

GOOD WORKS AND THE VIRTUOUS LIFE:  
SANCTIFICATION AS THE MEANS OF  
ACHIEVING HUMAN HAPPINESS

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*In this life there is nothing so like this ultimate and perfect happiness as the life of those who contemplate the truth, as far as possible here below.*<sup>1</sup>

*Will not the knowledge of the Chief Good have a great influence on life?*<sup>2</sup>

### **Introduction**

If asked, “Are you saved?” by an Evangelical Christian, many Roman Catholics will be puzzled.<sup>3</sup> Knowledge of one’s salvation seems to assume that assurance is presently available, and this also seems to imply knowledge of the future—for salvation encompasses more than just an initial or present state, it includes the future as well. Referring to these three stages of salvation, Alan Schreck writes that, “a Catholic can adequately answer the question ‘have you been saved’ by giving three different answers. The Catholic can say that, ‘I have been saved’; ‘I am being saved’; and ‘I hope to be saved.’”<sup>4</sup> Naturally, if salvation is seen as a onetime event, as

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Tr. The Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2010), 3:63.10.

<sup>2</sup> A slight paraphrase from Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1.2 (1094a).

<sup>3</sup> See Alan Schreck, *Catholic and Christian: An Explanation of Commonly Misunderstood Catholic Beliefs* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1984), 38-39 or Bob Moran, *A Closer Look at Catholicism* (Waco: Word Books, 1986), 79.

<sup>4</sup> Schreck, *Catholic and Christian*, 39.

any Evangelical Christians describe it, then a response such as this will create confusion for both parties.<sup>5</sup>

A related issue has to do with the grounds for one's assurance of salvation. Clearly, if a onetime action has eternal results, then assurance can be grounded as securely as one's assurance that the onetime requirement(s) was/were met. Because Evangelicals often affirm the Protestant mottos of *sola gratia* and *sola fide*,<sup>6</sup> such assurance is not necessarily difficult to generate.<sup>7</sup> However, if anything besides faith is added to the stated grounds for salvation it will often be seen as some form of legalism.<sup>8</sup> Thus, for many in the Evangelical tradition, lack of assurance and legalism go hand-in-hand.

Recent developments in ecumenical talks between Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians has put the salvation issue back on the table.<sup>9</sup> Long-standing assumptions about each

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<sup>5</sup> For example, one of Evangelicalism's most popular evangelists recommends stating the gospel this way: "If you will repent—turn away from sin—and place your trust in Jesus Christ alone as your savior, God will forgive you and grant you everlasting life." Kirk Cameron and Ray Comfort, *The Way of the Master Study Guide* (Bartlesville, OK: Genesis Publishing Group, 2006), 105. While these authors do go into more depth for salvation's requirements, they do not necessarily extend past a onetime decision with an eternal effect.

<sup>6</sup> "Protestant orthodoxy understand[s] negatively slanted formulations of the doctrine of justification, above all *sola fide*, 'by faith alone,' on the basis of Martin Luther's (1483–1546) rendering of Romans 3:28. This exclusion of works as a ground of justification does not mean the isolating of faith but singles out justifying faith because it receives the righteousness of Christ that is given by grace alone. The formula thus has the implication of *solus Christus* (Christ alone) and *sola gratia* (grace alone), . . ." Fahlbusch, Erwin and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 531–532.

<sup>7</sup> Reformed theologians often do not grant this point, as assurance is grounded in *perseverance*—a state that cannot be known to have been achieved until the end of one's life. E.g., "Sustained assurance must ultimately rest on one's being convinced of God's preservation together with our perseverance. Evidence for one is evidence for the other." Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Geanies House - Fearn, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2008), 767.

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, differences over the very nature of faith and its fruit has led to the "Lordship Salvation" vs. "Free Grace" debate which often centers on this very issue. See Zane Hodges's *Absolutely Free* (Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1989) and John MacArthur's *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> "Table" and "Talk" pun intended.

group's positions have been questioned, clarified, and appreciated by both sides.<sup>10</sup> Popular writings reflect this new understanding as well.<sup>11</sup> If a harmony can be produced concerning the doctrine of justification, it would be a major step toward healing the divided Body of Christ. This paper will investigate whether the distinctions each side makes within the doctrine of salvation can indeed be harmonized, focusing primarily on the Roman Catholic / Protestant views of justification / sanctification respectively, as seen through the lens of a Thomistic theory of virtue ethics.<sup>12</sup>

### Justification By Faith

Behind all of this lurks the primary issue of Reformation doctrine—the grounds of justification.<sup>13</sup> Norman Geisler summarizes the typical Evangelical position, which he calls “the very heart of the Reformation,”<sup>14</sup> this way:

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<sup>10</sup> The most visible being Colson and Neuhaus's group “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” which produced a statement titled *The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium* in 1994. This statement was signed by Catholics such as Peter Kreeft, James Hitchcock, and Cardinal John O'Connor. Evangelical signers included Os Guinness, J. I. Packer, and Bill Bright.. Many high-profile Evangelicals were decidedly against signing, however, such as Norman Geisler, James White, Harold O. J. Brown, Carl F. H. Henry, David Wells, and R. C. Sproul. More important for this study is the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church ([http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_31101999\\_cath-luth-joint-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html)). See also Brian Farrell's commentary on *Unitatis Redintegratio* and other ecumenical actions of recent origin at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_20041121\\_farrell-ecumenismo\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20041121_farrell-ecumenismo_en.html).

<sup>11</sup> Peter Kreeft, for example, begins an article on justification by stating that, “The Protestant Reformation began when a Catholic monk rediscovered a Catholic doctrine in a Catholic book.” [Peter Kreeft, *Fundamentals of the Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 277.] See also John J. Dietzen's commentary on *Ut Unum Sint* in *Catholic Q&A: Answers to the Most Common Questions About Catholicism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2009), 469-471.

<sup>12</sup> Viz., Thomas Aquinas's understanding and application of Aristotle's moral theory.

<sup>13</sup> “[J]ustification by faith alone and Scripture alone as the supreme authority came to be called the ‘material’ and ‘formal’ principles of the Reformation or of Protestantism. . . . In this case the principles refer to the basic or essential laws that underlie and control the various doctrinal decisions of Reformation Christianity.” (Fahlbusch and Bromiley, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 532).

<sup>14</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 229.

[T]he Reformation was fought over, namely, that Scripture teaches, as Protestants affirm, that *we are saved by grace alone through faith alone*. . . . as the Catholic doctrine of merit reveals, they do not believe that salvation is by grace alone (*sola gratia*), since meritorious works are also necessary, at least for those that live beyond infancy. Further, for Evangelicals, salvation is not simply “through faith” but “by faith *alone*” (*sola fide*).<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, summary statements such as this ignore the essential distinction between the Protestant doctrines of justification and sanctification within the overall concept of salvation— an error that many now believe was at the core of the Reformation schism.

Peter Kreeft writes, “One of the tragic ironies of Christian history is that the deepest split in the history of the Church, and the one that occasioned the most persecution, hatred, and bloody wars on both sides . . . originated in a misunderstanding.”<sup>16</sup> Likewise, John Dietzen states that, “Catholics and Lutherans involved in the dialogue gradually discovered that their ideas on the subject [of justification] are not that far apart; they are only arrived at from different directions.”<sup>17</sup> The dialogue Dietzen refers to is the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church, which states, among other things, that “In their discussion of the doctrine of justification, all the dialogue reports as well as the responses show a high degree of agreement in their approaches and conclusions.”<sup>18</sup>

Lest this move toward agreement be seen as a recent development conceding too much to modern ecumenical concerns, or a post-modern lack of concern for truth, consider the words of John Calvin:

There is no controversy between us and the sounder Schoolmen as to the beginning of justification. They admit that the sinner, freely delivered from condemnation, obtains justification, and that by forgiveness of sins; but under the term justification they

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Kreeft, *Fundamentals of the Faith*, 277.

<sup>17</sup> Dietzen, *Catholic Q&A*, 470.

<sup>18</sup> *Joint Declaration*, Preamble 4.

comprehend the renovation by which the Spirit forms us anew to the obedience of the Law; and in describing the righteousness of the regenerate man, maintain that being once reconciled to God by means of Christ, he is afterwards deemed righteous by his good works, and is accepted in consideration of them.<sup>19</sup>

Centuries later, in 1845, John Henry Cardinal Newman noted this linguistic issue as well: “Few but will grant that Luther's view of justification had never been stated in words before his time: that his phraseology and his positions were novel, whether called for by circumstances or not. It is equally certain that the doctrine of justification defined at Trent was, in some sense, new also.”<sup>20</sup> He had earlier (prior to his conversion to Roman Catholicism) described the debate over justification this way:

Now, in the foregoing Lecture, in which I stated what I consider as in the main the true doctrine, two points were proposed for proof; first, that justification and sanctification were in fact substantially one and the same thing; . . . and in those which follow, returning to the subject which has already employed us, I shall show the *real connection* between the two doctrines, or rather their *identity*, in matter of fact, however we may vary our terms, or classify our ideas.<sup>21</sup>

This is the same conclusion that many are reaching today, viz., that a misunderstanding of the justification / sanctification distinction is behind the most divisive elements of the Protestant / Roman Catholic schism. In another example, Roman Catholic writer Georges Tavad wrote as early as 1959 that once the distinction made by Protestants regarding intrinsic and extrinsic imputation “has been cleared up, the doctrine is not so objectionable.”<sup>22</sup> Tavad explained that “the Reformers were more interested in the redeeming action of Christ than in the

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<sup>19</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 3.14.11.

<sup>20</sup> John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 58.

<sup>21</sup> John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification* [<http://www.newmanreader.org/works/justification/#contents> (accessed May 7, 2010)], Advertisement to the First Edition.

<sup>22</sup> Georges Tavad, *Protestantism*, vol. 137 of *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, trans. Rachel Attwater (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1959), 29.

effect of that action in the transformation of the Christian soul,” and because of this, “it is easy to see how their disciples and their adversaries misinterpreted the thought of the reformers . . . Once again, the formulas that were employed were very unfortunate.”<sup>23</sup> Even now, however, Tavad’s conclusion might still seem shocking: “Catholics must complete the reformer’s explanations . . . seeking correspondence of thought beneath the divergences of language. . . . it will then be seen how much closer is the profound spirituality of the Protestant mind to Catholicism than it believes itself to be.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Sanctification By Works**

Roman Catholic apologist Robert Sungenis notes that, “In Catholic theology, justification is not a one-time act of God. Although for New Testament believers justification begins at a point in time, . . . a person gains grace as he lives out his Christian life in obedience.”<sup>25</sup> For the Evangelical Christian this may sound strange, for many see salvation as made up of three parts: justification, sanctification, and glorification. Since justification is said to be faith alone (*sola fide*) and only sanctification is a process, then the Roman Catholic view makes two errors: denying justification by faith alone (by grounding it in obedience) and denying that God justifies in an instant.

Confusion over the justification / sanctification distinction is not limited to Roman Catholics, however. Specific references to justification, as understood by Protestants, are often collapsed into statements concerning salvation generally. Consider the following examples:

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<sup>23</sup> Tavad, *Protestantism*, 29-30.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>25</sup> Robert A. Sungenis, *Not By Faith Alone: The Biblical Evidence for the Catholic Doctrine of Justification* (Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1997), 222.

Paul's letter to the Romans directly assaults human aversion, whether Jewish or Gentile (1:16), to salvation by faith alone.<sup>26</sup>

The Judaizers argued that since the law came after Abraham, then the law had priority over grace (salvation by faith alone). To refute this point, Paul appeals to a permanently binding contract or will.<sup>27</sup>

James's statement implies that true faith stimulates action. Active faith is alive; inactive faith is not. The classic axiom "salvation by faith alone, yet not alone" is appropriate here. Without merciful works, faith is a solitary faith, and such faith is lifeless.<sup>28</sup>

Equally possible is that the question stemmed from conscientious Jews who felt that the doctrine of salvation by faith alone would encourage moral irresponsibility.<sup>29</sup>

The very apostles could not readily accept the truth of salvation *by faith alone*. They thought that at least the Jewish requirement of circumcision must be made.<sup>30</sup>

They deny the inspiration of the Bible, the sinfulness of man, the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross, salvation by faith alone, and even the reality of eternal judgment.<sup>31</sup>

The argument concerning salvation by faith alone that Paul developed in response to this situation gained fundamental importance for the later church, but there are no clear quotations or allusions to Galatians until the middle of the second century<sup>32</sup>

As can be seen, in a rather ironic turn, Evangelical Christians have mirrored Roman Catholicism's penchant for collapsing justification and sanctification into "salvation." The

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<sup>26</sup> Robert B. Hughes and J. Carl Laney, *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*, The Tyndale reference library (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 525.

<sup>27</sup> Max Anders, vol. 8, *Galatians-Colossians*, Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 37–38.

<sup>28</sup> Kurt A. Richardson, vol. 36, *James*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 132.

<sup>29</sup> Robert H. Mounce, vol. 27, *Romans*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 148.

<sup>30</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary: Acts of the Apostles Vol. I*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2004), 457.

<sup>31</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996), 2 Pe 2:1.

<sup>32</sup> James Luther Mays, Publishers Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1996).

problem goes beyond popular usage. Steven Porter notes that the doctrine of sanctification alone “is tricky . . . it is a complex doctrine in that it is the culmination of conclusions reached in just about every other theological category.”<sup>33</sup> This difficulty is well illustrated by a five-part series of articles in *The Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* which detailed the past, present, and future aspects of sanctification itself.<sup>34</sup>

Sungenis, in his analysis of the Roman Catholic position on justification, writes that, “In regard to sanctification, there is no appreciable difference between it and justification.”<sup>35</sup> The *Catechism* makes this position clear as well: “Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.”<sup>36</sup> The merging of the two concepts was also expressed at the Council of Trent: “Having, therefore, been thus justified, and made the friends and domestics of God, advancing from virtue to virtue, they are renewed, as the Apostle says, day by day; that is, by mortifying the members of their own flesh, and by presenting them as instruments of justice unto sanctification, they, through the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, faith co-operating with good works, increase in that justice which they have received through the grace of Christ, and are still further justified, . . .”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Steven Porter, “On the Renewal of Interest in the Doctrine of Sanctification: A Methodological Reminder.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 3 (September 2002): 416.

<sup>34</sup> Arthur L. Farstad, “We Believe In: Sanctification Part 1: Introduction.” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 5, no. 2 (Autumn 1992): 4-11; Robert N. Wilkin, “We Believe In: Sanctification Part 2: Past Sanctification.” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 4-16; Robert N. Wilkin, “We Believe In: Sanctification Part 3: Present Sanctification God’s Role in Present Sanctification.” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 4-17; Robert N. Wilkin, “We Believe In: Sanctification Part 4: Man’s Role in Present Sanctification.” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 7, no. 2 (Autumn 1994): 4-24; Arthur L. Farstad, “We Believe In: Sanctification Part 5: Future Sanctification: Perfect, or Ultimate, Sanctification.” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 4-10.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>36</sup> *Catechism*, 1989.

<sup>37</sup> “The Council of Trent, The Sixth Session” in *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, Trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), chapter 10.



It is easy to see how a Roman Catholic three-part doctrine of justification and a Protestant three-part doctrine of salvation (which includes a three-part doctrine of sanctification) could be confused. While this merger of these ideas may be attributed to the synonymous usage of terms such as justification and sanctification in Paul (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:11<sup>38</sup>), the resulting confusion in theological terminology (which should serve to remove ambiguity) needs to be confronted. For the Protestant / Roman Catholic debate, however, noting synonymous usage is only the first step. At issue is the relation between justification and sanctification, and the grounds for each.

### Salvation By Grace

If the Protestant justification / sanctification distinction is at least tacitly allowable in Roman Catholic theology, then the grounds for each remain to be discussed. While several verses can be brought forward detailing different aspects of each step in the salvation process, the Apostle Paul's words in his letter to the Ephesian church introduce a more detailed formula. In chapter two verses 8-10, Paul explains that, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (ESV).<sup>39</sup>

The connectives here appear to be showing causality. Salvation is said to be *by* grace (efficient cause), *through* faith (instrumental cause), with works specifically denied as being

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<sup>38</sup> "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." (ESV) καὶ ταῦτα τινες ἦτε· ἀλλὰ ἀπελούσασθε, ἀλλὰ ἡγιασθητε, ἀλλὰ ἐδικαιώθητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν. Greek text from Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger and Allen Wikgren, *The Greek New Testament* (Federal Republic of Germany: United Bible Societies, 1997).

<sup>39</sup> Τῇ γὰρ χάριτι ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ πίστεως· καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον· <sup>9</sup>οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μὴ τις καυχῆσται. <sup>10</sup>αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἐσμεν ποίημα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς οἷς προητοίμασεν ὁ θεός, ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν.

instrumental. These verses are often cited as proof that salvation is by faith alone, although the text says neither. Further, the last causal link is often omitted: salvation is *for* good works (final cause). If this reading of Paul is correct then works are part of the salvation process, they are simply do not function as either the efficient or instrumental causes.

In Thomas Aquinas's commentary on Ephesians he explains "by grace you are saved" with reference to verses of grace: "'By the grace of God, I am what I am' (1 Cor. 15:10); 'being justified freely by his grace' (Rom. 3:24). For to be saved is the same as to be justified."<sup>40</sup> Aquinas says that Paul is eliminating two errors: "The first of these is that, since he had said we are saved by faith, any one can hold the opinion that faith itself originates within ourselves . . . The second error he rejects is that anyone can believe that faith is given by God to us on the merit of our preceding actions."<sup>41</sup> Finally, Aquinas notes that, "Lest anyone imagine that good works are prepared for us by God in such a way that we do not cooperate in their realization through our free will, he annexes that we should walk in them."<sup>42</sup> Even here, however, where it would be easiest to take a legalistic stance, Aquinas adds a caveat: "Moreover, not only are the habits of virtue and grace given to us, but we are inwardly renewed through the Spirit in order to act uprightly. Whence he goes on in good works since the good works themselves are [made possible] to us by God."<sup>43</sup> An investigation of Aquinas's important notion of virtue will be made below.

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<sup>40</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Ephesians*, Lecture 3. [www.aquinas.avemaria.edu/Aquinas%20Ephesians%20Complete.pdf](http://www.aquinas.avemaria.edu/Aquinas%20Ephesians%20Complete.pdf) (accessed May 11, 2010).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

On the Protestant understanding, John Calvin himself explains the same passage in much the same way when he says,

But if we attend to the four kinds of causes which philosophers bring under our view in regard to effects, we shall find that not one of them is applicable to works as a cause of salvation. The efficient cause of our eternal salvation the Scripture uniformly proclaims to be the mercy and free love of the heavenly Father towards us; the material cause to be Christ, with the obedience by which he purchased righteousness for us; and what can the formal or instrumental cause be but faith? . . . Thus also [with John 3:16 and Rom. 3:23-24], in the Epistle to the Ephesians, he tells us that we are received into the favor of God by mere mercy; that this is done by the intervention of Christ; that it is apprehended by faith; the end of all being that the glory of the divine goodness may be fully displayed.<sup>44</sup>

Where Calvin departs from the above system is with regard to the final cause which he believes, based on John 3:16, to be “the demonstration of the divine righteousness and the praise of his goodness.”<sup>45</sup> Further, Calvin concludes from these verses that,

When we see that all the parts of our salvation thus exist without us, what ground can we have for glorying or confiding in our works? Neither as to the efficient nor the final cause can the most sworn enemies of divine grace raise any controversy with us unless they would abjure the whole of Scripture. In regard to the material or formal cause they make a gloss, as if they held that our works divide the merit with faith and the righteousness of Christ. But here also Scripture reclaims, simply affirming that Christ is both righteousness and life, and that the blessing of justification is possessed by faith alone.<sup>46</sup>

As can be seen, harmonizing Calvin’s and Aquinas’s viewpoints would not be as difficult as might be thought. Both thinkers agree that works are the result of salvation, yet neither believe that they serve as efficient causes of that salvation. Further, Aquinas and Calvin agree that works are ultimately of God.

In another comparison we can see the Protestant and Roman Catholic views come close to a merger. *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* states concerning *sola fide* that the “exclusion of

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<sup>44</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.14.17.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

works as a ground of justification does not mean the isolating of faith but singles out justifying faith because it receives the righteousness of Christ that is given by grace alone. . . . Not excluded, of course, are the works that follow.”<sup>47</sup> Calvin himself wrote that although “it is by mercy alone that God admits his people to life, yet as he leads them into possession of it by the course of good works, that he may complete his work in them in the order which he has destined . . . since by these doubtless they are prepared for receiving the crown of immortality.”<sup>48</sup>

Theological statements such as these might sound suspiciously similar to Roman Catholic explanations of what they mean when they say that salvation is not by faith alone. At Trent it was stated that, “Neither is this to be omitted, that although, in the sacred writings, so much is attributed to good works, . . . nevertheless God forbid that a Christian should either trust or glory in himself, and not in the Lord, whose bounty towards all men is so great, that He will have the things which are His own gifts be their merits.”<sup>49</sup> The *Catechism* states that with justification comes “at the same time the acceptance of God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. . . . justification, faith, hope, and charity are poured into our hearts, and obedience to the divine will is granted us.”<sup>50</sup>

If this is the case, then positing sanctification (as opposed to justification) as being caused (in some sense) by both God and man seems necessary. If man's actions are involved then sanctification would not, by definition, be possible without good works.<sup>51</sup> Now, if this notion of sanctification is merged with *justification* (as it often is in Roman Catholicism), or with *salvation*

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<sup>47</sup> Fahlbusch and Bromiley, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 531–532.

<sup>48</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.18.1

<sup>49</sup> “The Council of Trent, The Sixth Session,” Chapter 16.

<sup>50</sup> *Catechism*, 1991.

<sup>51</sup> As distinguished from “works of the law” (ἔργων νόμου), e.g., Rom. 3:20–28; Gal. 2:16; 3:2–10.

(as it often is in Protestantism), then the resulting misunderstandings can easily be predicted. In the former case, a charge of legalism will be leveled against Roman Catholics for “adding works to faith for salvation [read: “justification”],” while in the latter case Roman Catholics may consider Protestants to be antinomian because they “don’t think works matter to salvation [read: “sanctification”].” However, if both sides agree that good works matter to the *process* of salvation (as opposed to its beginning *point*), then perhaps the divide is not nearly as wide as it is often portrayed.<sup>52</sup>

### Salvation For Happiness

The notion that “God alone satisfies” is from Thomas Aquinas, but the same conclusion is seen in the very first question of *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”<sup>53</sup> It is also reflected in the writings of Blaise Pascal concerning man’s search for happiness:

What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.<sup>54</sup>

So, for many Protestants and Roman Catholics happiness is what all men seek, and that happiness is ultimately found in God.<sup>55</sup> What may not be appreciated, however, is that Aquinas

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<sup>52</sup> Chapters 4 and 9 in Sungenis, *Not By Faith Alone*, are good examples of this issue. Note also that this interpretation already seems to be the agreed-upon position of the *Joint Declaration*. See Appendix A.

<sup>53</sup> George Thomas Kurian, *Nelson's New Christian Dictionary : The Authoritative Resource on the Christian World* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Pubs., 2001), s.v. Westminster Catechisms.

<sup>54</sup> Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, 10.148 (cf. 6.425). Note that this “vacuum” is happiness (not God, as it is commonly stated). Pascal certainly believed that only God could fill this vacuum, but the desire is for happiness.

<sup>55</sup> Even Immanuel Kant, hardly a virtue theorist, believed that there is “one end that can be presupposed as actual in the case of all rational beings . . . and therefore one purpose that they not merely *could* have but that we can safely presuppose they all actually *do have* by a natural necessity, and that purpose is *happiness*.” Kant, *Groundwork*

does not begin with God as man's chief end, and move on from there. Rather, this comes as the conclusion of his application of Aristotelian virtue theory. Moreover, once this conclusion is reached, Aquinas moves on to demonstrate how it can be achieved—and this may be a key to resolving the Roman Catholic / Protestant dispute over the efficacy of good works.

### Identifying Man's Ultimate End

Thomas Aquinas's treatment of human action and happiness is found in his "Treatise on Happiness," which is comprised of questions 1-5 (*prima secundæ*) of the *Summa Theologia*.<sup>56</sup> Aquinas (following Aristotle) believes that it belongs to man to do everything for an end.<sup>57</sup> This is because "if the agent were not determinate to some particular effect, it would not do one thing rather than another."<sup>58</sup> No decisions would be made without some reason to make them, and further it is not possible to proceed indefinitely in the matter of ends. If there were no last end, then "nothing would be desired, nor would any action have its term, nor would the intention of the agent be at rest."<sup>59</sup> Thus, it is proper for man to act for an end. Further, as Kierkegaard would later note, this end must be one.<sup>60</sup>

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*of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:415 in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Tr. Mary J. Gregor, ed. (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2008).

<sup>56</sup> References to which will follow Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Happiness*, Tr. John A. Oesterle (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001).

<sup>57</sup> Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 1, a. 1.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 1, a. 4.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 1, a. 5. Kierkegaard, for example, prayed, "Oh, Thou that givest both the beginning and the completion, give Thou victory in the day of need so that what neither a man's burning wish nor his determined resolution may attain to, may be granted unto him in the sorrowing of repentance: to will only one thing." Søren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing* (Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008), 5.

Whatever someone desires, he desires it under some aspect of goodness. That is, man cannot choose evil qua evil. The proper object of the will is the good, and so for the will to be moved it must be presented with some object that is perceived as good. This good may not be seen as one's ultimate good, but it must tend to the perfect good.<sup>61</sup> In agreement with Augustine, Aquinas states that, "all men agree in desiring the last end, which is happiness."<sup>62</sup> This agreement does not carry with it the result that all agree on how to achieve this end, but Aquinas believes it is generally agreed that people act in order to achieve happiness.

Aquinas then investigates that in which man's happiness consists, and he considers several options. First he looks at external goods (wealth, honor, glory, power), then internal goods beginning with the body, and proceeding to the soul. After showing that man's ultimate good must not be finite (created goods), Aquinas concludes that God alone will suffice as man's ultimate good.

Aquinas dismisses wealth as a candidate for man's happiness, for wealth is only sought as a means to something else (e.g., livelihood, procuring other objects).<sup>63</sup> Honor, likewise, cannot be man's perfect end, for "it is a sign and attestation of the excellence that is in the person honored," and may only indicate happiness.<sup>64</sup> Fame is excluded on the basis that "human knowledge often fails, [and]. . . human glory is frequently deceptive."<sup>65</sup> Power is considered next, and Aquinas says this, too, is impossible to consider as man's ultimate end, for it is only a principle that "has relation to good and evil: whereas happiness is man's proper and perfect

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 1, a. 6.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 1, a. 7.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 2, a. 1.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 2, a. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 2, a. 3.

good.”<sup>66</sup> In summary, “having gained happiness, man cannot lack any needful good. But after acquiring any one of the foregoing, man may still lack many goods that are necessary to him. . . . [Further,] man is ordained to happiness through principles that are in him; since he is ordained thereto naturally [but] the four goods above are due rather to external causes.”<sup>67</sup>

Because man’s happiness cannot be ultimately found in external things, Aquinas turns to internal factors: the body and the soul. Good of the body cannot be considered as man’s last end, for man’s happiness must be found in that which is ultimately human, and while man surpasses all other animals in regard to happiness, in bodily goods he is surpassed by many animals.<sup>68</sup> Further, man's being consists in soul and body; and though the being of the body depends on the soul, yet the being of the human soul depends not on the body. Finally, bodily delight “is quite a trifle as compared with the good of the soul.”<sup>69</sup>

At this point, man’s soul is brought to consideration. Aquinas does not believe that the soul can itself be man’s ultimate end, for it is “something existing in potentiality (e.g., it becomes knowing actually, from being potentially knowing) . . . [and] since potentiality is for the sake of act as for its fulfillment, that which in itself is in potentiality cannot be the last end.”<sup>70</sup> However, if we speak of man's last end as to the *attainment / possession / use of* the thing itself desired as an end, the soul is required—for man attains happiness through his soul. This is because it is in the soul that contemplation takes place and, again following Aristotle, “man's ultimate happiness

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 2, a. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 2, a. 5-6.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 2, a. 7.



consists in his most perfect contemplation.”<sup>71</sup> Anthony Kenny notes that for Aristotle /Aquinas, “The best human virtue is the best part of a human being, and that is the speculative intellect.”<sup>72</sup> Thus it would follow that while “we must say that happiness is something belonging to the soul; . . . that which constitutes happiness is something outside the soul.”<sup>73</sup>

The object of man’s happiness cannot be any created good, for the object of the will, i.e. of man's appetite, is the universal good; just as the object of the intellect is the universal true. “Hence it is evident that naught can lull man's will, save the universal good.”<sup>74</sup> Perfect happiness is the perfect good, which would only be the last end if nothing remained to be desired. Aquinas then drives home his conclusion, which will now go beyond Aristotle to the ultimate good for man: This good cannot be found in any creature, but in God alone; because every creature has goodness by participation. “If, therefore, we speak of man's last end as of the thing which is the end . . . God is the last end of man and of all other things.”<sup>75</sup> Because infinite goodness alone can satisfy the will of man, God alone constitutes man's ultimate happiness. Thus, “Man and other rational creatures attain to their last end by knowing and loving God.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., I, q. 62, a. 1.

<sup>72</sup> Anthony Kenny, “Aquinas on Aristotelian Happiness,” in *Aquinas's Moral Theory: Essays in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*. Ed. Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 18.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 2, a. 8.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 1, a. 7.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 5, a. 3. Kenny believes that although “Aquinas does not claim the authority of Aristotle for the link he makes between the Nichomachean theory of contemplative happiness and the Christian doctrine of the beatific vision. . . . it is not an illegitimate development of Aristotelian theory.” Kenny, “Aquinas on Aristotelian Happiness,” 23.

Because “man's last end is . . . nothing else than the attainment or enjoyment of the last end,”<sup>77</sup> eternal life is said to be the last end, as said in John 17:3: "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God."<sup>78</sup> Final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence, for so long as man can know, he will desire to know the causes of things.<sup>79</sup> This is due to man's nature.<sup>80</sup> If the human intellect knows no more of God than "that He is" then the intellect does not yet know the First Cause truly, and it is not perfectly happy. “Consequently, for perfect happiness the intellect needs to reach the very Essence of the First Cause. And thus it will have its perfection through union with God as with that object, in which alone man's happiness consists.”<sup>81</sup>

#### Attaining Man's Ultimate End

From the above, Aquinas concludes that “Happiness means the attainment of the perfect good.”<sup>82</sup> This perfect good being God Himself, Aquinas concludes, echoing the sentiments of Augustine,<sup>83</sup> that God alone can bring ultimate satisfaction to both the will and the intellect. For the same reasons, however, while some imperfect happiness can be found, perfect happiness

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 3, a. 1.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 3, a. 2.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 3, a. 8.

<sup>80</sup> As indicated in the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, this desire is one of wonder, and causes inquiry.

<sup>81</sup> Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 3, a. 8. Note that Aquinas does not limit himself to philosophy or human authority, he cites the Bible as well for this conclusion: e.g., Psalm 16:5-15; 144:15; Wisdom 7:11; 8:16; Luke 2:10; Revelation 21:3-4.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 5, a. 1.

<sup>83</sup> “Thou awakest us to delight in Thy praise; for Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee.” Saint Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, Tr. E. B. Pusey (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1996), Bk 1, Ch. 1.

cannot be attained by man in the present state of life.<sup>84</sup> Man has a capacity for attaining the perfect good, as evidenced by the fact that “his intellect apprehends the universal and perfect good, and his will seeks it.”<sup>85</sup> The issue, then, is how this can be accomplished.

It is here that Aquinas’s virtue theory can speak to the issue of justification / sanctification. Aquinas provides a bridge that connects justification to glorification via sanctification.<sup>86</sup> This is, of course, where charges of legalism are most likely to appear, for it is not only justification that is by God’s grace.<sup>87</sup> Commenting on some of the very verses under consideration in the debate, Aquinas explains that “a spiritual race terminates in happiness.”<sup>88</sup> Does this mean that without works (“the race”) one cannot reach God (“happiness”)? It seems that this is what Aquinas is saying, but as will be shown below, he is not simply adding works requirements to faith in order to secure heaven. Rather, Aquinas is recording that which *prepares* the believer for heaven.

In his apologetic text, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas notes that, “All action and movement is for some perfection. For if the action itself be the end, it is clearly a second perfection of the agent. And if the action consist in the transformation of external matter, clearly

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<sup>84</sup> Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 5, a. 3.

<sup>85</sup> Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 5, a. 1.

<sup>86</sup> This usage reflects Protestant terminology. A Roman Catholic may refer to the entire process as simply “justification,” and both Roman Catholics and Protestants sometimes speak of the whole process as “salvation.”

<sup>87</sup> E.G., Galatians 3:3 - “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” Note that the previous verse reads, “Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?” This seems to indicate that Paul is speaking of adding works to faith in order to receive what faith alone had already brought, *viz.*, the Spirit. Some, however, believe this to indicate that both justification and sanctification have the exact same ground (contrast *The New American Commentary* or the *New International Greek Testament Commentary* with *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* and *The Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* respectively). This, however, may be a moot point—for both agree that God is the source of all salvation [stages] prior to man’s responsive actions, whatever their level of cooperation.

<sup>88</sup> 1 Cor. 9:24 and 2 Tim. 4:7-8. See Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 4, a. 3.

the mover intends to induce some perfection into the thing moved: towards which perfection the movable tends, if the movement be natural. Now when we say a thing is perfect, we mean that it is good. Therefore every action and movement is for a good.”<sup>89</sup> If every action taken is toward some perceived good or perfection, then ultimately all things are, in a sense, reaching toward God. “The supreme good, namely God, is the cause of goodness in all things good. Therefore He is the cause of every end being an end: since whatever is an end, is such, in so far as it is good. Now the cause of a thing being such, is yet more so. Therefore God is supremely the end of all things.”<sup>90</sup> Aquinas sees all of creation as tending toward God, but especially humans: “Now, seeing that all creatures, even those that are devoid of reason, are directed to God as their last end: and that all reach this end in so far as they have some share of a likeness to him: the intellectual creature attains to him in a special way, namely through its proper operation, by understanding him. Consequently this must be the end of the intelligent creature, namely to understand God.”<sup>91</sup> This understanding, however, is not simply made available to any creature with an intellectual nature, for “the intellectual substance attains to God by its operation, not only by an act of understanding but also by an act of the will, through desiring and loving Him, and through delighting in Him.”<sup>92</sup> This sentiment is mirrored in Aquinas’s *Treatise*: “Now man is ordered to an intelligible end partly through the intellect and partly through the will.”<sup>93</sup>

A person’s will is involved in the process of attaining his ultimate end. While perfect knowledge of God is required for man’s perfect happiness, “imperfect knowledge of the end

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<sup>89</sup> Aquinas, *SCG*, 3:3.5.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* 3:17.3.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* 3:25.1.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* 3:26.1.

<sup>93</sup> Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 4, a. 3.

exists beforehand in the intellect through the will, first by *love*.”<sup>94</sup> Because that which is loved is beyond the capacity of the lover to attain, the movement toward that object is called *hope*.<sup>95</sup> The trust involved in hoping for things which reason cannot attain to by demonstration is called *faith*.<sup>96</sup> Thus we see that faith, hope, and love are all required to attain to one’s ultimate happiness. These three virtues are necessary, but not sufficient, for “happiness is the intellect’s perfect operation . . . But in knowledge by faith the operation of the intellect is found to be most imperfect as regards that which is on the part of the intellect:—although it is most perfect on the part of the object:—for the intellect in believing does not grasp the object of its assent. Therefore neither does man’s happiness consist in this knowledge of God.”<sup>97</sup> If a man is to be truly happy, therefore, faith is required but not able to actually give man the kind of knowledge of God that will satisfy the intellect and will. For this, the beatific vision of God is required.

Aquinas believes that the possibility of seeing God is both promised in Scripture (e.g., 1 Cor. 13:12; 1 John 3:2; Luke 22:29-30), and provable through reason.<sup>98</sup> But this possibility is not actualized automatically, nor is the experience of this vision expected to be equal to all to whom it is granted. While faith, hope, and love are required for the granting of the beatific vision of God (and this is offered to all), “it is possible that there be various degrees of participation of this light, so that one receives more light than another. Therefore it is possible that of those who see God, one may see Him more perfectly than another; though both see His substance.”<sup>99</sup> This is

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> See Aquinas, *SCG*, 1:5.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. 3:40.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 3:51-58.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 3:58.1.

affected because “of those who see Him one sees His substance more perfectly than another, according to their greater or lesser approach to Him.”<sup>100</sup> How does one gain this power? Aquinas states that because “the light of glory raises one to the divine vision for the reason that it is a likeness of the divine intellect, . . . a thing may be more or less like to God. Therefore it is possible for one to see the divine substance more or less perfectly.”<sup>101</sup> So, it is by being more like God that a creature more perfectly sees God.

That there will indeed be a diversity of experiences of the divine vision is due to the fact that there is a variety in the level of preparation in creatures for this event. “Now vision of the divine substance is the last end of every intellectual substance, . . . And intellectual substances are not all equally prepared for that end: for *some are more virtuous*, some less, and *virtue is the way to happiness*. Consequently there must be diversity in the divine vision.”<sup>102</sup> This is the key to understanding Aquinas’s view of good works: they function as a means of preparation of the creature for its happiness. While all the saved will see God, not all will share in the same happiness during the vision.<sup>103</sup> Aquinas believes this explains the notion of rewards in heaven: “The same thing then makes them all happy, but they do not all derive an equal happiness therefrom. Hence it does not stand in the way of what has been said, that our Lord declares (Matth. 20.) the labourers in the vineyard to have received the same wage, *a penny* to wit,

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 3:58.4. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>103</sup> “As to that Good itself, Which is the object and cause of Happiness, one Happiness cannot be greater than another, since there is but one Sovereign Good, namely, God, by enjoying Whom, men are made happy. But as to the attainment or enjoyment of this Good, one man can be happier than another; because the more a man enjoys this Good the happier he is. Now, that one man enjoys God more than another, happens through his being better disposed or ordered to the enjoyment of Him. And in this sense one man can be happier than another.” Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 5, a. 2.

although they worked not equally: because the same thing is appointed as a reward to be seen and enjoyed, namely God.”<sup>104</sup>

Why do good works function in this way? Following Aristotle, happiness is “virtuous *activity*. . . in doing something, not just being in a certain state or condition. It consists in those lifelong activities that actualize the virtues of the rational part of the soul.”<sup>105</sup> Doing good requires an act of the will, and the will chooses the most desirable object as presented by the intellect. But this desire is produced by one’s character (i.e., one’s level of virtue), and one’s character is formed by acts of the will.<sup>106</sup> Because of this, “rectitude of the will is required for happiness . . . because rectitude of the will consists in being properly ordered to the ultimate end.”<sup>107</sup> Far from merely fearful obedience, or forced actions based on law, in Aquinas’s system the reward of virtue is *happiness*.<sup>108</sup> Being godly is required to enjoy God, and that enjoyment will vary with one’s virtue attained in life through good works.

## Conclusion

The Apostle Paul begged his fellow believers to “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 3:58.8. See also *ST I-II*, q. 4, a. 6. Note that the *The Joint Declaration* (“Sources for 4.7”) states “Many antitheses could be overcome if the misleading word ‘merit’ were simply to be viewed and thought about in connection with the true sense of the biblical term ‘wage’ or reward.”

<sup>105</sup> *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/> [accessed May 12, 2010]), s.v. “Aristotle’s Ethics.”

<sup>106</sup> “It is activities exercised on particular objects that make the corresponding character.” Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), 3.5 (1114a).

<sup>107</sup> Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 4, a. 4.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. I-II, q. 4, a. 6. This is not to say that laws or fear are not useful to obedient acts, but rather that they often fail as motivators or as explanations for their propriety (cf. Mt. 9:13; 22:36-40; Rom. 8:15; 1 John 4:18).

world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”<sup>109</sup> Aquinas saw the renewal of the mind as a process whereby human beings could become prepared for ultimate happiness. The *Catechism* notes in Part 3, Section 1, Chapter 1, Article 2 that the Christian’s vocation is to beatitude (happiness).<sup>110</sup> It is two chapters later, in Article 2, that justification, grace, and merit are discussed.<sup>111</sup> The systematic nature of the *Catechism* implies that one must understand the former in order to understand the latter. Now, Article 2 states that, “The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness. This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One who alone can fulfill it: . . . God alone satisfies.”<sup>112</sup> Because this is the case, “the Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts: God calls us to his own beatitude.”<sup>113</sup> The notion that “God alone satisfies” is from Thomas Aquinas, who is expressing here his conclusion reached via his application of Aristotelian virtue theory as noted above. Given that Roman Catholic dogma tends to follow Aquinas,<sup>114</sup> and Aquinas tended to follow Aristotle, this interpretation appears sound.

Further, it was shown above that Roman Catholic theology conflates the Protestant notions of justification, sanctification, and glorification, into a three-stage “justification” (or

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<sup>109</sup> Romans 12:1-2.

<sup>110</sup> *Catechism*, 1716-1729.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 1987-2011.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 1718.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 1719.

<sup>114</sup> Consider “the crowning testimony of Innocent VI: ‘His teaching above that of others, the canons alone excepted, enjoys such an elegance of phraseology, a method of statement, a truth of proposition, that those who hold it are never found swerving from the path of truth, and he who dare assail it will always be suspected of error.’” Daniel Kennedy, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 14 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), s.v. “St. Thomas Aquinas” <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14663b.htm> (accessed May 11, 2010).



“salvation”). Imagine, then, the confusion generated by a new doctrine claiming that justification (or salvation) was by faith *alone*.<sup>115</sup> Clearly it would not be countenanced.

Nor, it might be argued, would such an idea stand in many Protestant circles if seen in relation to sanctification.<sup>116</sup> For example, within Evangelicalism, adherents to both the Free Grace and Lordship Salvation camps admit that works are necessary to the salvation process, while both sides also agree with some notion of *sola fide*.<sup>117</sup> Here again, a lack of strict distinction between justification and sanctification is a likely culprit. Charles Ryrie says, “In the positional sense no one is more sanctified than another, but in the experiential aspect it is quite correct to speak of one believer as being more sanctified than another. All the exhortations of the New Testament concerning spiritual growth are pertinent to this progressive and experiential facet of sanctification.”<sup>118</sup> Thus, for Ryrie (giving what has been seen as a balanced view of the Lordship vs. Free Grace debate), “every Christian will bear spiritual fruit. Somewhere,

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<sup>115</sup> Or Luther’s call to “Be a sinner, and let your sins be strong, but let your trust in Christ be stronger . . . No sin can separate us from Him, even if we were to kill or commit adultery thousands of times each day.” Martin Luther, *Letter to Melancthon*, 99.

<sup>116</sup> For several examples from a variety of authors, see Stanley N. Gundry, ed, et al, *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), e.g., Hoekema, 67; Walvoord, 210; and Dieter, 34-35.

<sup>117</sup> A full discussion of this debate is beyond the scope of this paper, however some representative remarks are fitting here. Robert N. Wilkin, writing for the *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, says, “Some extreme Calvinists actually believe that Christians have *no* personal role in their own sanctification. . . . [and t]hese are not the views of a select few. . . . The idea that present sanctification is solely a work of God, that man has absolutely no active role to play, is unbiblical and unhealthy.” Robert N. Wilkin, “We Believe In: Sanctification Part 4: Man’s Role in Present Sanctification.” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 7, no. 2 (Autumn 1994): 4-5. Compare this to John MacArthur, on the Lordship Salvation side, who concludes that, “true believers cannot be hearers only.” John MacArthur, *Faith Works—The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Vancouver: Word Publishing, 1993), 143. The kind of faith that saves is one evidenced by works: non-doers are not true believers, although true believers will not always put the word into practice (MacArthur, *Faith Works*, 144-145). “Where there are no works, we must assume no faith exists either. . . . Real faith *inevitably* produces faith-works.” MacArthur, *Faith Works*, 149 (emphasis in original). He also writes that, “The Bible teaches clearly that the evidence of God’s work in a life is the inevitable fruit of transformed behavior (1 John 3:10). Faith that does not result in righteous living is dead and cannot save (James 2:14-17). Professing Christians utterly lacking the fruit of true righteousness will find no biblical basis for assurance of salvation (1 John 2:4).” John MacArthur, *Gospel According to Jesus*, 29.

<sup>118</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 131.

sometime, somehow. Otherwise that person is not a believer. Every born-again individual will be fruitful. Not to be fruitful is to be faithless, without faith, and therefore without salvation.”<sup>119</sup>

Across the spectrum (including both Roman Catholics and Protestants), then, good works are believed to be a necessary factor in the process of salvation.<sup>120</sup> Affirming this position is not legalistic.<sup>121</sup> Further, this notion hardly sets Protestants and Roman Catholics apart—and much less justifies a major schism in the Church.<sup>122</sup> Perhaps a virtue interpretation of the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification and the Protestant doctrine of sanctification can be used to further understanding between the two parties. If the ongoing and present aspect of salvation is seen as a process of character development and preparation for seeing God, then perhaps the two camps may attain once again to unity, with the result that we may together enjoy the “happy state which results from the divine vision, [where] man’s every desire is fulfilled.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *So Great Salvation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 45.

<sup>120</sup> The *Joint Declaration* “excludes the possibility of earning *grace* - that is, justification - (can. 2; DS 1552) and bases the earning or merit of *eternal life* on the gift of grace itself, through membership in Christ (can. 32; DS 1582). Good works are ‘merits’ as a *gift*.” (“Sources for section 4.7” Emphasis in original).

<sup>121</sup> Legalism is “the belief that salvation demands or depends upon total obedience to the letter of the law.” Martin H. Manser, *Zondervan Dictionary of Bible Themes. The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 1999), s.v. “Legalism.” Anders cites Max Lucado’s simple formula: “A legalist believes the supreme force behind salvation is you. Max Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, in *Holman New Testament Commentary*, vol. 8 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 26. Evans and Porter define legalism as “the attempt to acquire merit before God through the performance of various rituals and practices.” Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans, *Dictionary of New Testament Background : A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), s.v. “Jewish Piety.” Popular Reformed theologian R. C. Sproul, for example, teaches both that, “Legalism is the opposite heresy of antinomianism. Whereas antinomianism denies the significance of law, legalism exalts law above grace,” and that, “the process of sanctification means that the believer is becoming less of a sinner.” R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1996), sections 91 and 93.

<sup>122</sup> Regarding whether or not faith alone justifies, Peter Kreeft says, “On this issue I believe Luther was simply right.” Kreeft, *Fundamentals of the Faith*, 290. This may be seen to be the position of the *Joint Declaration*. See Appendix A.

<sup>123</sup> Aquinas, *SCG*, 3:63.1.

## **Appendix A: The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: Section 4.7**

“We confess together that good works - a Christian life lived in faith, hope and love - follow justification and are its fruits. When the justified live in Christ and act in the grace they receive, they bring forth, in biblical terms, good fruit. Since Christians struggle against sin their entire lives, this consequence of justification is also for them an obligation they must fulfill. Thus both Jesus and the apostolic Scriptures admonish Christians to bring forth the works of love. According to Catholic understanding, good works, made possible by grace and the working of the Holy Spirit, contribute to growth in grace, so that the righteousness that comes from God is preserved and communion with Christ is deepened. When Catholics affirm the "meritorious" character of good works, they wish to say that, according to the biblical witness, a reward in heaven is promised to these works. Their intention is to emphasize the responsibility of persons for their actions, not to contest the character of those works as gifts, or far less to deny that justification always remains the unmerited gift of grace. The concept of a preservation of grace and a growth in grace and faith is also held by Lutherans. They do emphasize that righteousness as acceptance by God and sharing in the righteousness of Christ is always complete. At the same time, they state that there can be growth in its effects in Christian living. When they view the good works of Christians as the fruits and signs of justification and not as one's own ‘merits’, they nevertheless also understand eternal life in accord with the New Testament as unmerited ‘reward’ in the sense of the fulfillment of God's promise to the believer.”<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_31101999\\_cath-luth-joint-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html) (accessed May 12, 2010), section 4.7.

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