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SALVATION

Catholics and evangelicals share a common core of beliefs about salvation. The roots of this common heritage are found in the early church fathers and flowered in Augustine. These first teachers of the church grappled primarily with the issues concerning the *Person* of Christ (Christology) rather than questions about the *work* of Christ (soteriology). It is only later that theologians addressed the doctrine of what Christ accomplished, agreeing that salvation is based on God's grace. As a current catechism puts it, "Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation (cf. Mk. 16:16 ; Jn. 3:36 ; 6:40 et al.)."¹

After nearly twenty years of dialogue between Catholic and Lutheran scholars searching for common understanding they agreed that "our entire hope of justification and salvation rests on Christ Jesus and on the gospel whereby the good news of God's merciful action in Christ is made known; we do not place our ultimate trust in anything other than God's promise and saving work in Christ." Although they acknowledge that "this Christological affirmation does not necessarily involve full agreement between Catholics and Lutherans on justification by faith,"² nonetheless, it does express the surprisingly significant core of salvation beliefs shared by Catholics and evangelicals.

THE EARLY PATRISTIC PERIOD

The basis for our common heritage is, of course, the Old and New Testaments. Beyond these, the writings of the early Fathers, as well as the creeds and confessions of the church form a common basis for all orthodox believers, Roman Catholic and Protestant.

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 161, p. 44.

² H. Georges Anderson et al., eds., *Justification by Faith* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), p. 16.

REACTION TO GNOSTICISM

The most serious threat to early Christian faith was Gnosticism.³ This was not a clearly defined movement but was made up of various subgroups drawn from Hellenic as well as oriental sources. The term *Gnosticism* comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means “knowledge.” One of Gnosticism’s central doctrines was the belief that those who embraced the movement possessed a special mystical knowledge which led to salvation.

Gnosticism also held to a form of dualism, a view of reality which posits two fundamental principles: matter is evil and spirit is good. Gnostics believed that salvation was the escape from the physical body (which is evil) achieved by special knowledge (*gnosis*). The understanding of the body as evil led some Gnostics to stress control of the body and its passions (asceticism), while others left the body to its own devices and passions (libertinism). Both forms of these Gnostic-like practices (which existed in embryonic form in the New Testament), were addressed in several books, including Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 2 Peter, and the Epistles of John.

Harold O. J. Brown offers this succinct summation of the effects of Gnosticism: “Gnosticism was a response to the widespread desire to understand the mystery of being: it offered detailed, secret knowledge of the whole order of reality, claiming to know and to be able to explain things of which ordinary, simple Christian faith was entirely ignorant.”⁴

Gnostics rejected the notion that Christ had a body like ours. Docetists held a similar view. Docetism—named from the Greek word meaning “to seem”—held that the body of Jesus appeared to be fully human but was not. This does serious damage to the doctrine of the incarnation and this error has recently reappeared.⁵ Marcion, a second-century heretic, represented the most dangerous movement associated with Gnosticism. According to him, the Father of Jesus is not the same as Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament. If this is true, Christianity is severed from its historic roots.

Fatalism, the belief that everything is controlled by an impersonal force, was also an element of Gnostic thinking. The early church fathers opposed fatalism by stressing the freedom of the human will. Justin Martyr and John Chrysostom argued that good and evil come not from the individual’s nature but from the will and choice. In response to the Gnostic libertarians Tertullian focused on the importance of works and righteousness,

³ For a general discussion of the subject, see Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1984). On the subject of Gnosticism and the New Testament documents, see Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidence*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983).

⁴ Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ*, p. 39. This volume examines Gnosticism in great detail.

⁵ See the “nature of Christ’s resurrection body” controversy in Geisler, *Battle for the Resurrection*, and a proponent of the “spiritual body” theory in Murray Harris, *Raised Immortal* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

going so far as to say that “the man who performs good works can be said to make God his debtor.”⁶ This unfortunate phrase set the stage for centuries to come.

The “works-righteousness” concept, which seemed to be so ingenuous in combating Gnosticism, was popular for the first 350 years of the church’s history. However, a controversy which would produce a more precise definition of the theological elements involved was needed. This dispute came on the scene in the system of Pelagius and the Christian thinker to confront it was Augustine of Hippo.⁷

AUGUSTINE, BISHOP OF HIPPO

Augustine (A.D. 354–430) was an intellectual giant. Born in Tagaste, North Africa (now Algeria), his mother was a Christian and his father a pagan. In his youth, Augustine sought after intellectual wisdom and thus was drawn to Manichaeism, a third-century religion that blended Persian, Christian, and Buddhist concepts. Augustine taught in Carthage for a time and then moved to Rome and Milan (A.D. 384), where he became disenchanted with Manichaeism and began to investigate Neoplatonism.

This new philosophical orientation convinced him that the existence of evil could be reconciled with the doctrine of creation. His understanding that evil was not a positive, created thing, but a privation or lack in things proved to be of great theological significance. Hence, concerning substance and evil, he wrote: “Therefore, as they are, they are good; therefore whatsoever is, is good. That evil, then, which I sought whence it was, is not any substance; for were it a substance, it would be good.”⁸ Further, “When accordingly it is inquired, whence is evil, it must first be inquired, what is evil, which is nothing else than corruption, either of the measure, or the form, or the order, that belong to nature.”⁹

Through the preaching of Ambrose of Milan, his study of the New Testament, and the life of the desert father Antony of Egypt, Augustine was prepared for Christian conversion and was baptized at Easter in A.D. 387. He was ordained a priest in A.D. 391,

6 Tertullian, *De paenitentia* 2; 1.323.44–46.

7 An excellent historical analysis of this period can be found in Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 1–23. For data on the church’s preaching during this period, see Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970). Although we have taken great pains throughout this work to point out that official Roman Catholic theology rejects Pelagianism (and semi-Pelagianism), it must be noted that impulses due to these heresies keep surfacing; see chap. 12 and Appendix B . The international Roman Catholic journal *30 Days* has addressed this issue; see “The Canons of Carthage: The Error of Pelagius,” no. 1, 1994, pp. 37–44, and “Small Roman Catechism,” no. 2, 1994, pp. 66–71.

8 *Confessions* 7.12; quoted in Norman L. Geisler, ed., *What Augustine Says* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), p. 188.

9 *On the Nature of Good* 4; quoted in *ibid.*, p. 189.

was a bishop four years later, and succeeded to the See of Hippo in A.D. 396. Augustine died during the siege of the city by the Vandals in A.D. 430.

The thought of this intellectual and spiritual giant is crucial to the central investigation of this present work in that Augustine's contributions have been embraced by both Roman Catholics and Protestants. Our primary concern here is with Augustine's soteriological contributions. No one has exercised a greater influence over the development of Western Christian thought than the Bishop of Hippo. Anselm of Canterbury equated theological orthodoxy as he knew it with conformity to the writings of Augustine of Hippo, as did Thomas Aquinas after him.

In dealing with Augustine's doctrine of justification, it is important to note that his thinking on this most vital of issues underwent significant development. Early on Augustine stressed the role of the human will in matters of salvation, a view he would later modify in his disputations with the British monk, Pelagius. His mature doctrine, however, came down decidedly on the side of grace alone (*sola gratia*). We are saved by grace, not by the law, "for the law gives its prescriptions to this end alone that when one has failed to fulfill these commandments, he will not be filled with pride; thus, by frightening him, the law fulfills its purpose of pedagogue, leading him to love Christ."¹⁰ Augustine was fond of saying: "The justice of God is not that by which God himself is just but that which God gives to man so that he might be just through God."¹¹ In short, it is totally by God's grace that we are justified. Salvation is neither initiated nor obtained by human action. Even the faith by which we obtain salvation is the gift of God.

SUMMING UP SALVATION IN THE EARLY PERIOD

After reflecting on Pauline insights, Augustine came to the following conclusions. First, the eternal decree of God's predestination determines one's election. "I speak thus of those who are predestined to the Kingdom of God, whose number is so certain that one can neither be added to them nor taken from them."¹²

Second, God's offer of grace (salvation) is itself a gift (John 6:44a). Commenting on Paul's statement in 2 Timothy 4 , Augustine wrote: "His last clause runs thus: 'I have kept the faith.' But he who says this is the same who declares in another passage, 'I have obtained mercy that I might be faithful.' He does not say, 'I obtained mercy because I was faithful' but 'in order that I might be faithful,' thus showing that even faith itself cannot be had without God's mercy, and that it is the gift of God."¹³

Third, the human will is completely unable to initiate or attain salvation. This concept squares quite well with the later doctrine of total depravity—which surfaced more than a

10 Augustine, *De perfectione iustitiae hominis* 5.11; quoted in Anderson, *Justification by Faith*, p. 123.

11 Augustine, *Tractatus Johannem* 26.1; quoted in *ibid.*

12 Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace* 39; quoted in *ibid.*, p. 127.

13 Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will* 17, *ibid.*, p. 167.

millennium later as the first point of the Reformed mnemonic device, TULIP: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, and Perseverance of the saints. These five points of Calvinist soteriology were adopted at the Synod of Dort (A.D. 1618–19).

Fourth, Augustine maintained that the justified sinner does not merely receive the *status* of sonship, but *becomes* one. For Augustine, justification included both the beginnings of one’s righteousness before God and its subsequent perfection—the event and the process. What later became the Reformation concept of “sanctification” then is effectively subsumed under the aegis of justification.¹⁴ Although he believed that God initiated the salvation process, it is incorrect to say that Augustine held to the concept of “forensic” justification. This understanding of justification is a later development of the Reformation (see chap. 12).

Fifth, a feature in Augustinianism which Protestants will no doubt find interesting is that God may regenerate a person without causing that one to finally persevere.¹⁵ This is Calvinism without the perseverance of *all* the saints. Thus Reformed scholar Louis Berkhof comments: “The [Reformed] doctrine [of perseverance] is not merely the effect that the elect will certainly be saved in the end, though Augustine has given it that form, but teaches very specifically that they who have once been regenerated and effectually called by God to a state of grace, can never completely fall from that state and thus fail to attain to eternal salvation.”¹⁶

Despite the later Protestant emphasis on forensic justification, there is a common core of teaching on salvation that unites Catholics and Protestants; namely, that *salvation is by God’s grace*.¹⁷ That is, no good works precede justification (regeneration). Recently, some have claimed that the common core is “salvation by grace through faith,”¹⁸ but this is misleading since Roman Catholics believe that justification occurs at baptism when the infant is too young to express any conscious or explicit faith in Christ. Further, they believe works are necessary for salvation (see chap. 12), whereas Protestants believe salvation is by faith alone. Often the views are distinguished by saying both Catholics and Protestants believe salvation is by grace alone (*sola gratia*), while Protestants add that it is also by faith alone (*sola fide*). But even here different things are meant by “grace alone,”¹⁹ for *sola gratia* does not mean the same thing for Catholics as it does for Reformed Protestants. For normative Catholicism, *sola gratia* means only the primacy and necessity of grace, but not the exclusivity of grace. Official Catholicism teaches that works are also necessary for salvation. And while all Catholics believe these

14 McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 1:32.

15 Augustine, *City of God* 10.8.

16 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 546.

17 The Protestant view is often contrasted with this as being salvation by grace alone and faith alone, *sola gratia*, *sola fide* (see chap. 12).

18 See the “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” joint statement released 29 March 1994 by Chuck Colson, Richard John Neuhaus, and others.

19 Anderson, *Justification by Faith* , pp. 15–16, 22.

works are prompted by grace, they also believe in the meritorious nature of good works, which Protestants deny (see chap. 12).

Nonetheless, both Catholics and Protestants believe in the *necessity of grace*. That is, without God's grace there would be no salvation. And even man's good works, which have the necessary fruit of regeneration, are produced by God's grace. This teaching was made clear by Augustine, Aquinas, and even the Council of Trent. Augustine said emphatically of Pelagius's error, "should he consent that we receive love from the grace of God, he must not suppose that any merit of our own preceded our reception of the gift," for "what merit could we possibly have had at the time when we loved not God?" Hence, "that grace of God, whereby 'His love is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost, which is given to us,' must be so confessed . . . that nothing whatever in the way of goodness pertaining to godliness and real holiness can be accomplished without it."²⁰ The third canon of the Second Council of Orange (A.D. 529) was emphatic: "If anyone says that the grace of God can be conferred because of human prayer, and not rather that it is grace itself that prompts us to pray, he contradicts the prophet Isaiah, or the apostle Paul who says the same thing: 'I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me' (Rom. 10:20 ; Isa. 65:1)."²¹ Canon 18 adds, "Whatever good works we do are deserving of reward, not through any merit anterior to grace; their performance, rather, is due to a prior gift of grace to which we have no claim."²²

In concluding this section on the early church's view of salvation, it is fitting to mention the tension between Augustine's doctrine of the church—which had sacramental and sacerdotal elements—and his soteriological concerns. In addressing this point, B. B. Warfield wrote, "the Reformation, in wardly considered, was just the ultimate triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over Augustine's doctrine of the Church."²³ While the sacraments of baptism and penance, the concept of merit, and the relationship between predestination and justification can be found in Augustinianism, they become more clearly defined later, and we will address them in Part Two. Augustine has been regarded as both the last of the church fathers and the first medieval theologian. He marks the end of one era and the beginning of another.

THE EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

²⁰ Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ*, I.27 [26], in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, pp. 227–28.

²¹ Neuner and Dupuis, *Christian Faith*, p. 606.

²² Cited by Louis Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1961), p. 49.

²³ B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956), pp. 312ff., p. 322.

The medieval period (the “middle ages”) is commonly dated from Augustine (or slightly later) to the 1500s. During this period the balance of power in the church shifted from the East (where Christianity began) to the West (or Latin) wing of the church.

Many heresies emerged during this time. Pelagianism was officially condemned by the church at the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) and again at the Second Council of Orange (A.D. 529) which declared that “If anyone says that the grace of God can be bestowed by human invocation, but that the grace itself does not bring it to pass that it be invoked by us, he contradicts Isias the Prophet . . . [cf. Isa. 65:1].”²⁴ This heresy, however, along with its close relative semi-Pelagianism²⁵ (also condemned at the Council of Orange), keeps recurring in church history. It seems that the natural inclination leans toward Pelagianism rather than Augustine’s Pauline emphasis on the grace of God.

Leo the Great, who was the Roman Pontiff from A.D. 440 to 461, is designated by many non-Catholic historians as the first “pope” in the modern sense. Many Roman Catholic dogmas (which may have existed in germ form earlier) now solidified: the supreme authority of the Roman bishop in the church, sacramentalism, sacerdotalism, and the change of emphasis in the Eucharistic Feast from celebration to sacrifice, to name a few.²⁶ These doctrines impacted medieval soteriology in several ways.

JUSTIFICATION AND THE SACRAMENTS

During the medieval period, baptism and penance were linked with justification. God’s righteousness was *begun* (infused) in baptism and *continued* (perfected) through penance. Augustine stated: “ ‘Who forgiveth all thine iniquities’: this is done in the sacrament of baptism.”²⁷ To circumvent the fact that it is impossible to please God without faith (which infants cannot possess), Bernard of Clairvaux held that God justified children on account of the faith of others.²⁸

Although this understanding of the nature and purpose of baptism can be found from the earliest of times, the same is not true of the concept of penance. The idea of confession to a priest for the remission of sin existed in the second century but did not become a widespread practice in the early medieval period. Indeed, some applied the term “the second baptism” to sacerdotal confession. Baptism addressed the problem of *original* sin, while confession cleansed the effect of *actual* sin. Some theologians of this era took pains to stress that the sacraments were the *means* God used to mediate grace to

24 Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, no. 176, p. 76.

25 Semi-Pelagianism held that humanity cooperated with God by ordinarily taking the first step toward salvation. The term was also applied by Dominco Báñez (1528–1604) to the theology of the Jesuit Luis De Molina (1535–1600).

26 These distinctives of Roman Catholicism will be dealt with more at length in Part Two.

27 Augustine, *On Forgiveness of Sins and Baptism* 1.44; quoted in Geisler, p. 151.

28 Anselm of Canterbury also taught this. See McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* , 1:92.

us. However, this theological nicety was often lost on the laity, who became entangled in a works-righteousness system.

THE CONCEPT OF MERIT

Closely related to the sacraments in general is the concept of *merit*. The term is first used by Tertullian (A.D. 160–225) and then fully developed by the Schoolmen in the medieval period. There was a pastoral intention connected to the concept of merit. As McGrath points out: “It can be shown that a distinction came to be drawn between the concepts of *merit* and *congruity*; while man cannot be said to merit justification by any of his actions, his preparation for justification could be said to make his subsequent justification ‘congruous’ or ‘appropriate.’ ”²⁹

An example of this thinking by Roman Catholics is mentioned by a contemporary Catholic historian who says concerning Martin Luther: “As a monk, he had found no peace in trying to clear his guilty conscience through penance and self-denial but experienced freedom when he realized that man is justified by faith alone, as Paul explains in his letter to the Romans.”³⁰ Unfortunately, as with the sacraments, this distinction did not always filter down to the common folk.

PREDESTINATION AND JUSTIFICATION

As in most of the theological concepts surrounding the doctrine of justification, we must go back to Augustine to find the earliest treatment of predestination this side of Paul. The context was Augustine’s dispute with Pelagius, whose theological system—among other things—denied original sin. Pelagius taught that people are free in their natural state to do good, apart from God’s grace.

Augustine disagreed, arguing that, before the fall, humanity was free both to sin and not to sin. Between the fall and the cross, we were free only to sin. When we are redeemed, the Holy Spirit works in our hearts, freedom is restored, and we are again free both to sin and not to sin. Ultimately, in heaven we shall still be free, but only free not to sin. It is important to note that, through all this, Augustine does not deny the freedom of the human will.³¹

Augustine took great pains to distinguish between predestination and fatalism. He resisted the notion of double predestination, which argues that God not only decides to elect some to eternal life but also actively predestines others to eternal destruction. Nonetheless, the predestination controversy came to the fore during the medieval period.

29 Ibid., 1:110.

30 Alan Schreck, *The Compact History of the Catholic Church* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1987), p. 63.

31 See Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), pp. 214f.

Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus held the Augustinian position that grace was extended to man by God without consideration of any existing merit. William of Ockham, on the other hand, seems to have based predestination on the reality of perseverance, which to the Reformed mind is putting the cart before the horse.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Anselm of Canterbury (A.D. 1033–1109) was arguably the most penetrating theological thinker between Augustine and Aquinas. He was born in Aosta, Northern Italy. At age fifteen Anselm gave his life to God and decided to become a monk.

He entered the Benedictine monastery of Bec in Normandy. Exposed to the rigors of theological investigation, he developed into a philosophical/religious thinker of first rank. He answered an invitation to come to England, and on his arrival was appointed archbishop of Canterbury, where he served with distinction until his death in A.D. 1109.

Anselm’s earliest literary efforts were prayers, meditations, and letters of consolation and reproof, directed to those under his spiritual care. His facile mind soon turned to profound theological themes and his efforts would change the soteriological landscape forever.³² Anselm wrote on a number of themes during his career: the existence and attributes of God, the incarnation, the atonement, evil, free will, and predestination.

Like Aquinas, Anselm owed a great deal to Augustine. The guiding principle in his theological investigations was *fides quaerens intellectum* (“faith seeking understanding”). For Anselm, “faith is not only the foundation of true understanding; it is the *stimulus* to understanding. Faith seeks completion in an understanding which stands midway between faith and vision.”³³ According to Anselm, Christianity is “intrinsically and preeminently rational; and a Christian lacking an understanding of his faith would be a stunted Christian indeed.”³⁴

Anselm rejects fideism. Faith is not without reasons. In fact, “one believes *in order that* one may understand.”³⁵ However, the faith that opens the door to understanding cannot be defined simply as an intellectual acceptance of certain truths. The faith that

32 The following volumes on Anselm are helpful: John J. Delaney and James Edward Tobin, eds., *Dictionary of Catholic Biography* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961); F. L. Cross, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); John D. Woodbridge, ed., *Great Leaders of the Christian Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988).

33 Robert B. Strimple, *Anselm and the Theology of Atonement*, unpublished Master of Theology thesis (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1964), p. 79.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., pp. 79, 80.

introduces man to God, and thus to all of reality, must be defined primarily in terms of *relationship* with God.³⁶

One of Anselm's great theological treatises was *Cur Deus Homo* ("Why the God-man").³⁷ In it he addressed the relationship between the incarnation and the atonement and redirected thinking on the nature and purpose of the atonement that had been in place since the apostolic era.

Augustine had plumbed the depths of depravity and grace, but even he had not addressed the ultimate question posed by Anselm. A popular theory in the early church was the so-called *ransom* theory. This "classic view" understood the atonement as an antidote over the forces of sin and evil, as a deliverance of humanity from the clutches of Satan. Augustine also held this view. Anselm's contribution to the doctrine of the atonement is called the *satisfaction* theory. It understands the atonement as compensation to the Father; sin is failing to give God his due.³⁸

Cur Deus Homo consists of two parts, having twenty-five and twenty-two chapters respectively. In the first part, Anselm attempts to show that no one is saved apart from Christ: "The man who thinks that he can make satisfaction for his own sin has simply 'not yet considered what a heavy weight sin is' (1:21)."³⁹

In Part Two, Anselm states that man is destined for salvation and examines how this purpose was carried out by the God-man. "The *Cur Deus Homo* performed a valuable service for the Church in dealing the death-blow to the notion that Christ's death was a ransom paid to the devil in order to satisfy the latter's just claim upon men."⁴⁰ Anselm exhibited "a profound sense of the sinfulness of sin and the necessity of atonement."⁴¹

Finally, "*Cur Deus Homo* places in the forefront of consideration the *objective* efficacy of the Atonement—Christ's death as removing that obstacle which our sin had placed in the way of God's extending his favor toward us."⁴² *Cur Deus Homo* has been called "the truest and greatest book on the atonement that has ever been written."⁴³

One further theory concerning the atonement should be mentioned—the *moral-influence* theory. This position was advanced by Peter Abelard (A.D. 1070–1142). A younger contemporary of Anselm, Abelard promoted the view that the atonement is best

36 Ibid., p. 81.

37 Or "Why God Became Man," *The Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 10, ed. and trans. Eugene R. Fairweather (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951).

38 Careful treatment of Anselm's view can be found in McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, pp. 55–60.

39 Strimple, *Anselm*, p. 91.

40 Ibid., p. 109.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 James Denney, *The Atonement and the Modern Mind* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1903), p. 116.

understood as a demonstration of God's love. Hence, "the major effect of Christ's death was upon man rather than upon God."⁴⁴ Abelard's moral-influence theory, however, proved to be less satisfactory than Anselm's.⁴⁵

SOME CENTRAL THEMES IN MEDIEVAL SOTERIOLOGY

It may be helpful at this point to summarize some important developments in the doctrine of salvation in the Middle Ages. First, there was an increased interest in Pauline studies for theological formulations; hence, new attention was paid to moral and legal concepts of redemption.

Second, with the brilliant work of Anselm, the medieval notion of the "devil's rights" over sinful humanity—known as the ransom theory of the atonement—was replaced by the satisfaction theory. The Reformers were later to build on Anselm's insights and would develop a forensic perspective on justification.

Third, the distinction between justification and sanctification—which came to the fore in the Reformation—is almost totally absent from the medieval period. Instead, the idea that man's *status*, not his *nature*, was affected by justification was later developed by the Reformers.

Fourth, although Pelagianism (and semi-Pelagianism) were not completely absent from the theological scene during this period it is incorrect to hold that these deviations dominated the soteriological scene. Most theological concepts were Augustinian in nature, to a greater or lesser degree.

THE LATE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

One figure dominated the late medieval period, the Angelic Doctor. St. Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225?–74) considered himself Augustinian in his theology, although he preferred to express his philosophical views in Aristotelian terms rather than the Platonic language of Augustine. Aquinas seldom differed from Augustine in theology, and then only with great deference to his theological mentor. This is certainly true on the doctrine of justification.

Like Augustine, Aquinas believed that regeneration occurs at baptism, asserting that "Baptism cleanses only the individual person who receives it [baptism] from original sin;

44 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), p. 785.

45 It is of interest to note that this great Christian scholar, Anselm (who was declared a Doctor of the Church in A.D. 1720), was also concerned with practical issues as well as academic theological formulations. In 1102 at a domestic council at Westminster, he made an impassioned plea against the slave trade in England.

his children must also be baptized.”⁴⁶ Likewise, he held that not all the regenerate will persevere. Contrary to a widespread misunderstanding among Protestants, Aquinas believed that humankind is unable to initiate or attain salvation except by the grace of God. While man can do “natural” good (i.e., loving one’s family, kindness toward those who do good to us, etc.), he is completely dependent on God for salvation. Aquinas asserted emphatically that

Human reason is very deficient in things concerning God. A sign of this is that philosophers, in their inquiry into human affairs by natural investigation, have fallen into many errors, and have disagreed among themselves. [Consequently] . . . in order that men might have knowledge of God, free of doubt and uncertainty, it was necessary for divine truths to be delivered to them by way of faith, being told to them as it were, by God Himself Who cannot lie.⁴⁷

Aquinas also believed that human beings are fallen. Commenting on Ephesians 2:3 , he wrote, “Original sin is hinted at in [this phrase] *and we were by nature children of wrath*. This sin of the first parents was not only passed on to the Gentiles but also to the Jews also. . . .” Thus, “ *we were by nature*, that is, from the earliest beginning of nature—not of nature as nature since this is good and from God, but of nature as vitiated—*children of an avenging wrath*, aimed at punishment and hell.”⁴⁸ As a result of the effects of sin on man, grace is necessary. Commenting on the great text on grace in Ephesians 2:8–9 , Aquinas even asserted that faith is a gift of God:

He [St. Paul] eliminates two errors. . . . The first of these is that, since he has said we are saved by faith, any one can hold the opinion that faith originates within ourselves and that to believe is determined by our own wishes. Therefore to abolish this he states *and that not of yourselves*. Free will is inadequate for the act of faith since the contents of faith are above human reason.⁴⁹

Aquinas added, “The second error he [St. Paul] rejects is that anyone can believe that faith is given by God to us on the merit of our predestined actions. To exclude this he adds *Not of preceding works* that we merited at one time to be saved.” Aquinas concluded that “if for something to be in our power means that we can do it without the help of grace, then we are bound to many things that are not within our power without healing grace—for example to love God or neighbor.” Further, he stated:

The same is true of believing in the articles of faith. But with the help of grace we do have this power. As Augustine says, to whomever this help is given by God it is given in

46 Aquinas, *Commentary on Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians* by St. Thomas Aquinas, trans. Matthew L. Lamb (Albany, N.Y.: Magi Books, 1966), p. 89.

47 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae. 2, 4, in *The Basic Writings of Thomas Aquinas* , ed. Anton C. Pegis (New York: Random House, 1944), p. 1079.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., p. 96.

mercy; to whomever it is denied, it is denied in justice, namely because of previous sin, even if only original sin.⁵⁰

Whatever can be said of others, the two greatest theologians of the Catholic church, Augustine and Aquinas, clearly believed that *salvation is completely dependent on God's grace*. In fact in their case, though not infallibly normative for Catholics, it is by grace alone (*sola gratia*) in the sense that every human action connected with salvation is not only prompted by but is produced by God's grace. Grace is operative, not merely cooperative, in effecting our salvation.⁵¹

However, Aquinas, like Augustine, did not speak of forensic justification as understood by the Reformers. Justification for him meant not simply to *declare* the sinner righteous but to *make* him righteous. Whereas the Reformers distinguished forensic justification and progressive sanctification, Augustine and Aquinas did not. This does not mean that the Reformers' distinction is incompatible with Aquinas's view, but simply that Aquinas did not state it this way. Both can be true. Some contemporary Roman Catholic scholars believe that declarative justification is included in the thinking of Augustine and Aquinas, at least implicitly.

THE PRE-REFORMATION PERIOD

IMPORTANT PRE-REFORMATION EVENTS

The end of the fifteenth century proved to be a turning point in Western history. Not only the church but culture in general was to be forever changed. Columbus's arrival in America (A.D. 1492), Henry VIII and his matrimonial difficulties, and the spreading influence of the Renaissance were but a few of the incidents marking this period. Virtually all historians—Roman Catholic and Protestant alike—agree that the church had become morally corrupt and in need of reform. The “Babylonian Captivity” at Avignon (A.D. 1309–77) and the Great Schism (1378–1417) with its scandal of anti-popes (competing claims to the papacy) exposed cracks in the papal edifice.

While clerical celibacy was officially the law of the church, many priests and bishops ignored this rule. Pope John XXII (A.D. 1316–34) officially condemned the distortions that had crept into the church concerning the ideal of poverty promoted by Francis of Assisi (1182–1226), a man so revered by his contemporaries that he was called “the

⁵⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae. 2, 6, ad 1.

⁵¹ Of course, Aquinas did believe in the doctrine of merit and the necessity of good works. So in this sense he would fall short of the Protestant understanding of salvation by faith alone. But since these good works come in the overall context of God's operative grace, some evangelicals have embraced Aquinas as “Protestant.”

second Christ.”⁵² The ecclesiastical situation is aptly summed up by Sebastian Brant (1457–1521): “St. Peter’s bark is tempest-tossed, I fear the vessel may be lost.”

The two major figures prior to the Reformation were John Wycliffe (A.D. 1329–84) and John Hus (A.D. 1373–1415). Wycliffe was a brilliant Oxford scholar whose insistence on the superiority of Scripture in religious affairs earned him the title of the “morning star of the Reformation.” As a philosopher, he attacked nominalism and upheld an Augustinian realism. Hus was ordained in A.D. 1401 and soon became the rector of the University of Prague. He was an admirer of Wycliffe’s views in general, while not quite as “anti-Roman” as the Oxford thinker. His views, however, led to him being called a heretic, and he was burned at the stake in A.D. 1415.

SUMMING UP SALVATION PRIOR TO THE REFORMATION

It is important to note that concerning the soteriological doctrines of the men we have been examining were Augustinian. The following features characterize the medieval theological tradition prior to the Reformation period.

First, justification was regarded as both an initial act and a continual process.

Second, the view of man’s standing before God and his basic nature underwent change.

Third, a firm anti-Pelagianism permeated late medieval thought and this view passed into the early theology of the Reformation.

Fourth, a works-righteousness position emerged which was to become a focal point in the Reformation controversy.

THE REFORMATION PERIOD

Many volumes have been written covering both sides of this controversy.⁵³ The passage of time since the event in question has caused the stridency and emotional trauma associated with the rupture to subside. On both sides of the debate those of a progressive

52 Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), p. 133.

53 Two good Protestant treatments are: R. Tudur Jones, *The Great Reformation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1985), and Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Reformation* (London: Longman, 1981). A short but balanced Roman Catholic work is Alan Schreck, *The Compact History of the Catholic Church* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1987). Also see William Durant’s *The Reformation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), Part VI of “The Story of Civilization” series.

and traditional bent have of late taken a more sympathetic look at the causes and events that led to the Reformation. Much study and dialogue have occurred recently between Roman Catholics and Protestants concerning core theological issues in general and soteriological concerns (i.e., justification by faith) in particular. We will examine the degree of continuity—or lack of it—between the Augustinianism of the early church and later medieval period, and that of the major movers and shakers of the Reformation.

MARTIN LUTHER

Born in A.D. 1483, in Eisleben, Germany, of middle-class parents, Martin Luther entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt in 1505. The themes of salvation and damnation—which were central to the culture of the day—concerned him greatly. Luther became aware of the presence of sin in his life and the ineffectiveness of the penance provided by the church to bring relief to this situation. In addition to penance, divine “grace” was dispensed by the church through the six other sacraments, the most important of these being, in addition to penance, baptism and the Eucharistic observance (Holy Communion).⁵⁴

Listen to Luther as years later he recalls his experience in the monastery:

I was a good monk and kept my order so strictly that I could claim that if ever a monk were able to reach heaven by monkish discipline I should have found my way there. All my fellows in the house, who know me, would bear me out in this. For if it had continued much longer I would, what with vigils, prayers, readings and other such works, have done myself to death.⁵⁵

A Dominican scholar recalls Luther’s word during this time of spiritual anguish: “I wanted to live so devoutly that I could appear before God and say: ‘here you have holiness.’ ”⁵⁶

In 1511 Luther was transferred from Erfurt to Wittenberg. He lived in the Augustinian cloister and was fortunate to have as his spiritual confessor a godly man who was also the vicar-general of the monastery: Johannes von Staupitz (1469–1524). Staupitz, aware of the intense spiritual struggles that enveloped his young charge, directed Luther to study Scripture. Luther was graduated Doctor of Theology on October 19, 1512, and commenced teaching theology and biblical studies at Wittenberg on August 16, 1513. It was in the context of his assignment at the university that Luther developed his initial ideas concerning justification by faith.

54 Protestants should be aware that Luther’s view of the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist was very close to that of the Roman Catholic church. See Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 345–74.

55 WA, Tischreden, IV, 303.16.

56 Quoted in Stephanus Pfurtner, *Luther and Aquinas—a Conversation: Our Salvation, Its Certainty and Peril*, trans. Edward Quinn (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964), p. 19.

Luther had been influenced by nominalism, the form of theology and philosophy advocated by William of Ockham. It was known as the *via moderna* in contrast to Thomism and Scotism, which were called the *via antiqua*. Nominalism removed most of the data of faith from the realm of reason and was one of the antecedents of modern fideism.

Luther seems to have had little contact with the early Dominican school (which had Thomism as its theological rudder) and it is interesting to speculate on how exposure to the Augustinian core of Thomistic thought might have influenced his early spiritual and exegetical investigations.

The decisive role in the formulation of Luther's theology was played by St. Paul and Augustinianism. It was shortly after his exegesis of Paul's phrase in Romans 1:17, "the righteousness of God" (*iustitia Dei* in the Latin), that Luther stated that justification is a gift of God, appropriated by faith:

Now I felt as though I had been immediately born anew and had entered Paradise itself. From that moment the face of Scripture as a whole became clear to me. My mind ran through the sacred books, as far as I was able to recollect them, seeking analogies in other phrases, such as *opus Dei*, that which God works in us; *virtus Dei*, that by which God makes us strong; *sapientia Dei*, that by which he makes us wise; *fortitudo Dei*, *salus Dei*, *gloria Dei*— the strength, the salvation, the glory of God.⁵⁷

Luther's understanding of God's justice and grace had undergone a drastic change. He wrote: "Because God is almighty and rich in mercy and turns as such to me, I can—indeed, I must—trust in him, I can and must be certain of my salvation in spite of my own sinfulness!"⁵⁸

The beginning of Martin Luther's problems with Rome has often been identified with his posting of the *Ninety-five Theses* on the eve of All Saints, October 31, 1517. These theses dealt with the doctrine of purgatory, the penitential system, papal authority, but primarily with the sale of indulgences. Pastoral concern prompted Luther to act. People who showed no signs of sincere repentance for their sins would come to him for confession. They would produce copies of indulgences that they had purchased and thought of them as licenses to sin without spiritual consequences. Luther declined to grant them absolution. With the public display of the *Ninety-five Theses* the die was cast; the Reformation began and Christendom changed forever.⁵⁹

Among the points raised in the *Ninety-five Theses* were the following:

1. A true Christian who is repentant has remission from both the guilt and penalty of sin because he participates in the benefits of Christ (theses 16–17).

57 WA, LIV, 179–87.

58 Pfurtner, *Luther and Aquinas*, p. 22.

59 It should be pointed out that the pope agreed with many of these theses, primarily those which dealt with moral issues.

2. A Christian has no need of letters of pardon and the purchase of such is wrong when it is clearly better to give the money to the poor (theses 41–45).
3. “The Pope can remit no guilt, but only declare and confirm that it has been remitted by God” (thesis 6).
4. Concerning the “treasury of the accumulated merits of the saints,” the “true treasure of the Church is the holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God” (thesis 62).

In the *Ninety-five Theses*, Luther did not “challenge the doctrine of purgatory. He [did] not question the scriptural basis of the sacrament of penance. He [did] not demand the abolition of indulgences.”⁶⁰ What he did was address the abuses of the doctrines that had become commonplace in the culture of his day.

Indicating how deeply his evangelical (Augustinian) principles influenced the theses, Luther was later to write:

And this is the confidence that Christians have and our real joy of conscience, that by faith our sins become no longer ours but Christ’s upon whom God placed the sins of all of us. He took upon himself our sins. . . . All the righteousness of Christ becomes ours. . . . He spreads his cloak and covers us.⁶¹

Some reevaluation has been going on among contemporary Catholic theologians concerning Luther’s reaction to the state of the church in his day. For example, Louis Bouyer (who had been a Lutheran pastor before his conversion to Roman Catholicism) does not view Luther as a revolutionary, but as a truly spiritually sensitive pastor seeking to reform the church from within. Bouyer argues that the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone is not a heresy but is consistent with Catholic tradition and in harmony with the teachings of Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas.⁶² Other Catholic theologians hold similar views.

Another quote from a modern Roman Catholic source is in order: “The irony of the Protestant Reformation is that much of what Luther believed and taught was authentic Catholic doctrine that had been distorted by abuses and incorrect practices in the Church, such as the mercenary selling of indulgences. Unfortunately, Luther’s criticism of real abuses was not heeded.”⁶³

60 Jones, *Great Reformation*, p. 36.

61 Martin Luther, *Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses*, published August 1518.

62 Louis Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, trans. A. V. Littledale (Westminster: Newman Press, 1961). See chaps. 1 through 6 covering such topics as salvation as a free gift, justification by faith, and the sovereign authority of Scripture.

63 Schreck, *Compact History*, pp. 63f.

The Council of Trent (A.D. 1545–63) would, during the Counter-Reformation, address these same issues and provide needed reforms, such as banning the sale of indulgences. This was done to avoid the corrupt practices that had developed.

In addressing the similarities and differences of Augustinianism and Luther, the following may be stated.

First, Luther and Augustine both believed that *iustitia Dei* (righteousness of God) is a righteousness that is a gift from God to us, rather than the righteousness that God possesses in his own Person.⁶⁴

Second, Luther, following Augustine, did not make the distinction between forensic justification and progressive sanctification that would emerge in later Protestantism.⁶⁵ Indeed, “It is important to note that Luther does not employ forensic [legal] terms to explain this imputation of alien righteousness. This development will come later, from others.”⁶⁶

Third, Augustine and the medieval church had believed in a “theology of glory.” This is the result of natural theology and claims to know God through his works. Its antithesis is Luther’s “theology of the cross” concept, which elevates the cross as the most important place of encounter between God and man. There God is seen in weakness (1 Cor. 1:18–25) and suffering and our preconceived concepts of divine glory are shattered. Luther said:

That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as if it were clearly perceptible in those things in which have actually happened. He deserved to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.⁶⁷

A contemporary orthodox Roman Catholic theologian comments on these two “paths” in Christology:

In the history of the Christian faith, two divergent lines of approach to the contemplation of Jesus have appeared again and again: the theology of the incarnation (glory), which sprang from Greek thought and became dominant in the Catholic tradition of East and

64 McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 2:7ff.

65 Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 237ff.

66 Peter Toon, *Justification and Sanctification* (Westminster: Crossway Books, 1983), p. 58.

67 WA, 361f.; LW 31, 52. Theses 19 and 20 of the Heidelberg Disputation; quoted in *ibid.* Good treatment of the “Theology of the Cross” is found on pp. 25–34.

West, and the theology of the cross, which based itself on St. Paul and the earliest forms of Christian belief and made a decisive break-through in the thinking of the Reformers.⁶⁸

Ratzinger goes on to develop these two themes and states that they are not contradictory but “must remain present as polarities which mutually correct each other and only by complementing each other point toward the whole.”⁶⁹

Finally, Augustine never held the doctrine of “double” predestination. “This means an unconditional, eternal predestination both to salvation and to damnation.”⁷⁰ Although Augustinianism might be said to imply logically such a concept, the bishop of Hippo never took that step and actually argued against it.

It seems clear that in spite of significant differences in their systems, Luther and Augustine were united in their belief that man is spiritually destitute and, apart from God’s grace, is incapable of producing any semblance of spiritual merit. Luther was, indeed (at least concerning the basic tenets of justification), a spiritual son of the bishop of Hippo and of the “Doctor Angelicus.”

PHILIPP MELANCHTHON

Philipp Melanchthon was born in Bretten in A.D. 1497. He was a mere twenty-one years of age when, teaching at Tübingen, he was appointed to the newly founded Chair of Greek in Luther’s University of Wittenberg. Two men could not be less alike than Melanchthon and Luther. Luther was a tempestuous religious revolutionary; Melanchthon, a quiet systematic theologian. Luther was contemptuous of philosophy and Christian humanism⁷¹ while Melanchthon enjoyed the support and friendship of the greatest Christian humanist of the day, Erasmus.

Even though they were opposites in temperament and somewhat different in theological methodology, “Magister Philipp,” as Luther called him, became Luther’s trusted friend and first lieutenant. The major theological work of Lutheranism, the Augsburg Confession (1530), was mainly the work of Melanchthon. His irenic nature in contrast to his superior’s bombast made him a natural candidate to effect a rapprochement between Rome and Wittenberg, but efforts in this direction came to naught.

68 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J. R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), p. 170.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 171. This section, “Theology of the Incarnation and Theology of the Cross” (pp. 170–72), is excellent.

70 WA, DB, 7, 23; LW 35, 378; quoted in *ibid.*, p. 275. Also see chap. 20 in its entirety.

71 Christian humanists, unlike secular humanists, were God-centered, being theists in their philosophy. Nonetheless, they believed the focus of history was on human beings. Hence, they stressed the importance of the humanities as a field of study. See Norman L. Geisler, *Is Man the Measure?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), chap. 8.

Melanchthon represented many differences with his mentor and earlier Lutheran thinking. For one thing, he had a more positive approach to the freedom of the human will. For another, Melanchthon was more conciliatory toward Calvin and Zwingli, appreciating their view on the sacraments and their approach to the disciplines of the Christian life. Then, too, Melanchthon seems to abandon an important aspect of Luther's understanding of justification: the personal union of Christ and the believer. Thus, extrinsic justification overwhelmed intrinsic justification. Indeed, it was Melanchthon, not Luther, who first spoke of justification in forensic terms.⁷² In short, concerning issues of soteriology, Melanchthon was less Augustinian than Luther and much a product of his earlier training in humanistic studies.⁷³

JOHN CALVIN

Without a doubt, the most important Reformed theology to come out of the Protestant Reformation was that of John Calvin. He was born in Noyon, France, on July 10, 1509. Calvin studied in Paris, where he encountered humanism as well as the conservative reaction to it. Calvin was familiar with the writings and theology of Wycliffe, Hus, and Luther. He drew his deepest inspiration, however, from Augustine. Calvin believed that he was doing nothing more than reproducing "that holy man's own plain and uncompromising teachings."⁷⁴ "If I wanted to compile a whole volume from Augustine, I would readily show my readers that I need no other language than his."⁷⁵

Calvin's theological system begins, as did Augustine's and Aquinas's before him, with man's present condition—one of complete moral corruption. For "Even though we grant that God's image was not totally annihilated and destroyed in man, yet was it so corrupted that whatever remains is a horrible deformity."⁷⁶

Calvin held that "Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, which he has determined in himself, what he would have to become of every individual of mankind."⁷⁷ Election is prior to faith, for "While the elect receive the grace of adoption by faith, their election does not depend on faith, but is prior in time and order."⁷⁸

Calvin refers to justification as the "main hinge upon which religion turns." It "consists in remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness."⁷⁹ Departing

72 See Anderson, *Justification by Faith*, p. 279.

73 Melanchthon introduces forensic terms that were absent in Luther's treatment of justification. For an examination of this and other differences between Luther and Melanchthon, see Toon, *Foundations for Faith*, pp. 61–63.

74 Reardon, *Religious Thought*, p. 190.

75 Calvin, *Institutes*, III, xxii, 8 .

76 Ibid., I, xv, 4 .

77 Ibid., II, i.

78 J. K. S. Reid, trans., *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, vol. 22, in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), Article 5.

79 Calvin, *Institutes*, III, xi, 2 .

at this point from Augustine, Aquinas, and the medieval tradition, Calvin does not see justification as involving an *infusion* of grace. “We are justified by God solely by the intercession of Christ’s righteousness.”⁸⁰ What place, then, do good works have in the life of the believer? “To the charge that justification thus understood obviates the need for good works Calvin’s firm reply is, like Luther’s, that although in no respect can good works become the ground of our holiness a living faith is never devoid of such works. Thus justification necessarily has its consequence in sanctification.”⁸¹

Christian salvation includes both justification and sanctification. Calvin kept these doctrines in balance, writing, “We confess that, when God reconciles us to himself by means of the justice of Christ, and by the free remission of our sins, reposes us to be just, he joins to this mercy a further benefit, namely, he dwells in us by his holy Spirit, by whose virtue the lusts of our flesh are daily more and more mortified, and we are ourselves sanctified, that is, consecrated to God in true purity of life, our hearts once moulded to the obedience of the Law.”⁸²

Hence, “God’s justification of the sinner must lead to ethical, eternal sanctification; but justification can never be based on man’s ethical attainments. God’s justification must lead to righteousness of life, but such righteousness of life is never the basis for God’s justification.”⁸³

In closing the discussion of Calvin and his contributions to Christian thought, let us hear the words of another Reformed theologian:

The fundamental interest of Calvin as a theologian lay, it is clear, in the region broadly designated soteriological. Perhaps we may go further and add that, within this broad field, his interest was most intense in the application to the sinful soul of the salvation wrought out by Christ . . . and we have been told that the main fault of the *Institutes* . . . lies in its too subjective character. Its effect, at all events, has been to constitute Calvin pre-eminently “the theologian of the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁴

For Calvin, justification was an aspect of the greater question of man’s relation to God in Christ.

HULDREICH ZWINGLI

Zwingli was born New Year’s Day, 1584, about forty miles from Zurich. He was the dominant force in the Swiss Reformation. He was much influenced by the Christian

80 Ibid., xi, 23 .

81 Reardon, *Religious Thought*, p. 196.

82 Calvin, *Institutes*, chap. 24.

83 Toon, *Foundations for Faith*, p. 42.

84 Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956), p. 484.

humanist Erasmus. Zwingli was more rationalistic and seems to have lacked the intense personal religious conversion in his life Luther experienced.

Whereas Luther searched for a gracious God, Zwingli emphasized a sovereign God. On another key principle of Zwingli's theology, he was one with the other Reformers: "We call God Father because he can do what he pleases with us." As to the divine image, "it has been obscured, but not obliterated."⁸⁵

Zwingli and Luther differed over the issue of the "actual presence" in the Eucharistic controversy, and Zwingli seems to include a "works-righteousness" element in his understanding of justification. In this, a similarity with Erasmus can be noted. Thus, "It is this aspect of Zwingli's theology which led Melancthon to hint darkly at Marburg of the works-righteousness of the Swiss Reformers."⁸⁶

Concerning Christian doctrine, it is important to note that "The Reformers never claimed to have an exhaustive knowledge of biblical truth, but they did maintain that any 'new truth' arises out of the Spirit's application of the Word in the Christian's life. The 'new truth' in no way adds to that in Scripture."⁸⁷

SUMMING UP OUR COMMON SOTERIOLOGICAL ROOTS

Our differences on the doctrine of salvation notwithstanding,⁸⁸ a survey of both Roman Catholics and Protestant Reformers leads to the following conclusions regarding Roman Catholic and evangelical agreement in this area.

First, both believe salvation is historical. The Old Testament view of salvation as effected through historic, divine intervention is affirmed in the New Testament. Against Gnosticism, we jointly affirm that man is not saved by wisdom; as against Judaism, man is not saved by moral and religious merit apart from the grace of God. Over against the Hellenistic mystery religions, man is not saved by mere religious practices, but by God's action in history in the person of Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:25 ; 5:10 ; 2 Cor. 4:10f .; Phil. 2:6f .; 1 Tim. 1:15 ; 1 John 4:9–10 , 14).

Second, both evangelicals and Catholics believe salvation is moral and spiritual. Salvation is related to a deliverance from sin and its consequences and hence from guilt (Rom. 5:1 ; Heb. 10:22), from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13 ; Col. 2:14), from death (1

85 Zwingli, *Apolegeticus Architeles*, IV, 307. This is Zwingli's major statement concerning his beliefs.

86 McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 2:33.

87 David F. Wells, *Revolution in Rome* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1972), p. 44.

88 The differences between Catholic and evangelical views on salvation will be discussed in Part Two. For a treatment of salvation doctrines beyond the scope of this work, see Peter Toon, *Born Again: A Biblical and Theological Study of Regeneration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987).

Pet. 1:3–5), from judgment (Rom. 5:9), from fear (Heb. 2:15); and, finally, from bondage (Gal. 5:1f .; Titus 2:11–3:6).

Third, salvation is eschatological for both Catholics and evangelicals. The future perspective of salvation is crucial (Rom. 8:24 ; 13:11 ; 1 Cor. 5:5 ; Phil. 3:20 ; Heb. 1:14 ; 9:28 ; 1 Pet. 1:5–9). All that is now known about salvation is preliminary and a foretaste of the fullness which awaits the completing of the kingdom at the *parousia* of the Lord.

Fourth, initial justification is unmerited. As the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it, “Our justification comes from the grace of God” (1996) and even “the merits of our good works are gifts of the divine goodness” (2009).⁸⁹ Although the forensic aspect of justification stressed by Reformed theology is scarcely found prior to the Reformation, there is continuity concerning salvation between medieval Catholicism and the Reformers. Thus, Colin Brown can speak of “the Augustinian orthodoxy of Geneva and Rome.”⁹⁰ For both groups salvation is by grace and is not prompted by human works. It comes as a gift of God to undeserving humanity. Harold O. J. Brown states, “We must not oversimplify and create an artificial and forced consensus between great Christians of the past and present. Yet if one thing stands out when one studies the writings and lives of such men, it is that they knew and served the same Lord, and that they shared one faith and one hope.”⁹¹

This is not to say that there are no important differences between Catholics and evangelicals on the topic of salvation (see chap. 12). However, perhaps the bishop of Hippo, the archbishop of Canterbury, the Angelic Doctor, the monk from Erfurt, and the theologian of the Holy Spirit have more in common than has hither-to-fore been granted.

89 (*Libreria Editrice Vaticana* , 1994), pp. 483, 487.

90 Colin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought*, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1990), p. 165.

91 Harold O. J. Brown, *The Protest of a Troubled Protestant* (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1969), p. 107.