

THEOLOGICAL THESES:

In which it is inquired,
Whether sufficient Grace is given to all Men
for Conversion, and for avoiding Sins?
And on this matter, the Doctrine of the Roman School is explained, and
compared with the Doctrine of the Protestants.

THESIS I.

On this question, there is not complete agreement among the Doctors of the Roman Church. Firstly, there are those who disapprove of the distinction of grace into sufficient and effective, and do not want any grace to be considered sufficient if it is not effective. They clearly teach that not all men are given sufficient grace either for conversion or for avoiding sins; since it is evident that not all are given the grace that is effective for these purposes. This opinion is defended by Jansenius and his disciples, as being in conformity with the doctrine of Augustine.

II. However, the common opinion of the Doctors of the Roman Church is to the contrary: at least as far as contemporary and more recent Doctors are concerned. They believe that sufficient grace is given by God to all for conversion and avoiding sins. They are led to this belief by passages of Scripture, in which it is said that God wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth; also that He does not wish anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance; among other similar statements. For these statements do not seem consistent with the idea that God wants the salvation and conversion of people; and yet denies them the grace necessary for faith and salvation. Moreover, unless sufficient grace is given to all men, they think many could be excused if they do not convert or abstain from sins, namely all those to whom such grace has not been given. For they do not believe that anyone can justly be condemned for not doing what they did not have the necessary and sufficient help to do: since, however, Scripture teaches that all those who persist in sins and do not turn to God are inexcusable.

III. Nevertheless, all those who seem to agree on this general thesis of sufficient grace being granted to all do not explain and understand this grace in the same way. For those who are called more recent Thomists, who teach that the effectiveness of grace consists in a certain physical determination of free will, say that sufficient grace is given by God to all men, since they are given sufficient help by God to act well: although with this help no one ever acts well; but for this, another distinct effective help is required that determines the will towards good, and which is not granted by God to all men. Therefore, according to them, sufficient grace is given to all men to act well: but yet it does not suffice to actually act well without new help.

IV. But Molina, and many other theologians of the Roman School, teach that sufficient grace is given to all, not only to act well but also to actually perform actions, if they wish, and it is within their freedom and power to use that grace, or not to use it.

V. However, it is to be noted that all Doctors of the Roman School agree that not all men are given the grace which immediately suffices for obtaining salvation. For this reason, they admit that with respect to adults, faith in Christ is necessary, which one cannot have unless Christ is preached to them or becomes known in some other way; although it is clear that the name of Christ is completely unheard of by many people.

VI. Therefore, when they insist on some universal and sufficient grace, they understand it as one that at least mediately suffices, so that by its benefit men may be led to eternal salvation: inasmuch as, if they use well the measure of grace first granted to them, God is always ready to bestow more, until He eventually brings them to the saving knowledge of His Son, through ordinary or even extraordinary means, as happened to Cornelius, who, piously worshipping God according to the knowledge granted him by God, was advised by an angel to summon Peter, from whom he would be further instructed in the path of salvation and receive the teaching of the Gospel.

VII. Indeed, they do not want all men to be given grace that is immediately sufficient to avoid sins and overcome temptations, but only that by which they can, at least mediately, avoid sins and overcome temptations. They acknowledge that many, with the present help, are unequal to overcoming temptation, and unless God provides greater assistance, they will surely succumb to evil desires; but they insist that at least they are not without help by which they can pray to God and obtain from Him the necessary grace then.

VIII. Moreover, Roman School theologians raise various questions here about which there is not the same opinion for all. And first, they inquire about infants, whether sufficient grace for salvation is given by God to all of them? Many in the Roman School deny this, since many infants die before Baptism can be administered to them, without which, however, they consider no infant can attain salvation. This is evident, especially in the case of infants who are extinguished in their mother's womb without the fault of the parents.

IX. Vazquez holds this opinion, noting here the question is not whether Christ has instituted means sufficient for the salvation of all children in themselves, but whether He has so provided and arranged them that their application is left to the free ability of someone. And later, making a certain distinction, he teaches that for some children, namely those born into the world, and those who die in their mother's womb due to parental neglect, sufficient remedies were provided, which could have been applied to them, although they were not applied due to adult negligence: but for some children, no means were granted by God that could be applied by human diligence, whether they are born into the world when water is not provided, or dying in the womb by the force of nature alone.

X. But others affirm that even with respect to these infants, sufficient grace is given to all: because God, as much as it is within Him, has prepared baptism for all infants, and has given parents and others who have the power over infants, whether the immediate or mediate ability to baptize them and thus secure their salvation.

XI. This is the opinion of Carlo Giuseppe Tricassini, a Capuchin preacher, in his recently published book on the necessary grace for salvation given to all and each, in the last section of the second part, where his conclusion is, All and each of the infants have sufficient grace for salvation, not indeed in themselves, since they are incapable of receiving it, but in their parents and the friends of the parents, who can lead them to baptism, and through this to salvation.

XII. Then he explains how parents can lead them to baptism. Namely, if they are unbelievers, they have the grace by which they can either immediately or at least mediately believe, and thus procure baptism for their infants. If, however, they are believers, they can pray for the salvation of their little ones, so that God may preserve them until birth, at which time they should be diligent to procure baptism for them as soon as possible. They can also avoid sins, so that their little ones are not deprived of their temporal life before being born. And especially mothers can avoid all things that can be harmful and deadly to themselves and their unborn children. If they observe these well, their children will come to baptism and thus to eternal salvation.

XIII. As for adults, those who teach that all adults are given sufficient grace do not agree among themselves whether this sufficient grace is always present with them, or whether it is given to them only according to place and time; so that sometimes they are deprived of it. For modern Jesuits and many other Doctors of the Roman School maintain that all adults are always accompanied by the grace by which they can avoid each sin as the occasion presents itself and to which they are tempted and driven, and by which they can also turn to God and rescue themselves from the state of sin

XIV. But others use a certain distinction here. There are those who believe that no one exists to whom God does not at some point in their life bestow grace by which they can turn themselves to God and become a participant in salvation: but they deny that this grace is always present for everyone: many are justly deprived of it by God because of their sins. However, they insist that God never denies any person the grace by which they can refrain from new sins and resist impending temptation, that is, either immediately or, as mentioned, at least mediately, through help which they do not have but can obtain through prayer. This is the opinion of Cardinal Bellarmine, as can be seen in the first chapters of the second book on Grace and Free Will.

XV. However, some proponents of universal and sufficient grace do not even admit that grace is always present for everyone to avoid sins: because, for example, some are abandoned by God due to excessive abuse of divine grace and as punishment and penance for preceding sins, to the point that they are henceforth entirely surrendered to their depraved desires and can no longer avoid sinning. They consider those whom the scripture calls hardened and blinded to be among this number.

XVI. Vazquez attributes this opinion to Tostatus, Bishop of Avila, Cardinal Cajetan, John, Bishop of Ross, and Cardinal, and Ruard Tapper, Professor at Leuven, who he asserts believe that sometimes, due to previous sins, people are deprived for a certain period of their life in such a way that they are not granted the sufficient and necessary help to observe the commandments of believing, repenting, and the like, and to avoid sins.

XVII. As for the Reformed School theologians, the vast majority do not recognize any grace that is sufficient to convert a person and lead them to salvation, which does not also actually convert the person and bring them to salvation. Accordingly, in their opinion, there is no sufficient grace that is not also effective: nor should this be distinguished from it. And since they teach that God's grace is effective only in the elect, they are far from acknowledging that sufficient grace is given to all men, whether for conversion or for avoiding sins, asserting that this is only obtained by the elect.

XVIII. Nevertheless, some contemporary theologians among the Reformed defend and preach a certain universal grace, which they wish to be common to all men, and which they also say is sufficient in itself and by itself for salvation. Therefore, when asked whether all men are given sufficient grace? They respond affirmatively. But they define that grace, not as some internal operation of the spirit that moves and excites a person's mind, will, and emotions to turn to God and flee from sin, but only as the external preaching and declaration of divine mercy, and an invitation to faith and repentance, in hope of obtaining forgiveness of sins and participation in salvation, whether this declaration and invitation occur through the external proclamation of the word or through various effects of divine providence, which exert themselves around men corrupted by sin.

XIX. They call this grace sufficient, not because, in their view, it simply suffices to actually convert a person without any other divine help, but because it makes salvation possible for a person, so that they can be saved if they wish: and there is no, as they say, physical impediment that stands in the way of their salvation: since salvation is duly offered to them, and they have the natural faculties, namely, the mind and will, with which they can embrace it if they use them correctly.

XX. However, they acknowledge that these natural human faculties, namely the mind and will, are so corrupted and vitiated by sin that unless some internal grace of God comes to illuminate the mind and bend the will, it is not possible for a person to use these faculties well and to obey and respond to God calling and inviting to participate in His externally offered grace, which is morally impossible for them due to inherent vice, without such internal grace.

XXI. Nor do they consider those who do not obey God's call any less inexcusable. This is because the moral impossibility lies in the deliberate persistence and hardening of the will in evil, which does not excuse sin, as is evident from the example of the demons: since we are only excused by those impediments that do not depend on our own will and which we cannot remove no matter how much we wish and strive.

XXII. Moreover, they believe that this grace, commonly offered to all men, is sufficient for God to be said not to want anyone to perish, but to will and earnestly desire the salvation and conversion of all men: since through it, God makes salvation possible for all, under a condition that depends on their will, and which they can fulfill if they wish: as there is no external cause or external impediment that obstructs their salvation, but only their perverse will, which rejects and despises the means offered by God and stubbornly refuses to use them.

XXIII. However, they consider internal grace, without which no one can embrace divine mercy, to be unique and special to the elect, and not available to anyone but the elect, far from being common to all. This can be seen in the works of Amyraut on particular grace and universal grace, and in Paul Testard's work on nature and grace, chapter 7, titled On supernatural grace, and the power of salvation granted by it, and its universality.

XXIV. Furthermore, they teach that this grace, which they call universal, is universal not only with respect to adults but also with respect to infants themselves, to whom, evidently, God has made salvation possible, insofar as He has willed that infants follow the condition of their parents: making salvation possible for all parents, and therefore for the infants who originate from them and are considered as some kind of appendage to them.

XXV. But it should not be omitted that the distinguished Amyraut in his Dissertation on Particular Grace refers to a third opinion, which he attributes to some among the Reformed, although he does not name them. Therefore, according to his report, they not only admit some external and objective Universal Grace, which suffices for salvation, but also some subjective and internal grace, which is also Universal, and of which all men are made participants by God, so that they can believe and convert, which could not be done without it. Although they do not deny that besides this subjective and universal grace, there is another that is special to the elect. They make, he says, both grace internal, which he calls subjective, and external, which he calls objective, somewhat universal: So that although they do not deny that a certain special efficacy is exerted in the elect, they think that, just as God reveals His mercy to all men, by which they are invited to faith and repentance; so also are the minds of all inwardly affected to that extent with respect to objective grace, if they want to embrace and retain it. And these, he says, have not published their doctrine but have only made private notes, which, however, have spread far and wide through the hands of men, having singled out subjective grace as particular only to the elect and having deemed the doctrine of absolute Reprobation, as repugnant to the truth, to be expelled from the bounds of religion.

XXVI. Furthermore, those called Remonstrants or Arminians in Belgium place among their principal doctrines the concept of a certain universal and sufficient grace, which God bestows on all for the purpose that they might, if they please, come to their senses and turn to God. Indeed, along with many contemporary theologians of the Roman School, they clearly teach and defend that not only is salvation offered externally to all and every individual by God, but God also acts internally in the minds of everyone, making it entirely up to them and within their power to use this internal and universal grace well or poorly: and thus either reject the offered salvation or gradually and step by step reach true conversion and faith, and thereby attain eternal salvation.

XXVII. However, the theologians of the Augsburg Confession, who are called Lutherans, reject the distinction between sufficient and effective grace as unnecessary and superfluous; yet in this matter, they seem to hold the same or nearly the same view as the Remonstrants. They believe that all are universally called and stirred to salvation by God, with a calling that is in itself, and by God's intention, effective: the fact that it does not take effect in many is due to many rejecting the calling God and resisting divine vocation, not accepting the efficacy of the grace offered to them, or once accepted, not using it well; instead, they willingly reject divine grace. Others, on the contrary, lend an ear to God calling and do not put any obstacle to the operation of the spirit within them. This is discussed in more detail by Johann Gerhard, Volume 2, in the treatise on Election and Reprobation, chapter 7.

XXVIII. Furthermore, from what has been said, it is clear that the doctrine of a certain sufficient grace given to all men is not yet held as an article of faith in the Roman Church, which cannot be denied without the mark of heresy, but although it is held by many doctors, there are still some who oppose it: And conversely, not a few among the Reformed today defend a certain universal and, in its own kind, sufficient grace, although the contrary is the more common opinion among the Reformed Churches. Hence, what many in the Roman School affirm, that all men are given sufficient grace for conversion and for avoiding new sins, is simply denied by many of the Reformed.

XXIX. However, those very Reformed doctors, who, at least in words, confess to some kind of universal and sufficient grace along with many theologians of the Roman School, in reality differ from them. For what the theologians of the Roman School understand about a certain internal and subjective grace, which makes the conversion of a man not only physically but also morally possible, the Reformed attribute entirely to an external and objective grace, with which, once posited, conversion remains morally impossible for a man deprived of internal grace.

XXX. Yet those who, according to Moses Amyraut, recognize among the Reformed a certain universal and sufficient grace, not only external and objective but also subjective and inherent in men, do not seem to differ from the more recent Thomists and Dominicans, since both groups, in addition to that universal grace which does not convert anyone in act, deem necessary a certain special help for actual conversion, which is not granted to all but only to those who are actually converted.