BC	Book of Concord, a compilation of Lutheran confessional documents
BOC	<i>The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church</i> . Trans. Charles Arand et al. Ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000.
CA	Augsburg Confession (Confessio Augustana), a Lutheran confessional document
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> . Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. Ottawa: Concacan Inc., 1994.
CT	Council of Trent (1545-63) of the Roman Catholic Church
DEC	<i>Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils</i> , 2 volumes. Norman P. Tanner, ed. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1990.
EEC	<i>Encyclopedia of Early Christianity</i> . Second Edition. Ed. Everett Ferguson et al. New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1997.
FC	Formula of Concord, a Lutheran confessional document
FOC	<i>The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation</i> . Trans. Robert P. Russell edited by Roy Joseph Deferrari et al. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968.
JD	Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church (1999).
LW	<i>Luther's Works</i> . American Edition. 55 vols. Ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958.
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NCE	<i>New Catholic Encyclopedia</i> . Second Edition. Thomas Carlson and Joann Cerrito, eds. Washington: The Catholic University of America, 2003.
NPNF	<i>A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i> . Ed. Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans,
OER	<i>The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation</i> . Editor-in-chief Hans J. Hillerbrand. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
PCPCU	Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

ABBREVIATIONS continued

SD	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
SPCU	Vatican's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity
UR	<i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i> , The Second Vatican Council's <i>Decree on Ecumenism</i>
VC II	Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church

Introduction

This thesis is a biblical, historical and ecumenical analysis of the doctrine of justification. Justification is a complex doctrine which is at the very heart of the Christian message. But, what is justification? *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* defines justification as “a term that describes the event whereby persons are set or declared to be in right relation to God”¹. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, however, holds that justification “is the event or process by which man is made or declared to be righteous in the sight of God.”² The common element in the two definitions is that justification means being “right” or “righteous” in relation to God. But the definitions also highlight differences. We see that the first definition refers to an “event” and being “set or declared” righteous. The second definition contains the possibility of an “event” or a “process” as well as either being “declared” or “being made” righteous. Right away, we enter into the complexity surrounding justification, a doctrine which has great significance for Christians with its deep soteriological and salvific implications.

This thesis will analyse the doctrine of justification from its biblical roots in the New Testament to its ecumenical interpretation at the end of the twentieth century. My initial interest in the subject of this thesis was sparked a decade ago after the Lutheran World federation (LWF) and the Roman Catholic Church signed in October 1999 the Joint Declaration on the doctrine of justification (JD). As I studied this ecumenical document, I was drawn into the complexity of the doctrine of justification and my guess is that all has not yet been said on this doctrine. I will state at the very outset that the

¹ Richard B. Hayes, “Justification” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* David Noel Freedman, Editor-in-chief (New York: Doubleday, 1996) 3: 1129.

² F. L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, eds. “Justification” *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 919.

focus of my thesis is the celebration of the ecumenical reception and agreement on the doctrine of justification as evidenced in the JD. My biblical, hermeneutical and historical analyses of justification are therefore all driven with this ecumenical focus in mind.

The first part of the thesis will be a biblical and historical analysis of the doctrine of justification from the New Testament to its reception in the sixteenth century. Saint Paul's letters to the Galatians and Romans are often the principal scriptures which are studied when attempting to understand justification. But Paul also discussed justification in his letters to the Philippians, Ephesians and Corinthians. It must however be noted that the letters to the Ephesians are considered by many to be pseudo-Pauline letters.

Faith is a key element of justification in Paul's letters. What is faith? Does it involve transformation? Is justification distinct from sanctification? Are we saved only by faith or are good works also to be pursued by justified sinners? Is justification a doctrine that stands by itself or does it require to be interpreted within God's overall plan for humanity? These are some of the questions to which my thesis will respond.

In the fourth century, Augustine of Hippo picked up the thread of the doctrine of justification. Augustine found a balance between two contrasting points of view; the Manicheans who held that man does not possess free will and the Pelagians who believed that man could by his own free will move towards God.

The common thread during the entire medieval period was its acceptance that there was, in reality, no distinction between justification and regeneration. Justification was transformational, involving change in a person. Thus the concept of "imputed" or extrinsic justification without transformation did not exist until the entrance of Luther.

Martin Luther, in the sixteenth century, relied heavily on Paul and Augustine. But, Luther interpreted Paul and Augustine with the lens of his own developing theology. As he struggled with his own inadequacy before God, justification as the free gift of God received through faith appealed to him. Luther made a major contribution to developing the doctrine of justification. My thesis will demonstrate that Luther did not have a non-transformational understanding of justification. I will also demonstrate that Luther was not against good works. Far from it, he strongly advocated good works. He, however, vehemently opposed any thinking that good works were a pre-requisite for justification.

Even in the sixteenth century no major theological differences existed, between Luther and the Roman Catholic Church, which warranted a schism in the Western Church. A series of political, ecclesial and societal factors, however, prevented timely rapprochement between Lutherans and Catholics. Positions gradually hardened and Lutheran interpretations moved away from Luther's original thought. The result was that both Lutherans (Book of Concord) and Roman Catholics (Canons of the Council of Trent) issued mutual condemnations which were carried down for over four hundred years, until the JD was signed in 1999.

The second half of my thesis will analyse the ecumenical reception of the doctrine of justification by the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church in their JD. At the very outset, a clear distinction needs to be made between "ecumenical" and "interfaith" relations. Ecumenical dialogue refers to the effort for restoration of unity among Christian Churches. Interfaith or interreligious dialogue, on the other hand, is carried out between Christians and members of other faiths such as Judaism, Islam and Hinduism.

The JD represents a major ecumenical success. It is significant that an agreement was reached between Lutherans and Catholics on such a divisive doctrinal issue.

Following the agreement, the mutual condemnations by Lutherans and Catholics, which had lasted for over four hundred years, were abrogated by both sides. A great success for ecumenism!

Some believe that the ecumenical movement has stalled after a very promising start at the beginning of the twentieth century. But there is reason for hope. My thesis will demonstrate what Christians can learn from the JD. If agreement could be reached on such a complex and divisive a doctrine as justification, there is no reason why unity in other major areas cannot be achieved.

Statement of the Question

The main question addressed by my thesis is: What made it possible for Lutherans and Roman Catholics to agree on the doctrine of justification? From a doctrinal standpoint, the central question surrounding justification was: How are sinners found acceptable by a just God? In the sixteenth century, each church believed that it was condemning the teachings of the other church on this issue. My thesis will demonstrate how the differences of the sixteenth century did not warrant a schism at the time. Even though mutual condemnations were issued in the sixteenth century, such differences had either disappeared or were no longer seen as church-dividing in the twentieth century.

A second related question that I will explore is: What can the ecumenical movement take from the JD for use in future dialogue? Clearly, the JD reinforces the idea that efforts in the area of Christian unity and ecumenism require a determined commitment to dialogue. But, consistent and determined efforts at mutual understanding

can lead to rapprochement. The ecumenical movement can learn from the processes and methodologies which were used to arrive at the JD. In arriving at the JD, the focus was finding interpretations of justification which both partners could accept. This focus with the objective of promoting Christian unity has much to offer the ecumenical movement. A positive driving force behind the ecumenical initiative of the JD was the Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council and its *Decree on Ecumenism* (see chapter 3).

Methodology and Structure

Historical criticism will be an essential methodology in my thesis. I will explore the historical context in which the doctrine of justification developed. For example, what was Paul's context in the first century when he explained the role of faith in Abraham's life and how faith is credited to us as righteousness?

Augustine was a major contributor in the fourth and fifth centuries to the doctrine of justification. His writings were largely a response to the Manicheans, Pelagians, Donatists and Massilians. He had to explain the impact that original sin had on the free will of man. He had to emphasise the absolute necessity of God's grace for a sinner to be justified. He confirmed Paul's emphasis on faith but he also provided an appropriate role for works in the life of a justified person.

Moving on to the sixteenth century, my thesis will demonstrate that Luther did not intend to break away from the Roman Catholic Church. His doctrine of justification was shaped by his view of his own sinfulness before God and he was seeking reform within the Roman Catholic Church in the area of the selling of indulgencies. Even when the Augsburg Confession (*Confessio Augustana*, CA hereafter) was drawn up by Melancthon, Luther's close associate, its objective was to seek unity within the Church.

Social, political, economic and ecclesial factors intervened and in some way prevented the calling of an ecumenical council for twenty five years. In those intervening years, positions hardened and even within Lutheranism, interpretations moved away from what Luther had held. The positions taken by Lutherans and Catholics changed from being conciliatory to being confrontational. The result was the condemnations contained in the canons of the Council of Trent (CT) and the Lutheran confessional document of the Book of Concord (BC).

This thesis will rely upon the integral or organic model for studying church history. It attempts “a synchronous understanding of the development of the central ideas of Christianity.”³ This model developed primarily by historians of doctrine, such as Adolf Harnack and Reinhold Seeberg, is a useful method for church historians as well as systematic theologians. Compared to other methods, such as “the special history model” or “the great thinker model”, it provides a more comprehensive view of the doctrine. Often, the main driving force of a doctrine is not its inner logic as suggested by “the special history model” or the force of an individual’s personality as proposed by “the great thinker model”. The main thrust is derived from a combination of factors such as politics, the social environment and the interaction between opposing parties in the church during a particular period in history. We shall see this exemplified with the development of the doctrine of justification by Augustine in the fourth and fifth centuries and later in the context of the sixteenth century when the official positions of both Lutherans and Catholics were formulated.

³ James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Method* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 31.

Methodological investigation will also be undertaken using the model of Bernard Lonergan, who advocates critical history. Lonergan employs his Four Levels of Cognition: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable and be responsible.⁴ One must first be aware of what was written or said. Next, one must try to understand the data whilst being aware of self. Thirdly, one must judge and evaluate between alternative courses of action and finally one must make the decision. The JD required the application of these four levels of Cognition. Thus in the dialogues leading up to the JD, Lutherans and Catholics first took stock of their respective positions. Next, they analysed why those positions were taken in the sixteenth century. They then moved on to possible ways to have different interpretations in the twentieth century which could result in agreement. Finally they took the step of signing the JD.

Within the overall methodology outlined in the preceding paragraphs, my thesis is structured into four chapters. Chapter 1 presents a biblical and historical analysis of the doctrine of justification from Paul to just prior to Luther. Chapter 2 will discuss justification from the viewpoint of Luther and Lutheranism as evidenced in their confessional documents, namely the CA and the BC. The BC contained condemnations which were directed towards the Roman Catholic Church. Chapter 3 discusses the Roman Catholic position on the doctrine of justification. While the Council of Trent (CT) resulted in condemnation of certain positions of Lutheranism, the Second Vatican Council (VC II) prepared the ground for rapprochement through ecumenical dialogue in the twentieth century. Finally chapter 4 will study the common understanding on justification which was reached in the *Joint Declaration on Justification* (JD). It will highlight the methodologies and processes that were used to arrive at a common

⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 20.

agreement; such methodologies and processes can be conducive if used in other ecumenical dialogues.

Status Quaestionis

Paul explains justification as God's action in men, as exemplified by the fact that he uses the verb form of "rightness" 23 times as opposed to using only twice the noun form of "righteousness". Usually when Paul is studied, his letters to the Galatians and Romans are quoted. Paul can be read from the "pro-Lutheran" or from the "anti-Lutheran" viewpoint. The "pro-Lutheran" point of view is that Paul's letters support Luther's doctrine of justification. Thus faith is what enables us to be credited with righteousness (Gal. 3:16, Rom. 4:3). But Paul in other passages also conveys the idea that works of love (Gal. 5:6) and obeying the Law (Rom. 2:13) are important.

"Pro-Lutheran" scholar Stephen Westerholm's book *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* will be used extensively to present the "pro-Lutheran Paul" perspective. On the other hand, scholars like Wright, Dunn and Sanders belong to the "anti-Lutheran Paul" camp. They believe that Paul was often studied mainly from Luther's angle. They go back to Paul's Jewish roots and hold that Paul was not against works but against Jews setting up national boundaries, where gentiles could not enter (Wright). I have relied extensively on Wright's book *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* when discussing perspectives on Paul.

Alister McGrath has offered an explanation of how a resolution of the "pro-Lutheran" and "anti-Lutheran" perspectives can take place. McGrath's book *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* traces the history of the doctrine of justification and is a reference source which I have used in my thesis.

Augustine's theology on justification can be seen as an advancement of Paul in the context of his responses to the Manicheans and Pelagians. Augustine's own writings have been quoted from the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (NPNF) series edited by Schaff and the *Fathers of the Church* (FOC) series translated by Russell (see primary sources for listing of Augustine's writings). Augustine's concept of "faith expressing itself through love" echoes Paul (Gal. 5:6) and is a recurring theme of Augustinian theology.

As this thesis continues with Luther and Lutheranism in chapter 2, Jaroslav Pelikan's *Luther's Works* (LW) and Hans Hillerbrand's (editor) *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (OER) are used extensively. LW contains Luther's original writings; OER gives an overview of Luther.

When discussing the Lutheran confessional documents, namely the CA and the BC, Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* will be used. My thesis will demonstrate that when CA was drawn up by Melancthon in 1530, the differences between Lutherans and Catholics were not church-dividing. Political and ecclesial factors resulted in the postponement of the calling of the ecumenical council. When the CT finally commenced its work in 1545, almost twenty five years after calls for a council, positions had hardened and even within Lutheranism there were disputes over what Luther had held.

Chapter 3 studies the Roman Catholic position on the doctrine of justification. Though the CT started too late to prevent the schism of the Reformation, it was instrumental in defining the position of the Catholic Church on justification. It explained the Catholic doctrine in its decrees before proceeding to canons or condemnations.

Norman Tanner's *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* and Hubert Jedin's *A History of the Council of Trent* serve to provide a composite picture of the CT. Though the basis of reconciliation with Lutherans was contained in the CT, for political and ecclesial reasons, no agreement could be reached in the sixteenth century. The CT's condemnations, like those of the Lutheran confession contained in the BC, were carried down for over four hundred years.

The VC II set in motion the process of reconciliation between Lutherans and Catholics. Its *Decree on Ecumenism* made ecumenical dialogue a priority. In chapter 3, I have drawn on John O'Malley's *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* and Hubert Jedin's *Crisis and the Closure of the Council of Trent: A Retrospective View from the Second Vatican Council*.

Chapter 4 heralds the resolution of the diverse interpretations of Lutherans and Catholics on justification. I will demonstrate how an ecumenical interpretation of justification was reached in 1999 in the JD.⁵ In the dialogue leading up to the JD, VC II's *Decree on Ecumenism* was significant.⁶

Extensive dialogue took place between Lutherans and Roman Catholics from the VC II till the JD was signed. I have drawn on John Radano's *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification: A Chronology of The Holy See's Contributions 1961-1999*. Further, analytical studies were conducted by Lutherans and Catholics as to whether the condemnations of the sixteenth century still applied to the partners. Ground

⁵ The JD been quoted from Vatican's web site: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101_999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html (accessed on June 25, 2013)

⁶ The *Decree on Ecumenism* is referenced from Vatican's web site: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html (accessed on June 25, 2013)

breaking in this area was Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, eds. *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do they Still Divide?* This compilation of essays showed that Lutherans and Catholics were ready to enter into agreement.

The JD provides a boost to ecumenism. In the processes and methods that it used, it provides pointers for future ecumenical dialogue. As I conclude my thesis on the salutary effect of the JD on the ecumenical movement, I will use William G. Rusch, ed. *Justification and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement: The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, another compilation of essays which gives insights of how the JD can be received by Christians other than Lutherans and Catholics. This thesis will conclude on a positive ecumenical note. If agreement on a divisive and complex doctrine like justification was possible, other ecumenical agreements can indeed be envisaged. Ecumenism has much to look forward to in the twenty-first century!

Chapter 1

A Biblical and Historical Analysis of the Doctrine of Justification from Paul to its Reception in the Medieval Period

Introduction

This chapter is a biblical and historical review of the doctrine of justification and will introduce the reader to the issues surrounding justification and trace the historical development of the doctrine of justification.

The chapter commences with a biblical review of the Apostle Paul's letters, which became a major scriptural source for the development of the doctrine of justification. They were extensively relied upon by Lutherans and Roman Catholics in their own confessional documents as well as in the JD. It requires to be stated that though the letters to the Ephesians are quoted in the JD or in this thesis, they are considered by many to be pseudo-Pauline letters. Next, I will study the interpretation of justification by Saint Augustine of Hippo. Augustine is one of the foremost Christian writers of the fourth and fifth centuries who has had a significant impact on Western theological thought through the medieval period and beyond. Lutherans and Roman Catholics rely heavily on Augustine to support their respective positions at the time of the Reformation. The third section of this chapter will be devoted to the development of the doctrine in the medieval period. I will provide an overview on Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas and Gabriel Biel, since their theologies were addressed by Catholics (the CT) and Lutherans (the CA and the FC) in the sixteenth century.

1.1 Paul's Letters

It is not the objective of this thesis to incorporate a detailed exegesis of the vast Pauline corpus on justification. The focus will be to analyse some of the major scriptural

texts referred to in the JD. Paul's letters to the Galatians and to the Romans will be discussed. Further, certain scriptural passages from Philippians, Corinthians and Ephesians will be examined so as to have a balanced overview of Paul's thought on justification. Next, I will provide a reconciliation of the diverse messages on justification, which are contained in the Pauline corpus. In the final part of this section, I will discuss the "old" and "new" perspectives on Paul, also referred to as the "pro-Lutheran Paul" and "anti-Lutheran Paul" viewpoints. In this context, my thesis will study a Dead Sea Scroll document entitled "4QMMT", which provides some guidance on who Paul was addressing when referring to the "works of the Law" in his letters.

Paul was very conversant with Jewish law and he himself had been a strong advocate and follower of the law. The gentiles, towards whom his mission was principally addressed, were coming to Christ. At the same time, the Christian message was being received by Jews. Paul had to defend himself against certain Jewish Christians who held that gentiles who were becoming Christians needed to follow the Jewish law.

"Justification as a theological concept has its metaphorical roots in legal language. To be justified is to be proved right or innocent before the bar".⁷ In the Old Testament, the righteousness of God was understood in terms of a covenant relationship between God and Israel. This covenant required fidelity on the part of both parties and it resulted in *saddiq* or things being "as they should be" or in right order; thus the notion of righteousness. For example, Israel's victory over her enemies in Judges 5:11, was proof of *sidqot adonay* in Hebrew, which is translated into Latin as *iustitia dei* or the righteousness of God. It helps to bear in mind that redaction difficulties were encountered

⁷ Richard B. Hayes, "Justification", 1129.

in the transition from the Hebrew Old Testament to the Greek Septuagint, which then became the basis for the Latin Vulgate Bible.

Paul, when referring to justification, uses the noun (*diakaisosis*) only twice in Romans. He uses the verb (*dikaion*) 23 times in the two letters; 8 in Galatians and 15 in Romans.⁸ Paul thus reflects the Old Testament understanding which prefers the verb to convey the idea of God's action.

Letter to the Galatians

The practical question that required a response was whether gentiles who were being converted to Christianity needed to be circumcised. Paul points out that even Titus, who accompanied Paul, was not compelled to be circumcised (Gal. 2:3). Paul opposes Peter, who used to eat with the gentiles, but for fear of the "circumcision group" stopped eating with them (Gal. 2:12). Thus for Paul, neither Jews nor gentiles are justified by "works of the law" but by "faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:15-16).

Paul compares the righteousness that is promised to those who believe in Jesus with the promise given to Abraham. "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Gal. 3:6)⁹. This scripture passage is one of the foundational points of the doctrine of justification as it developed within Lutheranism and the Reformation movement in the sixteenth century.

Paul contrasts freedom in Christ with slavery to the law with an allegorical interpretation relating to the two sons of Abraham (Gal. 4: 21-31). The son Ishmael, born of the slave woman Hagar, represents slavery to the law. Isaac, born of the free woman

⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 22.

⁹ In this thesis, all biblical references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible at <http://www.biblegateway.com>.

Sarah following a promise made to Abraham, represents freedom from the law and the promise to all Christians in Jesus Christ.

The preceding couple of paragraphs may suggest that Paul is against following the law and that only faith, as opposed to love, is what justification implies. But in Gal. 5:6, he states that circumcision is not important, what counts is “faith expressing itself through love”. This concept of faith expressing itself through love was later taken up by Augustine as discussed in the following section 1.2. This scripture passage is relied upon by exponents of the “new” perspective on Paul, as I shall discuss later in this section.

The Letter to the Romans

In Romans 2:5-7, Paul explains how God will repay each person according to what they have done and so those who persevere in doing good will receive eternal life. In Romans 2:13, “For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified.” Further, in Romans 2:28-29, Paul affirms that true circumcision is not merely external; it is of the heart, by the Spirit. Paul thus introduces the aspect of interior conversion through the working of the Holy Spirit.

In Rom. 3:28 Paul points out that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Both the circumcised Jew and the uncircumcised Gentile is justified by faith and God is the God of all, both Jews and gentiles (Rom. 3:29-30).

Romans 4 discusses the promise that was made to Abraham and through him to all those who believe in faith. “Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness” (Rom. 4:3), repeats the message of Gal. 3:6. It is significant that Abraham was credited with righteousness before he was circumcised (Rom. 4: 9-10). “That he was

found righteous before as well as after he was circumcised makes him a fit father of both uncircumcised and circumcised who share his faith” (Rom.4:11-12).¹⁰

Paul says that he is often unable to do the good he wants to do and ends up doing the evil that he does not want to do. All this, he says, is because sin lives in him (Rom. 7: 20-25). Is Paul lamenting a weakened nature that causes him to do the things that he does not want to do or does he go further and consider his weakened nature sin itself? We hear the reverberations of a weakened human nature or concupiscence as understood later by Augustine. We also identify a reason for the discord which continues between the Lutherans (who believe that concupiscence is sin) and Catholics (who hold that concupiscence is not sin but the tendency of a weakened nature to sin).

The Letters to the Philippians, Corinthians and Ephesians

A verse that has been problematic to the Lutheran interpretation of justification is Philippians 2:12-13 “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For, it is God who works in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure.” Similarly, in Phil. 3:12: “Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.” These verses convey the idea that Paul believes he needs to strive in order to gain salvation at the end; he is not yet there.

A key passage when proposing justification, as the Lutherans do, as being the external righteousness of Christ is 2Cor. 5:21 “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”. Our sin is imputed to Christ; His righteousness is imputed to us. But scholars like Wright (in the

¹⁰ Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran Paul” and His Critics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 392.

“anti-Lutheran Paul” camp) point out that this verse must be interpreted in its context, namely that we live our present life in the light of the coming day of judgement. “For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil” (2Cor. 5:10). Further, the word *become* in 2Cor. 5:21 does not easily conform to the interpretation of righteousness being merely “imputed” or “reckoned” to believers.¹¹

Ephesians 2:8 states “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” This is the only Pauline reference that says that we are saved as opposed to being justified or being found righteous. The terms “salvation” and “justification” are sometimes used interchangeably; but they represent different concepts. Justification is being declared by God to be right, to be members of his covenant family. Salvation is being saved from death and sin. This distinction between justification and salvation is a recurring theme which my thesis will demonstrate leads to differences in the role that works play in a justified person.

Reconciliation of Paul’s Seemingly Differing Viewpoints

So is faith the only Pauline criterion for justification, as Paul seems to suggest in Gal. 3:6 and Rom. 4:3? Or, are we also called to work out our salvation (Phil 2:12), obey the law (Rom. 2:13) and express our faith through love (Gal. 5:6)? It must be noted that “Paul never uses the expression ‘justification by faith alone’ (*sola fide* is a slogan of the Reformation, not of Paul)”¹². I believe that a reconciliation of these two viewpoints is possible when we consider what Paul has to say about predestination and how

¹¹ Tom Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2009), 141.

¹² Hayes, “Justification”, 1132.

justification is encompassed within God's predestined plan. Paul explains justification within God's foreknowledge and predestination in Rom. 8:29-30: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified." It is God who predestines those who are called to justification. In this vein, Rom. 9:11-13 explains that God, even before the birth of Esau and Jacob, called Jacob and rejected Esau. This choice was not based on their works but on God's election. Thus justification is seen by Paul as part of God's predestined plan for mankind. The theme of predestination was echoed by Augustine and Luther and it was incorporated into the Lutheran confessional documents, as I shall discuss later.

Twentieth Century scholarship on Paul

In the sixteenth century, Luther considered justification central to Paul and to the proclamation of the Christian Gospel. Scholars who endorse Luther's position are on the side of the "pro-Lutheran Paul". Others on the "anti-Lutheran Paul" side believe that justification is only a sub-set of Paul's vision of redemption in Christ.

"Anti-Lutheran Paul" or "new perspective" scholarship has studied Paul within his Jewish context. The new perspective proponents, such as Sanders, Wright and Dunn, believe that much of the "old perspective" was driven by the Protestant Reformation and insufficient attention was paid to first century Judaism. The "new perspective" has sought to focus on first century Judaism without the Lutheran lens. Thus Sanders claims that Judaism was not a religion of works-righteousness which Paul had to combat, it was

based on being in a covenantal relationship with God.¹³ According to Wright, Paul does not criticise the Jews for believing that they could merit God's favour by keeping the law (Torah), but does so for their "relentless pursuit of national, ethnic and territorial identity."¹⁴ Similarly, Dunn holds that the focus of Paul was to remove boundary-markers, which separated Jews from gentiles.¹⁵

According to Wright, justification for Paul meant to be considered by God to be a true member of his family with the right to share table fellowship.¹⁶ Commenting on Gal. 2:11-16, he points out that it is not set in a law court (which would then support a juridical interpretation of justification) but around a table where meals are shared. Peter became accustomed to sharing meals with the gentiles. He had moved from the family of Jews (based on ethnicity) to the family of gentiles (based on faith in Jesus Christ) and was now, from fear, reverting back to his Jewish family roots. Paul reminds Peter that one is not justified by the "works of the law" but through faith in Jesus Christ.

Wright has made a case that the doctrine of justification, as explained by the "pro-Lutheran Paul" camp, is correct but not in itself complete. What he believes is missing is the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's faith life and how faith becomes "active through love" (Gal 5:6) and working in the plan of God to rescue people from death (Rom 8:1-11). According to Wright, Paul conceives of two justifications: present justification and final justification. The "pro-Lutheran Paul" supporters have considered present justification but not final justification. Final justification is when God puts the

¹³ E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1977), 297.

¹⁴ Wright, 84.

¹⁵ James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 358.

¹⁶ Wright, 95-96.

whole world right and raises his people from the dead.¹⁷ This second justification involves the Holy Spirit who enables us to do acts of love.

Westerholm, on the other hand, has made a case for the “Lutheran” Paul. He holds that Paul rejects the view that one can be declared righteous by observing the law, of which circumcision, food and festivals were a part.¹⁸ The allegorical use by Paul of the two sons of Abraham is, in Westerholm’s view, indicative of the message that Paul wishes to convey. Ishmael was born of a slave woman and born according to the flesh. Isaac was born of a free woman and was born according to the promise. It is clear to the “pro-Lutheran Paul” Westerholm that Paul wishes to draw a parallel between Ishmael and a life of slavery under the law compared with Isaac and a life of freedom through faith.¹⁹

A key to interpreting Paul correctly may lie in determining who the intended addressees of Paul’s letters were. A twentieth century finding of a document within the Dead Sea Scrolls entitled “A Sectarian Manifesto” or “4QMMT” (an acronym from the Hebrew words meaning “some of the works of the Law”) provides guidance on this point. The relevant extract of 4QMMT is from the book “The Dead Sea Scrolls, A New Translation” by Wise, Abegg Jr., and Cook²⁰:

Now, we have written to you some of the works of the Law, those which we determined would be beneficial for you and your people, because we have seen that you possess insight and knowledge of the Law. Understand all these things and beseech Him to set your counsel straight and so keep you away from evil thoughts and the counsel of Belial. Then you shall

¹⁷ Wright, viii-x.

¹⁸ Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 367.

¹⁹ Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 379.

²⁰ Michael O. Wise, Martin G. Abegg Jr. and Edward M. Cook, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*. (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 2005), 454-62.

rejoice at the end time when you find the essence of our words to be true.

And it will be reckoned to you as righteousness, in that you have done what is right and good before Him, to your own benefit and to that of Israel. (Emphasis mine)

In commenting on the 4QMMT, Wright holds²¹ that the false brethren that Paul opposed in Gal. 2:4 probably held a doctrine on justification similar to the one contained in 4QMMT. Those who followed the 4QMMT believed that justification was reserved for those who belonged to an extreme and highly disciplined sect within Judaism, those who followed the many requirements of the Torah Law. The document has a clear covenantal and eschatological context. Further, the promise given in advance of a foretold eschatology requires both justification and adherence to the Jewish Law. Paul could have been addressing those who followed the 4QMMT, namely an extreme sect. For 4QMMT, the marker was living by the “works of the law”, for Paul however it was faith.

McGrath suggests a possible compromise between the “pro-Lutheran Paul” and “anti-Lutheran Paul” viewpoints. It is possible that the centre of Paul’s thought is not justification but the grace of God. Justification is one of the ways of describing this grace. “It is thus central in one sense (in that it is a way of expressing the core of the gospel), and not central in another (in that it is only one way among others, of expressing this core).”²²

²¹ Tom Wright. “4QMMT and Paul: Justification, ‘Works’ and Eschatology” in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of Dr. E. Earle Ellis for His 80th Birthday*. Aang-Won (Aaron) Son ed. (New York and London: T & T Clark, 2006):104-32.

²² McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 25.

1.2 Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

The apostolic fathers hardly mention Pauline writings on justification. The only patristic scholar to do so is Augustine. Thus Richard B. Hayes²³ writes:

Paul's powerful and highly nuanced understanding of justification does not appear to have been widely influential in the early Church. Only much later was it "rediscovered" through hermeneutical innovations that allowed Augustine and Luther to reinterpret it for their own times as an antidote to Pelagianism and as a word of reassurance to the terrified introspective conscience.

Augustine wrote in the context of the Manichean, Pelagian, Donatist and Massilian controversies. The following paragraphs will be an overview of Augustine's writings on justification which addressed these controversies.

Augustine's mature doctrine of justification after the year 395 had three major changes from his earlier views. Firstly, Augustine now understood justification in terms of God's predestination. Secondly, humanity's response of faith to God's grace is seen by Augustine as itself God's gift. Thirdly, the human will can only be led to justification through liberation by grace.²⁴ Concupiscence, an inclination towards evil, continues as a potent force in a justified person. But, concupiscence itself is not sin, but the inclination of a weakened nature to sin. This tendency can be overcome by the will only with the help of grace. This Augustinian viewpoint corresponds with the Catholic understanding of concupiscence but differs from the Lutheran view that concupiscence is sin. These differing understandings needed resolution in the JD.

²³ Hayes, "Justification", 1133.

²⁴ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 40.

The Manicheans rejected the creation story in Genesis. They held that there were two eternal principles, Light and Darkness, and that there was a constant cosmic struggle between these two kingdoms. Man's nature is evil and man is not, therefore, responsible for his sin.

Augustine's *The Free Choice of the Will* (*De libero arbitrio*, 388-395) was written to defend the catholic teaching against the Manichean view of dual kingdoms and the absence of free will. Augustine counters the Manicheans by explaining that even though our nature has been depraved by sin, sin is still not the substance of our nature.²⁵

Even though Augustine modified his views about the nature of free will, he never rejected its existence. In *Retractations* (427), Book 1, Ch. 9, he confirmed his position laid out in *The Free Choice of the Will*. For Augustine, therefore, "For, unless something is done by the will, it can be neither a sin nor a good deed."²⁶ This Augustinian understanding of sin, as resulting from the exercise of the human will, is still what the Catholic Church holds, as I will discuss in chapters 3 and 4.

Augustine maintained that humans have free will (*liberum arbitrium*), but that they do not possess freedom (*libertas*). Augustine's later work *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* explains this as "Through sin freedom indeed perished, but it was that freedom which was in Paradise... and it is on this account that human nature needs divine grace."²⁷ This is why, according to Augustine, Paul states "For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (Rom. 7:15).

The question therefore arises as to how strong the damaged human will is. Does it need God's grace? In *On Nature and Grace* (415), Augustine quotes numerous Pauline

²⁵ Augustine of Hippo, *On Nature and Grace* Chapter 22, NPNF 5:128.

²⁶ Augustine, *The Free Choice of the Will*, 2.1.3, FOC 59:109-10.

²⁷ Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*, 1.5, NPNF 5:378.

passages to support his argument that man is saved by grace and by faith in Jesus Christ. “Human nature cannot by any means be justified and redeemed from God’s most righteous wrath - in a word, from punishment - except by faith and the sacrament of the blood of Christ.”²⁸

While Augustine had written *The Free Choice of the Will* (388-95) to refute the Manicheans, he wrote *Grace and the Free Will* (426-427) to refute the Pelagians. He emphasises the need for God’s grace and man’s incapacity to move himself towards God. For Augustine, grace is not a denial of free will, just the acknowledgment of its insufficiency to move on its own towards God.

Augustine denies merit prior to justification, but confirms its existence after justification. Merit, as understood by Augustine, is itself a gift from God. Faith also is a gift of God and man can claim no merit when he has faith. “Consequently, if your good merits are God’s gifts, then He does not crown them as merits of yours, but as gifts of His own.”²⁹

Pelagius and his student, Julian of Eclanum, criticised Augustine and stated that Christ came to give us “an example”. Justification was based on human efforts in following Christ’s example. Pelagius, whilst conceding that Adam’s sin had disastrous consequences on man, insisted that this arose due to “imitation” and not by “propagation”. Augustine rejects this assertion in “But it is not because of the force of habit that the apostle called the flesh the body of death...that we are all born under sin, and our very origin is in a fault.”³⁰ Augustine also rejected the Pelagian view of reward based on merit, quoting the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-10)

²⁸ Augustine, *On Nature and Grace*, Chapter 2, NPNF 5:122.

²⁹ Augustine, *Grace and Free Will*, 6.15, FOC 59: 267.

³⁰ Augustine, *Against Julian*, 2.3.5, FOC 35: 61.

where the labourers were not rewarded on the basis of their work but on a promise made by the owner of the vineyard. Similarly, humans are not rewarded based on their works but on God's promise.³¹

Augustine, in his mature writings after 395, did not believe that man's will is strong enough to turn towards God through its own strength; it needs grace. This grace is provided by the right hand of God, namely Jesus Christ.³² Refuting Julian's *On Nature*, Augustine argues this in his own *On Nature and Grace* (415): "But that free will, whereby man corrupted his own self, was sufficient for passing into sin; but to return to righteousness, he has need of a Physician, since he is out of health; he is in need of a Vivifier, because he is dead."³³

Augustine explains the respective roles of God and humans in operative and co-operative grace. Operative grace is the initiation by God of human justification. This initial operative grace repairs the damaged free will, making it now able to desire good. Humans then co-operate with this liberated will to perform good works and bring justification to perfection. God, too, co-operates with the liberated free will to actualise the good will into good actions. Thus Augustine writes "God, then, works in us, without our cooperation, the power to will, but once we begin to will, and do so in a way that brings us to act, then it is that He cooperates with us."³⁴

Augustine quotes Phil. 2: 12-13 to explain the respective role of works and grace in the life of a person. For Augustine, the first part of these verses: "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" is a command to use our will to do good works. The

³¹ Augustine, *Sermon 37*, NPNF 6:373-8.

³² Augustine, *The Free Choice of the Will*, FOC 59:163.

³³ Augustine, *On Nature and Grace* Chapter 25, NPNF 5:129.

³⁴ Augustine, *Grace and Free Will* 17.33, FOC 59:289.

second part: “for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure” is a confirmation that God’s grace first works on our will and then cooperates with our liberated will as we work.³⁵ Thus, Augustine integrates Paul’s thought in Phil. 2:12-13 into his own understanding of God’s grace and the human will.

McGrath points out that the debate over the role merit plays in the justification process may be superficial. All sides agree that justification is a divine judgement. But God’s own judgement may be based on whether the human has followed God’s righteousness received through Christ. “It may be God’s judgement-but the basis of that judgement is human achievement or status.”³⁶

Augustine had an all-encompassing understanding of justification as transformative. For Augustine, the righteousness that God gives humans in justification is *inherent* in them; it is not just *imputed* to them. For Augustine, when a person is justified, the Trinity enters the soul of the person and transforms the person. The concept of “imputed righteousness” which was introduced by the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century was not an Augustinian concept.³⁷

Augustine did not understand grace as an impersonal abstract force. Rather he holds that love, initiated by the Holy Spirit, plays an important role in the life of the justified person. Faith, without love, has no value in God’s sight. Thus Augustine would develop the concept of “faith working through love”, which would dominate western theological thought for over a thousand years. This concept was already envisaged by Paul in Galatians 5:6, as we saw earlier in section 1.1. The Augustinian concept of “faith

³⁵ Augustine, *Grace and Free Will*, 9.21, FOC 59:273.

³⁶ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 73.

³⁷ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 47-8.

working through love” could not be criticised as being Pelagian since Augustine held that both faith and love were gifts from God.

In chapters 16-21 of *Grace and Free Will*, Augustine provides a succinct explanation of the role that good works and faith play in this life and in eternal life.³⁸ According to Augustine, Paul never meant “that faith suffices to a man, even if he leads a bad life, and has no good works” (chapter 18). According to Augustine, Paul argued that we are justified solely and entirely by grace. But he did not wish to suggest that good works were not necessary for our lives. Augustine quotes Paul “For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life” (Eph. 2:10) to demonstrate that works are important to Paul. We will be rewarded in the eternal life for good works; such reward will itself be a manifestation of God’s grace (chapter 20).

God decides to whom He grants faith, which brings us to Augustine’s doctrine of predestination. “God selects now one and now another, but why is hidden in his mysterious counsels.”³⁹ Augustine uses the analogy of how God chose Jacob and rejected Esau even before they were born (Rom. 9:10-13) to support his argument of divine election.⁴⁰ Election is not given because of a person’s belief or holiness; it is given to make a person a believer and holy.⁴¹ For Augustine, God’s will in predestination is inscrutable to man (potter and the clay). But divine election does not imply human passivity. Since no one knows in advance what God’s election is for him, each has to strive for faith, works and love during his lifetime. Augustine does not subscribe to total

³⁸ Augustine, *Grace and Free Will*, chapters 16-21, FOC 59:285-304.

³⁹ Anthony Meredith, “Justification” *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* 2nd Everett Ferguson, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 646-647.

⁴⁰ Augustine, *On The Predestination of the Saints*, 1.32, NPNF 5:513.

⁴¹ Augustine, *On The Predestination of the Saints*, 1.34-36, NPNF 5:514-5.

assurance about salvation, a concept which would be raised by the Reformers in the sixteenth century.

The Massilians were monks from Marseilles, with John Cassian (360-435) being prominent among them. The Massilians disputed Augustine's view of predestination, believing that it led to fatalism. While the Massilians rejected the Pelagian view that a man can will his return towards God, they nevertheless also held that free will had a role greater than that given by Augustine.⁴² Grace was important to the Massilians, who believed that this grace enables man to choose the good. The human will, given by the Creator, is itself inclined towards being saved. Thus "when God sees us turning in order to will what is good, he comes to us, directs us and strengthens us."⁴³ Augustine, who had earlier held a Massilian point of view, accepted in 428-429, that he had been in error and confirms that even the beginning of faith is God's gift.⁴⁴

For the Donatists, the true church was pure and not tainted by those who had betrayed the church by cooperating with its persecutors under Diocletian. They questioned the efficacy of sacraments administered by unworthy priests. Augustine, for his part, affirmed that the church lives in a secular world and includes sinners. In *The Retractions*,⁴⁵ he corrects any possible misunderstanding that may have occurred because he referred to the Church as "not having spot or wrinkle" (*On Baptism, Against the Donatists*, 1.17.26). He reiterates that the Church is a church of sinners, a place where

⁴² John Cassian, *The Conferences* Trans. Boniface Ramsey in "Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation" 57: 467-91.

⁴³ John Cassian, *The Conferences*, XIII. XI.5, 478.

⁴⁴ Augustine, *On The Predestination of the Saints*, 1.5, NPNF 5:499-500.

⁴⁵ Augustine, *The Retractions*, 2.44, Trans. Sister Mary Inez Bogan FOC 60:156.

sinner are invited to come.⁴⁶ He also confirms that the sacraments are efficacious despite the unworthiness of the priest and that they effect what they promise.⁴⁷

The Second Council of Orange (529, Orange II) pronounced on the Pelagian and Massilian controversies. The Council declared that while the human will is damaged and weakened, its continued existence is never in question. Thus it rejected Pelagianism. It pointed out that not only is grace needed at the initial stage; but that the very movement of the human will towards God, brought about through human effort, is itself a manifestation of God's grace in humans. It thus rejected the Massilian viewpoint. But, the pronouncements of Orange II were unknown from the ninth century, when Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims quoted them, till the sixteenth century, when they were referenced in the canonical collection of Peter Crabbe in 1538.⁴⁸ Within this period when the documents of Orange II were not available, medieval theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus and Gabriel Biel developed their theologies.

Augustine's writings were important to the Protestant reformers, especially to Luther. Luther, as I will discuss in chapter 2 of my thesis, however, read Augustine through the lens of his own theology.

1.3 Reception of the Doctrine of Justification during the Medieval Period

Introduction

In this section, I introduce three theologians of the medieval period, namely Bonaventure, Aquinas and Biel. These three have been selected because their theologies

⁴⁶ Augustine, *The Correction of the Donatists*, 9.40, trans. J. R. King NPNF 4:647.

⁴⁷ Margaret R. Miles, "Augustine" *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd edition, Everett Ferguson et al. eds. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997) 151.

⁴⁸ G. H. Tavard and P. De Letter "Justification" *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, 2nd ed., (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 82.

were discussed by Catholics and Lutherans in the sixteenth century. Bonaventure outlines the view of the early Franciscan school, while Biel represents the later Franciscan school and the scholasticism of the *via moderna*. Aquinas became the preeminent doctor of the Dominicans. When the Roman Catholic Council of Trent met, it had most representatives from the Franciscans. Yet, the Dominican thought of Thomas Aquinas gained sway at the CT, as I shall discuss in chapter 3. Biel's theology that man's will is strong enough to move towards God without God's grace came under fire from both Lutherans and Catholics, as we shall see in chapters 2 and 3. This section will thus enable the reader to have an overview of medieval theology on justification and set up the stage for the development of the doctrine in the sixteenth century.

Bonaventure (1221-1274) and the Early Franciscan School

During the eleventh-century, it was widely held that grace did not bring about an ontological change in the human soul. They "expressed the change effected in justification in terms of a particular presence of God in his creature, which did not necessarily effect an ontological change."⁴⁹ Bonaventure and the early Franciscan school corrected this eleventh century view of justification. They were influenced by pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite. According to this school of thought, there were three fundamental operations of grace in the justification process - purification, illumination and perfection of the soul. Bonaventure⁵⁰ writes:

Whoever wishes to ascend to God must first avoid sin, which deforms our nature, then exercise his natural powers mentioned above: by praying, to receive restoring grace; by a good life, to receive purifying justice; by

⁴⁹ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 68.

⁵⁰ Bonaventure, "The Soul's Journey into God", 1.8, Trans. Ewert Cousins in *The Classics of Western Spirituality: A Library of the Great Spiritual Masters* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 63.

meditating, to receive illuminating knowledge; and by contemplating, to receive perfecting wisdom.

Thus Bonaventure's spirituality is based on "Three Ways", requiring the sinner to respond to these three acts.⁵¹

While Augustine considered merit in terms of gaining eternal life, the eleventh and twelfth century theologians sought to answer the question whether humans by their own efforts could merit justification. The response was a resounding no; it being clearly accepted that only Christ had merit. The systematisation of the theology of merit in the twelfth century, however, created the distinction between merit and congruity. While humans cannot merit justification, they can make themselves congruous or ready for justification. This concept of congruity was particularly applied to Mary. But, congruity was always understood as God's *gift* rather than man's *merit*.

For the early Franciscan school, there was a direct relationship between the moral and meritorious value of an act. But the later Franciscan school and the *via moderna* held that the merit of an act is based solely on divine will and not on its inherent moral value. The parable of the labourers who were hired at different times in the day by the owner of the vineyard and then paid the same wages irrespective of the number of hours they had worked was used as a scriptural illustration of this point.

Thomas of Aquinas (1225-1274) and the Dominican School⁵²

Aquinas' mature writing, as expressed in the *Summa Theologiae* (1266-73), retained the role of preparation for justification but pointed out that such preparation was

⁵¹ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 67.

⁵² McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 64-68.

outside purely natural human powers (*Summa theologiae*, 1-2, q. 112, a.1)⁵³. “Thomas distinguishes between a capacity to liberate oneself from sin and a capacity to cooperate with grace towards such liberation.”⁵⁴ The human preparation for justification is itself seen as the work of God. The act of justification is free, but the will cooperates through the grace of God. But “because the will cooperates in the fulfilment of the conditions of justification, it does not follow that the will cooperates in producing justification itself.”⁵⁵ The initiation in a person of preparation for justification comes from God. Thus *quod in se est*, namely doing one’s best, is now replaced by the axiom *facienti quod in se est*, meaning God does not deny grace to those who do their best, in so far as God moves them to do so.

Thomas Aquinas makes a distinction between the *virtue of justice* and *infused justice*, also referred to as the *supernatural habit of justice*. The *virtue of acquired justice* enables a person to be just towards others (*Summa* 1.2, q.63, a.4)⁵⁶. *Infused justice* comes only from God through grace and results in the justification of man. Infused justice brings about a change of the mind. When the mind which is the higher nature is subordinate to God, it will be able to control the lower nature to avoid *mortal sin*. But the lower nature cannot be completely controlled by the higher mind. The justified person still commits *venial sin* (*Summa* 1.2, q. 109, a.8)⁵⁷. In this sense, Thomas understands Romans 7:25 “So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin” as describing the human condition. Thomas indicates that the initial

⁵³ Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation* ed. Timothy McDermott (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1989), 316.

⁵⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* in “Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan” Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988)1:392.

⁵⁵ Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 401.

⁵⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 241.

⁵⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 311.

infusion of grace must be followed by the submission of the lower to the higher nature, a reflection of the Augustinian understanding of the dual nature of justification.

The question arose as to whether this infusion of supernatural habits was prior or posterior to divine acceptance. Up to the thirteenth century, it was held that infused grace was prior to divine acceptance. This thinking was rejected in the fourteenth century as we shall discuss in the section on Biel.

Thomas held that justification brought about real change in persons by the infusion of the supernatural habit of grace into their souls. “In justification of souls, two things occur together, namely, the remission of guilt and the newness of life through grace” (*Summa* 3a, q. 56, a.2)⁵⁸.

The Augustinian view that justification is the restoration of humanity to its proper order in the created hierarchy is reflected in Thomas’ reasoning as to why justification is properly named after justice rather than faith or love. According to Thomas, even though faith and love are infused in the process of justification, the transformation is rightly named after justice since justice refers to the correct ordering of the soul (*Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 113, a.1).

Thomas understands divine reward of human merit as an act of God’s justice. But for Thomas, the use of the word “justice” is not meant in its usual sense, since in its usual sense; justice can only exist between equals. Therefore, for Thomas, justice and merit must be understood within the context of God’s grace.

Thomas had a great influence on the thinking of the Catholic Church and even on Eastern theology. For example, the Council of Florence (1439-45) is considered as a compendium of the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas. Again at the Council of Trent, the

⁵⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 537.

Summa was extensively referenced in the deliberations. The *Summa* was also translated into Greek and was important to Eastern theology.⁵⁹

1.3.2 Gabriel Biel (1425-1495) and the *Via Moderna*⁶⁰

The dilemma that needed resolution revolved around the question: How can God justify humans and at the same time permit human merit? Duns Scotus (1266-1308) answered this by arguing that both justification and merit are based on divine acceptance of humans. For Scotus, the primary cause of divine acceptance is God's own ordination that there should be a covenant relationship between Him and humans and that the created habit of charity be the secondary cause of divine acceptance. Thus, contrary to earlier thinking, divine acceptance precedes the infusion of supernatural habits. Scotus' line of thinking was followed by William of Ockham (1287-1387) and later by Biel. Biel, from the *via moderna* school, made a major contribution to the medieval understanding of God's righteousness.

Biel's doctrine of justification is based on a pact between God and man, which determines the conditions for humans to be justified. According to Biel, God of His own free will, has determined to enter into a binding contract with humanity and respects this covenant because God is just. Therefore God gives grace to those who do their best, because of His own promise within the contract. Biel relates the justice of God with God's mercy. Biel points out that God acts in mercy when he establishes his pact of justice. Therefore when humans do their very best, God in His mercy and justice provides them with justifying grace. Thus *facere quod in se est*, namely God rewards based on merit within the framework of the covenant. "He is obliged, because he has placed the

⁵⁹ W. A. Wallace, J.A. Weisheipl and M. F. Johnson "St. Thomas Aquinas" *NCE* 14:23.

⁶⁰ Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 132-160.

obligation on himself, to infuse his grace in everyone who has done his very best.”⁶¹ But for Biel, no one can know with certainty that he has in fact done his very best.

Merit within the pact with God is explained by distinguishing between the inherent moral value of an act and its ascribed value in terms of a covenant. In the Middle Ages, a king was entitled to issue “token coinage”, often made from lead, which had negligible inherent value but full ascribed value determined by the king. Similarly, within the pact, human acts have a contractual value ascribed by God, which is much greater than their negligible inherent value.

The soteriology of Biel and the *via moderna* has a weakness. Since Biel understood justification in terms of the pact between God and man, there is no essential difference between the covenant in the New Testament and that in the Old Testament. Therefore justification has no necessity for the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, no need of Christ as saviour.

Original sin causes man to be weakened and he has to struggle constantly against evil. Original sin has a psychological but not an ontological impact on the free will of man. It takes away the pleasure of doing good acts and changes the direction of the will. But, Biel believes that man is capable of loving God for God’s sake (the ultimate form of love) without the assistance of grace.⁶² Free will, according to Biel, could enable humans to be disposed to the reception of God’s grace. It is this claim that exposed Biel to the criticism of being Pelagian. Biel’s position on the ability of the will to move itself towards God was rejected both by Lutherans and Catholics in the sixteenth century. But, Biel had written without access to the pronouncements and canons of the Second Council

⁶¹ Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 132.

⁶² Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 129, 133.

of Orange (529) as explained in the section on Augustine. He was not criticised as being Pelagian by his contemporaries, who similarly did not have access to those pronouncements. Biel was aware of the Council of Carthage and he was diligent in being faithful to it. Thus, what was considered orthodox in 1500, when Orange II was unknown, was no longer considered orthodox in 1550, when the canons of Orange II became accessible.

Even though merit or reward was understood in terms of the pact with God, the *via moderna* continued to hold that justification included regeneration. Thus justification was not forensic and external, it involved transformation. The entire medieval period understood justification as a real change in the sinner. Thus the notional distinction between justification and sanctification made in the sixteenth century by the Reformers represents a departure from earlier western theological tradition.⁶³

Conclusion

This chapter was a brief biblical and historical analysis of the doctrine of justification. It has followed the development of the doctrine from the time of Saint Paul through Augustine in the fourth and fifth centuries and then to its reception during the medieval period by Bonaventure, Aquinas and Biel. The pronouncements of Orange II, for reasons that are not clear, were not available to Bonaventure, Aquinas and Biel. Thus Biel's teaching on the ability of man to move by his own will towards God was found unacceptable in the sixteenth century, both by the Lutherans and Catholics.

This chapter identified and discussed key concepts such as justification, predestination, righteousness, faith, works, grace, free will, original sin and

⁶³ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 71-2.

concupiscence. These themes, which were central during the Reformation period, recur throughout this thesis and are some of the principal subjects addressed by the JD, as discussed in chapter 4. In the next two chapters, I will outline the respective doctrinal positions of Lutherans and Roman Catholics on justification.

Chapter 2

Luther and Lutheranism

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the development of the doctrine of justification by Luther and the Lutheran Church. Political issues as well as theological differences played a significant role at the time of the Reformation. The Catholic Church was slow in responding to the calls of the Reformers to hold an ecumenical council. Such calls started around 1520. When the CT finally met twenty five years later, it was too late, as I shall demonstrate in this and in the next chapter, to prevent the rupture within the Catholic Church.

I will begin this chapter by studying Martin Luther, who led the Reformation movement and made a significant contribution to the doctrine of justification. Thereafter, I will analyse two principal faith documents of the Lutheran Confession, namely the Augsburg Confession (CA) and the Formula of Concord (FC). Both these documents are foundational to the Lutheran Confession right up to the present time.

2.1 Martin Luther (1483-1546)

According to Grane, who has studied the references of Augustinian texts used by Luther, Luther possibly viewed Augustine through the lens of his own theology and his own understanding of Paul.⁶⁴

Luther had an overly sensitive conscience. As a priest, he felt he was not worthy to celebrate mass. He went to confession frequently, yet carried a sense of unworthiness and guilt. He had anxieties (*Anfechtungen*) about his own salvation. He obtained solace

⁶⁴ Hans-Ulrich Delius, “Augustine” *OER* 1:99.

from his interpretation of Rom. 1:17 that God is not a harsh judge, but one who is righteous and accepts the righteousness of Christ for us, when we have faith in Christ.⁶⁵

Luther opposed the Roman Catholic Church's practice of selling indulgences. He posted in October 1517 at Wittenberg his ninety-five "Theses on the Power of Indulgences". He meant to initiate discussion within the Roman Catholic Church. But, his initiative was perceived as questioning the authority of the pope. While this tension between Luther and Rome continued, Luther formulated his own doctrine of justification, which took a different slant from that of Paul and Augustine, even though he drew heavily from both.

It has been held for many centuries that Luther had a forensic understanding of justification, significantly different from Augustine, and that he distinguishes between justification and sanctification. From Augustine to the medieval period, justification was a process that included both the initial grace of God as well as the inner sanctification of the justified person. From the Reformation perspective, however, the criterion for establishing whether a given doctrine of justification was truly Protestant was whether the justifying righteousness was considered as extrinsic. Extrinsic justification can also be forensic, which has its origin within the setting of a court and is based on a declaration by which a sinner is declared righteous even though the debt for the sin has not been repaid. This is similar to a person being declared "not guilty" by a court at which point the actual guilt of the person has no bearing anymore. This Protestant understanding of the nature of justification was a theological *novum* (new thing) that was not catholic (universally accepted) prior to the Reformation.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Martin Brecht, "Martin Luther" *OER* 2:462.

⁶⁶ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 215.

Recent scholarship under the leadership of Finnish Lutheran scholar Tuomo Mannermaa has re-examined the meaning of “faith” in the works of Luther. According to these scholars, faith for Luther is union with Christ. They have studied Luther’s expression “in ipsa fide Christus adest” (in faith itself Christ is present) to demonstrate that faith for Luther is not merely intellectual, emotional or just something received. It is living with Christ. “In that sense, in Luther’s theology, justification and *theosis* as participation in God are also inseparable.”⁶⁷

Luther’s mature theology starts around 1519. In his work, “Two Types of Righteousness” (1519)⁶⁸, Luther explains that the first type of righteousness creates faith, and gains for the believer Christ’s justifying work on the cross as described in Phil. 2:5-6. In the first righteousness, the relationship between Christ and the sinner is comparable to that between a bridegroom and a bride. The sinner, Christ’s bride, receives the external and unmerited righteousness of Christ by grace alone. At this stage, works have no part to play. This first righteousness is also the source of the second righteousness, which enables a person who is justified in Christ to do good works. Luther was not against works; far from it. Works are part of the second righteousness and help to purify the flesh, enable us to love our neighbour and develop meekness and humility in ourselves, like Christ (Phil. 2).

To Luther, the whole person (*totus homo*) simultaneously serves the law of God and the law of sin. This interpretation leads Luther to his famous statement that the believer is *simul iustus et peccator*, simultaneously justified and sinner. To Augustine,

⁶⁷ Tuomo Mannermaa, “Justification and *Theosis* in Lutheran-Orthodox Perspective”, in Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 38.

⁶⁸ Martin Luther, LW 31: Career of the Reformer I, 297-306.

the sinner is justified both in relation to God and in relation to other humans. But for Luther, the sinner is only justified in relation to God. At the human level, he is still a sinner.

Luther's work "Bondage of the Will" (*De Servo Arbitrio*, 1525)⁶⁹ discusses whether the human will has the ability to choose God. This work was a response to Erasmus (*De libero arbitrio*), who held that humans are able to accept or reject God's grace. Luther disagrees. He points out that we do not have free choice. Our free will is inclined to evil and wickedness. Our reasoning is ignorant of God and the good. Therefore men despise God.

Luther also rejects the scholastic division of merit into "congruous" and "condign" merit. The former refers to preparing oneself. Here merit is not based on the intrinsic value of the act, but on equity in God's sight. Condign merit refers to merit where the reward is proportional to the act. For Luther, no merit of any kind exists because the will cannot make good choices. For Luther, the distinction made by Paul in Romans 4: 1-5, between the righteousness of works and that of faith, is crucial to our understanding of the inability of the will to choose God. In this passage, Paul states that it was Abraham's faith, and not his works, that was reckoned to him as righteousness.

Luther, like Augustine, believes in predestination. The question is: Did Luther support single or double predestination? Single predestination teaches that God chooses the ones He saves. Double predestination holds that God not only elects the ones He saves, He also decides who will be damned. The Lutheran confessional document Formula of Concord (FC, 157) teaches single predestination. Calvin and the Reformed tradition teach double predestination. I agree, however, with the view of Brian G.

⁶⁹ Luther, LW 33 Career of the Reformer III: 15-19, 246-95.

Mattson, that Luther also taught double predestination.⁷⁰ Mattson states that the reason why many scholars believe that Luther supports single predestination is that they read Luther from the paradigm of the Book of Concord.

Luther in *Bondage of the Will*⁷¹ cites three sets of scriptural passages when discussing predestination. Firstly, using Rom. 9:18 and Ex. 4:21, he explains how God hardened the heart of Pharaoh (p.165-6). Next, he moves on to Judas, where he distinguishes between two types of necessity, namely that of force and that of foreknowledge. Judas was not forced, against his will, to sin (necessity of force). But, that he would sin was already known to God in advance (necessity of foreknowledge). God's foreknowledge does not nullify free will (p.192-3). In the third instance, Luther takes up the classic case of Jacob and Esau referring to Rom. 1:13 and Mal. 1:2. That God chose Jacob and rejected Esau, even before they were born, is significant to Luther. It demonstrates that God's election *either way* is not dependant on works. God makes his election as part of His sovereign will. We are not capable of understanding God and therefore should not question His working. We are clay in the potter's hand (p.199-203). I conclude that Luther held in favour of double predestination.

Did Luther reject good works? Clearly, Luther vehemently opposed the selling of indulgences, but was he really opposed to good works? A key to understanding Luther on the tension between faith and works is his tiny tract entitled *Christian Liberty*⁷². It is significant that this tract was written by Luther in 1520 seeking reconciliation with Rome. Therefore what Luther put down in this tract represents the very minimum he expected

⁷⁰ Brian G. Mattson. *Double or Nothing: Martin Luther's Doctrine of Predestination* (unpublished paper, 1997) available at <http://www.contra-mundum.org/essays/mattson/Luther-predestination.pdf>, 1-21 (accessed on June 25, 2013).

⁷¹ Luther, LW 33:164-203.

⁷² Martin Luther, *Christian Liberty* ed. Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957).

from the Roman Church. The page references in this and the next two paragraphs are from *Christian Liberty*. Luther states that only one thing is needed for Christian life, righteousness and freedom, namely the Word of God, the Gospel of Christ, which is God's promise of providing grace to man (p. 8).

Luther points out that no works would be necessary if we were only spiritual beings (p.21). Since we are also natural beings with flesh, good works are to be pursued in order to honour and please God. Good works purify the body (p. 22). Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works. He uses the example from Matthew 7:18 where a good tree bears good fruits, but the fruits do not make the tree.

As discussed earlier, Luther believes that there are two types of righteousness. The first type of righteousness is completely free of our works. But having received this freedom, we humans must seek the second righteousness. A man must do good works not only for himself, but also for others, through works of charity. "Freedom *from* (useless) works is simultaneously freedom *for* useful works."⁷³ On the lines of Galatians 5:6, Luther even reiterates the concept of "faith is active through love" (p. 28), which Augustine had earlier developed as a major theological theme. Thus Luther believes in works, but not in their necessity for justification.

The teaching that justification as the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*, the article by which the church stands or falls, was the leading feature of Luther's and mainstream Reformation theology. I will discuss this teaching later in this and following chapters.

⁷³ Hans Küng, *Justification : The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection* Trans. Edward Quinn (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1981), xv.

2.2 Augsburg Confession (1530)

Introduction

The Augsburg Confession (known in Latin as *Confessio Augustana*, CA) defined the doctrinal position of the Lutherans. The CA was presented to the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, in an attempt to safeguard unity within the Catholic Church. It was meant to present the Lutheran view at an Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church; calls for such a Council having begun after Luther posted his ninety-five “Theses on the Power of Indulgences” in 1517. The hope of Melanchthon, Luther and the CA was to resolve issues to ensure the purity of the church and to safeguard it as one, holy, catholic (universal) and apostolic (articles 7, 8 of CA). Lutherans in the twentieth century assign the CA special importance among their confessional documents and this facilitated, as I shall demonstrate in chapter 4, the signing of the JD.

The CA preceded the Council of Trent (CT), while the Book of Concord (BC) succeeded the CT. The CA represents most closely Luther’s views having been developed during the early years of the Reformation before disputes set in within Lutheranism. Its tone was conciliatory since positions had not become polarised. In some Lutheran churches mainly in Denmark and Norway, the only two confessional documents that are recognised are the CA and Luther’s Small Catechism. “These texts contain no condemnations about justification in relation to the Roman Catholic Church.” (Note 3 of the JD)

Political factors⁷⁴

Political developments had an important bearing on the CA. In 1521, the Edict of Worms (following the Diet of Worms, called by Charles V) condemned Martin Luther and Protestantism, and ordered the suppression of all church reformation which was based on Luther's demands. But, the Edict of Worms could not be enforced because many German princes supported Luther. Charles V was also busy fighting France and attending to problems within his own kingdom. Additionally, the Ottoman Empire under Suleiman posed a serious threat to Germany and Charles V realised that he had to rally all German princes to face this threat. German unity was more pressing than church reform for the time being.

But 1529 brought about a major shift in the political scenarios. Charles V came to an agreement with Pope Clement VII with the Treaty of Barcelona. He also signed a peace agreement with France with the Treaty of Cambria. Further, Suleiman failed to capture Vienna and the Ottoman advance was temporarily halted in October 1529. This freed up Charles V to devote himself to religious matters. The 1529 Edict of Speyer was issued demanding an end to reform. This evoked a formal appeal or "protestatio" from Luther's princely supporters. Charles V, seeking to achieve unity within the Christian ranks, therefore, summoned the Diet of Augsburg.

In preparation for the Diet of Augsburg, Elector John of Saxony commissioned his theologians, led by Luther and his close associate Melancthon, to prepare documents. Since Luther had been excommunicated in 1521, the Saxon delegation of theologians to Augsburg was led by Melancthon. When they reached Augsburg, they were confronted by a publication edited by John Eck, one of the brightest German Roman

⁷⁴ Helmar Junghans, "Augsburg Confession" *OER* 1:93-97.

Catholic theologians, who opposed those from Wittenberg. Melanchthon realised that he would have to prove that their position was not heretical but orthodox and catholic, namely universally accepted by the church. Melanchthon therefore drew up the CA, which was presented at the Diet of Augsburg. The Roman Catholic theologians formulated a “Confutation”. The emperor Charles V accepted this “Confutation” and thus rejected the Lutheran view. He issued orders that all Lutheran governments return to obedience to Rome by 15th April 1531 or face suppression.

Original sin

Article II of the CA states that humans are born in sin, without fear of God, without trust in God and with concupiscence, which itself is sin. This article reflects closely Luther’s position on original sin and its disastrous effects. The first part states that all men are born in sin which did not create any difficulties. However, the Catholic Church rejected: (1) that men are born without fear of God or without trust in God and (2) that concupiscence itself is sin. Herein, we find the source of differing understandings between the Lutherans and Roman Catholics on the consequences of original sin on man’s free will (see section 4.4 of the JD).

Justification

Article IV of the CA on justification restates the Pauline idea contained in Romans 4:5 of “faith being reckoned as righteousness”. The concept of justification as forensic (within the setting of a court and having to do with scientifically investigating a crime) and resulting from God declaring the believer to be righteous was not in the CA, though the CA may have contained a hint of it.⁷⁵ Forensic imputation was introduced in the Apologia to the Augsburg Confession (1530) formulated by Melanchthon, in response

⁷⁵ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 240.

to the Roman Catholic Confutation of the CA. Later, the BC would formalise the concept of forensic imputation, though it was not present in the CA.

Sola fide

Sola fide is discussed in the Article VI on obedience, where the justified are commanded to do good works. The Article quotes Ambrose “it is ordained of God that he who believes in Christ is saved, freely receiving remission of sins, without works, by faith alone.” Humanity is not justified because of faith such that faith is the cause of justification. Faith is not seen as a human achievement or work. Rather, faith is human beings receiving the gracious deed of God in Christ. CA’s “they are justified as a gift on account of Christ through faith”⁷⁶ reflects Augustinian thinking.

Kolb and Wengert have proposed a possible reason for the differences in understanding between Lutherans and Catholics of the role that faith plays in justification. The Lutheran confessional documents, namely the CA and the FC, were drawn up in German. The German “*durch den Glauben*” is translated to English as “by faith alone”. But in German, the preposition *durch* denotes both process (in English “through”) and agent (in English “by”). So is faith the agency by which we receive justification or is it only the process (way) through which justification is received? In this article of the FC, it is translated as “through”. But translating “through faith here and elsewhere in the FC does not contradict that the Reformers also held that we are justified by faith.”⁷⁷ This nuance of the German language where *durch* can be translated into

⁷⁶ Augsburg Confession, Article IV.1-2 BOC, 39-41.

⁷⁷ BOC, 40, note 46.

English either as “through” or “by” goes some way to explaining the different understandings of “by faith alone” between Lutherans and Roman Catholics.

Free Will

Article XVIII on free will makes a distinction between civil righteousness and spiritual righteousness. While civil righteousness (doing things well in the eyes of the world) is possible in an unjustified person, spiritual righteousness is only possible in a justified person. The will cannot choose the good in spiritual matters without the help of the Holy Spirit. This follows Luther’s thought on the powerlessness of the will.

Faith and Good Works

Article XX condemns the Pelagians who believe that, without the Holy Spirit and by the powers of nature alone, we are able to love God and keep His commandments. It also rejects the scholastic concept of *Quoad substantiam actuum*⁷⁸ which teaches that human nature, by its own powers, can fulfill the divine commands according to the letter, but not according to the intention of the law-giver, God. This scholastic view had been proposed by Duns Scotus and Gabriel Biel who held that without grace, human beings have the ability to fulfil the law and merit God’s grace

⁷⁸ BOC, 53, note 101.

2.3 Formula of Concord (FC, 1577) and the Book of Concord (BC, 1580)

Introduction

The BC is a compilation of ten confessional documents of the Lutheran Church. It includes the three ecumenical creeds (Apostles, Nicene and Athanasian), the CA (studied in 2.2), the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Luther's Small and Large Catechisms and the Formula of Concord (FC for short), which will be reviewed in this section. The Small and Large Catechisms and the Smalcald Articles were written by Luther. The CA, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession and the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope were drawn up by Melanchthon. The FC was given its final form principally by Andreae, Chemnitz, and Selnecker.

The word "concord" in the FC and the BC, demonstrates that doctrinal positions were being laid out in order to bring about agreement or concord among Lutherans. The FC had a different focus from the CA. The CA was drawn up with an upcoming ecumenical council in mind, though such a council took place only years later at Trent. CA's primary objective was to achieve unity within the Catholic Church. The FC and the BC were meant to settle internal disputes that had persisted from the 1550's within Lutheranism and to respond to the Council of Trent, which had completed its work.

Unless otherwise stated in this section, references are to the Solid Declaration (SD) of the FC, which are the unabridged confessions, as opposed to the Epitome which is an abridged version of the FC.

Political factors⁷⁹

After Luther's death in 1546, Emperor Charles V was able to impose his will on the Lutherans. He did not respect his oral promise to Moritz, the Lutheran Duke of East Saxony that they would not have to give up their Protestant faith. Moritz therefore summoned theologians from Wittenberg and Leipzig (including Melanchthon) to draft a compromise plan that would appear to comply with the Emperor, but would maintain Luther's teaching. The plan was never officially adopted, but came to be labelled as the "Leipzig Interim". The "Leipzig Interim" (LI) was built on the principle of *adiaphora*, namely things which are neither commanded nor forbidden by scripture. With *adiaphora*, there is space to agree on different interpretations if there are no commands to the contrary in scripture. Therefore where a core faith belief is not covered by scripture, possibilities exist to have more than one interpretation. One can see some similarity between this line of thinking and the process of "differentiated consensus" which was adopted to arrive at the JD (and will be discussed in chapter 4).

Theological Themes

The BC was an attempt to determine the fundamental theological principles of a new movement based on its founders, Luther and Melanchthon. The early principles of Luther and Melanchthon were being called into question. In the 1530's and 1540's, Melanchthon had disagreements with Amsdorf on the role of good works in salvation and the bondage of the human will. The Wittenberg professor, George Major, siding with Melanchthon, supported the LI's statement that good works were needed for salvation. This caused a rift between the Gnesio-Lutherans (genuine Lutherans) who opposed the

⁷⁹ Robert Kolb, "Formula of Concord" *OER* 2:117-121.

role of good works in salvation and the Philippists (Melanchthon's supporters) who believed in such works. Melanchthon's position on works is closer to the Catholic position than what was finally laid out in the FC. Further, both the Gnesio-Lutherans and the Philippists opposed Osiander's interpretation that justification by grace through faith took place by the indwelling of Christ's divine nature in believers. But, Osiander reflected Luther's *theosis* of Christ in-dwelling in the sinner (as seen in Mannermaa's work on Luther in section 2.1) and the transformational aspect of justification, which is also supported by Catholics. A clear need existed within Lutheranism to define its position on theological issues.

Original Sin (Article I of the Solid Declaration of the FC)

How extensive is the damage caused by man's sin? The FC holds that the damage is severe. This damage is therefore not comparable to a magnet's temporary loss of its properties when covered with garlic juice. When wiped clean of the garlic juice, the magnet regains its original properties. According to the FC, man's nature is severely damaged, thus ruling out the possibility of it regaining its original properties. We shall see in chapter 3 that Catholics have a less dismal view of the impact of original sin.

The FC, however, holds that despite the massive damage to man's nature, sin is not the nature of man.⁸⁰ Man's nature after the Fall continues to be a creature of God and must be differentiated from sin. This clarification in the FC rejected the Gnesio-Lutheran view, espoused by Matthias Flacius, that after the Fall, sin was the "essence" of man.

For Lutherans, concupiscence, namely the tendency or lust to sin, is itself sin. This view contrasts sharply with that of Catholics, who do not believe that concupiscence is sin. This difference needed resolution in the JD.

⁸⁰ The Solid Declaration (SD) of the Formula of Concord, Article I-2, BOC, 532.

Free Will (Article II of the SD of the FC)

Article II seeks to answer the question whether man before conversion, when he hears the Word of God and when God's grace is offered to him, is capable of preparing himself for receiving grace, accepting it and assenting to it. The FC answered this question in the negative. The FC reiterated the view of Luther in his commentary on Psalm 90 that though man is clever about temporal matters, he is totally blind in spiritual matters, until he is converted by the Holy Spirit (Article II.2). It reiterates that it is the Holy Spirit alone, and not human free will, which causes the actual beginning and completion of conversion, faith in Christ, rebirth and renewal (Article II.25). Thus this Article represents a rejection of the Massilian and scholastic (Biel) views that the human will has a part in the "beginnings of conversion". This total exclusion of any human cooperation in conversion represented a difference with Catholics which needed resolution.

But, the FC rejected the view that the will is entirely passive after conversion. It states that the human will after conversion, is an instrument of the Holy Spirit. Man not only accepts grace but cooperates with the Holy Spirit in the works that follow. Man's will, after conversion, is an instrument of the Holy Spirit.⁸¹ On this point, there does not seem to be any difference with the Catholic understanding.

It is significant to note that Melanchthon, in his 1535 edition of *Loci* suggested and in his 1543 edition explicitly stated that the human will was not entirely passive in justification. According to Melanchthon, justification is attributed to three contributing factors: the Word of God, the Holy Spirit and the human will.⁸² Thus for Melanchthon,

⁸¹ Epitome of the FC, Article II-18, BOC, 494.

⁸² BOC, 494.

humans do have the faculty of allowing themselves to be drawn towards God even before justification.

The FC (article II.77) rejects the teaching of the Synergists who had Melancthon in their ranks. Synergism is the view that holds that in the process of salvation, there is an element of human cooperation with divine grace. The FC upheld Monergism, namely that God's grace effects salvation without human cooperation.

Righteousness (Article III of the SD of the FC)

It is the entire Christ, in both His divine and human natures, who is our righteousness before God (Article III.4). It is through faith alone and from pure grace that the obedience of Christ is imputed to believers as righteousness. Article III.9 unequivocally states that we are justified apart from all preceding, present or subsequent works. "Accordingly, the word 'justify' here means to declare righteous and free from sins, and to absolve one from eternal punishment for the sake of Christ's righteousness, which is imputed by God to faith."⁸³ This definition of justification as being declared righteous for Christ's sake differs from the Catholic position at Trent.

Melancthon in his writings after 1530 uses the notion of external righteousness. Melancthon went even further than Luther to describe the relationship between Christ and the believer. Luther had used the image of a marriage to describe the intimacy between Christ (bridegroom) and the soul (bride). Melancthon used images from Roman law. Protestant orthodoxy frequently used the Roman legal term "acceptilation" to describe the treatment of a debt as paid, even though it had not. This Protestant

⁸³ SD of FC, Article III.17, BOC, 564.

understanding of the forensic imputation of justifying righteousness represents a break from Augustine's understanding of righteousness, which makes the sinner righteous.⁸⁴

The BC did not reject works of the law or of love. The FC accepts *regeneratio*, in the sense that justification before God is re-birth. But it did reject the view that works were required as part of justification (Article III.19). Thus “we are pronounced righteous solely by faith in Christ, not by works of the law or by love.”⁸⁵

Article III.6 reiterates that the article on justification by faith is the most important of Christian teachings. It makes it the one article by which all other Christian teachings are to be judged, the article by which the church stands or falls. The validity of this statement was rejected by Trent. I reiterate here that this article did not exist in the CA. It was introduced in the (Apology IV, 2, 3). Finally, as I shall demonstrate in chapter 4, the article was given a particular interpretation in the JD, which enabled agreement to be reached.

Faith itself is not mere knowledge of Christ; it is a gift of God. This Lutheran understanding of faith as gift resonates with the Augustinian theme, which was ratified by Trent.

Article III.22 explains the well-known Lutheran belief that a person, after justification, is simultaneously justified and sinner. The justified continues to be sinner until death. But through faith, his sins are covered by the perfect obedience of Christ. This doctrine of “simultaneous justified and sinner” was disputed at Trent. The reason for the difference between Lutherans and Catholics on this point is based on their

⁸⁴ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 238-40.

⁸⁵ SD in FC, Article III.29, BOC, 567.

understandings of the nature of concupiscence. As discussed earlier, for Lutherans, concupiscence is sin, while for Catholics it is a tendency to sin.

Though sin continues in man in a major way, man must be certain of his righteousness because the righteousness imputed to him is that of Christ and is based on the promises of the Word of God. Again on this point, the Catholics at Trent will present an understanding that is less certain of a man's righteousness.

Good works (Article IV of the SD of the FC)

Major had confirmed what Melanchthon had written in the second edition of *Loci communes* (1535) reiterating that works are a *sine qua non* for salvation. This view was supported by Philippists but was opposed by Amsdorf. Amsdorf's opposition was so vehement that he and Flacius went to the other extreme of holding that good works were harmful to salvation. The FC rejects both extreme views. Works are therefore neither necessary for salvation nor are they harmful for salvation (Articles IV.1-3).

The FC gave its own definition of good works in Article IV.7-8. Good works are not to be interpreted according to human nature. Such works, even when praiseworthy from a human standpoint, are not acceptable in God's eyes since they arise from a sinful man. A bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Good works are rather those commanded by the Word and performed by a man who is reconciled with God.

Good works follow living faith as fruits from a good tree. But, the FC clearly warns against drawing works into the article of justification and salvation (art. IV.22). Kolb and Wengert offer a possible explanation for the differences between Major's position (works are necessary to salvation, similar to the Roman Catholic position), and that of Amsdorf (works are harmful to salvation). The reason may lie in the definition of

salvation in German. In German, salvation (*Seligkeit*) is literally translated as “blessedness”. Major himself equated salvation with blessedness. Amsdorf, on the other hand, equated salvation with the act of being saved or justification.⁸⁶

Predestination (Article XI)

Predestination was not an issue at the time of the CA, though Luther had written on predestination. This article distinguishes between God’s eternal foreknowledge and his eternal election to salvation (SD 4-5). Foreknowledge refers to God’s advance knowledge of all that will happen to all people, good and evil. Predestination or the eternal election of God applies only to those who are chosen for eternal life. The FC accepts single predestination, to be distinguished from double predestination, accepted by Calvin and the Reformed Church.

The FC, by differentiating between foreknowledge and predestination, seeks to answer the dilemma as to whether God creates evil. The FC states that God does not create evil. Evil exists because of the perverted will of the devil and of human beings (SD 7). Such evil men reject the Word of God, while it is God’s will that we accept the Word through the working of the Holy Spirit (SD 29).

Conclusion

This chapter has defined the doctrinal positions of Luther and Lutheranism. Political issues played a significant role in the sixteenth century. Specifically within Germany, the disputes between the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V of Germany and Elector John of Saxony motivated these political leaders to request their theologians to define their respective doctrinal positions.

⁸⁶ BOC, 578.

Martin Luther, dissatisfied with the practice within the Roman Catholic Church of selling indulgences and driven by his own conscience and sense of sinfulness (*Anfechtungen*), began to develop his own doctrine of justification. When Luther posted at Wittenberg his ninety five “Theses on the Power of Indulgences”, he intended to initiate debate and reform within the Roman Catholic Church. But his position was seen as rebellious by the papacy. “Luther wanted to remain a Catholic, but he was not allowed to be one.”⁸⁷

Lutheranism began defining its own confessional documents. The CA was formulated in 1530 by Melanchthon in preparation for an upcoming ecumenical council which was being sought by Protestantism. Such a council only took place many years later at Trent. Over the next fifty years after the CA, disputes set in within the Lutheran ranks over various interpretations of Luther and Melanchthon.

Finally in 1580, the BC was compiled. The BC is a compilation of ten documents of the Lutheran Confession. It was meant to bring about concord or unity within the Lutheran ranks. It was also the Lutheran response to Trent.

This chapter has established the doctrinal position of the Lutheran Church on justification. The stage is now set for moving on to an analysis of the Roman Catholic position on justification.

⁸⁷ Küng, *Justification*, x.

Chapter 3

The Roman Catholic Church and Justification

Introduction

Concerning the doctrine of justification, two Councils of the Roman Catholic Church had major implications. The Council of Trent (CT, 1545-63) defined the Catholic understanding of justification in the sixteenth century. The Second Vatican Council (VC II, 1962-65) encouraged ecumenical dialogue and led to an ecumenical interpretation of the doctrine of justification in the JD. The first section of this chapter will discuss the CT, which defined the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on the doctrine of justification but also contained condemnations, which touched certain Lutheran positions. These condemnations were reciprocated by condemnations from the Lutherans in the FC. Such mutual condemnations continued for over four hundred years.

The second part of this chapter will analyse the VC II and its decree "*Unitatis Redintegratio*" (Decree on Ecumenism, UR). The VC II sought to introduce a breath of fresh air into the Roman Catholic Church and to respond to the demands of a world, which had changed significantly. The VC II defined in a positive manner the role of dialogue with other Christians. One of the documents of the VC II was the UR, which encouraged Catholics to participate in ecumenical dialogue. It set in motion dialogue between Catholics and Lutherans, which finally culminated in the signing of the JD in 1999.

In the final section of this chapter, I will analyse the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) as to its position on justification. It must be noted that at the time of the

preparation and publication of the CCC, the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue on justification was already at an advanced stage.

This chapter will thus establish the position of the Roman Catholic Church on the doctrine of justification, from the sixteenth century to the present time.

3.1 Council of Trent (CT, 1545-63)

Introduction

The CT was convened at least twenty years too late. The calls for a council had begun after Luther posted his ninety five theses in 1517. At that point, Luther was mainly seeking reform within the Catholic Church, with no intention of initiating the Reformation movement. Jedin⁸⁸ believes that in the early years of the Reformation movement, there were no sharp differences between Protestants and Catholics. In fact, the split came about over time rather than as a result of a deliberate process.

When the CT finally started its work in 1545, hopes of avoiding a schism had already evaporated. But the Catholic Church still needed reform and to establish its doctrinal positions which were being challenged by the Protestant Reformation. The CT discussed a wide variety of subjects. In this section, I focus on the CT's decrees and canons on justification (including original sin, free will and good works). Thus CT's session VI on justification and session V on original sin will be reviewed in this section.

The Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, was more interested in the council dealing with church reform. The Pope, for his part, was seeking clarification on doctrinal issues. In a judicious compromise, both reform and doctrine were addressed by the CT. Due to changes in Popes and Emperors as well as political factors, the Council spanned three distinct periods: 1545-49, 1551-52, and 1562-63. However, the fifth session on original

⁸⁸ Hubert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent*, (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson., 1957), 1:166-96.

sin and the sixth session on justification (the subject of my analysis) both took place in the first period of the Council (1545-49).

The Tridentine decree on justification marked a significant development in conciliar history. Before Trent, the councils had framed canons and condemnations without explaining Catholic teaching. For the first time, the first sixteen chapters of the decree of the CT were devoted to Catholic teaching. Another significant characteristic of the CT is that it relied heavily on scripture. Further, the deliberations were led by the Augustinian Girolamo Seripando, whose views were close to those of the Reformers. Seripando made every effort to bring about conciliatory interpretations. This conciliatory approach resulted in doctrines and interpretations which facilitated the agreement of the JD in the twentieth century.

Political and Papal Factors

Martin Luther posted in October 1517 his 95 Theses at Wittenberg. In June 1520, Pope Leo X, in his Bull *Exsurge Domine*, condemned as heresy forty-one propositions of Luther. The Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, was in favour of calling an ecumenical council. But Francis I of France opposed a council and attacked Charles V. The opposition between the house of Habsburg (Charles V) and the house of Valois (Francis I) was the main political obstacle to the Council.⁸⁹ Further, facing a possible Turkish attack, Charles V required support from all German princes, Catholic and Protestant alike, and therefore the calling of a council was postponed.

The Council was summoned by Pope Paul III in May 1537 to be held in Mantua. Martin Luther drew up the Smalcald Articles to present the Protestant points of view at the Council. But the Council was postponed indefinitely in 1539. When the Habsburg-

⁸⁹ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* 1:230.

Valois War was settled by the Peace of Cr py in 1544, conditions were finally conducive to the convening of an ecumenical council.

In December 1545, Pope Paul III convened the Council at Trent, a free city under the Holy Roman Empire. The Pope's decision in 1547 to move the Council to Bologna (controlled by the Papal States) did not take effect and was met with Protestant distrust. The Council was prorogued indefinitely in September 1549. It was reopened at Trent in May 1551 by Pope Julius III (1550-5). The Council was again disrupted by the sudden victory of Maurice, Elector of Saxony, over Emperor Charles V in April 1552. The Council was not reconvened by the anti-Protestant Pope Paul IV (1555-59). Finally, Pope Pius IV (1559-65) reconvened the council for the last time in January 1562 and the council continued its work until its final adjournment in December 1563.

Theological Schools

An analysis of the composition of theologians who participated in the sixth session of the CT demonstrates that Franciscans (29) were largest in number, followed by the Dominicans (7).⁹⁰ But, unlike the Dominicans, for whom Thomas was their eminent doctor, the Franciscans lacked unanimity as to who was their preeminent theologian. This led to Dominican theology gaining prominence at Trent. Thus, the doctrine of justification defined by the CT was mainly based on Thomas and on Augustine.

The most important Franciscan theologian present during the Tridentine debates on justification was Andr s de Vega. Vega's *Opusculum de iustificatione*, was published and made available to those at Trent. Vega defended the necessity of a human disposition towards justification, which is termed *merit de congruo*.

⁹⁰ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 320.

The General of the Augustinian order, Girolamo Seripando, played a significant role at Trent though the Augustinian representation at the sixth session was small.

Seripando's imprint on Trent enabled a proper balance to be reached, safeguarding both the necessity of the gift of grace as well as of human cooperation.⁹¹

Theological Issues

There was almost a consensus at Trent that justification included transformation. Trent defined justification in terms of a person becoming righteous, not merely being imputed or declared as righteous. Even mainstream Protestant thinkers of the time, including Melancthon, made only a notional distinction between justification and regeneration. They did not hold that the two were divided. Protestantism understood by the two terms "justification" and "regeneration" what Catholics understood by the single term "justification". Thus, there was no major difference between the two views. This acceptance within early Lutheranism that justification was also transformational proved to be useful in arriving at the JD, as I shall discuss in chapter 4.

A difference in hermeneutical interpretation also existed between Catholics and Lutherans regarding *sola fide*. Catholics believed that Protestants excluded works from Christian living. For Protestants, however, justification was a distinct process, which excluded works from the initiation of Christian life. But Protestants believe that works have a role in Christian life, after its initiation by grace. As discussed in chapter 2, Luther believed that works have no place in the first righteousness. But they certainly do have a place in the second righteousness. Thus, there was no irreconcilable difference between Lutherans and Catholics on this point.

⁹¹ Guiseppe Alberigo. "Council of Trent" *OER* 4:174-175.

Tridentine Decree

In this section, the Catholic Church's teaching on justification is expounded, with comments on similarities as well as differences with the Lutheran understanding of justification.

In session 5 on original sin, the CT affirms that Adam's sin caused the loss of man's original holiness and justice. This loss is passed down by propagation, and not by imitation, to all of Adam's descendants. Such loss cannot be remedied by human action. Only the merit of Jesus Christ received in baptism takes away all sin and its guilt. Concupiscence continues in the baptised, it is not sin but a tendency to sin.⁹² I conclude that Augustinian theology on original sin was accepted at Trent.

Original sin damages the free will, but does not destroy it (Chapter I of the Decree on Justification). The Decree, therefore, reaffirms the position of Augustine and rejects Luther's claim that free will, after sin, exists only in name. It states that free will though "weakened and sapped in strength, was in no way extinct."⁹³

Christ died for all and provides grace by his passion to all (Chapters 2-3). Justification is described in transformational terms. A person is translated from being a child of Adam to being a child of God, and this takes place through rebirth in Christ.

Chapter 5 declares that justification flows from God's grace through Jesus Christ, with no merit on the part of man. But man, once disposed by grace to turn towards God, has to assent to and cooperate with grace. However, man cannot without God's grace move himself, by his own free will, to justice in God's sight. Thus the thinking of Biel is rejected. The Decree avoids scholastic language and chooses instead to appeal to

⁹² DEC 2:666-667.

⁹³ DEC 2:671.

Scripture. Its interpretation is very close to that of the Reformers with the exception that the will is not entirely passive.

The seventh chapter is a key chapter since it analyses the causes of justification, and affirms that the sole formal cause of justification is the justice of God. The justice of God is not defined as that which makes God just, but by which God makes us just. This chapter excludes the possibility that there is more than one formal cause of justification. Thus faith is ruled out as being a contributing cause of justification.

By justification, “we are not merely considered to be just but we are truly named and are just.”⁹⁴ Justification is not only forgiveness of sin but also sanctification and internal renewal. The Holy Spirit distributes grace according to His will and according to the disposition and cooperation of the sinner. Disposition before justification is not ruled out, disposition after justification represents renewal and is a part of justification. We note here a difference from the Lutheran view that disposition plays no role prior to justification.

Chapter 8 discusses the concepts of “justified by faith” and “justified freely”. Both these terms were interpreted according to the Catholic tradition. Faith is thus the beginning of salvation and the root of justification. The gift of justification is freely given. Nothing that precedes justification, not even faith or works, can merit justification.

The ninth Chapter discusses the question of the certitude of being justified. It points out that though the mercy of God and the merits of Christ and the sacraments are certain, it is not appropriate for anyone to be absolutely certain that he has received the grace of God and that he is justified. A sinner cannot know with complete certainty that

⁹⁴ DEC 2:673.

he has adequately received God's grace.⁹⁵ This differs from the certainty expressed by Lutherans about a sinner's righteousness (Art. III of SD of FC).

The tenth Chapter starts the discussion on second justification. In the first justification, grace operates on humans. In the second justification, humans co-operate with grace. Faith, working with good works, enables man to advance in his justification. Such an increase in justification is to be pursued throughout a person's life. Like Augustine, the CT affirms that since no one is certain of his predestination, we need to persevere to the end by co-operating with grace and doing good works.

Chapter 12 forbids anyone to believe that they are sure that they are among the predestined. No one can know in advance God's election, other than by divine revelation. The CT accepts single predestination. It, however, rejects certainty in anyone that he/she is among the elected ones.⁹⁶ Consequently, following the commandments and doing good works are required from a justified person.

The final chapter 16 deals with good works and merit and goes a considerable way to addressing Protestant objections to the role of works in the life of the justified sinner. This chapter can be seen as a genuine attempt on the part of the Council to consider the interpretations of the Reformists. It states that our justice is not of ourselves, it is the justice of God infused into us through the merits of Christ. It affirms that good works are rewarded by God, but that merit is a divine gift. Believers, by their co-operation with grace, are entitled to receive merit and thereby increase in justification, within God's justice and the merits of Christ. Good works are to be pursued since they do bring merit within God's justice. "Eternal life should be held out, both as a grace

⁹⁵ DEC 2:674.

⁹⁶ DEC 2:676.

promised in his mercy through Jesus Christ to the children of God, and as a reward to be faithfully bestowed, on the promise of God himself, for their good works and merits.”⁹⁷

We can never have a sense of self-reliance in ourselves or our works. As I shall demonstrate in chapter 4, chapter 16 of the CT enabled a resolution in the JD of the role of works in the life of the justified.

Tridentine Canons

In this section, I will analyse whether the canons and their condemnations (anathemas) are applicable to Luther, to sixteenth century Lutheranism, and to modern Lutheranism. As part of the dialogue, between Lutherans and Roman Catholics prior to the JD, an Ecumenical Study Group of theologians was formed. In this section, I have drawn on Otto Hermann Pesch who examined to whom the Tridentine condemnations applied in the sixteenth century and whether they apply today to the Lutheran position. This essay was presented to the Ecumenical Study Group and was later incorporated into a collection of such essays in “The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?”⁹⁸ a resource referenced in the appendix to the JD.

Canon 2 rejects the idea that man, though his own free will and without God’s grace, can move himself towards God and that grace only enables him to move more easily. This canon is the rejection of the late scholastic teaching of Biel.

Canon 4 holds that the will, when moved by God, is not inanimate or completely passive. It cooperates in disposing itself towards receiving the grace of justification. Thus canon 4 attacks Luther’s concept of passivity of the will. For Trent, *assentire* (assenting)

⁹⁷ DEC 2:678.

⁹⁸ Otto Hermann Pesch, “The Canons of the Tridentine Decree on Justification” in Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenburg eds., *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 175-216.

is an existential self-application and more than an intellectual agreement. Trent says that to hold otherwise would be to equate man to a lifeless thing. Canon 5 asserts that the will of man is not destroyed by original sin. The FC accepts that the will cooperates with the Holy Spirit, after initially receiving God's grace (Art. II of SD of FC).

Canon 9 condemns the belief that one is justified by faith alone, and that no human cooperation is required to accompany such a belief. Thus canon 9 attacks the *sola fide* teaching of Luther. But this condemnation has its roots in different interpretations of faith within the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches. In Catholic theology, faith is an act of understanding and a confession of trust in relation to salvation. But for Luther, faith was more than a rational "yes" to God's revelation. Lutheran research has demonstrated Luther to interpret faith as both the activation of the human being, through faith in God, as well as the personal response to God's promise. Further, the fact that Lutheran churches themselves take positions on ethical questions, namely "works corresponding to faith" demonstrates a willingness to recognise actions arising from faith.

Canon 11 rejects the view that justification is merely the imputation of the justice of Christ, to the exclusion of grace and charity infused into the person by the Holy Spirit.⁹⁹ Canon 11 was meant to reject what was perceived as Luther's position on justification being imputed from Christ, without love being part of it. But Luther did not hold that forgiveness of sins comes without grace and love, but only that grace and love were not the formal cause of justification. Thus Luther is not condemned by canon 11.

It is clear that Luther's teaching of "certainty of salvation" is addressed by canons 12-14. But the canons do not consider the real intentions of Luther. From Catholic understanding, faith is understood as the temporal beginning of salvation or the first

⁹⁹ DEC 2: 679.

justification. In Catholic terminology, the completed salvation of a person before God is considered as the second justification. On the other hand, for Luther, faith is the complete and total relation to God based on God's justifying promise of forgiveness. Luther connects the certainty of forgiveness with Matthew 16:19, where what is loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven. Luther advocates the unconditional validity of God's promise of forgiveness in the sacrament of penance. Luther too, like the CT, cautioned against over complacency in a person about the guarantee of salvation. Luther also believed in the possibility of man losing the grace received and stressed that man should not overlook his own weakness. Therefore the condemnations of Trent do not apply to Lutheran theology either at the time of Luther or today.¹⁰⁰

Canons 18-20 give due importance to the role of the commandments in the life of a justified Christian. They reject the view that faith is by itself sufficient. These canons definitely intended to condemn Luther. But the CT's understanding of Luther was mistaken. Luther stresses the new desire of the justified person for the law of God. If he had taught what Canon 18 condemns, he would not have taught on so many occasions about observing the Ten Commandments and he would not have devoted the first section of both his catechisms to an explanation of the Ten Commandments.

Canon 21 rejects the view that Christ came as redeemer only; someone in whom we trust, as opposed to legislator; someone whom we obey. This canon seeks to respond to Luther who vehemently opposed the *Christ legislator* concept. But, as a consequence of new reflections in Christology, the term *Christus legislator* proposed by the Council, has been largely replaced in Catholic theology by *Christus exemplum*, where Christ is

¹⁰⁰ Pesch. "The Canons of the Tridentine Decree on Justification" 185-186.

held out as a model for life and action. This concept of Christ as model is accepted today both by Lutheran and Catholics.¹⁰¹

Canons 24-25 are directed against Luther when they hold that works preserve and increase justification. For Luther, works are the fruits of justification. Luther (as seen in chapter 2), however, follows the same line as the Council, with his concept of “faith enfolded”. For Luther, good works are an indirect confirmation of the certainty of salvation. Luther, however, is very clear that works do not increase our justification. The Roman Catholic Church believes that good works do increase justification. In chapter 4, I shall discuss how agreement was reached.

Canon 25 rejects Luther’s concept of *simul iustus et peccator*. But the Council fathers did not understand the complexities of Luther’s thesis and so it was damned as “anathema”. To Luther, concupiscence is sin, and since concupiscence continues in the justified person, the person is at the same time just in the eyes of God, but a sinner himself. Catholics, however, believe that concupiscence is not itself sin, but a tendency towards sin. The CT’s condemnation of Luther on this point is explained by different understandings of the nature of concupiscence in a baptised person.

Nothing substantial has been added since Trent to the Catholic Church’s teaching on justification, other than new insights on Luther since VC II.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Pesch. “The Canons of the Tridentine Decree on Justification” 188-189.

¹⁰² George H. Tavard and P. De Letter “Justification” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., Vol. 8, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 85.

3.2 Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and the Decree on Ecumenism (1964)

The Second Vatican Council (VC II) was a turning point in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. The historical setting of the VC II was almost a polar opposite of Trent. At Trent, the church was responding to the crisis of the Reformation and the urgent need for internal church reform. No such crisis existed around the VC II. Trent was a Council that sought to bring about reform, VC II was about renewal. Trent had predominantly Italian bishops among the two hundred and thirty seven voters, the rest were European. The VC II had over two thousand bishops from all over the world. VC II took place at a time when technology, industrialisation and communications had advanced and colonialism had mainly ended.¹⁰³

The styles of the two councils were significantly different. Trent sought to define doctrine and church teaching. According to Jedin, Trent introduced “boundary stones” between Protestantism and Catholicism.¹⁰⁴ It is therefore not clear whether the post-Tridentine church was driven by enthusiasm or merely by effective ecclesiastical disciplining of clergy and laity.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, the VC II sought to permit a breath of fresh air into the Catholic Church and to respond to the needs of a new world. It was the first ecumenical council to invite other Christians to be present at its deliberations. The invitation was not to “return” to the Catholic Church but “to participate”.¹⁰⁶ Both the Reformation and the Eastern Orthodox churches were invited to the VC II. These invitees were observers. They could also give their views in private meetings to voting members

¹⁰³ Raymond F. Bulman and Frederick J. Parella, *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 8-12.

¹⁰⁴ Hubert Jedin, *Crisis and the Closure of the Council of Trent: A Retrospective View from the Second Vatican Council*, Trans. N. D. Smith (London and Melbourne: Sheed and Ward Stagbooks, 1967), 164.

¹⁰⁵ John W. O'Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 64.

¹⁰⁶ John W. O'Malley et al., *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 3-10.

and their representatives. Thus relationships were formed and mutual trust was generated. It is significant to note that many of the non-Catholic observers at the VC II later became agents of ecumenism within their respective churches. They also became members of discussion and study groups between their churches and the Roman Catholic Church. For example, four (Skydsgaard, Vajta, Brauer, Quanbeck) of the seven LWF representatives on the Joint Working Group (set up in 1965 during the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue) had been observers to the VC II. In addition, theologian George Lindbeck was also a VC II observer and became a key player in the bilateral Lutheran-Catholic dialogues that followed. The presence of non-Catholic observers to VC II on the bilateral dialogue teams that followed ensured both continuity of relationships and shared thought.¹⁰⁷

VC II was convened in the middle of the twentieth century, which was the bloodiest of all centuries. The Jewish Holocaust and the Second World War resulted in about 60 million fatalities. The utilisation of the atom bomb raised the threat of human annihilation. This was followed by the Cold War and the decolonisation of many countries. People began to ask questions such as: Who is God? How does God permit such suffering? How are men saved? What is the role of the church? In the midst of these major catastrophic events, the church was faced with an ethical imperative to change.¹⁰⁸

VC II also took place at a time when communications and technology had greatly advanced. Air travel had become a reality. Thus, the deliberations of the Council were followed by Catholics, other Christians and people world-wide.

¹⁰⁷ John A. Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 32.

¹⁰⁸ Stephen Schloesser, "Against Forgetting: Memory, History, Vatican II" *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* Eds. O'Malley et al. (New York: Continuum, 2008), 95-96.

VC II is an important event in the history of the Catholic Church. It is an “event” because it is significant to the life of the church. It expressed a forward vision, but it did not represent a rupture from past church history. Its approach can be summarised by two words: *aggiornamento* (Italian) and *ressourcement* (French). *Aggiornamento* means to update and to modernise. *Ressourcement* means to return to the source to enable changes that reflect a more normative past. VC II looked backwards to recapture the authenticity of the source, but with the clear vision of changing the church to respond to modern realities.¹⁰⁹

One of the decrees from the VC II is the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, UR for short). It encourages ecumenism and lays down guidelines for ecumenical dialogue. The UR stresses the prayer of Jesus to His Father that “they all be one” just as Jesus and the Father are one (paragraph 2, quoting John 17:21).¹¹⁰ The UR acknowledges that considerable ecumenical progress had already been made in the areas of prayer, word and action to increase unity among Christians. It reiterates the dictum that ecumenism requires a change of heart, and it seeks forgiveness from other Christians for sins against them (par. 7).

UR recommends that Catholics must understand the outlook of “our separated brethren” and must seek to dialogue with them as equals (par. 9). This language, of treating other Christians as “separated brethren” and as equals in dialogue, greatly facilitated the ecumenical dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics.

The most relevant paragraphs in the Decree, for our purposes, are paragraphs 19 to 24, which touch specifically on ecumenism with the Reformation Churches. They

¹⁰⁹ O'Malley et al, *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* 63-67.

¹¹⁰ DEC 2:908.

highlight what the Roman Catholic Church shares in common with these churches, namely a common profession of faith in Jesus Christ as God and Lord and as sole mediator between God and man, to the glory of the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (par. 20).¹¹¹ It points out that the Reformation churches already demonstrate an active faith through their works of charity (par. 23). Finally, it exhorts all Roman Catholics to pursue ecumenism and reminds them that this ecumenical effort should not be superficial. Ecumenism would be best served if Catholics understand their own faith passed down by the Apostles and Fathers of the Church (par. 24). I conclude that the UR provided both the impetus and the framework for Catholics to pursue ecumenism.

Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI)¹¹², one of the theologians who participated in the VC II, has provided some insights on what transpired before the UR took its final shape. Ratzinger points to the three stages of drafting that UR underwent. In the first phase, a “member of the church” within the Catholic interpretation meant someone who was under the bishop of Rome. Therefore it only included Catholics; other Christians (like non-Christians) were only “members of the church” by “desire”. The second stage accepted that other Christians have common ties with Catholics: baptism, common faith in Jesus Christ, some sacraments and the working of the Holy Spirit within them. The term “membership in the church” was excluded in the second phase of the drafting of the UR. The third stage emphasised Scripture as an important area of commonality. The work of the Holy Spirit in Catholics and other Christians was reiterated. It was further noted that other Churches and ecclesial communities also have

¹¹¹ DEC 2:919.

¹¹² Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 100-118.

sacraments other than baptism. These steps facilitated the removal of distrust and facilitated ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and other Christians.

A major stumbling block to progress in ecumenical dialogue had been the fear of other Christian Churches that the Catholic Church was attempting to absorb them and their members. This issue was clarified by distinguishing between unity and uniformity. While the Catholic Church seeks unity, it does not insist on uniformity. Through continuing dialogue, it was possible to provide more comfort to other Christian Churches and encourage them to enter into ecumenical dialogue.¹¹³

We thus see in UR, a renewed thrust for ecumenism to be lived in the modern world. As we shall see in chapter 4, this encouraged ecumenical dialogue and the JD was one of the fruits of such dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics.

3.3 Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) is a compendium of Catholic doctrine. It takes into consideration Sacred Scripture, the living Tradition of the Church, the authentic Magisterium and the heritage of the Fathers, Doctors and saints of the Church. The CCC was released in 1992 and thus represents a relatively recent view of the doctrines and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church including those on justification.

Pope John XXIII assigned to the VC II the task of presenting and guarding the precious deposit of Christian doctrine and making it accessible to the faithful. In 1992, after six years of intensive work by a commission of twelve Cardinals and bishops, the CCC was released by Pope John Paul II. The work on preparing the new Catechism took place from 1986 to 1992, years which overlap the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue prior to the

¹¹³ Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 113.

signing of the JD. The CCC likely took into account the ecumenical deliberations between Lutherans and Catholics in the area of justification.

Original Sin

Original sin destroyed the original harmony in which man was created (par. 400). Original sin is transmitted by Adam to all humans at birth. That is why even infants, who have no personal sin, need baptism for remission of this transmitted sin (403). Original sin transmits to all by propagation a nature that does not possess its original holiness and justice (404).

Original sin does not have the character of committed personal sin. Human nature is wounded but not entirely corrupted. Concupiscence, an inclination to evil, is part of that wounded nature (405). Par. 405 represents a difference from the Lutheran understanding that human nature is massively damaged and that concupiscence is itself sin. The CCC confirms the pronouncements of the CT on all issues related to original sin.

Justification

The grace of the Holy Spirit justifies us, cleansing us of our sins and giving us the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ and through Baptism (par. 1987). This understanding of justification is identical to the Lutheran one. But for Catholics, justification is not only the forgiveness of sins, but also the sanctification and interior renewal (1989).

Justification establishes co-operation between God's grace and man's freedom (1993). Man is not passive since he can reject God's grace. But man cannot, by his own free will, move himself to be just in God's sight (confirming the CT).

Grace

Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is the free gift that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God (1996). The free gift of God's grace is infused by the Holy Spirit into the soul to heal it of sins and to sanctify it (1999). God's free initiative demands man's free response (2002). Par. 2002 has a different point of view from Luther, for whom God's grace takes man's passive will captive. But par. 2002 is entirely in accord with the FC (Article II.18 of the Epitome of FC).

Merit

Merit is recompense that is owed. But, the inequality between God and man is so great, that man does not have any right to merit (2007). Man's merit itself is due to God (2008). No one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, however, we can merit for ourselves and others graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity and for the attainment of eternal life (2010). Lutherans disagree with the view that grace, even after initial justification, can be merited by man.

Conclusion

In the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church was slow in responding to calls for an ecumenical council. Such calls had commenced around 1520. When the Council of Trent (CT) finally convened in 1545, the divisions between Roman Catholics and the Reformers had become entrenched. Representatives from both sides had already lived under separate church belief systems. They were less motivated than their predecessors to seek reconciliation within the church.

The CT, however, played an important role in the life of the Roman Catholic Church. Working its way through a number of popes, emperors and political figures, it succeeded in defining the Roman Catholic position on theological issues, including justification. The CT's decrees and canons were in part a response to the theological issues of the Reformation. The importance accorded to explaining Catholic teaching is demonstrated by the CT's methodology. It begins with chapters where teaching is covered before it proceeds to issuing canons (condemnations). Trent made a conscious effort to reconcile differences with the Reformers' positions. Thus it provided a basic foundation for future resolution of theological differences. Nevertheless, the CT's canons (condemnations) on justification remained in force right till the JD was signed.

The VC II had a radically different socio-historical setting than that of Trent. It was meant to take the Catholic Church forward within the context of the twentieth century and beyond. It was ecumenical in the sense that it had bishops from around the world. It sought to place the Church in the context of rapid advancements in technology and communications and to bring about renewal in the church. Yves Congar holds that the great success of Vatican II was the demise of "Tridentinism" with its "all-embracing system of theology, ethics, Christian behaviour, religious practice, liturgy, organisation and Roman centralization"¹¹⁴

The VC II reached out towards other Christians and even to those of other faiths. It invited representatives of other Christian Churches (including Reformation and Eastern Orthodox) to attend as observers. Many of these observers (including Lutherans) went back to their respective churches and became the driving force for future ecumenical

¹¹⁴ Yves Congar, *Fifty Years of Catholic Theology* ed. Bernard Lauret (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 3-4.

dialogue. One such dialogue which took its roots at the VC II was the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue. A significant achievement of this dialogue is the signing of the JD.

VC II was a shot in the arm for ecumenism. In its *Decree on Ecumenism* (UR), it clearly promoted dialogue between Catholics and other Christians. It specifically referred to the Reformation movement. It pointed out areas of commonality between the Catholic and Reformation Churches and urged further efforts towards reconciliation.

The release in 1992 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) defined the doctrinal position of the Catholic Church. The work towards issuing the new CCC was conducted when the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue on justification was taking place.

Trent was held too late to facilitate a rapprochement between Lutherans and Catholics in the sixteenth century. But in the twentieth century, the VC II encouraged greater dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics. One of the great achievements of the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue was the signing of the JD in 1999, which is the subject of my study in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church (1999)

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the Joint Declaration (JD) on the doctrine of justification signed by Lutherans and Catholics in 1999. As the title of my thesis suggests, this bilateral declaration constitutes a significant ecumenical event. It resulted in the end of mutual condemnations, which had been carried down from the sixteenth century. The JD represents agreement on a major theological issue whose relevance extends far beyond the bilateral partners. I will demonstrate that the methods and processes which were used to arrive at the JD can be followed in other ecumenical efforts. The JD thus provides fresh hope for the future of ecumenism.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I will study the common understanding on justification which was reached, thereby resolving the complex theological issues to the satisfaction of both parties. Among the theological themes which were resolved by the JD are such complex issues as: human powerlessness in relation to justification, justification as forgiveness of sins and being made righteous, faith and grace, the justified as sinner, the assurance of salvation and the place of good works in the life of the justified person. In the second section, I will discuss the methodologies and processes which were used to arrive at the JD and how these provide pointers for future ecumenical dialogue. The final section will be an overview of some of the developments that have taken place after the JD.

4.1 The Joint Declaration on Justification

Biblical Message (Part 1 of the JD)

The JD confirms that justification is a theme that is explained in a variety of ways in the Bible. In the Old Testament, there are recurring themes of human sinfulness and disobedience followed by God's righteousness and judgement. From the New Testament, the work of the Trinity in the life of a justified Christian, as explained in John 3:16 is given importance to interpret justification. Melancthon too, in the Apology to the Augsburg Confession also referred to the work of the Trinity outlined in John 3.¹¹⁵

In the New Testament, righteousness and justification are explained in diverse ways by Matthew (5:10, 6:33, 21:32), John (16:8-11) and James (2:14-26). Paul describes justification in a plurality of ways. Thus, justification is being set free (Gal. 5:1-13), reconciled with God (2 Cor. 5:18-21), being made a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), the forgiveness of sins (Rom 3:23-25) and communion with God, both now and fully in God's kingdom to come (Rom. 5:1). The JD, however, affirms that in Paul's letters, justification as God's grace through faith (Rom. 3:23-25) is a key theme which came into prominence during the Reformation.

Faith itself is a gift of God, not the result of works (Eph. 2:8). Faith comes from the Word of Christ (Rom. 10:17) and is activated through love (Gal. 5:6). The justified are still inclined to sin and must therefore constantly be attentive to God's promises, confess their sins (1 John 1: 8-10) and live righteously in accordance with God's will. It is in this context that Phil 2:12 exhorts the justified "to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to

¹¹⁵ BOC, 136.

work for his good pleasure.” But there is no condemnation of anyone since Christ’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all (Rom. 5:18).

In chapter 1, I analysed the diverse biblical passages that discuss justification, faith, works and living in the plan of God. We see in the biblical section of the JD a serious attempt at providing a composite view of the different ways in which scripture speaks about justification. This sets the stage for the agreement on justification in the JD. Justification is thus not only being forgiven our sins and being set free; it is also acceptance into communion with God. That justification involves being made a new creation calls for an active faith and addresses the issue of the role of works and charity in the life of the justified. That faith is itself a gift excludes the possibility of a person’s faith being considered as merit in the justification process. We are thus able to see how the JD was made possible by appropriating the diverse biblical messages on justification.

The Common Understanding on Justification

The JD resulted in the withdrawal of the mutual condemnations which had been in effect since the sixteenth century (chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis reviewed the theological and historical factors related to the mutual condemnations). Ending the condemnations carries with it the salutary effect of greater collaboration and dialogue between the partners and ushers in a new era of mutual trust.

Gunther Wenz notes that both the FC (Formula of Concord) and the BC (Book of Concord) were meant to be understood as an authentic interpretation of the CA (Augsburg Confession). The CA and the Small Catechism of Luther were considered the principal documents within the Lutheran confession and other books were referenced to them. On the other hand, the BC was meant to settle the differences that had crept into

the Lutheran churches after Luther (chapter 2 discusses the CA and the BC). “Therefore the sharp clarifications that later became necessary must be measured by the positive statements of Augsburg and the Small Catechism, and not vice-versa.”¹¹⁶ The LWF took into consideration the differences in the confessional commitments of its member churches and gave emphasis to the CA and the Small Catechism.¹¹⁷ LWF’s decision to give greater importance to the CA facilitated the agreement in the JD.

The joint confession in JD is as follows:

By grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works
(par. 15).

This common understanding emphasises the work of the Trinity. Free grace is what makes us acceptable in God’s sight. This grace is appropriated through our faith in Christ without any merit of our own. Faith itself is God’s gift (par. 15). A justified person is both empowered by the Holy Spirit, and is expected to do good works through the renewal brought about by the Spirit.

The common understanding also responds to the question whether justification is the article by which the church stands or falls (par. 18). Lutherans have held that justification is “the touchstone for testing at all times whether a particular interpretation of our relationship to God can claim the name of ‘Christian’” (Explanation to Part 3 in Appendix to JD). Catholics, however, believe that they are bound by several criteria,

¹¹⁶ Gunther Wenz, “Damnamus? The Condemnations in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church as a Problem for the Ecumenical Dialogue between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches” in Karl Lehmann and Wolghart Pannenberg eds., *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do they Still Divide?* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 101.

¹¹⁷ Wenz “Damnamus”, 106.

justification being one of them. As Cardinal Cassidy writes “justification points to the heart of the Gospel message but must be seen as an organic unity with all other truths of faith, Trinity, Christology, ecclesiology and sacraments.”¹¹⁸

In the JD, Lutherans, while emphasising the significance of the doctrine of justification, did not deny the significance of all truths of faith. For their part, Catholics, seeing themselves bound by several truths of faith, recognised the special role of justification in its relation to other truths. Both churches agreed that “the message of justification directs us in a special way towards the New Testament witness to God’s saving action in Christ” (par. 17). This subject, however, represents an area for potential future dialogue between the partners as evidenced by “the criteriological significance of the doctrine of justification for sacramentology, ecclesiology and ethical teachings still deserves to be studied.” (Explanation to Part 3 in Appendix to JD)

Human Powerlessness in Relation to Justification

How passive is the human will in its movement towards God and its reception of grace before and after justification? The JD addresses the difference in understandings between Lutherans and Catholics on the passivity of the will (par. 19-21). In the JD, both sides agreed that sinners cannot by themselves turn to God. They cannot do anything, by their own abilities, to merit justification or salvation. “Justification takes place solely by God’s grace.” (par. 19) Catholics accept that cooperation in preparing for and accepting justification is not the result of a person’s ability; rather it is the work of God’s grace. Lutherans, when they hold that humans are passive in receiving justification, do not deny that believers are involved in their faith. They acknowledge “cooperation” in the sense

¹¹⁸ Cardinal Cassidy/Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue, “The Meaning of the Joint Declaration on Justification,” *Origins* 29 no. 18 (October 14, 1999): 284.

that in faith the heart is involved, when it is touched by the Word. I conclude that in the JD, Lutherans re-appropriated Luther's view of an active faith.

Even after the JD, there still remains a difference in the understanding of the role of our acceptance of justification. Catholics, as I demonstrated in chapter 3, hold that human acceptance, itself a gift of God, has a role in justification (canons 4, 5, 6 and 9 of the CT). Lutherans believe that it is entirely the work of Christ that brings about justification. Cardinal Cassidy, president of the PCPCU at the time of the JD, put the difference in its perspective a short time before the signing of the JD. He said the Catholic Church is "uncomfortable with the Lutheran insistence on the phrase mere 'passive', since the FC affirmed that the justified person can refuse grace and can by the power of the Holy Spirit cooperate and must so cooperate (FC, 65)."¹¹⁹ This difference, though not considered a difference in basic truths, is a doctrinal difference which calls for further dialogue between the partners (Explanation to 4.1 in Appendix to the JD).

Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Being Made Righteous

The JD tackled the issue of whether justification is only the forgiveness of sins or also the beginning of new life, namely whether it is transformational. It held that justification was both (par. 22-24). It explained that since justification takes place through faith in Jesus Christ, our sins are no longer imputed to us because of the righteousness of Christ. But justification also introduces the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes love active. Thus new life is introduced, transforming the person. Therefore forgiveness of sins and the imparting of the gift of new life cannot be separated in the justified person (par. 22).

¹¹⁹ Cardinal Cassidy, "Consensus Achieved, Vatican Official Tells Lutherans" *Origins* 28 no. 17 (October 8, 1998): 287.

The agreement on the transformational nature of justification was possible because in reality no real difference existed on this point even in the sixteenth century (see chapter 3 for a discussion of the point). Lutherans agreed in the JD that by justification we are both declared and made righteous. Justification effects what it promises, namely forgiveness of sin and being made righteous. Lutherans also accepted that in justification, the power of sin to divide the sinner from God is abolished (par. 29 of JD). Catholics confirmed that grace received by the justified is not a possession of the person, not something merited. Agreement was achieved in the JD by explaining the work of the Holy Spirit, who makes love active and transforms the person.

Justification by Faith through Grace

How are “*sola fide*” and “renewal” reconciled within the context of justification? Par. 25-27 of the JD state that we “are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ.” In baptism, we receive the Holy Spirit and then trust God’s gracious promise by justifying faith. True justifying faith includes both our faith and love. But whatever precedes or follows the free gift of faith is not the basis of justification (par. 25).

Lutherans agreed in the JD that the doctrine of “justification by faith alone” makes a distinction between justification and renewal. But, there is no separation for Lutherans between justification and renewal, which must necessarily follow if faith is to exist. Renewal comes from the love of God received in justification. Catholics, as I discussed in chapter 3, reiterated that justification includes being made righteous by justifying grace.

The explanations offered by the JD (Part 4.3 in Appendix to the JD) on this point indicate that the difference between the two understandings was due to hermeneutical

differences in language. What Protestants mean by “justification through faith” is the Catholic equivalent of “justification through grace”. Protestants also understand by the one word “faith” what Catholics sum up in three words: faith, hope and love.

Protestants understand faith as forgiveness of sin and fellowship with Christ. Thus Lutherans propose “*sola fide per Christum*”. This line of thinking follows Tuomo Mannermaa’s re-discovery of Luther’s understanding that justification means the indwelling of Christ because “in faith itself, Christ is present” (see section 2.1 in chapter 2). But Christ, through the working of the Holy Spirit, makes the justified sinner a new creation. Catholics stress interior renewal in order to acknowledge the role of God in this new creative process. Such renewal is a response to God’s grace, never a contribution to which a person can appeal before God.

The clarification of their respective languages on faith enabled Lutherans and Catholics to agree on this point.

Justified as Sinner

Is a justified person still a sinner? This question preoccupied both Lutherans and Catholics, as I demonstrated in chapters 2 and 3. JD (par. 28-30) discusses the concept of “simultaneous righteous and sinner”, which Lutherans have held since the sixteenth century. The JD states that even after justification, a person is constantly exposed to the power of sin. He has to struggle all his life against concupiscence, which is a “contradiction to God”. The justified must therefore throughout his life seek God’s forgiveness.

Lutherans believe that since the justified appropriate in faith the righteousness of Christ, they are justified in God’s sight. But in the eyes of the law, they continue to be

sinner. Concupiscence is considered sin by Lutherans and therefore the justified still have sin in them. In the JD, the Lutherans concede that though sin remains in the justified, sin (including concupiscence) is “controlled”, it no longer possesses its enslaving power. Sin in the justified person does not “rule” the person, but is itself “ruled” by Christ. Thus, sin no longer separates a person from God and does not bring down damnation.

The Lutheran Reformation equated the image of God in humanity with original righteousness and considered that the Fall meant a loss of that original image of God. Luther was seeking to teach how man is born into great misery and even after baptism, the remnant of original sin that remains in the baptised is not neutralised but is in need of the saving power of Christ. Unlike Luther, Melancthon in Apology to the CA (2:35-45) indicated that baptism erases totally the guilt of original sin, though the evil inclination remains.

Catholics, for their part, have held that baptism takes away all sin and damnation. But, concupiscence remains in the justified. Küng has explained the Catholic viewpoint and has stated that the CT at no point suggests that a justified person has already in this life arrived at total holiness. Justified man is not reborn to total glory, but to the hope of glory, as he encounters his own weaknesses daily.¹²⁰ Catholics, however, do not consider concupiscence as sin, but a tendency or inclination to sin. Agreement was facilitated by Catholics accepting that concupiscence is a “contradiction to God”, which in Lutheran understanding, is sin.

I thus conclude that on this point, neither Lutherans nor Catholics changed their basic views on concupiscence (namely whether it is sin or not). However, agreement was

¹²⁰ Küng, *Justification*, 239.

reached by Lutherans accepting concupiscence as “controlled” sin and by Catholics accepting that concupiscence is a “contradiction to God”. I would say both sides met each other half-way. This openness of both partners to the other position exemplifies what ecumenism is all about. But, as the JD states on this point: “a considerable rapprochement is reached” (Explanation to 4.4 in Appendix to the JD), indicating room for further rapprochement still exists.

Assurance of Salvation

JD (par. 34-36) tackles the subject of assurance of salvation. It holds that the faithful, despite personal weaknesses, can rely on the promise of God to be sure of grace in Word and in Sacrament. The Reformers had suggested that believers should not look at themselves and their weaknesses, but at Christ’s death and resurrection. God’s promise of grace is sure and has to be completely trusted. In the JD, Lutherans refined this position. They affirmed that there is rock-like certainty in the *objective* efficacy of the absolution given by penance. But, this certainty does not apply *subjectively* to a person.

Catholics, too, hold that God is completely trust-worthy in His promises. But, each one must be concerned about his salvation because of personal weaknesses. Catholics agreed that God intends the salvation of all persons. What is less certain to Catholics, as I demonstrated in the discussion on the CT in chapter 3, is whether sinners in their weakness always accept God’s promise.

The fine hermeneutical distinction made in the JD between objective *assurance* (certitude) of faith based on God’s promise and the subjective *security* based on the human being, enabled both parties to reach a common understanding.

Good Works (par. 37-39)

Good works are the fruits of a Christian life lived in faith, hope and love. Good works are made possible through grace and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Catholics clarified in the JD that works are a gift of the Holy Spirit. Such works contribute to growth in grace and thus justification is preserved and communion with Christ is deepened. Catholics intend to emphasise the responsibility of persons for their actions. Catholics reiterated, however, that justification is unmerited grace. Canon 24 of the CT discusses good works as a “cause” of increased justification and if this is interpreted in the personal terms of chapter 16 of its Decree on Justification, the basic foundation is communion with Christ. Works can therefore be understood as gift which enables deeper communion with Christ (see chapter 3 for the discussion on the CT).

Lutherans (see chapter 2 for this discussion) have stressed that works do not have a role in justification. But the justified are commanded to do good works (article VI and XX of the CA).¹²¹ Lutherans also emphasise that a person is responsible not to lose the grace received but to live in it. The explanation to 4.7 in Appendix to the JD suggests that rather than using the word “merit”, it would be better to think in terms of “reward”. Thus works have “unmerited reward” within God’s plan based not on merit but on God’s promise.

After the JD, Walter Cardinal Kasper clarified that the CT (like Lutherans) also condemned the Pelagian doctrine that a person can save himself. He writes:

¹²¹ BOC, 40 (Article VI of CA), 56 (Article XX of CA)

The question at issue, however, was not: justification by grace or by good works. Rather it was whether and to what extent God's action enables and stimulates the cooperation of the human person.¹²²

This issue of whether works done in the power of the Holy Spirit can enable growth of grace represents an area for further dialogue between the partners.

4.2 Methodologies and Processes used by the Joint Declaration

In this section, I will study some of the methods and processes which were used by the JD and how they provide pointers for future ecumenical dialogue. The doctrine of justification underwent major re-assessment in the sixteenth century. Both the Lutheran (the CA and the BC) and Catholic (the CT) Churches formulated their positions on justification. What made the reconciliation even more challenging was the fact that the bilateral partners issued mutual condemnations in the sixteenth century. It is in this context that the methodologies and processes used in the JD take on special significance as they offer suggestions for future ecumenical dialogue. If a complex doctrine like justification, which had caused a rupture in the Western Church at the time of the Reformation, could be agreed upon by the bilateral partners, surely other challenges in the field of ecumenism can also be overcome.

Agreement Based on a High Degree of Commonality

I believe that one of the important contributions of the JD to the ecumenical field must be its appropriation of the concept of “consensus in basic truths” (par. 14). This novel approach has also been referred to as “differentiated consensus”. Though

¹²² Walter Kasper, “The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: A Roman Catholic Perspective”, William Rusch ed., *Justification and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 15.

“differentiated consensus” is not a term used in the JD, it is implicit in its choice of other terms such as “consensus in basic truths”, “remaining differences” and “differing explications”.

“Differentiated consensus” is now considered as a new hermeneutical approach which has special significance for ecumenical dialogue. The term “differentiated consensus” has even been added to a glossary of ecumenical terms (See Steven Harmon’s book *Ecumenism Means You, Too: Ordinary Christians and the Quest for Christian Unity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010). It is not the place of this thesis to explore this subject. Suffice it to say that the JD does not represent an agreement on all aspects of the doctrine of justification. The JD differentiated between an agreement on basic truths and complete agreement.

The question that needs to be answered in this context is: What are “basic truths”? Talking from the Catholic point of view, Catherine Clifford¹²³ highlights the distinction made by Pope John XXIII in his opening address to the VC II. The Pope distinguished between “the deposit of faith” and “the way in which it is expressed”. The “deposit of faith” constitutes “basic truths”. Thus a “consensus in basic truths” is agreement on aspects that touch the “deposit of faith”. But, unity in faith does not demand uniformity in the expression of faith; different interpretations are possible concerning “other truths”.

Complete agreement would not have been possible at the time of the JD. Had one been sought, it likely would have resulted in no agreement whatsoever. The JD identified whether the continuing differences were significant enough to touch the basic truths or beliefs of the partners. The JD therefore represents agreement in basic truths. This was

¹²³ Catherine Clifford. “The Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith: Lessons Learned and Pastoral Challenges Ahead” *Ecumenism* no. 141 (March 2001): 26.

sufficient comfort for the partners to agree to the withdrawal of mutual condemnations of the sixteenth century.¹²⁴

The ecumenical movement would do well to use the approach of “agreement in basic truths” in other areas of dialogue.

Giving Due Importance to Differences

The JD clearly indicates that in ecumenical dialogue, especially those on doctrinal issues, it is important that differences are not glossed over but are in fact recognised. Such differences require to be studied with due diligence as part of rapprochement. Giving due importance to the other’s understandings demonstrates respect for the other party and facilitates dialogue.

Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Preamble to the JD set the tone by recognising the historical differences on justification between Lutherans and Catholics. For Lutherans, the doctrine of justification is “the first and chief article” and a “judge” over all other Christian doctrines. But, the doctrine of justification has a different character within the hierarchy of doctrines of the Catholic Church. The JD goes further than merely acknowledging this difference. The Preamble (par. 7) closes by categorically affirming that though the JD overcomes the past doctrinal condemnations, the signing partners do not deny their past history. They are merely recognising developments that have taken place which enable them to re-examine their positions in a new light.

A couple of years after the signing of the JD, two Canadian Catholic theologians expressed their appreciation that the JD had recognised the histories of the signing

¹²⁴ Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification*, 173.

partners. Gilles Routhier¹²⁵ states “I believe that nothing solid can be built if we do not accept the historic dimension of the divisions and the historic character of the reconciliation.” Catherine Clifford echoes this view: “Until we face the past squarely, we cannot experience a genuine healing of memories.”¹²⁶

New Developments and Current Ecumenical Witness¹²⁷

The VC II, as explained in chapter 3, encouraged greater ecumenical dialogue. Its Decree on Ecumenism pushed for the fostering of ecumenical relations with the Reformation churches. The Catholic Church thereafter took steps towards advancing ecumenism including dialogue with Lutherans.

Following a visit of Pope John Paul II to Germany in 1980, a Joint Ecumenical Commission of Roman Catholic and Protestant (Lutherans, Reformed and United) church leaders was established in 1981. It was assigned the task of exploring the pre-conditions for closer relations between the churches. The Joint Ecumenical Commission asked the Ecumenical Study Group, a group of scholars that had been meeting since the Second World War, to examine questions relating to the churches’ mutual condemnations.

The Joint Ecumenical Commission took into account the “new realities” of the churches and concluded that the sixteenth century judgments stood in sharp contrast to the churches’ current joint statements of faith. The Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue had already produced major joint documents such as “The Gospel and the Church”, “The Eucharist”, “Ministry”, “Ways to Community” and “Facing Unity”. Further, research

¹²⁵ Gilles Routhier, “Joint Declaration on Justification: A Landmark in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue” *Ecumenism* 141 (March 2001): 12.

¹²⁶ Clifford, “The Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith: Lessons Learned and Pastoral Challenges Ahead”, 24.

¹²⁷ Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification* , 31-52.

undertaken on the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the CA showed that the division at the time of the CA did not extend to the very roots of the faith.

Extended Bilateral Dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics¹²⁸

Ecumenical dialogue takes a lot of patience, perseverance and fortitude. It is a continuing process over an extended period of time. Ecumenical dialogue “must necessarily be done in the concrete. Dialogue, even between traditions, is a dialogue of persons.”¹²⁹ In ecumenical dialogue, one of the first bridges that must be built is mutual trust and respect between the parties.

Pope John XXIII, expecting the VC II to deal with the subject of Christian unity, established in 1960 the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU). The Secretary of the SPCU was Monsignor Willebrands, who already had more than a decade of ecumenical experience behind him.¹³⁰ The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), along with other churches, was invited by the Holy See to send observers to the VC II. The observers were permitted to enter into the life of the VC II and make contact with the council fathers. Thus relationships began to develop.

Then Pope Paul VI in 1963 humbly asked for forgiveness for the faults of the Catholic Church in the separation that had taken place. This had the impact of convincing the observers that the VC II was indeed serious about ecumenical dialogue. In 1965, a Joint Working Group (JWG) of Lutherans and Catholics was formed to study theological issues. This Group became the nucleus of bilateral scholars who would study the doctrine of justification. Significantly four of the seven representatives of the LWF on the JWG

¹²⁸ Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification* , 55-102.

¹²⁹ George H. Tavard, *Vatican II and the Ecumenical Way* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette Press, 2006), 23.

¹³⁰ Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification* , 3.

had been observers at the VC II, thus providing continuity and carrying on in the spirit of mutual respect and dialogue (Radano, 32).

Contacts and exchange of visits continued from both sides. In 1969, the LWF General Secretary, Dr. André Appel, led a delegation to Rome which visited the SPCU and other Vatican offices such as the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* and the *Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples*. In 1970, Cardinal Willebrands was invited by the LWF to give a major address at its Fifth General Assembly at Evian, France. Willebrands, in this address, acknowledged that Luther had held that the Bible was the basis of his theology and that the VC II had also given due importance to Holy Scripture. In 1972, a major Report entitled “The Gospel and the Church”, also called the “Malta Report” (a reference document for note 10 of the JD), was released by the two partners and it held that the doctrine of justification need no longer divide the churches. When the Holy Year was celebrated by the Catholic Church in 1975, the SPCU provided input so that the wording around indulgences, an issue at the time of Luther, would not be harmful to the continuing dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics. This was an example of sensitivity towards the other partner.

In 1980, on the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the CA, the joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Commission issued a statement “All Under One Christ” (AUOC), which put the differences of the sixteenth century in a historical perspective. It pointed out that when the CA was drawn up, the Church was still united and “under One Christ” (no.2). Thereafter, differences sharpened within the church. These sharpened differences and other external factors caused the major break (no. 3). It noted that the parties now believed that they could again be “under One Christ” (no. 6). The Statement gave

singular importance to the CA and stated that it was drawn up with an ecumenical purpose in mind; that of seeking unity and purity within the church. All other Lutheran Confessional documents have the CA as a reference point (no. 7). The Statement reiterated that CA gives greater importance to the witness of Scripture rather than to any specific doctrine (no. 8). AUOC held that the CA, to a large extent, expressed the common faith of the partner churches (no. 11, 12). These pronouncements of AUOC were a major step in arriving at agreement in the JD and the AUOC is a source document for the JD (page 4 of “The Common Understanding” and note 11 on page 19 of the JD).

Following Pope John Paul’s visit to Germany in 1980, the Ecumenical Study Group of Protestant and Catholic theologians worked for five years and in 1986 it published its report *Lehrverurteilungen – kirchentrennend* or in English “The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?” This report, a primary source used by the JD, concluded that the impasse concerning justification could be resolved by focussing on its Christological foundation, namely that all are saved by God’s free gift of Jesus Christ, given in the Holy Spirit. It confirmed that no major theological differences on the doctrine of justification divided the Lutheran and Catholic Churches in the twentieth century.

These extensive ecumenical dialogues, visits, meetings and joint documents set the stage for mutual respect and understanding, which led to the JD.

Hermeneutical Analysis

In ecumenical relations, hermeneutical differences need to be recognised. There are instances where a theological difference is mainly due to different hermeneutical interpretations. For example, Lutherans believe that a person is simultaneously sinner and

justified because they hold that concupiscence, which continues after baptism, is sin. Catholics however believe that concupiscence, which continues in the baptised, is not sin. This hermeneutical difference in the partners' respective understanding of concupiscence led to condemnations related to the effects of original sin and the continuance of sin in the justified person.

Another benefit of hermeneutical analysis is that it helps to determine whether the condemnations are directed towards the partner or not. In the case of the JD, it was necessary to conduct this analysis in a two-fold manner. Firstly, it had to be determined whether the condemnations were directed towards the partner in the sixteenth century. Secondly, were the condemnations still applicable to the partner in the twentieth century? An example of the hermeneutical analysis that was undertaken prior to the JD is the work of the Lutheran-Catholic Study Group which worked for five years and in 1986 published its report "The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?"

Sensitivity to Respective Church Structures

When ecumenical dialogue is conducted, it is imperative to bear in mind that different churches have their own structures through which dialogue takes place. A structure that may be recognised within one church may be non-existent in another. Failure to recognise this difference can cause difficulties.

A case in point is the official response of the Catholic Church prior to the signing of the JD. In June 1998, both the LWF and the Catholic Church sent in their official responses to the proposed text of the JD. The Catholic response spoke of the "different character of the two signatories of this Joint Declaration." The LWF had gone through a synodal process with its member churches for consultation and formal decision on the JD.

The Catholic response questioned whether this synodal process had real authority.¹³¹ This questioning of the authority of the other partner caused anger and disappointment in the LWF. Though these obstacles were overcome and the JD was signed, we see here a case where greater sensitivity to the other partner's structure and process would have been the preferred option. "The tone of the Vatican Response might be one to which we are accustomed within Roman Catholic circles, but it does not reflect a great deal of ecumenical sensitivity, to say the least."¹³²

Delays in Pursuing Dialogue Result in Hardened Positions

When differences exist between Christians, it is imperative that dialogue be undertaken without unnecessary delay. As I discussed in chapters 2 and 3, the differences which existed in 1517 when Luther posted his ninety-five theses, were not church-dividing. Luther was seeking reform in areas like the selling of indulgences and also attempting to provide a new hermeneutical interpretation of the doctrine of justification; one which would be coherent with his own conscience and experience. Several political and ecclesial factors resulted in the postponement of an ecumenical council to debate these matters. Even when the CA was drawn up in 1530, the differences were not significant enough to cause a major rift. But, by the time the CT started meeting in 1545, positions had hardened. They hardened even further by the time the BC was drawn up in 1580. The break-away of the Reformation churches was the result.

¹³¹ Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification*, 152.

¹³² Clifford, "The Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Declaration", 24.

4.3 Significance and Scope of the Joint Declaration and a Brief Overview of Ecumenism since the Joint Declaration

For the Signing Partners

The JD is a bilateral agreement and therefore its significance and scope must first be sought in the life of the two partner churches, namely Lutherans and Catholics. On the Lutheran side, the JD was signed by the LWF. At present, “the LWF is a global communion of 142 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 70 million Christians in 79 countries.”¹³³ The JD is not part of the confessional documents of either the Lutheran or Roman Catholic Churches. But it has deep significance for the two churches. The JD resulted in the lifting of mutual condemnations by Lutherans and Catholics concerning the doctrine of justification (par. 41). This is itself a huge achievement in the wake of over four hundred years of living with the distancing effects of mutual condemnations. The JD between the LWF and the Catholic Church was the first agreement between the Catholic Church and a church from the Reformation period. Cardinal Cassidy points out that by its example, the JD provides hope that even sharp and long-standing differences, like those on the doctrine of justification, can be overcome.¹³⁴

Within the LWF, when the General Secretary, Reverend Dr. Ishmael Noko, wrote prior to the JD being signed, requesting the member churches to affirm the conclusions of the JD, 79% of its member churches agreed to the differentiated consensus and an even greater number agreed that the condemnations in the Lutheran confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.¹³⁵ Some churches, however, including the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, do not accept the JD. I nevertheless conclude, based on

¹³³ LWF’s web site: <http://www.lutheranworld.org/content/about-lwf> (accessed on June 25, 2013)

¹³⁴ Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification*, xiv.

¹³⁵ Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification*, 149.

the high percentage of Lutheran member churches in favour of the JD, that the JD has wide acceptance within the Lutheran confession.

The JD also represents intra-Lutheran agreement.¹³⁶ It provides clarity to Lutherans on the doctrine of justification. The FC of 1577 was meant to settle major differences within Lutheranism, which surfaced after Luther and Melanchthon. As discussed in chapter 2, when the FC was finalised, it excluded the Philippist side of the argument (synergism). The JD re-appropriates within the Lutheran confession Melanchthon's synergism, namely that there is an element of human cooperation in justification.

Four hundred years of mutual condemnations and distrust do not disappear easily. An example of accumulated distrust was seen in the debate that took place in Germany in early 1998, prior to the two partners sending in their official responses to the text of the JD. On January 29, 1998, the daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* published a statement signed by over a hundred and forty Protestant university professors challenging the statement that the JD represented an "agreement in basic truths". It even contained an accusation that the JD would be used by the Roman Catholic Church to absorb Lutherans into Catholicism.¹³⁷ Though these statements were effectively denied by both the Lutheran and Catholic sides, this incident remains as a reminder of the need for further trust and healing to take place.

Concerning the differences on justification which were not considered as basic truths but still remain, three were considered important by Lutherans. The LWF's 1998

¹³⁶ Michael Root, "The Implications of the Joint Declaration on Justification and Its Wider Impact for Lutheran Participation in the Ecumenical Movement" in William Rusch ed., *Justification and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 45.

¹³⁷ Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification*, 147.

response to the text of the JD lists these as the status of the doctrine of justification, concupiscence as sin and how good works preserve grace.¹³⁸ For Catholics, the Lutheran understanding of “simultaneous justified and sinner”, the integration of justification within all truths of faith and the reconciliation of human cooperation with human passivity remain as areas requiring further dialogue and clarification.¹³⁹ I believe that the JD does well by identifying with complete transparency the need for further dialogue.

JD encourages both partners to treat the past condemnations as “salutary warnings”, which must be kept in mind in teaching and practice (par. 42). It encourages them to use this consensus on basic truths to influence the life and teachings of the respective churches (par. 43). Taking this cue, The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada jointly published a resource entitled “Justification by Faith through Grace: Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, Study Resources for Congregations and Parishes” (Ottawa: Concacan Inc., 1999). This resource provides a framework of bible study which can be used jointly by Lutherans and Catholics on the central themes of the JD.

Beyond the Bilateral Partners

This section does not in any way claim to be an exhaustive list of ecumenical efforts since the JD. It provides an overview of some ecumenical developments where the Catholic Church is involved, and explains the Orthodox position on justification.

When the JD was signed in 1999, the World Methodist Council (WMC) began considering its affirmation. The LWF and the Catholic Church accompanied the WMC until it and its member churches formally affirmed in 2006 the JD. This affirmation

¹³⁸ Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification* , 149.

¹³⁹ Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification* ,151.

confirms that the common understanding of the JD corresponds to the Methodist doctrine.¹⁴⁰ WMC's affirmation thus attaches the Methodist churches to the basic truths and explanations on justification contained in the JD.

The signing of the JD reduces conflict far beyond that between the Lutheran and Catholic Churches. As Reverend Dr. Ishmael Noko, (General Secretary of the LWF at the time the JD was signed) points out, conflict in the sixteenth century spread beyond the churches to society as a whole. It manifested itself in wars and tensions. By signifying closure to the conflict between churches, the JD becomes a harbinger of peace in society at large.¹⁴¹

A success story in the ecumenical movement is the annual "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity", which takes place annually at the end of January in the Northern hemisphere and is prepared jointly by Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and "The Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches". The *World Council of Churches* is a body in which a large number of Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist and Reformed churches are represented, and which gives ecumenism a high priority.¹⁴² One of the laudable aspects of this annual "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" is the process that goes into the planning and implementation of the week. An international planning team is comprised of members from the Orthodox, Reformation, Anglican and Catholic Churches, to name a few. This team requests a different country each year to plan the week for Christian unity and send in its draft proposals to the international team. The work is then translated and

¹⁴⁰ Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification* , 210.

¹⁴¹ Radano, *Lutheran and Catholic Reconciliation on Justification* , xvii.

¹⁴² The web site of the World Council of Churches <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us> (accessed on June 25, 2013)

disseminated for use by Christians world-wide. The resources provided by the international team can be used in prayer meetings, incorporated into liturgies and in bible studies. The 2014 “Week of Prayer for Christian Unity” has been prepared by Canada with the theme: *Is Christ divided?* (1Cor. 1:13) It is my view that the “Week of Prayer for Christian Unity” has done a lot towards furthering the cause of ecumenism at national and international levels.

Among the numerous bilateral ecumenical dialogues that have been conducted by the Roman Catholic Church, two deserve special mention. In December 1965, Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I signed a joint declaration to remove the mutual sentences of excommunications of 1054. This contributed to healing after nine hundred years of separation. Secondly, the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches have participated in the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) for over forty years. The first phase of ARCIC (1970-81) produced a number of joint documents – *Eucharistic Doctrine, Ministry and Ordination* and *Authority in the Church*. The second phase of ARCIC (1983-2005) produced *Salvation and the Church* (which echoes the theme of the JD), *The Church as Communion*, *Life in Christ*, *The Gift of Authority* and *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*. All these documents are fruits of the extensive dialogue between Anglicans and Catholics over the years.

My thesis has so far been silent on the Orthodox Church and justification. What is the position of the Orthodox Church on the doctrine of justification?

The Orthodox Church is less concerned with the JD because justification, as understood by the Western Church (both Roman Catholic and Reformation), is not an

important theological doctrine for the Orthodox Church.¹⁴³ The Greek Fathers hardly discussed justification or righteousness. Gregory of Nyssa, one of the few who wrote on righteousness, discusses righteousness as the Christian way of life, namely works of righteousness.

The Orthodox Church agrees that man inherits Adam's fallen nature but does not accept that man inherits the guilt of original sin from Adam. The concept of guilt or punishment for sin which has not been committed by a person is alien to Orthodox thinking. The Orthodox Church administers baptism together with the other two sacraments of initiation (confirmation and Eucharist) to infants not to absolve them of their guilt but to incorporate them into the Church, the Body of Christ, and to initiate in them new life in the Holy Spirit. The Orthodox Church believes that after the Fall, God's image in man is obscured, but is still mainly intact. This is more positive than Augustine and the Catholic Church's understanding of the loss caused by the Fall. Free will is still strong in man according to the Orthodox understanding.

Orthodoxy believes that God's free grace is offered to all, it does not accept predestination. The Orthodox Church believes that the Incarnation of Jesus has two purposes: justification and sanctification. Justification is not understood in a forensic sense; rather it is existential, transforming the life of a person. Salvation includes both justification and deification (*theosis* or union with God). The real objective of being justified is in fact to go beyond the original blessed life of Adam and Eve before the Fall. It is to be in full communion with God (*theosis*).

¹⁴³ Valerie A. Karras, "Beyond Justification: An Orthodox Perspective" William Rusch ed., *Justification and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 99-131.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the ecumenical reception of the doctrine of justification. This doctrine, the subject of mutual condemnations between Lutherans and Catholics since the sixteenth century, was re-examined by these two churches in the twentieth century.

The VC II's invitation to observers from the Reformation and Eastern Orthodox churches to attend its proceedings was a real boost to twentieth century ecumenism. It resulted in lasting friendships and the first beginnings of mutual trust. The Vatican also created in 1960 the SPCU (Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity) which later in 1989 became the PCPCU (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity) to work on ecumenism. VC II's Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, *UR*) encouraged Roman Catholics to pursue ecumenism. *UR* even devoted a section to ecumenism with the Reformation Churches. Ecumenical dialogue began in earnest after the VC II.

For the next thirty-five years after the VC II, extensive meetings and dialogue took place between Lutherans and Roman Catholics. Agreed joint statements were prepared defining the common understandings on a variety of subjects. Two such reports that are significant are the *Malta Report* (1972) and *All under One Christ* (1980). The numerous exchanges between the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church representatives provided momentum to the dialogue. The gestures towards rapprochement of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II were also well received by the LWF.

One of the moves from the Lutheran side which facilitated agreement was the decision by the LWF to give the CA and Luther's Small Catechism greater importance among its confessional documents. Neither of these two documents contained

condemnations on justification directed towards the Roman Catholic Church. Another positive step was the willingness to interpret justification by studying a variety of New Testament scriptures. Prominence was accorded to the work of the Trinity, annunciated in John 3:16.

On October 31, 1999, the JD was signed with great rejoicing on both sides. The mutual condemnations of the sixteenth century were withdrawn. This permitted the Lutheran and Catholic Churches to start a new form of relationship. The JD was a “consensus in basic truths”. There are still areas related to justification that require further dialogue. This *modus operandi* of working with the principle of “consensus in basic truths” should be appropriated in other areas of ecumenism.

Agreement between the Catholic Church and a Reformation Church is good news for the ecumenical movement and for society at large. If such a contentious and divisive doctrine like justification could be agreed upon, ecumenical dialogue can overcome many other obstacles to Christian unity. Society will also benefit from the peace that the JD encourages through a better communion among Christians.

Summary and Conclusion

Justification is a doctrine which goes to the core of Christian living. With its salvific, Christological and soteriological implications, it has deep meaning for Christians. The doctrine of justification responds to the question: What makes sinners righteous and just in the eyes of God, who is righteous and just? Many interpretations of justification are offered in Scripture as well as in the writings of Augustine, Bonaventure, Aquinas, Biel and Luther to name just a few notable contributors to the development of the doctrine. The diverse interpretations of this complex doctrine resulted in major differences between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century.

This thesis began with a biblical and historical analysis of the doctrine of justification and then proceeded to its ecumenical interpretation and reception by Lutherans and Catholics evidenced by their 1999 signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.

I began with a biblical and historical analysis of the doctrine of justification from the writings of Paul to its reception in the medieval period. Paul, in his letters, introduces a number of ways in which we can understand justification. In the Old Testament, justification was understood as things being in the right order within a covenant relationship between God and Israel. Paul stresses the action of God in justifying a sinner. Justification takes place within the framework of predestination (Rom. 8:29-30). For Paul, all men are sinners in need of God's mercy (Rom. 3:23). The effects of original sin linger in all men, even the justified (Rom. 7:20-25). By faith, Christ's righteousness is imputed to us (2Cor. 5:21).

Romans 3:28-30 demonstrates the importance which Paul assigns to faith. He uses the example of Abraham's faith, which was credited to him as righteousness (Rom. 4:3, Gal. 3:6). But on the flip side, Paul also emphasises that we will be repaid according to our deeds (Rom. 2:5-7), calls for men to work out their own salvation in fear and trembling for God's good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13) and uses terminology such as "faith expressing itself through love" (Gal. 5:6). How does one reconcile these two seemingly opposing views (faith alone vs. faith and works)? This duality of views was at the centre of the schism in the sixteenth century.

The dilemma of faith vs. works can be resolved by understanding God's grace as outlined in Eph. 2:8 ("for by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God"). Everything comes from God's free grace. God uses our good works to bring us into Christ (Eph. 1:10). Therefore our good works are not to be held as an alternative to faith; they are the fruits of an active, living faith. Our works, like our faith, are the fulfilment of God's predestined plan for our lives.

Augustine, like Paul, holds that it is God's predestination that chooses and calls those who are justified. No person can have total assurance about his salvation since we do not know God's election for us. Original sin is passed on by propagation and not by imitation, as held by the Pelagians. Original sin does not make man's nature evil; it damages its original state. The human free will continues to exist, but its freedom to choose is damaged. It no longer has the capacity to come to God without God's grace. God "prepares the will" and then cooperates with the liberated will to enable it to do good works. Concupiscence, an inclination to evil, remains in a person even after baptism. But for Augustine, concupiscence is not sin. Sin is always the result of a decision of the free

will. For Augustine, faith itself is a gift of God. To Augustine, justification is transformative and not merely “imputed”. Augustine continues his thinking along the lines of Paul’s principle of “faith working through love”.

Chapter 2 studies Luther and Lutheranism in the sixteenth century. The division between Luther and the Catholic Church revolved around two questions. The first was: By what are we justified in God’s eyes? The second was: Are works required from a justified person?

Luther held that we are justified by faith. By faith, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. Until recently, it was held that Luther had a forensic or extrinsic understanding of justification. This extrinsic understanding, which does not include transformation, was considered a key feature of Protestant theology on justification. Recent scholarship on Luther (such as that led by Finnish Lutheran scholar Mannermaa) has demonstrated that Luther believed that faith was not merely intellectual but based on Christ being present in a person’s faith, thus resulting in participation with God or *theosis*.

Luther was also not against works; only against them being considered a pre-requisite to justification. In his work *Two Types of Righteousness*, Luther explains that the first type of righteousness creates faith and gains for the sinner the merits of Christ’s work on the cross. Works play no part in this first righteousness. But this first righteousness then creates a second righteousness which enables the person to do good works. Luther, in his short tract *Christian Liberty*, stresses that good works are to be pursued in order to please God. I have demonstrated in my thesis that no major theological difference in understanding existed between Luther and the Roman Catholic

Church either on what brings about justification or on the necessity of works in the life of the justified.

Despite what has been discussed in the previous two paragraphs, a series of political and social factors resulted in Rome postponing the calling of an ecumenical council. This resulted in a hardening of positions. Melancthon, Luther's close associate, drew up the Augsburg Confession (CA) in 1530. The CA had the ecumenical objective of achieving unity in the Catholic Church. Included within this ecumenical objective was the need to have proper clarification on the doctrine of justification, following Luther's interpretation of the doctrine. By the time the Council of Trent (CT) met in 1545, it was too late to heal the rupture. Besides, numerous new additions and amendments to Luther's thought had taken place among Lutherans and there were major differences amongst Lutherans themselves. In 1577, the Formula of Concord (FC) was signed. FC was concerned with concord or unity within the Lutheran ranks. The Book of Concord (BC) was compiled in 1580 and is a compilation of ten Lutheran confessional documents, including the CA. Both the CA and the FC's positions on the doctrine of justification have been analysed in my thesis.

Chapter 3 studies the doctrine of justification from the Roman Catholic viewpoint. Though the Council of Trent was too late to prevent the Reformation Churches from breaking away, it was crucial to the life of the Catholic Church itself. It covered the Church's teachings on a variety of subjects including justification. It represented a genuine attempt to engage the Reformers and to reconcile differences. When the decrees and canons of the CT are analysed, we observe that the seed for future resolution and agreement on the doctrine of justification was already sown by the CT. It took, however,

over four hundred years for Lutherans and Roman Catholics to withdraw their mutual condemnations on the doctrine of justification.

The Second Vatican Council (VC II, 1962-65) of the Catholic Church strongly advocated Catholic ecumenical efforts in the twentieth century. The VC II was called to equip the Church to respond to the twentieth century and beyond. VC II invited observers from the Eastern Orthodox and Reformation Churches to attend its proceedings. It thus became the vehicle for building trust and continuing relationships. In its *Decree on Ecumenism* (1964), the VC II encouraged Catholics to seek ecumenical dialogue with Christians and even laid down guidelines for such dialogue with the Reformation Churches.

Chapter 4 represents a culmination of the dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Catholics resulting in the signing in 1999 of their Joint Declaration on the doctrine of justification. The friendships which had started with the observers to VC II facilitated the dialogue over the next thirty years prior to the signing of the JD.

In this thesis, I identified five factors which facilitated agreement in the JD. The first was the acceptance by the LWF to give special importance among the Lutheran confessional documents to the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism, neither of which contain a condemnation of the Catholic Church. The second initiative was on the part of the Catholics when they emphasised the role of Scripture, which was at the heart of Luther's writings and the Reformation movement. Further, a serious effort was made by twentieth century scholarship towards understanding the person and theology of Luther. The third facilitating factor was the adoption of the principle of

“consensus in basic truths” to reach agreement. Full agreement was not sought, since one would not have been forthcoming at the time. Rather, an agreement was reached on the essentials of faith and other differences were left to be discussed in future dialogue. Fourthly, in reaching agreement on justification, various biblical interpretations were taken into consideration, including justification as the work of the Trinity (John 3:16), and highlighting the role of the Holy Spirit in transforming a justified person. Lastly, no attempt was made in the bilateral dialogue to downplay the past histories of the partners. Instead, by trying to understand the differences, respect was shown to the other party as well as to one’s own church history.

Ecumenical dialogue will continue to be of great significance for Christians in the twenty-first century. The Joint Declaration on the doctrine of justification signed by Lutherans and Roman Catholics is a beacon of hope for the future. If such a complex and divisive doctrine like justification which had resulted in mutual condemnations by Lutherans and Catholics in the sixteenth century could be agreed upon, there are no limits to what ecumenical dialogue can achieve. The path has been indicated, the beacon lit. Now it remains for Christians to persevere in their efforts to reach out towards their brethren in the faith and strive for deeper ecumenical unity.

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