

The Council of Trent: Catholic Counter Reformation



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The Council of Trent

19th Ecumenical Council

- Three sessions
- Dec 1545 until Dec 1563
- 28 years after Martin Luther posted 95 theses

Tone of the Council

- No new theological insights
- Affirmation as orthodoxy of what was already and remained Catholic teaching
- Decrees included anathema for reformed ideas
- Some attention to reform

Goals of the Council

- Condemn the principles and doctrines of the Reformers
- Clarify the doctrines of the Catholic Church on all disputed points
- Church is the ultimate interpreter of Scripture
- Clarify relation of grace-faith-works
- Formation of priests
- Reform of ecclesial administration
- Correct abuses of veneration, indulgences, and other "sacramentals"

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Key Points from Last Week

Nature of Original Sin

- Shared: loss of original righteousness and corruption of human nature
- Shared: transmission of original sin from Adam and Eve

Free Will

- Catholic: Individuals still retained a measure of freedom to cooperate with God's grace and choose the good.

Free Will *(continued)*

- Luther: will is in bondage to sin and cannot choose God or contribute to its own salvation. Grace can free the will to accept the Faith.
- Calvin: "bondage of the will." God's grace is irresistible and efficacious – and so free will has nothing to do with it.

Scripture

- Divine Revelation: Canon and Tradition
- Authoritative and final teacher

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Original Sin

Nature of Original Sin

- Shared: loss of original righteousness and corruption of human nature
- Catholic: did not destroy free will, *desire*
- Luther: bondage of sin; divine intervention absolute
- Calvin: corrupted intellect, emotions, and will

Transmission

- Catholic and Reformers agree via natural generation

Free Will

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Justification

Justification *sola fide* (Luther)

- “*That upon which the Reformation stands or falls.*”
- bondage of sin - corrupted intellect, emotions, and will
- Legal declaration that one was made justified even though corrupt (*imputed righteousness*)
- Faith: passive reception
 - Gospel – Holy Spirit – leading to faith
 - Faith: united to Christ when one accepts the merits of Christ and Christ alone
 - Faith-Belief-Trust

Justification *sola fide* (Calvin)

- Luther + irresistible grace
 - to the Gospel
 - to the Holy Spirit
 - Free will has no role
- The Holy Spirit regenerates the Elect with an imputed righteousness
- Holy Spirit works in the life of the person to produce a life of holiness and good works – but without “merit.”

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Trent & Justification

Justification and Sanctification

- Justification – single event, no repeat, declared righteous
- Unmerited act of God
- Person now able to cooperate with grace to participate in the divine nature
- Accomplished in Baptism
- Sanctification – the life of holiness stemming from that justification
- Catholic thought: Salvation = Justification + Sanctification

Grace and Holiness

- Prevenient Grace disposed one to accept the Gospel and Holy Spirit in cooperation
- Justification is by the merits and promises of Christ effected in Baptism freely offered and accepted
- From that sanctifying grace comes the opening to actual grace whose fruits are Faith, Hope, Love (Charity) and good works – the fruit of Faith from Grace.
- Not earning salvation, but increasing in holiness (Mt 5:48)

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Some Implications

Justification

- *Sole fide? No... sola gratia.* We are saved by grace alone
- Person now able to cooperate with grace to participate in the divine nature

Sanctification

- Cultivation of Virtue
- Avoiding sin
- Sacramental Life
- Mindful and intentional acts of charity, cooperating with God's grace
- Growth in Holiness

Salvation

- "For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast." (Eph 2:8-9)
- "are being saved" (1 Cor 1:18)
- "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12)
- "those who are being saved" (2 Cor 2:15)

Salvation

- We have been saved, are being saved, will be saved

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Trent & the Sacraments

Key Points

- There are 7 Sacraments
- More than outward signs, they convey grace signified
- *Ex opera operato* – effective by the sacramental action; not dependent on faith of recipient
- Baptism is necessary for justification.
- Infant baptism is valid
- Other Churches baptisms are valid and sacramental *

Basis

- Scripture, Tradition and long liturgical practice of the Church

Luther

- Baptism and Eucharist as "sacraments"
- Faith not *ex opera operato*
- Others are good, rites only

Calvin

- Spiritual sacraments: baptism and Eucharist; no grace or saving power
- Others – church rites

Anabaptist

- Adult believer's baptism
- Lord's supper - spiritual

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Reformation and Baptism

Catholic View

- Fully Augustinian
- God imparts unmerited grace via Sacramental Baptism
- Removes guilt of original sin and forgives all sin
- Regenerates individuals to a state of grace: righteous before God

Reformation reaction:

- original sin, grace and free will
- Subservient to *sola fide*
- No regeneration via Sacrament

Martin Luther

- Visible sign and seal of his view of Baptism- infants: ok
- Person is united to Christ
- Not absolutely needed for salvation

John Calvin

- Similar to Luther's view
- Bondage of the will & election eliminate any role in salvation.

Anabaptists

- Calvin + adults only baptism

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Saints, Relics and Indulgences

Communion of Saints

- What is the role?
- Do they care about us?
- Do they pray for us?
- Do they hear our prayers?

Reformation reaction:

- Catholics don't differentiate between God and Saints
- Saints with a small "s"
- A holy fellowship only

Relics and Indulgences

- Reformers - absolutely not
- Catholics – yes, but major reform and catechesis needed.

Indulgences

- Absolutely not

Purgatory

- Absolutely not
- Just a scare tactic

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Counter Reformation: post Trent

Jesuits

Reformed Religious Orders:

- Capuchins Friars
- Discalced Carmelites
- Oratorians
- Franciscan OFM and Dominicans
- Ursalines

New Spiritual Movements

Roman Inquisition

Reform and Formation of the Clergy and Bishops

The Trentintine Mass

Intentional Use of Art for Evangelization

Index of Forbidden Books

Catechesis of the Laity

..... *Meanwhile the New World becomes the something that excites and distracts*

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