



St. Paul and Ecumenism: Justification and All That¹

Paul D. Murray

Abstract

After some opening reflections on the place of justification in recent Pauline scholarship, the essential argument is that both Catholic and Lutheran readings of Paul on justification, regardless of their strict exegetical accuracy, serve to articulate key principles of Christian existence under grace which need not only to be conjoined or placed alongside each other but need to be allowed, in the spirit of Receptive Ecumenism, to inform each other. In the Catholic case the need is for an expansion in the direction of a more effective and genuinely Pauline emphasis on the dynamism of grace. There are three sections. First, a detailed exploration, presented in a number of subsections, of the historic theological background to the issues at stake in the ecumenical dialogues and the way in which these might be best conceptualised. Second, situated against this backdrop is a summary exposition of some of the key achievements of the 1999 affirmation of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church. Third, note is taken of some of the criticisms that have been made of the *Joint Declaration*, identifying the need for receptive ecumenical learning if its best intentions are to be realised. This generic need is illustrated in relation to one area of potential receptive Catholic learning from Lutheranism concerning the effective dynamism of grace and the character of Christian life as confident trust in this as a continually renewed event.

Keywords

Justification, *Joint Declaration*, Grace, Catholic, Lutheran, Receptive Ecumenism

¹ This is a developed version of the paper first presented to the annual conference of The Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain at Ushaw College, Durham, September 2009 on the theme 'The Legacy of St Paul'. I am grateful to all who commented on the paper at the time, particularly the respondent Prof. Eamon Duffy, and to a number of colleagues who advised at various points in the course of the preceding research: amongst Durham colleagues Lewis Ayres, John Barclay, Sibylle Rolf and Alec Ryrie; further afield Tom Brusck, David Carter, Jeffrey Gros, and Mark Woodruff.

Introduction

In an essay on the theme ‘St. Paul and Ecumenism’, why, one might ask, should justification automatically provide the focus? Whilst acknowledging both the traditional Protestant claim for the centrality of justification by faith to the entire gospel message² and the key role interpretation of the Pauline corpus has played in this assessment, in reality is it not but one amongst several soteriologically-weighted terms in St. Paul’s writings?³ And are there not other aspects of Pauline theology of equal if not greater contemporary ecumenical significance – for example, the image of the church as the Spirit-filled, charism-endowed body of Christ, combining order and mutual accountability? Anyway, has not the ‘new perspective on Paul’ simply blown the entire Reformation reading of justification and the problematic associated with it out of the water, calling for its fundamental re-evaluation as pertaining, in the first instance at least, to matters of communal identity and associated norms rather than personal soteriology?⁴

² E.g. ‘justification is the heart of the Christian message’, Ernst Käsemann, ‘Some Thoughts on the Theme “The Doctrine of Reconciliation in the New Testament”’, in J. M. Robinson (ed.), *The Future of Our Religious Past: Essays in Honour of Rudolf Bultmann*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 49–64 (p. 63); also Eberhard Jüngel, *Justification. The Heart of the Christian Faith: A Theological Study with an Ecumenical Purpose*, Jeffrey F. Cayzer (trans.), (Edinburgh & New York: T & T Clark, 2001); also Bruce L. McCormack, ‘What’s at Stake in Current Debates over Justification?’, in Mark Husbans and Daniel J. Treier (eds.), *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debates*, (Downers Grove, Ill/Leicester: InterVarsity Press/Apollos, 2004), pp. 81–117.

³ For example, in an influential paper that he contributed to the US Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue on justification, Joseph Fitzmyer identified ten other images employed by St. Paul alongside that of justification to articulate the significance of God’s action in Jesus: salvation, expiation, redemption, reconciliation, adoption, sanctification, freedom, transformation, glorification and new creation. See Fitzmyer, ‘The Biblical Basis of Justification by Faith: Comments on the Essay of Professor Reumann’, in John Reumann, with responses by Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Jerome D. Quinn, “*Righteousness*” in the *New Testament: “Justification” in the United States Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue*, (Philadelphia & Ramsey, N.J.: Fortress & Paulist, 1982), pp. 193–227; also ‘Justification by Faith and “Righteousness” in the New Testament’, in H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy and Joseph A. Burgess (eds.), *Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), pp. 77–81 (p. 81); compare Fitzmyer, *Paul and His Theology: A Brief Sketch*, 2nd edn., (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989), pp. 59–71 and ‘Reconciliation in Pauline Theology’, in *To Advance the Gospel: New Testament Studies*, 2nd edn., (Grand Rapids, Michigan & Livonia, MI: Dove, 1998), pp. 162–85 (pp. 170–5). For the incorporation of Fitzmyer’s analysis into the 1985 US Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue statement itself, see ‘Justification by Faith (Common Statement)’, §132 in Anderson, Murphy and Burgess (eds.), *Justification by Faith*, pp. 13–74 (p. 61).

⁴ See James D. G. Dunn, ‘The New Perspective on Paul’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 65 (1983), pp. 95–122, reprinted in Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. edn., (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008 [2005]), pp. 99–120; also ‘The New Perspective: Whence, What and Whither?’, in *The New Perspective on Paul*, pp. 1–97. Dunn coined the term ‘the new perspective on Paul’

All good questions to be sure. In favour nevertheless of focussing on justification is the fact that the Reformation, at least in its Lutheran form, was theologically centred in and propelled by a fresh reading of St. Paul on justification in explicit contrast to the Augustinian-Thomistic reading that preceded it and its implications for Christian existence and the role of the penitential system within it.⁵ Regardless of whether one comes, as proponents of the ‘new perspective’ tend to do, to view both Augustinian and Lutheran readings of St. Paul as historically erroneous on account of an anachronistic focus on the individual subject, it is indisputable that between them these

to refer to the paradigm shift in Pauline interpretation variously associated with himself, E. P. Sanders and N. T. Wright, with the earlier, somewhat different yet nevertheless significant work of Krister Stendahl also lying in the background. For Sanders, see *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); also *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983). For Wright, see ‘The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith’, *Tyndale Bulletin*, 29 (1978), pp. 61–88; and for his full-length treatment of the subject, exploring a somewhat independent line to that of Sanders and Dunn, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); also, *Paul, Fresh Perspectives*, (London: SPCK, 2005); and most recently, engaging a number of his critics specifically in relation to his interpretation of justification, *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision*, (London: SPCK, 2009). For Stendahl, see ‘The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 56 (1963), pp. 199–215; and *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

⁵ In a helpful essay, for reference to which I am grateful to Alec Ryrie, Alister E. McGrath gives qualified approval to the controversial 1975 thesis of Steven E. Ozment to the effect that ‘the popular appeal of Protestantism derived from its doctrine of justification by faith, which offered relief from the psychological pressure of the late medieval Catholic penitential system and an associated “semi-Pelagian” doctrine of justification.’ McGrath, ‘Justification and the Reformation: The Significance of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith to Sixteenth Century Urban Communities’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 81 (1990), pp. 5–19 (p. 7), refers to Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975). Daphne Hampson shares something of this analysis in her dogged maintenance of the incommensurability and irreconcilability of the Catholic and Lutheran systems, see *Christian Contradictions: The Structures of Lutheran and Catholic Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2001). In essence McGrath accepts the criticisms of Ozment which argue for the relatively greater significance, at least in relation to the reforming agendas of Bucer, Zwingli and Calvin, of the widespread appeal of social, institutional and ecclesial reforming concerns, in turn driven by the key principle of *sola scriptura*, over Luther’s more subjective and more directly spiritual-cum-soteriological focus (pp. 12–17). Accepting this, McGrath maintains that the evidence nevertheless still supports the thesis that in the circles around Luther and Wittenberg at least, a significant, likely primary, factor in promoting support for reform lay in the attraction Luther’s thinking held for ‘a religious public weary of the burdens and obligations of late medieval religion, and anxious to be relieved of its oppression.’ (p. 11). Similarly, McGrath holds this to have likely continued as a contributory, if secondary, factor in the broader spread of reforming agendas (p. 15). For McGrath’s own magisterial full-length analysis of the history of justification, see *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 2nd edn., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998 [1986]). For a highly influential counter-blast to any over-easy assumptions about the widespread unpopularity and experienced oppressiveness of late medieval piety in relation to the English context, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

readings, together with the differing one again of John Calvin, have shaped, divided and demarcated the greater part of western Christian self-understanding.

As such, it is a matter of tremendous significance, if not incredulity in some quarters, that a number of long-term bilateral dialogue processes have led the respective partner traditions to being able formally to reconcile their historic differences in this regard. Writing from the UK context, closest to home here is the 1987 agreed statement *Salvation and the Church* deriving from the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission.⁶ Of undoubted greater international and historical significance, however, has been the long process of national and international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues that culminated in the formal endorsement in 1999 of a *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)*.⁷

Remarkably, having articulated both what the respective traditions can now say jointly in regard to justification and the particular but, it is claimed, non-contradictory emphases to which each tradition also holds, the *JDDJ* concludes that the degree of consensus achieved – generally referred to in positively disposed ecumenical circles as a virtuous example of ‘differentiated consensus’ but by others as a ‘botch’ or ‘fudge’⁸ – is such as to mean that the mutual condemnations of the Reformation era no longer apply to the respective Lutheran and Roman Catholic teachings as expressed in

⁶ ARCIC II, *Salvation and the Church: An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission*, (London: Church House and Catholic Truth Society, 1987).

⁷ See Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, (Grand Rapids, MI and London: Eerdmans and CTS, 2000/2001), available at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html. This document is here frequently subsequently referred to as *JDDJ*. For the *Official Common Statement* and the associated *Annex to the Official Common Statement*, see respectively: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-official-statement_en.html; and http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-annex_en.html. For the work of the hugely significant United States Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, see Anderson, Murphy and Burgess (eds.), *Justification by Faith*, cited in n. 3 here.

⁸ For the notion of ‘differentiated consensus’, of which Harding Meyer was the originator, see Meyer, ‘Die Prägung einer Formel: Ursprung und Intention’, in Harald Wagner (ed.), *Einheit aber Wie? Zur Tragfähigkeit der ökumenischen Formels ‘differenzierten Konsens’*, (Freiburg: Herder, 2000), pp. 36–58; also ‘Differentiated Participation: The Possibility of Protestant Sharing in the Historic Office of Bishop’, *Ecumenical Trends*, 34 (2005), pp. 10–14. For its application to the *JDDJ*, see William G. Rusch, ‘The International Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue – An Example of Ecclesial Learning and Ecumenical Reception’, in Paul D. Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, (Oxford: OUP, 2008), pp. 149–59. For less positive appraisal, see Aidan Nichols, O.P., ‘The Lutheran-Catholic Agreement on Justification: Botch or Breakthrough?’, *New Blackfriars*, 82 (2001), pp. 375–86; and for a Lutheran judging of it as a fudge, see Jonathan Nauman, ‘But Is it Justified?’, *New Directions*, 3.53 (1999), pp. 4–6, cited in Nichols, *ibid.*, p. 378; compare Eberhard Jüngel,

JDDJ (§§40–41).⁹ Quite apart from the joint signing itself, that it took place on 31st October, a day set aside as ‘Reformation Day’ in the Protestant calendar, in the city of Augsburg, home of the Augsburg Confession, one of the twin pillars of Lutheran orthodoxy, is a matter of great symbolic significance.¹⁰ “Here”, it is being claimed, “is resolution to one of the key historic wounds of western Christianity.”

Leaving aside for the moment closer analysis of this supposed achievement and some of the criticisms that have been raised in its regard, it is further notable that this apparent resolving of these historically opposed readings of St. Paul was itself made possible by a further round of Pauline reading; this time by scholars across the traditions with a shared commitment to the historical-critical method.¹¹ That is, whatever the changes in method and reading, justification continues to focus the relationship between Paul and western Christianity. For its own part and somewhat ironically, even the ‘new perspective on Paul’ as variously promoted by Dunn, Sanders and Wright reinforces this.

In the latter regard, the point is that for all their concern to free Pauline interpretation from the concerns of the ‘introspective conscience of the West’ in favour of a frame set by Jewish covenantal understanding and practice – or for Wright and, to some extent, Dunn, to resituate the former within the latter¹² – further fresh readings

‘On the Doctrine of Justification’, *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 1 (1999), pp. 24–52; also *id.*, *Justification. The Heart of the Christian Faith*, *op. cit.*

⁹ In this specific regard, as in many others, the *JDDJ* built upon and assumed work previously pursued in various preceding national and international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue processes, particularly here the five-year study conducted from 1981–1985 by the Ecumenical Study Group of Protestant and Catholic Theologians in Germany on behalf of the Joint Ecumenical Commission that was established following the November 1980 visit of John Paul II to Germany. For the formal texts comprising the study, see Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg (eds.), *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?*, Margaret Kohl (trans.), (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990). For a collection of essays stimulated by and, in some cases, contributing to this study, see Karl Lehmann, Michael Root and William G. Rusch (eds.), *Justification by Faith: Do the Sixteenth-Century Condemnations Still Apply?*, (New York: Continuum, 1999).

¹⁰ See Nichols, ‘The Lutheran-Catholic Agreement on Justification’, *op. cit.*, pp. 375–7.

¹¹ E.g., ‘It is the common use of this method [the historical-critical] by Catholic and Lutheran members of the dialogue which lies at the root of the biblical section of the statement on “Justification by Faith” presented in this volume’, Fitzmyer, ‘Justification by Faith and “Righteousness” in the New Testament’, in Anderson, Murphy & Burgess (eds.), *Justification by Faith*, *op. cit.*, p. 78. For more extended treatment of this theme, see David E. Aune (ed.), *Rereading Paul Together: Protestant and Catholic Perspectives on Justification*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), pp. 77–94 (p. 83). I am grateful to Jeffrey Gros for drawing my attention to this remarkably useful volume.

¹² See Wright, *Justification*, *op. cit.*; compare Dunn, ‘Paul and Justification by Faith’, in R. N. Longenecker (ed.), *The Road from Damascus: The Impact of Paul’s Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 85–101, reprinted in *The New Perspective on Paul*, pp. 367–80; also *The Theology of Paul the*

precisely of Paul's understanding of justification lie at the heart of these new perspectives. With this, whilst the focus of attention might in the first instance move away from immediate intra-Christian ecumenical concerns, matters of profound ecumenical significance more broadly construed continue to figure here: matters central to Jewish-Christian relations and the historic 'Parting of the Ways', the first great rupture in the church.¹³ Given this, all the more surprising is the lack of any real engagement with the 'new perspective on Paul' within the relevant ecumenical literature.¹⁴

So Paul, ecumenism and justification it is. The essay is in three sections. First is a detailed exploration, presented in a number of subsections, of the historic theological background to the issues at stake in the ecumenical dialogues and the way in which these might be best conceptualised. Second, situated against this backdrop is a summary exposition of some of the key achievements of the 1999 *JDDJ*. Third, note is taken of some of the criticisms that have been made of the *JDDJ*, identifying the need for receptive ecumenical learning if its best intentions are to be realised and illustrating this generic need in relation to one area of potential receptive Catholic learning from Lutheranism concerning the effective dynamism of grace and the character of Christian life as confident trust in this as a continually renewed event. The essential argument of the essay is that both Catholic and Lutheran readings of Paul on justification, regardless of their strict exegetical accuracy, serve to articulate key principles of Christian existence under grace which need not only to be conjoined or placed alongside each other but to be allowed to inform each other; in the Catholic case by being expanded in the direction of a more effective and genuinely Pauline emphasis on the dynamism of grace.

From opposition to 'differentiated consensus': reading Paul in western tradition

i) the Augustinian-Thomistic synthesis

To understand the significance of documents such as ARCIC II's *Salvation and the Church* or the *JDDJ* and the reconciled readings

Apostle, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), §14, particularly §14.7, pp. 371–9; and 'The New Perspective: Whence, What and Whither?', in *The New Perspective on Paul*, pp. 17–23.

¹³ See Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, (London: SCM, 1991).

¹⁴ A notable exception is David E. Aune, 'Recent Readings of Paul Relating to Justification by Faith', in Aune (ed.), *Rereading Paul Together*, pp. 188–245, esp. pp. 205–219 & 227–31; also pp. 192, 224, 242; also Richard E. DeMaris, 'Can We Reread Paul Together Any Longer? Joseph A. Fitzmyer's View of Pauline Justification in Context', in *ibid.*, pp. 95–107 (pp. 102–3).

of Paul they promote, we need first to understand how Luther, or at least confessional Lutheranism as expressed in the Augsburg Confession and the Book of Concord, differed from the previously dominant western reading. Here, whilst recognising that it is a lazy habit of mind that would hold St. Augustine responsible for all perceived problems with the western tradition, we must nevertheless start our story with Augustine, for his understanding of *iustificare* (the Latin Vulgate translation of the Greek ‘δικαιουν’) as ‘to make just/righteous’ set the West on a trajectory along which justification was understood in terms of achieved Christian regeneration and effectively equated with the secure, enduring state of grace constituted by the results of sanctification.¹⁵ As such, God’s making the believer just through faith and by grace was understood as a process of moral and spiritual transformation actually realised in the believer’s life, which if not complete in this order might be brought to completion through a period of purgation in the next.¹⁶

For Augustine, this process of regeneration was a movement through grace from disordered self-love and excessive love of creatures to love of all things for the sake of God, culminating in coming to share in the perfect love that God is.¹⁷ As a matter of the reordering of will and desire, justification – to anticipate later debates – simply cannot be conceived either as a matter of the believer’s mere knowledge or belief, or of God’s forgiving intent alone.¹⁸ For Augustine, it is only a faith that is ‘active through love’ (Gal. 5:6) that justifies.¹⁹ Equally, Augustine was quite clear that this making just is a process entirely initiated and sustained by grace; a conviction underpinned by the accompanying conviction, sharpened in face of

¹⁵ See McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, pp. 4–16, 29–32, 40–3.

¹⁶ Compare ‘The medieval statements concerning justification demonstrate that justification is universally understood to involve a real change in its object, so that regeneration is subsumed under justification’, McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 48.

¹⁷ See David M. Rylaarsdam, ‘Interpretations of Paul in the Early Church’, in Aune (ed.), *Rereading Paul Together*, pp. 147–68, particularly p. 163 where he follows A. M. La Bonnardière’s 1954 study in identifying Augustine’s most cited Pauline text as Rom 5:5: ‘Love for God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us’. See also Randall C. Zachman, ‘Medieval and Reformation Readings of Paul’, in Aune (ed.), pp. 169–87 (pp. 170–1).

¹⁸ Compare ‘Augustine develops a history of redemptive grace, a process of justification, that stretches . . . to glorification, the reaching of final perfection in the eschatological city. This history of a person under grace seems equivalent to Augustine’s notion of justification, the gracious process by which God restores human beings to justice, that is, to giving to God and neighbour the love that is their due (Matt. 22: 40), to loving God and neighbour for the sake of God.’ Rylaarsdam, ‘Interpretations of Paul in the Early Church’, p. 164. Also, ‘The *telos* of the saving work of Christ is attained only when the Spirit gives us the ability to will and do what the law requires, so that we might fulfill the law and thereby be made righteous’, Zachman, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

¹⁹ Rylaarsdam, p. 163; see also Zachman, pp. 173, 174; McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, pp. 29–30.

Pelagius, that the human will is weakened by the inherited lustful effects of original sin, compounded by personal sin, and so lacks the ability to desire and choose properly.²⁰ Nevertheless, he also viewed it simultaneously as a process in which responsible human agency is fully involved rather than in any way by-passed.²¹ Far from it, Augustine spoke of such grace-moved striving and progress as being meritorious; the appropriate and necessary means of obtaining God's promised reward. Nevertheless, on account of the acknowledged primacy of grace throughout, he was also able to say, '... when God crowns our merits, he only crowns his own gifts'.²² Christian existence is thus at one and the same time a life impelled by and held throughout in grace and a responsibility for which the believer is being made free but from which she *may* fall disastrously and in which she certainly *will* invariably fail.²³ In every sense, Christian life is a life in tension.

²⁰ See 'By yourself you could only lose yourself. You do not know how to find yourself unless the one who made you searches for you.' 'Sermon 13. At the Shrine of Saint Cyprian, 27th May 418', in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century. Part III – Sermons*, vol. 1: *Sermons 1–19*, Edmund Hill, OP (trans.), John E. Rotelle, OSA (ed.), (New York: New City Press, 1990), pp. 308–15 (p. 310); also 'For nothing in you pleases God except what you have from God; what you have from yourself displeases God.' *ibid.*, p. 309; 'Remove yourself, remove, I repeat, yourself from yourself; you just get in your own way. If it's you that are building yourself, it's a ruin you're building', 'Sermon 169. On the Words of the Apostle Paul, Philippians 3:3–16... Against the Pelagians, 416', in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century. Part III – Sermons*, vol. 5: *Sermons 148–183*, Hill (trans.), Rotelle (ed.), (New York: New City Press, 1992), pp. 222–37 (p. 229).

²¹ See "'So if it is God who works in us, why does it say *Work out your own salvation?*" Because he works in us in such a way that we too are enabled to work ourselves... "But it is my will that is good," he says. I grant you it's yours. But who was it who gave you even that, who stirred it up in you? Don't just listen to me; ask the apostle: *For it is God*, he says, *who works in you both to will – works in you both to will – and to work with a good will* (Phil 2:13)', 'Sermon 13', *op. cit.*, p. 309; also 'But God made you without you... So while he made you without you, he doesn't justify you without you.' 'Sermon 169', *op. cit.*, p. 231. Compare, 'In the Augustinian reading of Paul, the focus is not so much on what Christ himself does on our behalf to free us from sin but rather the way Christ brings the Spirit, which alone gives us the ability to fulfill the law of love', Zachman, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

²² 'Letter 194' (§19), in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century. Part II – Letters*, vol. 3: *Letters 156–210*, Roland Teske, S.J. (trans.), Boniface Ramsey (ed.), (New York: New City Press, 2004), pp. 287–308 (p. 296). Compare, 'However, the hope that we will reap what we sow unto eternal life, and will win the crown of eternal life in the race we are running, must always be tempered by the awareness that all this is due to the grace of God within us, and not due to our own power and ability, lest we once again become proud', Zachman, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

²³ Compare 'If the grace of God means the gift of love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, then the work of salvation must be entirely due to the work of God within us, both to will and to work the love that is the fulfilling of the law. However, since we have been given the ability to fulfill the law of God by grace, though with fear and trembling, as we are aware of the weakness that remains even in those given the gift of love for God', Zachman, pp. 175–6.

This basic vision of the coincidence of divine and human agency in the grace-filled, grace-impelled journey of conversion into the life of God, a journey that *is* the making just of the Christian, lies also at the heart of the writings of St. Thomas' who in this regard follows Augustine closely. For Aquinas too, as he wrote in commentary on Ephesians 2:8, 'to be saved is the same as to be justified'.²⁴ Faith is an unmerited gift of God and 'whatever good we possess is not from ourselves but from the action of God.'²⁵ As with Augustine, far from viewing this as by-passing human agency, grace precisely involves free will and human agency in its movement. Picking up the final clause of Eph. 2: 10, 'that we should walk in them', he comments:

Lest anyone imagine that good works are prepared for us by God in such a way that we do not cooperate in their realization through our free will, he annexes 'that we should walk in them', as though he said: thus has he prepared them for us, that we might perform them for ourselves through our free will.²⁶

Again we find here no zero-sum game of *either* divine action *or* human action, nor any multiplication of comparable and potentially competitive agencies alongside each other – divine action *plus* human action – but a situating and energising of human action within divine action through the right ordering of desire and will. All of this is worked out in lengthy technical detail in the *Summa Theologiae* in terms of the prevenience and utter gratuity of grace, the distinction and relationship between primary and secondary causation and, on this basis, the appropriate "cooperation" of divine and human agency – with "cooperation" requiring here to be properly understood in the strictest, formal sense of simultaneity of act rather than the more colloquial sense of "assistance rendered".²⁷ Operative grace not

²⁴ See *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians by St Thomas Aquinas*, Matthew L. Lamb (trans.), (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1966), p. 95, cited in Daniel A. Keating, 'Justification, Sanctification and Divinization in Thomas Aquinas', in Thomas Weinandy, Daniel Keating and John Yocum (eds.), *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, (London & New York: T & T Clark Ltd, 2004), pp. 139–58 (p. 142).

²⁵ Aquinas, commenting on Eph 2:10, in Lamb (trans.), p. 97, cited in Keating, p. 142.

²⁶ In Lamb (trans.), p. 98, cited in Keating, p. 143.

²⁷ See, for example, 'It is in this sense that the New Law is inward to man; it not only points out to him what he should do, but assists him actually to do it', *Summa Theologiae* 1a2æ.106.1, as in *Summa Theologiae* vol. 30. *The Gospel of Grace*, Cornelius Ernst, OP (ed.), (London/New York: Eyre & Spottiswoode/McGraw-Hill Book Co, 1972), p. 7. All subsequent references to this edition in the form, for example, ST 1a2æ.106.1 (vol. 30, p. 7); also 'Now it is clear that just as all physical movements are derived from the movement of the heavenly body as primary physical mover, so all movements, both physical and spiritual, are derived from what is the primary mover simply speaking, which is God', ST 1a2æ.109.1 (vol. 30, p. 71); 'By his will man does perform works meriting eternal life; but... for this there is need that man's will should be prepared by God through grace.' ST 1a2æ.109.5 (vol. 30, p. 87); 'Man's turning to God does indeed take place by his free decision; and in this sense Man is enjoined to turn himself to God.'

only moves us to act, it is given to us in such a way that our action is both God's action, viewed in one way, but also genuinely ours: God moves our will so it is genuinely our will that is enacted.²⁸ Commenting on Romans 9:14–18, he first notes that 'always an action is attributed more to the principal agent than to a secondary agent' and provides the example, 'consider . . . we say that an axe does not make the chest, but the artificer through the axe' before stating:

God moves all things, but by diverse modes, insofar as, namely, whatever thing is moved by God [is] according to the mode of its nature. And thus man is moved by God for willing and for running through the mode of free will. Thus, therefore, to will and to run is man's, as of one acting freely: however, it is not of a person as the one moving chiefly, but of God.²⁹

The consequent grace-impelled process of regeneration might be thought of as a dual movement of conversion: of movement away from sin and penitence for the lasting, debilitating effects on sin on the one hand and movement towards God through growth in virtue and active love on the other.³⁰

ii) Catholic theology in practice

Of course, theory can be one thing and practice another. For all its careful situating of human responsibility within divine initiative, a weakness in the Augustinian-Thomistic synthesis, particularly so when received in debased coinage, is that it can appear in practice to be saying: "Grace has been given . . . you have it . . . now get on with the task of putting it work" in such a fashion as effectively throws the believer back on currently experienced resources as the

But the free decision can only be turned to God when God turns it to himself, as it says in *Jeremiah*, *Turn me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God* [Jer 31:18], and in *Lamentations*, *Turn us, O Lord, to thee, and we shall be turned* [Lamentations 5:21], *ST 1a2æ.109.6* (vol. 30, p. 91).

²⁸ See 'Augustine says, *By his cooperation God perfects in us what he initiates by his operation; since by his operation he initiates our willing who, by his cooperation with us who will, perfects us. . . .* Augustine goes on, *It is by his operation that we will; but once we will, it is by his cooperation with us that we bring our action to completion*', *ST 1a2æ.111.2* (vol. 30, pp. 129–131), citing Augustine, *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio* §17 (PL 44, 901); also 'God does not justify us without us, since while we are being justified, we consent to God's justice by a movement of free choice. But that movement is not the cause but the effect of grace. Thus the whole operation belongs to grace', *ST 1a2æ.111.2* (vol. 30, p. 131).

²⁹ *Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, Steven Boguslawski (trans.), (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press), forthcoming, cited in Keating, p. 146; compare *ST 1a2æ.109.2* (vol. 30, p. 75); also *ST 1a2æ.111.2* (vol. 30, p. 129).

³⁰ For Thomas as following Augustine also in viewing justifying faith in terms of faith formed by love, see *ST 1a2æ.114.5* (vol. 30, pp. 212–13).

limit of what is available. Fully theorised acknowledgement may well be made of the prior initiative of grace but, if the role of the believer is to act in responsible cooperation with the movement of conversion that this grace, already given, is understood to support, then it is all too easy for the actual experience of this life supposedly lived under and within grace to become little different to a striving on the basis of one's currently available inadequate resources. That is, the theory may well avoid all hint of Pelagian or semi-Pelagian self-perfecting whilst too easily supporting, or at least floating somewhat detached from, a lived practice shot through with such implicit assumptions.

Such a tendency would be exacerbated all the more were the theory itself to slip away from the subtle integration of human initiative within divine initiative that we have seen in the Augustinian-Thomistic synthesis and devolve into a sense of differing agencies, human and divine, working alongside, together or over against each other; a significant step towards which scenario might be thought to have been taken in Duns Scotus' claim that the first step towards love of God can be taken on the basis of unaided natural human reason.³¹

Where the spiritually strong might relish the challenge implied by the situation described, the spiritually sensitive and those who know themselves to lack the necessary resources to progress in the way of conversion find themselves in a state of constant anxiety and open, therefore, to the possibility of other secondary means of satisfying the goal of working towards favourable judgement from God. Here practices with a sound theory behind them, which are in themselves good and potentially valid means of living penitence and so turning away from sin and its effects – practices such as fasting, almsgiving, prayer exercises, asceticism, pilgrimages, sacramental reception, charitable works – are vulnerable to becoming debased into means by which to purchase or earn vicariously that which cannot be lived actually; a danger to which all financial works of mercy and monetary expressions of piety are particularly exposed.

iii) Luther's fresh reading

In this context, Luther's challenge to the erstwhile western system was driven by a fresh reading of St. Paul which, going behind the Latin texts of the Vulgate and drawing on recent philological studies of the Greek texts of the New Testament and the Hebrew texts of the Old Testament, was illuminated by the discovery that 'δικαιω' and the Hebrew word it translates in the LXX, 'hasdîq', are rooted in courtroom imagery of acquittal and so more faithfully rendered as

³¹ See *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, Alan B. Wolter (trans.), (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1998); compare Zachman, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

‘to pronounce just/righteous’ or ‘declare just/righteous’ than ‘make just/righteous’.

For Luther, the significance of this was that it enabled him to see, in a way he did not find clearly maintained and performed in the prevailing system – indeed, quite the contrary – that God’s gracious, forgiving approach to the believer is an entirely unmerited act of grace alone. As this became classically expressed in the foundational texts of Lutheran orthodoxy, the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Formula of Concord*, God justifies believers – finds in their favour – not as the end-point of a successful process of self-implicating regeneration but whilst they are still sinners; people still labouring under the debilitating effects of concupiscence and recurrently succumbing to what in Catholic terminology would be regarded as venial sins (and hence, it should be noted, not sin in the proper sense in Catholic understanding). In place of the penitential system and a process of lived regeneration, the mechanism for justification was held to consist in God imputing the righteousness of Christ to the believer; counting it as applying against the believer’s account.

The famous *simul iustus et peccator* applies in two senses. On the one hand it applies in the strong dialectical sense that when viewed as included within, or covered over by, the righteousness of Christ the believer is totally just (i.e. forgiven and accepted by God), whereas when viewed in his/her own right, abstracted from Christ as it were, the believer is still totally at odds with God. On the other hand it applies in the more prosaic sense of the believer in this order being both forgiven and accepted by God but not yet freed from all sin and brought to full lived conformity with God’s righteousness in Christ.³² As this suggests, whilst Lutheranism did not discount all talk of growth in holiness of life and conformity to Christ, it certainly avoided – at least as classically articulated and received and contrary to subsequent Calvinist teaching – placing any systematic emphasis upon it, concerned that doing so would lock the believer back into anxiety-making, works-focussed, penitential-justifying assumptions regarding the need for programmed regeneration.

So here we have the classical Reformation stand-off, indeed utter mutual incomprehension, between Lutheranism and Catholicism in relation to justification. Where the Lutheran heard justification as “the forgiving acceptance of God that initiates distinctively Christian existence”, the Catholic heard it as “the successful completion of the grace-impelled, grace-carried process of regeneration unto sanctification that draws the recipient into the very life of God.” Consequently,

³² Compare Michael Root, ‘Continuing the Conversation: Deeper Agreement on Justification as Criterion and on the Christian as *simul iustus et peccator*’, in Wayne C. Stumme (ed.), *The Gospel of Justification in Christ: Where Does the Church Stand Today?*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2006), pp. 42–61.

when the Lutheran reading of justification as unmerited forgiving acceptance encountered the Catholic equation of justification with the successful completion of a self-implicating process of regeneration, it could not but hear Catholics as claiming that we must achieve forgiveness through our own good works. Similarly, the Catholic reading could not but hear the Lutheran notion of God's justifying us whilst we continue to be sinners as making the nonsensical claim that the all pure God draws us fully into sharing God's life whilst we continue in a state of corruption and fundamental contradiction to that life.

Further, it should be noted that this is not simply a matter of differing translations, of referring to different things by the same word, which once the confusion is untangled can readily be seen to be complementary. We are dealing here with differing total assumptions about the saving work of God in Christ and the Spirit that do not easily map onto each other. The Lutheran experience focuses on the immediacy of God's acceptance and issues in a confidence both that God will fulfil the promise to lead the believer to salvation and an assurance that the Spirit will be at work moving the believer to live in conformity with Christ. As such, whilst classical Lutheranism is not dismissive of Christian regeneration, it is neither anxious about it nor particularly focussed upon it. It can be trusted that God whose work this is will bring it to completion. In contrast, the Catholic preoccupation is less with the assured fact of God's gracious disposal and more with the means by which the promise of and calling to Christian regeneration unto salvation is actually achieved; less with the *fact* of grace and more with its salvific *efficacy*.³³ The logic here is that if God's gracing of us and our correlative enfolding into it really is the most important thing in life, and if we are not left inert objects of this gracing but are genuinely drawn into the transforming reality it represents then we need to give concerted focussed attention to its operation in the conviction that the grace God assuredly gives is given to take us somewhere as well as to be enjoyed.

iv) approaching doctrinal disagreement in an ecumenical age

Having introduced the language of differing translations and vocabularies, differing emphases, core concerns and associated systems to speak of the Catholic and Lutheran understandings of justification, it is timely to introduce the language of George Lindbeck's massively

³³ As Cardinal Walter Kasper writes, 'Thus, whereas Luther's concern was the sovereignty of grace, the Council [of Trent] was concerned about the effective power of grace, which transforms us and makes us righteous.' 'The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification', *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity Today*, (London & New York: Burns & Oates, 2004), pp. 122–35 (p. 123).

influential 1984 work on *The Nature of Doctrine* into the discussion, itself born directly of his own professional lifetime of ecumenical engagement, not least Lutheran-Roman Catholic.³⁴ There Lindbeck famously distinguishes between three ways of conceiving of the primary function of doctrinal language.

He views the first, ‘the cognitive-propositionalist’, as the default if misguided common assumption that doctrine essentially operates as a series of propositional truth claims, the appropriate response to which is either to believe them or to discount them as erroneous. The second, ‘the experiential-expressivist’, he views as variously characterising, again misguidedly, much self-consciously modern (read ‘liberal’) theology in its tendency to start from human subjectivity and experience and to view doctrine as giving expression to the theological freight of what is to be found there. The third, Lindbeck’s favoured, which he refers to as ‘the cultural-linguistic’, integrates a Barthian understanding of the Christocentric particularity of Christian faith, a Wittgensteinian understanding of languages as entire rule-based grammatical systems rather than discrete propositions, and the social anthropologist’s sense that correct understanding of any particular belief requires understanding it against the total complex system of practice and belief of which it is a part. Given that it first and foremost views the role of doctrine as articulating the particular rules, or the formal grammar, by which the Christian game of understanding and practice is properly played, this is also frequently referred to as a ‘regulative’ or ‘grammatical’ approach to doctrine.³⁵

The significance of all of this for present purposes is that if doctrine is conceived of in the first sense – as a series of discrete propositional truth claims to be believed or denied – then it becomes difficult in the extreme to see how any meaningful rapprochement might ever be struck between what we have seen to be the very different integrated understandings of justification at work in Lutheran and Catholic theology and spirituality respectively. That is, if taken primarily as discrete propositional truth claims, the Lutheran and Catholic teachings seem to be irreconcilably opposed, with “justification is prior to and independent of any subsequent regeneration” playing against “justification is the end-point of successful Christian regeneration.” Understood in this manner, any attempt to sew these

³⁴ George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, (London: SPCK, 1984).

³⁵ The literature discussing Lindbeck’s typology and variously criticising, refining, and applying it is voluminous. For a significant recent addition which, whilst sympathetic to Lindbeck’s constructive agenda, joins with Kathryn Tanner in finding his understanding of culture – and, by analogy, of doctrine – as too homogeneous and overly defined and regulated, see Medi Ann Volpe, *Rethinking Christian Identity*, (Oxford: Blackwell, forthcoming 2010), particularly Chapter 2, drawing on Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997).

together is going to have the elegance, integrity and credibility of a pantomime horse and will understandably be regarded as a fudged botch.

Indeed, there was such an attempt historically to do this in the service of possible reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics at Regensburg in 1541 where the proposal was to think in terms of a double righteousness: of justification as God's double action of *both* graciously embracing the sinner in forgiveness at the outset *and* subsequently enfolding the believer into divine life at the successful completion of a grace-held yet self-implicating process of regeneration, or sanctification. The Catholic parties could sign up to this on the basis that it helpfully drew out the utterly unearned prevenience of God's prior merciful disposition whilst maintaining the traditional concern for regeneration as a pre-requisite for salvation proper. In turn, Calvin could find in it an appropriate expression of the necessary conjoining of justification and sanctification. For Luther, however, it represented a dog's dinner maintaining that justification is both unmerited forgiveness and merited achievement in such a fashion as fundamentally compromised the core conviction that God's merciful decision in favour of the sinner can in no ways be subject to subsequent achieved transformation.³⁶

Any possibility of movement beyond such a judgement would require the shift from a cognitive-propositionalist approach to doctrine to a cultural-linguistic one concerned to ask both after the particular rules, or principles, of Christian life variously being maintained by the respective parties and as to whether these differing rules are necessarily as contradictory as assumed. This is in effect what occurred in the course of the late 20th century bilateral dialogues concerning justification.

v) from ARCIC II's *Salvation and the Church* to the Lutheran-Roman Catholic *JDDJ*

Something of the required shift to a regulative view of doctrine can be seen to be at work in ARCIC II's *Salvation and the Church*. Drawing on decades of shared scriptural scholarship in which confessional traditions of reading were subject to mutual critical scrutiny on the basis of historical-critical methods, the ARCIC members could agree that,

³⁶ For further reading on the 1541 Regensburg Colloquium, see Dermot Fenlon, *Heresy and Obedience in Tridentine Italy: Cardinal Pole and Tridentine Italy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 45–61. I am grateful to Alec Ryrie for drawing my attention to this volume. See also Anthony N. S. Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue: An Evangelical Assessment*, (London & New York: T & T Clark, 2002), pp. 46–60. For the text of the relevant Article 5 of the Regensburg Agreement, see *ibid.*, pp. 233–7.

contrary to hallowed Catholic usage, justification is best translated as “pronounce/declare just/righteous”, implying in its strictest sense judicial acquittal and, in an extended sense, forgiving acceptance rather than sanctification.³⁷ Balancing this, however, in *Salvation and the Church* is an equally clear recognition that the scriptural record is not simply one of forensic acquittal or forgiving embrace but every bit also of transforming power and responsible regeneration. In the Pauline corpus alone there are abundant references to and admonitions concerning this. Consequently, having noted the historic mutual incomprehension caused by the differing frames of reference for justification,³⁸ the constructive heart of *Salvation and the Church* lies in emphasising how both principles, both rules, of Christian existence (i.e. of unearned forgiving embrace and responsible regeneration) can be, indeed require to be, held together.

Unlike in the failed 1541 Regensburg agreement, however, forgiveness and sanctification are not here seen as two stages of God’s accepting justifying favour – a claim that could never be acceptable to Lutheran concerns, given the implication it would carry that God does not look favourably upon us until we are made holy. Rather, forgiveness/justification and sanctification are seen as ‘two aspects of the same divine act (1 Cor 6:11)’ (§15). The document continues, ‘when God promises the removal of our condemnation and gives us a new standing before him, this justification is indissolubly linked with his sanctifying recreation of us in grace.’ Again, ‘Sanctification is that work of God which actualizes in believers the righteousness and holiness without which no one may see the Lord.’³⁹

³⁷ See ‘The term justification speaks of a divine declaration of acquittal, of the love of God manifested to an alienated and lost humanity prior to any entitlement on our part. Through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, God declares that we are forgiven, accepted and reconciled to him. . . . God’s declaration is sometimes expressed in the New Testament in the language of law, as a verdict of acquittal of the sinner’, *Salvation and the Church*, *op. cit.*, §18; also §14.

³⁸ ‘The theologians of the Reformation tended to follow the predominant usage of the New Testament, in which the verb *dikaion* usually means “to pronounce righteous”. The Catholic theologians, and notably the Council of Trent, tended to follow the usage of patristic and medieval Latin writers, for whom *justificare* (the traditional translation of *dikaion*) signified “to make righteous”. Thus the Catholic understanding of the process of justification, following Latin usage, tended to include elements of salvation which the Reformers would describe as belonging to sanctification rather than justification. As a consequence, Protestants took Catholics to be emphasising sanctification in such a way that absolute gratuitousness of salvation was threatened. On the other side, Catholics feared that Protestants were so stressing the justifying action of God that sanctification and human responsibility were gravely depreciated’, *ibid.*, §14.

³⁹ §17; also ‘The remission of sins is accompanied by a present renewal, the rebirth to newness of life. Thus the juridical aspect of justification, while expressing an important facet of the truth, is not the exclusive notion in the light of which all other biblical ideas and images of salvation must be interpreted. For God sanctifies as well as acquits us.’ §18

In effect, the document accepts the classical Lutheran understanding of justification and marries this with maintaining the need for a real process of regeneration as an essential aspect of the total work of salvation. This is all significant, but we also need to be aware of its potential limitations. It is certainly possible to see both the Calvinist and the Catholic theological mind as coming to be relatively comfortable with this line – subject, at least, to the latter coming to appreciate that equating justification with the unmerited initiative of the approach of grace that is already maintained in Catholic tradition need not conflict with a continuing strong emphasis on the need for a process of self-implicating regeneration. It is less clear, however, that Lutherans could as easily stretch to accommodate recognition of the need for God’s forgiving initiative to flow into a focused concern for lived renewal given the traditional Lutheran suspicion of all such talk as reopening the door to the return of anxious scrupulosity and works-righteousness. The implication is that for similar progress to be achieved in Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, some significant expansion would have to occur in Lutheran soteriological understanding. Indeed, just such an ecumenically grounded revisioning of Lutheran soteriology had been quietly occurring in Finnish Luther studies from the mid-70s onwards, stimulated by the groundbreaking work of Tuomo Mannermaa and subsequently followed and further justified by the circle of students around him.⁴⁰

The immediate context and stimulus for Mannermaa’s work was his own long-standing participation in ecumenical dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church, the main dialogue partner for the Lutheran Church in Finland, which led him to ask after the relationship between Lutheran understanding of justification and Orthodox understanding of theosis. With this issue framing his analysis, Mannermaa returned behind the classic expressions of Lutheran orthodoxy to examine the texts of Luther’s own writings and uncovered there a consistent line maintaining, as the title of his thesis repeats, that ‘*in ipsa fide Christus adest*’. That is, that “Christ is present in faith itself”; or to get the emphasis that Mannermaa finds here, “Christ is really present in faith itself”. This opened up an understanding

⁴⁰ Mannermaa’s work was first published in Finnish as *In ipsa fide Christus adest. Luterilaisen ja ortodoksisen kristinuskäsityksen leikkauspiste*, Missiologian ja ekumenikan seuran julkaisu 19, (Helsinki: 1979); subsequently republished in German in 1989, from which text the following English translation derives: *Christ Present in Faith: Luther’s View of Justification*, Kirsi Stjerna (trans.), (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005). The other key names in this Finnish school are: Simo Puera, Antti Raunio, Sammeli Juntunen, and Risto Saarinen. For the first phase of English-language dissemination and reception, see Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (eds.), *Union with Christ: the New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998). More recently, see Stephen Chester, ‘It Is No Longer I Who Live: Justification by Faith and Participation in Christ in Martin Luther’s Exegesis of Galatians’, *New Testament Studies*, 55 (2009), pp. 315–37. I am grateful to John Barclay for drawing my attention to this essay.

of justification as precisely not just forgiving acceptance, in Luther's language, 'favour', but as the believer also actually being taken into Christ and transformed, as the fire transforms the iron, which transforming participation Luther refers to as 'gift'.

To say the least, this puts regeneration back on the scene in the Lutheran context and this not simply as a subsequent process to the gracious acquittal of justification, as in Calvinism, but as an intrinsic aspect of justification itself. However, before we leap to saying "But that is exactly what Catholicism always maintained: justification and regeneration are identified", we need crucially to note that for Luther, according to the Finns, justification, understood as real participation, is not consequent upon regeneration, as the medieval synthesis maintained, but rather itself entails regeneration. It is the real presence of Christ in faith and the real participation of the believer who is still a sinner in Christ that brings about regeneration rather than vice versa. The sense is of this God-wrought event being both definitively realised in baptism and subsequently continually reactualised in the life of the believer in such a fashion as serves over time actually to conform the believer to the reality actualised. The appropriate response is to trust oneself to the moment-by-moment reality of Christ. So, even this understanding of what is taken to be the fact of God's regenerating action in the life of the believer does not map directly onto the traditional Catholic concern to discern the manner and efficacy of this action and the ways in which the believer might responsibly dispose him/herself for its further actualisation. It is, nevertheless, more than sufficient to legitimise Catholics and Lutherans in each using the language of regeneration and exploring how they might appropriately speak this language together whilst also acknowledging their own respective tradition-specific concerns and emphases. This is precisely what they sought to do in the *JDDJ*.⁴¹

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

As noted earlier, the *JDDJ* combines sections expressing areas of core-agreed teaching with other sections expressing the distinctive but, it is claimed, non-contradictory emphases of the respective traditions. In terms of what it was felt possible to say together in the light of fresh scriptural and historical research, the following joint statements are significant:

11. Justification is the forgiveness of sins (cf. *Rom* 3:23–25; *Acts* 13:39; *Lk* 18:14), liberation from the dominating power of sin and death (*Rom*

⁴¹ In terms of the direct influence of Mannerma's work on the *JDDJ*, it is significant that, in the context of laying out specifically Lutheran teaching, §26 draws to a close with a sentence that could have been lifted directly from Mannermaa: 'Justification and renewal are joined in Christ who is present in faith.'

5:12–21). . . . It is acceptance into communion with God: already now, but then fully in God’s coming kingdom (*Rom* 5:1f). . . . All this is from God alone, for Christ’s sake, by grace, through faith in “the gospel of God’s Son” (*Rom* 1:1–3).

12. The justified live by faith that comes from the Word of Christ (*Rom* 10:17) and is active through love (*Gal* 5:6), the fruit of the Spirit (*Gal* 5:22f). But since the justified are assailed from within and without by powers and desires (*Rom* 8:35–39; *Gal* 5:16–21) and fall into sin (1 *Jn* 1:8,10), they must constantly hear God’s promises anew, confess their sins (1 *Jn* 1:9), participate in Christ’s body and blood, and be exhorted to live righteously in accord with the will of God.

15. Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.

22. We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin’s enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ.

Balancing these and other such conjoined articulations, however, is a series of sections (4.1–4.7, §§19–39) identifying seven areas where more nuanced acknowledgement needs to be made of continuing differences of emphasis or articulation. These are headed: Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to Justification, Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making Righteous, Justification by Faith and through Grace, the Justified as Sinner, Law and Gospel, Assurance of Salvation, and the Good Works of the Justified. We will briefly explore the first and fourth of these.

In relation to the question of human action under grace and of human powerlessness without (4.1), having jointly reaffirmed that ‘Justification takes place solely by God’s grace’ (§19), the *JDDJ* proceeds first to seek to clarify that ‘When Catholics say that persons “cooperate” in preparing for and accepting justification by consenting to God’s justifying action, they see such personal consent as itself an effect of grace, not as an action arising from innate human abilities’ (§20), thereby wanting to subordinate human action to grace and to situate it within grace rather than in any way view it as an action alongside God’s action.

Immediately following this, §21 notes in some apparent contrast that: ‘According to Lutheran teaching, human beings are incapable of cooperating in their salvation, because as sinners they actively oppose God and his saving action.’ In turn, however, this is doubly qualified with ‘Lutherans do not deny that a person can reject the working of grace’ and ‘When they [Lutherans] emphasize that a person can only receive (mere passive) justification, they mean thereby to exclude any possibility of contributing to one’s own justification, but do not deny

that believers are fully involved personally in their faith, which is effected by God's Word.'

In short, the respective openness to and avoidance of the language of cooperation is acknowledged whilst seeking to maintain that both the essential Catholic concern in this regard and the essential Lutheran concern is preserved by the other. What is notable by its absence, however, both here and in other places within the *JDDJ* is any potentially helpful reminder that when Catholics and Lutherans speak of justification in this way they are tending respectively to think primarily in terms of the total process of justification/salvation on the one hand and the initiating forgiving acquittal and gracious embrace on the other.

In turn, in relation to the notion of 'The Justified as Sinner', we first find the integrating statement:

28. We confess together that in baptism the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies, and truly renews the person. But the justified must all through life constantly look to God's unconditional justifying grace. They also are continuously exposed to the power of sin still pressing its attacks (cf. *Rom* 6:12–14) and are not exempt from a lifelong struggle against the contradiction to God within the selfish desires of the old Adam (cf. *Gal* 5:16; *Rom* 7:7–10). The justified also must ask God daily for forgiveness as in the Lord's Prayer (*Mt.* 6:12; *1 Jn* 1:9), are ever again called to conversion and penance, and are ever again granted forgiveness.

Following this, we find statement of the Lutheran *simul iustus* – in such a fashion, it should be noted, as somewhat unhelpfully runs together the earlier noted, subtly differing, dialectical and progressive senses in which this is used:

29. Lutherans understand this condition of the Christian as a being "at the same time righteous and sinner." Believers are totally righteous, in that God forgives their sins through Word and Sacrament and grants the righteousness of Christ which they appropriate in faith. In Christ, they are made just before God. Looking at themselves through the law, however, they recognize that they remain also totally sinners. Sin still lives in them (*1 Jn* 1:8; *Rom* 7:17, 20), for they repeatedly turn to false gods and do not love God with that undivided love which God requires as their Creator (*Deut* 6:5; *Mt* 22:36–40 pr.).

Then, still within the same paragraph, whilst it is noted that the previously mentioned 'contradiction to God is as such truly sin', we also find the following series of interesting qualifications intended to off-set the apparently incoherent nature of the *simul* to Catholic ears and to clarify that in this context they are speaking of what Catholics would refer to as 'venial sin' – which, it should be recalled, is precisely *not* sin in the proper sense for Catholics:

Nevertheless, the enslaving power of sin is broken on the basis of the merit of Christ. It no longer is a sin that "rules" the Christian for it is

itself “ruled” by Christ with whom the justified are bound in faith. In this life, then, Christians can in part lead a just life. Despite sin, the Christian is no longer separated from God. . . . Thus, when Lutherans say that justified persons are also sinners and that their opposition to God is truly sin, they do not deny that, despite this sin, they are not separated from God and that this sin is a “ruled” sin. In these affirmations, they are in agreement with Roman Catholics, despite the difference in understanding sin in the justified.

In turn, in the next paragraph we find nuanced statement of the Catholic position:

30. Catholics hold that the grace of Jesus Christ imparted in baptism takes away all that is sin “in the proper sense” and that is “worthy of damnation” (*Rom* 8:1). There does, however, remain in the person an inclination (concupiscence) which comes from sin and presses toward sin. Since, according to Catholic conviction, human sins always involve a personal element and since this element is lacking in this inclination, Catholics do not see this inclination as sin in an authentic sense. They do not thereby deny that this inclination does not correspond to God’s original design for humanity and that it is objectively in contradiction to God and remains one’s enemy in lifelong struggle.

This should be read in conjunction with what is also to be found in the *Annex to the Official Common Statement* that was issued in response to various questions raised by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

Yet we would be wrong were we to say that we are without sin (1 *Jn* 1:8–10, cf. *JDDJ* §28). “All of us make many mistakes” (*Jas* 3:2). . . . And when we pray, we can only say, like the tax collector, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner” (*Lk* 18:13). This is expressed in a variety of ways in our liturgies. . . . To this extent, Lutherans and Catholics can together understand the Christian as *simul justus et peccator*, despite their different approaches to this subject as expressed in *JDDJ* §§29–30.⁴²

So how are we to assess the nuanced rapprochement, or ‘differentiated consensus’, that, as partially illustrated here, is achieved in the *JDDJ*?

‘Differentiated consensus’, ‘reconciled diversity’, ‘Receptive Ecumenism’ and the need for Catholic learning around the dynamism of grace

Perhaps it is important to say here that ‘differentiated consensus’ and the related phrase, ‘reconciled diversity’, are not intended here merely as fancy gloss for “agreeing to differ” in matters of

⁴² See n. 7 here.

fundamental doctrine and settling instead for simply getting along. On the contrary, the purpose of the parts of the *JDDJ* in common voice is to demonstrate ‘that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics’ (§40). With this, the intention is also to demonstrate that what ‘remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification’ there might be, are not to be seen as contradicting or eroding the ‘consensus regarding the basic truths’ (cf. §§18–39). Viewed in this way, the concepts of differentiated consensus and reconciled diversity are properly to be seen as expressing the kind of diversity in unity, or internal pluralism in communion, that is not only inevitable but entirely appropriate and healthy, indeed necessary, within the dynamically integrated catholicity of the church.

When viewed in this way, any criticisms of the *JDDJ* born out of a principled assumption that we need strict uniformity of doctrinal expression in all specific regards appears misguided. Closer to the mark would be criticisms claiming either that the teaching of one or other tradition receives ambiguous, even inaccurate, articulation in the *JDDJ* or that what the *JDDJ* regards as legitimate diversity is, in fact, unresolved, or insufficiently resolved, contradiction. Neither criticism need be fatal but would certainly indicate the need for more work to be done. Both kinds of criticism are to be found in the 1998 ‘Response to the Joint Declaration of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on the Doctrine of Justification’.⁴³

Where §4 of this Response finds inadequate the treatment of the role of the sacrament of penance in justification and regeneration, §§1–3 consider there to be as yet unresolved contradictions respectively in: 1) the treatment of the *simul iustus*, 2) in the relative weighting accorded to justification as a central criterion for Christian understanding and practice, and 3) in the relationship between passivity and human agency in response to grace and justification. It might also be noted, although this does not appear to have been recognised in the Response, that the first and third of these perceived contradictions are each further complicated by an ambiguous usage of “justification” in the *JDDJ* to refer both to the forgiving, transforming embrace of God in this order and to eschatological fulfilment.⁴⁴ On the basis of these concerns, the Response judged that whilst the level of achieved agreement was certainly impressive and

⁴³ See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, ‘Response to the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on the Doctrine of Justification’ (1998), available at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_01081998_off-answer-catholic_en.html.

⁴⁴ For one example, see ‘It is acceptance into communion with God: already now, but then fully in God’s coming kingdom.’ *JDDJ*, §11.

welcome, it did not yet equate to agreement in all essentials and differences only over non-essential emphases and, as such, indicated the need for some further work.⁴⁵ Given, however, that the clarification and re-articulation given to the relevant teachings in the *Annex to the Common Statement* – produced at breakneck speed by Vatican standards – was subsequently found to be satisfactory by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, thus clearing the way for the joint signing, there is no need for present purposes to conduct a detailed analysis of them here.

Instead, let us turn to explore the kind of potential limitation that the perspective associated with Receptive Ecumenism would find in the *JDDJ* and, more generally, with ‘the problem-driven strategy of conceptual and grammatical clarification’ that has tended to characterise the work of the bilateral dialogues.⁴⁶ In itself, this strategy has performed the invaluable role of unpicking knots of past disagreement and misunderstanding and so opening the way to more fruitful constructive contemporary engagement. If left in isolation, however, rather than as a resource within a broader process, Receptive Ecumenism finds the strategy of conceptual and grammatical clarification inadequate in as much as beyond improved mutual relations and understanding, it leaves divided traditions little different: neither closer together, nor internally transformed. It is ‘more a strategy of translation and interpretation than of actual conversion and real receptive learning’.

In contrast, Receptive Ecumenism starts out not with the aim of seeking agreement *between* traditions but of pursuing appropriate potential learning *across* traditions. The starting assumption is that each tradition is wounded and in need of healing and development; a healing that cannot be achieved simply on the basis of a tradition’s own resources. Consequently, the appropriate question is as to how the particular gifts and ecclesial experience of other traditions can be received as a creative resource for the constructive reimagining of one’s own tradition.

In specific relation, then, to the present focus on issues around justification, this prompts the question as to what in this regard might be the particular areas of need, woundedness even, in Catholic understanding and practice? Earlier it was noted that whilst formal Catholic theology certainly gives clear conceptual priority to grace even as it

⁴⁵ See ‘The level of agreement is high, but it does not yet allow us to affirm that all the differences separating Catholics and Lutherans in the doctrine concerning justification are simply a question of emphasis or language. Some of these differences concern aspects of substance and are therefore not all mutually compatible...’ ‘Response to the Joint Declaration’, §5.

⁴⁶ See Murray, ‘Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning: Establishing the Agenda’, in Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*, *op. cit.*, pp. 5–25 (p. 14).

places strong emphasis on the need for a self-implicating process of considered regeneration, Catholic practice and spirituality, homiletics and informal catechetics can too easily fall short of this in the direction of a demanding, unachievable ethic of self-transformation. There are, to be sure, other issues also worthy of attention here, such as: the role of the church in mediating forgiveness and grace; the language of merit and the understanding of Christian existence it can promote; and the relationship between Catholic thinking about there being stable structures and guaranteed means of grace in the church (e.g. order) and the need for these to be held continually within the event of grace. Each of these and more is indeed requiring of analysis with a view to potential receptive Catholic learning. For the purpose of this essay, however, attention will be confined by way of illustration to the issue of the discordance that can sound between Catholic theology of the priority and primacy of grace on the one hand and a recurrent Catholic tendency to a practical Pelagianism on the other hand.

The general point here, as Nicholas Lash noted some years ago in relation to a rather different area of historic Catholic discordance, is that in some sense it is irrelevant whether or not the theory, the operative theology, offers consistent conceptual counter to the practical problems in question; if the problems are recurrent, then it suggests some weakness in the theory, no matter how unimpeachable the theory might be in itself.⁴⁷ Applying this to the specific issue in focus here, my suggestion is that there is similarly a formal weakness at issue in the potential for significant discordance between Catholic theology of the priority and primacy of grace and Catholic practice. This formal weakness pertains to an imbalance between a strong and detailed theory of the stable structures of grace and its transmission relative to a considerably less well developed emphasis on the dynamic, in-breaking, event-like, 'more quality' to grace.

By the phrase the 'stable structures of grace', I am referring to such notions as the habits, the virtues, the understanding of prevenient grace and the fact of operative grace, and the various structures, such as order and sacrament, that are regarded within Catholic thinking as divinely instituted means for the sure mediation of grace. Indeed, we might also think here of Rahner's theory of the supernatural

⁴⁷ As Lash wrote in the context of reflecting on the historically significant discrepancies that occurred between Catholic doctrine and piety in relation to the sacrifice of the Mass: 'The truth-value of propositions is not to be ascertained simply in the abstract, in isolation from their use and employment in human affairs. If what the Church is doing, in the concrete, can reasonably be said to be significantly different from what she ought to be doing, then the theory according to which she interprets her activity may be calculated to mislead, even if that same theory, when employed as the interpretation of a more adequate state of concrete activity, were irreproachable', Lash, *His Presence in the World: A Study in Eucharistic Worship and Theology*, (London: Sheed & Ward, 1968), pp. 127–8.

existential.⁴⁸ My essential point is that these Catholic structures of stability, which are intended to evoke confidence and to negate any quietism, need combining with a clear actualist emphasis that is more typical of Lutheran theology and spirituality – particularly so in the powerful fresh articulation this receives in the Finnish school – if they are indeed to in-breathe confidence, assurance and propel to graced action rather than appearing to leave the believer without any potential “more” beyond what she knows herself already to have. What is in view here is the need for and the search for the possibility of a form of graced docility within Catholic theology and spirituality that is a graced passivity but certainly not a quietism nor a self-resourced activism.

It might seem that we have come a rather long way from the broad issue of St. Paul and ecumenism even though, in fact, the matter of Pauline interpretation and reception has floated somewhere in the background throughout. Be that as it may, let us return now explicitly to St. Paul, with John M. G. Barclay as our guide, to explore what can be discerned there about the relationship between divine and human agency, particularly as this relates to our concern for the holding together of stability and dynamic actualism.

⁴⁸ The ‘supernatural existential’ is Rahner’s technical shorthand for his recurrent dual conviction that: a) the human person is intrinsically, even if unconsciously, oriented to the infinite mystery of God as a transcendental or existential of the human condition; and b) this intrinsic orientation is *de facto* – but as a matter of divine will rather than natural right – a graced openness, hence ‘*supernatural existential*’, to the absolute self-communication of the Trinitarian God in grace and incarnation. See Rahner, ‘Nature and Grace’ (1959), in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4. *More Recent Writings*, Kevin Smyth (trans.), (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), pp. 165–88. A criticism that has frequently been levelled against Rahner at this point, as classically pressed by Hans Urs von Balthasar and those who follow him, is that Rahner thereby dulls the challenge and distinctiveness of God’s unique approach in Christ and the Spirit and effectively suppresses Christianity’s authentic evangelical, missionary dynamic. See Balthasar, *Cordula oder der Ernstfall*, (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1966), ET *The Moment of Christian Witness*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994 [1969]). Leaving aside for now the question as to whether a notion of the universal, gracious self-communication of God must necessarily compromise the challenge and distinctiveness of grace – here Rahner’s comment is significant that it is erroneous to assume that ‘grace would no longer be grace if God became too free with it’ (‘Nature and Grace’, pp. 30–1) – the line being pursued in the present essay leads to a different, although not entirely unrelated, concern about Rahner’s supernatural existential. That is, that unless Rahner’s eloquent articulation of the supernatural existential has integrated within it an equally eloquent and consistent articulation of there always being a dynamic, ‘more’ quality to grace then it is in danger of offering a theorised account of the graced character of human existence which, in practice, leaves us with nothing other than our own currently experienced and inadequate resources on which to rely. In short, the potential problem is not in itself that Rahner’s supernatural existential universalises the reality of grace but that he gives insufficient attention to the transformative reality of grace and so threatens, in practice, to make a self-frustrating Pelagianism of his graced universalism.

In a stunning essay comparing grace and agency in Philo and Paul,⁴⁹ Barclay analyses some distinctive Pauline speech patterns about the prior situatedness of human action in divine action and the involvement throughout of divine action in human action:

1 Cor 15: 10 'But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me.'

Phil 2: 12–14 particularly '... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.'

Gal 2: 19–21 particularly 'it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.'

Following analysis of each text, Barclay comments:

In all cases, the logical sequence... places divine grace anterior to human action, and affirms the continuation of that grace in human activity. But in no case does the human actor become passive or inactive in the face of divine grace, but is rather energized by that grace to action. The relationship between the two actors can be expressed through a variety of prepositions: grace may be described as 'towards me' ... 'with me' ... 'through me' ... 'and in me'. (p. 153)

Then a little later, resonant with an earlier acknowledged debt to Kathryn Tanner's analysis of a 'non-contrastive account' of divine-human agency, we find:

Although in one sense we may speak properly of a 'dual agency', in non-exclusive relation, this would be inadequately expressed as the co-operation or conjunction of two agents, or as the relationship of gift and response, if it is thereby forgotten that the 'response' continues to be activated by grace, and the believer's agency *embedded within* that of the Spirit. If we give any weight to Paul's prepositions, some account must be given to 'in' and 'through', as well as 'towards' and 'with'.⁵⁰

Finding 'synergism' an inadequate phrase to describe this understanding of the situatedness of human action within prior and continuing divine initiative, Barclay suggests the neologism of 'energism'. In terms of its relevance to our concern for a vitalising of the stable structures of grace in Catholic understanding, this is all very interesting. On the one hand, as the use of Tanner's work might suggest,

⁴⁹ Barclay, "'By the Grace of God I Am What I Am": Grace and Agency in Philo and Paul', in Barclay and Simon J. Gathercole (eds.), *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment*, (London & New York: T & T Clark, 2006), pp. 140–57.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 156; compare Barclay, 'Introduction', *ibid.*, pp. 1–8 (p. 7), drawing on Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 46.

this is an account of divine-human agency derived from a reading of St. Paul that has strong resonance with the primary-secondary causality analysis that St. Thomas offers. On the other hand, there is suggestion of far greater vitality, actuality and an interruptive event-like quality to grace in Barclay's reading of St. Paul than Catholic theology of grace and of grace-carried regenerative-living tend to suggest. This dimension is strongly underlined by the use Barclay makes of J. L. Martyn's apocalyptic reading of St. Paul.⁵¹

Far from the primacy and initiative of grace here being in any sense a purely theorised acknowledgment sitting alongside and somewhat disconnected from the experienced living of the life of faith as a determined, demanding, self-willed struggle, the sense conveyed is of the moment-by-moment energising of the believer by grace and the correlative moment-by-moment leaning-in of the believer into this force, trusting that one will indeed be held and energised, even propelled into fresh possibilities.

This image of Christian existence, of Christian life under grace, of life in the Spirit, as a process of 'leaning-in' that energises, a tangible moment-by-moment mode of dependence that impels us forwards into action, struck me very powerfully one night almost nine years ago when we were living for a period in a very exposed house on the Ushaw College estate which sits literally on top of a hill, looking downwards to lesser and greater degrees in every possible direction. Local folklore has it that there is no high land between the Ushaw estate and the Russian Urals and when the wind really blows in winter, it is easy to imagine this being true. In the house in which we were living when the wind was up to full force, it was so noisy roaring down the chimney that it was impossible to be heard even when shouting. One such evening, as I exited the back door to fetch something from the shed, the force of the wind was such that it knocked me clean off my feet. As I struggled up, battling against the terrific force of the wind, the idea came into my mind to try something I had not been able to do since I was a child: to try leaning my entire bodyweight into the wind to see if it would hold me up, which it surely did. For a few minutes I was returned to my childhood, playing bolder and bolder trust-games with the wind. As I did so, the thought came powerfully to me: this is what grace is like; this is how our life in the Spirit is; it's a form of dependence which, far from infantilising us, sets us on our feet and supports us and impels us; it's a form of passivity that energises into action. I suddenly knew existentially, rather than merely theoretically and

⁵¹ See Barclay, 'By the Grace of God I Am what I Am', pp. 153–6, drawing on J. L. Martyn, 'De-apocalypticizing Paul: An Essay Focussed on *Paul and the Stoics* by Troels Engberg-Pedersen', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 86 (2002), pp. 61–102; also Martyn, *Galatians*, (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

conceptually, what Rahner really means when he speaks about real freedom and dependence on God being in direct rather than inverse proportion.⁵²

This all suggests an image of Christian existence as a life of docility – in the true sense of docility – to the in-breaking, moment-by-moment initiative, support, and impulse of the Spirit; open always to the possibility of being taken in fresh directions and of encountering fresh challenges in that light; a process of leaning into the energy of these in-breakings at the time of their occurrence and of continuing to lean into them as we live along their trajectory, as we ride out their surf; an attitude of patience and attentiveness in times of calm but also of expectation that new strong events of grace will happen in addition to a less dramatic yet tangible moment-by-moment support. It is this kind of lived actualism, I suggest, that is generally lacking in the refined Catholic theories and stable structures of grace and which is here identified as one of the primary challenges to and opportunities for receptive Catholic learning arising out of the *JDDJ* once the move is made from viewing the *JDDJ* as merely advocating tolerance for differing doctrinal articulations to regarding it as identifying respective ways in which one tradition requires to be held open to the continuing refreshing challenge of the other's perspective.

In place of conclusion

As has already been noted, this analysis of the need for effective receptive Catholic learning in relation to the real dynamism of grace by no means exhausts the range of issues pertaining to the *JDDJ*. On the contrary, there is a host of other issues requiring patient, self-critical, constructive analysis (e.g. merit and the mediation of the church) and holding similar potential for duly considered receptive Catholic learning. Similarly, beyond justification and the dynamics of divine and human action, there are many other issues of ecumenical significance arising out of St Paul's writings – to take just one, his theology of the church as the diversely charism-endowed body of Christ held in relations of mutual accountability. In addition, there is the gamut of issues relating to the contrast between the social/communal focus of the New Perspective and the more personal focus of the traditional Reformation issues and their respective ecumenical and ecclesiological implications.⁵³ Suffice it to say that whilst it is impossible to

⁵² See Rahner, 'Current Problems in Christology' (1954), in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1. *God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, Cornelius Ernst, OP (trans.), (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), pp. 149–220 (pp. 162–3).

⁵³ As noted earlier, N. T. Wright's work's is particularly significant here, see *Justification*, *op. cit.*

turn the page on this broader range of issues in what is already an over-full essay, it is hoped that the approach taken here to just one key issue will illustrate effectively how appropriately to go about realising the possibilities for transformative ecclesial learning in the context of the real opportunities that are open here.

Paul D. Murray
Professor of Systematic Theology
and Director of the Centre for Catholic Studies
Department of Theology and Religion
Durham University
Durham DH1 3RS
Email: paul.murray@durham.ac.uk