

# **the Vatican/Lutheran Agreement on Justification EXAMINED**

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**The following examination is a detailed study of the Catholic/Lutheran Joint Declaration on Justification. This Declaration has caused much controversy within so-called traditionalist circles. The majority of Sedevacantists tend to misunderstand this declaration and distort just what it's saying. The main problem doesn't always stem from a willingness to mislead people deliberately, but rather out of ignorance to Theology as a whole. Theology is important, and it's disappointing that it's realm is so limited within Sedevacantism. We will be particularly dealing with an article put out by the Dimond Brothers. Peter and Michael Dimond run a Sedevacantist group and they self-interpret Catholic doctrines and documents. In this article we find a number of issues that have confused this Sedevacantist sect. Peter and Michael Dimond, if they have had any formal theological training, don't understand the basic tenets of Protestant theology.**

Opening their article we read,

***On October 31, 1999, the Vatican under John Paul II approved a joint declaration with the Lutherans on the doctrine of Justification. The idea that Catholics could agree to a joint declaration with Lutherans on the doctrine of justification should immediately strike a Catholic as absurd because Catholics are required to believe in the dogmatic teaching of the Council of Trent, while Lutherans reject the dogmatic teaching of the Council of***

*Trent.*

**The problem with this approach is the assertion that all Lutherans are united on the issue of Justification. Further widening the problem is the assertion that Catholics are compromising the teachings of Trent in this declaration. In theory, it would be quite possible for a Catholic to agree to such a declaration, if the other side were to finally resolve certain theological barriers that were once present in the past. As a matter of fact, we will find that within Lutheranism, the tenets of justification as well as matters dealing with eschatology tend to separate those within this faith.**

*Obviously, the only agreement that could be reached is one where the Lutherans rejected their heresy and accepted Catholic dogma. However, this was not what the Joint Declaration with the Lutherans – which was approved by John Paul II and Benedict XVI – was about.*

**Why is this the only agreement that could be reached? Why isn't it logical that the Lutherans and the Catholics could come to a joint agreement on certain facets that deal with Justification in its many aspects? Justification isn't only one faceted within Catholic theology. How can this Sedevacantist sect ignorantly think that the "ONLY" agreement would be one where the Lutherans would abandon their theology wholesale and adopt Catholic dogma? This is absurd on its face. It would be ideal if the Lutherans would accept Catholic dogma on this issue, but it'd be highly unlikely they'd be Lutherans. The whole reason there was a joint declaration is to broaden the possibility that Lutherans and those that hold similar faith values realize that Catholic theology is not only logical but it's the same since Trent and even before. The fact that this joint declaration states that the condemnations from Trent are STILL in force is enough to show that no Catholic dogma is being compromised. The only thing being compromised is your logic if**

you are to take the Sedevacantist comments at face value!

*The Joint Declaration with the Lutherans on the Doctrine of Justification is so heretical that there are almost no words to describe it. It completely repudiates the Council of Trent.*

The Joint Declaration is clear when it says,

**"...JUSTIFICATION WAS REGARDED AS THE CRUX OF ALL THE DISPUTES, AND RESULTED IN THE MUTUAL DOCTRINAL CONDEMNATIONS BOTH IN THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS AND BY THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH'S COUNCIL OF TRENT. THESE CONDEMNATIONS ARE STILL OPERATIVE TODAY AND THUS HAVE A CHURCH-DIVIDING EFFECT."(1)**

**If this joint declaration were "REPUDIATING" Trent, the preamble would have no need to let us know that the condemnations are STILL operative to this very day!**

► 1) *Joint Declaration With Lutherans on Justification, Oct. 31, 1999: "# 5.*

*THE PRESENT JOINT DECLARATION... does not cover all that either church teaches about justification; it does encompass a consensus on*

*basic*

*truths of the doctrine of justification and SHOWS THAT THE REMAINING DIFFERENCES ARE NO LONGER THE OCCASION FOR DOCTRINAL CONDEMNATIONS.”<sup>4</sup>*

*This means that the remaining differences between Lutherans and Catholics on Justification – for example, the fact that Lutherans don’t accept the Council of Trent’s Decree on Justification as dogmatic – are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations. This is blatantly HERETICAL. The very fact that the Lutherans don’t accept the Council of Trent’s Decree on Justification as dogmatic is an occasion for their doctrinal condemnation, as we just saw.*

**Let's examine and see if what is being said here really IS heretical. Picking up the whole context of what is said here, we read,**

**5. The present Joint Declaration has this intention: namely, to show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church[9] are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ. It does not cover all that either church teaches about justification; it does encompass a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the**

## **occasion for doctrinal condemnations. (2)**

**As we can clearly see, a "COMMON UNDERSTANDING" on the Biblical and Historical teaching of SOLA GRATIA is what is being spoken about in this particular part of the Declaration. Had the Dimond brothers quoted the CONTEXT of this passage of the Declaration we'd see what is being spoken about in regards to the realm of Justification. As this declaration itself tells us, certain facets of justification are NO LONGER the occasion for condemnations, whereas OTHERS are! The teaching of SOLA GRATIA is a biblical and historical teaching and as such, this particular group of Lutherans, has come to an agreement on this as well as other levels of the biblical and traditional truths of justification.**

**► (2) *Joint Declaration With the Lutherans on Justification, Oct. 31, 1999: "41. Thus the doctrinal condemnations of the 16th century [i.e., the Council of Trent], in so far as they are related to the doctrine of justification, appear in a new light: The teaching of the Lutheran churches presented in this Declaration does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent."***<sup>5</sup>

***This means that none of the teaching of the Lutherans in the Joint Declaration (JD) is condemned by the Council of Trent! But in the JD, besides the other heresies taught by the Lutherans (as we will see), the Lutheran churches teach the heresy of Justification by "faith alone," which was condemned by the Council of Trent approximately 13 times!***

**What we will find as we continue along is a pattern that is quite obvious. The Sedevacantists have taken portions of the Joint Declaration and have completely taken them out of context and jumped to illogical**

conclusions. For instance, what is quoted from the Joint Declaration above is taken completely out of context. The Dimonds say that "none of the teaching of the Lutherans in the Joint Declaration is condemned by Trent" without pointing out what specific teachings are being agreed upon in this section. If we read the context in it's totality we can see,

41. Thus the doctrinal condemnations of the 16th century, in so far as they relate to the doctrine of justification, appear in a new light: The teaching of the Lutheran churches presented in this Declaration does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this Declaration.

42. Nothing is thereby taken away from the seriousness of the condemnations related to the doctrine of justification. Some were not simply pointless. They remain for us "salutary warnings" to which we must attend in our teaching and practice.(3)

Section 42 clearly affirms that the condemnations of the erroneous theology within Lutheranism is **STILL** serious and should still be realized as existing in our day and age. If this declaration were abandoning the teachings of Trent, we wouldn't be told about the condemnations **STILL** in force. There is nothing within this declaration that compromises Catholic teaching in anyway whatsoever.

► *Joint Declaration with the Lutherans on Justification: "26. According to Lutheran understanding, God justifies sinners in faith alone (sola fide)."6*

*Pope Paul III, Council of Trent, Session 6, Chap. 10, ex cathedra:  
"You see, that by works a man is justified and not by faith alone' (Jas.  
2:24)."*<sup>7</sup>

*Thus, the statement in #41 of the JD means that the "Catholic" side agrees that all the dogmatic canons and decrees in Trent condemning faith alone are overturned, and that faith alone is no longer contrary to or condemned by Trent. It is not possible for heresy to be any more formal than this.*

**Not only is this outrageous, but it's dishonest for the Dimond Brothers to put forth such a distortion of what the Joint Declaration is saying. The Joint Declaration, in this specific section 4. Explicating the Common Understanding of Justification is NOT claiming that the Lutheran position of SOLA FIDE condemned by Trent is also adopted and held in common confession by the Catholic Church! The whole point of this section is to point out our likenesses and differences. Right after explicating what the Lutherans believe, we read what the Catholic Church believes. If the Catholic Church were saying they "AGREE" and are now overturning what Trent has said then the whole declaration and it's particular explanations would have not been needed! As is clearly shown, this group of Lutherans do not hold to "faith alone" in the intellectual assent formulation that Trent fiercely condemned. Read carefully. The Lutheran position as put forth in the 16th century is different from that that is held by this particular group of Lutherans! If the position was the same, then it would be impossible to come to an agreement on this section.**

► 3) *Joint Declaration With the Lutherans on Justification, Oct. 31, 1999:*  
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**13. IN LIGHT OF THIS CONSENSUS, THE CORRESPONDING**

***DOCTRINAL CONDEMNATIONS OF THE 16TH CENTURY [the Council of Trent] DO NOT APPLY TO TODAY'S PARTNER.*"8**

*This again means that the fact that the Lutherans don't accept the Council of Trent's Decree on Justification in totality is not heretical, which is a denial of the Council of Trent. The Council of Trent condemned as heretical anyone who does not accept all of its teaching, as we saw above.*

**The remaining condemnations are STILL there, as we have examined. The condemnations that are no longer in existence are those where both sides have reached a mutual agreement. As can be seen from the very document itself,**

**40. The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this Declaration shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics. In light of this consensus the remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification described in paras. 18 to 39 are acceptable. Therefore the Lutheran and the Catholic explications of justification are in their difference open to one another and do not destroy the consensus regarding the basic truths. (4)**

**There IS a consensus but there are STILL remaining differences. The differences, as the declaration tells us, does "NOT DESTROY THE**

## CONSENSUS REGARDING THE BASIC TRUTHS."

It's quite simple. There are certain truths that both sides agree to, those truths are no longer a matter of dispute.

*So, don't be misled by those liars who try to convince people that the JD didn't really deny the Council of Trent, or that "it's much more complicated than that." These people are used by the Devil to defend the apostate Vatican II sect. The Joint Declaration with the Lutherans on the Doctrine of Justification completely rejects the dogmatic Council of Trent. Anyone who denies this is simply a liar.*

If the Dimond brothers could show us one section of the Joint Declaration that is notifying us that it is denying Trent then they would have a case. It would also be sufficient if the Dimonds could show us flawed and Protestant theology that has been adopted from this decree. It isn't complicated. The Joint Declaration is very easy to read and it's companion commentary makes it an enjoyable read. The Joint Declaration, at the outset, declared,

**"...JUSTIFICATION WAS REGARDED AS THE CRUX OF ALL THE DISPUTES, AND RESULTED IN THE MUTUAL DOCTRINAL CONDEMNATIONS BOTH IN THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS AND BY THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH'S COUNCIL OF TRENT. THESE CONDEMNATIONS ARE STILL OPERATIVE TODAY AND**

## **THUS HAVE A CHURCH-DIVIDING EFFECT."(5)**

**Throughout the document Trent is constantly hearkened to. If Trent was being tossed out the window, as the Sedevacantists would have you believe, we'd find it difficult to read certain sections which invoke just what Trent said!**

**What follows are a bunch of excerpts taken from the Joint Declaration that make it seem as if the Catholic side has compromised it's teaching in order to be more ecumenical. It surely WOULD be heresy if some of the things misrepresented would have been accepted by the Catholic side. The unfortunate thing is that instead of actually reading the Joint Declaration, as the Sedevacantists claim to have done, they have proofread it and have totally misrepresented the document! As we can see, the sections that start with , "ACCORDING TO THE LUTHERAN TEACHING..." are just what they say--regarding LUTHERAN teaching! It doesn't claim that the Catholic side has now adopted such a theology. The Dimonds go to great lengths to show that the Lutherans and the Council of Trent differ on these theological points. No argument at all! The Joint Declaration says from the OUTSET that the condemnations from Trent, in regards to various issues, are STILL in effect! The failure to understand what the Joint Declaration is saying is simply disappointing for a group that claims to be part of the TRUE Catholic Church.**

**\*\*\* In order to read everything that is quoted completely out of context by the Dimonds we recommend you read the PDF that they have put out on this. In order to see the tortured misrepresentation it is recommended that their work be read alongside the actual Joint Declaration itself.\*\*\***

**\*\*\* Footnote number (6) includes much of the joint declaration that is misunderstood by the Dimond brothers.\*\*\***

*Remember, all of these teachings of the Lutherans in the Joint Declaration – which are blatantly heretical and clearly condemned by the Council of Trent – are declared to be not condemned by Trent in #41 of the Joint Declaration!*

**This couldn't be farther from the truth. All the condemnations from Trent that are STILL a matter of dispute are still in existence. In a debate that I had against Peter Dimond of the Most Holy Family Monastery on the topic of Sedevacantism, Dimond asked me certain questions in regards to Sola Fide and it's terminological factors. I tried to explain to Mr. Dimond just what it was that the Joint Declaration was saying and just how it was and IS acceptable to use the formula SOLA FIDE in the sense that the Fathers used it--and in the sense that the Declaration is using it. Sola Fide, in the sense that TRENT condemned it, is NOT acceptable. But this was NOT what the Joint Declaration is speaking of when it endorses a Sola Fidean formula that is acceptable. A trend amongst so-called Traditionalists is the inability to understand or grasp Protestant theology. The majority of Sedevacantists are able to look over Catholic teaching and give it their own personal homemade twist and then attempt to also give Protestant theology it's own twist as well. Such a type of behavior lacks honesty. Within the various factions of Lutheranism, as we have already covered, the divergence of Soteriology is quite wide.**

*Moreover, the Annex to the Official Common Statement actually goes farther than the JD itself and professes belief in justification by faith alone on the “Catholic” side!*

**For an individual that understands Catholic theology and Protestant theology, to say "SOLA FIDE" is acceptable based on Catholic principles and not those that Trent condemned, is quite acceptable. For the Dimond brothers, anything that seems like it's of shock value should then be adopted! Unfortunately, the Joint Declaration is professing a**

belief in a formula that is NOT condemned by Trent.

In order to understand just what it was the Council of Trent condemned, we must examine what Trent says on this very topic.

## Canon IX

### Decree on Justification

"..if anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, so that thus he understands nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, let him by anathema."

An examination of the Latin will help iron this out for us even better.

In reference to the anathema, it is corresponding to **"ITA  
UT INTELLIGAT"**

In this context the Latin INTELLIGAT means a certain type of FEELING. So, THIS is the type of FAITH ALONE that is being spoken out against by Trent. As we will soon see, this is NOT the formula for "Faith Alone" that the document endorses.

In the Joint Declaration(25) we read what type of faith is being spoken of:

**"justifying faith..includes hope in GOD and**

**love for him. Such a faith is active in love and thus the Christian cannot and should not remain without works."**

This is the type of FAITH that is being spoken of here. A true faith, a faith that works itself out through love.

It is a well known fact that this joint agreement was years in the making. It didn't just sprout up in the late 90's and get signed. Long before it was formulated, the Church's scholars spoke of a type of "faith alone" that was acceptable, it was this type of faith crystalized in 1 Corinthians 13:13

**NAB 1 Corinthians 13:13 So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.**

**BGT 1 Corinthians 13:13** Νυνὶ δὲ μένει πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη, τὰ τρία ταῦτα· μείζων δὲ τούτων ἡ ἀγάπη.(7)

As the Lutheran World Federation has clearly defined, "faith" is tantamount to "FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE" which is all consonant with Catholic theology. So in this case, FAITH ALONE would be

**acceptable because it's not an intellectual type of faith that Trent slammed down upon.**

*This means that the “Church” of John Paul II officially accepts the Joint Declaration with the Lutherans on the Doctrine of Justification and rejects the Council of Trent. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, retains and will always retain the Council of Trent’s Doctrine on Justification, which was delivered by Christ to the Apostles.*

**This means that the Catholic Church has held on to it's ancient and historical truths so much so that it is now able to reach out to Lutherans and tell them that what Trent said is still true to this very day. Trent was not compromised in this joint declaration, rather Trent was EMPHASIZED! We can see that a little bit of theology can be quite dangerous if it's taken completely out of context. Within Sedevacantism we can see a wholesale abandonment of logic and willingness to trust the Church that GOD promised us he would not abandon. If we are to preserve our Catholic faith and to defend it, it would behoove us to understand it's theology and the theology of the churches that are dealt with.**

**GOD BLESS**

Footnotes 1-5 are taken from the Joint Declaration itself

Read the JD from the official Vatican site linked below:

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_31101999\\_cath-luth-joint-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html)

6.(the following are portions from Trent and the JD that are posted by the Dimonds-the Dimonds, not understanding just what the Joint Declaration is saying, have thought it fitting to post heaps of sections from Trent that condemn certain facets of Protestant theology. The Dimonds are of the mindset that the Declaration is affirming Protestant teaching previously condemned by the Church. As we have previously seen, they are confused on Catholic theology as well as Protestant theological matters in regards to justification and Lutheranism.

***Pope Paul III, Council of Trent, Session 6, Can. 4:***

***"If anyone shall say that man's free will moved and aroused by God does not cooperate by assenting to God who rouses and calls, whereby it disposes and prepares itself to obtain the grace of justification, and that it cannot dissent, if it wishes, but that like something inanimate it does nothing at all and is merely in a passive state: let him be anathema."10***

**► *Joint Declaration with Lutherans: "23. ...Lutherans... intend rather to express that justification remains free from human cooperation and is not dependent upon the lifereneewing effects of grace in human beings." – HERESY CONDEMNED BY TRENT!***

**•*Pope Paul III, Council of Trent, Session 6, Can. 1:***

***"If anyone shall say that man can be justified before God by his own works which are done either by his own natural powers, or through the teaching of the Law, and without divine grace through Christ Jesus: let him be anathema."11***

**► *Joint Declaration with Lutherans: "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 their 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 totally sinners."*<sup>12</sup> – **HERESY CONDEMNED BY TRENT!**

*This heresy is also called "simul justus et peccator" (at the same time just and sinner) and was one of Martin Luther's favorites. It was vigorously condemned by Trent in the following two passages.*

**•Pope Paul III, Council of Trent, Session 5:**

*"If anyone denies that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is conferred in baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted, or even asserts that the whole of that which has the true and proper nature of sin is not taken away, but says that it is only touched in person or is not imputed, let him be anathema."*<sup>13</sup>

**Pope Paul III, Council of Trent, Session 5:**

*"For in those who are born again [Justified], God hates nothing, because there is no condemnation, to those who are truly buried together with Christ by baptism unto death' (Rom. 6:4), who do not 'walk according to the flesh' (Rom. 8:1), but putting off 'the old man' and putting on the 'new, who is created according to God' (Eph. 4:22 ff.; Col. 3:9), are made innocent, immaculate, pure, guiltless, and beloved sons of God, 'heirs indeed of God, but co-heirs with Christ' (Rom. 8:17), so that there is nothing whatever to retard their entrance into Heaven."*<sup>14</sup>

► *Joint Declaration with Lutherans: "29. ...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 is a 'ruled' sin. "15 – HERESY CONDEMNED BY TRENT*

*Pope Paul III, Council of Trent, Session 6, Chap. 15:  
"... the doctrine of divine law which excludes from the kingdom of God not only the unbelievers, but also the faithful who are fornicators, adulterers, effeminate, liars with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, railers, extortioners (1 Cor. 6:9), and all others who commit deadly sins, from which with the assistance of divine grace they can refrain and for which they are separated from the grace of God."16*

7. Some translations render it as "...faith, hope, and charity"

The Greek term is agape, and whereas charity(caritas) is still a viable translation--LOVE brings out the context even better.

The Greek "agape", in this passage, is used in the noun nominative construct and therefore is important to point out that this passage is stressing the importance of this "affection"/"caritas"