

Roman Catholic and Tridentine Doctrine of Preparation for Justification

1. Summary

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| 1. Faith (re one's own sin) | 4. Faith (re God's mercy) |
| 2. Fear of God's wrath and hell | 5. Hope in God's goodness |
| 3. Displeasure and detestation of sin (out of fear) | 6. Love for God above all things by natural powers |
| | 7. Displeasure and detestation of sin (out of love for God above all things) |
| | 8. Resolution to amend |

INCOMPLETE CONGRUENT MERIT

UNDIVIDED CONGRUENT MERIT

2. Gabriel Biel (1420/5-1495), *Sentences*, Book 3, Distinction 14, Question 2

Therefore: (1) The act of faith must come first, by which the abomination of sin and sin's reward is understood. (2) From this there follows fear of the wrath of God and of the fire of hell. (3) As a result of this, sins begin to displease, and man begins to detest them. And this is the disposition *de congruo*, not complete, nor sufficient, but far from it. (4) Faith turns to a consideration of the divine mercy, and decides that God is ready to remit sins through the infusion of love in those who are sufficiently prepared and disposed. (5) From this consideration there follows the act of hope, by which he begins to desire God as the highest good. (6) From this act of hope one rises to loving God above all things by natural powers. (7) Out of that love is elicited a different displeasure with, and detestation of, sin, not on account of the fear of damnation but because of God, who is now finally loved above all things. (8) These acts are followed by the resolve to amend. And this, finally, is the sufficient or undivided *meritum congrui*, the sufficient and ultimate disposition for the infusion of grace.

(quoted in Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, vol. 1, p. 560)

3. *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent (1545-1563)*, Decree on Justification, Chapter VI

The Manner of Preparation

Now they [i.e., adults] are disposed unto the said justice, when, excited and assisted by divine grace, conceiving *faith by hearing* [Rom. 10:17], they are freely moved towards God, believing those things to be true which God has revealed and promised—and this especially, that God justifies the impious *by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus* [Rom. 3:24]; and when, [1] understanding themselves to be sinners, they, by turning themselves, from the [2] fear of divine justice whereby they are [3] profitably agitated, to [4] consider the mercy of God, are raised unto [5] hope, confiding that God will be propitious to them for Christ's sake; and they begin to [6] love him as the fountain of all justice; and are therefore [7] moved against sins by a certain hatred and detestation, to wit, by that [8] penitence which must be performed before baptism: lastly, when they purpose to receive baptism, to begin a new life, and to *keep the commandments* of God. Concerning this disposition it is written: *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and is a rewarder to them that seek him* [Heb. 11:6]; and, *Be of good faith, son, thy sins are forgiven thee* [Matt. 9:2]; and, *The fear of the Lord driveth out sin* [Eccles. 1:27]; and, *Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost* [Acts 2:38]; and, *Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* [Matt. 28:19]; finally, *Prepare your hearts unto the Lord* [I Sam. 7:3].

(in Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 2, pp. 93-94)