

Evangelical Review of Theology

EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

Volume 30 · Number 4 · October 2006

Articles and book reviews reflecting global evangelical
theology for the purpose of discerning the obedience of faith

Published by



for
WORLD EVANGELICAL
ALLIANCE
Theological Commission

Regensburg Redux: Have Colson and Neuhaus Succeeded where Bucer and Contarini Failed?

George W. Harper

KEYWORDS: *Evangelicals and Catholics Together, Roman Catholics, evangelicals, ecumenism, justification, ecclesiology*

THERE is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on
to fortune;

Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in mis-
eries.

On such a full sea are we now
afloat;

And we must take the current
when it serves,

Or lose our ventures.¹

So says Shakespeare's Brutus, and
Chuck Colson and Richard John
Neuhaus might say much the same

about their ongoing effort to broker a rapprochement between evangelicals and Roman Catholics. This effort, known as *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (ECT), has a twofold aim: in Latin America it hopes to stem the rising tide of hostility between evangelicals and Catholics that has led to frequent outbreaks of violence, the destruction of much property, many cases of personal injury, and a number of fatalities, while in North America it aims to provide the theological basis for an evangelical-Catholic united front in the ongoing culture war against religious liberalism and secular humanism.²

¹ William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act 4, Scene 3.

² William M. Shea, *The Lion and the Lamb: Evangelicals and Catholics in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 181-2; Kenneth J. Collins, *The Evangelical Moment: The Promise of an American Religion* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2005), pp. 169-75.

Dr George W. Harper, an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) holding degrees from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Boston University (PhD), is Professor of Christian History and Theology and Director of Doctoral Studies at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek, Croatia. Dr Harper previously taught at the Alliance Biblical Seminary, Quezon City, Philippines, and the Asia Graduate School of Theology—Philippines. He is the author of *A People So Favored of God: Boston's Congregational Churches and Their Pastors, 1710-1760*, (University Press of America, 2004), and has previously contributed articles to this and several other academic journals. This article is based on a paper presented on 19 November 2004 during the Annual Conference of the Evangelical Theological Society, held in San Antonio, Texas.

So far four documents have resulted: an introductory statement, 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium' (1994); a statement on the doctrine of justification, 'The Gift of Salvation' (1997); a statement on Scripture and tradition, 'Your Word Is Truth' (2002); and a statement on worship, ministry, the sacraments, and related topics, 'The Communion of Saints' (2003).³ Colson, Neuhaus, and their colleagues are quite sanguine about what these documents denote, seeing ours as 'a time of opportunity' that calls for such bold initiatives on behalf of Christ's kingdom.⁴

What has been the response? In Latin America, where Colson and Neuhaus had hoped that their efforts might serve as oil on troubled waters, so far ECT has had relatively little impact. For example, Catholic clerics have continued to refer to the region's burgeoning evangelical churches as 'sects', and even Pope John Paul II, who was usually so ecumenically

minded, described these churches' leaders as 'rapacious wolves'.⁵ In return, several evangelical organizations ministering where tension has run the highest have felt it necessary to issue statements distancing themselves from ECT.⁶

In North America, Catholic reaction to ECT has been generally positive, though not without an occasional cavil.⁷ The reaction of the American evangelical community has been far noisier, and much of it has been extremely negative. For example, James Montgomery Boice, of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, has described ECT's fuzziness regarding justification as 'sell[ing] out' the Reformation.⁸ Though not all of ECT's

3 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium', *First Things* 43 (May 1994), pp. 15-22, and <<http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft9405/mission.html>>; 'The Gift of Salvation', *First Things* 79 (January 1998), pp. 20-23, and <<http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft9801/articles/gift.html>>; 'Your Word Is Truth', *First Things* 125 (August-September 2002), pp. 38-42, and <<http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0208/articles/ect.html>>; 'The Communion of Saints', *First Things* 131 (March 2003), pp. 26-33, and <<http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0303/articles/sect-saints.html>>. All citations of these documents in this article will refer to their online versions.

4 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together', ¶18.

5 Cecil M. Robeck Jr., 'Pope John Paul II: A Personal Account of His Impact and Legacy', *Pneuma* 27:1 (Spring 2005), pp. 11, 13.

6 Vern Edmonds, Director of Tecate Mission, letter to staff members, 22 February 1995, in personal papers of Roland Rose, Tecate Mission missionary serving in Chiapas, Mexico; e-mail from Roland Rose to author, 26 October 2004, and fax from Roland Rose to author, 27 October 2004.

7 Keith A. Fournier and William D. Watkins, *A House United? Evangelicals and Catholics Together—A Winning Strategy for the Twenty-First Century* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1994); Patrick Henry Reardon, 'Editorial: Evangelicals and Catholics—Together?', *Touchstone* 7:4 (Fall 1994), pp. 6-7; Karl Keating, 'Almost Worth a Signature', *This Rock* 9:1 (January 1998), <<http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/1998/9801up.asp>>; Philip Blosser, 'Walking the Ecumenical Tightrope', *This Rock* 9:10 (October 1998), <<http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/1998/9810feal.asp>>.

8 Quoted in Art Moore, 'Does "The Gift of Salvation" Sell Out the Reformation?', *Chr T* 42:5 (27 April 1998), p. 17.

conservative critics have used such categorical language, a number of them have gone on record with expressions of unease.⁹ This has led several of these critics to join forces with a few chastened ECT participants, producing a series of documents intended to clarify and put an evangelical spin on ECT's first two documents.¹⁰

On the other hand, some evangelicals have risen to the defence of ECT and other such dialogues, not only taking heart from the ongoing theological discussion but even finding a measure of promise in what they see as Catholic concessions concerning justification.¹¹

The most eloquent of these optimists is British theologian Tony Lane, who has published an important study of recent Protestant-Catholic interaction on that point.¹² Lane suggests that those hoping to build on this interaction look to the example of an earlier dialogue, the Regensburg Colloquy of 1541, at which Protestant and Catholic theologians reached an agreement on justification that he sees as momentous: 'It was, one might say, one small leap for a colloquy, [but] one giant leap for Christian theology.'¹³ The primary purpose of this article is to consider whether there may be merit in Lane's suggestion. First, though, a review of Regensburg's particulars is in order.

1. Reconsidering Regensburg

The Regensburg Colloquy was the most important of a series of meetings that brought together prominent Protestant and Catholic theologians

9 John H. Armstrong, *A View of Rome: A Guide to Understanding the Beliefs and Practices of Roman Catholics* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), pp. 115-21; Norman L. Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1995), pp. 491-502; Michael Scott Horton, *Evangelicals, Catholics, and Unity* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1999).

10 'Resolutions for Roman Catholic and Evangelical Dialogue', <http://www.christianity.com/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID307086%7CCHID560462%7CCHID1415596,00.html>; 'The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration', *Chr T* 43:7 (14 June 1999), pp. 51-6.

11 Matthew C. Heckel, 'Is R. C. Sproul Wrong about Martin Luther? An Analysis of R.C. Sproul's *Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification* with Respect to Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Catholic Luther Scholarship', *J Ev Th S* 47:1 (March 2004), pp. 89-120; Mark A. Noll, 'The Evangelical Mind Today', <<http://firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0410/articles/noll.htm>>; Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, *Is the Reformation Over? An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2005), pp. 178-83.

12 Anthony N. S. Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue: An Evangelical Assessment* (London: T & T Clark, 2002).

13 Anthony N. S. Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness: A Key to the Doctrine of Justification? Reflections on Article 5 of the Regensburg Colloquy (1541)', in *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), pp. 205-24; the quotation is from p. 217. Lane is planning a book-length study tentatively titled *Compromising Patchwork or Ecumenical Breakthrough? The Regensburg Article on Justification (1541): Introduction, Text, and Commentary*; see Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', p. 211, n. 36. As the articles by Clark and Samworth cited in n. 9 above demonstrate, critics have also drawn a parallel between ECT and Regensburg.

under the sponsorship of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.¹⁴ In order to face his perennial foes, the French to the west and the Ottoman Turks to the southeast, Charles needed an Empire that stood united; he hoped these theologians could find a way to restore the visible oneness of German Christendom that had been lost in the years after 1517.

For Regensburg, Charles himself chose each side's spokesmen: Philip Melancthon, Martin Bucer, and Johannes Pistorius on behalf of the Protestants, and Julius Pflug, Johann Eck, and Johannes Gropper on behalf of the Catholics. A number of other theologians were also present, including Bucer's protégé, the young John Calvin, and Pope Paul III's personal representative, Gasparo Cardinal Con-

tarini, who presided over the colloquy's sessions.¹⁵ With discussion based on the so-called *Book of Regensburg*, a document prepared by Gropper with input from Bucer, agreement was soon reached on humanity's condition as created and after Adam's fall, on the nature of sin and the effects of original sin, and on fallen humanity's loss of free will.¹⁶ Amazingly, as has already been noted, agreement was even reached on the nature of justification. This must have seemed very promising.

Also promising was the fact that the Catholics at Regensburg were willing to consider the granting of marriage to the clergy and communion in both kinds to the laity. In response, their Protestant counterparts were willing to consider the maintenance of the traditional clerical hierarchy, though with certain modifications, and the recognition of the pope at its head as a kind of constitutional monarch. The Catholics accepted a mildly Protestant description of the nature of the church, and the Protestants accepted as *adiaphora* traditional Catholic practices in regard to the eucharist. However, the Protestants could not accept the doctrine of

14 Vinzenz Pfnür, 'Colloquies', in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*; Klaus Ganzer and others, 'Religious Colloquies in the Sixteenth Century', <<http://www.religionsgesprache.uni-bonn.de/introduction.html>>. For introductions to Regensburg, see Mark Greengrass, *The Longman Companion to the European Reformation, c. 1500-1618* (Harlow, UK: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998), pp. 245-6; Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform, 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 405-6; and Thomas M. Lindsay, *A History of the Reformation*, 2 vols., International Theological Library (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), 2: 519-24. For detailed studies, see Elisabeth G. Gleason, *Gasparo Contarini: Venice, Rome, and Reform* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 186-256; and Peter Matheson, *Cardinal Contarini at Regensburg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

15 Martin Greschat, *Martin Bucer: A Reformer and His Times*, trans. Stephen E. Buckwalter (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), p. 179; Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 51; Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', p. 207; Ozment, *Age of Reform*, p. 405; Lindsay, *History of the Reformation*, 2: 519.

16 Greschat, *Bucer*, pp. 179-80; Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 51; Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', pp. 207-8; Ozment, *Age of Reform*, pp. 405-6; Lindsay, *History of the Reformation*, 2: 519-20.

transubstantiation underlying those practices, while the Catholics found that doctrine indispensable; the Catholics could not accept any sweeping limits on the hierarchy's power, while the Protestants found that power intolerable.¹⁷ The inevitable result was that the colloquy broke down.

In Regensburg's aftermath both the Emperor and the Pope changed tactics; Charles launched a disastrous war against the Protestant princes of the Schmalkald League, while Rome moved to suppress the neo-Augustinian renewal movement, so-called 'Italian Evangelism', in which Contarini had played a leading role. Charles's war was no more successful than Regensburg at putting Germany's ecclesiastical Humpty Dumpty back together again, while Catholicism in Italy and elsewhere was permanently impoverished by the silencing of Contarini, Girolamo Cardinal Seripando, and their theological allies as well as the subsequent loss of Bernardino Ochino and Peter Martyr Vermigli to the Protestants. Thomas Lindsay notes the result: 'The concept of a Catholic Reformation disappeared; the idea of a Counter-Reformation took its place.'¹⁸

What about the scheme of justification outlined in Article 5 of the *Book of Regensburg*? Is Lane correct in seeing this as an example for evangelical and Catholic theologians hoping to reach agreement today? Most scholars have

thought not, arguing that Regensburg offered a theory of so-called 'double justification' which merely juxtaposed the Lutheran idea of forensic righteousness, righteousness that is imputed and therefore 'alien' to the one justified, with the traditional Catholic idea of restorative righteousness, righteousness that is infused and therefore ultimately inherent in the one justified.¹⁹

For example, Elisabeth Gleason describes Article 5 as 'a compromise between two basically incompatible positions'.²⁰ Hubert Jedin uses stronger language, claiming that it was crippled by 'the irreconcilable opposition of contradictory doctrines'.²¹ R. Scott Clark calls it 'a tertium quid' whose terminology was 'brilliantly and deliberately ambiguous'.²² Alister McGrath gives his discussion a moral slant, claiming that Article 5 'merely placed opposing views side by side, without reconciling, or even addressing, the underlying questions' and accusing the authors of 'a purely superficial engagement with the serious theological issues at stake'.²³

¹⁹ Ozment, *Age of Reform*, p. 406. Mark Seifrid, in "The Gift of Salvation": Its Failure to Address the Crux of Justification', *J Ev Th S* 42:4 (December 1999), pp. 679-88, claims to find 'double justification' in the documents of ECT as well as those of Regensburg.

²⁰ Gleason, *Gasparo Contarini*, p. 228.

²¹ Hubert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent*, trans. Ernest Graf, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson, 1963), 1: 391.

²² Clark, 'Regensburg and Regensburg II', ¶¶12 and 19.

²³ Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 248.

¹⁷ Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 52; Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', p. 208; Lindsay, *History of the Reformation*, 2: 519 and 521-3.

¹⁸ Lindsay, *History of the Reformation*, 2: 524.

This pejorative reading of Regensburg has a distinguished pedigree. Martin Luther himself claimed that the colloquy's theologians had simply sewn a new patch onto an old garment, 'so [that] they [Catholics] are right, and so are we'.²⁴ Certainly Melancthon and Bucer among the Protestants and Contarini among the Catholics were well known for their irenic approach to theology. Could it be that their eagerness to come to terms blinded them to the crazy-quilt nature of the document they drafted?

While this is possible, it is important to note that the young Calvin, with theological perspicuity second to none, saw Regensburg very differently, indeed very positively. In a letter to William Farel, his former colleague in Geneva, he commented: 'You will be astonished, I am sure, that our opponents have yielded so much.... Our friends have... retained... the substance of the true doctrine [of justification], so that nothing can be comprehended within it [Article 5] which is not to be found in our writings. You will desire, I know, a more distinct explication and statement of the doctrine.... However, if you consider with what kind of men we have to agree upon this doctrine, you will acknowledge that much has been accomplished.'²⁵

So which assessment is correct, Luther's or Calvin's? McGrath's or Lane's? The only way of deciding is to look at Regensburg's text. When we

do, we find that those characterizing Article 5 as nothing more than a juxtaposition of the Protestant and Catholic positions are seriously mistaken. While the quintessentially Protestant terminology describing justification as *sola fide*, 'by faith alone', is not required by the text, it is at least sanctioned.²⁶ More importantly, the doctrinal content summarised in that terminology is strongly affirmed: 'By... faith [the repentant sinner] is lifted up to God by the Holy Spirit, and so he receives the Holy Spirit, remission of sins, imputation of righteousness, and countless other gifts.'²⁷ 'So it is a reliable and sound doctrine that the sinner is justified by living and efficacious faith, for through it we are pleasing and acceptable to God on account of Christ.'²⁸ 'And thus by faith in Christ we are justified or reckoned to be righteous, that is, we are accepted through his merits and not on account of our own worthiness or works.'²⁹

26 *Book of Regensburg*, Article 5, 'Articula iustificatione hominis', trans. Lane, ¶10, in Lane, *Justification by Faith*, pp. 236-7, and Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', p. 224. Contrast the Council of Trent's *Decree on Justification*, canons 9, 11, 12, 14, and 29, and *Decree on the Sacraments*, canons 7 and 10, in *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. H.J. Schroeder (St. Louis, Mo.: B. Herder, 1941; reprint ed., Rockford, Ill.: Tan Books, 1978), pp. 43, 44, 45-6, 53, and 54.

27 Article 5, ¶3, in Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 234, and Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', p. 222.

28 Article 5, ¶4, in Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 234, and Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', p. 222.

29 Article 5, ¶5, in Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 235, and Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', p. 223.

24 Quoted in Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', p. 209; note Luther's allusion to Mt. 9:16.

25 Quoted in Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', p. 209.

It is true that Article 5 also affirms the divine infusion of love into the repentant sinner's soul, so that righteousness comes to inhere in that soul as well: '[Justification] happens to no one unless at the same time love is infused which heals the will so that the healed will may begin to fulfill the law, just as St. Augustine said.'³⁰ '[T]he one who is justified... has inherent righteousness, as the apostle says: "You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified, etc." [1 Cor. 6:11], which is why the holy fathers made use of the term "to be justified" even to mean "to receive inherent righteousness."³¹ A Protestant could easily see this latter affirmation as dangerous, since Catholics have traditionally used it as the basis for a system of merit that makes our salvation a matter both of God's grace and of our own works, so that we can even be said to 'truly merit' eternal life.³²

However, Article 5 flatly rejects such a line of argument. Each sentence affirming the inherent righteousness of the justified is followed by a sentence insisting that this righteousness is not the basis for their justification: 'Nevertheless it remains true that it is by... faith that we are justified... inasmuch

as [faith] appropriates the mercy and [the] righteousness that is imputed to us on account of Christ and his merit, not on account of the worthiness or perfection of the righteousness imparted to us in Christ.'³³ '[N]evertheless the faithful soul depends not on [inherent righteousness], but only on the righteousness of Christ given to us as a gift, without which there is and can be no righteousness at all.'³⁴

In short, it is hard to avoid Lane's conclusion that in Article 5 the possibility of our acceptance before God 'on the basis of inherent righteousness... is very carefully excluded'.³⁵ But this means that the traditional Catholic teaching on justification is excluded as well. In other words, the text does not teach 'double justification' in the common meaning of that term. It does teach that those God justifies can, will, and indeed must perform works he justifies as well, works he graciously accepts and even chooses to reward, but so does Calvin himself, not to mention the New Testament.³⁶ In other words, the doctrine set forth in it is no misbegotten hybrid. Instead, though it sometimes draws on Catholic terminology, the content is best seen as essen-

³⁰ Article 5, ¶4, in Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 234, and Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', p. 222.

³¹ Article 5, ¶5, in Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 235, and Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', p. 223.

³² Council of Trent, *Decree on Justification*, chap. 16, in *Council of Trent*, p. 41; cf. Council of Trent, *Decree on Justification*, canon 26, in *Council of Trent*, p. 45.

³³ Article 5, ¶4, in Lane, *Justification by Faith*, pp. 234-5, and Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', p. 222.

³⁴ Article 5, ¶5, in Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 235, and Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', p. 223.

³⁵ Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 59; see also Lindsay, *History of the Reformation*, 2: 520-21.

³⁶ Lane, *Justification by Faith*, pp. 26-39; Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.17.3-10 and 3.18.1-5; Mt. 25:31-46, etc.

tially Protestant.³⁷ This is not to say that Article 5 cannot be given a Catholic interpretation, but only that such an interpretation seems forced while the Protestant interpretation seems much more natural.³⁸

As further corroboration of the point, note that at least by implication the text also appears to take a Protestant view of the possibility of assurance of salvation, a subject which is closely related to justification. Article 5 insists that in spite of the soul's imperfect renewal and spiritual weakness in this life, 'those who truly repent may always hold with most certain faith that they are pleasing to God on account of Christ the mediator'.³⁹ Again this apparently excludes the traditional Catholic teaching on assurance.⁴⁰ In light of the above, it should come as no surprise that Eck had to be persuaded to sign Article 5, that Rome flatly rejected it, and that five years later, when Cardinal Seripando defended the same concept of justification at the Council of Trent, the Jesuit

Diego Lainez decried this as a 'Lutheran' (i.e., Protestant) innovation which threatened to undermine traditional Catholic doctrine and sacramental practice.⁴¹ It certainly did, just as it does today. This point will be developed further below.

2. Regensburg and ECT

Does Regensburg have any light to shed on more recent Protestant-Catholic dialogues, especially ECT? Like Lane, I think it does, although, unlike Lane, I think the light it sheds is mainly premonitory. The fact is that so far Colson, Neuhaus, and ECT's other participants have taken a path eerily like that taken long ago by Bucer, Contarini, and Regensburg's other participants.

As already noted, ECT's initial statement was strongly criticized by some evangelicals for its implicit marginalization of the doctrine of justification. Those involved with ECT responded by issuing a statement focusing on that doctrine, one taking a position that, like Regensburg's Article 5, seems to be in broad agreement with classic Protestantism. At its heart is a passage stressing that justification 'is not earned by any good works or merits of our own; it is entirely God's gift, conferred through the Father's sheer graciousness, out of the love that he bears us in his Son.... In justification, God, on the basis of Christ's right-

37 Lane, in *Justification by Faith*, describes Contarini's doctrine of justification as 'close to Luther's' (p. 48) and 'not so far removed from the Protestant doctrine' (p. 59).

38 Note the parallel to John Henry Newman's strained attempt at a Catholic reading of the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles. In Newman's famous *Tract XC* (1841), he argued that there was nothing in those Articles which could not be harmonized with the dogmatic teachings of the Council of Trent.

39 Article 5, ¶6, in Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 235, and Lane, 'Twofold Righteousness', p. 223.

40 Council of Trent, *Decree on Justification*, chap. 9 and canon 16, in *Council of Trent*, pp. 35 and 44.

41 Lindsay, *History of the Reformation*, 2: 521; Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 63; Ozment, *Age of Reform*, p. 406.

eousness alone, declares us to be no longer his rebellious enemies but his forgiven friends, and by virtue of his declaration it is so.⁴² As with Article 5, it might be possible to read this in a way that is consonant with Trent, but, as with Article 5, doing so would require a great deal of exegetical contortion. The most obvious way of reading both statements is that they affirm an understanding of justification seemingly rejected and even anathematized by Trent.⁴³

At Regensburg, Trent's anathemas did not matter because they were still five years in the future. For Catholic participants in ECT, though, as well as other Catholics who hope to further such dialogues, those anathemas matter very much.⁴⁴ The sixteen Catholics who signed 'The Gift of Salvation' could do so only because Catholic scholars' views of justification are no longer what they were in the sixteenth or even the nineteenth century.⁴⁵ Though one of those sixteen, Avery Dulles, has claimed that in ECT's work on this topic '[w]e were careful to follow Trent',⁴⁶ the fact is that over the course of the twentieth century, leading Catholic exegetes shifted from Trent's position to that of Luther when

dealing with pivotal texts such as Romans 3:28.⁴⁷

The bottom line is that, in Lane's words, 'most Roman Catholic theologians today regard it as legitimate despite Trent to accept a more or less Protestant doctrine of justification by faith'.⁴⁸ Previously the significance of this development might have been discounted, since in the Catholic Church it is not what theologians say but what the magisterium says that is decisive. However, recently the magisterium has begun to follow Catholic theologians' lead on this point, slowly backing away from Trent's robust endorsement of the role of merit in our justification, stressing instead the primacy of God's grace, and finally even accepting Luther's battle cry that justification is by faith alone.⁴⁹ If the magis-

47 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1993), p. 363.

48 Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 90. For discussions of recent Catholic thought on justification, see Lane, *Justification by Faith*, passim; and George Carey, 'Justification by Faith in Recent Roman Catholic Theology', in *The Great Acquittal: Justification by Faith and Current Christian Thought*, ed. Gavin Reid (Glasgow, Scotland: Fount Paperbacks, Collins, 1980), pp. 62-88.

49 'Annex to the Official Common Statement', in *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 45. For discussion of events leading up to the promulgation of this document by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, see John Reumann, 'Justification by Faith: The Lutheran-Catholic Convergence', *Chr Cent* 114:33 (22 October 1997), pp. 942-6; Richard E. Koenig, 'Ecumenical Impasse?', *Chr Cent* 115:27 (14 October 1998), pp. 926-7; and Douglas A. Sweeney, 'Taming the Reformation', *Chr T* 44:1 (10 January 2000), pp. 63-5.

42 'Gift of Salvation', ¶7.

43 Timothy George, 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together: A New Initiative', *Chr T* 41:14 (8 December 1997), pp. 34-5.

44 Karl Lehmann, Michael Root, and William Rusch, eds., *Justification by Faith: Do the Sixteenth-Century Condemnations Still Apply?* (New York: Continuum, 1997).

45 Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 226.

46 Quoted in Moore, 'Gift of Salvation', p. 21.

terium had said the same in 1517, perhaps there would have been no need for a battle. Surely this is a very positive development, isn't it?

But I would argue that it is not as positive as might at first seem to be the case. True, unlike Regensburg's Article 5, which was emphatically rejected by Rome, ECT's documents, including 'The Gift of Salvation', have met with Rome's approval. True, unlike Contarini and his cohorts, who rapidly lost their influence after Regensburg, the signers of ECT and other contemporary Catholic 'evangelicals' seem quite secure in their positions.⁵⁰ True, the hierarchy has even given its sanction to the use of terms like *sola fide* that were once exclusively Protestant. But what about those other issues that led to Regensburg's failure? What about the sacraments, especially the Mass and the doctrine of transubstantiation? What about the church's authority and authority structures, the episcopacy and especially the papacy? And what about an array of issues Regensburg did not attempt to address that have become extremely important for modern evangelicals, issues having to do with Scripture, tradition, and the magisterium? ECT has issued documents dealing with all of these, as has already been noted, but unfortunately the content of those documents is mainly a summary of the two parties' positions

along with a bit of healthy self- and mutual criticism.

For example, ECT's document on Scripture and tradition, 'Your Word Is Truth', states the evangelical position on 'the primacy and sufficiency of Scripture as the theological norm—the only infallible rule of faith and practice' that is traditionally summarized in the phrase *sola scriptura*; it notes both 'the widespread misunderstanding in [the evangelical] community that *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) means *nuda scriptura* (literally, Scriptura unclothed; i.e., denuded of and abstracted from its churchly context)' and the evangelical belief that 'in practice if not in theory, the Catholic understanding of the Magisterium, including infallibility, results in the Roman Catholic Church standing in judgment over Scripture, instead of vice versa'.⁵¹

On the other hand, this document states the Catholic position that 'the lived experience (tradition) of the community of faith through time includes the ministry of faithful interpreters [of Scripture] guided by the Holy Spirit', i.e., the magisterium; again it notes both 'the widespread misunderstanding in [the Catholic] community that tradition is an addition to Holy Scripture or a parallel and independent source of authoritative teaching' and the Catholic belief that 'Evangelicals have an inadequate appreciation of certain elements of truth that, from the earliest centuries, Christians have understood Christ to have intended for his Church'.⁵² The most recent of ECT's

50 Ralph Martin, 'Catholics, Evangelicals, and Catholic Evangelicals', in *Serving Our Generation: Evangelical Strategies for the Eighties*, ed. Waldron Scott (Colorado Springs, Colo.: World Evangelical Fellowship, 1980), pp. 249-65; Keith A. Fournier, *Evangelical Catholics* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1990).

51 'Your Word Is Truth', ¶¶13 and 21.

52 'Your Word Is Truth', ¶¶14 and 20.

documents, 'The Communion of Saints', contains similar statements concerning the sacraments and various aspects of worship.

My point is that the value of these documents lies mainly in their delineation of what 'good' evangelicals and 'good' Catholics should and should not believe and do. The genuine convergence they demonstrate in regard to justification as *sola fide*—and, it should be added, in regard to tradition as 'proper reflection of biblical teaching' rather than addition to that teaching⁵³—is based on the prior shift first of Catholic scholars and then of the Catholic magisterium toward the Protestant position on both of these points. When ECT attempts to go farther, it becomes an exercise not in the convergence ECT seeks but merely in clarification.⁵⁴

And what about justification? The shift of position on that point apparently made by the magisterium in its approval of ECT and similar ecumenical documents has yet to be reflected in the magisterium's other authoritative statements, most notably the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.⁵⁵ The *Catechism*'s discussion of justification is rather brief, set in a conventionally Augustinian framework, and mentions faith only five times, almost in pass-

ing.⁵⁶ Its discussion of merit is almost as long, and although the position staked out there is more mildly worded than that of Trent, its claim that God 'bestow[s] *true merit* [italics in original] on us' does echo Trent's language.⁵⁷ In all of this there is absolutely no sign of the Protestantizing shift noted above.

Is this an inconsistency? If it is, will consistency eventually be achieved by a more general Protestantizing, or perhaps by what might be called a re-Catholicizing, or will the inconsistency instead become a permanent fixture of the Catholic dogmatic landscape? Lane argues that at least in these recent ecumenical documents, Catholics have been able to adopt a more-or-less Protestant position on justification without actually becoming Protestants because 'for the inner life of the Catholic Church [this] doctrine [is] not very important'.⁵⁸ The implication is that inconsistency on such an allegedly minor point, especially in pursuit of the major goals of ecumenical reconciliation and ecclesiastical reunion, can easily be tolerated. This is evocative of Walt Whitman's lines: 'Do I contradict

53 'Your Word Is Truth', ¶15.

54 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together', ¶5.

55 D. A. Carson, 'Reflections on Salvation and Justification in the New Testament', *J Ev Th S* 40:4 (December 1997), pp. 581-608; analysing recent papal encyclicals as well as the *Catechism*, Carson sees little change from the position defined at Trent.

56 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), §§1987-1995 and 2018-2020. Faith is referred to in §§1991, 1992, and 1993; two of the five references are in a quotation of Romans 3:21-26. For further critical discussion of the *Catechism*'s treatment of justification, see David H. Linden, 'The Doctrine of Justification in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*' (unpublished paper); and Eveson, *The Great Exchange*, pp. 81-7.

57 *Catechism*, §§2006-2011 and 2025-2027.

58 Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 84; see also pp. 230-1.

myself?/ Very well then I contradict myself./ (I am large, I contain multitudes.)⁵⁹

But if Catholics see justification as relatively peripheral, they see the sacraments as absolutely central, and of course their sacramental theory and practice revolve around humanity's 'need to offer satisfaction for our sins'.⁶⁰ Again, is it possible to reconcile the traditional Catholic theology of the sacraments found in the *Catechism* with the new Catholic theology of justification found in recent ecumenical documents? I would argue that it is not. Bruce McCormack makes this point very forcefully:

[T]he idea of an immediate divine imputation renders superfluous the entire Catholic system of the priestly mediation of grace by the Church. To speak of a positive imputation of Christ's righteousness is to affirm the priesthood of all believers, the communion of the saints with its necessary protest against clericalism, the primacy of the preached word in worship, etc.⁶¹

Whether or not Rome has embraced imputation, there is absolutely no indication that it has embraced these ideas which McCormack rightly describes as imputation's consequences.⁶²

And what of so-called 'folk Catholi-

cism'? Having taught for eleven years in the Philippines, a country whose population of roughly 85 million includes close to 70 million nominal Catholics, I would be remiss if I failed to comment on this at least in passing. Practices such as reciting a special novena in order to persuade God to grant one's request, participating in a religious procession and especially carrying a sacred image or statue as part of that procession in order to accrue merit, and certainly engaging in public self-flagellation during Holy Week in order to atone for one's sins—all of these are deeply ingrained in Philippine culture, they are all endorsed or at least condoned by the Philippine Catholic hierarchy, and they all reflect a works-oriented understanding of righteousness that is poles apart from *sola fide*.⁶³ The Second Vatican Council left the door open to such practices, the *Catechism* affirms what it describes as their 'storehouse of values', conveying '[t]he Catholic wisdom of the people', and the national catechism issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines is even more enthusiastic.⁶⁴ Certainly the Philippine Catholic Church has not embraced imputation.

59 Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*, stanza 51.

60 Lane, *Justification by Faith*, p. 84.

61 Bruce L. McCormack, 'What's at Stake in Current Debates over Justification? The Crisis of Protestantism in the West', in *Justification*, eds. Husbands and Treier, p. 82.

62 Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Viking, 2003), p. 118.

63 George W. Harper, 'Philippine Tongues of Fire? Latin American Pentecostalism and the Future of Filipino Christianity', *Ev R Th* 26:2 (April 2002), pp. 156-8.

64 *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, §13, in *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing, 1996), pp. 123-4; *Catechism*, §§1674-1676; *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Manila, Philippines: ECCCE, Word and Life Publications, 1997), §§1535-1536 and 1579.

3. Conclusion

Some time ago, when I described this article's contents to another evangelical theologian, he expressed surprise at what he saw as my optimism regarding ECT. I responded that I am indeed optimistic about it as a vehicle to help evangelicals and Catholics understand their own and each other's positions better and establish a firmer foundation for cobelligerency in the West's ongoing culture wars. However, about ECT as an instrument of theological detente and possibly even entente I am just as pessimistic as my friend.

ECT and other recent ecumenical documents, like Regensburg's Article 5, demonstrate a genuine convergence in regard to the doctrine of justification. But this convergence is limited because so far the understanding of justification found in those documents

has been kept insulated from other aspects of Catholic faith and life.⁶⁵ It is not found in the magisterium's most authoritative summaries of Catholic dogma, it has had no effect on Catholic teaching in regard to the church or the sacraments, and common Catholic devotional practices continue as though justification were on the basis not of faith but of works. Returning to the question that forms this article's subtitle, have Colson and Neuhaus succeeded where Bucer and Contarini failed? No, they have not, at least not yet. Any hope for success in the enormous task they have set themselves will depend on Rome's willingness to follow through on the idea of justification it claims to have accepted, accepting that idea's implications as well. If there is indeed a 'tide' in the affairs of these men, it may not reach the flood for many years yet.

⁶⁵ There is precedent for this in Contarini, who, according to Matheson, 'while accepting a doctrine of imputed righteousness,... insulate[d] it off from the other doctrines' (*Cardinal Contarini at Regensburg*, p. 179).

The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis

A major achievement in Old Testament studies, this comprehensive five-volume dictionary is an invaluable study aid for all involved in the analysis and exposition of the Old Testament.

'When dictionaries and encyclopaedias are multiplying, NIDOTTE looks set to become the standard work in this field for all who respect the Bible.'

Alan Millard (Rankin Professor of Hebrew and Semitic Languages, University of Liverpool)

0-85364-834-4 (5 volume set) / £169.99

Paternoster, 9 Holdom Avenue, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK1 1QR, UK