

3. Order of Salvation

In this part of dogmatics will be treated

- A. Vocation (call).
- B. Conversion (regeneration, illumination).
- C. Justification.
- D. Sanctification.
- E. Preservation (perseverance and election).
- F. Mystic union.

A. Vocation

I. God calls and invites sinners to accept and enjoy the fruits of Christ's redemptive work.

1. Human beings have by nature no knowledge of the way of salvation.

a) They are by nature unable to conceive and unwilling to seek salvation by grace.

1) This is the result of original sin.

Note: Consider how this reflects both aspects of original sin: both the lack of true fear, love and trust in God and the presence of natural hostility toward him.

Augsburg Confession, II, p 43: Also they teach that since the fall of Adam, all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence.

2) Scripture is rich in descriptive terms for this natural spiritual condition of mankind.

-a) Scripture pictures it as general depravity.

Psalm 14:2,3 The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. ² All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Psalm 53:3 Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Romans 3:10-12 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

-b) Scripture calls this condition darkness or blindness.

John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

Acts 26:18 [I am sending you] to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Ephesians 4:17,18 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

-c) Scripture pictures it as hostility.

Romans 8:7 The sinful mind is hostile (*ἐχθρα*) to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Colossians 1:21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

-d) Scripture calls it spiritual death.

Ephesians 2:1,5 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins. ⁵ God made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Colossians 2:13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.

-e) Scripture calls it desire that is diametrically opposed to God.

Genesis 6:5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

Genesis 8:21 The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done."

Galatians 5:17,24 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

James 1:14 But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

Romans 7:8,21,23 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. ²¹ So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²³ But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

3) Sinful human beings oppose the gospel of free justification.

1 Corinthians 1:18,23 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ²³ But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 2:8,14 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ¹⁴ The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

2 Corinthians 4:3,4 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Acts 17:6,7,18 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, ⁷ and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." ¹⁸ A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

Isaiah 53:1-3 Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

b) Therefore, if Christ's work of redemption is not to be lost, God himself must bring sinners to acceptance.

1 Corinthians 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

1 Corinthians 2:12,13 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.¹³ This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

2 Corinthians 5:19 God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children."

2. God proclaims salvation and invites sinners to accept and enjoy it.

a) God's overtures to the sinner are often referred to as a call or vocation.

1) Scripture in several places uses this term specifically.

Romans 1:5-7 Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.⁶ You also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.⁷ To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:28,30 We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

1 Corinthians 1:9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

Galatians 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Galatians 5:8 That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.

Ephesians 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

1 Thessalonians 2:12 Encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

1 Peter 1:15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

2) God's call or vocation is often presented in Scripture in the form of an invitation.

Matthew 11:28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

John 7:37 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

2 Corinthians 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Isaiah 55:1,3,5 Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. ³ Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. ⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor.

Matthew 22:3,9 He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. ⁹ "Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find."

3) Since the preaching of the gospel is always the announcement of the great things God has done for sinners, the call or vocation is practically identical with that preaching of the gospel.

-a) Notice how closely the proclamation of the gospel is connected to the call to faith.

Mark 16:15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 22:4 Then he sent some more servants and said, "Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet."

-b) If any distinction is to be made, the gospel call is issued on the basis of the gospel proclamation.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

b) God's means of calling are the means of grace.

1) This is God's ordinary way of calling.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:14-17 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" ¹⁶ But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" ¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

2) God, of course, may call directly.

Acts 9:3-5 As he reached Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

Quenstedt: That extraordinary call is special and very rare. It was indeed extended in ancient times in the Old Testament and now and then in the beginning of the New. But today, after the gospel has been preached in the whole world and the church has been established through the apostles, it has clearly been set aside (*TDP*, Pt III, chap. V, sect. I, thesis V, note II, p 462).

3) In a loose sense, anything that causes a sinner to stop and think may be termed a call. This is part of what may often be called "pre-evangelism."

Acts 17:27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Romans 2:14,15 Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law,¹⁵ since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

1 Kings 10:1 When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relation to the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions.

1 Thessalonians 1:8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it.

Quenstedt: The aforementioned types of call, rather than being a call in the proper sense, are certain invitations and inducements to inquire about the true worship of God and about the congregation in which that worship flourishes (*TDP*, Pt III, chap. V, sect. I, thesis III, note II, p 461).

c) God is moved to call sinners.

1) Only his grace moves him to extend this call.

Galatians 1:15 God...set me apart from birth and called me by his grace.

2 Timothy 1:9 [God] has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.

Psalms 86:15 But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

2) His grace responds freely to the self-inflicted human misery caused by sin.

Matthew 9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

d) When Scripture uses the term “call,” it is usually referring to the effective call that brings a sinner to faith.

Note: The gospel is always *efficacious*, that is, it is always able to convert, because the power of the Holy Spirit is always at work in it to create and strengthen faith. Yet the gospel is not always *effective*, that is, it does not always work faith because of the stubbornness of human unbelief. Caution: The bare statement that the gospel is not always effective may be confusing.

3. God's call is serious, efficacious, and universal, but not irresistible.

a) His call remains serious, efficacious, and universal even though all who hear that call are not brought to faith.

1) Clearly, not all who are called are saved.

Isaiah 65:2 All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations.

Matthew 22:14 For many are invited, but few are chosen.

2) The fault is always sinful human nature's resistance to God's grace.

Matthew 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

Formula of Concord, Ep., XI, p 834, 11: However, that "many are called and few chosen," Matt. 22:14, does not mean that God is not willing to save everybody; but the reason is that they either do not at all hear God's Word, but willfully despise it, stop their ears and harden their hearts, and in this manner foreclose the ordinary way to the Holy Spirit, so that he cannot perform his work in them, or, when they have heard it, make light of it again and do not heed it, for which not God or his election, but their wickedness, is responsible. [2 Pet. 2:1ff ; Luke 11:49,52; Heb. 12:25f.]

3) Therefore, God's call is not irresistible.

Acts 7:51 You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

b) God's call is never sham.

1) It is always sincere.

1 Timothy 2:4 God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Ezekiel 33:11 Say to them, “As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?”

Formula of Concord, TD XI, p 1072,1074, 29,34: This call of God, which is made through the preaching of the Word, we should not regard as jugglery, but know that thereby God reveals his will, that in those whom he thus calls he will work through the Word, that they may be enlightened, converted, and saved. For the Word, whereby we are called, is a ministration of the Spirit, that gives the Spirit, or whereby the Spirit is given, 2 Cor. 3:8, and a power of God unto salvation, Rom. 1:16. And since the Holy Spirit wishes to be efficacious through the Word, and to strengthen and give power and ability, it is God’s will that we should receive the Word, believe and obey it.^{34]} However, that many are called and few chosen is not owing to the fact that the call of God, which is made through the Word, had the meaning as though God said: Outwardly, through the Word, I indeed call to my kingdom all of you to whom I give my Word; however, in my heart I do not mean this with respect to all, but only with respect to a few; for it is my will that the greatest part of those whom I call through the Word shall not be enlightened nor converted, but be and remain damned, although through the Word, in the call, I declare myself to them otherwise. *Hoc enim esset Deo contradictorias voluntates affingere*, that is: For this would be to assign contradictory wills to God.

2) The efficacy of God’s call is assured by the efficacy of the means of grace.

Isaiah 55:10,11 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Jeremiah 23:29 “Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?”

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Formula of Concord, Ep., II, p 786, 4-6: God the Holy Spirit, however, does not effect conversion without means, but uses for this purpose the preaching and hearing of God’s Word, as it is written Rom. 1:16: “The gospel is the power of God^{5]} unto salvation to every one that believes.” Also Rom. 10:17: “Faith comes by hearing of the Word of God.” And it

is God's will that his Word should be heard, and that man's ears should not be closed. Ps. 95:8. With this Word the Holy Spirit is present, and opens hearts, so that they, as Lydia in Acts 16:14, are attentive to it, and are thus converted alone through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, whose⁶¹ work alone the conversion of man is. For without his grace, and if he do not grant the increase, our willing and running, our planting, sowing, and watering, all are nothing, as Christ says John 15:5: "Without me you can do nothing." With these brief words he denies to the free will its powers, and ascribes everything to God's grace, in order that no one may boast before God. 1 Cor. 1:29; 2 Cor. 12:5; Jer. 9:23.

3) Calvinism errs in assuming a special call for the elect.

Wayne Grudem: In distinction from common grace, the grace of God that brings people to salvation is often called "saving grace." Of course, when we talk about "common grace" and "saving grace" we are not implying that there are two different kinds of grace in God himself, but only that God's grace manifests itself in the world in two different ways. Common grace is different from saving grace in its *results* (it does not bring about salvation), in its *recipients* (it is given to believer and unbelievers alike), and in its *source* (it does not directly flow from Christ's atoning work, since Christ's death did not earn any measure of forgiveness for unbelievers, and therefore did not merit the blessings of common grace for them either) (*Systematic Theology*, p 657, 658).

Wayne Grudem: In distinction from effective calling, which is entirely an act of God, we may talk about the *gospel call* in general which comes through human speech. This gospel call is offered to all people, even those who do not accept it. Sometimes this gospel call is referred to as *external calling* or *general calling*. By contrast, the effective calling of God that actually brings about a willing response from the person who hears it is sometimes called *internal calling*. The gospel call is general and external and often rejected, while the effective call is particular, internal, and *always* effective (*Systematic Theology*, p 693).

Millard Erickson: Special or effective calling, then, involves an extraordinary presentation of the message of salvation. It is sufficiently powerful to counteract the effects of sin and enable the person to believe. It is also so appealing that the person will believe. Special calling is in many ways similar to the prevenient grace of which Arminians speak. It differs from that concept, however, in two respects. It is bestowed only upon the elect, not upon all humans, and it leads infallibly or efficaciously to a positive response by the recipient (*Christian Theology*, p 944).

Robert Raymond: Nor does the Word have in itself the intrinsic power to convert men and to produce holiness in them, as Lutherans contend. To the contrary, God and God alone is the efficient cause of all salvific grace. Accordingly, he must do his saving work by and with these means immediately in the hearts of men if they would in fact become instruments of grace (*A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, p 913).

Quenstedt: The Calvinists distinguish between an external and an internal call and they explain them both a) with respect to their origin, because the former comes through the ministry of the Word, whether it is extended outwardly to all or to certain ones, the latter is extended through the Holy Spirit who inwardly enlightens and moves the hearts of the elect; b) with respect to the subjects who are called, because the former is extended both to the elect and the reprobate, but the latter is for the elect alone, so that the reprobates are at no time made participants in the former; c) with respect to efficacy, because the latter alone is efficacious; it alone both irresistibly enlightens the mind and moves the will, and it can never be destroyed or extinguished where it has once taken root in the soul, but the former without the latter is useless for salvation and without power.—We Lutherans agree that such a distinction can be made but in such a way that we do not set the external call in opposition to the internal. Nor do we separate the one from the other, since the external call is the means or organ through which the internal call comes and through the former God is powerfully at work in the hearts of men. If the external call does not correspond in its entirety with the internal, if one can be called externally who is not also called internally, it [i.e. the external call] would be useless, deceptive, imaginary (*TDP*, Pt III, p 466).

c) God's call is universal.

1) It is limited only by the extent of sin in mankind.

Matthew 9:13 But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

1 Timothy 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.

Formula of Concord, Ep. XI, p 832, 8 This Christ calls to himself all sinners and promises them rest, and he is in earnest that all men should come to him and suffer themselves to be helped, to whom he offers himself in his Word, and wishes them to hear it and not to stop their ears or despise the Word. Moreover, he promises the power and working of the Holy Spirit, and divine assistance for perseverance and eternal salvation.

2) It is God's will that his call reach every sinner.

-a) This is clearly taught in Scripture.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

1 Timothy 2:4 God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Mark 16:15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Quenstedt: We say, however, that this call is universal, 1) with respect to the intention of God, ... 2) with respect, also, to the command of Christ... To every place therefore to which creation extends the preaching of the Word also reaches... 3) with respect to the preaching itself, for all men in the whole universe have been called. For the voice of the apostles has gone out into the whole world (Mk 16:20; Ro 10:18) (*TDP*, Pt III, chap. V, sect. I, thesis V, note, p 464).

Formula of Concord, TD XI, p 1070, 28: Therefore, if we wish to consider our eternal election to salvation with profit, we must in every way hold sturdily and firmly to this, that, as the preaching of repentance, so also the promise of the gospel is *universalis* (universal), that is, it pertains to all men, Luke 24:47. For this reason Christ has commanded that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among ALL nations. For God loved the WORLD and gave His Son, John 3:16. Christ bore the sins of the WORLD, John 1:29. He gave His flesh for the life of the WORLD, John 6: 51. His blood is the propitiation for the sins of the WHOLE WORLD, 1 John 1:7, 2:2. Christ says: Come unto me, ALL you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, Matt. 11:28. God has concluded them ALL in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon ALL, Rom. 11:32. The Lord is not willing that ANY should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance, 2 Pet. 3:9. The same Lord over all is rich unto ALL that call upon him, Rom. 10:12. The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto ALL and upon ALL them that believe, Rom. 3:22. This is the will of him that sent me, that EVERY ONE that sees the Son and believes on him may have everlasting life, John 6:40. Likewise it is Christ's command that to all in common to whom repentance is preached this promise of the gospel also should be offered Luke 24:47; Mark 16:15.

-b) Though there may be differences in the external mode of the call, yet essentially it is everywhere the same.

Hollaz: The ordinary call is equally extended to all in substance, or in so far as it is viewed essentially, but it is unequally extended to all when we consider sequence, manner and degree, time and duration. The ordinary call is equally extended, 1) because we are equally called by saving grace ... 2) because the same powers enabling us to believe are offered to all ... 3) because we are called through the same means, the same Gospel, the same baptism, all equally efficacious, if you keep the intention of God in mind (*Examen*, Pt III, sect. I, chap. IV, p 253).

3) The gospel call has repeatedly gone out to the whole world.

Quenstedt: This universal call, however, has been solemnly extended on three distinct occasions, namely, at the time of our fallen first parents (Gn 3:15); at the time of Noah after the flood (Gn 9:8,9; 2 Pe 2:5) and at the time of the apostles (Mk 16:15,20; Ro 10:18; Col 1:6,23). This threefold call came not only to those who were present, or those to whom it was extended directly, but it pertains also to their descendants (Dt 1:6; 4:11; Gn 17:7,10; cp. also Lk 24:47; Mt 24:14) (*TDP*, Pt III, chap. V, sect. I, thesis XIII, p 465).

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Romans 10:18 But I ask, Did they not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

Colossians 1:6,23 All over the world this gospel is producing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. ²³ This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

4) God often judges and punishes people's contempt for his call by withdrawing it or by allowing delusions to prevail.

-a) Scripture offers specific examples of this judgment.

Amos 8:11,12 "The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. ¹² Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it."

Acts 13:46 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and

do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.”

Acts 28:26-28 Go to this people and say, “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.”²⁷ For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.²⁸ Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!

2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.¹¹ For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie¹² and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

-b) Yet it is not for us to judge wherever and whenever this judgment has taken place. We cannot in every case fully understand the ways of God.

Koenig: We cannot deny, although the benevolent will of God for the salvation of all men through faith in Christ stands, although the universal merit of Christ also stands, and joined with it His intercession for all men as Mediator, that when the means of salvation are dispensed there are often some things that are not equal, which must be committed to the hidden and unsearchable judgment of God (*Theol Pos*, Par 441, p 187).

Hutter: The meaning of our thesis, therefore, is that children pay for the guilt of their parents and elders in this that they are born outside the church but not in this that on account of the ingratitude of their parents every opportunity to hear the Word of God or salvation itself is cut off and taken away (*Loci*, p 789).

Gerhard: But we grant that we cannot in these and similar special cases search out and set forth exactly why God makes these decisions. Nevertheless, we ought not to resort to any absolute decree of reprobation. Rather let us cling firmly to these universal pronouncements: God wants all men to be saved, etc. (*Loci*, vol XXII, ch V, par III, p 789).

B. Conversion

The transition of a man from the state of sin into the state of faith is variously designated in Scripture as: repentance, regeneration, and illumination. However the term most commonly used is conversion. Repentance describes the change properly; the other expressions are metaphorical.

Note: Many of the terms in this section can be used in a wider or narrower sense. In this section, we are using these terms in their narrow sense for that instant and moment when the Spirit brings the sinner from spiritual death to spiritual life. In the wider sense these terms can be used to include both God's work to bring about conversion in the sinner's heart through law and gospel as well as the daily contrition and repentance of the Christian after the moment of conversion.

I. Repentance is a change of heart and mind in which the person regrets his sinfulness and through faith embraces the grace of God.

1. Repentance in a broader sense has a double aspect.

a) Scripture speaks of both of these aspects.

1) Terrors of conscience over sin (contrition).

Job 42:6 Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Matthew 11:21 Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Acts 8:22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.

2 Corinthians 12:21 I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God.

Revelation 2:21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling.

Friedlieb: Contrition is sincere grief because of sins and their justly deserved punishments (*Medulla Theologiae*, p 1319)

Calov: Contrition is the suffering of the soul, aroused by the law because of sins and their very severe punishments, which drives us to Christ (*Theol Pos*, Pt III, sect. IV, ch. VII, thesis V, p 500).

Haffenreffer (d 1619): What is contrition? It is sincere and true sorrow of heart in which when we are made conscious of sins by the Law of

God, we tremble in fear before the anger of God and the punishments we have deserved as we grieve over the sins we have committed (*Loci*, Bk III, sect. III, loc V, p 503).

2) Faith is the principal element of repentance.

-a) This is the consistent teaching of Scripture.

Luke 15:7,10 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

Luke 24:47 Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 16:31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

Acts 5:31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

Revelation 16:9 They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.

Gerhard: That true faith in Christ, no less [than contrition], is required for repentance that leads to salvation and that it constitutes the second part of such repentance, we show by the following arguments: 1) Repentance is a work that leads to life (Ac 11:18), by which forgiveness of sins (Jr 36:3; Ac 3:19), the grace of God, righteousness is obtained... But now there is no room for [any of] these apart from the faith without which it is impossible to please God (He 11:6). In reality only by faith in Christ are these benefits obtained. Therefore ... 2) That by which true repentance that leads to salvation is distinguished from false repentance that leads to death should not be excluded from the essential parts of true repentance that leads to salvation. But now by faith true repentance that leads to salvation is distinguished from false repentance that leads to death. Therefore ... 3) Whatever is needed as an essential part in describing true repentance that leads to salvation must not be excluded from the number of its parts. But now faith is required as an essential part in describing true repentance that leads to salvation (Mt 21:32; Mk 1:15; Ac 20:21; Mt 3:2; Ac 19:4). Therefore ... 4) If faith is excluded from the number of essential parts of repentance, then there is no *terminus ad quem* in

conversion (no goal in the process of conversion), no difference between repentance that leads to salvation and repentance that leads to death, abiding consolation is taken away from terrified consciences, repentance in its totality would be a work of the law and therefore would not be repentance unto life, unto salvation (Ac 11:18; 2 Cor 7:10). Since all these are absurd, it surely cannot be denied that faith is a part of repentance (*Loci*, Vol VI, locus XVI, par XLII, p 236).

Quenstedt: Observe here the theological rule: Whenever the effect of the forgiveness of sins is ascribed to repentance and there is nevertheless no express mention of faith, then the word “repentance” must in those passages be understood as signifying the whole work of conversion (*TDP*, Pt III, chap. IX, sect. I, thesis V, note, p 580).

Chemnitz: Faith is assenting to the whole word of God set before us, and in this Word to the promise of free reconciliation granted to us for the sake of Christ the Mediator . It therefore remains firm and established that the proper and principal object of justifying faith, in respect to which and by the apprehension of which it justifies, is the free promise of the mercy of God who forgives sins, adopts and accepts the believers into eternal life because of Christ the Mediator (*Examen*, de fide justificante, p 161).

Quenstedt: The general object of faith is the Scripture or the things revealed in Scripture; the special [object of faith] is the doctrine of the gospel. But as far as justifying faith as such is concerned, the proper and special object of faith is the grace and mercy of God promised in the Word to individual believers and merited for them by the active and passive obedience of Christ... This we prove from Ro 3:24, 25, where the apostle designates Christ as the object of faith (or, asserts that the object of faith is Christ) not viewed in a general way but as the *ἰλαστήριον*, the appeasement or appeaser of the wrath of God, set before us in His blood (*TDP*, Pt IV, chap. VIII, sect. I, thesis XIII, note 1, p 285).

Calov: Justifying faith has as its object not all the things which God has revealed, but the grace and mercy of God, or rather the gospel promise about the grace of God, and therefore the suffering and death of Christ, by which redemption and salvation have been won for us, as well as his righteousness and obedience (Ac 4:12; Ro 3:24,25; 1 Cor 15:3) (*Apodixis*, de fide justificante, par. XXI, p 298).

-b) Thus faith follows contrition (logically, not chronologically).

Torgau Colloquy, 1527: Agricola (who maintained that repentance is worked by the gospel, not the law): Contrition begins with faith in the threats of the law. Melanchthon: What else is faith in the threats but fear? Luther said that it was his opinion that the word

“faith” is used for the faith which justifies us and consoles us in these terrors. (See the Concordia Triglotta, Historical Introduction, p 163.)

b) No other elements, other than contrition and faith, are mentioned in Scripture as belonging to the essence of repentance.

1) Therefore we speak of these two emotions as constituting repentance.

Augsburg Confession, XII, p 48, 2–5: Now, repentance consists properly of these ³¹ two parts: One is contrition, that is, ⁴¹ terrors smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin; the other is faith, which is born of ⁵¹ the gospel, or of absolution, and believes that for Christ’s sake, sins are forgiven.

Apology, XII, p 254, 8: They teach that by contrition we merit grace. In reference to which, if any one should ask why Saul and Judas and similar persons, who were dreadfully contrite, did not obtain grace, the answer was to be taken from faith and according to the gospel, that Judas did not believe, that he did not support himself by the gospel and promise of Christ. For faith shows the distinction between the contrition of Judas and of Peter. But the adversaries take their answer from the law, that Judas did not love God, but feared the punishments. Is not this teaching uncertain and improper things concerning repentance?

Apology, XII, p 258,260, 29,31,32,35-36: From contrition we separate those idle and infinite discussions, as to when we grieve from love of God, and when from fear of punishment. For these are nothing but mere words and a useless babbling of persons who have never experienced the state of mind of a terrified conscience. But we say that contrition is the true terror of conscience, which feels that God is angry with sin, and which grieves that it has sinned. And this contrition takes place in this manner when sins are censured by the Word of God, because the sum of the preaching of the gospel is this, namely, to convict of sin, and to offer for Christ’s sake the remission of sins and righteousness, and the Holy Spirit, and eternal life, and that as regenerate men we should do good works. ³¹ And of these terrors Scripture speaks, as Ps. 38: 4,8: “For my iniquities are gone over mine head, as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.... I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.” ... ³² In these terrors, conscience feels the wrath of God against sin, which is unknown to secure men walking according to the flesh as the sophists and their like. It sees the turpitude of sin, and seriously grieves that it has sinned; meanwhile it also flees from the dreadful wrath of God.... ³⁵ We therefore add as the second part of repentance, Of Faith in Christ, that in these terrors the gospel concerning Christ ought to be set forth to consciences, in which gospel the remission of sins is freely promised concerning Christ. Therefore, they ought to believe that for Christ’s sake ³⁶ sins are freely remitted to them. This faith cheers, sustains, and quickens the contrite, according to Rom. 5:1: “:Being justified by faith, we have peace with God. This faith obtains the remission of sins.”: This faith justifies before God, as the

same passage testifies: Being justified by faith. This faith shows the distinction between the contrition of Judas and Peter, of Saul and of David. The contrition of Judas or Saul is of no avail, for the reason that to this there is not added this faith, which apprehends the remission of sins, bestowed as a gift for Christ's sake. Accordingly, the contrition of David or Peter avails, because to it there is added faith, which apprehends the remission of sins granted for Christ's sake.

Hafenreffer: How many parts does repentance have? Two, first, contrition, secondly, faith (*Loci*, Bk V, sect. III, locus V, p 502).

Heerbrand: How many parts does repentance have? Two. Which are they? Contrition and faith (*Compendium*, de poenitentia, p 255).

Urbanus Rhegius (d. 1541): The gospel teaches repentance, that is to grieve from the heart over the sins that have been committed, to be truly terrified by the judgment of God, so that the heart becomes crushed (contrite) and humbled, and at the same time to believe firmly that all sins, no matter how many they may be, have been forgiven us by God because of the merits of Christ (*Formulae*, as quoted by Hoenecke, Vol III, p 288).

Quenstedt: That which makes up repentance is of two parts, contrition and faith (Ac 20:21; 26:18; Is 57:15) (*TDP*, Pt III, chap. IX, sect. I, thesis XI, p 581).

2) **The new obedience in good works is not the essence of repentance but is the fruit of repentance.**

Matthew 3:8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Luke 3:8,10-14 "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham."¹⁰ "What should we do then?" the crowd asked.¹¹ John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same."¹² Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"¹³ "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.¹⁴ Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."

Acts 26:20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.

Revelation 2:5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

Apology, XII, p 260, 37-38: Neither is love present before reconciliation has been made by faith. For without Christ God's law or the First

Commandment is not performed, according to Eph. 2:18; 3:12 and Rom. 5:2: By Christ we have access to God. And this faith grows gradually and throughout the entire life, struggles with sin is tested by various temptations in order to overcome sin and death.^{38]} But love follows faith, as we have said above. And thus filial fear can be clearly defined as such anxiety as has been connected with faith, i.e., where faith consoles and sustains the anxious heart. It is servile fear when faith does not sustain the anxious heart.

2. The sinner's repentance is the work of God.

a) That repentance is God's work can be seen from several biblical considerations.

1) Repentance is the aim of God's calling.

Matthew 3:11 I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Matthew 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Mark 6:12 They went out and preached that people should repent.

Luke 5:32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Luke 24:47 Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Acts 17:30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

Acts 20:21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

Acts 26:20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.

2) Repentance is also directly called a work of God.

Acts 5:31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

Acts 11:18 When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life."

2 Timothy 2:25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.

3) The means for repentance are the means of grace.

Matthew 3:11 I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Luke 5:32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Luke 24:47 Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

4) Even the remorse is inflicted by God through the law.

Psalms 32:4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

Psalms 119:120 My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws.

Jeremiah 23:29 “Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?”

Augsburg Confession, XII, p 48, 3: Now, repentance consists properly of these two parts: One is contrition, that is, terrors smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin.

Apology, XII, p 260, 36: This faith cheers, sustains, and quickens the contrite, according to Rom. 5:1: Being justified by faith, we have peace with God. This faith obtains the remission of sins. This faith justifies before God, as the same passage testifies: Being justified by faith. This faith shows the distinction between the contrition of Judas and Peter, of Saul and of David. The contrition of Judas or Saul is of no avail, for the reason that to this there is not added this faith, which apprehends the remission of sins, bestowed as a gift for Christ’s sake. Accordingly, the contrition of David or Peter avails, because to it there is added faith, which apprehends the remission of sins granted for Christ’s sake.

Chemnitz: But Thomas Aquinas says that just as sin is brought about by the consent of the will, so it is wiped out and forgiven through dissent (when that consent is no longer there). And he adds: By virtue of the merits of Christ baptism has the power to wipe out sin (that is, as an inborn inclination). But in the contrition which results in forgiveness of sins our act of being displeased with sin is also required together with the merits of Christ. This act is meritorious because it lies in the power of our free will.... Scotus therefore says that the sinner by his natural spiritual powers with the help of the common or general prompting of God can look upon the sin he has committed as an act which is against the Law of

God, as offensive to God, as bringing upon him wrath and eternal punishments, and for those reasons the natural will is able to hate sin (*Examen*, Pt II, de contritione, p 195).

b) Exhortations to repent are based on the preaching of law or gospel, or both, and always carry with them the power to effect what they call for.

1) When they are a proclamation of the law, they presuppose and declare a person's utter sinfulness.

Smalcald Articles, III, p 486, 488, 30–32: Here comes the fiery angel, St. John, the true preacher of repentance, and with one hurls both those selling and those buying works on one heap, and says: Repent! Matt. 3:2. ^{31]} Now, the former imagine: Why, we have repented! The latter say: We need no repentance. ^{32]} John says: Repent, both of you, for you are false penitents; so are these false saints, and all of you on either side need the forgiveness of sins, because neither of you know what true sin is not to say anything about your duty to repent of it and shun it. For no one of you is good; you are full of unbelief, stupidity, and ignorance of God and God's will. For here he is present of whose fullness have all we received, and grace for grace, John 1:16, and without him no man can be just before God. Therefore, if you wish to repent, repent aright; your penance will not accomplish anything. And you hypocrites, who do not need repentance, you serpents' brood, who has assured you that you will escape the wrath to come? etc. Matt. 3:7; Luke 3:7.

2) Their purpose is not to condemn but to rescue.

Matthew 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

Acts 8:22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.

Revelation 2:16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

3. Roman Catholicism makes of repentance a sacrament (penance) consisting of three parts: contrition, confession, and satisfaction.

Council of Trent, Sess. XIV, Can. 4: If anyone denies that complete and perfect forgiveness requires that in the penitent there be three acts, the stuff of which the sacrament of penance is made, as it were, namely, contrition, confession, and satisfaction, which are called the three parts of penance; or, if anyone says that there are only two parts in repentance, namely, terrors striking the conscience when sin is recognized and faith which is created by the gospel or absolution, by which a man believes that his sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, let him be damned.

Council of Trent, Sess. XIV, Chap. IV: Contrition, which has first place among the above-mentioned acts of the penitent sinner is grief and revulsion over the sin that has been committed together with the intention of not sinning in the future. At all times, however, this feeling of contrition has been necessary for obtaining the forgiveness of sins. And in the man who has fallen after baptism it finally prepares him for the forgiveness of sins, if it is joined with trust in the mercy of God [Notice: not in the gospel promise of forgiveness] and the promise of doing what remains to be done, namely, the works of satisfaction. These things are required for a proper reception of this sacrament. It [that is, the Council] furthermore teaches that although it sometimes happens that this contrition is perfected by love and reconciles a man to God before this sacrament is actually received.

Council of Trent, Sess. XIV, Canon 5: If anyone says that this contrition which is produced by examining, remembering, and despising sins ... is not true and useful sorrow, that it does not prepare a man for grace, but makes him a hypocrite and a greater sinner, and finally that it is a coerced and not a free and voluntary sorrow, a sorrow produced by free will, let him be damned.

Council of Trent, Sess. XIV, Canon 5, Chapter 5: From these facts we can conclude that penitent sinners should in confession enumerate all the mortal sins of which they are conscious after diligent self-examination even if these are most secret and committed only against the last two commandments of the decalog.... We can conclude besides that also those circumstances, which change the nature of the sin (that is, from mortal to venial), should be explained in confession.

Council of Trent, Sess. XIV, Canon 6: If anyone denies that sacramental confession is divinely instituted and necessary for salvation by divine right or if he says that the custom [mode] of confessing in secret to the priest alone, which the Catholic Church from the beginning has always observed and still observes, is foreign to the institution and command of Christ, and a human invention, let him be anathema.

Bellarmino: Catholics unanimously teach that after the guilt has been remitted, liability to *temporal* punishment *often* remains, as is clear from Conc. Trid. Sess. VI, Can. XIV; Sess. XIV, Canon XII. (*Disputationes*, Vol III, de sacr. poenitentiae, bk. IV, chap. II, p 615).

Council of Trent, Sess. XIV, Canon 12: If anyone says that the whole punishment is always forgiven by God simultaneously with the guilt and that the satisfaction of the penitents is nothing else than the faith by which they lay hold of the fact that Christ has made satisfaction for them, let him be damned.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 1450: Penance requires...the sinner to endure all things willingly, be contrite of heart, confess with the lips, and practice complete humility and fruitful satisfaction.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 1459: Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin: he must make satisfaction for or expiate his sins. This satisfaction is called penance

Note: Daily repentance is a part of Christian sanctification. This is not to be confused with the repentance that takes place at conversion.

II. Regeneration is a metaphorical expression describing the beginning of faith as a new birth.

Note 1: There are two points of comparison in this biblical picture. The new attitude of the heart is considered as a new life. This life is produced without any cooperation on the part of the one regenerated.

Note 2: Practically the same ideas are expressed by the terms “vivification” and “quicken.”

1. Regeneration (and vivification or quickening) denotes the beginning of faith.

a) Notice how regeneration is synonymous with becoming a child of God (entering the kingdom of God, gaining the hope of heaven, etc.).

John 1:12,13 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

John 3:3,5,16-18 In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”⁵ Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

1 Peter 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

Galatians 3:21,22 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.²² But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

Ephesians 2:5,8 [God] made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

Colossians 2:12 You have been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

b) Therefore, regeneration is an instantaneous act of moving from spiritual death to spiritual life.

Formula of Concord, TD III, p 920, 18-21: However, since the word *regeneratio*, regeneration, is sometimes employed for the word *iustificatio*, justification, it is necessary that this word be properly explained, in order that the renewal which follows justification of faith may not be confounded with the justification of faith, but that they may be properly distinguished from one another. ^{19]} For, in the first place, the word *regeneratio*, that is, regeneration, is used so as to comprise at the same time the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake alone, and the succeeding renewal which the Holy Spirit works in those who are justified by faith. Then, again, it is sometimes used *pro remissione peccatorum et adoptione in filios Dei*, that is, so as to mean only the remission of sins, and that we are adopted as sons of God. And in this latter sense the word is much and often used in the *Apology*, where it is written: *Iustificatio est regeneratio*, that is, Justification before God is regeneration. St. Paul, too, has employed these words as distinct from one another, Titus 3:5: "He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." ^{20]} As also the word *vivificatio*, that is, making alive, has sometimes been used in a like sense. For when man is justified through faith (which the Holy Spirit alone works), this is truly a regeneration, because from a child of wrath he becomes a child of God, and thus is transferred from death to life, as it is written: "When we were dead in sins, he has quickened us together with Christ," Eph. 2:5. Likewise: "The just shall live by faith," Rom. 1:17; Hab. 2:4. In this sense the word is much and often used in the *Apology*. ^{21]} But again, it is often taken also for sanctification and renewal, which succeeds the righteousness of faith, as Dr. Luther has thus used it in his book concerning the Church and the Councils, and elsewhere.

Gerhard: Regeneration, properly so called, which accepts the forgiveness of sins, etc. ... can not be described as greater or less any more than physical generation. But renewal can be described as greater or less, because the inward man is renewed day by day (2 Cor 4:16) (*Loci*, Vol VII, par. 226, p 294).

Huelsemann: Renewal and sanctification take place day by day (2 Cor 4:16; Eph 4:23; 2 Cor 7:1). But quickening and regeneration never are said to take place day by day or by stages nor are they ever described as greater or less so that one man is said to be more regenerated or more alive than another, but the transfer from death to life, namely spiritual (life), takes place in a moment (Jo 5:24) (*Vindiciae*, p.551).

Quenstedt: This bestowal of spiritual life, however, happens by stages, not always momentarily, but gradually and increasingly, and even if the ζωοποίησις

or quickening happens at that moment in which faith is kindled in us and Christ, the true Sun of righteousness, rises in our hearts, (2 Pt 1:19), nevertheless this spiritual life shows itself in successive acts (*TDP*, Pt III, chap. VI, thesis XVII, p 482).

Quenstedt: Regeneration so far as the regenerating God is concerned is perfect and cannot be described as greater or less any more than physical birth itself. But so far as the men who receive it are concerned it is imperfect because the sinner does not perfectly receive what the Holy Spirit gives, because moral evil always is present in them, because sin still lives in them, and because faith can grow and increase in them (*TDP*, Pt III, chap. VI, thesis XVII, p 483).

Hoenecke: These dogmaticians [Quenstedt and others] call rebirth gradual, even though they take rebirth in the strict sense as the kindling of faith, only because they unintentionally fall into a wider conception of it...In this sense Quenstedt also says concerning the continuation that is ascribed to regeneration as an attribute that it consists in the strengthening, preservation and increase of faith that are stirred up in the regenerated man (*Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, Vol III, p 249,250).

- c) **Some Evangelicals, in the interest of subtle synergism in conversion, make regeneration merely one step in the “process” of conversion by which God gives to sinful man the ability to choose to believe in Christ.**

Wayne Grudem: We have defined regeneration to be the act of God awakening spiritual life within us, bringing us from spiritual *death* to spiritual *life*. On this definition, it is natural to understand that regeneration comes before saving faith. It is in fact that work of God that gives us the spiritual *ability* to respond to God in faith. However, when we say that it comes “before” saving faith, it is important to remember that they usually come so close together that it will ordinarily seem to us that they are happening at the same time. As God addresses the effective call of the gospel to us, he regenerates us and we respond in faith and repentance to that call. So *from our perspective* it is hard to tell any difference in time, especially because regeneration is a spiritual work that we cannot perceive with our eyes or even understand with our minds (*Systematic Theology*, p 702).

2. Regeneration is accomplished by God without any human assistance.

- a) **God works regeneration.**

- 1) **Notice how the Scripture passages speak of God as the one doing the work of regeneration.**

John 1:13 Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. [?]

John 3:6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

1 John 5:1,4 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. ⁴ for

everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

2) The means of this regeneration are the means of grace.

John 3:5,8 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 1:23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

James 1:18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

Notice that even the human agents who dispense this powerful regenerating gospel are called spiritual “parents.”

1 Corinthians 4:15 Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

Galatians 4:19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you...

3) God’s merciful saving work in Christ is the only motive for this regenerating work.

-a) At times God’s mercy itself is emphasized.

1 Peter 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Ephesians 2:4,5 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

-b) At other times the vicarious work of Christ receives the emphasis.

1 Peter 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

b) Man cannot in any way cooperate to bring about his own regeneration.

John 1:13 Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. [?]

John 3:6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

Ephesians 2:4,5 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,⁵ made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.

3. Regeneration may be lost.

a) Spiritual death may again set in.

Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

Romans 11:20 They were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid.

1 Corinthians 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

Galatians 5:4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

1 Timothy 1:19 Holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.

Hollaz: By sins that are committed with deliberate intent and against conscience (lit. laying waste the conscience) the grace of regeneration is lost (*Examen*, p 886).

Formula of Concord, TD XI, p 1076, 42 Thus many receive the Word with joy, but afterwards fall away again, Luke 8:13. But the cause is not as though God were unwilling to grant grace for perseverance to those in whom he has begun the good work, for that is contrary to St. Paul, Phil. 1:6; but the cause is that they willfully turn away again from the holy commandment of God, grieve and embitter the Holy Spirit, implicate themselves again in the filth of the world, and garnish again the habitation of the heart for the devil. With them the last state is worse than the first, 2 Pet. 2:10,20; Eph. 4:30; Heb. 10:26; Luke 11:25.

Beza (d. 1605): David was not again endowed with the Spirit of regeneration whom he had previously lost, but the Spirit who lay asleep in him was divinely awakened by the ministry of Nathan (*Colloquium Mompelgart.*, Pt II, p 74).

Calvin: Meanwhile this must be maintained that however small and weak faith may be in the elect, nevertheless, because the Spirit of God is for them a sure

pledge and seal of their adoption, the sculpturing that He had done on their hearts can never be erased (*Institutes*, Bk III, chap. II, 12, p.361).

Bucanus (d. 1603): In the fallen elect faith remains in the same way as reason sleeps and slumbers in those who are drunk and in infants (*Institutiones*, Locus 29, Qu 27).

Robert Reymond: To cite the words of the Westminster Confession once more: backslidden Christians are “never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart, and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, their assurance may, in due time, be revived; and by the which, in the mean time, they are supported from utter despair” (XVIII/iv). As he did with backslidden Peter, the Lord will continue to support his wayward children even while he chastens them when they fail to grow or when they fall into sin (Luke 22:31,32, 54-61; 24:34; Mark 16:7; John 21:15-19) (*A New Systematic Theology*, p 793).

b) Lost regeneration may be restored.

Galatians 4:19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.

2 Corinthians 2:5-7 If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent – not to put it too severely. ⁶ The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. ⁷ Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overcome by excessive sorrow.

1 Timothy 1:19-20 Hold on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. ²⁰ Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

Hollaz: A lost regeneration can be regained by a penitent sinner.—Regenerated men, helped by the preserving grace of God, are extremely careful lest by repeated sin they maliciously wound their own conscience; and yet, if in spite of this they fall into mortal sins three, four or more times because they are overcome by the tricks of the devil, the allurements of the world, and the promptings of the flesh, they have no doubts at all about the converting and regenerating grace of God (*Examen*, Pt III, sect. 1, chap. 7, ques. 18, p 886).

Formula of Concord, TD XI, p 1080, 54 Thus there is no doubt that God most exactly and certainly foresaw before the time of the world, and still knows, which of those that are called will believe or will not believe; also which of the converted will persevere in faith and which will not persevere; which will return after a fall into grievous sins, and which will fall into obduracy. So, too, the number, how many there are of these on either side, is beyond all doubt perfectly known to God.

III. Illumination is a metaphorical expression describing the beginning of faith as the coming out of darkness into light.

1. Consider the point of comparison.

a) Darkness and light are used in various ways as metaphors.

1) Darkness often denotes fear, anxiety, and despair. Consider the gloom and darkness Jesus often uses to describe hell.

Matthew 22:13 Then the king told the attendants, “Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 25:30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

2 Peter 2:4 God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment.

Jude 6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

Job 3:1-7 After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. ² He said: ³ “May the day of my birth perish, and the night it was said, ‘A boy is born!’ ⁴ That day—may it turn to darkness; may God above not care about it; may no light shine upon it. ⁵ May darkness and deep shadow claim it once more; may a cloud settle over it; may blackness overwhelm its light. ⁶ That night—may thick darkness seize it; may it not be included among the days of the year nor be entered in any of the months. ⁷ May that night be barren; may no shout of joy be heard in it.”

Isaiah 8:20,22 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. ²² Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.

Lamentations 3:1-2 I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. ² He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light.

2) Light often denotes hope, joy, and salvation.

Psalms 56:13 For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.

Psalms 97:11 Light is shed upon the righteous and joy on the upright in heart.

Proverbs 13:9 The light of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out.

Ecclesiastes 11:7 Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun.

Isaiah 58:8-11 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. ⁹ Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, ¹⁰ and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. ¹¹ The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

b) With faith heavenly peace enters the heart.

1) Notice how the light of peace and the joy is intimately connected with faith in the gospel.

Luke 2:29-32 Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all people, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Isaiah 49:6 He says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

Psalms 19:8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

2) Light is also used with the emphasis on the understanding.

Acts 26:17,18 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you ¹⁸ to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Hollaz: So far as the man who receives the heavenly doctrine is concerned, enlightenment is either literal or pedagogical on the one hand or spiritual and completely saving on the other hand. The former is the operation of the Holy Spirit by which He by His grace which helps and prepares the mind externally brings the man who is still unregenerated

but who is nevertheless inclining toward regeneration [*Careful!*] to a literal knowledge of the things that must be believed and produces in him an acceptance of the history of the gospel so that he is more and more disposed toward accepting saving faith. The latter is the operation of the Holy Spirit who, by entering and dwelling in the contrite heart of a man, kindles in that heart a saving knowledge of the mercy of God founded on the merits of Christ, produces a trusting acceptance of the gospel and strengthens and certifies the same by his inner testimony (*Examen*, Pt III, sect. I, chap. V, ques. 10, p 267).

Quenstedt: Enlightenment is either παιδαγωγική και γραμματική, (that is), pedagogical, merely literal or external, when someone who has been instructed in the knowledge of God's truth and is convinced in his conscience concerning its certainty but does not yet have this known truth certified in his heart by the seal of the Spirit and confirmed by the gracious indwelling of the Holy Spirit, or it is πνευματική, spiritual, gracious and internal, namely, when someone who is truly reborn not only has a literal (intellectual) understanding of the doctrine of the Gospel but at the same time is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who Himself lives in him with His grace, or when the truth is not only known and recognized but at the same time supported, confirmed, and certified by the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit who dwells in the heart with his grace (*TDP*, Pt II, chap. II, sect. I, thesis 95, note II, p 77).

3) Light is also used with reference to living a holy life.

Ephesians 1:18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

Ephesians 5:8,14,15 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ¹⁴ for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." ¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

1 John 1:5-7 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

2. The means of illumination is the gospel.

a) Notice how the gospel light brings joy and understanding.

2 Peter 1:19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Psalm 19:8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Psalm 119:130 The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

Proverbs 6:23 For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life.

Ephesians 3:8,9 Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,⁹ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

Hollaz: The enlightening power with which the Word of God is endowed is not strictly bound to the acts of hearing, reading, or meditating, but the Word which has been heard, read, or conveyed to the mind and retained in it always is powerful with its own enlightening powers (*Examen*, Pt. III, sect. I, chap. V, ques. 7, p 263).

b) We must not confuse this gospel illumination with the illumination which the law provides.

Romans 3:19,20 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.²⁰ Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Romans 4:14,15 For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless,¹⁵ because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

Hollaz: Enlightenment with respect to the enlightening means is either the illumination of the law or of the gospel. The former is the one which shows us our sin, the wrath of God, and the temporal and eternal punishment for sin; the latter is the one which reveals to us the grace of God which is based on the merits of Christ, the righteousness that avails before God, and eternal life (*Examen*, Pt III, sect. I, chap. V, ques. 5, p 262).

c) It is an error of enthusiasts past and present to expect illumination from the Spirit immediately.

Hollaz: The notion that supernatural divine light should be awaited in silence is so far from right that rather the external Word of God, which is a very clear light, should be earnestly preached, diligently heard, frequently read, and attentively studied, and at the same time pious prayers together with sacred songs should be sent to heaven, so that in this way the saving light of knowledge may rise in our hearts and then continue to grow even more. I. When the mystics distinguish between the silence of words, of thoughts and of desires, we certainly approve of the first, namely, the silence of words, for

meditations on the Word of God love the silence found behind closet walls; but the silence of thoughts and desires we do not approve. II. Waiting for divine help in silence indeed is becoming for true Christians but not a silent waiting for light which brings immediate revelation. III. The teaching concerning an internal Sabbath is retained and taught in our churches insofar as that term denotes 1) refraining from works of the flesh 2) the repose of the soul in God, 3) meditations on divine benefits, 4) the desire for and expectation of an eternal Sabbath. But the term internal Sabbath is rejected when it denotes a silence not only of words but also of all thoughts and emotions (*Examen*, Pt III, sect. I, chap. V, ques. 15, p 289,290).

Bruce McConkie: Any message whether written or spoken, that comes from God to man by the power of the Holy Ghost is scripture (*Mormon Doctrine*, p 682).

J. Rodman Williams: In the contemporary spiritual renewal there is frequent possession and investment. Whatever may have been the previous relation to God, many people sense a fresh and total claim on their lives. "I may have had the Spirit before, but now the Spirit has me" – such is a typical testimony of participants in the renewal (*Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*, Vol II, p 197).

IV. Conversion speaks of the beginning of faith as a turning toward God.

1. In the Old Testament we find the word שׁוּב.

a) There are various common uses of the term.

1) It may mean simply an ordinary change of direction.

Judges 14:8 Some time later, when he went back to marry her, he turned aside to look at the lion's carcass. In it was a swarm of bees and some honey.

Ruth 1:16,22 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." ²² So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

Genesis 8:12 He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.

2) It may also be applied metaphorically.

Genesis 30:31 "What shall I give you?" he asked. "Don't give me anything," Jacob replied. "But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them."

Exodus 32:12 Why should the Egyptians say, "It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them

off the face of the earth”? *Turn* from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people.

Isaiah 45:23 By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not *be revoked*: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.

Jeremiah 4:28 Therefore the earth will mourn and the heavens above grow dark, because I have spoken and will not relent, I have decided and will not *turn back*.

Leviticus 27:24 In the Year of Jubilee the field *will revert* to the person from whom he bought it, the one whose land it was.

1 Samuel 7:14 The towns from Ekron to Gath that the Philistines had captured from Israel *were restored* to her, and Israel delivered the neighboring territory from the power of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

1 Kings 13:6 Then the king said to the man of God, “Intercede with the LORD your God and pray for me that my hand *may be restored*.” So the man of God interceded with the LORD, and the king’s hand *was restored* and became as it was before.

b) שׁוּב denotes turning from sin toward God.

1) At times the term is used with the *terminus a quo*.

1 Kings 8:35 When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and confess your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them.

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Nehemiah 9:35 Even while they were in their kingdom, enjoying your great goodness to them in the spacious and fertile land you gave them, they did not serve you or turn from their evil ways.

Isaiah 59:20 “The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 23:14,22 And among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen something horrible: They commit adultery and live a lie. They strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his wickedness. They are all like Sodom to me; the people of Jerusalem are like Gomorrah.²² But *if* they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds.

Jeremiah 25:5 They said, “Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the LORD gave to you and your fathers for ever and ever.”

Jeremiah 26:3 Perhaps they will listen and each will turn from his evil way. Then I will relent and not bring on them the disaster I was planning because of the evil they have done.

Ezekiel 3:19 But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself.

Ezekiel 33:9,14 But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself. ¹⁴ And if I say to the wicked man, “You will surely die,” but he then turns away from his sin and does what is just and right.

Daniel 9:13 Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth.

2) At other times the term שׁוּב is used with the *terminus ad quem*.

Deuteronomy 4:30 When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him.

1 Samuel 7:3 And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, “If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.”

2 Chronicles 30:9 If you return to the LORD, then your brothers and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will come back to this land, for the LORD your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him.

Job 22:23 If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored: If you remove wickedness far from your tent.

3) At other times the term is used without mention of either *terminus*.

Jeremiah 3:12,14,22 Go, proclaim this message toward the north: “Return, faithless Israel,” declares the LORD, “I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful,” declares the LORD, “I will not be angry forever.” ¹⁴ “Return, faithless people,” declares the LORD, “for I am your husband. I will choose you—one from a town and two from a clan—and bring you to Zion.” ²² “Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding.” “Yes, we will come to you, for you are the LORD our God.”

2 Chronicles 6:24 When your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you and when they turn back and confess your name, praying and making supplication before you in this temple...

c) שׁוּב is used also to denote a defection from God.

1) There are several examples of this usage.

Jeremiah 11:10 They have returned to the sins of their forefathers, who refused to listen to my words. They have followed other gods to serve them. Both the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken the covenant I made with their forefathers.

Isaiah 47:10 You have trusted in your wickedness and have said, “No one sees me.” Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, “I am, and there is none besides me.”

Jeremiah 50:6 My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray and caused them to roam on the mountains. They wandered over mountain and hill and forgot their own resting place.

Jeremiah 8:4,5 Say to them, “This is what the LORD says: ‘When men fall down, do they not get up? When a man turns away, does he not return?’⁵ Why then have these people turned away? Why does Jerusalem always turn away? They cling to deceit; they refuse to return.’”

Jeremiah 34:16 But now you have turned around and profaned my name; each of you has taken back the male and female slaves you had set free to go where they wished. You have forced them to become your slaves again.

2) סוּר is a verb commonly used in the sense of a defection from God.

Deuteronomy 11:16,28 Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them.²⁸ the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known.

Job 34:27 They turned from following him and had no regard for any of his ways.

Psalms 14:3 All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Psalms 125:5 But those who turn (הִמָּטְיִים) to crooked ways the LORD will banish with the evildoers. Peace be upon Israel.

2. In the New Testament ἐπιστρέφειν is the most common term used for conversion.

a) This word, which contains a reference to the *terminus ad*, is used both in the literal sense and the common metaphorical senses.

Matthew 10:13 If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you.

Matthew 12:44 Then the evil spirit says, “I will return to the house I left.” When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order.

Matthew 24:18 Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak.

Mark 5:30 At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

Mark 8:33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

Luke 8:55 Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat.

b) Our chief concern is its use for conversion.

1) The active voice in the transitive sense corresponds to the Hiphil of שׁוּב.

Luke 1:16,17 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God.¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

James 5:19,20 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back,²⁰ remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Nehemiah 9:29 You warned them to return to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands. They sinned against your ordinances, by which a man will live if he obeys them. Stubbornly they turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen.

Jeremiah 31:18 I have surely heard Ephraim’s moaning: ‘You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me (הַשִּׁיבֵנִי), and I will return (אָשׁוּבָה), because you are the LORD my God.’”

Malachi 2:6 True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin.

2) The active voice is also used in the reflexive or intransitive sense.

Matthew 13:15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.

Luke 22:32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

Acts 9:35 All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

Acts 11:21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

Acts 14:15 Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.

Acts 15:19 It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.

Acts 26:18,20 I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.²⁰ First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.

Acts 28:27 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.

2 Corinthians 3:16 But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

3) The passive voice, while most often used with a reflexive sense, may, in a least one passage, have some of the passive sense in its use.

1 Peter 2:25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

1 Peter 2:25 (TEV) You were like sheep that had lost their way, but now you have been brought back to follow the Shepherd and Keeper of your souls.

c) Two other verbs from the same root are used for conversion.

1) Once the compound form with *ἀπό* is used, referring to the *terminus a*.

Acts 3:26 When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.

2) Twice we find the simple stem *στρέφειν*.

Matthew 18:3 And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

John 12:40 He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn (*στραφῶσιν*)—and I would heal them.

3. The *terminus a* and *ad* of conversion are mentioned in many passages.

a) Either one or the other or both are mentioned specifically.

Acts 3:26 When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.

Acts 26:20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.

1 Peter 2:25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Acts 14:15 Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.

Acts 26:18 I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

b) Conversion is, therefore, in the strict sense, the decisive step of a sinner out of the state of sin into the state of grace through faith.

Acts 11:21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. (πολύς τε ἀριθμὸς ὁ πιστεύσας ἐπέστρεψεν)

Quenstedt: Conversion is an act of the applicatory grace of the Holy Spirit by which He, together with the Father and the Son freely, namely, by grace based on the merits of Christ, through the preached Word of God delivers a mature man who is spiritually dead out of the state of sin into the state of grace, by stages, so far as the preparatory acts are concerned, but instantaneously, so far as the final act is concerned, by a power that is indeed supernatural and divine yet resistible, so that he, repenting, obtains forgiveness of sins by faith and becomes a partaker of everlasting salvation (*TDP*, Part III, p 500).

4. Conversion, in this sense, is the act of a moment.

a) Our dogmaticians often speak of conversion in this way.

Quenstedt: The translation out of the state of wrath into the state of grace happens in an instant and in a moment, since it is impossible that the same person should even for a moment be at the same time in a state of grace and a state of wrath, simultaneously alive and dead. For the term conversion is used either in a broad sense, namely, insofar as it includes all the preceding emotions directed toward conversion by the grace of God; or in a narrow sense, insofar as it denotes only that final act, namely, the translation from the state of wrath into the state of grace. Understood in the former way, conversion has its preparatory acts, which happen by stages. But this translation itself from death to life, from the state of wrath into the state of grace most properly is and is called conversion. God alone performs this act in an instant or a moment, as we said. (*TDP*, Pt III, chap. VII, sect. I, thesis XXII, note I. p 493).

Otto Eckert: This we shall have to maintain over against the so-called "breakthrough theory" (*Durchbruchstheorie*) of Pietism and Methodism which is completely shot through from end to end with synergism and negates "by grace alone." When these movements speak of the moment (*Augenblick*), they mean something entirely different than we do, as different as day from night, for to them the moment is the time when a process in which man has contributed his own efforts (*Busskampf*) is completed with the *Durchbruch* or break-through accompanied with varying and often intense emotional experiences and manifestations, a moment before which no one, not even those who have been baptized and reared in the church, should be considered fully regenerated and converted. We, on the other hand, speak of the moment when by God's grace alone a new life comes into being by the gospel without any effort whatsoever on our part (cf. Ephesians 2:8,9) (*Our Great Heritage*, Vol III, p 18).

b) The converted person will ordinarily not be able to specify the precise moment.

John 3:8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

c) Conversion proper may be preceded by a period of preparatory efforts on the part of God.

1) The sinner will feel the impact of the law and gospel which he cannot escape.

Mark 6:20 Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

Luke 4:22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

Acts 24:25 As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."

Acts 26:24 At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."

John 16:8-11 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; ¹⁰ in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

2) These impressions the sinner undergoes against his will. They are not in any way his cooperation in conversion.

d) Conversion is at times spoken of as including the new life which follows. Scripture often speaks of a close connection between conversion and the new life that follows. Some have called this "continued conversion" (*conversio continuata*).

Deuteronomy 4:30 When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him.

2 Kings 23:24,25 Furthermore, Josiah got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods, the idols and all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem. This he did to fulfill the requirements of the law written in the book that Hilkiah the priest had discovered in the temple of the LORD. ²⁵ Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the

LORD as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.

Psalm 51:13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. [?]

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. [?]

Jeremiah 34:14,15 “Every seventh year each of you must free any fellow Hebrew who has sold himself to you. After he has served you six years, you must let him go free.” Your fathers, however, did not listen to me or pay attention to me. ¹⁵ Recently you repented and did what is right in my sight: Each of you proclaimed freedom to his countrymen. You even made a covenant before me in the house that bears my Name.

Matthew 18:3 And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (?)

Acts 26:20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.

Acts 15:3 The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the brothers very glad.

Chemnitz: For it is a far different thing to speak of powers before he begins and when he has already begun to be renewed. Also, cleansing and renewal is not a change which is immediately completed and finished, but it has its beginnings and definite steps of progress, by which it grows, is increased and is preserved (*Examen*, Vol I, p 424).

e) The following classification of conversion (and repentance) is made with reference to the previous state of the repenting person.

Quenstedt: Looked at with the subjects in view, conversion is either the first conversion of unbelievers and of the unregenerate, or the continued conversion of those who stand converted, or the repeated or resumed conversion of backsliding believers who once again return to a healthier mind (*TDP*, Part III, chap. VII, sect. 1, thesis III, p 488).

1) As we most commonly use the term, conversion is the first conversion of unbelievers and of the unregenerate.

Psalm 22:27 All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him.

Acts 9:35 All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

Acts 11:21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

Acts 14:15 Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.

Acts 26:18 I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

2) The term conversion may also be used for the continued conversion of the believer in the sense of daily repentance.

Jeremiah 31:18,19 I have surely heard Ephraim's moaning: "You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the LORD my God. ¹⁹ After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth." [?]

Lamentations 5:21 Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may return; renew our days as of old. [?]

Psalms 51:13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. [?]

Matthew 18:3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

3) The term conversion can also be used for the restoration of faith for those who had fallen away.

Deuteronomy 30:2 When you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today.

Jeremiah 3:7,12,13 I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. ¹² Go, proclaim this message toward the north: "Return, faithless Israel," declares the LORD, "I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful," declares the LORD, "I will not be angry forever. ¹³ Only acknowledge your guilt—you have rebelled against the LORD your God, you have scattered your favors to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed me," declares the LORD.

Ezekiel 18:30,32 Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. ³² For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!

Joel 2:12,13 “Even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” ¹³ Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

Matthew 13:15 For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.

Mark 4:12 They may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!

John 12:40 He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them.

Luke 22:32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.

James 5:19-20 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, ²⁰ remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

5. Conversion is entirely God’s work.

a) There is no cooperation between God and the sinner in bringing about conversion.

1) Scripture never declares otherwise.

-a) There are passages which speak about conversion in the reflexive sense. These merely state as a fact that conversion took place.

Acts 11:21 The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

-b) There are passages commanding men to be converted. Yet even these do not establish human cooperation in conversion.

- 1) **They need not be understood as implying that sinners themselves should do the work.**
- 2) **They simply call for conversion without any reference to the agent effecting it.**
- 3) **If taken as commands of the law, they will have the effect of the law. They create a painful knowledge of sin.**
- 4) **If taken as a gospel call, they carry the gospel power of producing faith.**

2) Pelagians and Synergists assume a cooperation in conversion.

Pelagius: By nature all men (Christians, Jews, and heathen) have a free will to the same degree, but only in Christians is it aided by grace. The latter (Jews and heathen) therefore are to be judged and damned because, although they have a free will, by which they could come to faith and merit the grace of God, they use in a bad way the freedom granted to them (*Ad Innocentium*, as quoted in Hoenecke, *III*, p 279-280).

Council of Trent: If anyone says that the free will of man when it is moved and awakened by God cooperates in no way by giving assent to God as he awakens and calls, by which man disposes and prepares himself for the reception of the grace of justification, let him be damned (Session VI, Canon 4, as quoted in Chemnitz, *Examen*, Vol 1, p 410).

Schmalz (Socinian): It is certain that the Holy Spirit does not work at all in the man who does not show himself fit and obedient. Therefore it is clear that free will, even though it is not the primary or most powerful cause of conversion is nevertheless a cause without which there will never be a future conversion (Disputation VII, as quoted in Schertzer, *Collegium Anti-Socinianum*, Disputation LXXV, p 612).

Melanchthon: From this error of the Manicheans minds must be led away and taught that free will does something. Therefore some of the ancients spoke in this way: Free will in man is the ability to respond to grace (*facultas se applicandi ad gratiam*), that is, it hears the promise and tries to assent and renounces sins against conscience. Such things do not happen in devils. Therefore the difference between devils and mankind should be kept in mind. However, these things will become more clear when the promise is considered. Since the promise is universal and there are no contradictory wills in God, it is necessary that there must be in us some cause for the difference, why Saul is rejected and David is saved, that is, it is necessary that these two men must have acted in different ways (*Loci Communes*, p 44).

J. Kenneth Grider: The gift of faith, for Wesley, does not mean a gift bestowed upon people whether or not they will have it so. In many passages in his writings he teaches that everyone confronted with a moral choice “has in himself the casting voice.” This is the way evangelist Bud

Robinson saw it, who used to say, “God voted for me, the devil voted against me, and I cast the deciding ballot for myself” (*A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, p 353).

Grudem: When a person comes to faith in Christ, all three elements must be present. There must be some basic knowledge or *understanding* of the facts of the gospel. There must also be *approval* of, or agreement with, these facts. Such agreement includes a conviction that the facts spoken of the gospel are true, especially the fact that I am a sinner in need of salvation and that Christ alone has paid the penalty for my sin and offers salvation to me. It also includes an awareness that I need to trust in Christ for salvation and that he is the only way to God, and the only means provided for my salvation. This approval of the facts of the gospel will also involve a desire to be saved through Christ. But all this still does not add up to true saving faith. That comes only when I make a decision of my will to depend on, or put my *trust* in, Christ as *my* Savior. This personal decision to place my trust in Christ is something done with my heart, the central faculty of my entire being that makes commitments for me as a whole person (*Systematic Theology*, p 712).

Grudem: What shall we say about the common practice of asking people to *pray* to receive Christ as their personal Savior and Lord? Since personal faith in Christ must involve an actual decision of the will, it is often very helpful to *express* that decision in spoken words, and this could very naturally take the form of a prayer to Christ in which we tell him of our sorrow for sin, our commitment to forsake it, and our decision actually to put our trust in him. Such a spoken prayer does not in itself save us, but the attitude of heart that it represents does constitute true conversion, and the decision to speak that prayer can often be the point at which a person truly comes to faith in Christ (*Systematic Theology*, p 717).

b) God performs the work of conversion through his servants by his means of grace.

1) God is ultimately the author of conversion.

Jeremiah 31:18 I have surely heard Ephraim’s moaning: “You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the LORD my God.” [?]

Acts 11:21 The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

John 6:44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

1 Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 2:13 It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Colossians 2:13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.

2) He accomplishes this conversion through his means of grace.

Jeremiah 23:22 But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds.

Acts 14:15 Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.

3) Since God applies these means of grace through human agents, this conversion may be ascribed to the person applying the means.

Daniel 12:3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness like the stars for ever and ever.

Malachi 2:6 True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin.

Luke 1:16,17 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

James 5:19,20 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, ²⁰ remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

c) God does not force conversion on a sinner against his will.

1) In conversion he changes the perverse will of a man into an obedient one.

Philippians 2:13 It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Formula of Concord, TD, II, p 904, 60 And although God does not force man to become godly (for those who always resist the Holy Spirit and persistently oppose the known truth, as Stephen says of the hardened

Jews, Acts 7:51, are not converted), yet God the Lord draws the man whom He wishes decreed to convert, and draws him in such a way that his darkened understanding is turned into an enlightened one and his perverse will into an obedient one. And this is what the Scriptures call *creating a new heart*, Ps. 51:10.

Formula of Concord, TD, II, p 912, 87-88: For the conversion of our corrupt will, which is nothing else than a resuscitation of it from spiritual death, is only and solely the work of God (just as also the resuscitation in the resurrection of the body must be ascribed to God alone), as has been fully set forth above and proved by manifest testimonies of Holy Scripture.⁸⁸¹ But how God in conversion changes stubborn and unwilling into willing men through the drawing of the Holy Spirit, and that after such conversion, in the daily exercise of repentance, the regenerate will of man is not idle, but also cooperates in all the works of the Holy Spirit which He does through us, has already been sufficiently explained above.

2) **Whenever a sinner is not converted, the fault is all his own.**

-a) The sinner's responsibility for refusing God's converting grace is evidenced by the fact that God holds the sinner liable to judgment for his refusal.

Jeremiah 15:7 I will winnow them with a winnowing fork at the city gates of the land. I will bring bereavement and destruction on my people, for they have not changed their ways.

Jeremiah 25:5,7 They said, "Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the LORD gave to you and your fathers for ever and ever.⁷ But you did not listen to me," declares the LORD, "and you have provoked me with what your hands have made, and you have brought harm to yourselves."

Jeremiah 35:15,17 Again and again I sent all my servants the prophets to you. They said, "Each of you must turn from your wicked ways and reform your actions; do not follow other gods to serve them. Then you will live in the land I have given to you and your fathers." But you have not paid attention or listened to me.¹⁷ Therefore, this is what the LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Listen! I am going to bring on Judah and on everyone living in Jerusalem every disaster I pronounced against them. I spoke to them, but they did not listen; I called to them, but they did not answer."

Hosea 11:5,6 Will they not return to Egypt and will not Assyria rule over them because they refuse to repent?⁶ Swords will flash in their cities, will destroy the bars of their gates and put an end to their plans.

-b) Scripture also clearly indicates that the fault is not on God's side of the equation by showing his eager desire for the salvation of those who reject his mercy.

Matthew 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

Acts 7:51 You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

-c) God's repeated pleas through his messengers to obstinate sinners is further evidence that he is not to blame for such unbelief.

2 Chronicles 24:19 Although the LORD sent prophets to the people to bring them back to him, and though they testified against them, they would not listen.

2 Chronicles 30:6-10 At the king's command, couriers went throughout Israel and Judah with letters from the king and from his officials, which read: "People of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that he may return to you who are left, who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria.⁷ Do not be like your fathers and brothers, who were unfaithful to the LORD, the God of their fathers, so that he made them an object of horror, as you see.⁸ Do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were; submit to the LORD. Come to the sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever. Serve the LORD your God, so that his fierce anger will turn away from you.⁹ If you return to the LORD, then your brothers and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will come back to this land, for the LORD your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him."¹⁰ The couriers went from town to town in Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun, but the people scorned and ridiculed them.

2 Chronicles 36:13 He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him take an oath in God's name. He became stiff-necked and hardened his heart and would not turn to the LORD, the God of Israel.

Nehemiah 9:29 You warned them to return to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands. They sinned against your ordinances, by which a man will live if he obeys them. Stubbornly they turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen.

Jeremiah 5:3-5 O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth? You struck them, but they felt no pain; you crushed them, but they

refused correction. They made their faces harder than stone and refused to repent. ⁴ I thought, “These are only the poor; they are foolish, for they do not know the way of the LORD, the requirements of their God. ⁵ So I will go to the leaders and speak to them; surely they know the way of the LORD, the requirements of their God.” But with one accord they too had broken off the yoke and torn off the bonds.

-d) In particular, God will hold false prophets responsible for the loss of souls under their care.

Jeremiah 23:14 And among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen something horrible: They commit adultery and live a lie. They strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his wickedness. They are all like Sodom to me; the people of Jerusalem are like Gomorrah.

Ezekiel 13:22 You disheartened the righteous with your lies, when I had brought them no grief, and you encouraged the wicked not to turn from their evil ways and so save their lives.

-e) All that remains when God’s converting love is rejected is judgment.

Hosea 7:16 They do not turn to the Most High; they are like a faulty bow. Their leaders will fall by the sword because of their insolent words. For this they will be ridiculed in the land of Egypt.

Hosea 13:9 You are destroyed, O Israel, because you are against me, against your helper.

C. Justification

I. Justification is a declaratory act of God, in which he pronounces a sinner righteous for the sake of Christ.

1. In Scripture the words for justification denote a judicial (forensic) act.

a) The following terms occur.

1) In the Old Testament we find the Hiphil of קָדַשׁ.

-a) The word is used in the ordinary sense of being acquitted.

Exodus 23:7 Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.

Deuteronomy 25:1 When men have a dispute, they are to take it to court and the judges will decide the case, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty.

2 Samuel 15:4 Absalom would add, “If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that he gets justice.”

1 Kings 8:32 Hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty and bringing down on his own head what he has done. Declare the innocent not guilty, and so establish his innocence.

2 Chronicles 6:23 Hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, repaying the guilty by bringing down on his own head what he has done. Declare the innocent not guilty and so establish his innocence.

Isaiah 5:23 They acquit the guilty for a bribe, but deny justice to the innocent.

Proverbs 17:15 Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent— the LORD detests them both.

Job 27:5 I will never admit you are in the right; till I die, I will not deny my integrity.

-b) It is also used in the sense of helping a person to enjoy the benefits of a favorable verdict.

Psalm 82:3 Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.

Daniel 12:3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Isaiah 50:8,9 He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! ⁹ It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up.

Isaiah 53:11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

2) In the New Testament we find the verb δικαιῶν (used 38 times).

-a) This word is also used in the ordinary sense of acquitting or of being acquitted.

Matthew 12:37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.

Luke 7:29 All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John.

Luke 10:29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Luke 16:15 He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight."

Romans 2:13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

1 Corinthians 4:4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

-b) It is also used in the full theological sense of justification before God.

Luke 18:14 I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Acts 13:38,39 Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.³⁹ Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

Romans 3:20,24,26,28,30 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.²⁴ All are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.²⁶ He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.³⁰ There is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

Romans 4:2,5 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God.⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Romans 5:1,9 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Romans 8:30,33 Those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

1 Corinthians 6:11 That is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Galatians 2:16,17 We know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. ¹⁷ If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!

Galatians 3:8,11,24 The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." ¹¹ Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." ²⁴ So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

Galatians 5:4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Titus 3:7 He saved us, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

James 2:21,24,25 Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. ²⁵ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?

3) In the New Testament we also find noun forms that express this truth of justification.

-a) There is the noun *δικαίωμα* (used 10 times).

-1) This verbal noun, as its suffix *-μα* suggests, stresses the product of the judicial process. It is used for the judge's declaration itself, whether favorable or unfavorable.

Romans 1:32 Although they know God's righteous decree (*δικαίωμα*) that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 5:16 Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification (*δικαίωμα*).

Romans 5:18 Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness (*δικαιώματος*) was justification (*δικαίωσιν*) that brings life for all men.

-2) It is also used to mean requirement or regulation, since a regulation is that which God has declared to be right in his sight.

Luke 1:6 Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly.

Romans 2:26 If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?

Romans 8:4 He condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

Hebrews 9:1,10 Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. ¹⁰ They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

-3) Some propose a meaning of “a performance of righteousness.”

Romans 5:18 Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

Revelation 15:4 Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts (*δικαιώματά*) have been revealed.

Revelation 19:8 Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

Becker: The NIV has translated *δικαιώματά* with “righteous acts” [in Revelation 19:8]. There is really only one passage in the New Testament where *δικαίωμα* seems to mean a righteous

act, and even this is not entirely certain (Ro 5:18). It is entirely possible to translate *δικαίωμα* in Romans 5:18 with “a verdict of ‘not guilty’” and make perfectly good sense in the context. In fact, it probably makes better sense than the NIV’s “one act of righteousness.” Though the NIV translation of *τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἁγίων*, “the righteous acts of the saints,” does not necessarily support the idea of justification by works, it does seem to imply it. We know from other passages of Scripture that our own good works are in themselves imperfect, but that they are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. His blood washes away all the stains of sin that mar all the good deeds of the Christian (1 Pe 2:5). If we view the works of the believer as righteous in that sense, we may accept the NIV rendering (*Revelation: The Distant Triumph Song*, p 285).

-b) Another noun used is *δικαίωσις*. This stresses the state of having been declared not guilty (used only twice).

Romans 4:25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Romans 5:18 Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

-c) The third noun used is *δικαιοσύνη*. This word stresses the status of something/someone that is declared acceptable before God.

2 Corinthians 3:9 If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!

Romans 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Romans 3:21-24 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.²² This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Romans 4:3,5,6 What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.⁶ David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works.

Romans 8:10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. (Jerome—*justificatio*)

Philippians 3:9 I consider them all rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

b) From this it is evident that justification is a verdict.

- 1) Justification (unlike regeneration) is not a change worked in the sinner, but it is God's declarative act concerning the sinner.**
- 2) It is not an executive order of God with no legal satisfaction (just cause) as its basis, comparable to a governor's pardoning of a criminal.**
- 3) It is rather the verdict of a judge who after due investigation acquits a defendant because of a prior satisfaction of justice.**

2. Justification is God pronouncing a sinner righteous.

a) This is stated directly.

1) Some scriptural statements use the term justification.

Romans 4:5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Romans 3:20-24 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.²¹ But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.²² This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

2) Other scriptural statements use synonymous expressions.

Psalms 32:1,2 Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.² Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

Psalms 143:2 Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you.

John 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

John 5:24 I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

Romans 4:6-7 David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷ Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

Gerhard: The synonymous phrases are also forensic, for “to be justified” is “not to be called into judgment” (Ps 143:2), “not to be condemned” (Jn 3:18), “not to come into judgment” (Jn 5:24), “not to be judged” (Jn 3:18) (*Loci*, Book VII, loc. XVII, par. VII, p 6).

b) When God pronounces the sinner righteous, this one concept includes both the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness.

1) Forgiveness of sins is used as a perfect synonym of justification.

Acts 13:38,39 Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹ Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

Romans 4:6 David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works.

Psalms 32:2 Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

2) Remission of sins is sufficient for salvation.

Luke 1:77 You will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.

Acts 26:18 I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.

Colossians 1:14 In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Hebrews 10:17,18 Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” ¹⁸ And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

3) **Therefore the remission of sins is not one part of justification and the imputation of Christ's righteousness a separate part. The forgiveness of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness are positive and negative expressions for the one concept of justification.**

Apology, Article IV, p 146, 76 To obtain forgiveness of sins is to be justified. (Compare also Pieper, II, 537–541; Hoenecke, III, 330–338).

Calov: The essence of justification is, on the one hand, described negatively as the non-imputation of unrighteousness or sins, on the other, positively, as the imputation of the righteousness and merits of Christ (*TDP*, part III, sect. IV, chap. V, thesis IV, p 493).

Quenstedt: But these parts (if I may call them that) are not different in reality but only in terminology, for the imputation of the righteousness of Christ is for all practical purposes the same thing as the remission of sins, and the remission of sins the same thing as the imputation of Christ's righteousness, so that both terms, used separately, can express the whole nature of justification (*TDP*, part III, chap. VIII, thesis XIV, p 524).

Gerhard: Although the free remission of sins and the free imputation of the righteousness won by Christ are for pedagogical purposes called by some the two parts, as it were, of justification (from the fact that they hold that the formal cause of justification is a double one, negative and positive,—some speak of two kinds of imputation); yet there is in reality either no difference between them, or they certainly cannot be separated from each other...Since the remission of sins has its foundation in Christ's righteousness on account of which, when it is laid hold of by faith, [Caution!] God receives us into grace, forgives our sins, and, in turn, when these sins have been remitted, imputes to us the righteousness of Christ; therefore also no complete definition of the forgiveness of sins is possible without the imputation of righteousness nor of the imputation of righteousness without the forgiveness of sins. But the non-imputation of sins is the imputation of righteousness, and the imputation of righteousness is the non-imputation or forgiveness of sins. Some present it in this way: The remission of sins and the imputation of righteousness are said to be parts of justification not in reality but in our way of thinking about them, that is, they do not make up the whole, as if neither one or the other of these were justification, but they are making a distinction in the one act of being justified in view of the differing terms, just as when a man dresses himself, his nakedness is covered and his clothing is put on in the same act, yet the covering of nakedness and the putting on of clothing are distinct parts of the act of dressing, not in reality but in terminology, so far as the point of origin and the point of end result are concerned, so in the justification of the sinner, which in Scripture is compared to being dressed, the remission of sins and the imputation of righteousness are so-called “parts”, which differ from one another in so far as the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* are concerned; even though in reality they are one act of justification (*Loci*, Book IV, loc. XVII, par. CXCIX, p 260).

Baier: Besides we do not deny that a certain variation, a broadening or even a narrowing of the concept of justification is found in the writings of our dogmaticians which is also admitted and explained with examples by the sainted Huelsemann (*Praelect. in F.C.*, art. XI, sect. II, p 545,546) where he deals with the definition, essence, and different ways of speaking of justification. Nevertheless it is certain that when we say that the essence of justification is the forgiveness or non-imputation of sins, this does not exclude the imputation of the righteousness of Christ or of his obedience both active and passive, nor the imputation of faith itself for righteousness. In other words all we have in mind is that the imputation of righteousness and of faith itself as the basis for justification (Caution!) is prior to that forensic act of justification by which men are absolved from the guilt of their sins, because when we are asked, “Why does God justify men?” we answer, for the reason given previously, “Because God imputes to man the righteousness or merit of Christ which he apprehends by faith, or because he judges that it belongs to this man in such a way that because of it he is absolved from the guilt of his sins” (*Compendium*, part III, chap. V, par. 11d, p 457).

Note: It is a confusion to speak of the forgiveness of sins as being based on the imputed and appropriated righteousness of Christ. The righteousness of Christ is certainly the reason for justification, but the imputation of the righteousness of Christ is already justification itself.

3. Roman Catholics consider justification as a process. It is the moral transformation of the sinner.

a) Their confessional statements demonstrate this teaching.

Council of Trent, session VI, chap. 7: This justification is not only forgiveness of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man through voluntary acceptance of grace and the gifts; hence the man who was unrighteous becomes righteous.

Council of Trent, session VI, chap. III, canon 11: If anyone says that men are justified either alone by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ or alone by the forgiveness of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and love which is poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit and which inheres in them, or even that the grace by which we are justified is nothing but the favor of God, let him be damned.

Council of Trent, session VI, chap. III: Unless they are reborn in Christ, they would never be justified since by that rebirth through the merit of his passion the grace by which they are made righteous is bestowed on them.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 1989: The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is conversion, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus' proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt 4:17). Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.

Gerhard: The papists, following the opinion of the scholastics, hold that “the grace of God” in the doctrine of justification means a quality infused into us, that is, they change the word grace from a predication of relationship into a predication of quality. Therefore the Council of Trent speaks a word of damnation upon those who hold that the grace by which we are justified is the favor of God (*Loci*, Book VII, loc. XVII, par. XXV, p 23).

b) They consider an imputed justification to be imaginary.

Bellarmino: Therefore the adoption which we now have in the Spirit through justification is truly owed and not imputed (*Disputationes*, Volume IV, de justificatione, book II, chap. III, par. 58, p 453).

Bellarmino: It certainly follows that to be justified by grace is not to be counted just and yet not to be just, but in truth to be just, holy, and unstained (*Ibid*, p 451).

Chemnitz: This explanation casts light on the entire doctrine and refutes many cavilings. Staphylus says: “The Lutherans set forth the righteousness of faith by speaking of a relationship, but a relationship involves an entity of minimal importance, as the dialecticians say. And it must be a matter of great and serious import to which is attributed salvation and eternal life” (*Loci Theologici*, Volume 2, p 530).

Osiander: God would not commit the injustice of declaring a man to be righteous in whom there is nothing whatever of true righteousness (*Disputatio de justificatione*, thes. 74).

Osiander: They err horribly who take the term “justify” to mean only “to regard or declare righteous” and not “to make righteous,” which is its true and real meaning (See Pieper, II, p 529).

Brunner: People believed, supposedly in agreement with Luther but actually in contradiction to him, that one must understand the message of justification by faith alone in the sense of the later orthodox doctrine of forensic justification... God not only declares, He creates a new man ... Christ for us corresponds to Christ in us; the righteousness accepted in faith, which in being accepted comes to personal actuality (*The Divine-Human Encounter*, p 100,101).

Quenstedt: The essence of imputation is a real assessment, which absolves the sinning man who believes in Christ [Caution: this could be misleading] from all his sins before the divine tribunal and actually ascribes to him in a judicial way the righteousness of Christ. God's imputation indeed does not cause the righteousness of Christ to become inherent in the believer, yet it is not on that account a fictitious, unreal and imaginary imputation, it is not just a bare opinion concerning the righteous man without any real effect on him, as the papists slanderously assert, but it is a λογισμός or imputation which is sincere and real, a gracious imputation based on Christ and coming upon us, which consists in a gracious assessment of God and a real assignment to and appropriation by the believer of the righteousness of Christ by which the

believer is affected in such a way that by it he is made and declared righteous in the judgment of God's mind. Therefore this imputation is real in the highest degree, whether you look at the righteousness itself which is imputed or the act of imputation. The very righteousness or obedience of Christ, consisting in what he did and suffered, which is imputed to us is true and real in the highest degree, since it obviously corresponds exactly to the mind and will of God as he has expressed it in the law. The act of imputing or the imputation itself is likewise real, because its standard is the mind of God which never makes a mistake. It follows that God cannot consider or look upon a man as righteous if true righteousness has not become his possession, nor is it possible that from the will of God, the standard of all goodness, there should issue a statement of approval of an imaginary or fictitious evaluation or righteousness. And so those to whom the righteousness of Christ is imputed are truly righteous, even though not inherently or by indwelling, but by imputation; and at least by a naming that comes from outside of them they are such righteous people, for also from that which is outside of us a true naming can take place. And so it is foolish to ask whether on account of that imputation we really are righteous or whether we are only considered righteous. For the judgment of God is always true. Therefore he, who in the judgment of God is considered righteous, is really righteous (*TDP*, part III, chap. VIII, thesis XIX, nota II).

4. Eastern Orthodoxy considers justification to be a process with the final result being the deification of the sinner.

Bishop Kallistos Ware: While God's inner essence is forever beyond our comprehension, his energies, grace, life and power fill the whole universe, and are directly accessible to us....When Orthodox Christians speak of the divine energies, they do not mean by this an emanation from God, an intermediary between God and man, or a thing or gift that God bestows. On the contrary, the energies are God himself in his activity and self-manifestation. When a man knows or participates in the divine energies, he truly knows or participates in God Himself, so far as this is possible for a created being...we are able to affirm the possibility of a direct or mystical union between man and God - what the Greek Fathers term *the theosis of man, his deification*....There is union, but not fusion or confusion. Although oned with the divine, man still remains man; he is not swallowed up or annihilated, but between him and God there continues to exist an I-Thou relationship of person to person (*The Orthodox Way*, p 27-28).

II. In justification God applies to the individual sinner (subjective justification) the universal or general (objective) justification granted to the whole world in Christ.

1. Objective or universal justification is the forgiveness of sins that God pronounced upon the whole world in the resurrection of Jesus.

a) Objective justification is identical with objective reconciliation.

Romans 5:8-11,18,19 God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved

through his life!¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.¹⁸ Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

b) The resurrection of Christ assures us of this justification.

Romans 4:25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Romans 4:23,24 The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone,²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

Romans 10:9 If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 8:11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Acts 13:33 What God has promised to our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus.

Colossians 2:11-14 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with the circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ,¹² having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

2 Timothy 2:8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel.

Gerhard: It should be noted that Christ accomplishes our justification in three very special ways: 1) meritoriously, for he has won for us the grace of justification by his most holy and most perfect merit; 2) effectively, for he not only set us free from sin, death and the devil, and he not only acquired for us

the righteousness that avails before God, but also in the Word of the Gospel he offers to us these precious treasures so dearly won, and makes them ours by faith; 3) essentially, in this very act of making them ours, since we are righteous before God by nothing else than the righteousness won by Christ and imputed to us by faith (*Loci*, part III, chap. VIII, thesis XIIX, par. XXXIII, p 31).

Gerhard: By raising Christ from the dead the Father absolved him from our sins which had been imputed to him, and therefore he also absolved us in him, so that in this way the resurrection of Christ might be the cause and guarantee and completion of our justification (*Annotationes in Epist. ad Romanos*, p 156).

Gerhard: In the resurrection of Christ we were absolved from our sins so that they might no longer be able to condemn us before the judgment seat of God (*Disputationes theologicae*, XX, p 1450).

Calov: If Christ had remained in death, he would not have been the conqueror of death nor would he have been able to make our own the righteousness bought for us at such high cost... With respect to the actual absolution from sin: Just as God in Christ punished our sins, which were laid on him or imputed to him as our substitute, so also by raising him from the dead he by that very fact absolved him from our sins which were imputed to him, and therefore he also absolved us in him (*Biblia illustrata*, on Ro 4:25).

Apology, Article XII, p 268, 281, 62, 94: Therefore, absolution necessarily requires faith. Neither do we see how he who does not assent to it may be said to receive absolution. And what else is the refusal to assent to absolution but charging God with falsehood? If the heart doubts, it regards those things which God promises as uncertain and of no account. Accordingly, in 1 John 5:10 it is written: Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony God has given about his Son.⁹⁴¹ For Tertullian speaks excellently concerning faith, dwelling upon the oath in the prophet, Ezek. 33:11: As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. For as God swears that he does not wish the death of a sinner, he shows that faith is required, in order that we may believe the one swearing, and be firmly confident that He forgives us. The authority of the divine promises ought by itself to be great in our estimation. But this promise has also been confirmed by an oath. Therefore, if any one be not confident that he is forgiven, he denies that God has sworn what is true, than which a more horrible blasphemy cannot be imagined. For Tertullian speaks thus: "He invites by reward to salvation, even swearing. Saying, 'I live.' He desires that he be believed. Oh, blessed we, for whose sake God swears! Oh, most miserable if we believe not the Lord even when He swears!"

Large Catechism, p 722, 88: Therefore there is here again great need to call upon God and to pray: Dear Father, forgive us our trespasses. Not as though he did not forgive sin without and even before our prayer (for he has given us the gospel, in which is pure forgiveness before we prayed or ever thought about it). But this is to the intent that we may recognize and accept such forgiveness.

2. Subjective or individual justification announces and applies to the individual sinner the merits of Christ. The result is that the sinner through faith recognizes and enjoys this gift as his own possession.

a) It is the individual sinner who is justified.

Matthew 9:2 Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.”

Luke 7:47,48 “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.”⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Luke 18:14 I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

b) God declares the sinner innocent in spite of the fact that he is guilty of sin.

Romans 4:5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Isaiah 1:18 “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”

Isaiah 43:24,25 You have not bought any fragrant calamus for me, or lavished on me the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your offenses.²⁵ I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.

Isaiah 44:22 I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.

c) In justification, God simply imputes the righteousness of Christ to the sinner.

Jeremiah 23:5,6 “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.⁶ In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.”

Jeremiah 33:15,16 In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line; he will do what is just and right in the land.¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.

1 Corinthians 1:30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Philippians 3:8,9 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Hebrews 9:14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Isaiah 61:10 I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Chemnitz: Christ is Mediator and Savior not only from the standpoint of merit, but also from the standpoint of efficacy. For his merit does not mean that the things pertaining to our justification should be brought about through us or through others, but he also effected them and still effects those things in which our justification and salvation consist, such as our deliverance from sin, the devil, death, and the wrath of God, and the application of these blessings to our hearts. Therefore this is deservedly called an efficient cause (1 Pe 1:18,19; 2:24; 1 Jn 1:9; Heb 2:14; Rev 5:9; Ga 3:13, etc) (*Examination*, Vol I, p 457).

III. Justification is by grace.

1. It is important to have an accurate biblical definition of grace.

a) Grace is the favorable disposition of God's heart toward us.

1) This is clearly Scripture's definition.

Romans 11:6 If by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Ephesians 2:5,8,9 God made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

2) Catholics take justifying grace as a quality infused in us (*gratia infusa*).

Council of Trent, session VI, chap. III, canon 11: If anyone says that men are justified either alone by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ or alone by the forgiveness of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and love which is poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit and which inheres in them, or even that the grace by which we are justified is nothing but the favor of God, let him be damned.

Chemnitz: The papists call it “first justification” when an unregenerate man for the first time is infused with a righteousness that is an inherent [part of his nature], when for the first time he receives the attitude or the infused quality of love. And concerning this first infusion of love they say that no works can merit it as a reward that is owed (*Examination*, Vol I, p 540).

Chemnitz: But they call it “second justification” when the infused love puts its abilities into practice to produce good works. And they say that this second justification can and should be obtained through good works. And they believe that those works merit a righteousness which is greater than that which is infused freely for the sake of Christ in first justification. Yes, they also say that those works in which their second justification consists finally merit eternal life, which they say is owed as a deserved reward for our good works done in love. So say the Jesuits (*Examination*, Vol 1, p 540).

3) There is no scriptural support for the concept of infused grace in justification.

-a) Some claim to find such support in the following passage.

Romans 5:5 Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

-b) The meaning is simply that we are assured of God's love. Notice how the pouring out of God's judgment mentioned in the following passages does not mean there is an “infused wrath.”

Psalm 69:24 Pour out your wrath on them; let your fierce anger overtake them.

Psalm 79:6 Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge you, on the kingdoms that do not call on your name.

Jeremiah 10:25 Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge you, on the peoples who do not call on your name. For they have devoured Jacob; they have devoured him completely and destroyed his homeland.

Calov: This love is poured out on us not as something that inheres in us, but as a manifestation and an effect and a feeling of it poured into our hearts (*Biblia Illustrata*, Vol. II, annotate. ad Rom., p 90).

b) Grace is God's motive for justification.

1) Salvation in general is attributed to grace.

Romans 5:2,17,21 Through him we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. ²¹ So that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:14,15,23 Sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. ¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Corinthians 6:1,2 As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. ² For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

2 Corinthians 12:9 He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Galatians 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Ephesians 1:5,6 In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Ephesians 2:8,9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Philippians 1:7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Revelation 21:6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life."

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Isaiah 55:1-3 Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.² Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.³ Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.

2) Specifically, Scripture speaks of justification being by grace.

Romans 3:24 All are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Romans 4:4,5 Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Romans 5:17,21 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.²¹ So that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

3) Justification becomes ours through faith.

-a) This is a clear fact of Scripture.

Romans 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Romans 3:22,28 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 9:30,31,32 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. ³² Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the “stumbling stone.”

Romans 10:6 The righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down).

Galatians 2:16 We know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Galatians 3:24 The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

Galatians 5:5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

-b) Faith is not a meritorious work, but only the organ for receiving grace.

Mark 16:15,16 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Romans 4:16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

-c) Since faith grasps the grace of God in Christ, it is imputed for righteousness.

-1) It is not the act of believing itself that is imputed for righteousness.

Romans 4:4 Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.

Romans 11:6 If by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Notice that the New Testament never speaks of being justified διὰ πίστεως (because of faith).

-2) Faith is imputed as righteousness because of the object to which faith clings, the merits of Christ.

Romans 4:5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Formula of Concord, TD, Article III, p 918, 13 For faith justifies, not for this cause and reason that it is so good a work and so fair a virtue, but because it lays hold of and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy Gospel; for this must be applied and appropriated to us by faith, if we are to be justified thereby.

-3) Roman Catholicism strongly denies this understanding of the relationship of faith to justification.

Council of Trent, Session VI, Canon 9: If anyone says that by faith alone the ungodly is justified with the understanding that nothing else is required which works with faith to obtain the grace of justification and that it is not at all necessary for him to be prepared and disposed by an act of his own will, let him be damned.

Canon 24: If anyone says that the received righteousness is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works but that the works are only the fruit and signs of the justification obtained, not also a cause of its increase, let him be damned.

Chemnitz: The papists explain the matter in this way: Faith which is perfected (i.e. given its essential saving characteristic) by love and other virtues is counted for righteousness, that is, that in believers God for Christ's sake accepts the works, which in and by themselves are not worthy, as the kind of righteousness which brings reconciliation with God etc. (*Loci*, de justificatione, chap. IV, de vocabulo imputationis, p 274).

2. The sinner's own merits in no way are a factor in justification.

a) We must understand what it meant by merits in this statement.

1) Among the merits we exclude are all the merits of the sinner before justification.

Luke 18:9-14 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ ¹³ But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ ¹⁴ I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Philippians 3:4-8 If anyone thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. ⁷ But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

Hoenecke: These seven steps of preparation, namely, faith, fear, hope, love, repentance, intention of Baptism, and intention of the new life form the so-called *meritum de congruo* of the scholastics, i.e., they are not something that are strictly worthy of being valued as merit (thus not *meritum de condigno*) (*Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, Vol III, p 340).

Apology, Article IV, p 124, 19,20: Their feigning a distinction between *meritum congrui* and *meritum condigni* [due merit and true, complete merit] is only an artifice in order not to appear openly to Pelagianize. For, if God necessarily gives grace for the *meritum congrui* [due merit], it is no longer *meritum congrui*, but *meritum condigni* [a true duty and complete merit]. But they do not know what they are saying. After this ability to love is present, they imagine that man can acquire merit *de condigno*. And yet they bid us doubt whether there is an ability present. How, therefore, do they know whether they acquire merit *de congruo* or ²⁰ *de condigno* [in full, or half]? But, good God! these are mere inane ideas and dreams of idle, wretched, inexperienced men, who do not much reduce the Bible to practice, who did not know how the remission of sins occurs, and how, in the judgment of God and terrors of conscience, trust in works is driven out of us. Secure hypocrites always judge that they acquire merit *de condigno*, whether the habit be present or be not present, because men naturally trust in their own righteousness; but terrified consciences waver and hesitate, and then seek and accumulate other works in order to find rest. Such consciences never think that they acquire merit *de condigno*, and they rush into despair unless they hear, in addition to the doctrine of the law, the gospel concerning the gratuitous remission of sins and the righteousness of faith. Thus some stories are

told that when the Barefooted monks had in vain praised their order and good works to some good consciences in the hour of death, they at last had to be silent concerning their order and St. Francis, and to say: “Dear man, Christ has died for you.” This revived and refreshed them in trouble, and alone gave peace and comfort.

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article I, p 476, 8: The scholastic doctors have taught... if a man does as much as is in him, God certainly grants him His grace.

2) Also excluded from merit in justification are all good works of the justified.

Romans 4:2,3 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God.³ What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Notice that justification is not conditioned on future worthiness, just as it is not given as a reward for past merits.

Hermas III, 2: If you would do something good not required by the commandment of God you would gain for yourself greater glory and be more glorious before God than you would be otherwise.

Didache VI, 2: If you can bear the whole yoke of the Lord you will be perfect; but if you cannot, do as much as you can.

2 Clem. VII, 3: Let us strive that we may be crowned. And if we cannot all be crowned, let us at least come near the crown.

b) Scripture expressly excludes all merits of man from justification (contra Lodge, Boy Scouts, etc.).

1) Note the strong *particulae exclusivae*.

Romans 3:28 We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Galatians 2:16 Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Ephesians 2:8,9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

2) Scripture very emphatically denounces any attempt to introduce the sinner’s own merits into justification.

Romans 10:2,3 For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. ³ Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Galatians 1:8,9 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! ⁹ As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

Galatians 2:21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

Galatians 3:1,3,10 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. ³ Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? ¹⁰ All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

Galatians 5:4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Philippians 3:2 Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh.

3) Reason cannot grasp this truth.

Limborch: Meanwhile, if quarreling about terminology were given up, we would have to confess that in the views of the papists there are many things of which we do not disapprove, and if this would be corrected that righteousness is an infused attitude and if all [ideas of] merit are renounced, it seems by all means that we must hold with them that an indwelling righteousness is required if we are to obtain forgiveness of sins and righteousness from God (*Theol. Christ.*, lib. VI, chap. IV, par. 4).

John Miley: Arminians deny the merit of good works but insist on them as a condition of salvation (*Systematic Theology*, p 373).

Erickson: Saving faith requires correct belief regarding the nature of God and what he has done. Correct belief is insufficient, however. There must also be active commitment of oneself to God (*Christian Theology*, p 959).

4) This is the error of "analytic justification."

John Ankerberg: The second key term for Protestantism [in the matter of justification] is synthetic; for Roman Catholicism it is the word analytic. By the term synthetic, Protestantism means that there is a synthesis or a combining or adding something to the life of the sinner who has placed trust in Christ. Before God's eyes, the sinner appears clothed in the righteousness of Christ-that is, the righteousness and merits of Christ are imputed to the

believer and cover him. Thus, God has declared the sinner just, not from anything in and of himself but from declaring him just in Christ. It is the merits of Christ that establish a man as righteous, not the merits of a man. The contrary word in Catholicism is that justification is analytic; this means that God analyzes or evaluates the condition of the person, finds him to be truly righteous and therefore declares him just (<http://www.ankerberg.com/Articles/roman-catholicism/RC0602W2.htm>). Cf Pieper II, p 537–541; Hoenecke III, p 334–338.

- 3. Such clear teaching about the exclusion of human merit in justification serves a double purpose.**
 - a) It sets justification on an unshakable foundation, giving the believer certainty of his standing with God.**
 - 1) Scripture testifies about this certainty.**

Romans 4:16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

John 10:28,29 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

Romans 8:15,16,38,39 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 3:12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

- 2) Roman Catholic doctrine consistently holds the Christian in suspense.**
 - a) Their doctrinal statements deny that objective assurance of salvation is the possession of every believer.**

Council of Trent, Session VI, Canon 15, 16: If anyone says that a regenerated and justified man is obligated by faith to believe that he is certainly one of the elect, let him be damned... If anyone says with absolute and infallible certainty that he will surely have this great gift of enduring to the end (unless he shall have learned this by a special revelation), let him be damned.

-b) Catholicism cites the following Scripture passages as proof.

-1) They list passages that contain conditional clauses.

Deuteronomy 4:29 But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.

2 Chronicles 6:38,39 If they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their captivity where they were taken, and pray toward the land you gave their fathers, toward the city you have chosen and toward the temple I have built for your Name; ³⁹ then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their pleas, and uphold their cause. And forgive your people, who have sinned against you.

Ezekiel 18:21 But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die.

Response: These are not conditions, but powerful invitations to find God's grace in repentance.

-2) They list passages that declare our guilt.

Proverbs 20:9 Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"?

Job 9:20,21 Even if I were innocent, my mouth would condemn me; if I were blameless, it would pronounce me guilty. ²¹ "Although I am blameless, I have no concern for myself; I despise my own life."

Psalms 19:12 Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

1 Corinthians 4:4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

Response: These are confessions of sinfulness.

-3) They list passages that speak of grace in the form of a question.

Joel 2:14 Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God.

Jonah 3:9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.

Acts 8:22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.

Response: These passages do not speak of doubt about salvation, but they are encouragement to repentance.

b) Refusing to allow for any human merit in justification gives all glory to God.

Ephesians 2:9 It is not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 1:5-7 In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

4. Therefore, a proper understanding of justification requires a clean-cut division between law and gospel.

a) Scripture, indeed, addresses warnings to Christians.

Romans 11:20,21 Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

1 Corinthians 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?

b) Yet such warnings are entirely out of place, and omitted by Scripture, when the question of justification is under consideration.

Acts 16:30,31 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

IV. God pronounces justification in the means of grace.

1. Strictly speaking, the Word of God is a means of grace only by the gospel it contains.

a) Justification by law is beyond our reach. The demand of a perfect obedience makes it impossible for us to achieve.

Romans 10:5 Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them."

b) Justification by faith is near. It is announced in the gospel.

Romans 10:6-9 But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down)⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming:⁹ That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

2 Corinthians 5:19 God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

2. Justification is the central doctrine of the gospel.

a) All other doctrines find their purpose in justification.

1) Notice how Scripture speaks of the centrality of this doctrine for preaching and teaching.

1 Corinthians 2:2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (Compare Acts 20:27: For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.)

Galatians 6:14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Acts 10:43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

2) Note the relation of some doctrines to justification.

- a) Law and sin speak of the necessity of justification.**
- b) The doctrine of God shows our God in love preparing it.**
- c) Christ and his work lay justification’s foundation.**
- d) The doctrine of the church presents us with the congregation of the justified.**
- e) The means of grace proclaim and seal it.**
- f) Sanctification (in all its ramifications) is the fruit of this justification.**
- g) The goal is the salvation of mankind and glory of God.**

b) Therefore this doctrine truly deserves its place at the heart of Christian doctrine.

1) It is rightly called *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*.

Smalcald Articles, Part II, Article I, p 460, 5: Of this article nothing can be yielded or surrendered nor can anything be granted or permitted contrary to the same, even though heaven and earth, and whatever will not abide, should sink to ruin. “For there is no other name under heaven, given to men by which we must be saved,” says Peter, Acts 4:12. “And by his wounds we are healed,” Is. 53:5. And upon this article all things depend which we teach and practice in opposition to the Pope, the devil, and the whole world. Therefore, we must be sure concerning this doctrine, and not doubt; for otherwise all is lost, and the Pope and devil and all things gain the victory and suit over us.

2) All Christians are one in heart concerning this article.

-a) Anyone trusting in his own works is no Christian.

Galatians 3:10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

-b) Christians may err in the intellectual conception of justification.

Romans 8:26,27 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.

-c) Here is a confessional statement on the centrality of justification.

Apology, Article III, p 224, 268: Good men, indeed, will easily judge these things, if they will think, as often as a passage concerning love or works is cited, that the law cannot be observed without Christ, and that we cannot be justified without Christ, and that we cannot be justified from the law, but from the gospel, that is, from the promise of the grace promised in Christ. And we hope that this discussion, although brief, will be profitable to good men for strengthening faith, and teaching and comforting conscience. For we know that those things which we have said are in harmony with the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures, with the holy fathers, Ambrose, Augustine, and very many others, and with the whole Church of Christ, which certainly confesses that Christ is propitiator and justifier.

c) A deviation from the truth in this article has the most far-reaching, disastrous results.

1) Rejection of this doctrine excludes a person from the church.

Matthew 21:31 “Which of the two did what his father wanted?” “The first,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.”

John 16:9 He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me.

Galatians 3:10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

Galatians 5:4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

2) Failure to understand this doctrine will dull spiritual understanding so that ultimately even the difference between Christian and pagan religion becomes obliterated.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 847: Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of conscience - those too may achieve eternal salvation.

National Council of Churches: As Christians we recognize that Jesus is not central to other religious traditions. For men and women in other communities, the mystery of God takes many forms. Observing this, we are not led to deny the centrality of Christ for our faith, but to contemplate more deeply the meaning of St. Paul’s affirmation: ‘Ever since the creation of the world, (God’s) eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things [God] has made’ (Romans 1:20). Christians disagree on the nature and extent of such ‘natural revelation’ and its relation to salvation. No matter what our view on this may be, we can be open to the insights of others (*Interfaith Relations and the Churches: A Policy Statement of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.*, as found on the ELCA web site).

V. The aim of justification is man's salvation.

1. Scripture tells us of two states of sinful human beings.

a) Before justification our state is wretchedness.

Psalms 32:3,4 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

b) The result of justification is blessedness.

Psalm 32:1,2 Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.² Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

Romans 4:6-9 David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:⁷ “Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.⁸ Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”⁹ Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness.

2. Scripture draws a vivid picture of a justified sinner's happiness.

a) The justified sinner enjoys freedom in Christ.

1) Compare this with the servitude of sin.

Genesis 3:22 And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”

John 8:34 Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”

Hebrews 2:14,15 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

2) There are several aspects to our freedom in Christ.

John 8:32,36 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Exodus 20:20 Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”

Romans 6:12,14,15,18 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.¹⁴ For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”

Galatians 4:9,10 But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable

principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? ¹⁰ You are observing special days and months and seasons and years!

3) Turning our freedom into a license for sinning is a grotesque travesty of real liberty.

Romans 6:1,2 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

Galatians 5:13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

1 Peter 2:16 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.

b) The justified sinner has been adopted as a full child of God with all the rights and privileges of an adult child.

Ephesians 1:5 He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.

Galatians 3:26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 4:1-5,6 What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. ² He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. ³ So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. ⁴ But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. ⁶ Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

Romans 8:14-16 Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

1 John 3:1,2 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

c) The justified sinner enjoys peace of heart.

John 20:21-23 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 4:7 The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 1:19 Fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.

1 Peter 3:21 This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

d) The justified sinner sees sanctification not as drudgery but as delight.

Romans 3:8 Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—“Let us do evil that good may result”? Their condemnation is deserved.

Romans 6:1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

1 Peter 5:2,3 Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

e) The justified sinner may not always recognize his blessedness. Similarly, the unbeliever may not always recognize his wretchedness. There is an objective and subjective quality to both states.

Psalms 73:12-14 This is what the wicked are like – always carefree, they increase in wealth.¹³ Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence.¹⁴ All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning.

Walther: Again, young ministers who are very desirous of achieving results and accomplishing something – may there be many of them! – love to speak before worldlings of the blessed state of being a Christian. However, not infrequently they exceed the bounds of propriety by saying: “Oh, those poor worldly people! They are without any joys, any peace, any rest!” That is not true at all. When worldly people hear a statement of that kind, they think: “That preacher is a simpleton, to be sure. What does he know about us? We have joy, peace, and quiet indeed.” The preacher must express himself differently; he must admit that worldly people have their delights and enjoyments, but at the same time he must remind them that they are frequently

visited with such thoughts as these: “What if it were true what the Christians are saying? If they are right, what will be my fate?” Amidst their riotous orgies the thought of death suddenly looms like a specter and turns their joys to bitterness. If the preacher addresses them thus, he forces them to acknowledge: “That man can give you a true picture of yourself!” Again, if you are to portray Christians as being exceedingly happy people, utterly without worry and trouble of any kind, you would again not paint a true picture. Christians are in far greater anxiety, worry, and tribulation than worldly people. Yet, spite of all this, the Christian is far happier than worldly men. If God were to come this night and demand his soul from him, he would say, “Praise God! My race is run; soon I shall be with my Savior.” Amidst his tribulations this is his reflection: “Surely, it will not be long before I shall come home to my Father in heaven, and all the misery and woe of this earth will be past and forgotten.” While Christians are weeping, the angels are rejoicing over them. While Christians are in anguish of soul and terror, God is cherishing the most cordial thoughts of love for them and calls them his beloved children (*Law and Gospel*, p 54, 55).

Walther: One who is spiritually dead regards it as foolish to torment himself with former sins. He becomes increasingly indifferent towards all sins. A Christian, however, feels his sin and also the witness of his conscience against him (*Law and Gospel*, p 45).

Walther: When you feel the comfort of the gospel in your heart, that is a glimpse of the light that may come to you on a certain day; but then several days may pass when you will not catch that glimpse again. Always keep this reflection present: “For such poor sinners as I am the gospel – the sweet gospel – has been provided. I have forgiveness of sins through Christ” (*Law and Gospel*, p 49).

VI. The church has coined various terms to preclude error and to safeguard the truth.

1. Justification is set off by various exclusive phrases.

a) We speak of justification as being “by grace”(favor dei, sola gratia).

Romans 4:13-16 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ¹⁴ For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵ because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶ Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring.

Formula of Concord, Ep., III, p 794, 10 We believe, teach, and confess that for the preservation of the pure doctrine concerning the righteousness of faith before God it is necessary to urge with special diligence the *particulae exclusivae*, that is, the “phrases that exclude,” i.e., the following words of the holy Apostle Paul, by which the merit of Christ is entirely separated from our works, and the honor given to Christ alone, when the holy Apostle Paul writes: of grace, without merit, without law, without works, not of works. All these

words together mean as much as that we are justified and saved along by faith in Christ.

b) We also speak of justification as being “for Christ's sake” (*satisfactio vicaria*).

Isaiah 53:12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Romans 3:24,25 All are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.

c) We also speak of justification as being “through faith” (*fides specialis, sola fide*).

Romans 4:4,5 Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Formula of Concord, TD, III, p 918, 13: For faith does not justify because it is so good a work and so God-pleasing a virtue, but because it lays hold on and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy Gospel.

2. Justification is a forensic act. It is not physical or medicinal.

Apology, Article III, p 204, 184: Scripture thus uses the term “faith,” as the following sentence of Paul testifies, Rom. 5:1: “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God.” Moreover, in this passage, to justify signifies, according to forensic usage, to acquit a guilty one and declare him righteous, but on account of the righteousness of another.

Formula of Concord, Ep., Article III, p 792, 794, 4,7,15,19-21: Accordingly, we believe, teach, and confess that our righteousness before God is this very thing, that God forgives us our sins out of pure grace, without any work, merit, or worthiness of ours preceding, present, or following, that he presents and imputes to us the righteousness of Christ’s obedience, on account of which righteousness we are received into grace by God, and regarded as righteous.⁷¹ 5. We believe, teach, and confess that according to the usage of Holy Scripture the word *justify* means in this article, to absolve, that is, to declare free from sins. Prov. 17:15: “Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent – the LORD detests them both.” Also Rom. 8:33: “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.”¹⁵¹ 3. We reject and condemn that in the sayings of the prophets and apostles where the righteousness of faith is spoken of the words *justify* and *to be justified* are not to signify declaring or being declared free from sins, and obtaining the forgiveness of sins, but actually being made righteous before God, because of

love infused by the Holy Spirit, virtues, and the works following them.¹⁹¹ 7. We reject and condemn that faith saves on this account, because by faith the renewal, which consists in love to God and one's neighbor, is begun in us.²⁰¹ 8. We reject and condemn that faith has the first place in justification, nevertheless also renewal and love belong to our righteousness before God in such a manner that they are indeed not the chief cause of our righteousness, but that nevertheless our righteousness before God is not entire or perfect without this love and renewal.²¹¹ 9. We reject and condemn that believers are justified before God and saved jointly by the imputed righteousness of Christ and by the new obedience begun in them, or in part by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, but in part also by the new obedience begun in them.

3. Justification is by faith *alone* (*sola fide*).

- a) **This is not meant to exclude the grace of God, the redemptive work of Christ, or the means of grace.**
- b) **It is meant rather to rule out any contribution of the sinner's own conduct to his justification.**
- c) **Faith, of course, is never without good works.**

Matthew 3:8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Galatians 5:6 In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

James 2:26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Hebrews 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

4. Justification is not a gradual process. It has no degrees. Forgiveness is full and complete for the one who has faith.

- a) **This is the clear testimony of Scripture.**

John 13:10 Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."

Luke 18:14 I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Luke 7:41,42,47 Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.⁴² Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will

love him more? ⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.

b) Roman Catholicism holds the opposite view.

Council of Trent, Session VI, chapter 10: Having been justified ... by keeping the commandments of God and of the Church they grow in that very righteousness which has been received through the grace of Christ, as their faith cooperates with good works, and are justified even more.

Canon 24: If anyone says that the righteousness which has been received is not preserved and even increased before God by good works, but that the good works themselves are nothing more than fruits and indications of the justification that has been acquired, and not, however, a cause of its increase, let him be damned.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 1989: The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is conversion, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus' proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 4:17). Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.

c) Our confessions clearly state the biblical doctrine that justification is a verdict, not a process.

Augsburg Confession, Article IV, p 44: Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by his death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in his sight. Romans 3 and 4.

Consider also the Formula of Concord's clear testimony in Article III of both the Epitome and Thorough Declaration.

VII. There is also a justification by works.

1. This justification by works is the outward evidence of the justification which we have been considering.

a) Good works prove the presence of justification.

1) Scripture establishes this fact.

Matthew 12:37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned. Compare Matthew 12:33 Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

John 13:35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

James 2:24-26 You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.²⁵ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?²⁶ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

2) This is a justification which human beings can see.

Matthew 12:33 Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

b) This justification is important.

1) This justification by works allows the individual Christian to evaluate his own faith.

-a) This is a proper use of good works.

Matthew 6:14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

2 Peter 1:5-10 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁹ But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall.

1 John 2:3,4 We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.⁴ The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

Apology, Article III, p 199, 154,155: And yet Christ often connects the promise of the remission of sins to good works, not because He means that good works are a propitiation, for they follow reconciliation; but for two reasons. One is, because good fruits must necessarily follow. Therefore He reminds us that, if good fruits do not follow, the repentance is hypocritical and feigned. The other reason is, because we have need of external signs of so great a promise, because 155] a conscience full of fear has need of

manifold consolation. As, therefore, Baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs that continually admonish, cheer, and encourage desponding minds to believe the more firmly that their sins are forgiven, so the same promise is written and portrayed in good works, in order that these works may admonish us to believe the more firmly. And those who produce no good works do not excite themselves to believe, but despise these promises. The godly on the other hand, embrace them, and rejoice that they have the signs and testimonies of so great a promise. Accordingly, they exercise themselves in these signs and testimonies. Just as, therefore, the Lord's Supper does not justify us *ex opere operato*, without faith, so alms do not justify us without faith, *ex opere operato*.

-b) For two reasons, great caution is in place in using this assurance through works.

-1) This assurance of faith can easily be distorted in our minds into a cause for justification rather than keeping our eyes focused on Christ.

Galatians 3:10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

Hebrews 12:1,2 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

-2) Because of the deceitfulness of the human heart and the imperfection of our sanctified living, our fruits of faith can never be our ultimate source of assurance of our standing with God.

1 John 3:18-20 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and truth. ¹⁹ This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence ²⁰ whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

1 John 3:18-20 My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action. ¹⁹ This, then, is how we will know that we belong to the truth; this is how we will be confident in God's presence. ²⁰ If our conscience condemns us, we know that God is greater than our conscience and that he knows everything. (TEV)

2) This justification by works also serves a purpose for congregations of believers.

- a) **It is intimately connected with the proper fulfillment of our task.**

Matthew 5:14,16 You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

John 13:35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

- b) **It serves as the basis for church discipline.**

1 Corinthians 5:13 God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.”

2. **Scripture is not self-contradictory in teaching this justification.**

- a) **Justification before God is by grace.**

Luke 7:50 Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

- b) **Works, as fruits, show this justification before men.**

Luke 7:47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.

Luke 7:47 I tell you, her sins – and they are many – have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love. (NLT)

D. Sanctification

I. **Sanctification is the inevitable result of justification.**

1. **The word is sometimes used in a wider sense.**

- a) **In the wider sense it embraces all phases of the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing a person to faith and maintaining that faith.**

- 1) **There are many passages that illustrate this wider use of the term.**

2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit (*ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος*) and through belief in the truth.

1 Peter 1:2 To God’s elect, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the

Spirit (ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος), for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

John 17:17-19 Sanctify (ἁγιάσον) them by the truth; your word is truth.¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.¹⁹ For them I sanctify (ἁγιάζω) myself, that they too may be truly sanctified (ἁγιασμένοι).

Romans 1:7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints (ἁγίοις): Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:2 To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified (ἁγιασμένοι) in Christ Jesus and called to be holy (ἁγίοις), together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours.

2 Corinthians 1:1,2 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God in Corinth, together with all the saints (τοῖς ἁγίοις) throughout Achaia:² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 9:13,32,41 “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints (τοῖς ἁγίοις) in Jerusalem.”³² As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the saints (τοὺς ἁγίους) in Lydda.⁴¹ He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers (τοὺς ἁγίους) and the widows and presented her to them alive.

Acts 20:32 Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified (ἁγιασμένοις).

Acts 26:18 I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified (ἁγιασμένοις) by faith in me.

2) At times the term is used with special emphasis on justification.

1 Corinthians 6:11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified (ἁγιάσθητε), you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Ephesians 5:25,26 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her²⁶ to make her holy (ἁγιάση), cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.

Hebrews 10:10 By that will we have been made holy (ἁγιασμένοι) through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

3) Our confessions also use the term sanctification in this broader sense.

Small Catechism The Third Article (Sanctification): I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Christian church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Large Catechism, p 678, 6,7: But that it may be most easily and clearly understood as it is to be taught to children, we shall briefly sum up the entire Creed in three chief articles, according to the three persons in the Godhead, to whom everything that we believe is related, so that the First Article, of God the Father, explains Creation, the Second Article, of the Son, Redemption, and the Third, of the Holy Spirit, Sanctification. ⁷¹ Just as though the Creed were briefly comprehended in so many words: I believe in God the Father, who has created me; I believe in God the Son, who has redeemed me; I believe in the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies me. One God and one faith, but three persons, therefore also three articles or confessions.

Large Catechism, p 686, 35-37: This article (as I have said) I cannot relate better than to Sanctification, that through the same the Holy Spirit, with his office, is declared and depicted, namely, that he makes holy. Therefore we must take our stand upon the word *Holy Spirit*, because it is so precise and comprehensive that we cannot find another. ³⁶¹ For there are, besides, many kinds of spirits mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, as, the spirit of man, heavenly spirits, and evil spirits. But the Spirit of God alone is called Holy Spirit, that is, he who has sanctified and still sanctifies us. For as the Father is called Creator, the Son Redeemer, so the Holy Spirit, from his work, must be called Sanctifier, or One that makes holy. ³⁷¹ But how is such sanctifying done? Answer: Just as the Son obtains dominion, whereby he wins us, through his birth, death, resurrection, etc., so also the Holy Spirit effects our sanctification by the following parts, namely, by the communion of saints or the Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting; that is, he first leads us into his holy congregation, and places us in the bosom of the church, whereby he preaches to us and brings us to Christ.

b) In this locus of dogmatics we are using the term sanctification in its narrower sense which denotes the new life, both of the heart and of the conduct, that was begun in regeneration.

1) Scripture also uses this term “sanctification” in this more restricted sense.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 It is God’s will that you should be sanctified (*ἀγιασμοῦς*): that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy (*ἀγιασμοῦ*) and honorable, ⁵ not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; ⁶ and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have

already told you and warned you. ⁷ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy (ἁγιασμῶ) life.

1 Thessalonians 3:13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy (ἁγιωσύνη) in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones (ἁγίων).

1 Thessalonians 5:23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify (αγιασαι) you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness (ἁγιωσύνην) out of reverence for God.

Romans 6:19,22 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness (ἁγιασμόν). ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness (ἁγιασμόν), and the result is eternal life.

2) **At times Scripture distinguishes the newness of life in principle and the fruit that this new life produces in our hearts.**

Galatians 5:22-23,25,26 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Gotfried Hoffmann (1712): The fruits of sanctification, to the extent that sanctification is looked upon as an indwelling quality, are good works rising out of faith (*Synopsis*, p 773).

Chemnitz: These Scripture passages describe the effects of renewal, such as good works, the worship of God, the fruits of the Spirit (*Loci*, Part III, p 10).

Quenstedt: The goal of renewal on the part of God is his glory (Mt 5:16; 1 Pe 2:12), on our part, good works (Ro 6:2,4,6; Eph 2:10; 4:22; Ga 5:22). The direct effect of renewal is the restoration of the image of God or indwelling holiness; the indirect effect is good works which are the goal of renewal in respect to intention, but they are its effect in respect to carrying out the intention (*TDP*, Part II, Chap. XI, sect. I, thes. XI, XII, p 636).

Formula of Concord, TD, III, p 928, 41: For good works do not precede faith, neither does sanctification precede justification. But first faith is kindled in us in conversion by the Holy Spirit from the hearing of the gospel. This lays hold of God's grace in Christ, by which the person is

justified. Then, when the person is justified, he is also renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, from which renewal and sanctification the fruits of good works then follow... This should not be understood as though justification and renewal were sundered from one another in such a manner that a genuine faith sometimes could exist and continue for a time together with a wicked intention, but hereby only the order is indicated, how one precedes or succeeds the other. For what Luther has correctly said remains true nevertheless: "Faith and good works well agree and fit together; but it is faith alone, without works, which lays hold of the blessing; and yet it is never and at no time alone."

Small Catechism, Third Article: I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers. On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

c) Renewal is usually a synonym for sanctification.

Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing (*ἀνακαινώσει*) of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed (*ἀνακαινοῦται*) day by day.

Colossians 3:10 Put on the new self, which is being renewed (*ἀνακαινούμενον*) in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (*καινὴ κτίσις*); the old has gone, the new has come!

Galatians 6:15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation (*καινὴ κτίσις*).

Ephesians 2:15 He has made the two one by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two (*κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον*), thus making peace.

Ephesians 4:24 Put on the new self (*τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον*), created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Quenstedt: The essence of sanctification in general consists in putting to death the old man and bringing the new man to life, or in the crucifixion of the flesh (Ga 5:24) and the renewing of the spirit. But specifically it lies 1) in the expulsion of the darkness and error of the intellect and the enlightenment of

the mind ... 2) in the correction or rectification of the will, and restoration of righteousness and true holiness ... 3) in the restraining of the appetite inclining toward evil, of depraved lust, and of improper emotions and in the purity and chastity of the desires, 4) in the use of the members of the body for doing works of righteousness ... 5) in suppressing the dominion of sin (*TDP*, Part III, Chap. XI, sect. I, thes. X, p 635).

Quenstedt: We speak of an old and a new man not in a physical sense, or insofar as his substance is concerned, but in a mystical (figurative) sense, insofar as his quality is concerned. In the concrete the old man is the nature of man corrupted, the new man is the same nature renewed for obedience to God. But in the abstract the former is the inborn corruption of the nature and the inclination of all the faculties toward evil, or original sin itself; the latter is the “spirit,” or the knowledge of God, righteousness and true holiness (*TDP*, Part III, Chap. XI, sect. I, thes. IX, note, p 635).

Formula of Concord, TD, III, p 928, 40,41 In the same manner the order also between faith and good works must abide and be maintained, and likewise between justification and renewal, or sanctification.⁴¹⁾ For good works do not precede faith, neither does sanctification precede justification. But first faith is kindled in us in conversion by the Holy Spirit from the hearing of the Gospel. This lays hold of God’s grace in Christ, by which the person is justified. Then, when the person is justified, he is also renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, from which renewal and sanctification the fruits of good works then follow...

2. Scripture carefully maintains the distinction between justification and sanctification.

a) It shows sanctification is the result of justification.

1) It does this in direct statements.

Romans 6:14,22 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

1 John 3:6 No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Matthew 7:17,18 Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

Matthew 12:33 Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

2) It makes this distinction by basing its exhortations to sanctification on justification and regeneration.

Romans 6:11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Titus 2:11,12 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.¹² It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

Titus 3:4-8 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,⁶ whom he poured on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.⁸ This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

1 Peter 1:22,23 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.²³ For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

1 Peter 2:10,11 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

b) Sanctification flows from the very nature of justification as many scriptural expressions and pictures show.

1) Natural reason fails to see the connection.

Romans 3:8 Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—“Let us do evil that good may result”? Their condemnation is deserved.

Romans 6:1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

1 Corinthians 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

1 Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

2) Justifying faith knows the love of God and by the power of that love genuine love is created in the believer's heart.

-a) Notice how justification is the ultimate expression of God's love.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

1 John 4:10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Romans 5:8,9 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

-b) Notice the impact of such love on human hearts: love received from God creates love in us.

1 John 4:11,19 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

2 Corinthians 5:15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

3) Justifying faith has received the adoption as children of God which inspires a child's freely given obedience.

-a) Notice how the picture of becoming a child of God illustrates what justification has done for us.

Romans 8:15,23 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Galatians 4:4-7 But when the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. ⁶ Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who

calls out, “Abba, Father.”⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

Ephesians 1:5 He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.

1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

-b) Notice then also how this reception of our place in the family of God produces the joyful child’s obedience.

Romans 8:14-17 Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Galatians 4:7-9 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.⁸ Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.⁹ But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?

Ephesians 5:1,8 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.

4) Justifying faith is pictured as receiving a new birth, which will show itself in new living.

-a) Justification imparts such spiritual life where there was death.

John 3:3,5,16-18 In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”⁵ Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.

Galatians 3:21,22 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart

life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.²² But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

Ephesians 2:5 God made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

1 Peter 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

-b) This new spiritual life desires to show itself in love.

1 John 5:1-3 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.²This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.³ This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.

1 John 4:7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

5) Therefore, justification and sanctification are inseparable.

-a) The presence of sanctification points to the reality of justification.

John 13:35 All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

-b) The lack of sanctification – as defined by Scripture - is conclusive evidence of the lack of justification.

James 2:17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

Note: We must be careful that we do not legalistically dictate what a Christian's sanctification will always "look" like. We must also never forget that much of a believer's sanctified life may be hidden from our eyes.

3. In spite of this close connection the two must always be clearly distinguished.

a) The difference is evident.

- 1) **Justification is a declaratory act of God performed outside of man. It imputes to man a foreign righteousness (*aliena iustitia*).**
- 2) **Sanctification is a medicinal act of God performed in the heart of man. It produces an inherent habitual righteousness (*propria iustitia*).**

b) The order is: justification first, then sanctification

- 1) **This relationship is not a succession in time since they are synchronous.**

Johann Benedict Carpzov Jr (1699): Immediately, in the same moment in which faith is kindled in us and in which we are justified by it (namely, faith) insofar as it lays hold of the justifying object offered in the Gospel, we are also renewed in mind and body (*Loci*, p 1135).

- 2) **This relationship is a logical sequence of cause and effect.**

Quenstedt: Regeneration, justification, mystic union, and renewal occur simultaneously and are joined to one another more closely than any mathematical point, to such a degree that they cannot be torn apart or separated. Nevertheless according to our way of thinking regeneration and justification are prior in order to this mystic union (*TDP*, Part III, chap. X, sect. I, thesis XVI, p 621).

Formula of Concord, Ep., III, p 928, 41: For good works do not precede faith, neither does sanctification precede justification. But first faith is kindled in us in conversion by the Holy Spirit from the hearing of the gospel. This lays hold of God's grace in Christ, by which the person is justified. Then, when the person is justified, he is also renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, from which renewal and sanctification the fruits of good works then follow... This should not be understood as though justification and renewal were sundered from one another in such a manner that a genuine faith sometimes could exist and continue for a time together with a wicked intention, but hereby only the order of causes and effects, of antecedents and consequents is indicated, how one precedes or succeeds the other. For what Luther has correctly said remains true nevertheless: "Faith and good works well agree and fit together; but it is faith alone, without works, which lays hold of the blessing; and yet it is never and at no time alone."

c) To reverse the order spells ruin for both.

- 1) **Justification would then be by works and out of our reach.**

Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Galatians 2:16 We know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ

Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Galatians 3:10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

2) True sanctification would also cease to exist.

-a) In place of sanctification there would be nothing but hypocrisy and self-deception.

Luke 18:11,12 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: “God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.”

Romans 7:5-11 For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. ⁶ But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. ⁷ What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.” ⁸ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. ⁹ Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. ¹⁰ I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. ¹¹ For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.

-b) An honest self-evaluation would lead to despair.

Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

-c) Such confusion would place us back under spiritual death and the kingdom of the devil.

Colossians 2:20-23 Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ²¹ “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? ²² These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. ²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

-d) This would also lead to idolatrous ideas of what pleases God.

Acts 17:22,23 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.”

1 Corinthians 10:20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.

d) Roman Catholicism makes sanctification part of the process which leads to complete justification.

Council of Trent, Session VI, Canon 24: If anyone says that the righteousness which has been received is not preserved and even increased before God by good works but that the works themselves are only results and evidences of the righteousness that has been obtained, and not a cause of its increase, let him be damned.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 1989: The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is conversion, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus' proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt 4:17). Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.

II. The Holy Spirit works sanctification through the means of grace. The believer cooperates with the new powers given in regeneration.

1. Sanctification is the Spirit's work.

a) Commonly the work of sanctification is ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:13,14 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ¹⁴because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

1 Corinthians 3:16,17 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

1 Corinthians 6:19,20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Galatians 5:16,22-23 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,

patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

b) As is often the case with God's outward works (*opera ad extra*), Scripture ascribes sanctification to the other persons of the Trinity as well.

John 15:1,2 I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

Hebrews 13:20,21 May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,²¹ equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Titus 2:14 Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

c) At times sanctification is ascribed simply to God in general without any mention of a specific person of the Trinity.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality.

1 Thessalonians 5:23,24 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

2. The means for sanctification are the means of grace.

a) The same means that offer grace and kindle faith also create and strengthen the new life.

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

Colossians 3:12,15,16 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Titus 3:8 This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

1 John 3:3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

1 Corinthians 10:21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

Quenstedt: The Word of God is the means of our renovation 1) as the conferring means, for by means of the Word of God the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of holiness (Ro 1:4) is conferred on us (Ga 3:2); 2) as the effective and productive means, which on the one hand, brings about and produces a renewed will, and, on the other, incipient righteousness and good works, yes, sanctification in its entirety (Ja 1:18, 21; 1 Pe 1:23; Lk 8:15); 3) as the directing and normative means, because it not only shows us the good things that are divinely commanded and the actions that please God but it also directs the renewed will of man into zeal for good works (Ga 6:16); 4) as a stimulating means inasmuch as by the blessing it bestows we are stimulated to live in newness of life (*TDP*, Part III, chap. XI, sect. I, thesis V, p 633).

b) The law is of secondary importance for sanctification.

1) The law curbs the opposition of the Old Adam in us.

Romans 7:18,23 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ²³ But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

Romans 8:7 The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Galatians 5:17 The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Mark 9:43-48 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for

you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell,⁴⁸ where “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”

1 Corinthians 9:27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

2 Corinthians 12:7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

Formula of Concord, Ep., II, p 788, 14 We reject also that in conversion and regeneration God entirely exterminates the substance and essence of the old Adam, and especially the rational soul, and in conversion and regeneration creates a new essence of the soul out of nothing.

Formula of Concord, TD, VI, p 968, 19, 24: But as far as the old Adam is concerned, which still clings to them, he must be driven not only with the law, but also with punishments; nevertheless he does everything against his will and under coercion, no less than the godless are driven and held in obedience by the threats of the law, 1 Cor. 9:27; Rom. 7:18. 19.²⁴¹ For the old Adam, as an intractable, refractory ass, is still a part of them, which must be coerced to the obedience of Christ, not only by the teaching, admonition, force and threatening of the law, but also oftentimes by the club of punishments and troubles, until the body of sin is entirely put off, and man is perfectly renewed in the resurrection, when he will need neither the preaching of the law nor its threatenings and punishments, as also the gospel any longer; these belong to this imperfect life.

2) The law points out the good works pleasing to God.

Micah 6:8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Deuteronomy 11:32 Be sure that you obey all the decrees and laws I am setting before you today.

Formula of Concord, TD, VI, p 968, 20 So, too, this doctrine of the law is needful for believers, in order that they may not hit upon a holiness and devotion of their own, and under the pretext of the Spirit of God set up a self-chosen worship, without God’s Word and command, as it is written Deut. 12: 8,28,32, You shall not do ... every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes, etc., but observe and hear all these words which I command you. You shalt not add thereto, nor diminish therefrom.

Formula of Concord, TD, VI, p 964, 12: Thereafter the Holy Spirit employs the law so as to teach the regenerate from it, and to point out and show them in the Ten Commandments what is the acceptable will of God, Rom. 12:2, in what good works God hath before ordained that they

should walk, Eph. 2: 10. He exhorts them thereto, and when they are idle, negligent, and rebellious in this matter because of the flesh, he reproves them on that account through the law, so that he carries on both offices together: He slays and makes alive; he leads into hell and brings up again. For his office is not only to comfort, but also to reprove, as it is written: When the Holy Spirit comes, he will reprove the world (which includes also the old Adam) of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

3. The law never produces a single good work despite all its commands and threats and promises.

Galatians 3:21,22 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. ²² But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

c) God may provide special occasions for reminding us of his Word, or for eliciting good works.

Deuteronomy 4:30 When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him.

Luke 16:20,21 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹ and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

3. A Christian may and must cooperate in his own sanctification,

Philippians 2:13 It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

2 Corinthians 6:1 As God's fellow workers (Συνεργοῦντες) we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.

a) The Christian has been raised to new life.

Romans 6:13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

Quenstedt: However, the Holy Spirit works our renewal in such a way that man cooperates with the powers of grace by which he is able... Therefore the reborn man is a subordinate cause of his renewal when moved by God, so that he renews himself day by day through the powers he receives from above. The Holy Spirit produces in man the ability for doing good, the nearest power, and the first act of sanctification without the agreement of man; but for the second act of sanctification, or the exercise and continuation of sanctification

once begun, man agrees through the Holy Spirit, not through natural powers, but supernatural powers; and thus through powers divinely granted man becomes a co-worker with God in his continuing renewal (*TDP*, Part III, chap. XI, sect. 1, thesis III, p 633).

b) Yet it is not by our own power that sanctification is produced.

John 15:4-5 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

2 Corinthians 3:5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Formula of Concord, TD, II, p 906, 65,66: From this, then, it follows that as soon as the Holy Spirit, as has been said, through the Word and holy Sacraments, has begun in us this his work of regeneration and renewal, it is certain that through the power of the Holy Spirit we can and should cooperate, although still in great weakness. But this cooperate does not occur from our carnal natural powers, but from the new powers and gifts which the Holy Spirit has begun in us in conversion,^{66]} as St. Paul expressly and earnestly exhorts that as workers together with him we receive not the grace of God in vain, 2 Cor. 6:1. But this is to be understood in no other way than that the converted man does good to such an extent and so long as God by his Holy Spirit rules, guides, and leads him, and that as soon as God would withdraw his gracious hand from him, he could not for a moment persevere in obedience to God. But if this were understood thus that the converted man cooperates with the Holy Spirit in the manner as when two horses together draw a wagon, this could in no way be conceded without prejudice to the divine truth.

Hoffmann: In the first act of sanctification, or the ability to do good works, a man cooperates no more than he does in regeneration and conversion itself, and therefore so far as the receiving of the power to lead a holy life is concerned a man is only acted upon (purely passive). Therefore also God alone is said to give man a new heart (Eze 36:26). But in the second act, or the use of the powers that have been granted, and in the continuation of the sanctification that has been begun, the renewed man actively cooperates, not indeed by powers of nature, but by supernatural powers, and insofar as he is born of God (*Synopsis*, p 764).

III. Sanctification involves a constant struggle against the sinful nature.

1. A Christian possesses a dual nature.

a) As a Christian he is a new creature.

1) Scripture clearly states this fact.

2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Ephesians 4:24 Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Colossians 3:10 You have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

2) By regeneration the Christian receives a new spiritual nature and is often called spirit or a spiritual being.

-a) This is his nature.

John 3:6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:15 The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment.

1 Corinthians 3:1 Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ.

Galatians 6:1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

-b) This spiritual nature is the guiding principle of his life. The new self is the true "I" of the Christian.

Romans 7:6 But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Romans 7:20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 12:11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Galatians 5:25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

b) Yet the old self (flesh) clings to the believer until death.

Ephesians 4:22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self (τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον), which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.

Romans 6:6 For we know that our old self (ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος) was crucified with him so that the body of sin (τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας) might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.

Romans 7:18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature (τῇ σαρκί μου). For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

2. The flesh hinders sanctification. Its goal is to regain control.

a) When the sinner was brought to faith this dominion has been wrenched from the flesh.

1 John 5:4 For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

Romans 6:2,6,11,14,18,22 We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. ¹¹ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

Romans 7:5,6 For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. ⁶ But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

b) Nevertheless the flesh is constantly seeking to regain that control.

Romans 7:18-23 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ²¹ So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

Galatians 5:17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

c) **Understanding this struggle gives the believer a plan of action in sanctification.**

1) **The goal is always to put to death the flesh. It is never to educate the flesh.**

Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

Galatians 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

1 Corinthians 9:27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

2) **At the same time the goal is also to exercise the corresponding virtues of the spirit.**

Romans 6:13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Ephesians 4:25-32 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.²⁶ "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.²⁸ He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 5:1,2 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Colossians 1:10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.

Colossians 3:10,12 You have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

1 Timothy 6:18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

3. A Christian is not left without comfort in the struggle.

a) The struggle is severe and painful.

Matthew 5:29,30 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Romans 7:24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

b) There are several aspects to the Christian's comfort in this struggle.

1) The struggle itself proves faith to be alive.

Romans 7:18-23 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ²¹ So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work in my members.

Ephesians 4:17, 20-24 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ²⁰ You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. ²¹ Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your

minds;²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

2) All saints underwent the same attacks from their flesh.

1 Peter 5:9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Romans 7:18,21,23 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.²¹ So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.²³ But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

3) We have the promise of sure victory.

Romans 8:37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

2 Corinthians 4:8-11 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.¹⁰ We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.¹¹ For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.

2 Corinthians 12:9,10 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Ephesians 6:16,17 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

4) The way to win the victory is to remember that Christ has already won the war and, by the gospel, empowers believers to win their daily battles.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Romans 14:7,8 For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.⁸ If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

IV. Good works are done by the Christian willingly according to God's rule laid down in the revealed will of God (the third use of the law).

1. A Christian is willing to do good works.

a) This willingness flows from the gospel.

1) It springs from gratitude, faith, and love.

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy (διὰ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ), to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Psalms 110:3 Your troops will be willing (נָדְבָת) on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth.

Romans 13:8-10 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.⁹ The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself."¹⁰ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

2 Corinthians 8:3,4,12 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own,⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.¹² For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Ephesians 5:1-4 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.³ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

2) This willingness is not a natural inclination.

Matthew 5:43-48 You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy."⁴⁴ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in

heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

b) This willingness has both focus and direction.

1) It seeks to obey God's command.

1 Samuel 3:10 The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Romans 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

Romans 7:22 For in my inner being (τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον) I delight in God’s law.

1 John 5:3 This is love for God to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.

2) It seeks to follow Christ's example.

Psalms 40:8 I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.

Hebrews 10:7 Then I said, “Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, O God.”

Isaiah 50:5 The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back.

John 4:34 “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”

Luther: Each should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all; that is, that we may be truly Christians (*LW* 31, p 367f).

3) It seeks to be faithful in carrying out our God-given vocation.

Ephesians 5:22-6:9 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through word, the ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant

church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.²⁹ After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—³⁰ for we are members of his body.³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.² “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—³ “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.⁵ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.⁶ Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.⁷ Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men,⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.⁹ And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

1 Peter 2:13-17 Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority,¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.¹⁵ For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.¹⁶ Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.¹⁷ Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

Luke 3:8-14 “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.⁹ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”¹⁰ “What should we do then?” the crowd asked.¹¹ John answered, “The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same.”¹² Tax collectors also came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?”¹³ “Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them.¹⁴ Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?” He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.”

2. No one but God may prescribe good works.

- a) No human authority has the right to bind our conscience apart from the Word of God.**

Matthew 15:9 They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.

Matthew 23:8-10 But you are not to be called “Rabbi,” for you have only one Master and you are all brothers.⁹ And do not call anyone on earth “father,” for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.¹⁰ Nor are you to be called “teacher,” for you have one Teacher, the Christ.

1 Corinthians 7:23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

Colossians 2:20-23 Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules:²¹ “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”²² These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings.²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

1 Samuel 15:22,23 But Samuel replied: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.²³ For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.”

John 16:2 They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.

Acts 26:9 I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

b) God prescribes good works for us in several ways.

1) God does this by commanding love as the fulfillment of the law and by specifying what love is in his commandments.

Romans 13:8-10 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.⁹ The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”¹⁰ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Matthew 22:35-40 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Galatians 5:13-15 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. ¹⁴ The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

2) God provides an opportunity for good works by giving each one a certain vocation in life.

1 Corinthians 7:20-24 Each one should remain in the situation (ἐν τῇ κλήσει) which he was in when God called him. ²¹ Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. ²² For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. ²³ You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. ²⁴ Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation (ἐν ᾧ ἐκλήθη) God called him to.

Ephesians 5:22,25 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

3) God prescribes good works by placing his representatives over us.

Ephesians 6:1,5,6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ⁵ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. ⁶ Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

Romans 13:1-5 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. ⁴ For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

c) **Human nature is prone to despise the God-given works and to indulge in self-chosen ones.**

Consider Roman monastic vows, Mormonism's avoidance of hot beverages, the Social Gospel, and countless other examples.

Matthew 15:7-9 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ⁸ "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁹ They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men."

Colossians 2:23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

Augsburg Confession, XVI, p 50, 4-7 They also condemn those who place the perfection of the gospel not in the fear of God and in faith but in forsaking civil duties. The gospel teaches an eternal righteousness of the heart, but it does not destroy the state or the family. ⁵ On the contrary, it especially requires their preservation as ordinance of God and the exercise of love in these ordinances. ⁶ Therefore Christians are necessarily bound to obey their magistrates and laws except when commanded to sin, ⁷ for then they ought to obey God rather than men.

Luther: We did not learn in the papacy what constitutes a good work. Before the gospel came, we were told that the works which we ourselves devised and chose were good works, such as making a pilgrimage to St. James or some other place, giving money to the monks in the cloisters for the reading of many masses, burning candles, fasting with but bread and water, praying a certain number of rosaries, etc. But now that the gospel is come, we preach thus: Good works are not those which we choose of ourselves, but those which God has commanded, those which our vocation calls for. A servant does good works when he fears God, believes in Christ, and obeys his master. First he is justified by faith in Christ, then he walks in faith, leads a godly life, is temperate and well-behaved, serves his neighbor, cleanses the stable, feeds the horses, etc. In performing such tasks he does better works than any Carthusian monk. For since he is baptized, believes in Christ, and in assured hope is waiting for eternal life, he goes on and obeys his master and knows that what he does in his calling pleases God. Therefore everything that he does in his occupation is a good and precious work. It does not look like a great fine work when he rides out on the field, drives to the mill, etc., but since he has God's command and directive for it, such works, mean as they seem, are nothing else than good works and a service rendered to the Lord. In like manner also a maidservant does good works when she performs her calling in faith, obeys her mistress, sweeps the house, washes and cooks in the kitchen, etc. Though there works are not as glamorous as the works of the Carthusian who hides behind a mask and has people gaping at him, still such works are much better and more precious before God than those of the Carthusian who wears a hair skirt, keeps his vigils, gets up at night and chants for five hours, eats no meat, etc. He does them without God's command and order; how, then, can they please God? Likewise when a burgher or a farmer helps his neighbor, warns him of the danger threatening his body, wife, child, servant, cattle, and goods, etc., such works do not make a great show, but they are

nevertheless good and precious works. When the civil government punishes the wicked and protects the virtuous, and when citizens yield obedience to the government and do so from faith and the hope of eternal life, they are performing good works, though they do not shine and glitter in the sight of reason...If you ask reason, the works of a servant, a maid, a master, a mistress, a mayor, and a judge are common, lowly works compared with the Carthusian's keeping his vigil, fasting, praying, abstaining from meat; but if you ask God's Word, the works of all Carthusians and all monks, melted together in one mass, are not as good as the work of a single poor servantmaid, who by baptism has been brought into the kingdom of God, believes in Christ, and in faith is looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the knowledge that everything we do in our Christian calling and station by faith is altogether a good and precious work; on which account we should be zealous unto good works...For example, I am a preacher, that is my office; if now I believe in Christ and look for the blessed hope and then go and tend to my preaching and perform my calling, even though men hold my office in low esteem, I would not trade my office for all the works that all the monks and nuns do in the cloister (St.L. IX, p 952 as cited in Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol III, p 40-41).

3. There is a wide neutral zone of acts neither commanded nor forbidden by God (adiaphora).

a) These are often divided into two classes.

1) moral: smoking, drinking, gambling, etc.

2) ceremonial: mode of baptism, liturgy, etc.

b) In matters of adiaphora, a Christian's attitude will be governed by three principles.

1) In his own conscience he must be absolutely free (i.e. able to use or refrain from using them, as the situation may demand).

Romans 14:5,6,14,22,23 One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. ¹⁴ As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. ²² So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. ²³ But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

Galatians 4:10,11 You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹ I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

1 Corinthians 6:12 “Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything.

2) In his conduct he must show tender respect for the equal liberty of others and for the welfare of weak brothers.

Romans 14:3,4,10,15,19,20,21 The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him.⁴ Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.¹⁰ You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.¹⁵ If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.¹⁹ Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.²⁰ Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.²¹ It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

1 Corinthians 10:27,28,32 If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience.²⁸ But if anyone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience’ sake—³² Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God.

3) When these liberties are attacked in principle, he must in word and deed defend them.

Galatians 2:3-5; 5:1 Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.⁴ This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.⁵ We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Formula of Concord, TD, p 828, 1,2,6: There has also been a division among theologians of the Augsburg Confession concerning those ceremonies or church usages which are neither commanded nor forbidden in the Word of God but have been introduced into the church in the interest of good order and the general welfare.

THE CHIEF QUESTION AT ISSUE IN THIS CONTROVERSY

² The chief question has been, In times of persecution, when a confession is called for, and when the enemies of the gospel have not come to an agreement with us in doctrine, may we with an inviolate conscience yield

to their pressure and demands, reintroduce some ceremonies that have fallen into disuse and that in themselves are indifferent things and are neither commanded nor forbidden by God, and thus come to an understanding with them in such ceremonies and indifferent things? One party said Yes to this, the other party said No.

⁶ We believe, teach, and confess that in time of persecution, when a clear-cut confession of faith is demanded of us, we dare not yield to the enemies in such indifferent things, as the apostle Paul writes, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1). "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?" (2 Cor. 6:14). "We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you" (Gal. 2:5). In such a case it is no longer a question of indifferent things, but a matter which has to do with the truth of the gospel, Christian liberty, and the sanctioning of public idolatry, as well as preventing offense to the weak in faith. In all these things we have no concessions to make, but we should witness an unequivocal confession and suffer in consequence what God sends us and what he lets the enemies inflict on us.

- c) **An "offense" is that which causes another Christian to become weak or to fall from faith or hinders an unbeliever from coming to faith.**

Matthew 18:6,7 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.⁷ Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!

Romans 14:13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

- d) **In a looser sense "offense" is anything that causes division among brothers.**

1 Corinthians 9:22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.

Ephesians 4:3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

4. **No one but a Christian can do good works.**

- a) **An unbeliever may indeed perform works that externally appear identical to the works of a Christian.**

1) **Yet his motive will be only the inborn *opinio legis* (escape punishment, appease a conscience, merit a reward, etc.).**

2) It will not be childlike gratitude.

Hebrews 11:4,6 By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Luther: A monkey can imitate the actions of people, but he is not a man on that account. But if he should become a man, this doubtless would not take place by virtue of these actions, by which he has imitated a man, but by some other power, namely, God's; but then having become a man, he would truly and rightly perform the actions of a man (*LW* 25, p 235).

b) Apparent “good works” of the unbeliever may be categorized in the following ways.

1) When judged purely as a human activity, such works can be valued as civic righteousness.

-a) For the well being of society such civic righteousness is certainly preferable to open sin.

-b) Such works even bear the promise of temporal blessing.

Matthew 6:5 And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

Apology, IV, p 126, 22-24: We for our part maintain that God requires the righteousness of reason. Because of God's command, honorable works commanded in the Decalogue should be performed, according to Gal. 3:24, “The law is a custodian,” and 1 Tim. 1:9, “The law is laid down for the lawless.” For God wants this civil discipline to restrain the unspiritual, and to preserve it he has given laws, learning, teaching, governments, and penalties. ²³ To some extent, reason can produce this righteousness by its own strength, though it is often overwhelmed by its natural weakness and by the devil, who drives it to open crimes. ²⁴ We freely give this righteousness of reason its due credit; for our corrupt nature has no greater good than this, as Aristotle correctly says, “Neither the evening star nor the morning star is more beautiful than righteousness.” God even honors it with material rewards. Nevertheless, it ought not be praised at the expense of Christ.

2) In God's view these works of civic righteousness are nothing but “glittering vices.”

Matthew 5:46,47 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only

your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

Luke 16:15 He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.”

Ephesians 2:1,12 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.¹² Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

Ephesians 4:18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Augustine: For though the soul may seem to rule the body admirably, and the reason the vices, if the soul and reason do not themselves obey God, as God has commanded them to serve Him, they have no proper authority over the body and the vices. For what kind of mistress of the body and the vices can that mind be which is ignorant of the true God, and which, instead of being subject to his authority, is prostituted to the corrupting influences of the most vicious demons? It is for this reason that the virtues which it seems to itself to possess, and by which it restrains the body and the vices that it may obtain and keep what it desires, are rather vices than virtues so long as there is no reference to God in the matter. For although some suppose that virtues which have a reference only to themselves, and are desired only on their own account, are yet true and genuine virtues, the fact is that even then they are inflated with pride, and are therefore to be reckoned vices rather than virtues (*City of God*, Book 19, Chapter 25).

5. Faith, when viewed as a work demanded by the law, is ethically good. Yet such faith does not merit forgiveness.

a) The law demands perfect trust in God.

Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods before me.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

b) The gospel provides this faith demanded by the law. It does this by imputing Christ's faith, his perfect trust in God, to me.

Romans 10:4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

1 Corinthians 1:30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Philippians 3:9 I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

- c) **Through the faith that the gospel awakens in my heart, Christ's faith is credited to me as though I had rendered it. In this my God-given faith functions merely as a receiving hand (*organon leptikon*).**

Ephesians 2:8,9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God –⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

- d) **At the same time my God-given faith, worked by the gospel, is new spiritual life, and as such it is the beginning of the fulfillment of God's law on my part. Yet since my faith ever remains imperfect here on earth, it is like every phase of my sanctification. It remains an imperfect fulfillment of the law on my part.**
- e) **Faith does not justify insofar as it is a partial restoration of God's image in us. Faith justifies since it is the God-given hand with which we embrace Christ's righteousness, imputed to us, including also his perfect trust in God as our substitute.**

V. **The process of sanctification is never completed in this life.**

1. **While conversion is a momentary act, and justification is not ours by degrees or stages, yet sanctification is a gradual process.**

- a) **Since a Christian's person is acceptable to God in Christ, therefore the believer's works are acceptable in Christ as well.**

Hebrews 13:16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

1 Thessalonians 4:1 Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.

Psalms 147:11 The LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Psalms 149:4 For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.

Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Colossians 1:3,4 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints.

1 Thessalonians 1:3,4 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, (This is true in spite of 4:4-6 Each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵ not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; ⁶ and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you.)

2 Thessalonians 1:3,4 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. ⁴ Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. (This is true in spite of 3:11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies.)

Apology, III, p 168, 45,46: Again, what need is there of a long discussion? If we were to think that, after we have come to the gospel and are born again, we were to merit by our works that God be gracious to us, not by faith, conscience would never find rest, but would be driven to despair. For the law unceasingly accuses us, since we never can satisfy the law. All Scripture, all the Church cries out that the law cannot be satisfied. Therefore this inchoate fulfillment of the law does not please on its own account, but on account of faith in Christ. Otherwise the law always accuses us.

Apology, III, p 202, 172: When in this manner the heart is cheered and quickened by faith, it receives the Holy Spirit, who renews us, so that we are able to observe the law; so that we are able to love God and the Word of God, and to be submissive to God in afflictions; so that we are able to be chaste, to love our neighbor, etc. Even though these works are as yet far distant from the perfection of the law, yet they please on account of faith, by which we are accounted righteous, because we believe that for Christ's sake we have a reconciled God.

Apology, III, p 206, 187: Rom. 4:3,5: Faith is credited as righteousness. Although on account of certain captious persons we must say technically: Faith is truly righteousness, because it is obedience to the gospel. For it is evident that obedience to the command of a superior is truly a species of distributive justice. And this obedience to the gospel is reckoned for righteousness, so that, only on account of this, because by this we apprehend Christ as Propitiator, good works, or obedience to the law, are pleasing. For we do not satisfy the law, but for Christ's sake this is forgiven us, as Paul says, Rom. 8:1, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

Formula of Concord, TD, IV, p 940, 8: Neither is there a controversy among us as to how and why the good works of believers are pleasing and acceptable to God, even though they are still impure and imperfect in this flesh of ours. We agree that this is so for the sake of the Lord Christ through faith, because the person is acceptable to God. For works which belong to the maintenance of outward discipline and which unbelievers and the unconverted are also able and require to perform, are indeed praiseworthy in the sight of the world, and even God will reward them with temporal blessings in this world, but since they do not flow from true faith, they are sinful (that is, spattered with sins in the sight of God), and God regards them as sin and as impure because of our corrupted nature and because the person is not reconciled with God. A bad tree cannot bear good fruit, and “Whatsoever does not proceed from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). The person must first be pleasing to God — and that alone for Christ’s sake — before that person’s works are pleasing.

b) A Christian's works are never perfect.

1) They are deficient in quality.

Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags, we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

-a) Our works often reveal a lack of understanding.

Romans 14:1,20,23 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.²⁰ Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.²³ But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

Colossians 2:16-23 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.¹⁸ Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.¹⁹ He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.²⁰ Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules:²¹ “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”²² These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings.²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

-b) Our works often reveal a lack of zeal.

Romans 7:22,23 For in my inner being I delight in God's law;²³ but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

Romans 12:11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Galatians 5:13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Galatians 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

2) **Our works are deficient also in quantity.**

-a) Our whole life is to be spent in the service of our Savior.

Matthew 5:48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 22:37-39 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

-b) However, the following exhortations demonstrate that this devotion is not always present among believers.

1 Corinthians 16:1,2 Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do.² On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

2 Corinthians 8:7 But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

2 Corinthians 9:8,11 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.¹¹ You will be made rich in every

way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

Ephesians 5:16 Make the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

Colossians 4:5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

1 Timothy 6:18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

Titus 2:14 Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Titus 3:8 This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

Luther: A Christian is righteous and a sinner at the same time (*simul justus et peccator*) (LW 26, p 232). A righteous man sins in all his good works (LW 32, p 83). Our condition in the kingdom of Christ is half sin and half holiness. What there is in us that belongs to faith and to Christ is completely pure and perfect, since it is not our own but Christ's, who is ours through faith and who lives and works in us. But what is still our own is completely sinful. Yet under Christ and in him it is concealed and blotted out through the forgiveness of sins (LW 21, p 205).

c) Though perfection is not attainable, we must not use this as an excuse for carelessness or despair.

Philippians 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

Colossians 1:10,11 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience.

1 Thessalonians 4:1,10 Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.¹⁰ And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.

Romans 7:24,25 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?²⁵ Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Luther: It is impossible to keep the devil from shooting evil thoughts and lusts into your heart. But see to it that you do not let such arrows stick there and take root, but tear them out and throw them away. Do what one of the ancient fathers counseled long ago: “I cannot,” he said, “keep a bird from flying over my head. But I can certainly keep it from nesting in my hair or from biting my nose off” (*LW* 21, p 88).

Luther: (In a letter written to Melancthon on August 1, 1521.) If you are a preacher of grace, then preach a true and not a fictitious grace, if grace is true, you must bear a true and not a fictitious sin. God does not save people who are only fictitious sinners. Be a sinner and sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ even more boldly, for he is victorious over sin, death, and the world (*LW* 48, p 281-282).

2. Perfectionism is taught by Roman Catholics. It is also taught by Methodists and other Holiness bodies.

a) Here are some illustrations of Rome’s teaching.

Council of Trent, Session VI, chapter 11: It follows that it is certain that those who say that a righteous man sins at least venially in every good work are opposed to the doctrine of the orthodox religion.

Canon 18: If anyone says that it is impossible even for the man who has been justified and placed under grace to keep the commandments of God, let him be damned.

Canon 25: If anyone says that in any good work the righteous man sins at least venially, let him be damned.

Bellarmino: Secondly Catholics confess that the good works of the righteous are naturally and absolutely just and even in their own way perfect, although not with that perfection that they cannot increase and that some evil works are not at times mingled with the good works (*Loci*, Chap. X, p 533).

Consider also their teaching about works of supererogation (*opera supererogationis*) and evangelical counsels (*consilia evangelica*).

b) Here are some examples of the perfectionism of Methodism and other Holiness bodies.

Wesley: I believe a person filled with love of God is still liable to involuntary transgressions. Such transgressions you may call sins if you please; I do not (*A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, p 24 online edition; see Pieper, III, 32).

J. A. Wood: In the grace of justification sins, as acts of transgression, are *pardoned*. In the grace of entire sanctification, sin, as a malady, is *removed*, so that the heart is pure. In the nature of the case, the eradication of sin in principle from the human heart completes the Christian character. When guilt is forgiven in justification, and all pollution is removed in entire sanctification, so that grace possesses the heart and nothing contrary to grace, then the moral condition is reached to which the Scriptures give the name of perfection, or entire sanctification (*Perfect Love*, p 34).

Grider: Baptism with the Holy Spirit...occasions, or effects, entire sanctification....Another component of entire sanctification is perfection, but only in a certain sense. We are not perfect in our judgment or in ethical conduct. We are perfect in the sense that a metal is perfect when extraneous substances are separated from it so that the metal is all of one kind. When the carnal nature is cleansed away, we are perfect in the sense of having a pure human nature – a human nature no longer infected by carnality. Christians are urged in Scripture to go on to perfection (He 6:1) and to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is (Mt 5:48) (*A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, p 388,389). Wesley was correct in teaching that entire sanctification is received by faith and not by works. Even as we are justified by faith alone, we are sanctified wholly by faith alone. Luther had taught that we are justified by faith alone; but he also had taught that we are sanctified gradually by pious disciplines. This caused Wesley to say that hardly anyone had taught better than Luther on justification or more poorly than Luther on sanctification (395). The faith that procures entire sanctification is not instantaneous. It is true that many believers hear Holiness preaching, go forward to receive the second blessing, yield themselves to God, and by faith enter into entire sanctification—no trauma, no delay. Others, however, pray but do not enter into the experience of entire sanctification. Sometimes they seek without fulfillment. They may be hindered by limited or incorrect understanding or incomplete consecration. They should not be urged to profess the experience, but to continue to seek until God effects it (*A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, p 407).

c) They attempt to supply scriptural proof for this teaching.

1) They misapply certain statements.

-a) At times they point to statements such as this by John, “No one who is born of God will continue to sin.”

1 John 3:9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. (Consider 1 John 1:10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.)

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Ezekiel 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

-b) There are better ways to understand John's words.

-1) John is speaking about the Christian according to the new self.

-2) John is using a durative present.

Note also the Pres. Inf., and the stress on the Christian's own activity (ποιεῖ).

2) They also use other expressions in attempts to prove such perfectionism.

-a) "As many as be perfect." (KJV) ("Ὅσοι οὖν τέλειοι)

Philippians 3:15 All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.

-b) Paul's own words in the context show that his meaning is anything but perfectionism.

Philippians 3:9,12-14 I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Augsburg Confession, XXVII, p 82, 49: Besides, the commands of God and true and proper service of God are obscured when people are told that monks alone are in a state of perfection. For this is Christian perfection: that we fear God honestly with our whole hearts, and yet have sincere confidence, faith, and trust that for Christ's sake we have a gracious, merciful God; that we may and should ask and pray God for those things of which we have need, and confidently expect help from him in every affliction connected with our particular calling and station in life; and that meanwhile we do good works for others and diligently attend to our calling.

d) Those who claim to be perfect are deceiving themselves.

1 John 1:8,10 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

Proverbs 20:9 Who can say, “I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin”?

Job 14:4 Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!

Ecclesiastes 7:20 There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags, we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

Apology, III, p 166, 40: But although from those things which have been said above it is evident that justification signifies not the beginning of the renewal, but the reconciliation by which also we afterwards are accepted, nevertheless it can now be seen much more clearly that the inchoate fulfilling of the law does not justify, because it is accepted only on account of faith. Trusting in our own fulfillment of the law is sheer idolatry and blaspheming Christ, and in the end it collapses and causes our consciences to despair. Therefore, this foundation shall stand forever, namely, that for Christ’s sake we are accepted with God, and justified by faith, not on account of our love and works.... Scripture indicates this often enough as in Ps. 143:2: “Enter not into judgment with Thy servant; for in your sight shall no man living be justified.” Here he clearly shows that all the saints, all the pious children of God, who have the Holy Spirit, if God would not by grace forgive them their sin, still have remnants of sin in the flesh. For when David in another place, Ps. 7:8, says: “Judge me O Lord, according to my righteousness,” he refers to his cause, and not to his righteousness, and asks God to protect his cause and word, for he says: Judge, O Lord, my cause. Again, in Ps. 130: 3 he clearly states that no person, not even the greatest saints, can bear God’s judgment, if He were to observe our iniquity, as he says: “If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?” And thus says Job 9:28: “I was afraid of all my works” (Engl. vers., sorrows). Likewise 9:30: “Even if I wash myself with soap and my hands with washing soda, you would plunge me into a slime pit.” And Prov. 20:9: “Who can say, I have made my heart clean?” And 1 John 1:8: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” And in the Lord’s Prayer the saints ask for the forgiveness of sins. Therefore even the saints have guilt and sins.

Apology, VI, p 294, 45: For of the law our adversaries speak thus: “God, condescending to our weakness, has given to man a measure of those things to which of necessity he is bound; and this is the observance of precepts, so that from what is left, *i.e.*, from works of supererogation, he can render satisfaction with reference to offenses that have been committed.” Here men imagine that they can observe the law of God in such a manner as to be able to do even more than the law exacts. But Scripture everywhere exclaims that we are far distant from the perfection which the law requires. Yet these men imagine that the law of God has been comprised in outward and civil righteousness; they do

not see that it requires true love to God “with the whole heart,” etc., and condemns the entire concupiscence in the nature. Therefore no one does as much as the law requires. Hence their imagination that we can do more is ridiculous. For although we can perform outward works not commanded by God’s law, which Paul calls beggarly ordinances, yet the confidence that satisfaction is rendered God’s law is vain and wicked.

Formula of Concord, Ep., VI, p 804, 4: For although they are indeed reborn and have been renewed in the spirit of their mind, such regeneration and renewal is incomplete in this world. In fact, it has only begun, and in the spirit of their mind the believers are in a constant war against their flesh (that is, their corrupt nature and kind), which clings to them until death. On account of this Old Adam, who inheres in people’s intellect, will, and all their powers, it is necessary for the law of God constantly to light their way lest in their merely human devotion they undertake self-decreed and self-chosen acts of serving God. This is further necessary lest the Old Adam go his own self-willed way. He must be coerced against his own will not only by the admonitions and threats of the law, but also by its punishments and plagues, to follow the Spirit and surrender himself a captive. 1 Cor. 9:27; Rom. 6:12; Gal. 6:14; Ps. 119:1; Heb. 13:21.

Formula of Concord, TD, II, p 906, 68: But since in this life we have received only the first fruits of the Spirit, and regeneration is not as yet perfect but has only been begun in us, the conflict and warfare of the flesh against the Spirit continues also in the elect and truly reborn. Again, there is not only a great difference between Christians, one being weak and the other strong in the Spirit, but even the individual Christian in his own life discovers that at one moment he is joyful in the Spirit and at another moment fearful and terrified, at one time ardent in love, strong in faith and in hope, and at another time cold and weak.

Formula of Concord, TD, VI, p 964, 7: But in this life Christians are not renewed perfectly and completely. For although their sins are covered up through the perfect obedience of Christ, so that they are not reckoned to believers for damnation, and although the Holy Spirit has begun the mortification of the Old Adam and their renewal in the spirit of their minds, nevertheless the Old Adam still clings to their nature and to all its internal and external powers.

VI. Sanctification is a necessary characteristic of Christian life.

1. First of all consider the value of good works.

a) We can list several ways their great worth is evident.

1) They correspond to the will of God.

Ph. Friedlieb (1655): The essence of good works absolutely considered is total conformity with the law of God. When we hold that faith is the essence of good works, this is what we want to say, that Christ the Mediator apprehended by true faith makes both a man and his works acceptable to God (*Medulla*, p 729).

Quenstedt: The essence of good works is either absolute or relative. Their essence or absolutely essential characteristic consists in *ἐννομία*, or their agreement and conformity with the law of God, just as the essential characteristic of the opposite of good works, namely sin, consists in *ἀνομία*, or lack of conformity with the law....But the essence of good works relative to what pleases God is justifying faith (*TDP*, Part IV, chap. IX, sect. I, thesis VII, p 307).

2) They are performed with strength and ability which God gives.

Quenstedt: They are called good not absolutely, but in their own way, not because of the intrinsic worthiness of the person who does them but because of the perfection of the infinite merit of Christ which perfectly covers all the imperfections of our works. Note: The works of the regenerate are not perfectly good when they are viewed in themselves, but they are defiled and spoiled by the pollution of sin, but in Christ they are perfectly good (*TDP*, Part IV, chap. IX, sect I, thesis III, p 306).

3) They serve the glory of God.

Matthew 5:16 let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

4) They provide external evidence of justification.

1 Thessalonians 1:3 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

5) They serve Christ by serving our neighbor.

Matthew 25:40 The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

b) God promises to reward good works.

1) Scripture states this truth in many places.

Matthew 10:41 Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward.

Luke 6:35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

1 Corinthians 3:8,14 The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. ¹⁴ If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.

1 Corinthians 9:17 If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.

Galatians 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

2 John 8 Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.

Revelation 11:18 The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth.

2) This reward is not for this life only but also for the life to come.

Matthew 19:29 Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

Mark 10:30 No one will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.

1 Timothy 4:8 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

Matthew 5:12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Luke 14:14 You will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

Revelation 14:13 Then I heard a voice from heaven say, “Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.”

Revelation 22:12 Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

3) This is a reward by grace.

Matthew 20:8 When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, “Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.” Compare verse 15 Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?

c) A Christian will rejoice in the promised reward.

- 1) **While these rewards are never the believer's motivation for living his faith, yet he will draw encouragement from God's superabundant grace.**

Matthew 5:12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Romans 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

2 Corinthians 4:16,17 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

- 2) **Never will the Christian demand them as rewards of merit.**

- a) **That would be against the nature of faith.**

- b) **A Christian realizes the imperfection of his works.**

Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

1 Peter 2:5 You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

- c) **Whatever is commendable in them is due to the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.**

Philippians 2:13 For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Matthew 25:37-39 Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

2. **Good works are necessary.**

- a) **This necessity does not conflict with willingness.**

- 1) **It is not a necessity of coercion.**

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Romans 7:6 But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

2) It is a necessity of natural consequence.

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.¹² It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

1 Peter 2:9-12 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

1 John 3:14,23 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

b) They are not necessary for salvation. Such was the false claim of George Major. (See the historical introduction in the Triglotta p 112-114)

1) Salvation is a matter of grace and faith alone.

Romans 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Colossians 1:22,23 But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

1 Peter 1:5,9 Through faith you are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.⁹ You are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Council of Trent, Session VI, Canon 32: If anyone says that the good works of a justified man are gifts of God to such an extent that they are

not also good merits of the justified person himself or that the justified person himself by the good works which are done ... by him does not truly merit increase of grace, everlasting life with all that belongs to it, (provided only that he dies in the state of grace), and even an increase in glory, let him be damned.

2) Good works do not preserve faith, although bad works may destroy it.

Romans 6:1,2 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

1 Corinthians 5:6 Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?

2 Corinthians 7:1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

Galatians 5:7,17 You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? ¹⁷ For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

1 Peter 2:11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

3) Good works are not harmful to faith, as Amsdorf claimed, but confidence in them destroys faith.

Formula of Concord, Ep., IV, p 798,800, 8-10, 17,18: We believe, teach, and confess further that all men, but especially those who are regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit, are obligated to do good works. ⁹ In this sense the words "necessary," "ought," and "must" are correctly and in a Christian way applied to the regenerated and are in no way contrary to the pattern of sound words and terminology. ¹⁰ However, when applied to the regenerated the words "necessity" and "necessary" are to be understood as involving not coercion but the due obedience which genuine believers, in so far as they are reborn, render not by coercion or compulsion of the law but from a spontaneous spirit because they are "no longer under the law but under grace." ¹⁷ We also reject and condemn as offensive and as subversive of Christian discipline that bald statement that good works are detrimental to salvation. ¹⁸ Especially in these last times, it is just as necessary to exhort people to Christian discipline and good works, and to remind them how necessary it is that they exercise themselves in good works as an evidence of their faith and their gratitude toward God, as it is to warn against mingling good works in the article of justification. Such an Epicurean dream concerning faith can damn people as much as a papistic and Pharisaic confidence in one's own works and merit.