

# EPILOGUE

The purview of this book is immense; beginning with the Apostolic Era, through the patristic and medieval periods, touching the Reformation events and the current situation. It has been a daunting task and one that we readily admit has not been exhaustive. We ask the readers' indulgence for any historical slights or oversights.

Our primary task has been an honest evaluation of the agreements and differences between evangelicals and orthodox Roman Catholics, being irenic about areas of agreement and yet realistic about areas of differences. Centuries of suspicion and mistrust, fueled by misconceptions on both sides, make this a formidable project.

In Part One, we addressed the areas of agreement among orthodox Christians of all jurisdictions. These are doctrinal truths emerging from the councils and creeds of classic Christianity. Chapter 5 on salvation is crucial in that we developed the thesis that Augustinianism was the major soteriological framework that informed Western Christianity. Both Roman Catholics and Protestants are indebted to the Bishop of Hippo. This chapter should be read in connection with chapter 12 on justification.

Part Two was more difficult. We realize that genuine differences exist between our two groups and that nothing is achieved by failing to face the issues. Efforts of this type by evangelicals have been flawed, erecting straw men and utilizing stereotypes. In our desire to avoid this we have attempted to use official Roman Catholic sources in developing our arguments and have called on our years of experience dialoguing with Roman Catholic brethren of various persuasions. While being rigorous in examination, we have attempted not to be rancorous in spirit.

In Part Three we endeavored to stress commonalities. Cooperative efforts of believing Roman Catholics and evangelicals facing the great moral and cultural declension of our society have been detailed. Both message and method, from Chrysostom "the golden mouthed" to Billy Graham the evangelist, have been mentioned.

Concerning this matter evangelicals might benefit from some observations from J. Gresham Machen, founder of Westminster Seminary. In the midst of his analysis of liberalism he wrote:

Far more serious still is the division between the Church of Rome and evangelical Protestantism in all its forms. Yet how great is the common heritage that unites the Roman Catholic Church . . . to devout Protestants today! [As great as the difference is] . . . it seems almost trifling compared to the abyss which stands between us and many ministers of our own church.<sup>1</sup>

We are convinced that much confusion exists because of unfamiliarity with the Holy Scriptures. On that subject, a well-known spokesman of orthodox Roman Catholicism has said: “I am firmly convinced that some erroneous doctrines of present day theology would have been impossible if the author (or authors) had regularly and attentively read the complete New Testament.”<sup>2</sup> Harold O. J. Brown echoes this sentiment: “The question of the reality of a personal God, or of Christology, divides believers from unbelievers, Christians from non-Christians. The question of the authority of Scripture divides sound teaching and good theology from false teaching and bad theology.”<sup>3</sup>

Concerning the nature of the church Brown says, “The true church is an *invisible* fellowship, but it is not an *imaginary* one. To be in it, you do not step inside four walls, but you accept a whole framework and orientation towards truth, by entering into it with your whole understanding as well as your will.” And as to the doctrinal and moral integrity of the church: “In the final analysis, the purity of the church cannot be guaranteed by decrees—it can only be guaranteed by church members who know their faith, both its vital elements and its secondary ones, and the difference between them.”<sup>4</sup>

In closing, we quote from a theologian who, to use his own words, was “raised in the bosom of the liberal ecumenical tradition.” Upon reexamination of the church fathers, he came to see the powerlessness of current liberal ecumenicism and embraced evangelicalism. Concerning interfaith dialogue he writes: “Evangelicals are more ready for serious dialogue with Eastern Orthodoxy and with Roman ecumenical initiatives than with a Geneva pan-Protestant voice that only faintly echoes Reformation teaching on Scripture, sin and grace.”<sup>5</sup>

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1 J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), p. 52; quoted in J. Daryl Charles, “Evangelical-Catholic Dialogue: Basis Boundaries, Benefits,” *Pro Ecclesia* 3, no. 3, p. 304.

2 Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *The Catholic World Report*, November 1992; quoted in *Touchstone* (Fall 1992): 47.

3 Brown, *Protest of a Troubled Protestant*, p. 133.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 248. As to the controversy between Roman Catholics and Protestants, one would be hard-pressed to find an evangelical more perceptive than Harold O. J. Brown. For a masterful discussion, see “Unhelpful Antagonism and Unhealthy Courtesy,” in Armstrong, *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants*, pp. 163–78.

5 Thomas C. Oden, “How Should Evangelicals Be Ecumenical?” *Christianity Today*, 5 April 1993, p. 40.

## APPENDIX A

# THE CHURCHES OF THE EAST

If evangelicals know little about Roman Catholicism they know even less about Eastern Orthodoxy. There are more than 225 million adherents to Orthodoxy worldwide. Still, the Orthodox Church is virtually unknown in this country. The impact Eastern Orthodoxy has had in America is due to faithful immigrants who maintained their faith within ethnic boundaries. Metropolitan Philip, Primate of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, has said that Orthodox Christianity is “the best kept secret in America.”<sup>1</sup>

In this appendix we will briefly consider the history of Eastern Orthodoxy: its early development, subsequent estrangement from Western (or Latin) Christianity, and particular doctrinal differences with Western Christianity. Special effort will be made to understand the Orthodox equivalent of justification (and sanctification), which they call “deification.”

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### ORTHODOX HISTORY

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It is an undeniable fact of history that Christianity was Eastern before it was Western. It was an Eastern Christian Ananias from Damascus, Syria, who baptized the apostle Paul ( Acts 9:1–19 ). Followers of “the Way” were first called “Christians” at Antioch ( Acts 11:19–26 ). Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem were more important than Rome during the early years of church history, and “Even in the West, the theological leadership of the church was in North Africa, which produced such figures as Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine.”<sup>2</sup> For a time both branches of the church—East and West—were one. Then a number of events, such as the Muslim

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1 Peter E. Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox: A Journey to the Ancient Christian Faith* (Brentwood: Wolgemuth and Hyatt Publishers, 1990), p. 62. The title “metropolitan” is applied to a bishop who has spiritual jurisdiction over a province or nation.

2 Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), p. 242.

conquests in the East and the disintegration of the empire in the West, led to events that would result in the final schism, which occurred in A.D. 1054.

## THE CHURCH OF THE SEVEN COUNCILS

John II, Metropolitan of Russia ( A.D. 1080–89), said: “All profess that there are seven holy and Ecumenical Councils, and these are the seven pillars of the faith of the Divine Word.”<sup>3</sup> The early Byzantine church was informed and directed by the first seven general councils. The doctrines which all Orthodox Christians acknowledge to be central to their faith—the Trinity and the incarnation—emerged from these councils.

*I Council of Nicea ( A.D. 325).* This first council condemned Arius, who taught that Jesus was of a “different substance” from the Father. It also produced the Nicene Creed.

*I Constantinople ( A.D. 381).* This Council reaffirmed the pronouncements of Nicea and proclaimed the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

*Ephesus ( A.D. 431).* The theological question raised here was: In what sense is Jesus Christ fully divine and completely human at the same time? Nestorius from Antioch was pitted against Cyril from Alexandria. The former taught the *diversity* and the latter pressed the *unity* of Christ’s person. Cyril carried the day, affirming of Jesus Christ that “What Mary bore was not a man loosely united to God, but a single and undivided person, who is God and man at once.”<sup>4</sup>

*Chalcedon ( A.D. 451).* Monophysitism, the doctrine that the incarnation resulted in a single nature in the person of Christ, appeared on the scene. The council reacted to this formulation and declared that in Christ the two natures—human and divine—are clearly separated. Monophysitism would continue to plague the Eastern church for some time to come.<sup>5</sup>

*II Constantinople ( A.D. 553).* The fifth Ecumenical Council carried forward the work of its predecessor. Using the Alexandrian perspective, this council explains *how* the two natures of Christ unite to form a single person.

*III Constantinople ( A.D. 680–681).* This council condemned the heresy of Monothelitism, which taught that while Christ had two natures, he had but one will. The

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3 Quoted in Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, rev. (New York: Penguin, 1983), p. 26.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

5 Evangelicals agree with the theological formulations found in these first four councils. Eastern Orthodoxy adds three more, and Roman Catholics—with the potentiality for more development—are open-ended.

council disagreed and stated that, “Since Christ is true man as well as true God, He must have a human will as well as a divine.”<sup>6</sup>

*II Nicea ( A.D. 787).* This last ecumenical council pronounced for iconodules and against the iconoclasts. The former accepted veneration dulia directed toward icons; the later rejected this devotion as idolatry. Since one of the distinctives of Orthodoxy is the attention it pays to icons, the decisions of the Council are very important. While God cannot be represented in his eternal nature ( John 1:18 ), Orthodoxy believes that because “the Incarnation has made a representational religious art possible: God can be depicted because He became man and took flesh.”<sup>7</sup>

The first seven councils are very important to Eastern Orthodoxy. They are a theological guide “and, next to the Bible, it is the Seven Councils which the Orthodox Church takes as its standard and guide in seeking solutions to the new problems which arise in every generation.”<sup>8</sup>

## THE GREAT SCHISM

In the year A.D. 1054, at the Church of the Holy Wisdom (Gk: *Hagia Sophia* ) in Constantinople, an event took place that would perpetrate the first major rupture in the Christian church. A representative of the pope, Cardinal Humbert, placed a Bull of Excommunication upon the altar. This was the culmination of a long and complicated process, involving a number of causes. In the last analysis however, the quarrel was not over cultural but theological themes.<sup>9</sup> Two matters in particular were at issue: the claims of the papacy and the filioque, to which issues we now turn.

*The Papal Claims.* Eastern Orthodoxy accepts the proposition that, from the beginning, Peter was the acknowledged leader among the apostles. After the death of the apostles and the spread of Christianity westward, the church at Rome became more important. Although all bishops were equal in authority, the Bishop of Rome was considered “first among equals.”

However, trouble was on the horizon. For, “after nearly three hundred years, the Bishops of Rome slowly began to assume to themselves a role of superiority over the others. And without consensus, they ultimately claimed to be the only true successors to St. Peter.”<sup>10</sup> The vacuum caused by the decline of secular power in the Roman Empire was filled by religious power, namely, the church of Rome. In addition, “In the West . . .

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6 Ibid., p. 37.

7 Ibid., p. 41.

8 Ibid., p. 43.

9 A move to address this ancient rupture was made by the Vatican II Council. See Appendix D.

10 Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, p. 54.

there was only one great see claiming Apostolic foundation—Rome—so that Rome came to be regarded as the Apostolic see.”<sup>11</sup>

There were many churches in the East, however, that traced their ancestry back to the apostles. Also, four of the five patriarchates were located there. Collegiality (decision making among equals) was the rule in the East, while the Western church became highly centralized and “was seen less as a college and more as a monarchy—the monarchy of the Pope.”<sup>12</sup> This situation was (and still is) rejected by Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>13</sup>

*The Filioque.* The other problem identified at the time of the great schism was the term *filioque* (Latin: “And the Son”). This word was added by the Western church to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, thus affirming that the procession of the Holy Spirit is not “from the Father through the Son” but “from the Father and the Son.” The purpose of this change was to safeguard against Arianism.

The Eastern wing of the church objected to the change on two grounds. First, the creed belongs to the whole church and any change must have the consent of all parties; and second, the Orthodox believe the *filioque* to be theologically incorrect. They believe its inclusion tends to “destroy the balance between the three persons of the Holy Trinity: it leads also to a false understanding of the work of the Spirit in the world.”<sup>14</sup>

This is a complicated problem which we cannot fully explore in this limited treatment. Eastern Orthodoxy’s motives were sound: the protection of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. However, evangelicals are united with Roman Catholics on this issue. Ecumenically oriented theologian John Warwick Montgomery, speaking in support of the inclusion of the filioque, writes, “Scripture calls the Holy Spirit not only the Spirit of the Father ( Matt. 10:20 ) but also the Spirit of the Son ( Gal. 5:6 ); . . . and the sending of the Spirit to the New Testament church is ascribed both to the Father ( John 14:16 ) and the Son ( John 15:26 ; 16:7 , 13–14 ).”<sup>15</sup>

## POST-SCHISM EVENTS

Tensions increased between East and West following A.D. 1054. Power plays on the part of the politically stronger Latin church further drove the wedge between the two branches of the church. The rape and pillage of the Byzantine capitol of Constantinople by the Roman Catholic crusaders is a dark blot on the history of the church and prompted the

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11 Ware, *Orthodox Church*, p. 55.

12 Ibid.

13 We have explored this problem in chap. 11 . It can be noted that evangelicals—while siding with their Western Roman Catholic brethren on many things—on this issue agree with Eastern Orthodoxy.

14 Ibid., pp. 59–60. We will examine the Orthodox position of the work of the Holy Spirit in the next section on “Doctrines.”

15 John W. Montgomery, *Ecumenicity, Evangelicals and Rome* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), p. 29 n. 32.

following lamentable statement by the Grand Duke Lucas Notaras: “I would rather see the Moslem turban in the midst of the city than the Latin mitre.”<sup>16</sup>

## CATHOLIC CHURCHES—EASTERN RITE

The churches which occupy the same territories as the Orthodox churches but are in communion with Rome are called Eastern Rite Catholic churches. They retain their original languages, have liturgies and dispense communion in both species, baptize by immersion, and allow clergy (excepting bishops) to be married. The term “Uniat” or “Uniate” was used by the opponents of the Eastern Rite Catholic churches and is considered a pejorative one.

Eastern rite churches include Armenians, Chaldeans, Copts, Ethiopians, Marianites, and Syrians. As one might expect, tensions arose between the two groups and consequently the Roman Catholic Church founded the “Congregation of Eastern Rites” in 1862 in order to address problems. Eastern Rite Catholics now number over 12 million worldwide. The churches were represented at Vatican II and subsequent events will be considered in the conclusion of this appendix.<sup>17</sup>

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## DOCTRINES

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We now turn to an examination of the differences between the Eastern and Western churches. This involves differing principles or motifs.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Western theology has been informed by a rational framework in an attempt to understand Christian truth. The East, on the other hand, has been guided by a different principle: “This motif can be summed up in a single word: Mystery. The entire theology and church life of Eastern Christendom is an effort to give organic expression to the unfathomable, mysterious life of the Godhead.”<sup>18</sup> In fact, what the West calls “sacraments,” the East calls “mysteries.” This motif of mystery can be seen in the theological language used—that of metaphor and symbolism. The symbol “becomes the language of mystery; i.e., a vehicle to represent the hidden divine realities.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, p. 81.

<sup>17</sup> For material on the Eastern Rite Churches, see Broderick, *Catholic Concise Encyclopedia*, pp. 138–39; Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*, p. 1407; and González, *Story of Christianity*, 2:316.

<sup>18</sup> Montgomery, *Ecumenicity, Evangelicals and Rome*, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> Stanley M. Burgess, *The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian Traditions* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989), p. 5.

Eastern Orthodoxy also tends to be “pneumatological” (guided by the Holy Spirit) rather than “Christological” (guided by Christ), as is the case in the West. A good deal of the controversy surrounding the disagreement concerning the origin and procession of the Holy Spirit arises out of Orthodoxy’s concern to preserve the integrity and office of the Holy Spirit. As to the work of the persons within the Trinity: “No member of the Triune God functions without the involvement of the other Two.”<sup>20</sup> Hence, the persons within the Godhead are “blended, though not confounded; distinct, though not divided.”<sup>21</sup>

Montgomery, drawing on the insights of Belgian Jesuit theologian G. Dejaifve, presents a number of contrasting motifs that differentiate between the theology of the East and that of the West. They may be placed in the following form:

<i>Western Church</i>	<i>Eastern Church</i>
Earthly	Heavenly
Present Focus	Future Focus
Rational	Mystical
Essentialistic	Existential

These distinctions may be helpful for Western Christians who wish to understand the nature of Eastern Orthodoxy.

## OTHER DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIONS

We now turn to some differences concerning other doctrines.

*Deification.* In chapter 5 we attempted to show that, in spite of important differences, Roman Catholics and evangelicals share a common Augustinian framework concerning salvation. The Eastern church, on the other hand, develops the doctrine of salvation from a different perspective. The concept is called “deification,” and it is found in both Eastern and Western theologians prior to Augustine. An Anglican scholar states: “The idea of deification or divinization as taught in the patristic period has often been misunderstood by Protestants.”<sup>22</sup>

Deification has been defined as follows: “*Theosis* in the Greek. The goal of Eastern Christian life. The term does not imply that a human ever can have the divine essence, but rather that it is possible to become God-like.”<sup>23</sup> Deification has also been called “Christification.” Peter speaks of becoming partakers of the divine nature in 2 Peter 1:4 .

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20 Ibid., p. 2.

21 *The Athanasian Creed* 4; quoted in *ibid.*, p. 4.

22 Toon, *Justification and Sanctification*, p. 46.

23 Burgess, *Holy Spirit*, p. 228. The Scripture most often used in describing deification is 2 Pet. 1:4 : “so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature.”

Paul instructs every man to become “mature in Christ” ( Col. 2:10 ).<sup>24</sup> Therefore, deification or Christification began with “The assumption of human nature by the Logos of God from the womb of the Virgin.” And it “is the foundation and starting-point of His incarnation and of the deification of humanity.”<sup>25</sup>

In his two-volume work examining the history of the Christian doctrine of justification Alister McGrath comments on the differences in the views of salvation between East and West: “The West has tended to subordinate the work of the Holy Spirit to the concept of grace,” whereas in the East we find the “stress upon the immediacy of the divine, and the direct encounter of man with the Holy Spirit.”<sup>26</sup> Also, the concept of deification meshes well with Neoplatonic thought, which has been influential in the formation of Orthodox theology. Finally, the Western interest in developing “Roman law” themes in soteriological concerns is absent in the East.<sup>27</sup>

One criticism of the Eastern Orthodox understanding of salvation as “deification” is that it sounds perilously close to pantheism (God is all and all is God). However, “The idea of deification must always be understood in the light of the distinction between Creator and creative activity, between God’s essence and His energies. Union with God means union with the divine energies, not the divine essence: the Orthodox Church, while speaking of deification and union, rejects all forms of pantheism.”<sup>28</sup> Also, “When the teachers of the early Church spoke of deification or divinization, there was no intention of claiming consubstantiality with God, for, in the words of the Creed, only Christ is one in substance with the Father.”<sup>29</sup>

There is no question that Orthodoxy uses images and concepts that are different from those used in the West. However, the basis for the idea of deification springs from the central truths of Christology, the person and work of Christ. Therefore, concerning salvation, the Orthodox are “orthodox.”<sup>30</sup> Another Orthodox distinction is the use of “icons” in worship. Icons are “flat pictures . . . to represent the Lord, the BVM, or another saint, which are used and venerated in the Greek Church.”<sup>31</sup> The use of icons

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24 See Panajiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1987), p. 39.

25 Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), p. 31.

26 McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 1:3.

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

28 Ware, *Orthodox Church*, p. 237. Also, for a helpful discussion of God’s essence versus his energies, see Mantzaridis, *Deification of Man*, pp. 104–15. Also for an evangelical assessment, see Daniel B. Clendenin, “Partakers of Divinity: The Orthodox Doctrine of Theosis,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol. 37, no. 3 (September 1994): 365–79.

29 Toon, *Justification and Sanctification*.

30 See William G. Rusch, “How the Eastern Fathers Understood What the Western Church Meant by Justification,” in Anderson, *Justification by Faith*, pp. 131–42.

31 Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*, p. 686.

caused a serious problem within the Eastern Church itself. This was termed the “Iconoclastic Controversy” and was to resurface during the Protestant Reformation.<sup>32</sup>

*Differences with Roman Catholicism* . We will only briefly touch on some differences between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. We already stated that the East prefers to accept “mystery” more readily than does the West. Hence, the explanation of how Christ is present in the Eucharist is not as precisely reasoned as the Roman Catholic position, the East preferring to stay with mystery and incomprehensibility.<sup>33</sup> In Eastern Orthodoxy, the laity as well as the clergy receive communion “under both kinds,” the bread as well as the cup. Concerning purgatory, “Today most if not all Orthodox theologians reject the idea” because “Christ the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, is our only atonement and satisfaction.”<sup>34</sup> As to Mariology, Orthodoxy honors Mary as “most blessed among God’s creatures.” Most Eastern theologians reject the doctrine of the immaculate conception (in rare agreement with Thomas Aquinas!), but all accept the bodily assumption dogma.<sup>35</sup>

It is of some interest to note that, concerning what some say is the most important difference between Roman Catholics and evangelicals—infallibility (see chap. 11)—the Orthodox side with evangelicals against the infallibility of the church (and the pope). As to the status of the Apocrypha, “most Orthodox scholars at the present day, . . . following the opinion of Athanasius and Jerome, consider that the Deutero-Canonical Books, although included in the Bible, stand on a lower footing than the rest of the Old Testament.”<sup>36</sup>

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## CONCLUSION

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The status of the Eastern Orthodox Church came up at Vatican II, which had ecumenicity as one of its goals. Whenever Roman Catholic triumphalism would emerge some Uniate participant would rush to the defense of Orthodoxy. One stated “that all this talk about the Eastern Church ‘returning to the true fold’ was ridiculous. Many of them regarded their Churches as older than the Church of Rome, so that, if anyone had wandered away and needed to be recalled, it was the Romans rather than they.”<sup>37</sup> In fact, the Uniates “were men who lived side by side with members of the eastern Churches. . . . They knew .

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32 Ibid., pp. 687–88. A good account of the place and history of icons may be found in Daniel B. Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), pp. 71–93, 152–55.

33 Ware, *Orthodox Church*, pp. 290–95.

34 Ibid., p. 259.

35 Ibid., pp. 261–65.

36 Ibid., pp. 208–9.

37 John Moorman, *Vatican Observed* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1967), p. 57.

. . . what holy lives many of them led. The Roman Church had no right to be . . . patronizing to the Church of S. Basil, S. Cyril, and S. Chrysostom.”<sup>38</sup>

Eastern Orthodox participation in the National and World Council of Churches—never solid—is now more tenuous than ever. Controversial issues such as the ordination of women, the acceptability of a homosexual lifestyle, and abortion are causing Orthodox Christians to rethink their commitment to these organizations.

We only briefly touch on the significant move of some evangelicals to Eastern Orthodoxy. Seeking a more liturgical element in their worship experience, a number of people with backgrounds in Campus Crusade, Youth for Christ, and Young Life have joined Orthodox churches.<sup>39</sup>

Recently, an agreement of historic proportions came into being. “Representatives of two Orthodox branches that split in the fifth century over presumed differences about the nature of Christ have agreed on a joint statement of common faith.”<sup>40</sup> The statement brings together the Orientals, who did not participate at Chalcedon, with the Greeks who did. They agree that Christ has two natures; however, they comprise an inseparable, indivisible union.

Although Eastern Orthodox participation and dialogue with evangelicals is not well known, there are interesting examples. One is when Metropolitan Anthony of the Russian Orthodox Church in England consented to become the Chairman of the Trustees of the C. S. Lewis Centre in London. This leader—whose office is one of the highest in the Orthodox Church—assumed this position because “of his conviction that despite the divorce of East and West, and the internal divisions of Western Christianity, historic orthodoxy is still there as a sweet savor, a common smell of true faith.”<sup>41</sup> The Centre’s promotional material has the following quote from Metropolitan Anthony: “At the Centre we like to think that affirming the central tenets of historic Christianity—while remaining ourselves, with all our unresolved differences—offers a way forward for Christians of goodwill who are bored with or feel betrayed by institutional ecumenism.”<sup>42</sup> Anglican C. S. Lewis would be pleased by these words in defense of “mere Christianity.”

Evangelicals would do well to familiarize themselves with this most ancient of Christian jurisdictions. Eastern Orthodoxy has many desirable tenets—historicity,

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38 Ibid., p. 58.

39 See Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, as well as his articles “Evangelicals Turned Orthodox,” *The Christian Century*, 4 March 1992, and “Orthodoxy,” *Faith and Renewal*, July/August 1992.

40 “Orthodox Branches Take Step toward Communion,” *San Diego Union and Tribune*, 26 August 1989.

41 Andrew Walker, “In Defense of Ecumenical Orthodoxy,” *Touchstone: A Journal of Ecumenical Orthodoxy*, vol. 7, no. 1 (winter 1994): 13.

42 Ibid.

continuity, and doctrinal steadfastness being the most noticeable. We should indeed become acquainted with our brethren in the “Church of the Seven Councils.”

## APPENDIX B

# THE COUNTER-REFORMATION AND LATER DEVELOPMENTS

The Counter-Reformation (also known as the Catholic Reformation) is usually dated from the middle of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the Thirty Year War ( A.D. 1618). That the Roman Catholic Church was in a state of moral and spiritual disarray is acknowledged by Catholic authorities. The papacy had lost territories north of the Alps and popes had been forced to negotiate treaties with the secular authorities who in turn controlled the church. Simony (the selling of spiritual merits and church offices) was widely practiced. Indulgences (pledges of freedom from the punishment for sin granted to individuals) were sold like merchandise.<sup>1</sup> Most clergy were poorly educated and many lived with women in violation of their vows of celibacy.

As to the spiritual condition of the average Roman Catholic layperson, a contemporary Catholic historian writes: “Their Christian life often focused on external devotions to saints or Mary, going on pilgrimages, and gaining indulgences, without an understanding of the more basic truths of the Catholic faith.”<sup>2</sup> This state of moral declension, coupled with the theological differences that were to surface with the Protestant Reformers, sets the stage for the Counter-Reformation. We will begin with the formation of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits.

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### THE JESUITS

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The theologians who emerged from the Jesuit order proved to be highly influential in the Counter-Reformation. Due in part to centuries of conflict with Islam, Spain became known for its orthodox militancy and obedience to the papacy. The Inquisition found fertile ground there for its investigations of heresy. Spain, therefore, was called “the

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<sup>1</sup> Indulgences were of primary concern to Martin Luther. See Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), pp. 54–64.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Schreck, *The Compact History of the Catholic Church* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1987), pp. 61–62.

hammer of heretics” and the “sword of Rome.”<sup>3</sup> The Society of Jesus was to become a product of Iberian spirituality.

## IGNATIUS LOYOLA (A.D. 1491/95–1556)

Ignatius Loyola was born in the Spanish province of Guipúzcoa, of a well-to-do Basque family. As a young man he acquired a reputation as a ne'er-do-well, joined the army, and was seriously wounded in combat against the French.

During a long convalescence, Loyola became acquainted with some books on the life of Christ and the saints and was converted. He set out on a pilgrimage to Montserrat and while in retreat developed the outline which would become his *Spiritual Exercises*, a manual designed to lead one into a deeper spiritual life. This work became the text book of the Jesuits.

After making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in A.D. 1523, Loyola returned to Spain and attended several universities before enrolling at the University of Paris. There he determined to become a “soldier for Christ” and the Society of Jesus was born. Loyola recruited six of his brightest fellow students (one of which, Francis Xavier, became a famous missionary to India, Japan, and China) to establish what would become the Jesuit order. The Society of Jesus was officially established in 1540 by Pope Paul III.

## JESUIT DISTINCTIONS AND MISSION

In addition to the usual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, the Jesuits took a vow of direct obedience to the pope. Concerning their reputation, “The Jesuits became known for their discipline and sacrifice and the society reflected Loyola’s military spirit and organizational talent.”<sup>4</sup> Loyola was also very concerned with education. Colleges and universities were formed for laity as well as clergy, the most famous being the Roman College (founded in 1551, now called the Gregorian University).

Although mention of the Jesuits often conjures up images of ecclesiological intrigue, casuistry, and the like (especially among evangelicals), their original mission concerned preaching Christ to the unconverted in the world. They became great missionaries, winning many to Christ in Africa, Asia, and the New World. Many were martyred for their faith.

Jesuit theologians were active in the Council of Trent and have been called “the shock troops of the Counter-Reformation.”<sup>5</sup> We will meet them again at the Council of Trent

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3 Lewis W. Spitz, *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements*, vol. 2, rev. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1987), p. 477.

4 Robert D. Linder, “Ignatius Loyola,” in John D. Woodbridge, ed., *Great Leaders of the Christian Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), p. 228.

5 Spitz, *Renaissance and Reformation Movements*, p. 478.

and the Molinist and Jansenist controversies. Jesuits have also had considerable impact (some would say not always positive) on nineteenth- and twentieth-century theological development.<sup>6</sup>

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## THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

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The Council of Trent ( A.D. 1545–63) was the most important council since Nicea ( A.D. 325). There would not be another council for 300 years—Vatican I. Trent’s purpose was twofold: to address disciplinary reform (which admittedly was much needed), and to deal with doctrinal issues that had been raised by the Reformers.<sup>7</sup>

The Tridentine proceedings were as follows: Period I ( A.D. 1545–47) set the basic agenda; Period II ( A.D. 1551–52) was concerned with repudiating Reformed views on the Eucharist; and Period III ( A.D. 1562–63) saw the influence of the Jesuits increase and any hope of repairing the breach with the Reformers disappeared.<sup>8</sup> Humor was not totally absent from these august proceedings: “One skeptical father at the Council observed that the Holy Spirit would no doubt come to them from Rome in the courier’s bag.”<sup>9</sup>

The Council of Trent dealt with a number of concerns, both of a disciplinary and theological nature. We will restrict our examination here to the most crucial issue: the nature, purpose, extent, and results of justification by faith.

### PRE-TRIDENTINE DEVELOPMENTS

We have already examined in chapter 5 the nature of Augustine’s thought on soteriological issues. Concerning justification, “Augustine has an all-embracing understanding of justification, which includes both the *event* of justification (brought about by operative grace) and the *process* of justification (brought about by cooperative grace).”<sup>10</sup>

The conflict Augustine had with Pelagianism involved the question of the human will: to what extent is it free to choose good and eschew evil? He believed that “the

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6 Material on Ignatius Loyola and the Jesuit Order may be found in Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*; and Delaney and Tobin, *Dictionary of Catholic Biography*.

7 One of the major works used in this treatment is McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, vol. 2. In chap. 7, “The Tridentine Decree on Justification,” McGrath carefully details the existing theological schools that participated at Trent and the complex doctrinal formulations that were debated.

8 Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*, pp. 1392–93.

9 Spitz, *Renaissance and Reformation Movements*, p. 486.

10 McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, vol. 1, p. 31.

power of sin is such that it takes hold of our will, and as long as we are under its sway we cannot move our will to be rid of it.”<sup>11</sup> The II Council of Orange ( A.D. 529) affirmed the Augustinian view.

Another group of doctrines emerged in the fourth and fifth centuries that has been called “semi-Pelagianism.” It should be noted that the term itself is modern and was originally used to designate the teachings of the Jesuit Luis de Molina ( A.D. 1535–1600). The earlier version of semi-Pelagianism was a position midway between Augustine and Pelagius, maintaining that, while divine grace was needed for salvation, “the first steps toward the Christian life were ordinarily taken by the human will and that Grace supervened only later.”<sup>12</sup> These doctrines continued to be championed, especially in France, and finally were condemned by the II Council of Orange ( A.D. 529).<sup>13</sup> The findings of Orange were confirmed by Boniface II ( A.D. 530–532) in A.D. 531.<sup>14</sup>

That semi-Pelagian tendencies reappeared in pre-Reformation theology is admitted by both Roman Catholic and Protestant historians. Contemporary Roman Catholic scholar Hans Küng states: “Major significance for the history of dogma attaches to the fact that, because the Council [II Orange] was not contained in the majority of medieval collections or compilations, it was unknown to theologians between the 12th century and the second-third of the 16th century. In general, these theologians do not distinguish between Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism.”<sup>15</sup> Küng identifies Peter Abelard ( A.D. 1079–1142) as “neo-Pelagian.”<sup>16</sup>

Concerning the freedom of the will during this period, “This emphasis on human freedom was strong especially . . . among those influenced by Ockham’s nominalism and the *via moderna* at the end of the Middle Ages.”<sup>17</sup> A Roman Catholic historian writes of the late Middle Ages: “There was even a new approach to theology and philosophy called Nominalism, first championed by Englishman William of Ockham ( A.D. 1280–1349), that separated the realms of faith and reason instead of seeing them as complementary as Thomas Aquinas and the other great scholastics had done.”<sup>18</sup>

In spite of the popularity of the *via moderna*, the period witnessed the re birth of Augustinianism. Within this movement were a group of theologians who have been

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11 González, *Story of Christianity*, 1:214.

12 Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*, p. 1258.

13 Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, nos. 1736–2000, pp. 75–81.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 81–82.

15 Küng, *Justification*, p. 177.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 216.

17 H. George Anderson, ed., *Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), p. 19.

18 Schreck, *Compact History of the Catholic Church*, p. 58. Roman Catholics have pointed out that Martin Luther was trained in Nominalism (e.g., Bouyer, *Spirit and Forms of Protestantism* ). While this may be true, Luther nevertheless rejected the view that a person’s *unaided* will could move toward God.

characterized as “Reform Catholics.”<sup>19</sup> While these men cannot be understood as “Protestants,” they were not impervious to the Reformed insights on justification by faith. Their thought was represented at the Council of Trent, but unfortunately (from the evangelical perspective) it could not make any headway.

## EXISTING THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

The major doctrine that Trent was to investigate was the Protestant understanding of justification. As to the existing theological schools, “we are concerned with the identification of the main schools present at Trent, as this has an important bearing upon the relation of the final decree to late medieval Catholic theology in general.”<sup>20</sup> While Alister McGrath is reluctant to rigidly classify the positions represented at Trent, he does identify three schools: the Thomists who had experienced a revival in the fifteenth century; the Scotist school, both the early (Bonaventure) and later (Duns Scotus) varieties; and Augustinianism was present in several forms as was the *via moderna* of Gabriel Biel.<sup>21</sup>

## PROCEEDINGS AND DECREE ON JUSTIFICATION

The first doctrinal discussions concerned the topics of Scripture, tradition, and original sin. We will consider the outcome of debates surrounding the doctrine of justification only briefly here, since a fuller discussion is found in chapter 12 .

In 1547 the council participants agreed on a final formula for justification. The process had been long and arduous and all of the theological schools weighed in with opinions on a great variety of complicated scholastic theological distinctions. Although several council members recognized an extrinsic element in justification (thereby approaching the Reformers on this point), the consensus view rejected “the opinion that a sinner may be justified solely as a matter of reputation or imputation.”<sup>22</sup> Therefore, “Justification is thus defined in terms of a man becoming, and not merely being reputed as, righteous.”<sup>23</sup> Trent understood justification in two senses (the second corresponding to the Reformed doctrine of sanctification), this second justification requiring a person’s cooperation. Hence, “It is thus both possible and necessary to keep the law of God.”<sup>24</sup>

The council, taking into account original sin, stated that sin has affected the human race. Therefore, “man is incapable of redeeming himself. Freewill is not destroyed, but is weakened and debilitated by the Fall.”<sup>25</sup> However, “The sinner indeed cooperates with

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19 Two of which were Gasparo Contrarini (1483–1542) and Johann Gropper (1503–59).

20 McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* , vol. 2, p. 63.

21 For a chart on various groups involved at Trent, see Table 7.1 in *ibid.*, pp. 65ff.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*, p. 84.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 81.

this grace, at least in the sense of not sinfully rejecting it.”<sup>26</sup> Trent understood justification in two ways: “first” and “second” phases. Baptism is operative in “first” justification, where grace to overcome original sin is “mediated” to us.<sup>27</sup> The Eucharist and penance pertain to “second” justification, such justification being said to “increase” by participation in these sacraments.

Because the Reformers laid such stress on the concept of assurance of salvation Trent was forced to deal with the subject. Subsequently, they issued “An explicit condemnation of the Lutheran doctrine of assurance as an assertion contrary to proper Christian humility.”<sup>28</sup> However, “In many ways Roman dogmatics has pointed out that Rome’s rejection of personal assurance of salvation does not mean the proclamation of a religion of uninterrupted anxiety.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, for the Roman Catholic “There is an intermediate position between the assurance of faith and doubt. This position is that of moral certainty which excludes any anxiety and despair.”<sup>30</sup> Since grace is cooperative—at least concerning the second phase of justification—one can forfeit one’s salvation. Thus, Christians can be said to have “relative,” not absolute, certainty of salvation. A contemporary Dominican scholar, Stephanus Pfürtner, states that “it must be observed that the faith of the Church is not by any means exhaustively stated in its dogmas.” Further, “we are in no way forbidden to ask what the Council properly means by ‘certainty of grace,’ in other words, what it condemned when it rejected this notion.”<sup>31</sup>

Trent seems to state that our justification must be seen as a “gift” rather than a “reward.” Thus, it comes as a surprise to many Protestants that Roman Catholics believe that “If anyone shall say that man can be justified before God by his own works which are done . . . without divine grace through Christ Jesus: let him be anathema.”<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, Trent says, “If anyone shall say that man’s free will moved and aroused by God does not cooperate by assenting to God who looses and calls, . . . let him be anathema.”<sup>33</sup> As to Luther’s understanding of the total corruption of human nature and

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26 Anderson, *Justification by Faith*, p. 34.

27 A detailed treatment of the sacrament of baptism is beyond the scope of this appendix. There are differences concerning it not only between Roman Catholics and evangelicals, but also in the Protestant community. It should be noted that Luther had difficulties formulating his understanding of baptism in light of his concept of forensic justification. On Luther and baptism, see Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther*, pp. 353–74.

28 McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, vol. 2, p. 78.

29 G. C. Berkouwer, *The Conflict with Rome* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1958), p. 114.

30 Bartmann, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik, II*, p. 109; quoted in *ibid.*, p. 115.

31 Stephanus Pfürtner, O.P., *Luther and Aquinas—a Conversation: Our Salvation, Its Certainty and Peril*, trans. by Edward Quinn (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964), p. 31. Fr. Pfürtner suggests that the Fathers of the Council of Trent may have misunderstood what Luther actually taught concerning the “certainty of grace.”

32 Trent, *Denz.*, 811, p. 258.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 814. For a good treatment of the Council of Trent from a Roman Catholic perspective, see H. Jedin, *History of the Council of Trent*, trans. by F. C. Eckhoff (St.

Trent's reaction to it, Roman Catholic scholar Michael Schmaus comments, "It is questionable whether Luther actually advocated the doctrine to which the council's condemnation alludes."<sup>34</sup> Contemporary evangelical scholar Harold O. J. Brown notes that "Trent went so far in rejecting everything that Luther taught that it impoverished Catholicism, and made it unnecessarily rigid, even from the point of view of its own tradition. Valuable elements of the common Christian heritage were eliminated for no better reason than because Luther praised them."<sup>35</sup> Thomas Nettles summarizes it this way: "The evangelical error comes in spite of a confessional history to the contrary; the Roman error purposefully canonized a historical aberration at the sixteenth century Council of Trent and has maintained it since."<sup>36</sup>

## EVANGELICAL EVALUATION

The results flowing from the Council of Trent are complex and require close study and evaluation. Our limited examination leads to the following observations. First, Trent addressed and corrected many moral and disciplinary problems that had plagued the medieval church. Bishops were ordered to live in their sees, the holding of several ecclesiastical offices at one time was condemned, and the use of relics and indulgences was regulated. Second, the charge of semi-Pelagianism is often made against Roman Catholicism by Protestants; this is incorrect. The condemnation of semi-Pelagianism first made at the II Council of Orange was reaffirmed at the Council of Trent.<sup>37</sup> Third, the Council of Trent encouraged the study of Aquinas, who was strongly Augustinian and thus anti-Pelagian. His theological system was declared the official and dominant theology of Roman Catholicism. Lastly, there are real differences in areas such as justification, infallibility, the extent of the canon, the nature of the church, and sacramentalism. (These issues are addressed in Part Two.)

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## POST-TRIDENTINE DEVELOPMENTS

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Earlier we developed the thesis that the Western Church owes its soteriology to Augustine (see chap. 5). Both Roman Catholics and evangelicals acknowledge their debt to the Bishop of Hippo.

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Louis and London, 1947). The standard Protestant work is Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1971).

34 Michael Schmaus, *Dogma 6: Justification and the Last Things* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1977), p. 24.

35 Brown, *Protest of a Troubled Protestant*, p. 123.

36 Nettles, "One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church," in Armstrong, *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants*, p. 27.

37 See "Canons on Justification," in Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, pp. 258–61.

However, the Pelagian system which Augustine bested reoccurred throughout church history. The debate usually revolves around the relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility; how God's grace is mediated to sinful human beings. We will look briefly at Molinism, the subsequent Augustinian reaction, and Blaise Pascal and Jansenism.

## LUIS DE MOLINA (A.D. 1535–1600)

Molina was born in Cuenca, New Castile, Spain. He joined the Society of Jesus and became a theologian. The theology that bears his name claims to protect the integrity of human free will better than any other system. Among other things, Molinism affirmed that predestination follows God's foreknowledge. Thus, "the efficacy of grace has its ultimate foundation, not within the substance of the Divine gift of grace itself (*ab intrinseco*), but in the Divinely foreknown fact of free human cooperation with this gift."

<sup>38</sup> This was perceived as a species of Pelagianism and was vigorously opposed by followers of Augustinianism. <sup>39</sup> If God's predestination depended on his knowledge of human free choice, then God's knowledge is dependent on contingent happenings and he is not truly an Independent Being. As the noted Thomist authority Garrigou-Lagrange put it, citing the Council of Orange: "If anyone maintains that God waits upon our will to cleanse us from sin, and does not rather acknowledge that even our willingness to be cleansed is brought about in us through the infusion and operation of the Holy Ghost, he resists the Holy Spirit Himself, who declares. . . : 'It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will' ( Phil. 2:13 )." <sup>40</sup>

## DOMINGO BÁÑEZ (A.D. 1528–1604)

Like Molina, Báñez was born in Spain. He joined the Dominican order and became known as one of the best Catholic theologians of his day. It is important to note that Báñez was interested in practical spiritual matters as well as theological issues, as he served as director and confessor of Teresa of Avila (see chap. 19 ). <sup>41</sup>

Báñez became the primary adversary of Molinism, which he claimed made "the power of divine grace subordinate to the human will." <sup>42</sup> Instead, Báñez claimed that "God knows the future, including conditional future free acts, in virtue of his divine decrees, which predetermine all events." <sup>43</sup> McGrath notes that "the term 'semi-Pelagian'

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<sup>38</sup> Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*, p. 928.

<sup>39</sup> Material on Molina can be found in Delaney and Edward, *Dictionary of Catholic Biography*, pp. 814–15.

<sup>40</sup> Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas, 1a 2ae, g. 109–14* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1952), p. 208.

<sup>41</sup> Material on Báñez can be found in Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*, p. 125.

<sup>42</sup> Colin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought*, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990), p. 162.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

was introduced during the course of this dispute by the followers of Báñez to describe the teachings of their Molinist opponents.”<sup>44</sup>

This dispute between the Dominicans and the Jesuits became so severe that Pope Clement VIII intervened and decided to permit both viewpoints. The Dominicans were forbidden to call the Jesuits “Pelagians” and the Jesuits were not to refer to Dominicans as “closet Calvinists”! Both views exist in the Roman Catholic Church to this day.

## BLAISE PASCAL AND JANSENISM (A.D. 1623–1662)

Blaise Pascal was born at Clermont-Ferrand, France, and is regarded as one of the greatest scientific geniuses that ever lived. As a teen he developed skills in geometry, physics, and mathematical theory that are still valid today. What is not so well known is his deep faith in Jesus Christ and his consciousness of sinful human nature. His theological insights naturally inclined him toward Jansenism, a group within French Roman Catholicism that professed to follow Augustine. This made them natural foes of the Jesuits, “who appeared to them to make Christianity too easy and accessible.”<sup>45</sup>

The center of Jansenism was at the Convent of Port Royal in Paris. Pascal’s sister Jacqueline was to later become a nun there and he maintained contact with the men and women of Port Royal all his life. A leading Jansenist, Antoine Arnauld, had been condemned by the Jesuit establishment and Pascal came to his defense by writing the *Provincial Letters*. These were published anonymously to avoid imprisonment and were a devastating critique of Jesuit casuistry, which they believed employed “situationalism” to arrive at moral decisions.<sup>46</sup>

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## CONCLUSION

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We have examined some important events that occurred in Christendom from the Council of Trent through the post-Tridentine period. We have paid special attention to soteriological concerns, namely, justification by faith. Some observations follow.

1. Just as in church history prior to the Reformation, Augustinianism was never completely absent from the theological scene.
2. Although forms of Pelagianism (or semi-Pelagianism) can be detected in this time frame, these doctrines were condemned by official Roman Catholic pronouncements. This condemnation was first issued by the II Council of Orange,

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44 McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, vol. 2, p. 95.

45 Toon, “Blaise Pascal,” in Woodbridge, *Great Leaders of the Christian Church*, p. 258.

46 A good treatment of Blaise Pascal can be found in Emile Cailliet, *Pascal: The Emergence of Genius* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961).

which “approved by Boniface II, obtained such authority in the Church that it is worthily held as an infallible norm of faith.”<sup>47</sup>

3. The problem of how to reconcile the sovereignty of God and human freedom is an issue with which both Roman Catholics and evangelicals wrestle. May we humbly suggest considering the following quotation from the *Westminster Confession of Faith*:

God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass, *yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.*<sup>48</sup>

4. The doctrinal investigations of the Council of Trent seem to have been predicated on a number of misconceptions—chief of which is an erroneous belief that the Reformers were indifferent at best and antinomian at worse concerning faith and good works.

We have already quoted Luther on the subject of the need for a “good tree” to be present in order to produce “good fruit.” In addition he said, “Our faith in Christ does not free us from works, but from false opinions concerning works. . . . For faith redeems, corrects, and preserves our consciences, so that we know that righteousness does not consist in works, although works neither can nor ought to be wanting.”<sup>49</sup> John Calvin and the major Reformers agreed with Luther that while works are not the *grounds for* salvation they are the *result of* the believers justification. Peter Kreeft has this interesting observation about the Reformation: “How do I resolve the Reformation? Is it faith alone that justifies, or is it faith and works? Very simple. No tricks. On this issue I believe Luther was simply right; and this issue is absolutely crucial. As a Catholic I feel guilt for the tragedy of Christian disunity because the church in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was failing to preach the gospel.”<sup>50</sup>

5. Roman Catholic and Lutheran scholars in the United States have engaged in dialogue for twenty-seven years. The issues discussed involve the doctrinal differences that led to the Reformation. These theologians have petitioned the Vatican to lift the anathema issued at the Council of Trent against justification by faith alone. The statement, among other things, says: “The goal is to declare by 1997 that the condemnations on justification ‘are no longer applicable,’ according

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47 “Council of Orange II ( A.D. 529),” Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 75 n. 1.

48 “Of God’s Eternal Decrees,” in *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part I, Book of Confessions* (New York: Office of the General Assembly, 1983), emphasis added.

49 *Works of Martin Luther*, vol. 2, p. 344; quoted in Faculty of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, *Our Protestant Heritage* (Richmond: John Knox, 1948), p. 176.

50 Kreeft, *Fundamentals of the Faith*, p. 290.

to a joint statement issued here February 18–21.”<sup>51</sup> The year 1997 will mark the 450th anniversary of the anathema issued by the Council of Trent. Such a declaration seems unlikely since infallible declarations are irrevocable. Nonetheless, real differences remain with Protestants affirming (and Catholics denying) that salvation is “by grace alone through faith alone” (see chap. 12 ).

6. Lastly, we have attempted to accurately describe the events and theological formulations that occurred during this interest period. Evangelicals and orthodox Roman Catholics should investigate the issues frankly and fairly, and not forget to emulate the godly Bereans, who “received the word with all willingness and examined the scriptures daily to determine whether these things were so ( Acts 17:11 ).”

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<sup>51</sup> “Revocation of Condemnation Sought,” *San Diego Union and Tribune*, 27 February 1993.

## APPENDIX C

# MODERN/LIBERAL CATHOLICISM

Protestantism was not the only branch of Christendom weakened by the Enlightenment. At the beginning of the twentieth century, ideas that had infiltrated many Protestant churches began to surface in Roman Catholicism. Catholic modernism was informed by two principal ideas: first, it desired to bring Roman Catholic belief into conformity with modern notions of philosophy and science; and second, it was subjectivistic—intuition was preferred to intellect. One Catholic source analyzes the situation this way: Because the criticism of Christian faith that came from some quarters was embarrassing, some “opted for a faith without Knowledge. . . . They began with the premise that the human mind is entirely restricted to phenomena, the external, sensible properties of things.”<sup>1</sup>

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### MODERNISM

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Among the Modernist tendencies were:

1. A destructive critical approach to Bible study was employed. This often exceeded the skepticism found in their Protestant counterparts.<sup>2</sup> The Roman Catholic Church’s position on the inerrancy of the Scripture had been clear cut: “The Council of Trent, though reacting strongly against the Reformation’s formal principle of *Sola Scriptura*, stated in no uncertain terms the full inspiration of the Bible.”<sup>3</sup> Modernism began to undermine this by limiting the infallibility of Scripture to only truths about salvation.
2. Scholastic theology was rejected. The systems of Augustine, Anselm, and especially Aquinas were declared invalid. “Deed” was stressed over “creed.” The

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1 Hardon, *Catholic Catechism*, p. 34.

2 For a treatment of how this has impacted Catholic Scripture teaching, see Fr. William G. Most, *Free from All Error* (Libertyville, Ill.: Franciscan Marytown Press, 1985).

3 Montgomery, *Ecumenicity, Evangelicals and Rome*, p. 74. Also see chap. 1, “Revelation.”

Modernists “sought the essence of Christianity in life rather than in an intellectual system or creed.”<sup>4</sup>

3. In Modernism, history is understood as teleological; what it is *doing* is more important than where it *comes from*. In doctrine, this approach proved very destructive. The divinity of Jesus Christ was challenged and among other things they believed Jesus was in error concerning the time of his second coming (Gk: *parousia*).<sup>5</sup>

One authority calls Modernism “the synthesis of all heresies.”<sup>6</sup> Among the leaders in the movement were Alfred Loisy (1857–1940), a Frenchman who was excommunicated in 1908; Friedrich Von Hügel (1852–1952); and George Tyrell (1861–1909)—the last two from England. Although Pius X (pope, 1903–14) condemned Modernism in 1907, its baleful effects are still with us. We will encounter it again in Appendix D.

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## THE OXFORD MOVEMENT AND JOHN NEWMAN

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Space limitations force us to leave the effects of the Reformation in England untouched. As with the Reformation in Europe, political action and state policy— along with theological considerations—were active in the English ecclesiological rupture. Lutheran ideas, dating from at least A.D. 1520, were finding their way into the common culture and the universities. Also, humanism was in full swing; its most famous proponent was Erasmus, who lectured at Cambridge from A.D. 1509 to 1514.

The English revolt really emerged with the reign of Henry VIII ( A.D. 1491– 1547), which began in 1509. Henry has been described as “a man of remarkable intellectual abilities and executive force, well read and always interested in scholastic theology, sympathetic with humanism, popular with the mass of people, but egotistic, obstinate, and self-seeking.”<sup>7</sup> When Henry’s wife Queen Katharine was unable to provide him with a male heir and the papacy would not provide him with a divorce, the official breach with Rome occurred.

The Church of England is an interesting mix of theological stances; one can find the very liberal as well as the thoroughly orthodox within its ranks. Anglicanism has been called “half Catholic and half Protestant” in its doctrinal understandings. Many great Christian leaders have been nurtured in its bosom; the brothers Wesley, the social reformers Shaftsbury and Wilberforce, and the apologist C. S. Lewis to name but a few.

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<sup>4</sup> Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*, p. 926.

<sup>5</sup> See Hardon, *Catholic Catechism*, pp. 144–45.

<sup>6</sup> Broderick, *Catholic Concise Encyclopedia*, p. 243. For positions on various doctrines, see Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, Index, “Modernism.”

<sup>7</sup> Walker, *History of the Christian Church*, p. 358.

## THE OXFORD MOVEMENT (1833–1845)

The “high church” tradition (also known as the Anglo-Catholic party) in the Church of England produced the Oxford, or Tractarian Movement. Also, the spread of “liberalism” in theology and increasing Roman Catholic influence were major factors in the birth of the Oxford Movement. This group of devout and intensely self-conscious believers had for their goal the restoration of primitive and medieval Christianity. Their main objective was to defend the Anglican communion as a legitimate branch of the Christian church and they argued for the validity of “Apostolic Succession” within the Church of England. The acknowledged leaders within the movement were John Keble (1792–1866), E. B. Pusey (1800–1882), and John Henry Newman (1801–90), to whom we now turn our attention.<sup>8</sup>

### JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

The most important figure to emerge from the Oxford Movement was John Henry Newman. Born in London of well-to-do parents, he graduated from Oxford and was ordained to the Anglican priesthood in 1825. He was appointed vicar of St. Mary’s, the university church where he ministered for fifteen years. In addition to his work in the Oxford Movement, Newman wrote a number of books: *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833) and *Tracts for the Times* (1833–41), the latter being statements of his religious positions. A number of them “defended his thesis of the ‘Via media,’ i.e. the belief that the Church of England held an intermediate position, represented by the patristic tradition, as against modern Romanism on the one hand and modern Protestantism on the other.”<sup>9</sup>

Of special interest to us in this book is the fact that Newman finally became disillusioned with the claims of the Anglican Church and in 1845 he was received into the Roman Catholic Church. Soon after his conversion he wrote his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, and in 1852 the *Idea of a University*. Although Leo XIII made Newman a cardinal in 1879, he was viewed with suspicion in conservative Catholic circles and his genius was not recognized until after his death. He was also to play an important role in Vatican I, which will be discussed shortly.<sup>10</sup>

*Newman and Justification.* Newman’s *Lectures on Justification*, published before his conversion to Roman Catholicism, is well regarded by modern Roman Catholic scholars. Küng writes, “Though too little known, this book is one of the best treatments of the

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8 For background on the Oxford Movement and its leaders, see Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*, pp. 1019–20; Walker, *History of the Christian Church*, pp. 497, 499; and John A. Griffin, *John Keble: Saint of Anglicanism* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1987).

9 Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*, p. 965.

10 For background on Newman, see “John Henry Newman,” in Delaney and Tobin, *Dictionary of Catholic Biography*, pp. 847–48.

Catholic theology of justification.”<sup>11</sup> In *Justification*, Newman addressed the primary sense of the term by setting forth three principles: (1) justification is a *declaration* of righteousness; (2) it is to be *distinguished from* renewal; and (3) it is the *ground* or efficient cause of renewal.

The essence of Newman’s understanding of justification “is his insistence upon the real presence of the Trinity within the soul of the justified believer, . . . which undoubtedly reflects his interest in and positive evaluation of the Greek fathers, such as Athanasius.”<sup>12</sup> In *Justification* “Newman defined what he took to be a *via media* understanding of justification, which allowed an authentically *Anglican* concept of justification to be defended in the face of the distortions of both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.”<sup>13</sup> However, according to McGrath, “Newman’s historico-theological analysis appears to be seriously and irredeemably inaccurate.”<sup>14</sup> In particular “Newman’s critique of Luther in the *Lectures* appears to rest upon the quite fallacious assumption that the Reformer regards faith as a human work.”<sup>15</sup>

Luther understood human beings to be passive in justification, which is God’s work completely. Concerning Luther’s position McGrath writes: “Luther does not understand ‘justification by faith’ to mean that man puts his trust in God, and is justified on that account . . . rather, it means that God bestows upon that man faith and grace, without his cooperation, effecting within him the real and redeeming presence of Christ as the ‘righteousness of God’ within him, and justifying him on *this* account.”<sup>16</sup>

McGrath feels that Newman misunderstood the actual Lutheran and Reformed position on justification. Concerning the Reformer from Geneva, he comments: “Had Newman studied Calvin seriously, he could hardly have failed to notice the remarkable similarities between them on the nature of justification.”<sup>17</sup> Both believed that justification and renewal are part and parcel of God’s great gift to us.

*Newman’s “Doctrine of Development.”* Almost immediately after his conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1845, Newman released his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*.<sup>18</sup> This theological treatise was to have implications for Roman Catholic doctrinal development.

Newman began his thesis with two convictions: first, the fourth- and fifth-century Fathers were the rightful successors of the apostolic church, and second, any revelation

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11 Küng, *Justification*, p. 212.

12 McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 2:123.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 125–26.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 126.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

18 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 6th ed., 1989).

from God must of necessity be in some way associated with God's church.<sup>19</sup> Also, he was aware of the possibility of corruption (heresy) concerning the development of doctrine. Thus, he stated a number of characteristics of true development: the preservation of the idea or type, the continuity of principles, the power of assimilation, early anticipation, logical sequence, preservative additions, and chronic continuance.<sup>20</sup>

Evangelicals may critique Newman's development model at several points: first, his identification of the Roman jurisdiction as being *the* authentic, "true" church, and second, his use of his theory to develop dogmas (i.e., concerning the virgin Mary, the sacraments, etc.), which are rejected by non-Roman Catholic Christians. Some evangelicals, however, have overstated the case against Newman's theory of development. A penetrating critique of Newman's theory is found in the classic refutation of infallibility by George Salmon, *The Infallibility of the Church*.<sup>21</sup>

Newman is accused of providing the historical/theological framework that would become the "warp and woof" of Roman Catholic Modernism in the early years of the present century. Further, it is claimed that Newman's theory makes any appeal to earlier sources or authorities (such as Augustine, Aquinas, Trent, and Vatican I) dated and irrelevant. This may be the view of liberal Roman Catholic theologians but it is firmly rejected by traditionalists.

Concerning Newman's orthodoxy Pope Pius X, who was very critical of Modernism, stated: "Be assured that we strongly approve of your pamphlet proving that the works of Cardinal Newman, far from being at variance with our Encyclical are actually in close agreement with it."<sup>22</sup> In 1993, John Paul II issued an encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor* ("The Splendor of Truth"). Among its purposes is to affirm "the universality and immutability of the moral commandments," to which most evangelicals would bid the pope "Godspeed." This encyclical contains 184 footnotes. Of those, thirty-six (or one in five citations) contain references to patristic writers (sixteen from Augustine), and

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19 Newman felt that he had to choose between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant denominations. He seems not to have considered Eastern Orthodoxy an option (see Appendix A).

20 Peter Toon, *The Development of Doctrine in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 8–15. Also see "John Henry Newman," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 10 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 418. Evangelicals will notice the similarity between Newman's theory and that of "progressive revelation" mentioned in chap. 1.

21 (E. P. Dutton & Company, 1914 [1st ed. 1888]).

22 From a private letter to Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick, Ireland; quoted in Christopher Hollis, "The Achievements of Vatican II," *The Twentieth-Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, ed. by Henri Daniel-Rops (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1967), p. 13. For an examination of the similarity between Newman's theory of development and the Protestant understanding of "progressive Revelation," see Henri Rondet, S.J., "Do Dogmas Change?" *ibid.*, pp. 7–9.

nineteen footnotes reference Aquinas, principally from the *Summa Theologiae*.<sup>23</sup> Evangelical criticism of Roman Catholicism in other areas notwithstanding, traditional Catholicism cannot be accused of jettisoning the pronouncements of its forerunners. Concerning the essay on development, David Wells states: “To be sure, John Henry Newman would have been appalled to see the use to which his formulation had been put by the Modernists.”<sup>24</sup>

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## VATICAN I (1869–70)

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Pope Pius IX convoked the First Vatican Council to address a number of issues, including faith and dogma, church discipline, foreign missions, and church-state relations. Two schools of thought concerning church and papal authority were present. The majority party defended the authority of the pope and for this reason were called “ultramontane,” for “they looked for authority ‘beyond the mountains’—that is, beyond the Alps.”<sup>25</sup> The minority party (represented, among others, by John Henry Newman) wished to see infallibility linked to the bishops as well as the pope. This is known as “conciliarism.” The two views clashed on various issues throughout the council proceedings.

The council opened on December 8, 1869, with nearly 700 bishops in attendance. Various stances such as rationalism, materialism, and pantheism were examined and condemned. Of the remaining topics, it was decided to first deal with the question of papal infallibility (see chap. 11 ), to which we now turn.

### PAPAL INFALLIBILITY

The council debated infallibility in heated discussion. The minority party objected to papal authority being defined apart from the rest of the magisterium (the councils and bishops). The vote on infallibility was taken two months after the debate began and the measure passed.

The definition of the dogma contained a number of elements, one of the most crucial being that infallibility is operative only when the pope speaks *ex cathedra* (“from the chair”), which is to say “when in discharge of the office of Pastor and Doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals.”<sup>26</sup> Evangelicals, of course, reject the Catholic claim to infallibility.

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23 John Paul II, “Veritatis Splendor,” *Origins: Catholic News Service*, vol. 23, no. 18, 14 October 1993.

24 David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 120.

25 González, *Story of Christianity*, 2:165.

26 Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*, p. 1428.

What is more, others (including the Eastern Orthodox) contend that this formulation is objectionable because there is no sure way to determine which papal statements are “from the chair” and which are not (see chap. 11 ).<sup>27</sup>

John Henry Newman’s opposition to the dogma of papal infallibility is noted by the anti-Roman Catholic Reformed scholar Loraine Boettner.<sup>28</sup> Concerning Newman’s position, contemporary Roman Catholic apologist Karl Keating states: “He opposed not the content of the definition given at Vatican I, but the wisdom of promulgating the definition at that time; he thought the promulgation was inopportune, not inaccurate.”<sup>29</sup> Even granted that Boettner could be injudicious in method and strident in temperament when addressing Roman Catholicism, Keating’s contention is difficult to accept. The historical evidence seems to indicate that Newman opposed restricting the authority of the church to the papal office. Nevertheless, the infallibility of the pope was promulgated on July 18 and war broke out the following day between France and Prussia, bringing the council to an end.<sup>30</sup> As a faithful Catholic, Newman was obliged to accept the dogma he fought against.

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## CONCLUSION

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We have examined events and people who have, for good or ill, prepared the Catholic church for the twentieth century. When the first church council in almost 300 years convened, solidifying the authority of the pope, the breach between Protestants and Roman Catholics widened. But perhaps the most ominous development to occur in this time frame is the foothold that Modernism established in the Roman Catholic Church. The antecedents of this movement can be identified at least as far back as Erasmus and his dispute with Luther over the freedom of the will. They probably date back further to the Augustinian and Pelagian controversy. Humanism of this ilk, with its tolerant, syncretistic framework, has been and always will be the enemy of authentic Christianity, of whatever variety. We will encounter its negative influences in Appendix D, which concerns the contemporary situation.

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27 Several cases in church history illustrate this problem. One of the best known is the trial of Galileo (1564–1642) in 1616 when the Copernican theory was condemned at Rome and Galileo was ordered not to teach it. Galileo’s condemnation recently has been lifted, which raises the interesting question concerning the original “infallible” pronouncement (see chap. 11 ). Background on the incident can be found in Charles E. Hummel, *Galileo Connection* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), pp. 81–125.

28 See Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), p. 243.

29 Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, p. 226.

30 The official texts of the dogma of the infallibility of the pope can be found in Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, nos. 1832–40, pp. 455–57.

Concerning heretical teachers—either Roman Catholic or Protestant— Harold O. J. Brown offers wise counsel, “It is repugnant to every concept of human liberty and dignity to say that a man should be punished or persecuted for his ideas and opinions—but it is also repugnant to reason to say that a church cannot dismiss a teacher who is undermining its own intellectual foundations. It has no right to persecute him, but it certainly has no obligation to furnish him with a salary and a pulpit.”<sup>31</sup>

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31 Brown, *Protest of a Troubled Protestant*, p. 127.

# APPENDIX D

## VATICAN II AND THE CURRENT SITUATION

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### INTRODUCTION

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Before we address the Second Vatican Council some introductory remarks are in order. The period between Vatican I and Vatican II saw some developments that had a profound impact on Christianity.

British Roman Catholic historian Paul Johnson has chronicled a definite philosophical shift in Western culture beginning in the twentieth century. Johnson notes, “At the end of the Second World War, there was a significant change in the predominant aim of secular intellectuals, a shift of emphasis from utopianism to hedonism.”<sup>1</sup> Johnson identifies three English writers, all born in 1903, who illustrate this philosophical re-direction: George Orwell, Evelyn Waugh, and Cyril Connolly. Hedonism and its close relative, existentialism, had a sizable effect on Christianity in the twentieth century.

### MODERNISM RESURFACED

We dealt with the origins of Modernism in Appendix C. As a movement, it was condemned by Pope Pius X in 1907.<sup>2</sup> Modernism wreaks havoc first in the study of Scripture. Since the Bible is the source of and plumb line for Christian belief, any diminishing of its authority and authenticity is fatal. This destructive approach which had found fertile ground in mainline Protestantism surfaced in Roman Catholic Bible studies and theological systems.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Johnson, *Intellectuals* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> By the decree “Lamentabili” and the encyclical “Pascendi.” See Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, nos. 2001–2178, pp. 508–59.

Roman Catholics were warned not to be swayed by “the old war-cry of Protestantism, ‘the Bible and the Bible only.’ ”<sup>3</sup> Such notions led Roman Catholics to embrace an “unCatholic super-exaltation of the Bible.”<sup>4</sup> “Bibliolatry” is to be avoided at all costs.

The same liberalizing tendencies were encouraged in theology and societal concerns. Stephen Duffy paints the scene: “What is being played out in contemporary Catholic life is the effort to come to terms with modernity.”<sup>5</sup> Contemporary traditional Roman Catholics have lamented this slide into unbelief. An editor of a Catholic publishing house wrote, “I don’t pray any more. I’ve given it up for Lent. Also for Advent and Pentecost.” He said “My prayer life is a room with no furniture in it,” and concerning saying grace, “How can I maintain, without lying, that God has a hand in the meal?”<sup>6</sup> Jesuit scholar John O’Malley explained the meaning of this “new,” “progressive” Catholicism is that “we are freed from the past. We are free to appropriate what we find helpful and to reject what we find harmful.”<sup>7</sup>

Evangelical scholar John Montgomery perceptively calls this approach “new shape” Catholicism. It infuriates orthodox Roman Catholics, but some Protestants find it appealing. “One must not be afraid to look deeper—to the motif that underlies the New Shape. This is the substitution of a ‘dynamic,’ ‘personalistic’ category of doctrinal interpretation for the formalistic, propositional, Aristotelian—Thomistic categories of ‘efficient causality.’ ”<sup>8</sup> This “new shape” avant garde tendency in Roman Catholic theology looks suspiciously like Bultmannian demythologization, which wreaked such havoc in twentieth-century Protestantism.<sup>9</sup>

## LIBERATION THEOLOGY

One movement to emerge from the new theological climate in Catholicism is liberation theology. Also known as “Marxist Christianity,” its basis is Christian social action aimed at bettering the lot of the poor and oppressed. Liberation theology is best known for its effect in the “third world,” Latin America in particular, where it also has the support of some mainline Protestant groups.

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3 Gerald P. Fogarty, S.J., *American Catholic Biblical Scholarship: A History from the Early Republic to Vatican II* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 150.

4 Ibid. Fogarty’s work is an interesting history of biblical and theological development in American Roman Catholic “progressive” circles.

5 Stephen Duffy, “Catholicism’s Search for a New Self-Understanding” in Gerald M. Fagin, S.J., ed., *Vatican II: Open Questions and New Horizons* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1984), p. 9.

6 Don Brothy, “Why I Don’t Pray Anymore,” *National Catholic Reporter*, 1 March 1974, p. 9; quoted in Hitchcock, *Catholicism and Modernity*, p. 12.

7 John W. O’Malley, S.J., “Report, Historical Consciousness, and Vatican II’s Aggiornamento,” *Theological Studies*, 32, 1971, pp. 575, 590, 597, 600; quoted in *ibid.*, p. 20. Also see Martin, *Crisis of Truth*.

8 Montgomery, *Ecumenicity, Evangelicals and Rome*, p. 34.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Liberation theologians synthesize between Marxism and Christianity, making two assertions: one economic, the other theological.<sup>10</sup> The economic thesis states that “Democratic capitalism . . . is responsible for the poverty of the third world.”<sup>11</sup> Concerning the situation in South America, “Traditional Catholic ignorance about modern economics may, in fact, have more to do with the poverty of Latin America than any other single factor.”<sup>12</sup> The theological thesis of liberation theologians assumes a new and different source of revelation than that which has informed historic Christianity. “Neither the *sola Scriptura* of Reformation Protestantism nor the ‘two sources’ of Tridentine Catholicism . . . , namely Scripture and sacred tradition, is sufficient to justify so fundamental an assumption.”<sup>13</sup> Their Marxist hermeneutic is flawed, however, because “Instead of first focusing on Christ and the Bible as the revelational center of human history and destiny, . . . liberation theologians . . . make existing social and political conditions the necessary lens for viewing and interpreting scriptural data.”<sup>14</sup> Brown warns that “When even committed Marxists join the ostensibly ‘neutral’ secular press in their praise of the course the Roman Church is taking, all those who are concerned about her fate and destiny, Catholics and Protestants alike, had better take notice.”<sup>15</sup>

Finally, let us say clearly that orthodox Roman Catholics and evangelicals agree that Christians have a duty to care for the poor and to promote justice among the world’s oppressed. Our approach to this issue has several concerns. First, a true liberation theology must be faithful to the biblical doctrines of the historic Christian faith. Second, it should be evangelistic. Third, it ought to give priority to the vertical aspect of the gospel (God to humanity) rather than the horizontal (person to person).<sup>16</sup>

## RADICAL FEMINISM

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10 Nash, *Social Justice and the Christian Church*, p. 156.

11 Michael Novak, “A Theology of Development for Latin America,” in Ronald H. Nash, ed., *Liberation Theology* (Milford: Mott Media, 1984), p. 22. Novak is a Roman Catholic scholar in philosophy, religion, and public policy at the American Enterprise Institute. He has written extensively on liberation theology and modern economic theories.

12 Ibid., p. 24.

13 Harold O. J. Brown, “What Is Liberation Theology?” *ibid.*, p. 10.

14 Carl F. H. Henry, “Liberation Theology and the Scriptures,” *ibid.*, p. 196.

15 Brown, *Protest of a Troubled Protestant*, p. 142.

16 In addition to works already quoted, see Jacques Ellul, *Jesus and Marx* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988). The French sociologist and lay theologian brilliantly dissects the unholy alliance between Christianity and Marxism. One of his most fascinating insights is that the word “poor” in Scripture has a wider context than popularly assumed. The wealthy publicans were “poor”; the high paid call-girl prostitutes were “poor” (p. 145ff.). Also see Martin, *Crisis of Truth*, pp. 88, 96ff., where he discusses liberation theology in Latin America.

Radical feminism is closely related to liberation. In addition to the impulses that influence liberation theology in general, New Age concepts also have been incorporated in radical feminism. This movement is especially active in Roman Catholicism. Concerning the make-up of one feminist convention: “A startling majority of the women in attendance appeared to be Catholics: nuns, ex-nuns, students and faculty members from Catholic women’s colleges, parochial school teachers.”<sup>17</sup> A quote from the “godmother” of Catholic feminism, Rosemary Radford Ruether, immediately locates her on the theological spectrum: “A lot of evil had been done in the name of Christ, but no crusades or pogroms had been sent in the name of Ba’al, Isis or Apollo.”<sup>18</sup> Small wonder that orthodox Roman Catholics are exercised about this movement.<sup>19</sup>

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## VATICAN II (A.D. 1962–65)

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In January 1959 Pope John XXIII made public his intention to summon a council. It is important to note at the outset that the council neither claimed nor made any infallible pronouncements. Hence, while Catholics must accept it as authoritative, nothing stated in it is irrevocable. People everywhere asked themselves what motivated this move to call a council and how would it effect the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian jurisdictions? The pope defined the task of the council to be the renewing of the religious life of the church and asked Catholics to pray for the council: “Renew in our day O Lord, your wonders, as in a new Pentecost.” The portrayal of Jesus as the “Good Shepherd” deeply impressed him, indeed, “every description of John XXIII calls attention to this single ambition; he wanted first of all and genuinely to be a pastor.”<sup>20</sup> Pope John’s vision extended beyond his own communion to the Christian church worldwide.

Vatican II developed as follows:

*Session I* (October 11–December 8, 1962). Participants elect their own commission, thus distancing themselves from the Roman curia. John XXIII dies on June 3, 1963; he is succeeded by Paul VI on June 21, who announces his intention to continue the council.

*Session II* (September 29–December 4, 1963). Delegates vote to support the collegiality of the bishops, the divine right of the Episcopal College, and the reinstating of the Diaconate order. On May 17, 1964, the secretariat for non-Christian religions is formed.

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<sup>17</sup> Donna Steichen, *Ungodly Rage: The Hidden Face of Catholic Feminism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>19</sup> In addition to Steichen’s excellent volume for an evangelical critique of feminism, see Kassian, *Feminist Gospel*.

<sup>20</sup> G. C. Berkouwer, *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 12.

*Session III* (September 14–November 21, 1964). This session results in the promulgation of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the Decrees on Ecumenism and the Eastern Catholic churches. The Virgin Mary is also proclaimed to be the “Mother of the Church.”

*Session IV* (September 14–December 8, 1965). In this session a number of documents are drawn up, involving church discipline, religious renewal, and Christian education. On December 4, a service for the “Promotion of Christian Unity” takes place, and observers and guests as well as delegates take part. The council closes on December 8, 1965.<sup>21</sup>

## THEOLOGICAL MAKEUP OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Delegates of Vatican II represented the whole of the theological spectrum, from the most liberal to the most conservative. This variety was also present in the non-Roman observers and guests.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, so diverse were the participants at Vatican II that David Wells says the documents that Vatican II produced “officially embraced mutually incompatible theologies.”<sup>23</sup> One theology represented was traditional, the other progressive. “The first was championed by the conservatives in general and the Curia in particular, while the second found its proponents among a school of thinkers who in general represent the New Catholicism.”<sup>24</sup>

One area of difficulty was the doctrine of inerrancy. On the one hand, “Without doubt, it would seem, the Roman Catholic church wants to say it still believes in biblical inerrancy, at least as it was defined in 1870.”<sup>25</sup> However, an English bishop and progressive theologian explains the council’s view in such a fashion as to distinguish between “salvation truths” in Scripture that are inerrant and non-salvific material (historical and scientific statements) that are not.<sup>26</sup> This definition breaks with the historic position of the church.

## LIBERAL BIAS CONCERNING INERRANCY

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21 Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*, pp. 1428–29.

22 See John Moorman, *Vatican Observed: An Anglican Impression of Vatican II* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967). Moorman (bishop of Ripon) indicates that there was as much disagreement among the observers as between the council’s participants.

23 David F. Wells, *Revolution in Rome* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1972), p. 27.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 30–31.

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 31ff. For the view of the British Roman Catholic scholar who left the church because it was not progressive enough, see Charles Davis, *A Question of Conscience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

Evangelicals will remember the controversy that occurred in our community surrounding the understanding of what it means to declare that the Bible is “inerrant.” Some evangelicals held to “limited inerrancy,” meaning the Scriptures are inerrant when addressing salvific matters, but not necessarily so when non-salvific statements are made. Liberal Protestants have the same agenda as their Catholic compatriots.

Vatican II dealt with the issue of inerrancy in the “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.”<sup>27</sup> One translation from the Latin text is found in a volume edited by Walter M. Abbott, S.J., and is the one preferred by liberal scholars.<sup>28</sup> The translation that Roman Catholic traditionalists believe best represents the original text is the one edited by Austin Flannery, O.P.<sup>29</sup> The Abbott treatment of the text in question is misleading in that it *relocates* a key phrase in the Latin text, transforming it from a purposive, explanatory clause “for the sake of our salvation” to a restrictive clause. The Flannery translation following the Latin text, renders the sentence as follows:

Since, therefore, all that the inspired authors, or sacred writers, affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully and without error, teach that truth which God, *for the sake of our salvation*, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures.<sup>30</sup>

In this rendering, the placement of the clause makes it explanatory; it explains the purpose for which God recorded his truth in sacred Scripture. It was to facilitate our salvation.

The Abbott translation, however, renders the sentence as follows:

Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching firmly, faithfully, and without error that truth which God wanted put into the sacred writings *for the sake of our salvation*.<sup>31</sup>

Notice that the relocation of the clause in question changes its purpose from an explanatory sense and becomes instead a restrictive clause, indicating that Scripture teaches without error only that truth that is salvific in nature. Other assertions made by Scripture are not guaranteed to be true.

We have examined this problem at length to prove a point that some evangelicals overlook in their zeal to refute Roman Catholics. The official position of traditional Roman Catholicism concerning the authority of Holy Writ is that everything Scripture asserts is asserted by God, and since God cannot assert falsehood, everything Scripture

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27 *Dei Verbum*, 18 November 1965.

28 Walter M. Abbott, S.J., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966).

29 Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, vol. 1, rev. (Boston: St. Paul’s Books and Media, 1992).

30 *Ibid.*, p. 757, emphasis added.

31 Abbott, *Documents of Vatican II*, p. 119, emphasis added.

asserts is automatically inerrant (see chap. 1 ). Just as we would take offense if someone confused the theological position of Henry Emerson Fosdick with that of B. B. Warfield, so we should realize that Hans Küng is informed by a different theological impulse than, say, Cardinal Ratzinger.<sup>32</sup>

## SOME RESULTS OF VATICAN II

We will touch briefly on a few topics that were addressed in the Council under “Separated Brethren.” Here a more tolerant and open attitude was displayed at Vatican II concerning non-Roman Catholic Christians. “The relationship between Rome and non-Catholic Christians has for sometime not been the same as it was at Florence, for instance, where the Church was distinguished from heretics and schismatics as sheep from goats.”<sup>33</sup> The exclusiveness of the Roman Catholic church was down played; people could be “members of the Church *in a certain sense* without being members of the institution.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, non-Roman Catholic believers could belong to the “soul” while being absent from the “body.”

*Liturgical Renewal.* Efforts were also made to emphasize that the “church” is not only the pope and the hierarchical structure but all the people of God—laity as well as clergy. Lay ministry (women as well as men) was expanded and encouraged.

*Collegiality.* Further, there was an increased awareness of shared authority or “collegiality.” The bishops have an important role to play in the directing of the church. This function, however, is not to be understood as diluting the authority of the papacy.

*Non-Christian Religions.* There has been some confusion as to what the council determined concerning the salvific status of non-Christian religions. With regard to *Nostra Aetate* (NA), the document dealing with this subject, a Lutheran scholar observes that, “For the first time, there is a recognition of non-Christian religions as entities that the church should respect and with which Christians should enter into dialogue.”<sup>35</sup>

Many commentators on NA maintain that it recognized non-Christian religions as ways of salvation. Traditional scholars disagree, believing that this line of interpretation reflects more the presuppositions of the individual thinkers than the direct teaching of the council. Their view is that, while the council did not recognize the salvific *efficacy* of

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32 We are indebted to James Akin, staff member of *Catholic Answers*, for insights concerning this issue.

33 Berkouwer, *Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism*, p. 196.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 197.

35 Miikka Ruokanen, “Catholic Teaching on Non-Christian Religions at the Second Vatican Council,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, October 1985, 9:154–58. Ruokanen is a professor of theology at University of Helsinki. Vatican Council II also attempted to address that most ancient of disruptions in Christendom—the East/West schism. In the “Decree on Ecumenism,” we find a common statement from Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras, leader of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople.

other religions, it did find the general salvific *presence* of God's grace in all of God's universe (the concept of "general revelation").

*The Blessed Virgin Mary.* There was a concerted effort on the part of some traditionalists at Vatican II to devote a special document to Mary, to emphasize her unique role in salvation and in Catholic tradition. This effort failed. The council decided not to elevate Mary's status at this time. Instead, she is discussed in the last chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, the document dealing with the church.

## EVALUATION OF VATICAN II

Evangelicals are faced with a bewildering amount of conflicting opinions concerning the determinations of Vatican II. Roman Catholic liberals (of the Curran, Hunthausen, McBrien variety) have interpreted Vatican II to permit changes in theology and morals that exercise not only their more conservative colleagues but evangelicals as well. Views on the ordination of women, abortion, and the homosexual life-style come to mind. Also, evangelicals are rightly concerned about any trend to diminish the doctrine of the complete inerrancy of Scripture. In addition, any reflection of a inclusivistic/universalistic notion of salvation being present in non-Christian religions is of serious import.<sup>36</sup>

Orthodox Roman Catholics take issue with the usual "progressive" interpretation of Vatican II. An associate director of the Center for Pastoral Renewal (a Catholic charismatic group) writes: "The overriding purpose of the Vatican Council was to enable the Catholic Church to bear more effective witness to Christ in the modern world."<sup>37</sup> But the message was misunderstood, and "Catholic magazines and books carried the message that while official Catholic teaching on various issues had not changed, it was no longer binding, since Vatican Council II supposedly had promulgated a new view of conscience (an instance of appealing to the 'spirit' of the Council rather than to what was actually said)."<sup>38</sup>

John Cardinal O'Connor is probably the premier example of traditional, orthodox Roman Catholicism in the United States. He has joined forces with evangelicals to combat the moral laxity in our culture. In a meeting between American archbishops and curial officials, he addressed the misconceptions that issued from Vatican II: "We are still trying to recover from the chaos of misunderstanding and deliberate distortions. Suddenly

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36 Official Roman Catholic positions have been informed by both "traditional" and "progressive" perspectives. Dietrich von Hildebrand (*Trojan Horse in the City of God*) was a close friend of Pope Pius XII. A traditionalist, he was an erudite but blunt-speaking scholar who became concerned after the Second Vatican Council with certain "renewal" innovations. Among other charges, he accused some bishops of tolerating "the drivel of heretics."

37 Kevin Perrotta, "The U.S. Catholic Church," in Ronald H. Nash, ed., *Evangelical Renewal in the Mainline Churches* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1987), p. 141.

38 Ibid., p. 147.

all the old certainties seemed to be in question.”<sup>39</sup> Our orthodox friends in the Roman Catholic Church are attempting to fight unbelief and pluralism in their communion. While we remain vigilant to biblical norms, evangelicals should stand with them whenever possible.

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## THE CURRENT SITUATION

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In March 1990, John Cardinal O’Connor took on heavy-metal rock music in general and rocker Ozzy Osbourne in particular. He warned that “Violence is on the rise and heavy metal rock can trap people, especially teenagers.” The cardinal also affirmed the existence of Satan and his influence in the world. Father Richard McBrien (then chairman of the theology department at the University of Notre Dame) disagrees. McBrien considers the idea of a personal Satan to be “premodern and precritical.”<sup>40</sup> Here again we are faced with the riddle of Roman Catholicism.

There is a new appreciation on the part of Roman Catholics concerning the thinking of the Reformers. An example of this “rethinking” is a fascinating little volume by Dominican scholar Stephanus Pfürtner. He finds Martin Luther and Thomas Aquinas much closer in their understanding of the Christian’s hope of salvation than has been commonly held. Concerning the ground of this hope, it was for Aquinas, “no less than for Luther a vital relationship to God and ‘the experience’ of his personal faith.” Pfürtner believes that Luther’s understanding of Aquinas’s theological method was flawed and prevented him from appreciating the work of the “Doctor Angelicus.”<sup>41</sup>

As to his “new” direction, Harold O. J. Brown states, “It is significant that Roman Catholic scholars in two fields, biblical studies and church history, have been at the forefront of his development. Roman Catholics, turning more readily to the Bible itself instead of their traditional commentaries, have discovered it to be the legitimate source of some ‘Protestant’ ideas.”<sup>42</sup> However, this “new spirit” is not without its dangers. “Unfortunately, precisely because such scholars have stimulated a new openness, Roman Catholicism may be dangerously naive vis-à-vis Protestantism today. The Protestantism of Robinson is not that of Luther, nor is Pike’s anti-Catholicism anything like that of Calvin.”<sup>43</sup>

Concerning Luther and his understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification, contemporary Roman Catholic scholar Jared Wicks concludes that

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39 Steichen, *Ungodly Rage*, p. 17. For accounts of Cardinal O’Connor’s involvement with evangelicals, see chaps. 17 and 20.

40 Philip Elmer-De Witt, “No Sympathy for the Devil,” *Time*, 19 March 1990, pp. 55–56.

41 Pfürtner, *Luther and Aquinas—a Conversation*, pp. 39–40.

42 Brown, *Protest of a Troubled Protestant*, pp. 124–25.

43 *Ibid.*

“anyone who deals with ecclesiological topics can be positively stimulated and enriched by Luther’s insights.”<sup>44</sup>

On the evangelical side, there has been a revived appreciation of the work of Thomas Aquinas. Reformed thinker Arvin Vos’s book, *Aquinas, Calvin, and Contemporary Protestant Thought*, is a case in point.<sup>45</sup> One of the authors (Norman Geisler) has produced a major tome on the angelic doctor titled, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal*.<sup>46</sup> There are also many young evangelical thinkers who have a great appreciation for Aquinas, including Winfried Corduan, Douglas Givett, Terry Miethe, and J. P. Moreland. Indeed, Miethe is now the co-editor of the authoritative work on Thomistic writings.<sup>47</sup> In fact, having read Aquinas more carefully, even the noted Reformed philosopher Alvin Plantinga is more friendly to Aquinas.

Also, some evangelicals are renewing their interest in liturgy. In a contemporary Roman Catholic magazine, a P.C.A. (Presbyterian Church of American) pastor writes that many evangelical congregations are “entertainment-drenched.” The purpose of worship is “not entertainment for believers. Worship is designed to be entertaining to God, to please and delight Him. God is the audience in worship.”<sup>48</sup> Therefore, these Presbyterians have “tested the traditional liturgies of the Church by the standard of Scripture and have found them sound in many important respects.”<sup>49</sup>

What then does the face of modern Roman Catholicism look like? Just as it is possible to distinguish different varieties within Protestantism, so it is within the Roman Catholic Church. Allowing for some overlap, first, there are the *ultra-traditionalists*. These devotees have been said to be “more Catholic than the pope.” Indeed, they oppose the pope whenever they perceive that he is blurring the parameters of Roman Catholic orthodoxy. The ultra-traditionalists are firm in their defense of Tridentine Catholicism and prefer that the mass be recited in Latin. They are few in number and not very influential and may be compared in demeanor with the more radical wing of the Protestant fundamentalist movement.<sup>50</sup>

Next are the *traditionalists*. This is historic Roman Catholicism and most of the scholars and clergy we have quoted with approval belong to this group. They resist all

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44 Jared Wicks, S.J., “Insights for Luther’s Instructions on the Faith,” *Pro Ecclesia* 2, no. 2, pp. 150–72.

45 See Arvin Vos, *Calvin, Aquinas, and Contemporary Protestant Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

46 See Geisler, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal*.

47 Terry Miethe and Vernon J. Bourke, eds., *Thomistic Bibliography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980).

48 Peter J. Leithart, “The Biblical Way to Worship,” *Crisis* (October 1992): 32.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

50 The concerns of this group are reflected in the journal *The Latin Mass: Chronicle of a Catholic Reform*, published bi-monthly by the Foundation for Catholic Reform, Fort Collins, Colorado.

forms of revisionism and liberalism in theological matters and have joined forces with evangelicals in opposing a number of secularist trends in our culture.<sup>51</sup>

*Liberal Catholics* have adapted positions common to their liberal counterparts in mainline Protestantism. In addition to reinterpreting particular Catholic dogmas, they often go further and reject basic Christianity, such as the authority of Scripture and the orthodoxy of the councils and creeds. They are outspoken in their criticism of Pope John Paul, who has attempted to curtail their influence.

We have alluded to the fact that many (if not most) American Roman Catholic theologians are of the liberal/progressive persuasion. Robert B. Strimple is professor of systematic theology at Westminster Seminary West. He is also one of the few non-Catholic members of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA). Professor Strimple has related to one author (Ralph MacKenzie) that mention of John Cardinal Ratzinger's name elicits hoots and hisses at the CTSA meetings.<sup>52</sup>

Concerning ecumenicism, Harold O. J. Brown has sound advice: "If Roman Catholicism is to avoid poisoning itself on the new ecumenical diet, it must be very careful not to ingest the radical theologies which are destroying Protestant church life and doctrine."<sup>53</sup> And, "Roman Catholics ought to be aware that if they take Protestantism en masse, they will be buying some kind of a radical pig in a voluminous poke."<sup>54</sup> Brown says, "For any kind of Catholic, a liberal Protestant is a more companionable and agreeable dialogue partner, but for a believing Catholic, it is only the evangelical Protestant who can be a *Christian* dialogue partner."<sup>55</sup>

*Charismatic Catholics* are "evangelical" and share characteristics with their Pentecostal and charismatic brethren in Protestantism. The "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" and the exercise of gifts such as tongues and healing are central to their spiritual experience. They also cooperate with evangelicals in various efforts.

*Cultural Catholics* make up the majority of Catholics, and are sometimes referred to as "cradle Catholics." These are people who, due to circumstances of birth and rearing,

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51 Each day seems to unveil a new controversy that impacts Roman Catholic communion. Altar girls have already been mentioned and when the Holy See responded positively to the request of the American bishops to allow female altar servers orthodox Catholics were non-plussed. See Joseph Fessio, S.J., "How Did It Happen? A Canonical Investigation," *The Catholic World Report* (June 1994): 42–48.

52 For a detailed treatment of the American Roman Catholic theological scene, see Robert B. Strimple, "Roman Catholic Theology Today," in Armstrong, *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants*, pp. 85–117.

53 Brown, *Protest of a Troubled Protestant*, p. 137. Harold O. J. Brown addresses this group in "Catholic Loyalists vs. Traditionalist," *The Religion & Society Report*, December 1994, vol. II, no. 12, pp. 6–7.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 157.

have a cultural attachment to Catholicism but have little or no religious conviction. Unfortunately, this group, coupled with the aforementioned liberal Catholics, presents the only portrait that the person on the street sees. It is also tragic that many clergy (including some bishops) are guided by this mentality.

Lastly, we may identify *folk Catholics*, who are found in abundance in places such as Latin America and Haiti. A combination of primitive beliefs of an animistic nature with traditional Catholicism produces an eclectic religious mix. An example of the cultic nature of “folk” Catholicism was reported by the Associated Press. On Good Friday 1994, nineteen people re-enacted the death of Jesus Christ by being crucified in Capitanagan, Philippines. The report stated that, “Fourteen of the devotees were nailed to crosses while the others were tied to them. Attendants dressed as Roman centurions used slender aluminum nails soaked in alcohol to prevent infection.” The account went on to say that the local Roman Catholic hierarchy disapproves of such activity, but that “the events are so popular among rural peasants that the church makes little effort to discourage them.”<sup>56</sup> Many folk Catholics are guilty of idolatry in the worship of the virgin Mary and the saints. This group is particularly susceptible to proselytism by zealous (often charismatic) evangelicals. These new believers tend to be passionately anti-Catholic, and it is difficult to convince them that authentic faith can be found in the Roman Catholic Church. This probably more than any other factor is the reason that evangelicals and charismatics have been so successful evangelizing in the “third world” nominally Catholic areas.<sup>57</sup>

In a contemporary journal, Fr. Avery Dulles, S.J., states that there are “four fronts” comprising American Catholicism. They are:

*The Traditionalists.* These include authors such as Ralph Martin and James Hitchcock. While not advocating a “ghetto mentality,” they favor environments that transmit Catholic faith and morals.

*Neo-Conservatives.* These include Catholics such as Richard John Neuhaus and George Weigel, who are democratic capitalists and resist statism.

*Liberal Catholics.* These are thinkers such as Richard McBrien, who favor a restructuring that would include married priests and women in clerical office.

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56 “Faith Healer, Others Undergo Crucifixion,” *San Diego Union & Tribune*, 2 April 1994.

57 We wish to acknowledge that the source of this basic classification is Kenneth R. Samples, “What Think Ye of Rome?” *The Christian Research Journal* (winter 1993). Also, see the editorial “What Separates Evangelicals and Catholics?” *Christianity Today*, 23 October 1981.

*Radical Catholics.* This position is typified by Dorothy Day and Daniel Berrigan, and reflects such stances as voluntary poverty, radical feminism, and support for inclusive language referring to God as well as persons.<sup>58</sup>

The good news is that there is a new spirit of reaching out to Protestants based on shared moral and biblical convictions. We conclude this discussion with a quote from one Roman Catholic, James Hitchcock:

The real ecumenical task, which presents both the greatest difficulties and possibly the greatest rewards, is to begin explorations with the Protestant groups broadly called evangelical. The greatest difficulties are found here, because these groups take their own beliefs very seriously and will not compromise easily.<sup>59</sup>

And from Peter Kreeft:

The agreements between orthodox Protestants and orthodox Catholics are far more important than the agreements between orthodox Catholics and liberal, or Modernist, or demythologized Catholics, and far more important than the agreements between orthodox Protestants and liberal Protestants.<sup>60</sup>

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58 “Catho-cliques: The U.S. Catholic Fronts,” *30 DAYS*, no. 11 (1993): 21–22. Fr. Dulles is a valuable resource in that he occupies a mediating position between liberal/progressive and traditional American Roman Catholics. Some Roman Catholics chide Protestants for the proliferation of denominations within Protestantism. This seems a bit disingenuous given the various and diverse stances found within their own jurisdiction.

59 Hitchcock, *Catholicism and Modernity*, p. 231.

60 Kreeft, *Fundamentals of the Faith*, p. 294.

## APPENDIX E

# BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

While not unique to Catholicism, the sacrament of baptismal regeneration has a unique role in the Catholic faith. Some Protestants (such as Lutherans, Anglicans, and Methodists) hold to the *fact* of baptismal regeneration, but not in the same way that Catholics do, since they believe it is a cause of grace (see chap. 13 ). These differences make the criticism of baptismal regeneration more damaging for Catholics.

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### WHY BAPTISMAL REGENERATION IS CRUCIAL TO CATHOLICISM

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There are many reasons why the rejection of baptismal regeneration is more fatal to Roman Catholicism as a system. First, only Catholicism institutionalizes baptism in a unique way (see chap. 13 ). Second, only Catholicism sees baptismal regeneration as the way adults receive initial justification. Third, Catholicism sees no necessity for forensic justification in contrast to baptismal regeneration. Fourth, there is no tension in Catholicism between baptismal regeneration and initial justification by faith alone, as there is in Lutheranism. Finally, only Catholicism proclaims this doctrine infallibly; therefore they have more to lose if it is wrong. Thus, while the following critique applies to some forms of Protestantism, it is even more damaging for Catholicism. Baptismal regeneration is not an essential belief for those Protestants who hold it; in fact, they find significant tension between it and their basic Protestant principle of “faith alone.” However, baptismal regeneration naturally fits with and is essential to Catholicism. That is, Protestantism can live without it (e.g., Reformed and Baptist churches), but Catholicism cannot. For this reason the following criticisms apply uniquely to Catholicism.

Catholic theology insists on the necessity of baptismal regeneration. This is evident both from the official pronouncements on the topic and from the biblical text Catholics use to support it.

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## ARGUMENT FOR THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM

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The Council of Trent declared: “If anyone shall say that natural water is not necessary for baptism, and on that account those words of our Lord Jesus Christ: ‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit’ ( John 3:5 ), are distorted into some sort of metaphor; let him be anathema.”<sup>1</sup> And, according to the same council, “If anyone shall say that baptism is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation: let him be anathema.”<sup>2</sup> Baptism properly administered is a once-for-all act, not to be repeated.<sup>3</sup> However, like some Protestants (e.g., Arminians), Catholics believe baptism is not a guarantee of salvation, for even the regenerate can lose their salvation.<sup>4</sup>

What is more, the Council of Trent declared that “If anyone shall say that infants, because they have not actual faith, after having received baptism are not to be numbered among the faithful, and therefore, when they have reached the years of discretion, are to be rebaptized . . . let them be anathema.”<sup>5</sup> This is crucial to the debate between Catholics and evangelicals. For, according to Catholics, “Baptism confers the grace of justification.”<sup>6</sup> But for Protestants, justification is by faith alone apart from baptism or any other righteous work (act).<sup>7</sup> Since baptismal regeneration is a *de fide* pronouncement of the Catholic faith it is not negotiable. The Council of Trent declared: “If anyone denies that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which is conferred in Baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted; or even assert that the whole of that which has the true and proper nature of sin is not taken away . . . let him be anathema.”<sup>8</sup> This, of course, does not mean that one becomes sinless at baptism but that all of the *guilt* of original sin and actual sin are forgiven at baptism. The *desire* to sin (which is the stain of sin), however, remains and will result in future sinful *behavior*.

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1 Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, no. 858, p. 263.

2 Ibid., no. 861, p. 264.

3 Ibid., no. 867, p. 264.

4 Ibid., no. 862, p. 264.

5 Ibid., no. 869, p. 264. It should be noted that Roman Catholic theology does not believe that all unbaptized infants go to hell. Older Catholic theologians speculated that they went to limbo (neither heaven nor hell). Currently, most Catholic theologians reject limbo in favor of a mysterious way in which God reveals himself to infants with the offer of salvation and they express implicit “faith.”

6 Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 354.

7 Christian baptism is a righteous act or deed done in obedience to God’s command. Jesus called his baptism an act that fulfilled “righteousness” ( Matt. 3:15 ). In this sense it is properly called a righteous work. Since it is a divinely appointed work prompted by his grace it is considered a good deed and not one done by purely human effort in an attempt to please God. These kinds of self-righteous works are condemned by Scripture ( Rom. 10:3 ; 1 Cor. 13:3 ).

8 Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, no. 792, p. 247.

Elaborating on the Catholic dogma of justification by baptism, noted Catholic authority Ludwig Ott comments:

As justification consists, negatively, in the remission of sin, positively, in the sanctification and renewal of the inner man (D 799), so Baptism, provided that the proper dispositions (Faith and sorrow for sin) are present, effects: a) the eradication of sins, both original sin and, in the case of adults, also all personal moral or venial sins; b) inner sanctification by the infusion of sanctifying grace, with which the infused theological and moral virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost are always joined.<sup>9</sup>

## ARGUMENT FROM SCRIPTURE

Catholics offer a host of texts to support their belief in salvation by baptism, which includes infant salvation, since infants are considered proper candidates of baptism. Ott summarizes the case this way:

According to the testimony of Holy Writ, Baptism has the power both of eradicating sin and of effecting inner sanctification. [Acts 2 , 38](#) : “Do penance: and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” [I Cor. 6 , 11](#) : But you are washed: but you are sanctified: but you are justified: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God.” Acts, cf. [22 , 16 \[sic\]](#); [Rom. 6 , 3](#) et seq.: [Tit. 3 , 5](#) : [John 3 , 5](#) ; [I John 3 , 9](#) ; [5 , 18](#)  
<sup>10</sup>

## ARGUMENT FROM TRADITION

In addition to the argument from Scripture, Catholic scholars appeal to tradition in support of baptismal regeneration. Ott claims that “From the very beginning Tradition ascribes to Baptism the same effects. The author of the Barnabas Letter says: ‘We descend into the water full of sins and filth and we arise from it bearing fruit as we have in our hearts the fear of God, and in our spirits hope in Jesus’ (II,II).”<sup>11</sup> Justin, Tertullian, and Cyprian are also cited in support of salvation through baptism.

## PROTESTANT RESPONSE TO CATHOLIC ARGUMENT FOR BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

Since Catholics offer many Scriptures in support of their belief in baptismal regeneration, we will respond to them first before arguing that salvation is by faith alone, apart from

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<sup>9</sup> Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 354.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 355.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

baptism.<sup>12</sup> Since many of the same points can be made from different texts we will concentrate on the most important ones.

## RESPONSE TO ARGUMENT FROM SCRIPTURE

Since Protestants believe that the Bible alone is sufficient for faith and practice, they take seriously any attempt by Catholics to support their doctrines from Scripture. And while the authors acknowledge that some Protestants (e.g., Anglicans and Lutherans) believe in baptismal regeneration, we believe the Reformed/Baptist rejection of this doctrine is a more consistent Protestant approach.

*Acts 2:38*. Ludwig Ott uses this often cited text (from the Douay version) in support of baptismal regeneration: “*Do penance:*<sup>13</sup> and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Several points should be made in response to the use of this verse.

First, the outmoded and inaccurate translation “do penance” (following the Latin Vulgate) has been corrected by almost all modern and contemporary translations, including those done or approved by Catholics. The *New American Bible*, St. Joseph Edition, which is approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, renders it correctly as “Repent and be baptized,” as do the *Catholic New Jerusalem Bible* and the *Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition*. This eliminates the mistaken idea that any works are necessary as a condition for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Second, people are “born again” by receiving God’s word (cf. 1 Pet. 1:23), and Peter’s audience “accepted” his word before they were baptized (Acts 2:41).

Third, elsewhere in Acts those who believed Peter’s message clearly received the Holy Spirit *before* they were baptized. Peter said, “Can anyone withhold the water for

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<sup>12</sup> One must be careful not to overstate the conclusion here, since many Protestants hold baptismal regeneration too, including the Lutheran *Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978) which affirms: “What gifts or benefits does Baptism bestow? Answer: It effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and grants eternal salvation to all who believe, as the Word and promise of God declare” (Small Catechism, “The Sacrament of Holy Baptism,” pp. 348–49). See also the Large Catechism which affirms that “the power, effect, benefit, fruit, and purpose of baptism is to save [which] . . . is nothing other than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil and to enter into the kingdom of Christ and live with him forever” (“Baptism,” p. 439).

<sup>13</sup> Contemporary Catholics are embarrassed by this mistranslation of the Greek word *metanoia* as “do penance” and have dropped it. What they forget, however, is that the Vulgate was the official translation of the Catholic church and this very text was cited by Trent and used as a basis for their (false) teaching on penance. At best this is scarcely a good example of the alleged infallible guidance Catholics claim for the church, especially one gathered at an ecumenical council!

baptizing these people who have received the holy Spirit even as we have?” ( Acts 10:47 ).<sup>14</sup>

Fourth, Acts 2:41 speaks of “those who accepted his message” (i.e., believed) as having been baptized later on. Receiving (believing) the message is the means by which one is saved ( John 1:12 ; 12:48 ; Rom. 1:16 ). And verse 44 speaks of “those who believed” as being constituents of the early church, not all of whom were baptized. Likewise, Mark says “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” ( Mark 16:16 ), because baptism should follow belief. Nowhere does it say, “whoever is not *baptized* will be condemned.” Yet Jesus said emphatically that “whoever does not *believe* has already been condemned” ( John 3:18 , emphasis added).<sup>15</sup>

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14 Catholic scholars sometimes appeal to a “dispensational shift” here, claiming that this passage is not normative but a special case to assure the Jewish believers that Gentiles also were to be accepted into the church. This creative evasion of the obvious is insufficient for several reasons: First, the fact that it happened at all proves the evangelical point that water baptism is not necessary for salvation. If it were, then they could not have received the Holy Spirit before baptism. Second, the Jews would have been just as convinced that God accepted Gentiles if they had miraculously received the Holy Spirit and tongues *after* being baptized; doing it before was no more miraculous. Third, reversing the order to convince the Jews of Gentile acceptance would more likely to have had a different effect on the Jews. It probably would have convinced them that there was no necessity to be baptized first, rather than the subtle “dispensational” point that Gentiles should be accepted too.

15 Some Catholic apologists argue unconvincingly that if the text said “whoever believes and repents will be saved” everyone would understand that there were two conditions for salvation stated here. This is purely hypothetical since the text does not say this. However, since the Bible does list both belief and repentance as the means of receiving salvation, the illustration is a good one—unfortunately, not for the Catholic position. For both belief and repentance are two aspects of *one and the same act* of receiving Christ ( Acts 17:30 , 34 ), sometimes being used in the same verse ( Acts 20:21 ). Repentance stresses the turning from sin and faith stresses the turning to God (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9 ), but both are part of one true act of faith. Baptism, however, is clearly a separate act from believing (whichever comes first). Nonetheless, even if a text were to read: “Whoever believes and repents will be saved. But whoever does not believe will not be saved” we would know that repentance, as a separate act from believing, is not necessary for salvation. We could easily conclude from such a statement that belief was the only necessary condition and that repentance was put there as a synonym or for emphasis to make explicit that true faith involved a turning from sin as well as a turning to God. Finally, in texts where the meaning is not as clear as we may like it, we should never use them to build a dogma. In fact, these difficult texts should be interpreted in the light of the clear ones which call for only one condition for receiving salvation—belief (e.g., John 3:16 , 36 ; 5:24 ; Acts 16:31 ; Rom. 1:17 ; 4:5 ).

Fifth, Paul separates baptism from the gospel, saying, “Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel” ( 1 Cor. 1:17 ).<sup>16</sup> But it is the gospel that saves us ( Rom. 1:16 ). Therefore, baptism is not part of what saves us.

Sixth, Jesus referred to baptism as a work of “righteousness” ( Matt. 3:15 ), but the Bible declares clearly that it is “not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us” ( Titus 3:5 ). Hence, we are not saved by baptism.<sup>17</sup>

Seventh, the Gospel of John, written explicitly so that people could believe and be saved ( John 20:31 ), cites only belief as the condition of salvation. It simply states over and over that people need to “believe” and they will be saved (cf. John 3:16 , 18 , 36 ). If more were necessary, then the entire Gospel of John misleads on the central purpose for which it was written.<sup>18</sup>

Eighth, the word “for” (Gk: *eis* ) can also mean “with a view to” or even “because of.” In this case, water baptism would be called for *because* they had been saved, not *in order to* be saved. Even in the broader sense of “with a view to” the view could be backwards to the fact that they had been saved, baptism being a later outward manifestation of it.<sup>19</sup>

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16 The Catholic retort that Paul is only putting conceptual distance between baptism and the gospel is unconvincing for several reasons. First, he makes a strong contrast between the two in this passage, insisting that his call was only to preach the gospel, not to baptize. If baptism is part of the gospel by which we are saved, as Catholics believe, then such a statement by St. Paul would mean that he did not understand or preach the true gospel, since he claimed it was not part of what God sent him to do! Second, even though it is understandable that a busy itinerant preacher like Paul could not take time to baptize all his converts, nonetheless, it is still true that

17 It is unconvincing to argue that Jesus’ baptism was a special case and our baptism is not like his. First, Catholics believe that Jesus is our great moral example ( 1 Cor. 11:1 ). Peter said that Christ left “an example that you should follow in his footsteps” ( 1 Pet. 2:21 ). Second, even if Christ’s baptism is not a paradigm of Christian baptism, nonetheless, ours is still a work of righteousness in the sense that it is a physical act performed in obedience to his command. But this by definition is a work of righteousness. Certainly no Christian would call Christian baptism an unrighteous act. It is a righteous act! It makes no difference whether it is a means of receiving grace or not. It still would be a work by which this grace was received. Of course, it should be done in faith, opening one’s self to God’s blessing. That is what true obedience is. But that does not make it any less a righteous work.

18 No appeal to one isolated text ( John 3:5 ) which is subject to disputed interpretations (see below) can contradict the repeated and clear teaching that belief is the only condition for salvation. Otherwise, Jesus was deceiving his audience on all those other occasions when he said that only belief, not belief and baptism, was necessary for salvation.

19 It has been argued that *eis* meant “for” (i.e., in order to bring about) to the authors of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and, therefore, to deny this meaning here is to reject

Finally, even if “for” is taken in the sense of “in order to” this text does not prove baptismal regeneration for two reasons: first, the apostles were already believers by this time (cf. Matt. 16:16–18 ; John 20:30–31 ). It was not a question of their getting saved; they already were saved. What they were promised here after water baptism as Christians was “the gift of the Holy Spirit,” not the gift of salvation or eternal life (cf. Rom. 6:23 ) which is received only by faith ( Eph. 2:8–9 ; Titus 3:5–7 ). They were already regenerate, but they were not yet equipped with gifts by which they would have the “power” to serve Christ (cf. Acts 1:8 ).<sup>20</sup> Indeed, it was only after they received the gift of the Spirit ( Acts 2 ) and gave it to others ( Acts 8 , 10 , and 19 ) that the church grew in great numbers ( Acts 2:41 , 47 ). The converts of the evangelist Philip are a case in point. Even though he had preached to them and they believed and were baptized ( Acts 8:12 ), they had not received the Holy Spirit until the apostles came down and laid hands on them ( Acts 8:15–17 ). But they were obviously saved before they received this special gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>21</sup> So, it is entirely possible that Peter was not referring to being justified (or regenerated) in Acts 2:38 , but rather of their repentance and baptism as a Christian. This was a condition of their receiving the special gift of the Holy Spirit that empowered them to speak supernaturally in languages unknown to them (cf. Acts 2:4 , 8 ) and to witness with great boldness ( Acts 1:8 ; cf. 4:1–20 ).

In brief, this oft cited text does not support the Roman Catholic doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Rather, consistent with the rest of Scripture, it teaches that people have to “repent” or “accept the message” in order to be saved. Baptism is merely an outward sign of an inward reality that came “by grace through faith” and not by any “works of righteousness,” including baptism.

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orthodoxy. But this does not follow. The word *eis* can and often does mean “for” in other contexts, and even if it means “for” in Acts 2:38 baptismal regeneration does not necessarily follow. What the authors of the creed believed on other points is irrelevant to what they affirmed in the creed. Nowhere in this creed do they affirm baptismal regeneration. It merely connects baptismal forgiveness in the same associational and symbolic way they are in Scripture (cf. Acts 22:16 ; 1 Pet. 3:20–21 ).

20 Nor can one argue that the apostles were already baptized and therefore “grandfathered” out of this command. There is no indication that baptism before Pentecost was the same as this baptism. We know, for example, that those who were baptized by John before Pentecost had to be rebaptized after Pentecost ( Acts 19:4–5 ). And even if the apostles were exempted here on the basis of an earlier proleptical Christian baptism, there were over one hundred others there who were believers ( Acts 1:15 ). Indeed, many in the crowd were “devout Jews” ( Acts 2:5 ) who believed in the Messiah and had come to worship at this Jewish feast. Even though they were saved, as any other devout Jew was saved before Christ, they would still have to be baptized here.

21 The fact that Paul later said that no one can be saved who does not have the *presence* of the Holy Spirit ( Rom. 8:9 ) is not in conflict with the promise to receive the special *gift* of the Holy Spirit here. The Holy Spirit *indwelt* the apostles ( John 14:16 ) before they were later *baptized* by the Spirit ( Acts 1:5 , 8 ). These are different acts of the Holy Spirit.

*John 3:5* . Jesus said, “no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.” Although this is a favorite text of those who believe in baptismal regeneration, it says nothing about baptism or it being a condition of salvation.

First, baptism is not necessary for salvation. Salvation is by grace through faith and not by works of righteousness ( Eph. 2:8–9 ; Titus 3:5–6 ). But baptism is a work of righteousness (cf. Matt. 3:15 ). So, baptism is no more necessary for being saved than is any other “work of righteousness.”

Whatever Jesus meant by this disputed text, he clearly did not mean that infant baptism was a condition of salvation. For one thing, he was speaking here to an adult—Nicodemus the Pharisee—and not to or about children. Infants cannot consciously “accept” or “believe” as Jesus called on Nicodemus to do ( John 3:11–12 , 15–16 ).<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, if baptism is specified here as a condition of salvation, then it is contradictory to everything else in the entire Gospel of John which says “that everyone who believes in him [Christ] might not perish but might have eternal life” ( John 3:16 ; cf. vv. 18 , 36 ). What is more, all of the believe-only verses are not limited to this sermon. They are scattered throughout the whole of John’s Gospel (e.g., John 5:24 ; 6:35 ; 7:38 ; 8:24 ; 9:35 ; 10:38 ; 11:26 ; 12:44–48 ; 20:31 ). By any good rule of interpreting Scripture one unclear and disputed text should not be taken in any sense contrary to that conveyed clearly over and over by the same author and the rest of Scripture.

There are three basic ways to understand this text, none of which involve baptismal regeneration of anyone and certainly not of children. Some believe Jesus was speaking of the water of the womb, since Nicodemus had just mentioned a mother’s womb in the preceding verse. If so, then Jesus was saying “unless you are born once by water (at your physical birth) and then again by the Spirit at your spiritual birth, you cannot be saved.” This also fits with his statement that “what is born of flesh is flesh [physical birth] and what is born of the spirit is spirit [spiritual birth]” ( 3:6 ).

Others take “born of water” spiritually to refer to the washing of “water with the word” (cf. Eph. 5:26 ). They note that Peter refers to being “born anew . . . through the living and abiding word of God” ( 1 Pet. 1:23 ), the very thing John is speaking about in John 3:3–7 . So this interpretation is possible both in the immediate context and in the broader context of usage of “water” as the Word of God elsewhere in Scripture.

Still others think that “born of water,” while not referring to Christian baptism, refers to the baptism of John mentioned earlier ( John 1:26 ). John said he baptized with water,

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<sup>22</sup> There is heaven for those who *cannot* believe but who would have if they could have (e.g., infants). There is no heaven for those who *will not* believe when they could have believed (e.g., adults who reject Christ). See Robert Lightner, *Heaven for Those Who Cannot Believe* (Shaumburg, Ill.: Regular Baptist Press, 1977). Appealing to Old Testament circumcision will not help the Catholic argument, since circumcision was only a sign of an earthly covenant they inherited as Jews, not of eternal salvation. Furthermore, girls were not circumcised, yet they were part of the covenant.

but Jesus would baptize by the Spirit (cf. Matt. 3:11 ), saying “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” ( Matt. 3:2 ). If this is what is meant, then when Jesus said they must be “born of water and Spirit” ( John 3:5 ) he meant that the Jews of his day had to undergo the baptism of repentance by John and also the baptism of the Holy Spirit ( Acts 1:5 ) before they could “enter the kingdom of God.” Being “born of water” (i.e., being baptized by John) was not enough, for John’s baptism was not Christian baptism, as is proven by the fact that those who were baptized by John were rebaptized as Christians by the apostles ( Acts 19:1–5 ). So, whatever this passage means, it does not mean that Christian baptism is a necessary condition for regeneration.

Finally, the fact that many of the early Fathers understood this as a reference to baptism is not decisive for numerous reasons. First of all, only the Bible is infallible, not the Fathers; the Fathers had many mistaken and conflicting interpretations of Scripture. Second, even if baptism is meant, it may be a reference to the baptism of John and not to any Christian baptismal regeneration. Third, since baptism was so closely associated with belief, following immediately upon it, it is understandable that many of the Fathers would speak of it in salvific terms. Finally, the tendency to identify the ritual with the reality, the symbol with substance, is a common error in religion. The New Testament constantly warned against it ( Matt. 15:3–6 ; 23:23–28 ; 2 Tim. 3:5 ). It is understandable that as Christianity became more institutionalized errors like this would occur (cf. 2 Tim. 3:5 ).

*Titus 3:5–7* . Paul’s reference here to the “washing of regeneration” ( AV ) is clearly not a reference to water baptism. First, contrary to the mistranslation of the Catholic *New American Bible*, the word “baptism” (Gk: *baptizo* ) does not occur in this text. Here the word *loutrou* is used, which means “washing or cleansing.” Second, the clue that it is a figurative use of the term “washing” is that it is the “washing of *regeneration*.” That is, a regeneration kind of washing, namely, a spiritual washing. Third, this passage makes it absolutely clear that we are saved by God’s mercy and not by any “righteous deeds” which we have done (vv. 5–6 ). Fourth, baptism is a righteous act or deed. Hence, it could not be part of what saves us. Fifth, Paul is borrowing an image from the Old Testament laver which was used for cleansing of the priest before he entered the Holy Place, an image that here refers to a believer’s spiritual cleansing before he enters the presence of God and not to the regeneration of an unbeliever.

*Acts 22:16* . When Ananias told Paul to “be baptized at once and wash away your sins” he could not have been referring to any actual washing away of sins but only to a symbolic cleansing from them. First, the apostle was already converted earlier on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9 ). At this point he had acknowledged Jesus as his “Lord,” something he told the Roman Christians was the means of salvation ( Rom. 10:9–10 ; cf. 1 Cor. 12:3 ).

Second, the reason God gave for going to Ananias was not to be *saved* but to be *sent*. It was not to be *converted* but to be *commissioned*. The text says clearly, “get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do” ( Acts 9:6 ). And this is precisely what happened, for here Ananias told Saul, “for you will be his witness before all” ( Acts 22:15 ).

Third, the manner and wording of Paul's repeated testimony of his conversion experience make it clear that it was here that he was regenerated and justified, not at his baptism (cf. Acts 9:3–6 ; 22:6–8 ; 26:13–18 ). Indeed, in the last reference Paul even mentions that his message to the nations about what happened to him should be one about "the forgiveness of sins" ( Acts 26:18 ), something he could scarcely testify about unless he himself had received it in his conversion experience.

Fourth, since Paul's actual forgiveness of sins took place on the road to Damascus, the reference to forgiveness of sins later at his baptism must be symbolic or figurative. This fits perfectly with what Paul later told the Roman Christians about baptism, namely, that it is a figure or likeness of what takes place to us at the moment of salvation. "We have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also . . . in the resurrection" ( Rom. 6:5 ). Since it is Jesus' actual death and resurrection by which we are saved ( Rom. 4:25 ; 10:9–10 ; 1 Cor. 15:1–4 ), then baptism can only be a representation of this salvation; it cannot be the moment of the salvation itself. Baptism is an outward sign of an inward reality. It is a figurative representation of the washing away of our sins. It symbolically does to the body outwardly what the blood of Christ actually does to the soul inwardly. Finally, whenever there is any question as to whether or not a passages like this should be taken figuratively, one must appeal to other clear passages. But these, as we have seen, inform us emphatically that salvation is by faith alone.

*1 Peter 3:21* . Peter's reference to a "baptismal bath" by which we are "saved" is often used to support the Catholic dogma of baptismal regeneration. However, the text taken in its proper context yields no such conclusion. For one thing, Peter makes no reference to being saved from original sin in this passage, which is what Catholics claim occurs in baptism. Further, it is evident that what one is being saved from in baptism is a bad "conscience." Since baptism is a command of Christ ( Matt. 28:18–20 ), any Christian who knowingly remains unbaptized is living in disobedience to Christ. The only thing that will save that person from a bad conscience resulting from this disobedience is baptism. Finally, the prototype (Noah in the ark) of which baptism is said to be the antitype here is contrary to baptismal regeneration. For Noah was regenerated (i.e., received initial righteousness) long before he went into the ark ( Gen. 6:9 ; Heb. 11:7 ). In point of fact, Noah is called a "truly just" or "righteous" man before the flood ( Gen. 7:1 ). Since baptism is the antitype of the waters of the flood, it is clear that it came after one is saved, not before, in Noah's case.

*Other Texts.* Most other texts offered by Catholics actually say nothing about water baptism. Indeed, often the word "baptism" does not even appear in the text. The term "washing" is used figuratively or symbolically (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:11 ). At other times neither baptism nor washing of any kind is mentioned in the text, so there is no need to even reply to their use in support of Catholic teaching on this point (e.g., 1 John 3:9 ; 5:18 ).

The use of Romans 6:3–6 calls for brief comment, since it refers to baptism "into Christ," a phrase often referring to the status of the saved in the New Testament. It should be noted first that not all scholars agree that water baptism is in view here. They note the absence of any reference to water, the reference to baptism with the Spirit elsewhere (

Acts 1:5 ; 1 Cor. 12:13 ), and the fact that Paul is here speaking of our position in Christ, namely, one that denotes a true believer.

However, even if the text is referring to water baptism (as it seems to be), the Roman Catholic view that baptism justifies does not follow. First, as already noted, it speaks of being baptized in the “likeness” of Christ’s death and resurrection, which would indicate a figurative event. Further, “into” (Gk: *eis* ) can mean “unto” or “with a view to” (not literally “into”), and it is used elsewhere simply of identification *with* (not salvation *by* ). For example, Paul also said the children of Israel were “baptized into (*eis*) Moses” ( 1 Cor. 10:2 ), which does not mean they were thus saved by Moses<sup>23</sup> but rather that they were identified with him as they passed through the Red Sea. It is important to observe that noted Catholic authority Ludwig Ott believes that girls were saved in the Old Testament without circumcision, which they believe to be the Old Testament correlative of baptism, even though he affirmed that “During the period from Abraham to Moses, circumcision ( Gn. 17 , 19 et seq.) was for the male Israelite the ordinary means of purification from original sin.”<sup>24</sup> In fact, even Abraham, with whom God first instituted circumcision, was saved by faith ( Gen. 15:6 ; cf. Rom. 4:9 ) before he was circumcised ( Gen. 17 ).

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## CONCLUSION

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Baptism is not absolutely essential to salvation—as acknowledged by the Catholic concept of baptism by desire. Salvation is obtained by faith and faith alone. To be sure, justification by faith alone causes some tension for Protestants who believe in infant baptism.<sup>25</sup> Martin Luther, for example, believed that it has been “practiced since the

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23 Their “salvation” came earlier when they offered, in type, Christ their Passover Lamb (cf. John 1:29 ; 1 Cor. 5:7 ).

24 Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 347. Ott cites Pope Innocent III and scholastic theology in favor of this point. He admits that some early fathers (e.g., Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian) “saw in circumcision only a Sign of the Covenant and a model of Baptism, not a means for attaining salvation.” This view, however, would favor the non-baptismal regeneration position, which Catholic theology rejects.

25 It is understandable, even if it is not justifiable, how early Catholic reformers (i.e., Protestants) would not obtain a perfect harmony with all their previously held Catholic beliefs and their newfound principle of *sola fide* (faith alone). However, it appears to be inconsistent with the Protestant principle of faith alone as a means of salvation to affirm that an infant, not yet able or willing to believe, could be regenerated or justified. Augustine, who believed in baptismal regeneration, distinguished between “regeneration” and “conversion,” recognizing “the need of infants to be converted at a later age even if they have been baptized” (Toon, *Born Again*, p. 83). Augustine continues, “We all know that if one baptized in infancy does not believe when he comes to years of discretion . . . then he will have no profit from the gift he received as a baby” (Augustine, “A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants”; quoted in Toon,

beginning of the church” and originates “from the apostles and has been preserved ever since their time.”<sup>26</sup> However, “Luther freely admitted that infant baptism is neither explicitly commanded nor explicitly mentioned in Scripture.”<sup>27</sup> It is difficult to apprehend clearly Luther’s thinking on baptism and the presence of faith in infants. At first “Luther declares that children are baptized on the basis of the faith and confession of the sponsors, who in the baptismal liturgy are asked to answer in the place of the child being baptized whether he believes.”<sup>28</sup> However, to preserve the idea that we are saved not by another’s faith but by our own, he later began to teach that infants themselves believe when they are baptized. For instance, he refers to “John the Baptist who believed while in the womb of his mother.”<sup>29</sup>

In the Large Catechism ( A.D. 1529), Luther changed his view again. “In complete opposition to the statements of 1525, Luther now says that it is not decisive for baptism whether the baptized person believes or does not believe; that does not make baptism invalid but everything depends on God’s word and commandment.”<sup>30</sup> On this point of doctrine, Martin Luther was much closer to the Roman Catholic view than that of the other Reformers and he vigorously opposed the Anabaptists who rejected infant baptism, insisting that New Testament baptism was only for those old enough to believe ( Mark 16:15–16 ; Acts 2:38 ; 10:45–47 ).

The Reformed view of infant baptism is closely linked with the Old Testament idea of covenant. While the New Testament neither directly commands nor forbids infant baptism, “The debate centers on questions surrounding the meaning of baptism and the degree of continuity between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.”<sup>31</sup> Reformed Christians find a parallel between infant baptism and circumcision in the Old Testament. The point is made that in the case of Abraham he came to faith *prior* to his circumcision while his son Isaac “received the sign of his faith before he had the faith that the sign signified.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, the purpose of infant baptism is to introduce the baby into the believing community (the local church).<sup>33</sup> But baptism is not the *means* of faith, only a sign of it—even though it is done in advance.

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*Born Again* ). In *Born Again* Anglican scholar Peter Toon gives a good account of the theological development of the doctrine of regeneration from the biblical, Patristic, Medieval, and Reformation perspectives.

26 Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther*, p. 359.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 361.

28 WA 7, 321; LW 32, 14, *ibid.*, p. 364.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 368.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 369.

31 R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1992), p. 227.

32 *Ibid.*

33 It must be noted that not all Christians who claim to be “Reformed” accept infant baptism. Baptists, Congregationalists, and others believe that baptism is something that must *follow*, not *proceed* the presence of faith in the individual. For a defense of infant

The following quote summarizes the matter:

If the convert is fit for baptism he already knows what God's friendship means, and being justified by faith he already has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism will assure him afresh of these highest of all blessings, but it does not create them.<sup>34</sup>

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baptism, see Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Children of Promise: The Case for Baptizing Infants* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979). For a critique of infant baptism, see Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism & the Covenant of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

<sup>34</sup> Robert MacKintosh, *Proceedings of the International Congregational Council*; quoted in Alan P. F. Sell, *A Reformed, Evangelical, Catholic Theology: The Contribution of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1875–1982* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 153.

# APPENDIX F

## THE COLSON–NEUHAUS DECLARATION

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### INTRODUCTION

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When the document in question was published, it caused a furor in evangelical and Roman Catholic circles. The statement, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium* (ECT), March 29, 1994, was drafted by Richard John Neuhaus, Charles Colson, George Weigel, and Kent Hill. Neuhaus is a former Lutheran pastor who is now a Catholic priest; Colson, a Southern Baptist who founded Prison Fellowship; Weigel, a Catholic philosopher; and Hill, president of Eastern Nazarene College.

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### CONTENTS OF THE DECLARATION

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The introduction of the statement makes clear that while crafted by evangelicals and Roman Catholics, it cannot “speak officially for our communities.” However, since secularism presents such a threat in the modern world, areas of spiritual commonality and moral cooperation need to be explored.

#### SECTION I

“We Affirm Together” states “Jesus is Lord. . . . And there is salvation in no one else ( Acts 4 ).” Further, “We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ.” And “All who accept Christ as Lord and Saviour are brothers and sisters in Christ.” The *Apostles’ Creed* “we can and hereby do affirm together as an accurate statement of Scriptural truth.”

#### SECTION II

“We Hope Together” indicates the common desire that “all people will come to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.” Further, “Unity and love among Christians is an integral part of our missionary witness to the Lord whom we serve ( John 13 ).” Thus, “As evangelicals and Catholics, we pray that our unity in the love of Christ will become even more evident as a sign to the world of God’s reconciling power. Our communal and ecclesial separations are deep and long standing. We acknowledge that we do not know the schedule nor do we know the way to the greater visible unity for which we hope. . . . We do know that God . . . intends that we also be in communion with one another.”

### SECTION III

“We Search Together” is a joint venture “for a fuller and clearer understanding of God’s revelation in Christ and his will for his disciples.” The signatories confess: “We do not presume to suggest that we can resolve the deep and long standing differences between evangelicals and Catholics. . . . [However] Not all differences are authentic disagreements, nor need all disagreements divide.”

“Among points of difference in doctrine, worship, practice, and piety that are frequently thought to divide us are these”:

- “The church as an integral part of the Gospel or the church as a communal consequence of the Gospel.
- The church as visible communion or invisible fellowship of true believers.
- The sole authority of Scripture (*sola scriptura*) or Scripture as authoritatively interpreted in the church.
- The sole freedom of the individual Christian or the Magisterium (teaching authority) of the community.
- The church as local congregation or universal communion.
- Ministry ordered in apostolic succession or the priesthood of all believers.
- Sacraments and ordinances as symbols of grace or means of grace.
- The Lord’s Supper as eucharistic sacrifice or memorial meal.
- Remembrance of Mary and the saints or devotion to Mary and the saints.
- Baptism as sacrament of regeneration or testimony to regeneration.”

This list is by no means complete and the differences have, in some cases been misstated.

## SECTION IV

“We contend together” states that “In the exercise of these public responsibilities there has been in recent years a growing convergence and cooperation between Evangelicals and Catholics. We thank God for the discovery of one another in contending for a common cause. Much more important, we thank God for the discovery of one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.” So, “Together we contend for the truth that politics, law, and culture must be secured by moral truth.” Thus, “Christians individually and the church corporately also have a responsibility for the right ordering of civil society,” such as opposing pornography, homosexual practices, abortion, and “Together we contend for the truth that politics, law, and culture must be secured by moral truth.”

## SECTION V

“We Witness Together” states that “the achievement of good will and cooperation between Evangelicals and Catholics must not be at the price of the urgency and clarity of Christian witness to the Gospel.” However, “There is a necessary distinction between evangelizing [non-Christians] and what is today commonly called proselytizing or ‘sheep stealing.’ ” For “in view of the large number of non-Christians in the world and the enormous challenge of our common evangelistic task, it is neither theologically legitimate nor a prudent use of resources for one Christian community to proselytize among the active adherents of another Christian community.” Thus, “We condemn the practice of recruiting people from another community for purposes of denominational or institutional aggrandizement.”

The “Conclusion” states that “We do not know, we cannot know, what the Lord of history has in store for the Third Millennium.” However, “We do know that this is a time of opportunity—and . . . responsibility—for Evangelicals and Catholics to be Christians together in a way that helps prepare the world for the coming of him to whom belongs the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.”

Signatories to the declaration included noted persons across the evangelical spectrum, such as Elizabeth Achtemeier, Bill Bright, Os Guinness, Thomas Oden, J. I. Packer, and Pat Robertson. Among Roman Catholic signatories were William Bentley Ball, James Hitchcock, Peter Kreeft, Ralph Martin, and John Cardinal O’Connor.

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## REACTION TO THE DECLARATION

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### THE DAVE HUNT STATEMENT

Response to this document was immediate and spirited. From the far right sector of the evangelical/fundamentalist spectrum came the reactions of Dave Hunt. In an article titled

“The Gospel Betrayed,” he states, “The document overturns the Reformation and does incalculable damage to the cause of Christ.” Further, “the document represents the most devastating blow against the gospel in at least 1,000 years.” Finally, “The most tragic result of this historic development will be to prevent the gospel from being presented to lost millions who have now been wrongly reclassified by evangelical leaders as Christians.”<sup>1</sup>

## THE CURE EVALUATION

Closer to the center of the evangelical spectrum came a more measured but critical evaluation. In their journal *Modern Reformation*, Christians United for Reformation (CURE) produced a critical review of ECT.

Opening on a positive note, the review states that “Protestants have much to learn from Rome’s mature reflections in the realm of moral philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, and the like.” Negatively, the Decrees and Canons of the Council of Trent, which are authoritative for Roman Catholics, take a stance in opposition to the unchanging gospel of Christ.

Each affirmation in ECT is examined and found wanting. For example in Section I, “We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ” is incomplete because the Reformed qualifier *sola* (“only” or “alone”) is missing. They insist that “The doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone has since the Reformation been acknowledged by mainstream Protestants as ‘the article by which the church stands or falls,’ and the tenet that distinguishes a true from a false church. . . . The Council of Trent anathematized those who embrace this doctrine.” They add, “[W]e see justification by faith alone as an essential of the Gospel on which radical disagreement continues, and we deny the adequacy of any version of the Gospel that falls short at this point.”

Section II presents Christ as *example* while Reformed theology understands him first as *mediator*. In Section III is found a list of ten major differences that the CURE evaluation pronounces to contain “false dilemmas” and deals with “secondary issues.” One problem addressed is the confusion between “baptistic” and Reformed/Lutheran distinctives. Hence, “The reformers and their descendants were set in opposition not only to Rome’s magisterial authority, but also to the individualistic and subjective claims of the Anabaptist radicals.”

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1 “Current Issues,” *Voice, Journal of the Independent Fundamental Churches of America* (July/ Aug. 1994): 21–24. An equally severe, but better documented critique, came from well-known pastor and author John F. MacArthur, Jr., in *Reckless Faith: When the Church Loses Its Will to Discern* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994). Relevant material is found in chap. 5: “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” and Appendix 1: “Is Roman Catholicism Changing?” MacArthur condemns the ECT declaration and any attempt to effect a rapprochement between Roman Catholics and evangelicals.

In Section IV there are “many shared assumptions” that may lead to cooperation. Indeed, they acknowledge that “The extent of the creedal consensus that binds orthodox Evangelicals and Roman Catholics together warrants the making of common cause on moral and cultural issues in society. . . . Yet it is incorrect to regard such cooperation among Christians as common ecclesial action in fulfilling a common ecclesial mission.” For “We believe that cultural issues must be clearly distinguished from the mission of the church.” The CURE reaction to Section V accuses ECT of slighting the Reformed emphasis on “the objective Gospel message” for a “conversion experience.” Indeed, “To the extent that Evangelicals have replaced the objective emphasis . . . with the subjective . . . to that extent Evangelicals have become more closely linked to the Roman emphasis on justification as a process of conversion.”

In the “Conclusion” of the CURE critique, evangelicals may profit from and cooperate with Roman Catholic moral theologians even while they carefully reject Rome’s errors of systematic and biblical theology. The major error of Rome’s soteriology is that the righteousness of God “is a ‘gift,’ not in the sense of imputation of an alien righteousness, but in the sense of a revelation of communication of divine goodness somehow infused into us through Jesus.”

CURE’s final word is that in spite of an attempt to differentiate between the Council of Trent and Vatican II, Rome remains unchanged on these crucial doctrines. The review then presents “Ten Theses for Roman Catholic-Evangelical Dialogue,” which will be commented on in the following section.<sup>2</sup>

## THE HORTON–PACKER REVISION

Some months after the CURE evaluation, Michael Horton, director for CURE, and Anglican scholar J. I. Packer produced a revised Reformed statement. The basic thrust of the original “Ten Theses” is softened: “We deny that there can be any fellowship with those [Roman Catholics] who openly oppose the Gospel” is replaced by a milder one—“we deny the adequacy of any version of the Gospel that falls short at this point.”

Other weaker statements are made too, such as “We deny that this [the fact that some Catholics are ‘brothers and sisters’ in Christ despite the official teachings of their church] allows for joint communion or similar expressions of visible ecclesial union.” Also, “We deny such cooperation [on ‘moral and cultural issues’] is sufficient to declare that both communions are engaged in a common mission, part of a common church, and witness to a common Gospel” is weakened to “Yet it is incorrect to regard such cooperation among Christians as common ecclesial action in fulfilling a common mission.”

The Horton–Packer revision includes an introduction and seven points, which can be summarized as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> Reprint from *Modern Reformation* (Jan./Feb. 1994): 23–24.

- The agreement of both parties concerning the creeds does not mean that complete agreement on the essentials of the gospel has been achieved.
- Disagreement over justification by grace *alone* through faith *alone* because of Christ *alone* remains a serious obstacle.
- The Vatican II statements that unbelievers may be saved by their good works is extremely problematic for evangelicals.
- Consensus on moral and cultural matters are not to be understood as indicating a common ecclesial mission.
- The Roman Catholic claim on infallibility is rejected; dogmas such as justification according to Trent, transubstantiation, and the various doctrines surrounding the person and mission of the Virgin Mary remain serious differences between the two groups.
- While individual Roman Catholics can be our brethren in Christ, this does not mean that the Roman Catholic Church “in its present confession . . . is an acceptable Christian communion.”
- The mission stemming from the Great Commission of our Lord requires not only conversion, but “catechesis, nurture and discipline of converts.” Biblically based ecclesiastical structures are essential to Christian formation.<sup>3</sup>

## THE TABLETALK POSITION

A severe critique was also forthcoming from *TABLETALK*, the monthly magazine of the Ligonier Ministries. In the introduction, the editor states that Roman Catholics, “if they believe the doctrines of their Church, are not Christians.”<sup>4</sup> In an article titled, “After Light, Darkness,” Ligonier founder R. C. Sproul writes: “The Colson–Neuhaus document did not cause disunity but *exposed* a serious rift within evangelicalism.”<sup>5</sup> Sproul continues: “This [God’s grace, imputed to us when we are still sinners] the Reformers believed, is the biblical Gospel . . . the denial of which was worthy of anathema. This is

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3 “Resolutions for Roman Catholic and Evangelical Dialogue,” drafted by Michael Horton; revised by J. I. Packer. “Christians United for Reformation,” 1994. Signatories of the statement include such noted evangelicals as James Boice, R. C. Sproul, \*J. I. Packer, David Wells, John W. Montgomery, Roger Nicole, Robert Preus, Edmund Clowney, \*John White, \*Richard Land, and Michael Horton. (Those with a \* signed both this and the earlier ECT statement.)

4 R. C. Sproul, Jr., “Coram Deo,” *TABLETALK* (Nov. 1994): 2.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

the very Gospel Rome anathematized at Trent, thereby condemning the biblical Gospel.”<sup>6</sup>

In the same periodical, John Armstrong writes that “Rome does not confess the Gospel.” Further, “The fuzziness of this [ECT] document should trouble us precisely because we remain diligent for the Gospel itself.”<sup>7</sup> Others in this issue of *TABLETALK* are equally critical of the Colson–Neuhaus Declaration.<sup>8</sup>

## OTHER REACTIONS

In an editorial that appeared in *Christianity Today*, senior editor Timothy George writes a fairly positive evaluation of the ECT document.<sup>9</sup> However, two months later, a more critical appraisal of ECT appeared in the same magazine, which warns that “we dare not gloss over certain essential doctrines that still separate evangelicalism and Catholicism. While this document addresses some of these distinctions, it presents them in ways that do not always accurately reflect Protestant or evangelical convictions.”<sup>10</sup>

In May 1994 the ECT document was published in its entirety in *FIRST THINGS*, of which Fr. Richard John Neuhaus is editor in chief. In the journal’s “Letters to the Editor” (Nov. 1994), two communications reflect both sides of the issue. A Catholic nun writes, “I was amazed at the compromising attitude of the Catholic participants toward Evangelicals.” Indeed, “Protestants are not one with the Catholic Church.” Therefore, “The Catholic Church does not compromise its doctrine to accommodate Protestants—or shouldn’t.”<sup>11</sup>

From the evangelical side comes the following: “Thus, acknowledging joyfully the numerous points in common presented in this document . . . I must confess deep reservations on behalf of my evangelical brethren in regions where this distinctly American Christian experience is not their own.” These evangelicals “frequently

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6 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

8 It is of some interest to note that an earlier edition of *TABLETALK* (May 1994) titled “Should Old Aquinas Be Forgotten?” attempted to make the case that Thomas Aquinas (the premier theologian of the Roman Catholic Church—designated the “Doctor of Angels”) can be safely embraced by evangelicals. Evangelical and Reformed scholars such as R. C. Sproul, Norman L. Geisler, and Ronald Nash contribute positive evaluations of Aquinas. John H. Gerstner, who is adamant in his belief that Roman Catholicism is apostate, even writes an article titled, “Aquinas Was a Protestant”!

9 “Catholics and Evangelicals in the Trenches,” *Christianity Today*, 16 May 1994, pp. 16–17.

10 “Should Roman Catholics and Evangelicals Join Ranks?” *Christianity Today*, 18 July 1994, p. 17.

11 Sister Winifred Bauer, C.P.P.S., “Catholics & Evangelicals (Cont.),” pp. 5–6.

encounter a virulent nationalistic Catholicism that is actually quite fundamentalist in the world-religious sense.”<sup>12</sup>

Several of the Protestants who signed the ECT document have received censure from the groups they represent. John H. White, president of Geneva College and past president of the National Association of Evangelicals, was persuaded by his denomination (the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America) to withdraw his name from the ECT statement.

Another signer who received heat from his denomination was Richard D. Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission (CLC). The Foreign Mission Board trustees of the Southern Baptist Church, on June 16, 1994, “by unanimous resolution, expressed concern that the Evangelical-Catholic document is subject to interpretations harmful to Southern Baptist work of global witness and missionary outreach.”<sup>13</sup> Land defended his endorsement of the document in question but, according to sources close to him, he privately regrets signing it.<sup>14</sup>

The quarterly *Touchstone* has been very supportive of the ECT document. The statement was reproduced by them in Vol. 7.2, Spring 1994, and has been commented on often in the journal.

An associate editor of *Touchstone*, Patrick Henry Reardon, wrote an editorial interacting with *Christianity Today*'s editorial warning of July 18, 1994 (reported above). Reardon, a priest in the Antiochian Orthodox Church, commenting on reactions to ECT, claimed the rumblings were “entirely Protestant rumblings. Not a whisper of complaint was heard in Roman Catholic quarters.”<sup>15</sup> This is incorrect.

In fact, CATHOLIC ANSWERS, a lay-run Catholic apologetics and evangelization organization, is very concerned that the Colson–Neuhaus statement is loaded *against* the Roman Catholic position.<sup>16</sup> Reardon is critical not only of Kenneth Kantzer of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School but also of Michael Horton's evaluation of ECT, which appeared in *Modern Reformation* (No. 26). He states, “I am convinced that the doctrine of external justification as described by Horton is a serious distortion of Holy Scripture.”

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12 Kurt A. Richardson, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, *ibid.*, p. 6.

13 “Report of Committee on Resolutions on Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics,” meeting in Orlando, Florida, June 14–16, 1994.

14 “Perspective: Evangelicals and Catholics?” *Light*, a publication of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, May/June 1994.

15 “Editorial: Evangelicals & Catholics Together?” *Touchstone: A Journal of Ecumenical Orthodoxy*, Fall 1994, vol. 7, no. 4, p. 6.

16 One Catholic team engaged Michael Horton (president of CURE), W. Robert Godfrey (president and professor of church history at Westminster Theological Seminary in California), and Lutheran scholar and lecturer Rod Rosenblatt in a public debate on the topic, “What Still Divides Us?” on March 3 and 4, 1995, in Pasadena, California. *Sola scriptura* and *sola fide* were the topics addressed.

<sup>17</sup> Further, Reardon understand Horton to believe “that . . . in order to be saved, I must have not only faith but also a correct doctrine (‘some recognition’) of justification by faith.” Reardon rejects Horton in this point and states, “I believe that a man is justified by faith, not by entertaining a correct view on justification.”<sup>18</sup>

An extensive examination of the question of Roman Catholic-evangelical cooperation appeared in *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 3, no. 3.<sup>19</sup> The author concludes, “Evangelicals are not called to view other streams within broader Christendom with an uncritical eye. Neither are they constrained to dissolve their confessional differences. God is not interested in a merger between Rome and Wheaton.” However, “Those claiming to be a part of the Body of Christ stand nevertheless under the divine mandate to promote reconciliation—as far as it lies within their power—with all who profess and worship Jesus Christ as Lord ( John 17 ).”<sup>20</sup>

The Christian Research Institute (CRI) has monitored developments stemming from the Colson–Neuhaus statement. Indeed, its president, Hank Hanegraaff, a friend of Charles Colson, refused to sign the Colson–Neuhaus statement. While believing that some of the evangelical criticisms of ECT are too harsh, CRI nevertheless voices concern about the statement in a number of areas.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, they have published a number of articles by the present authors critical of Roman Catholic doctrine.<sup>22</sup>

Discussions surrounding the ECT document and those who crafted it have continued. One such meeting produced a statement drafted by J. I. Packer and carrying the signatures of Packer, Bill Bright and Charles Colson. It was offered to the other original Protestant signers of ECT for their approval as well.

We will summarize the points which emerged from this statement:

1. Evangelical cooperation with orthodox Roman Catholics to advance the goals mentioned in ECT “does not imply acceptance of Roman Catholic doctrinal distinctives or endorsement of the Roman Catholic church system.”

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<sup>17</sup> *Touchstone*, *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* The authors are in agreement with Horton against Reardon on the definition of justification, but concede that Reardon may have a point with the second comment.

<sup>19</sup> J. Daryl Charles, “Evangelical-Catholic Dialogue: Basis, Boundaries, Benefits,” pp. 289–305.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305.

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum from Elliot Miller to Hank Hanegraaff, “Evangelicals and Catholics Together,” June 16, 1994. CRI’s president Hank Hanegraaff did not sign the ECT document as erroneously reported.

<sup>22</sup> See Norman L. Geisler and Ralph MacKenzie, “The Catholic Protestant Debate on Papal Infallibility” and “The Protestant Catholic Debate on Biblical Authority” in *Christian Research Journal* (fall 1994 and spring 1994).

2. “We understand the statement that ‘we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ,’ in terms of the substitutionary atonement and imputed righteousness of Christ, leading to full assurance of eternal salvation. . . .”
3. Those who profess to be Christian—Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox—should in addition to an orthodox creed, exhibit signs indicating new life in Christ.
4. The signatories “hold that evangelism and church planting are always legitimate, whatever forms of church life are present already.”
5. Further theological discussions stemming from the ECT document should reflect the above clarifications to prevent misunderstandings of basic evangelical concerns.

As a result of this meeting and this new addendum to the ECT document, Dr. John F. Ankerberg (a participant in the discussion) feels that the ambiguity that existed in the original document has been addressed and “this new statement . . . reaffirms and clarifies the gospel, which is the life of the church.” It appears that this addendum goes a significant way toward clearing up confusion that the original ECT document generated.

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## EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

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### POSITIVE EVALUATION

- Because Roman Catholics and evangelicals share the same view on a number of societal and moral issues, the document is right to call for cooperation in these situations.
- It correctly points to a common core of theological beliefs that unite *believing* Roman Catholics and evangelicals. (This is the thesis of Part One of this volume).
- Common ideological foes of Catholics and evangelicals are identified (see Part Three of this volume).
- An attempt is made to find some common ground concerning salvation by grace through faith (see chap. 5 of this volume).

### NEGATIVE EVALUATION

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23 “News Release,” Dr. John F. Ankerberg, Ankerberg Theological Research Institute, January 27, 1995.

- A serious problem is the document's equating the term "Roman Catholics" (without a qualifier, such as "believing" or "traditional") and evangelicals. It would be equally inappropriate to link the terms "Protestants" (in general, which includes nonorthodox members) and " *believing* Roman Catholics."
- The document overlooks the crucial disagreements concerning the nature and extent of justification: grace *alone*, through faith *alone*, based on Christ *alone*.
- The question of the extent of the canon should not be overlooked, since the Apocrypha (accepted by Catholics) supports purgatory and prayers for the dead (see chap. 9 ).
- Questions concerning the idolatrous implications surrounding the worship of the consecrated host are not addressed.
- Evangelical concern over inappropriate attention involved in the veneration of saints, images, and especially Mary is not addressed.
- The statement in many places is somewhat theologically unsophisticated.
- A visible *ecclesial* union with Rome is encouraged.
- The document confuses the *cultural* mandate ( Gen. 1 ) with the *Gospel* mandate ( Matt. 28 ).
- Evangelization between the two groups is prohibited.

## CONCLUSION

A number of crucial questions remain to be resolved.

- How is the gospel to be defined? If belief in the "forensic" aspect of justification is demanded as a condition for receiving salvation, then how could people between the time of Paul and the Reformation be saved?
- To what extent is the gospel found in official Roman Catholicism? Even the severest evangelical critics of the Roman Catholic Church admit that individual Catholics can and are saved. Is this *because of* or *in spite of* their church's official teaching?
- Does Catholicism officially deny the saving gospel in principle or only detract from it in practice?
- Were the Reformers correct in believing that after Trent Roman Catholicism was an apostate church, since it infallibly defined a false gospel (one that included

meritorious works as a condition for receiving the gift of eternal life) as the true gospel?

In the final analysis, then, the question is this: is Roman Catholicism (since Trent) a false church with significant truth in it, as the Reformers believed, or is it a true church with significant error in it? Since “a true church” must proclaim the “true gospel” ( Gal. 1:8 ; 2:4 ), the answer will depend on what is essential to the true gospel.

In an attempt to respond to this question three important distinctions must be made. First, there is a difference between whether Catholics can be truly saved inside their system and whether their system officially proclaims the true gospel. Virtually everyone recognizes that one can be saved by believing the gospel in spite of being part of a system that may officially deny essential parts of the gospel.

Second, there is a difference between what is essential to the gospel itself and what is essential for people to believe about the gospel in order to be saved. For example, we believe that imputed righteousness is essential to the true gospel, but we also hold that one can be saved without believing that imputed righteousness (or forensic justification) is an essential part of the true gospel. Otherwise, few people were saved between the time of the apostle Paul and the Reformation, since scarcely anyone taught imputed righteousness (or forensic justification) during that period! That is, God has to impute Christ’s righteousness (and make a forensic declaration of justification) to people in order for them to be saved, even if they do not believe that he has to do so. Likewise, God can only save people “by grace alone through faith alone based on Christ alone,” even if they do not believe this is necessary to the way God does it.

Third, it is important to distinguish between what the Roman Catholic Church fails to affirm as essential elements of the gospel and what it actually denies is an essential element of the gospel. We suggest that the simple failure to affirm an element (say, forensic justification) is not the equivalent of affirming a false gospel. Rather, it is merely proclaiming an incomplete gospel. It seems to us that this charge is justly laid at Rome’s door.

The bottom line, then, is whether there is anything in what Roman Catholicism has infallibly proclaimed that denies an essential element of the true gospel. According to the Reformers, the answer was affirmative, since Catholicism denies salvation is “by grace alone through faith alone, based on Christ alone.” For Trent demanded that meritorious works are a necessary condition for receiving the gift of eternal life (= entering heaven). Thus, while affirming the necessity of grace, Catholicism denies the exclusivity of grace as a condition for receiving the gift of eternal life (see chap. 12 ). This, in the eyes of historic Protestantism, is a false gospel.

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