

Veritas Classical Academy

The Question of Personal Salvation  
As Understood in the Teachings of Four Christian Churches

Shawn Powers

Senior Thesis

April 2021

Shawn Powers

Veritas Classical Academy

Senior Thesis

26 April 2021

## The Question of Personal Salvation as Understood in the Teachings of Four Christian Churches

Throughout the history of Christianity, one question has truly been the basis for all of the divisions within the church: how are we saved? Often there is agreement at a basic level that the general salvation of man has been merited by Christ through His Death and Resurrection; however, there is more strife concerning personal salvation. One example of this division over the foundations of personal salvation would be the Protestant Reformation, in which Martin Luther, among many others, argued against the Roman Catholic church that personal salvation is merited by faith alone, and not by works. In this paper, the idea of personal salvation will be viewed through the teachings of four of the most prolific churches within Christianity: the Lutheran church, the Baptist church, the Orthodox church, and the Roman Catholic church. In describing the views of each church, Baptism is used to set common ground for the general ideas that are used by each church, namely those such as faith, justification, and grace.

### I: THE LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE

The Lutheran understanding of salvation focuses primarily on the idea that salvation is given by the Grace of God and is understood by faith in God's promise, and that this faith is instilled and strengthened by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God as it appears in the scriptures. This idea of salvation is condensed into a single word:

justification. Justification, as defined in the Book of Concord, is the "remission of sins through faith in Christ" (*Concord*, article IV (II) section 1). This idea of salvation, or justification, describes salvation through grace, which is merited through faith in Christ, and this faith is made and strengthened by the Word of God in the scriptures.

Furthermore, the idea of good works is intentionally left out, as it is understood that good works are not necessary for salvation, but rather that they naturally stem from one who is faithful.

With this in mind, the next question to ask is what justification is and who is justified. Salvation is understood to be merited by justifying faith, and it is defined in the Book of Concord: "...faith which justifies is not merely a knowledge of history...but it is to assent to the promise of God, in which, for Christ's sake, the remission of sins and justification are freely offered" (article IV (II) section 48). This means that one who is faithful does not only know what is said in the Bible, but they commit themselves to the promise of God and believe in it. In God's promise, the forgiveness, or remission, of sins and justification are offered without the believer needing to perform any good works, as this justification is given to the believer by God simply through Christ's righteousness. In other words, this gift from God, the offering of justification without need for merit on the end of the believer, is presented before an individual, and they are saved by choosing to accept this gift, understanding this promise and truly believing it. There is a common misconception about this interpretation of faith, and it is addressed in section 71 of article IV (II): that, rather than being justified on account of Christ's righteousness, which is seen as our own through faith and as is described in the promise of salvation, it is instead a means to give the believer the ability to gain accountability, and being thus

justified, in the eyes of God. This interpretation of faith is not a proper understanding of the Lutheran teaching, as this interpretation of faith describes faith as more of a tool to do good works, and those who do these good works become justified. Rather, it is explicitly stated that justification is simply granted by God to those who have faith in His promise. Good works are simply not a part of this promise. However, it is understood that one who has faith in this promise, one who is already justified, will naturally perform these good works. A more metaphoric example is given in the Book of Concord: "The beginning is half of everything; just as if one would say that grammar makes the teachers of all arts, because it prepares for other arts, although in fact it is his own art that renders everyone an artist" (art IV (II) section 71). It is said that faith is taught, though it should not be, to be like grammar as it is used in this metaphor, and it is emphasized that this is not a proper understanding of the Lutheran teaching. The metaphor says that grammar, which allows one to comprehend the language in which all of the other arts are taught, makes the teachers of all arts. In other words, because it gives one the means to understand the arts, the grammar should be seen to encompass all aspects of all arts - including the things within the arts that are clearly set apart from the grammar - despite the fact that it is the art that makes the artist, not the grammar. This metaphor describes the traditional teaching of faith, where faith is the grammar and good works are the arts that make the artist. The Lutherans deny this teaching of faith, as this proposes that the good works, not just one's faith, save the individual, as faith acts as a tool to learn to perform good works.

In discussing this topic, it is important to bring up that this idea of faith comes from the separation of scripture into two parts: the Law, or the Ten Commandments,

and the promises of God. This idea that good works are required alongside faith stems from the understanding that the Law requires penance for sins, and that this kind of judicial reason is necessarily applied to salvation. It is written in the Book of Concord that this is not the correct idea of how to approach salvation because if a man has the ability to achieve justification, the forgiveness of sins, by just performing penance, which one performs with his reason, then Christ's actions were of no benefit to him (art. IV (II) section 12). If a man has the ability to save himself by simply performing penance, Christ would not have had to die in order to save him. It is said in the Book of Concord: "If we merit the remission of sins by these elicit acts [that spring from our mind], of what benefit is Christ?" (art. IV (II) section 12)

For these reasons and others, it is understood that salvation is merited by one's faith in God's promise of salvation. The immediate question arises as to how someone obtains faith. Who is faithful? It is taught in Lutheran doctrine that faith can be created, strengthened, and lost.

The Augsburg Confession expounds on this idea: "That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted" (art. V section 1). This means that faith is obtained in two ways: participating in the sacraments and by hearing the preached Word of God. This is the case because, first, through the sacraments, the Holy Spirit instills and strengthens faith in the individual. It is said in article 13 of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession that baptism, partaking in the Eucharist, and confession, being sacraments, have God's command and promise of Grace (art. 13 section 4). In other words, sacraments are rites that are bound by the Word of God, in which he commands these rites and gives his promise of salvation. In

all of these sacraments, the believer is presented the promise of salvation, and by faith in this promise while they participate - and even as they don't participate, as they are always faithful in this promise - they are justified, or saved, by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the case of baptism, faith, if not already had by the individual, - usually in the case of infant baptism - is granted by God to the person being baptised, and is then maintained as the individual hears the Word of God and receives the sacraments. Furthermore, faith is obtained through the preached Word of God, not only through the participation in the sacraments. The Word of God is seen as the sole path to salvation within the church (preface, paragraph 2) When one hears the Word of God, preached as God intended, their faith is strengthened. In a similar fashion to how the promise of salvation is apprehended by faith, the Word of God is heard by an individual and justifies them when they accept it with faith, not only understanding the meaning, for, as it was said previously, simply knowing what is being said does not constitute faith, but believing and understanding in the Word of God strengthens one's faith.

Good works are understood in the Lutheran teachings not to be necessary for salvation. Immediately, someone may be drawn to the misconception that they condemn good works, and that is simply not true. It is said in article 6: "Also they teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, and that it is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God's will, but that we should not rely on those works to merit justification before God" (art. 6 section 1). It is given that, by faith, one will perform good works commanded by God. However, it is not by these works that one can be justified, but rather by the faith that brings forth these good works. Furthermore, it is said that seeking salvation through good works would immediately devalue Christ's

grace, as by works, one can find a way to God without God. In article 20, Ambrose is quoted as saying that if justification was something more transactional, as payment is for labor, so that it could be gained through good works, then there would be no reason for Christ to have suffered (art. 20, section 14). Instead of being presented as a form of reward for action, it is said that justification is given by grace to those who merit it by faith.

## II: THE BAPTIST PERSPECTIVE

The Baptist understanding of salvation is fairly similar to the Lutheran understanding in that justification plays a large role in salvation; however it differs in a couple of different aspects: in comparison to the Lutheran understanding, the Baptist understanding of salvation teaches that “Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man... [and] in its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification” (*Baptist Faith and Message*, art. IV, Introduction). It must first be said that, similarly to the Lutheran teaching of salvation, the Baptists teach that one is saved by faith alone, and that good works naturally stem from those with true faith. With that in mind, it can be said that the general idea of salvation in the Baptist teachings is that through the achievement of these four things, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification, the whole man is redeemed, and is thus saved.

Faith is taught by the Baptists in a similar manner as is taught by the Lutherans: it is not only knowledge of what God has taught through the scriptures, but it is also a complete trust in the salvation that is offered on account of the merits of Christ by the

grace of God. The main difference lies in the understanding of salvation and how sacraments play a part in faith. According to Thomas Nettles, faith is instilled in the individual by the power of the Holy Spirit as one hears the Word of God. For this reason, the sacraments, known as ordinances in the Baptist tradition, being baptism and the Lord's supper, are "effectual means of salvation, not for any virtue in them... but by the blessing of Christ, and the working of the Spirit in those that by faith receive them" (Nettles, 140-141). This means that it is the faith held by the believer when they participate in these sacraments that makes the sacraments means of salvation. They are called "effectual means of salvation" because they effectively "convince and convert sinners," and it is understood that, while it is one's faith that saves, by participating in the sacraments, one strengthens his own faith (140). According to the Baptist Faith and Message, baptism is recognized as a means to demonstrate the believer's faith in Christ as Savior and to recognize the believer's repentance and intent to live for God ("*Baptist Faith and Message*", art. VII). It can be said that this ordinance is understood to show the church that the believer is truly faithful, as they do all of this understanding that it is out of obedience to God and as a testimony to the believer's faith in the promises of Christ.

The first part of salvation is given as Regeneration. According to the Baptist Faith and Message, "Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus" (art. IV section A). This "new birth" occurs when an individual acknowledges their sin through the power of the Holy Spirit and, having recognized the importance of their relationship with God by the Holy Spirit, they repent and have faith in God. It is understood that "repentance is a genuine turning



from sin toward God” and that “faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior” (art. IV, section A). It is also understood that both repentance and faith are necessary parts of salvation, because to achieve salvation, an individual must understand that sin separates them from God, and then must accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In other words, regeneration occurs when an individual becomes a new man through the power of the Holy Spirit when he repents, turning to God from sin, and has faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, truly believing that Christ is the Lord, fully God, and the Savior, Who has saved us by suffering in our place on the cross.

The second part of the process of salvation is Justification. Justification is understood to be “God’s gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ” (art. IV, section B). This means that Justification is the forgiveness of sins by God through His Grace that is received by an individual after repentance, through faith, having been brought forth by the power of the Holy Spirit in Regeneration. Nettles also explains that a justified believer is regarded by God as if the believer had never sinned, and because of this, God grants him righteousness.

The third part of the process of salvation is Sanctification. Sanctification is defined in the Baptist Faith and Message as the “experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God’s purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him” (art. IV, section C). A similar explanation would be that Sanctification is an experience in which a believer, having been justified in Regeneration, where he

responded to God's grace by turning from sin towards God and placing their faith in Him, first grows in moral and spiritual maturity through the power of the Holy Spirit, which was given to him through Regeneration. Then, using this experience, the believer is changed so that he can achieve God's purposes, or so that he can achieve what God has planned for him, which is often said to be the "demonstration of His goodness in their lives" (Nettles, 161). Thus, Sanctification is ongoing, as it is brought on by the power of the Holy Spirit within a believer as he lives throughout his entire life, strengthening his faith, from which good works will naturally follow, confirming his faith.

Glorification, as defined by the Baptist Faith and Message, is the "culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed" (art IV, section D). Essentially, after an individual has been Regenerated, Justified, and Sanctified, he will achieve Glorification, in which he is given eternal life. This Glorification will occur either at the death of the believer or at the second coming of Christ, and it is the final stage of salvation. The Baptist Faith and Message cites Romans 8:10-11, which says: "But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you." (*New International Version*, Rom. 8.10-11).

It is understood in this passage that the Lord is the one who raised Jesus from the dead, and it is said that if His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, lives in the believer, then by the power of the Holy Spirit, he will bring man, who had previously been chained by his mortality and thus kept from glory, to eternal life.

### III: THE ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE

The Orthodox Catholic teaching on salvation, while it discusses justification and regeneration, as it draws its teachings from the Bible, is viewed more like a journey, or a progression, towards Christ. This teaching is called “theosis”, which is defined by Michael Pomazansky as “man’s union with God and participation in God’s life through the Divine, Uncreated Energies.” (Pomazansky 121) The idea separating “Created” and “Uncreated Energies” is an important distinction to make, and in this definition, it is used synonymously with the idea of the Grace of God. Essentially, this means that theosis is the process in which, by living through the Uncreated Energies, or by living through Grace, a man becomes more and more like God, until he finally achieves union with Him. The concept of theosis becomes increasingly important as the idea of personal salvation is explored. While the general salvation of the world is incredibly important, the focus of this paper is to view personal salvation through the lens of the teachings of each church, and therefore, while salvation is split in Orthodoxy into the general economy of salvation and personal salvation, the general economy will only be covered in parts as they pertain to personal salvation.

The distinction drawn in the Orthodox teachings between the “Created and Uncreated Energies” deals with the separation of man from the Grace of God, and man’s union with God is an essential part of the idea of theosis. In Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, a comparison is drawn between the Roman Catholic idea of Grace and the Orthodox understanding of Grace, and the argument is made for why the Grace of God is understood to be an “Uncreated Energy” instead of a “Created Energy.” (166) It is

said that Grace is an Uncreated Energy because this Grace “was, at the time of the creation of man, intimately connected with the soul” (166) This is seen as “uncreated” because it was not created separately from man, but rather, because it was made a part of man’s soul, it is not something else entirely. This is not to say that the status of creation of grace is dependent on the idea that grace is attributed directly to the soul of specifically the man, but, for the sake of example, that any one thing was created as a part of something else to begin with, where in this case, grace was created as a part of man’s soul. Put more simply, it is “uncreated” because it was not created separately from man’s soul, and was instead a part of man’s soul from the soul’s creation, and thus they are not being “joined” after being created, as grace was always a part of the soul. This Orthodox idea is contrasted with the Roman Catholic teaching that Grace is a “Created Energy,” as it is completely separate from man. In this teaching, it is understood that in the fall of man, man’s imperfection is attributed to the separation of man from God’s Grace and a blight on the nature of man rather than the actual change in the nature of man, as it is taught in Orthodoxy. Furthermore, it is understood that death became the consequence of the fall of man on account of the nature of man, not from the separation from the Grace of God. Thus, it becomes more clear that it is the nature of the man that is being redeemed, which begins to make more sense when it is considered that eternal life is granted to those who find union with God as understood in theosis.

When inspected a bit closer, the importance of humanity and its place in theosis becomes more clear. Christ set the perfect example for humanity in his demonstration of theosis, as “the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, through its union with the

Divinity, participated in Divine qualities and was enriched by them, in other words, it was 'deified.'" (220-221) To put it in other terms, Jesus Christ, being fully man and fully God, deified His own humanity by unifying His humanity and His Divinity. Being fully God, he was able to deify humanity by being also human, as it is understood that all that which God participates in becomes glorious. Furthermore, Pomazansky cites Hebrews 2:14, saying that because of Christ's participation in our flesh and blood, our own humanity may be deified (pg 221).

There is an important distinction to draw when describing deification: it does not mean that man can actually become God. Theosis is a process that may be adequately described as never ending, as is said by Fr. Staniloae: "... Man assimilates more and more of the Divine Energies, without this assimilation ever ending, since he will never assimilate the Source itself..." (222) so while a man may achieve union with God, he may neither achieve this union without God nor may he acquire the nature of God. It is described by Fr. Staniloae as becoming a "god by participation, and not God Himself" (222). He is saying that humans, by participating in the Divine Energies, or the Grace of God, may become "gods by Grace," as one is unified with God, however there is no direct identification of the man with God Himself. Staniloae explains it as such: "Deification is the passing of man from the created things to the Uncreated, to the level of the Divine Energies."(222) Essentially, the understanding is that humans do not become God, but are unified with Him by partaking in His Grace so that they become divine, and not Divine, which would require that they partake of the Essence of God.

Since theosis is a constant journey towards the deification of the man, it becomes far easier to analyze when this journey contains something like "spiritual

landmarks.” One way of simplifying this journey would be to look at the sacred mysteries: Baptism, Chrismation, and the Eucharist. Nicolas Cabasilas states that “the holy life is brought about by the sacred Mysteries” and that “each sacred rite unites to Christ those who have undergone it” (Cabasilas 65).

With the understanding that humanity may be deified through the Uncreated Energies and through Christ’s participation in humanity, it is appropriate then that there is a general path along which a person may be deified. This process begins at Baptism. Fr. Dumitru Staniloae writes that “Deification... begins at Baptism, and stretches out all along the whole of man’s spiritual ascent” (Pomazansky 221). Nicolas Cabasilas goes on to say that “the effect of this sacred rite is the imparting of the energies of the Holy Spirit” and that “the chrism brings in the Lord Jesus Himself, in whom is man’s whole salvation and all hope of benefits” (Cabasilas 106). He also says that “we are chrismated in order that we may become partakers of the royal anointing of His Deification” (106). Essentially, this means that the purpose of Baptism is to give man a gateway, being Christ, whose Grace is given in Baptism, through which they may deify their own humanity as Christ did. Cabasilas explains that this Baptism is much like a new birth, and he equates the life before Baptism to be a life of unbirth, in which “it is impossible to move or be fed” (66).

Baptism is understood in Orthodox teaching as a new birth in which the previous life is lost and the new life is created in Christ. It is described by Nicolas Cabasilas to have three names, each describing the significance and effects of Baptism: the “illumination”, or washing, the “gift,” and the “anointing” (67).

Baptism is first called the illumination, or the washing, because “since it confers true being, it makes men known to God” (68). Illumination also implies a “washing away,” as light does to darkness. (68) Essentially, this means that Baptism brings men to be acknowledged by God by creating a new life, what is called “true being,” in men (68).

Baptism is also called the “gift” because, as Cabasilas says, “what might a person contribute to his own birth?” (69) This life is given by God, not made in any regard by man, and “we do not contribute even the desire for all the blessings derived from Baptism” (69). This means that this gift of Baptism is given from God with no contribution from the person. No person can give himself a new life, but he can receive this blessing from God, the One Who creates this new life and grants it to those who partake in Baptism. It is said that the want for the blessings bestowed during Baptism cannot be attributed to man, as he cannot want for things that he has no understanding of. Cabasilas cites 1 Cor. 2:9, and he says “We wish for the things we are able to conceive with our minds, but these blessings ‘the heart of man has not conceived’” (69). He goes on to say that these blessings and promises can only be interpreted in the way that man would be able to. For example, when one thinks of the Kingdom of Heaven, he is inclined to think of a literal kingdom with God as king, however the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven is far greater than can be experienced or even imagined by any man.

Furthermore, Baptism is also called “anointing” because “on those who are initiated it engraves Christ, who was anointed for us” (69). In other words, when a person is Baptized, Christ is “engraved” into them, meaning that Christ is, in a sense,

brought upon them and is made one with them, having already had his humanity deified. This “anointing” allows humanity to be deified, thus beginning the journey on the path of theosis.

In Baptism, it is important to understand the nature of the new life that has been given and its interaction with sin. Baptism is said to wash away this sin, and the washing of this sin allows man to partake of life in Christ (78). This sin manifests in two forms: through action and through habit. Cabasilas says that sinful action “...happens once and is no more, like an arrow which is shot and passes by; yet it leaves a wound in those who commit it...” (76). It is understood then that the action is to be seen as something very temporary, but because the action is sinful, it leaves behind marks, appearing in forms of wickedness, disgrace, and liability to punishment (76). These sinful actions comprise the basis for the habit of sin, which is “permanent and chains souls with unbreakable fetters. It enslaves the mind... inciting its captives to commit the most wicked actions” (76). There is the understanding that sin does not go away, and instead accumulates. It is also said that a sinful mind, having not been baptized, becomes more prone to sinful action, resulting in a vicious cycle of constant, inescapable sin. This trail of sin could only be erased by Christ Himself, whom man receives in Baptism, where this sin is washed away, and the life of unbreakable sin is brought to an end, as he emerges from the water “without sin” (80). Cabasilas states: “Nor does it [baptism] merely set us free from wickedness, it also confers the opposite condition” (78). He goes on to say that because of Christ’s death, man may slay sin as He did, and similarly, because of His resurrection, man also may partake in the new life, all which is granted in Baptism.



Baptism accomplishes five main things: it brings one to new life, anointing them, washes them of their sins, seals them with Christ, grants them with the ability to overcome sin, and starts them on the path to deification.

The second of these sacred Mysteries is the rite of Chrismation. Chrismation is a physical pouring of chrism onto the head, and it takes place directly after Baptism. Chrismation differs from Baptism in that it confers the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is by these gifts, being “godliness, prayer, love, and sobriety, and the other gifts which are opportune for those who receive them” (107). This rite is often referred to as “the seal of the spiritual gift,” and it is in this rite that there is a joining of the individual with the Holy Spirit (104). The main reason for its importance is because Christ participated in Chrismation, and so it is understood that the believer must also participate in it. Through Chrismation, the believer receives the Holy Spirit through means of the Chrism, which is used on account of lacking in the nature of God. Christ did not need the Chrism, as He is fully God and man, and thus, he was able to be anointed with the Holy Spirit without need for a medium, the Chrism, to “represent Christ as the point of contact between both natures [of God and of man]” (104-105).

The final Mystery is the partaking of the Eucharist. While both Baptism and the partaking of the Eucharist are sacraments and are means through which new life is achieved, the Eucharist is understood to be the greatest of all of the sacraments, as it perfects the other sacraments. Baptism creates a new life in man, Chrismation instills in him the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and in the Eucharist, man is joined with Christ. Cabasilas says it as such: “By receiving Christ’s sacramental body, we are incorporated into His mystical Body, and thus become His Body” (114). This means that, by partaking in the

Eucharist, one accepts Christ's own Body into himself, and so he becomes a part of His body. Furthermore, this Mystery is seen as so important because it can "assist the initiates after their initiation, when the ray of light derived from the Mysteries must be revived after having been obscured by the darkness of sins" (117). It is by this sacrament alone that one can set himself back on the path toward deification. Thus the Eucharist also is the only means for atonement. As Cabasilas puts it, "Christ's body then is the only medicine against sin and His Blood the only ransom from offences" (120). He also says "...once men are united to Christ's Flesh and Blood, by partaking of them, straightaway the greatest benefits result, the remission of sins and the inheriting of the kingdom..."(121). The Orthodox understanding is that by receiving the Eucharist, a man is joined with Christ in His Body, and he is blessed with the remission of sins and the promise of eternal life.

Through these Mysteries, one comes to live a life in Christ: in Baptism, they are given a new life in Christ; in Chrismation, they are given the gifts of the Holy Spirit; in the Eucharist, they are joined with Christ in His Body. By living a life in Christ, it is understood that one is glorified in Christ, so that "at the time of universal judgement they will run to Him with whom they have been all the time" (146). Upon the judgement of the world, the pious who have lived a life in Christ will be united with Him, achieving theosis, deifying the pious man in Christ, not in His Essence, but in His Grace.

#### IV: THE ROMAN CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE

The Roman Catholic view of salvation, much like the view of the other churches, can, with the understanding that this all is only accomplished through Christ, be

simplified into general terms: justification and grace and merit. The Roman Catholic church, unlike the Protestant churches, teaches that Justification is merited on account of one's faith and also their works, and thus the understanding of salvation will be categorized as justification, grace, and merit.

In regards to justification, it is said in the Catechism of the Catholic Church that "the grace of the Holy Spirit has the power to justify us, that is, to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to us 'the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ and through Baptism'" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 535). It is also said that "The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of justification..." This makes more sense when the Roman Catholic view of Baptism is considered alongside this: In Baptism, one's sins are washed away, and they are given a new life. They are also justified, which entails these things: "... enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love Him... to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit... [and] to grow in goodness through the moral virtues" (354). All of this means that those who are baptized are given faith, the ability to do good works, and the ability to grow in goodness.

Within the Roman Catholic understanding of Justification, there are certain effects of Justification. It is said in the Catholic Catechism that "Justification detaches man from sin which contradicts the love of God, and purifies his heart of sin" (536). Essentially, Justification includes the forgiveness of sins, purifying the individual as well as "free[ing] from the enslavement to sin, [and] it heals" (536). It also entails the "acceptance of God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ" (536). To accept God's righteousness, as explained here, is to truly believe in the love of Christ in His

Death and Resurrection. It is also said that Justification “establishes cooperation between God’s grace and man’s freedom.” In this sense, it is understood that a Justified individual will act in accordance with the Word of God, demonstrating faith in it and cooperating with the prompting of the Holy Spirit (537). This is all done because of the grace of God, which grants justification.

The grace of God is understood to be received during Baptism, and is defined as the “favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God... partakers of the divine nature and eternal life” (538). and as the “sanctifying or deifying grace received in Baptism” (538). It is because of this God-given grace that the believer, who does not deserve it, is able to achieve justification. For the sake of reaching salvation, a believer must, through justification granted by the grace of God in Baptism, take advantage of this grace to maintain his justification through faith. It is understood that all efforts through works to maintain justification are only valid because they have been brought forth through the grace of God, as is said by St. Augustine: “since he who completes his work by cooperating with our will began by working so that we might will it” (539). It is understood as he said, that in order for one to carry out this will, God had to act so that the believer could work his will, all in accordance with His own will.

In discussing merit, it is important that the distinction is drawn between the merit of man and the merit of Christ for man’s sake, as through Christ, man has merited justification. This is important because man cannot merit salvation on his own, and thus it must be merited through Christ. It is said also that “the merit of a man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that God has freely chosen to associate man with

the work of his grace” (541). In other words, man gains merit through his own works because God Himself has decided to associate man with his own works of his grace. It is then understood that a man merits justification through works, which is an important distinction to make within Roman Catholicism, as this idea, among others, is one of the greatest points of contention between the Roman Catholic church and the Protestant churches. It is further said that “Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the grace needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life” (542). It also states that “even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God’s wisdom. These graces and goods are the object of Christian prayer” (542). In short, it teaches that, with the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the believer can merit sanctification for himself and for others, attaining salvation, which is union with Christ in eternal life by these graces. It is said that “the charity of Christ is the source in us of all our merits before God” (542). Because Christ is always the source of one’s merits, he may achieve salvation by this grace.

## V. COMPARISON & CONCLUSION

One great distinction to be drawn between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches and the Protestant churches, namely the Lutheran and Baptist churches, is that the Protestant churches claim that one is saved by faith alone, and that good works will follow if one is faithful. However, the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches claim that Justification is merited both by faith and good works. In Roman Catholicism, it is proposed that “the merit of a man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact

that God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace”(541). Similarly, the Orthodox church proposes that because salvation is merited through theosis, the participation in the life of God, salvation is then also merited by good works. The example of a vineyard is given from the prophet Isaiah, to which Pomazansky says “Preserving and guarding His planting, the Lord expects fruits from it. But what should be done... when it bears no fruits, and... is infected with a disease? Should it be looked after if it does not justify its purpose?” (Pomazansky 200).

On the other hand, both the Lutheran and Baptist teachings propose that good works are not necessary for salvation, as they simply stem from faith, which is necessary for salvation. As is written in the Book of Concord, “If we merit the remission of sins by these elicit acts [that spring from our mind], of what benefit is Christ?” (art IV (II) section 12) Likewise, it is also said in the Baptist Faith and Message, “There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.” (*Baptist Faith and Message*, section IV, Introduction)

The idea of works, whether they are regarded as necessary for salvation or not, plays a substantial role in how each denomination views salvation. The Lutheran understanding is that good works, though they will naturally follow from one who is truly faithful, do not merit one the remission of sins. It is stated in article XX of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession that “Christ, and not our works, is the propitiation for our sins” (*Concord* art XX section 79). Peter is cited from Acts in support of this claim: All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (*New International Version* Acts 10.43). The sacraments are viewed as necessary for salvation, as they are commanded by God and confer certain

gifts that can only be given through the sacraments. Because of this, they are viewed separately from good works, which are not necessary for salvation. For example, it is said in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession that baptism is necessary because it confers faith to children and presents the promise of salvation to all who are baptised (*Concord* art. IX). It is because baptism is commanded by God and because baptism confers faith that it is necessary for salvation and is set apart from good works.

The Baptist understanding is similar to the Lutheran understanding, as they believe that it is by faith alone that one is saved, however they include sacraments, known to them as “ordinances,” as works, and thus see them as important, but not necessary for salvation, as they are works commanded by God by which one demonstrates his faith and is reminded of all Christ has done for him (Nettles 166). It can be understood that they are works because they are actions performed only as reminders of Christ and demonstrations of faith, as Nettles says “[Christ gave these ordinances] to show that His disciples belong to Him, and to remind them of what He has done for them” (Nettles 166). He cites Matthew 28:19 and 1 Corinthians 11:24-26 in support of this claim.

In both Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy, works are a necessary part of salvation. In the Orthodox understanding, the process of salvation is understood as theosis, in which one strives toward true unity with Christ through faith and by performing good works on the path toward deification. Matthew 3:10 is cited in support of this claim: “The axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Pomazansky 200).

In Roman Catholicism, good works are understood to be necessary in order to achieve salvation. It is said that “Justification establishes cooperation between God’s grace and man’s freedom,” where the man shows his faith by believing in the Word of God and preserves his faith with the prompting of the Holy Spirit to charity (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 537). It is also said that “the merits of our good works are gifts of divine goodness” and that “the merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that God has chosen to freely associate man with the work of his grace” (541).

The idea behind salvation by faith alone is incredibly important, but as has already been demonstrated, there are many other doctrinal differences that set these denominations apart from each other. While there may be disagreement on many of those fronts, each denomination clearly believes that there is an answer to the question of salvation, and each provides their answers with full faith in Christ.



Works Cited

“Baptist Faith & Message 2000.” *Baptist Faith and Message Website*, Southern Baptist Convention. [bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/](http://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/). Accessed on

Arjakovsky, Antoine, et al. *What Is Orthodoxy?: a Genealogy of Christian Understanding*. Angelico Press, 2018.

Cabasilas, Nicholas. *A Commentary On The Divine Liturgy*. SVSP, 1998.

Cabasilas, Nicholas. *The Life in Christ*. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church: with Modifications from the Editio Typica*. Doubleday, 2003.

*Book of Concord*, Book of Concord Online, 28 Aug. 2019, [bookofconcord.org/](http://bookofconcord.org/). Accessed on

Nettles, Thomas J., and Steve Weaver. *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: the Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life*. Founders Press, 2017.

Pomazansky, Michael, and Seraphim Rose. *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: a Concise Exposition*. Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2015.