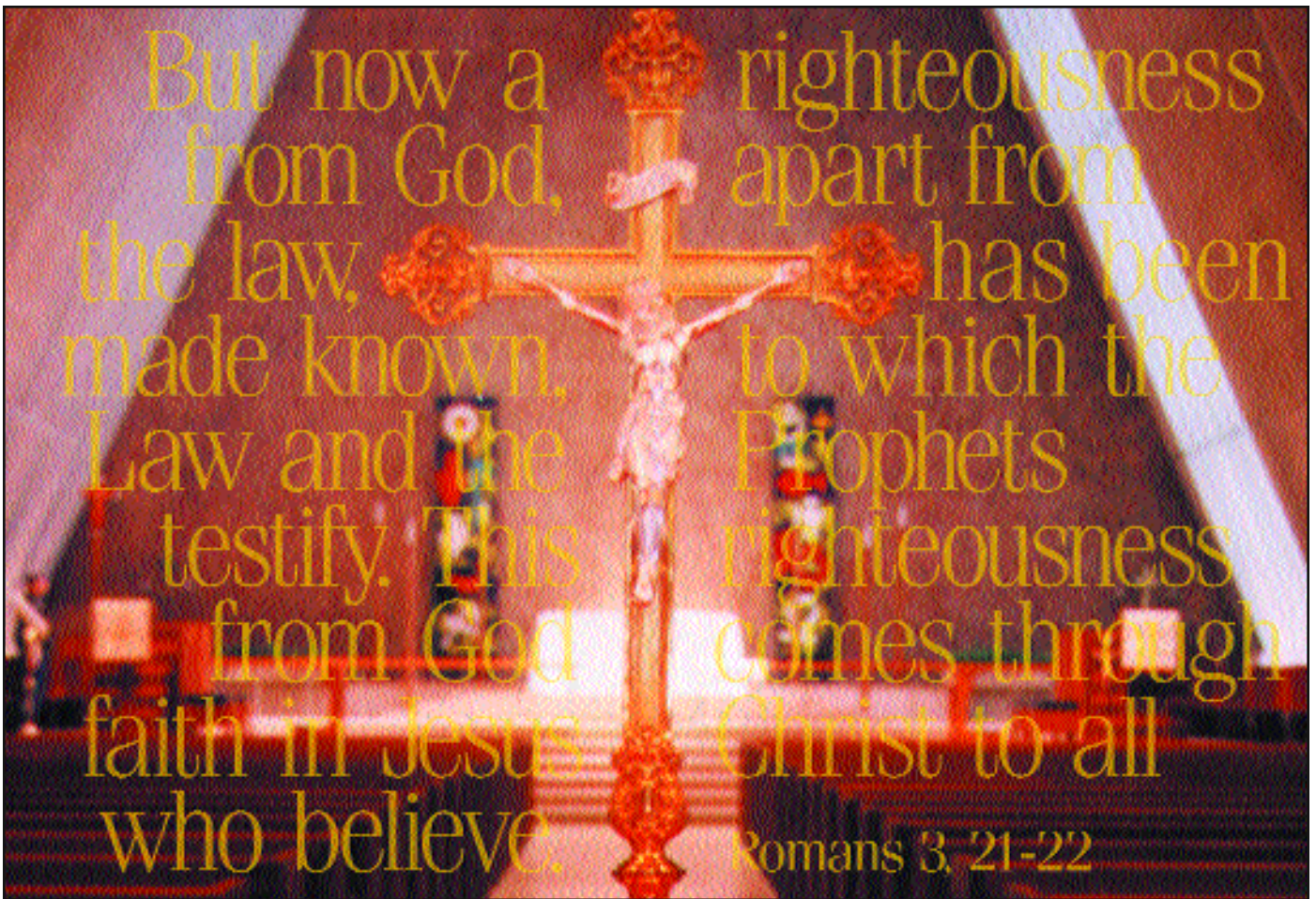


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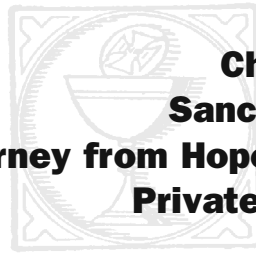
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P R E S S



Luther placed justification, the doctrine of God's free grace in Jesus Christ, at the heart of his theology. Man is saved not by anything he does or could hope to do, but by what God has done once and for all in Jesus Christ. Since the Reformation, God's accepting the death of Christ in place of the sinner's death has been the hallmark of Protestantism and more specifically of Lutheran churches. Salvation is sola gratia and sola fide. God justifies the sinner purely out of His grace through faith without works. Just as no one raises himself from the dead, so no one makes himself a Christian. God, who brought Jesus back from the dead, alone brings believers to Christ and declares them righteous. Lutherans hold that justification is monergistic, a Greek derivative, which means that a thing has only one cause. God alone converts Christians. He alone justifies believers. This principle also applies to sanctification. He alone makes us holy. God is the cause and content of our sanctification.

Traditional Roman Catholicism shares with Lutheranism a monergistic view of the general plan of salvation. God alone sent His Son into the flesh (incarnation) and sacrificed Him for the world's sin (atonement); however, the certainty of individual salvation is made dependent on the level of believers' personal holiness. Sanctification requires cooperating with divine grace in doing good works. At the center of this system is a doctrine of sanctification which holds that man cooperates with God for the certainty of salvation. There is no place for the total justification of sinful humanity as God's completed activity in Christ. Man cooperates with God in becoming holy and so sanctification is defined in ethical terms, which can be measured.

A majority of other Protestant denominations agree with Luther's monergistic doctrine of justification, but like Roman Catholics they see sanctification, the working of the Holy Spirit in Christian lives, in synergistic terms, another Greek derivative, which means that a thing has two or more causes. Believers are required to play a part in developing their personal holiness by living lives disciplined by the Law and by special ethical regulations set down by the church. Christians can and must cooperate with God's grace to increase the level of personal sanctification. Cooperation, a Latin derivative, is a synonym of synergism, and also means two or more things or persons working together. As a rule most Protestants agree with Luther that God alone justifies sinners and initiates the work of sanctification, but many differ in

holding that believers are responsible for completing it. They oppose the Roman Catholic view that pilgrimages, novenas, penance and masses as good works; however, they agree with Catholicism that man cooperates with God in his sanctification to attain personal holiness. God alone justifies, but sanctification is a combined divine-human activity, which even though God begins, each believer is obligated to complete. In this system, the Gospel, which alone creates faith, is replaced by the Law which instructs in moral requirements and warns against immorality. Justification by grace is seen as a past event and the present focus is on man cooperating with God to reach a complete sanctification.

Sanctification:

By Grace Alone

By Rev. Dr. David P. Scaer

Lutherans recognize that Christians as sinners are never immune to the Law's moral demands and its threats against sin, but in the strictest sense these warnings do not belong to Christian sanctification, the life believers live in Christ and in which Christ lives in them. In Roman Catholic and some Protestant systems, the Gospel brings the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, but is replaced by the Law which sets down directives for Christian life and warns and threatens the Christian as Christian. Law, and not the Gospel, becomes God's last and real word for the believer. So Christianity deteriorates into an implicit and eventually coarse legalism and abject moralism. Jesus faced this understanding of an ethically determined concept of sanctification among the Pharisees. Holiness was defined in terms of fulfilling ritual requirements. Sixteen centuries later for similar reasons, Luther raised his protest against medieval Catholicism.

At times, the New Testament uses the words sanctify and sanctification of God's entire activity of God in bringing about man's salvation. More specifically it refers to the work of the Holy Spirit to bring people to salvation, to keep them in the true faith and finally to raise them from the dead and give them eternal life (Small Catechism). All these works are also performed by the Father and the Son. Since God is not morally neutral and does not choose to be holy, but He is holy, all His works necessarily share in His holiness. The connection between the Holy Spirit and sanctification is seen in the Latin for the Third Person of the Trinity, Spiritus Sanctus. The Spirit who is holy in Himself makes believers holy, sanctifies them, by working faith in Christ in them and He becomes the sources of all their good works. Sanctification means that the Spirit permeates everything the Christian thinks, says and does. The Christian's personal holiness is as much a monergistic activity of the Holy Spirit as is his justification and conversion. The Spirit who alone creates faith is no less active after conversion than He was before.

Our Augsburg Confession recognizes those things which keep society and government together as good works, but strictly speaking, they do not belong to a Christian's personal holiness and have no necessary relationship to justification. Unbelievers can do these works as can Christians. The works of sanctification are, strictly speaking, only those which Christians can do. They find their source, content and form in Christ's offering of Himself for others and are given to Christians by the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son and who is sent into the world by the Son. Sanctification is a Trinitarian act. God dwells in the believer in order to accomplish what He wants. The petition of the Lord's Prayer that "God's will be done" is a prayer for our own sanctification.

The Spirit who assisted Christ during the days of humiliation to do good to others and to offer Himself as a sacrifice to His Father is the same Spirit whom Christ by His death, resurrection and ascension gave to His Christians. Jesus, in requiring that we love God with our whole being and our neighbors more than ourselves, was not giving us an impossible goal to awaken in us a morbid sense of sinfulness. Nor was He speaking in exaggerated terms to make a point, but He was describing His own life and the life of His Christians who live their lives and die in Him. Like Christ, Christians trust only in God and sacrifice themselves for others. Sanctification not only defines the Christian life, but in the first and real sense it defines Christ's life. Jesus Himself loved

God with everything which He was and had and made us His neighbors by loving us more than He loved His own life. Sanctification is first christological, that is, it is Christ's own life in God and then our life in Him. His life did not follow a system of codes, a pattern of regulations or list of moral demands and constraints and restraints. Just as Christ's life had to do with self-giving, our sanctification has to do with presenting our bodies as living sacrifices.

Our sanctification finds its closest point of contact in the earthly life of Jesus who gave Himself for us. Christ's giving of Himself is in turn an extension of Father's giving of His Son, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son." The sending of the Son as a sacrifice reflects the Father's eternal giving of Himself in begetting the Son, "begotten of His Father before all worlds." So the Christian doctrine of sanctification draws its substance from atonement, incarnation and even the mystery of the Holy Trinity itself. This self-giving of God and of Christ take form in the lives of believers and saints, especially those who are persecuted for the sake of the Gospel and martyred. On that account St. Paul sets himself and his companions in their sufferings as patterns of sanctification for those to whom they preached the Gospel.

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As magnificently monergistic as our sanctification is, that is, God works in us to create and confirm faith and to do good to others, we Christians are plagued by sin. In actual practice our sanctification is only a weak reflection of Christ's life. Good motives often turn into evil desires. Good works come to be valued as our own ethical accomplishments. Moral self-admiration and ethical self-absorption soon replace total reliance on God. The sanctified life constantly needs to be fully and only informed by Christ's life and death or our personal holiness will soon deteriorate into a degenerate legalism and barren moralism. God allows us Christians to be plagued by sin and a sense of moral inadequacy to force us to see the impossibility of a self-generated holiness. Our only hope is to look to Christ in whom alone we have a perfect and complete sanctification. "He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

The Rev. Dr. David P. Scaer is a professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.