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What is Christianity?—VIII.

SANCTIFYING GRACE AND JUSTIFICATION

by
Very Rev.

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D.D.

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Maynooth



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By

VERY REV. WM. MORAN, D.D.,

St. Patrick's College, Maynooth.

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SANCTIFYING GRACE AND JUSTIFICATION

Being the Eighth Booklet in a series entitled "What is Christianity?"

By REV. WILLIAM MORAN, D.D.

The word "grace" (from the Latin word *gratia*) is used in many different senses in Christian literature. For our present purpose it will suffice to mention two of these senses. In the first place, the word "grace" can mean favour or benevolence; as when the angel, addressing the Blessed Virgin, says, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace (i.e. favour) with God" (Luke I). In the second place, the word, "grace" is used to describe the gifts that God bestows on us, as a result of the favour or benevolence just mentioned. S. Paul, for instance, tells us that "to each of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. IV). It is in this second sense that the word "grace" has become a technical term in theology. It has been set aside to signify the supernatural gifts, which we receive in this life through the merits of Jesus Christ. These supernatural gifts are of two main kinds; hence the division of grace into sanctifying grace and actual grace. In the present booklet, space permits us to deal only with the former.

In an earlier booklet (No. 2) of this series, I had occasion to discuss certain metaphors used in the New Testament, particularly the metaphor of man's adoptive sonship of God, and that of man's re-birth to a new life by baptism. To understand the meaning of these metaphors is to understand what sanctifying grace is; for sanctifying grace is the name we give to the vital principle of this new life and to the basis of our adoptive sonship of God. Although the metaphors just mentioned have been discussed at considerable length in the booklet referred to, their importance to the discussion of sanctifying grace makes it desirable to give a brief summary of that discussion in the present context.

Like other creatures, man by his nature is only a *servant* of God, not a son and heir. Through Christ, however, we

are enabled to enter into a highly privileged relation with God; we are enabled to become His adoptive sons, heirs to His kingdom, and co-heirs with Christ. Such a privilege could only come to us as a gratuitous gift of God; and the knowledge that it has actually been given to mankind could only come to us by divine revelation. Here is one of the relevant passages from that revelation: "He (Christ) came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God" (John I). The text might be paraphrased as follows: although God the Son took a human nature from the stock of the Jewish people, yet that people as a whole refused to believe in Him. But those who did believe in Him received a great reward, in the shape of the privilege of divine sonship by adoption.

S. John tells us more about this adoptive sonship in one of his letters: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be, the sons of God . . . Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God: and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is" (I Ep. John, III). We might paraphrase the passage as follows: to us God the Father has given, not merely what was in some sense our due as human beings, but also a great gratuitous privilege. He has shown us extraordinary love in granting us not only the title of sons, but the very reality of sonship. And even this is not the end of His bounty to us; this is not the culmination of our privileges. Something still greater is in store for us, when God shall appear in judgment hereafter; for we shall then become like God Himself, because we shall see Him as He is.

S. Paul also has much to tell us about this divine sonship: "For you (Christians) have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, whereby we cry Abba (Father). For the (Holy) Spirit Himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God; and if sons, heirs also—heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. VIII). S. Paul goes even farther, and states that the establishment of this divine son-

ship was the very purpose of the Incarnation of God the Son: "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son made (man) of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem those who were under the law, *that we might receive the adoption of sons*" (Gal. IV).

The word "adoptive" is used in these passages, to distinguish our sonship of God from that of Jesus Christ. Christ was not a mere man; He was, and is, both God and man—He has divine nature and human nature. Because He has divine nature as well as human nature, He is Son of God in the literal sense of the word, and not merely by adoption. We, on the other hand, can never be more than adoptive sons, because we have not God's nature; we are **strangers to Him** by nature. In representing our privileged relation to God in terms of adoptive sonship, the apostles had before their minds the law of Imperial Rome, under which adoption established the closest legal relationship between adopter and adopted. The person adopted enjoyed the same social status, and the same rights of inheritance, as if he had been born of his adoptive father in the normal way. There is an obvious echo of this in S. Paul's words: "if sons, heirs also—heirs of God, and *joint heirs with Christ*."

From what has been said so far, the reader will see that the metaphor of adoptive sonship is not meant to express merely a kindly, but natural, relation of mutual goodwill between God and His rational creatures. It is meant to convey something much more far-reaching. It implies a fundamental change in our relations with God, a change that brings us into the closest and most privileged fellowship with Him. It implies further that the granting of that privilege to us is as gratuitous and condescending on God's part, as would have been the adoption of a complete stranger by one of the ancient Roman aristocracy. This point will become still more obvious from the passages to be examined presently.

THE METAPHOR OF A NEW LIFE

There is another metaphor, which we meet with frequently in the New Testament—the metaphor of a new life, or its equivalent, re-birth. The term "re-birth" or "regenera-

4 SANCTIFYING GRACE AND JUSTIFICATION

tion" is sometimes supplemented by the addition of such words as "renovation" or "renewal." We may remark in passing that the word "regeneration" is often loosely used by modern English writers, when they mean nothing more than the beginning of a better life, by giving up some vice and turning over a new leaf in the moral order. Regeneration or re-birth, as understood by the writers of the New Testament, means far more than that. It implies that we get a new *kind* of life, by reason of which S. Paul calls the regenerated man "a new creature" (2 Cor. V). This fuller meaning of spiritual regeneration will become clear as we proceed.

In His interview with Nicodemus (John III), Our Lord said: "Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." When Nicodemus looked for some explanation of his extraordinary statement—for it must have seemed extraordinary to him—Our Lord answered: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." Water is mentioned only because it is the material with which we are baptised. The Holy Ghost is mentioned, because the work of sanctification is appropriated (i.e., specially referred) to the Holy Ghost in Scripture. To be born of the Holy Ghost is to be the object of His special sanctifying influence. The text just quoted is but one of the many New Testament passages, in which spiritual re-birth is associated with a special outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the soul concerned: "Not by the works of justice, which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost, whom He hath poured forth upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Saviour" (Tit. III). Here S. Paul not only explains regeneration in terms of a special reception of the Holy Ghost, and a renovation of the soul by Him; but He also emphasises the gratuitous character of the gift thus conferred. That gift is not the reward of any works of our own; it is the gift of God's mercy: "Not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."

The gratuitousness of the regeneration and renovation, accomplished by the Holy Ghost, bears out a point already mentioned, namely, that the regeneration in question does not

consist merely in the improvement of one's life from the point of view of one's moral conduct. There is question of a wholly new life, a supernatural life, a kind of life which is given to us gratuitously by God, and which we could never obtain by our own efforts. This point can be illustrated from the teaching of Our Lord Himself: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you . . . He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him" (John VI). It is clear that Our Lord is not speaking of the natural life we possess as human beings: a man can possess this life without "eating the flesh of the Son of Man." He is speaking of another and different kind of life, which we can possess only by union with Him—the life which we enjoy, when He abides in us, and we in Him. It is a life that admits of varying degrees of completeness, according to the closeness of our union with Him: "I am come that they may have life, and have it *more abundantly*" (John X).

This supernatural life carries with it appropriate powers of action in the supernatural order: "I am the vine," says Our Lord, "and you are the branches As the branch cannot bear fruit, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. . . . He that abides in Me and I in him, the same bears much fruit" (John XV). S. Paul expresses the same idea, when he writes: "No man can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Ghost" (Cor. XII). It is hardly necessary to point out that any man, who is not dumb, can say the words "Jesus is Lord": but to say them in the sense conducive to eternal life is quite a different matter.

The new life, to which we are re-born by water and the Holy Ghost, is the same thing as the divine sonship by adoption already discussed. This will be obvious if we compare the passages, in which the purpose of the Incarnation is described in the New Testament. S. Paul tells us that "God sent His Son . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. IV). Our Lord tells us that "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John X). To receive adoptive sonship is evidently the same thing as to receive supernatural life. The texts already quoted show what

a momentous reality is this gift—whether we call it adoptive sonship of God, supernatural life, regeneration, or whatever else you will. Now, *that gift is what the Church means, when she speaks of sanctifying grace**.

JUSTIFICATION

The state of adoptive sonship of God—or of sanctifying grace, as we usually call it nowadays—is represented in the New Testament as incompatible with the state of sin (mortal sin and original sin). The two states—grace and sin—are compared with each other as freedom and slavery, light and darkness, life and death. When a man is raised from the state of spiritual death to that of spiritual life—from the state of sin to the state of grace—he is said to be justified; and the process of passing from one state to the other is called justification. Hence the state of sanctifying grace is often called the state of justice; and a man in the state of grace is called a just man. The word “just,” as used in this context, has no connection with the virtue of justice, with which the seventh commandment is concerned. In the present context a “just” man means a man who is the friend and adoptive son of God. This use of the word “just” is very common both in the Old and the New Testament.

Justification implies release from sin; but it implies far more. It involves a new bond of union with God, by reason of which we become “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” It involves incorporation with the Redeemer: “I am the vine, and you are the branches.” It involves not merely the re-shaping of our old life, but our re-birth to a wholly new life at the hands of the Holy Ghost, “Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” In the words of the Council of Trent, justification is “not merely the remission of sin, but the sanctification and renovation of the inner man, by the free

* If one wished to speak with meticulous accuracy, it would probably be more correct to say that sanctifying grace is the vital principle of our supernatural life, than to say it is our supernatural life. The distinction however, is of no practical importance, and may be disregarded.

acceptance of grace and the (accompanying) gifts, whereby man from being unjust becomes just, and from being an enemy becomes a friend of God, that he may be an heir, according to hope, of life everlasting.” We are so familiar with the idea of justification, that we may not realise its full meaning. So far as the eyes of the body are concerned, justification may pass unnoticed. To the eyes of faith, however, it is the biggest event in a man’s life. It is the passage from death to life: “When you are dead in your sins . . . He hath quickened you . . .forgiving you all offences” (Col. II).

It may perhaps help the reader to a fuller understanding of both grace and justification, if I enumerate separately the changes that take place, when a man passes from the state of sin to the state of grace—in other words, when he is justified. (1) In justification sin is really blotted out. (2) Justification does not consist solely in the blotting out of sin. It includes also an inward spiritual change, a renewal of the soul by the addition of a positive supernatural gift, which we call sanctifying grace. (3) This supernatural gift, inhering in the soul, and spiritually renovating it, is the reason for the beauty and acceptability of the soul in the eyes of God; or, to use a technical term, it is the formal cause of our justification. This last statement means that, if you ask “What exactly makes the soul just and holy in the eyes of God?” the answer will be “The supernatural gift of grace, which God infuses into the soul at justification.”

The Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century denied each of the three propositions stated in the last paragraph. They were logically compelled to do so by their theory that a man can be saved by faith alone. They still retained the word “justification,” but they had to give it a new meaning. If, as Luther thought, a sinner, while still remaining a sinner, could be “justified” and eventually saved by faith, then it must follow that forgiveness of sins is not an essential part of justification. In fact sins are never really blotted out, according to Luther: they are merely not imputed to the sinner. That means that God, for the sake of Christ, turns the blind eye to the sinner’s sins, and refrains from punishing them as they deserve. The sinner might thus be

compared to a criminal who is found "not guilty" in court through political influence, though the judge knows quite well he is guilty. If you were to ask Luther: "What then makes the soul just, holy and an object of God's love, when a man is justified?", his answer would be "A man's soul never becomes just, holy or an object of God's love." According to Luther, there is only one just man, Jesus Christ. Every other soul is an abomination in God's sight, even after "justification" (*i.e.*, justification as explained by Luther*). But God does not take account of the soul's real condition, if a man has faith; He only looks at the merits of Christ, behind which the sinner shelters by faith. In Lutheran theology, therefore, there is no room for sanctifying grace, nor for any real justification (as we understand that word). These errors of Luther, and similar ones propounded by other Protestant leaders were condemned by the Council of Trent, which re-asserted the traditional Catholic doctrine. Let us see the evidence for the truth of that doctrine.

Our first proposition stated that in justification sin is really blotted out. The truth of the proposition is obvious from many parts of the Bible. The mercy of God is written large over the Old Testament and over the New: and if we examine the language used by the sacred writers, in promising God's pardon to the penitent sinner, we find that the words commonly used are to *blot out* sin, to *remove* it, to *destroy* it, to *take it away*, and other similar terms. Such texts are so numerous, both in the Old Testament and in the New, that I need only quote two or three of them as samples. "Have mercy on me, O Lord, and according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies *blot out* my iniquity" (Psal. 50). "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be *blotted out*" (Acts III). The word, here translated "blotted out," is the word commonly used for erasing or blotting out writing. It is also frequently used to convey the idea of utterly destroy-

* According to Luther justification consists of the non-imputation of our sins to us, and the imputation to us of Christ's merits. That means that, while we remain a sinful abomination in the sight of God, yet God does not take account of our sins, but gives us credit instead for the holiness and merits of Christ—if only we have faith.

ing. I mention these facts, because they throw light on the meaning of the words "to blot out sin." Sometimes the sacred writer prefers to use a word meaning "to take away" sins: "Do penance, and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission (literally, *taking away*) of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts II).

If we turn to the metaphors used by the sacred writers, the same conclusion is forced upon us, namely, that sins are really blotted out in justification. The sinner is said to be *washed clean*, *purified*, *cleansed*, *made new*, etc. At his conversion, S. Paul receives from Our Lord the command: "Rise up and be baptized and *wash away* thy sins" (Acts XXII). The prophet Isaias tells us: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow" (Is. I). But there is no need to multiply quotations. It may appear strange that the Reformers, with such a mass of Scriptural evidence before them, could have had any doubt about the meaning of the forgiveness of sins. The explanation is that they did not examine the question on its merits at all. They did not reject the traditional doctrine of the forgiveness of sin on the ground that there is no Scriptural evidence for it; they rejected it because they could not make it harmonise with the theory of justification by faith alone. They did indeed claim to find some Scriptural support for their doctrine of the mere non-imputation of sin; and for this purpose tried to distort the meaning of one or two poetical passages in the Old Testament. But no Scriptural scholar takes this argument seriously.

We now come to our second proposition: "Justification does not consist solely in the remission of sins. It includes also an inward renewal of the soul by a positive supernatural gift." God was not bound to raise the human race to a supernatural state, when He created Adam; nor indeed at any other stage in human history. He might have placed us in this world with no other gifts than those which we could reasonably claim as human beings. In such case we should never have received any supernatural gifts, such as sanctifying grace. Yet man, even in that condition, could commit sin; and God could, if He willed, forgive sin. But

man, in the hypothesis we are making, would not lose the state of grace when he committed sin; nor would he get it back, when he obtained pardon for his sin. Forgiveness of sin would have a purely negative character; it would imply riddance of sin and nothing more. It would not include (as it does at present) the infusion of any positive supernatural gift into the soul. From this hypothetical example it will be seen that riddance of sin, considered in itself, does not necessarily involve the bestowal of anything supernatural. If, therefore, justification is represented in the New Testament as a supernatural gift, it must be because justification implies a positive element or gift, in addition to the negative element of deliverance from sin.

This positive element is referred to in many Scriptural passages, some of which I have already quoted: "He saved us by the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost, whom He hath poured forth upon us abundantly" (Tit. III). The Apostle shows that, not only are our sins wiped out, but we receive the Holy Ghost, who works a "renovation" in our souls. S. Peter expresses the same idea in his first sermon: "Be baptized, every one of you, unto the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Act II). Here two elements are explicitly mentioned—the negative element, remission of sins, and the positive element, the gift of the Holy Ghost. S. Peter has a still more striking statement in one of his letters: "(God) has given us most great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. I). To be given a share in God's nature—to be deified, as it were, by being allowed to share in something that belongs to God alone—that is obviously more than the mere negative element of release from sin. It is this sharing of what is divine that makes the justified man "a new creature": "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but to be a new creature" (Gal. VI). This positive element of justification, by reason of which we become adoptive sons of God, heirs to heaven, sharers of the divine nature, new creatures, and so on—this positive element is what the Church understands by sanctifying grace. From

the passages quoted above it is clear that this positive element of grace must be an interior gift, a gift inhering in the soul, renovating it and making it a new creature in the supernatural order.

Our third proposition stated that the supernatural gift of grace is the formal cause of our justification. The proposition means that a man is rendered just and holy in the eyes of God, not by mere outward imputation of Christ's justice* to him (as Luther thought), but by the gift of grace inhering in his own soul. We have already considered many texts, that speak of renovation, new creature, new life, sharing in divine nature, and so on. These texts show, in the first place, that a man obtains in justification a new permanent state (*i.e.*, permanent unless he loses it again by sin). They show, in the second place, that this new state does not consist solely in the removal of sin, nor in the mere outward imputation to us of another's justice or righteousness, but in the "renovation" of the soul by the Holy Ghost, by means of a positive supernatural gift. We are thus "born again of the Holy Ghost." It is this gift†, renovating the soul, which gives to the newly baptized Christian his new status as a "just" man, and adoptive son of God.

In view of what has been said, it is easy to understand why revelation puts before us, in the present order of Providence, only two possible alternatives in our relations with God: man is worthy of either love or hatred. Sin accounts for the hatred. What accounts for the love? The mere absence of sin is not enough to account for love; for no one loves a mere negation. Love is directed to some *positive goodness*; and if (as in the case we are considering) the love belongs to the supernatural order, it must have for its object some supernatural goodness. When God is said to love a man (supernaturally), therefore, it must be for some supernatural goodness in the man. There is this difference.

* As the word "justice" in this and following paragraphs may be a little puzzling to the ordinary reader, it may help him to think of it as the (supernatural) beauty of soul, which makes the soul acceptable in the sight of God.

† The gift in question is, of course, the gift of sanctifying grace.

however, between God's love and the love of creatures: Creatures only love a good, which they find already existing; while God loves us by producing in us the good, which is the object of His love. This difference does not, however, affect our present argument. God's supernatural love for us is thus described by Our Lord: "If anyone love Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him" (John XIV). Now, we cannot imagine God coming to abide with a man as a sign of love, and yet allowing that man to remain an abomination in His sight. Yet that is what Luther's error implies.

Another point worth considering is the comparison made by S. Paul between Adam and Christ in their respective influences on the human race. Even Luther would admit that it was not merely imputed justice that Adam lost, when he sinned, but a real inward justice that made him pleasing to God. Now, as surely as Adam lost real inward justice not only for himself but for us, so surely did Christ win it back for us: "For as by the disobedience of one man the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one the many shall be made just" (Rom. V). The obvious meaning of the Apostle is that Christ won back for us the *same* justice lost by Adam. Consequently, if Adam had a real inward justice (and not merely another's justice imputed to him), so have we also, if we are justified through Christ.

PROPERTIES OF GRACE AND JUSTIFICATION

If, as we have just seen, a man is rendered just and holy in the sight of God by the inward gift of grace, which he receives at justification, it necessarily follows that there must be different degrees of justification, if there are different degrees of grace. In other words, a man becomes more and more "just" in the sight of God with every increase of sanctifying grace. Here again Luther came into conflict with the traditional doctrine of the Church. It—as Luther maintained—the only justice we possessed were the justice of Christ imputed to us, then there could be neither increase

nor degrees of justification. There would be only two possible alternatives—a person must be "justified" by mere imputation, or not "justified" at all. The result would be that all "just" souls would be reduced to one dead level of acceptability before God; because no one would have any real justice of his own, and all believers would be equally covered by what we may call the legal fiction of having Christ's justice imputed to them. Luther was only drawing the logical conclusion from his own principles, when he said: "All we, who are Christians, are equally great and holy with the Mother of God."

As against the Lutheran doctrine just described, the Catholic Church teaches that in the grace of justification there are varying degrees. Of two adult converts to Christianity, one may be very well disposed for baptism, *i.e.*, very sorry for his sins, very generous in his good resolutions for the future, and so on. The other may have no more than the bare minimum required for justification. In such a case the person with the better dispositions will benefit more than the other from the reception of baptism—he will receive a higher degree of grace: "He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly, and he who sows in blessings shall also reap of blessings" (2 Cor. IX). Even for the same person, increase in grace is not only possible, but it ought to be the aim of every good Christian. In one of his letters (2 Pet. III), S. Peter urges his readers to "*grow in grace* and in the knowledge of Our Lord Jesus Christ." The Apostle is only repeating a lesson already given by his Master. A rich young man came to Our Lord and asked what he should do to gain life everlasting. Our Lord said: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." The rich man replied: "All these have I kept from my youth." And then Our Lord said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast and give to the poor . . . and come and follow Me" (Matt. XIX). Unless there be degrees of grace and justification, this incident is unintelligible. Our Lord also showed the possibility of acquiring increased grace and justification, when He established a multiple system of sacraments. The working of this multiple system is illustrated in Acts VIII. When Philip,

the deacon, converted and baptized the Samaritans, they received the grace of justification; yet when the apostles Peter and John went down and imposed hands on them, they received a further "gift of God," which can only be explained as an increase of grace and justification.

As grace belongs to a world of things, for the understanding of which our sense experience provides no data, we cannot hope to understand fully in this life the nature of grace, or what the increase of grace really means. That is why the inspired writers themselves have had to rely almost entirely on figures and metaphors, to give us the limited knowledge we possess about the grace of justification. They compare, for instance, the state of sin to death; and the state of grace to life. Working on this metaphor, we can say that increase of grace means increase of life—the more grace a man has, the more he is alive in the supernatural order. This point can be illustrated in a way that may appeal to the imagination, and give it something tangible to grasp. Electricians speak of a wire as "alive" or "live," when it carries an electric current; whereas it becomes "dead," when the current is cut off. A sinner then may be compared to a wire that is electrically dead: whereas the just or justified man is comparable to a "live" wire, the energising current being grace. Now, the wires in a motor car are "alive," though they usually carry a potential of only 6 to 14 volts. If your house is electrically lighted, the wires are still more "alive" than in your car, because the potential is probably around 200 volts. But none of these wires is nearly as much "alive" as one carrying a potential of 10,000 volts. And so in the order of justification there are different degrees of grace, which may be likened to different supernatural voltages. The illustration is more or less parallel to that given by Our Lord: "I am the vine and you are the branches." The more sap goes out from the vine to its branches, the more alive they become, and the more capable of bearing fruit.

The new life given to us at justification is intended by God to be permanent; nevertheless it can be lost by mortal sin. Here again the doctrine of the Reformers was at fault. Calvin

thought that a man once justified could not lose justification. Luther thought that a man could lose justification only by infidelity. By "infidelity" in this context he meant loss of that trust, by which in his opinion a man gains justification. The numerous warnings against all kinds of sin, given in the Bible, are unintelligible in either of these hypotheses. S. Paul, for instance, gives a whole list of sins, that exclude a man from eternal salvation: "Do not err; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, etc. . . . shall possess the Kingdom of God" (I Cor. VI). S. Paul fears even for himself, lest the temptations of the flesh should bring about his ruin. "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away" (I Cor. IX). Perhaps he is thinking of the inspired psalmist, King David, who actually fell from justification by a sin of the flesh, though his faith remained unimpaired. Our Lord Himself appears to have in view just such an error as Luther's, when He says: "Not everyone that says to Me, *Lord, Lord*, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that does the will of My Father" (Matt. VII). As He tells us elsewhere, "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."

In the early days of the Church, the Apostles had to struggle against a heresy closely akin to the Lutheran error, which we are now discussing. It was called Anti-nomianism (from the Greek words, *anti* meaning *against*, and *nomos* meaning *law*); because it purported to excuse Christians from the obligations of the moral law. The idea was that people who were Christians, were above the law. Luther did not go so far as to tell his followers that they were not bound by the law; he merely told them that it did not make much difference whether they observed it or not—provided they had faith. For practical purposes, however, there is little difference between the two errors. Here is how S. Peter speaks of the Antinomians—and his words are almost equally applicable to Luther—"But these men . . . leaving the right way, have gone astray . . . For speaking proud words of vanity, they allure by the desires of fleshy righteousness those who for a little while escape . . . promising them liberty,

whereas they themselves are the slaves of corruption. . . . For if, (after) flying from the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, they be again entangled in them and overcome, their latter state is worse than the former. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. For that of the proverb has happened to them—the dog has returned to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (II Pet. II). Comment on that passage would only spoil it.

But there is no necessity to dwell on particular passages. The whole scheme of salvation, as revealed by Christ and preached by His Apostles, bears witness in innumerable ways to the fact that the grace of justification can be lost and regained many times over. Christ is the good shepherd, who goes after His erring sheep, not once only but as often as it strays. He tells us to forgive our neighbour not seven times only, but seventy times seven; and then He tells us to pray to God; “Forgive us our trespasses (sins) as we forgive those who trespass against us.” There is a clear implication of the possibility of repeated sin (involving the loss of grace and justification), and repeated forgiveness (involving the renewal of justification). But this implication stands out most prominently in the institution of the sacrament of penance—a sacrament expressly designed by Christ for the forgiveness of post-baptismal sins. Its purpose, therefore, is not to confer first justification—baptism does that—but to restore justification, should it be lost after baptism. The early Fathers very appropriately call it “the second plank after shipwreck”—baptism being the first. But there is no room for such a consoling sacrament as penance in the theology of Luther or Calvin. Consequently they rejected it, as they were logically compelled to do by their principles.

If the reader should find some of the foregoing pages rather heavy reading, I would ask him to be lenient in his criticism, as it was necessary to compress within a small space the main points of our doctrine on a rather heavy and difficult subject.

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