


The Letter to the Ephesians

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Ephesians 2:3 – Children of Wrath

402 All men are implicated in Adam's sin, as St. Paul affirms: "By one man's disobedience many (that is, all men) were made sinners": "sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned."²⁸⁹ The Apostle contrasts the universality of sin and death with the universality of salvation in Christ. "Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men."

404 How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The whole human race is in Adam "as one body of one man".²⁹³ By this "unity of the human race" all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice. Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. But we do know by Revelation

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that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature. By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a *personal sin*, but this sin affected the *human nature* that they would then transmit *in a fallen state*.²⁹⁴ It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called "sin" only in an analogical sense: it is a sin "contracted" and not "committed" - a state and not an act.

Ephesians 2:5-6 – United with Christ

1003 United with Christ by Baptism, believers already truly participate in the heavenly life of the risen Christ, but this life remains "hidden with Christ in God." (Col 3:3; cf. Phil 3:20.) The Father has already "raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph 2:6.) Nourished with his body in the Eucharist, we already belong to the Body of Christ. When we rise on the last day we "also will appear with him in glory." (Col 3:4.)

Ephesians 2:8 – GRACE – The biblical term for (1) God's favor and (2) God's supernatural life.

1996 Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is *favor*, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.⁴⁶

1997 Grace is a *participation in the life of God*. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an "adopted son" he can

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henceforth call God "Father," in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church.

1998 This vocation to eternal life is *supernatural*. It depends entirely on God's gratuitous initiative, for he alone can reveal and give himself. It surpasses the power of human intellect and will, as that of every other creature.⁴⁷

1999 The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. It is the *sanctifying* or *deifying grace* received in Baptism. It is in us the source of the work of sanctification:⁴⁸

Therefore if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself.⁴⁹

2000 Sanctifying grace is an habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by his love. *Habitual grace*, the permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God's call, is distinguished from actual graces which refer to God's interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification.

2001 The *preparation of man* for the reception of grace is already a work of grace. This latter is needed to arouse and sustain our collaboration in justification through faith, and in sanctification through charity. God brings to completion in us what he has begun, "since he who completes his work by cooperating with our will began by working so that we might will it."⁵⁰

Indeed we also work, but we are only collaborating with God who works, for his mercy has gone before us. It has gone before us so that we may be healed, and follows us so that once healed, we may be given life; it goes before us so that we may be called, and

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follows us so that we may be glorified; it goes before us so that we may live devoutly, and follows us so that we may always live with God: for without him we can do nothing.⁵¹

2002 God's free initiative demands *man's free response*, for God has created man in his image by conferring on him, along with freedom, the power to know him and love him. The soul only enters freely into the communion of love. God immediately touches and directly moves the heart of man. He has placed in man a longing for truth and goodness that only he can satisfy. The promises of "eternal life" respond, beyond all hope, to this desire:

If at the end of your very good works . . . , you rested on the seventh day, it was to foretell by the voice of your book that at the end of our works, which are indeed "very good" since you have given them to us, we shall also rest in you on the sabbath of eternal life.⁵²

2003 Grace is first and foremost the gift of the Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us. But grace also includes the gifts that the Spirit grants us to associate us with his work, to enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of the Body of Christ, the Church. There are *sacramental graces*, gifts proper to the different sacraments. There are furthermore *special graces*, also called *charisms* after the Greek term used by St. Paul and meaning "favor," "gratuitous gift," "benefit."⁵³ Whatever their character - sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues - charisms are oriented toward sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church. They are at the service of charity which builds up the Church.

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Ephesians 2:13-18 – Abolishing the law:

1. In Christ: center of Pauline theology; being “in Christ” (2:13)
2. Gentiles: “you who were once far off” (2:13)
3. Unity: “has made us both [Jew and Gentile] one” (2:14)
4. Wall of Hostility: possible allusion to the stone plaque discovered in 1871:

Josephus: Such, then was the first court [a.k.a. “Court of the Gentiles”]. Within it and not far distant was a second one, accessible by a few steps and surrounded by a stone balustrade with an inscription prohibiting the entrance of a foreigner (Greek *alloethnē*) under the threat of the penalty of death (Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.417, trans. LCL)

Temple Inscription: No man of another race is to enter within the fence and enclosure around the Temple. Whoever is caught will have only himself to thank for the death which follows [trans A. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 141].

5. The Law: “abolished” or “nullified” (Greek *katargeō*) in “his flesh” (2:15)
6. New Creation: “create in himself one new man” (Greek *kainon anthrōpon*) (2:15)
7. Reconciliation: between human peoples comes through the cross (2:16)
8. Trinity: “in Christ Jesus” (2:13); “access in one Spirit” (2:18); “to the Father” (2:18)

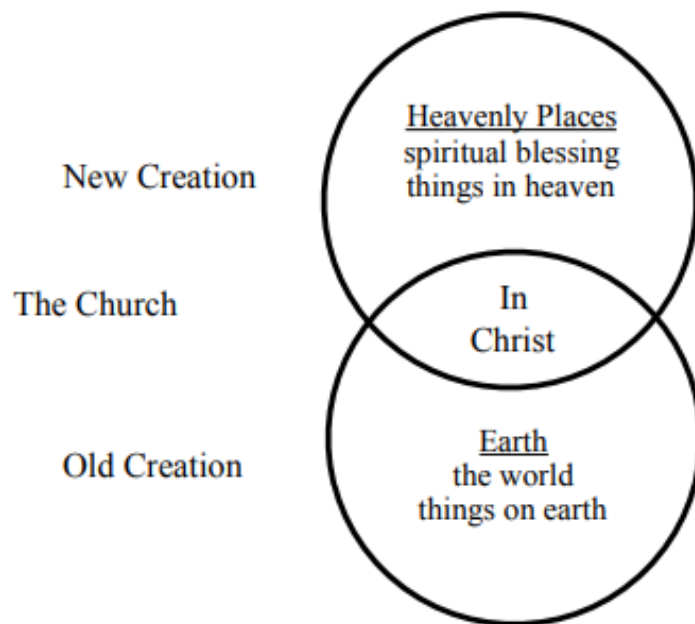
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Jesus did not come to remove or abolish the Law of Moses. Jesus did come to remove the laws that separated the Jews from the Gentiles so *“through him we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in one Spirit to the Father.”*

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The Living Tradition Thomas Aquinas:

A problem arises here since he says “breaking down the middle barrier or partition” [Eph 2:14] because, on the contrary, it is written: “do not think I have come to destroy (Greek *kataluō*) the law or the prophets. I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matt 5:17). I reply. The old law contained both moral and ceremonial precepts. The moral commandments were not destroyed by Christ but fulfilled in the counsels he added... “But I say to you, “love your enemies...” (Matt 5:43-44). He abolished the ceremonial precepts with regard to what they were in themselves, but he fulfilled them with regard to what they prefigured, adding what was symbolized to the symbol... To break down this barrier of partition is to destroy the hostility between the Jews and the gentiles.” (Aquinas, Commentary on Ephesians no. 114, trans. F. Larcher and M. L. Lamb).



Christ joins everything in himself so we all have access to everything in Heaven.