SCOTT HAHN & ROBERT KNUDSON
...THE JUSTIFICATION DEBATE

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[The following is a transcript of a taped debate between Scott Hahn, Catholic convert and former Presbyterian minister, and Dr. Robert Knudson of Westminster Seminary.
The original tape was distributed by Catholic Answers.]

MODERATOR
I'd like to begin this second half of the debate with a short scripture reading. I got the sense during the break that emotions are running high tonight on both sides. For good reason. All of us here, and I think I speak for Scott Hahn and for Dr. Knudson, we all appreciate the zeal and energy that we are bringing to this debate. Please don't think for one minute that the other side, whichever side you're on, is less interested and less convicted of their side than you are. And in an effort to try and calm the tension, bring ourselves back to the quiet reflection of truth, God's Word, I'd like to read a passage from 2 Timothy, chapter 2, beginning in verse 20.

"In a large household there are vessels not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for lofty and others of humble uses. If anyone cleanses himself with these things he will be a vessel for lofty uses dedicated, beneficial to the master of the house, ready for every good work. So turn from youthful desires and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace along with those who call on the Lord with purity of heart. Avoid foolish and ignorant debates, for you know that they breed quarrels. A slave of the Lord should not quarrel but should be gentle with everyone, able to teach tolerance, correcting opponents with kindness."

So now, with that in mind, we're going to open the second half of the debate on the question of justification. The resolution is: Are we justified by faith alone, which is the Protestant doctrine of sola fide, or is it as the Roman Catholic Church asserts, that there is justification by faith plus, in some way, some capacity, works? We'll open this section with Scott Hahn.

HAHN I think that it's a good sign that people who love Jesus Christ and seek to follow the Bible get together even if it's hard. It reminds me of another sign, a sign on a convent wall which read, "No trespassers. Violators will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Signed: The Sisters of Mercy." [laughter] Many people think that the Catholic view of justification has that incongruity of justice and mercy. I'm not sure it's incongruous, but I believe that it's harmonious. It's in contrast to the Protestant view and just for clarity's sake I wish to enunciate to the best of my understanding from Protestant sources what Protestants generally regardþwhether they're Presbyterian Methodists, Lutheran Episcopalians, Fundamentalists or whateverþwhat Protestants regard as the doctrine of justification. This is based on the Augsburg Confession of the Lutherans in 1530, the Second Helvetic in 1566, the Reformed Church's Westminster Confession in 1646, and many other statement as well. I think it's best summarized by a book on the back table written by James Buchanan on Justification By Faithþdidn't mean to advertise it, but it's a good book from a Reformed perspective. He defines justification as, "a legal or forensic term used in Scripture to denote the acceptance of anyone as righteous in the sight of

God." The Westminster Seminary faculty has adopted a statement on justification that I believe is very crystal clear in annunciating what is distinctively Protestant and non-Catholic. I read from the Westminster statement on justification for (garbled) in seminary: "Justification is altogether a legal, declarative act on God's part as the supreme Judge. We deny," it goes on to say, "that justification is in any sense a moral transformation or inner renewal." The Protestant position goes on, "In justification God legally declares the sinner who in himself is still guilty and polluted to be righteous in Christ. Justification involves only the legal imputation or legal account of the perfect righteousness of Christ to the sinner. We deny that justification is by a grace given at conversion which enables sinners to do the law unto their justification."

I used to teach this, I used to believe it, and after much study of Scripture and considerable prayer and a lot of pain I have repudiated it. I believe that we are saved by Christ through grace alone, by a living faith working in love. I believe that's the biblical view and I've also discovered, much to my shock, that it's the Roman Catholic view, restated in every official statement in the Catholic Church with regard to the doctrines of grace, justification and salvation. Two thousand years of faithful teaching. From Christ alone, through grace alone, by faith and works done in love, only and always by the Holy Spirit. Not works done by sheer human energy to kind of force God into a bargain or contract, but the works of God in us, by the Holy Spirit, through the Holy Spirit. If you want to understand the Catholic view, and I hope you want to understand it even if you don't want to end up agreeing with it, I would recommend the viewpoint of one of the greatest Catholic theologians of the ages, Matthia Schieban(?) who says, "The master idea of the Catholic faith in general and the doctrine of justification of the Catholic Church in particular is the family of God. We receive in justification, not a legal acquittal only, but nothing less than the full gift of divine sonship, living, active and powerful, simultaneous with when we are first justified." This is stated clearly in response to the Reformers in the Council of Trent, chapter 4, where justification is spoken of in terms of adoption of the sons of God through the second Adam, Jesus Christ. In chapter 8 also, the beginning, foundation and root of all justification without which it is impossible to please God and come to the fellowship of sons, justification from a Catholic perspective is divine sonship. It's standing in God's family. It's nothing we earn, it's nothing we work our way into.

How many people ever bought their way into a family? It can't be done and it hasn't been taught in the Catholic tradition. Justification, then, understood in the Catholic way, involves both the imputation of legal righteousness as the Protestants believe, but also the infusion of Christ's life and grace as the divine son so that in Christ we become at justification living, breathing sons of God, not just legally but actually. That's what the grace of the Father does for His children. In other words we hold with the Protestants that justification involves a legal decree, a divine word , that we are just, but unlike the Protestants and contrary to their position, we believe that that word of justification goes forth in power. In other words, God does what he declares. In the very act of declaring us just he makes us just because His Word is omnipotent, it's all-powerful. Isaiah 55:11: "So shall my Word go forth from my mouth. It shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose." Were God to say, 'Scott Hahn's a woman,' I would say [in a trill], 'No, I'm not.' I would become a woman in the very act of His declaring me to be such. His Word is what brought the world into being, even if you don't like my falsettoþI don't either. The point is that whatever God declares, He does by declaring it to be, because the Word of God is the living and active Christ himself. When we're declared just, god does what he declares. He fathers children in Christ, the eternal Son. The Catholic Church does not teach legalism. If individual Catholics you meet believe that through their own individual works-righteousness they can buy their way into heaven or merit everything on their own, you tell them to go back to their church, back to the Scripture, back to their councils, and change their minds. It isn't works-righteousness, it isn't striking a bargain or a deal with God at all. It's God having His way in us by filling us with His life, His love, His power. So God transforms children of the devil into children of God, not just by mere legal decree but by giving us Christ in his sonship. Therefore, according to the Roman Catholic Church, each and every deed I do that is pleasing to God is nothing other than the work of Christ active in me through the power of the Holy Spirit. St. Augustine said as a result, "When God rewards my labors, He’s merely crowning the works of His hands in my life." As Paul says, "We are not competent of ourselves; our competence is from God who has made us competent." It isn’t me but the Holy Spirit in me enabling me to cooperate and operate. So we are justified and made holy by God’s grace alone. The Catholic Church says, ’It’s grace from beginning to end; there’s no strict merit whatsoever. If there’s any merit it’s the merit of a child who grows up and receives from the parents the life of the family, and works and learns and does fidelity in the household. So it’s like a father who gives and fills his children with all that he has and is. But Paul says, ’Not of works, lest any man should boast.’ Paul’s excluding good works performed apart from grace, apart from sonship, outside the family, by men and women who think of themselves as employees or servants. But that is not what Paul is saying. Paul is saying that we are saved by grace through faith, but nowhere ever does Paul say ’alone’. Luther consciously added the word to Romans 3. He in his translation of the Bible into German deliberately and knowingly added a word that was not there in the Greek. He thought that it should be and that it was in spirit, but he added it. Justification by faith alone, first defined after 1500 yearsþfirst defined by Lutherþwas done so and defended by adding a word to the Bible that was not there.

But faith alone makes a man just with God; nothing else is needed. If we turn to the New Testament, however, we find Christ’s real teaching not only in Paul but also in James, chapter 2, verses 20-24, where James says, "Faith without works is dead. Do you not see that by works a man is justified and not by faith alone?" As Professor Shepherd of Westminster Seminary said, Paul and James are speaking of justification here in the same sense. So why do Protestants formulate a doctrine of justification that won’t fit the way the Holy Spirit led the New Testament writers to speak of justification? Paul and James are in harmony, but the doctrine of justification by faith alone expressly and explicitly contradicts what James says when he says, "A man is justified not by faith alone...." But Jesus offers salvation as a free gift, beyond what we deserve; all we have to do is just simply accept. Jesus offers himself to us and his salvation as free gift, beyond what we deserve, but you are wrong when you say we only have to accept. Jesus will say to those who say, ’Lord, Lord’ on that day, "Depart from me you workers of lawlessness." As Paul also says in Philippians, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling in your hearts." So we can bargain God into an exchange? No, because God is at work in you both willing and doing for His good will and pleasure and purpose.

But Catholics are always doing, doing; they’re always doing something to be saved. Of course that’s true, because what father wants his children to be sitting around all day without learning, growing, working and maturingþthat is, becoming like Him? When we pray, ’Lord, come into my heart,’ we’re doing something. When we say, ’Lord, I want to receive you into my heart as my personal Lord and savior, we are saying and doing something. When we sing, attend church, study Scripture, share the gospel, likewise. But then salvation is just God paying us for our worksþwhich Paul condemns. True, Paul condemns those who make salvation a wage or salary. Let me say that again. We are not teaching that salvation is in any sense an earned wage or salary. Rather, it’s a reward by way of inheritance. What child ever bought his way into the family? Entrance into the family, membership in the family, is pure gift. Or what parent ever told a child, "You will inherit and rule in the family no matter what you do? Salvation is a reward only in the sense that an inheritance is. From start to finish it’s pure gift. Even growing up and learning and doing is a gift received by children appropriating the parents’ gifts of life and truth. So its straight from the life and hearts of the parent, in this sense God the Father, into the body and soul of a child, the Son of God, the Christian. This is the Bible, this is St. Paul, this is St. James and this is the Catholic Church. Matthew 5, verse 12: "Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." Matthew 7, verse 21: "Not everyone who says to me ’Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 19:17: "If you wish to enter into life, keep the Commandments." Romans 2, verse 6: "God will render to every man according to his works." Romans 2:13: "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Colossians sums it up very well; chapter 3, verse 23: "Whatever you do, do from the heart as unto Christ, knowing you’ll receive of the Lord the reward of inheritance." Given to children, of course. First John, chapter 3, verse 7: "Little children, let no one deceive you, he who does right is righteous as He is righteous."

One of the greatest professors of Protestantism of the twentieth century was a man by the name of John Murray. His protege and successor had to leave Westminster Seminary because he saw that these statements and formulations of the Protestant church were not fully in line with Paul and James: at least many people didn’t believe that his statements were converse with the Protestant tradition. You will see that Protestant theologians in interpreting the Bible will actually say that adoption is only a legal actþfor instance, John Murray. Again, many consider him the greatest Protestant bible-believing, spirit-filled Bible theologian of the twentieth century. As a typical and representative Protestant, he argues in his book Redemption Accomplished and Applied, page 167, "Adoption is only a judicial act." We’re not really made children of God, we’re simply declared children legally. That’s not the Catholic view. He says, "Not degenerating within us of a new nature or character to say that men by adoption come to share in Christ’s sonship"þthis is Murray nowþ"that men by adoption come to share in Christ’s sonship and thus enter into the divine life of the Trinity, this is grave confusion and error. No one shares in Christ’s sonship." And yet we hear, "Little children, let no one deceive you, he who does right is righteous as he is righteous." [1 John 3:7]. Galatians 3:26 also tells us that we are righteous before the Father as children, for "in Christ you are all sons of God." In Romans 8:12 it says, "You who have received the spirit of sonship. It is the spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ provided we suffer with him that we may be glorified with him." And my last verse is 1 John 3:1: "See what love the Father has given us that we should be called the children of God, and so we are." We’re not just called children, we’re not just declared children, we are. We’re given a new nature in justification that makes us true children. J.I. Packer in his book Knowing God says, "It’s a strange fact that the truth of adoption has been little regarded in Christian [that is, Protestant] history. Apart from two last century books, now scarcely known, there is no evangelical writing on it, nor has there ever been at any time since the Reformation."

No wonder. It isn’t by law alone. We are fathered as children of God when we are justified by faith working in love, and not by faith alone.

KNUDSON

If we read in the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation we find that the four living creatures day and night never stop saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty who was and is and is to come." I read from the New International Version. We ought to be impressed not only, but we ought to be overwhelmed by the holiness and the righteousness of God. As far as the holiness of God is concerned, that of course refers to the fact that god is highly exalted above us, above His creatures so that we can only view Him in awe and reverence. But it also refers to the goodness of God, to the fact that the Scripture says that Him there is no shadow of turning. In him there is perfect righteousness, perfect justice, perfect goodness. But then there is also the perfect standard of God, that the scriptures not only tell us to be good, they lay out the Commandments, but it also tells us this: that we ought to love God with our whole heart, soul and mind, and that we ought to love our neighbor as ourselves. This is not something that is simply partial; we are told that we are to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. And that does not refer to only one or other order of Christians, we hope that those of us who belong to the clergy try to seek to be holy, but that refers to everybody, everyone who is a Christian. But then man comes to the big question: considering the holiness of God and the righteousness of God, and considering my own sinfulnessþbecause the Apostle Paul says, "Everyone, all have sinned," and fallen short of this perfect standard, how can I become right before God? That is the question of justification. You can say, "What must I do to be saved?" Yes, that's indeed so, but as this discussion has developed, we are focusing particularly on the idea of justification: How then shall I be right before God?

Now, if I have read the canons of Trent properly and the articles there, if I hear Scott properly, it is said in your circles that we are not justified by, in our own strength, and that is true. If I read these documents properly and if I listen to Scott Hahn properly, then it is not by the works of the law, and that is true. But then the question comes: How do we view the works of the law? What do we mean exactly by what is in our own strength? The teaching I would like to present, which I believe is solidly based on Scripture, is that justification is a gracious declaration of God. We're familiar in the courts with a 'not guilty' judgment. A judge or jury will come with a verdict 'not guilty' on the basis of what that person is, that he did not commit the crime. But the difficulty with us and our sinfulness is that we indeed are guilty and nevertheless, in spite of that fact, God comes with His declaration 'not guilty' even though one is not right before Him. One is reckoned, he is declared just, and that is the understanding that I am presenting of justification.

I might mention the Short CatechismþScott had been referring to Presbyterian traditionþIn the Shorter Catechism (sic) it says in Question 33, "What is justification?", and the answer is simply that justification "is an act of God's free grace wherein he pardoned all our sins and accepted us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone." The matter is indeed from the Protestant position that one is just from the declarative act of God while he is yet a sinner. That belongs to the notion intrinsically. That, then, comes through faith, as we say, through faith alone.

Now Scott is indeed right that when God justifies us by imputing to us the righteousness of Christ, He doesn't only do that. At the same time, inseparable from that, He makes us new creatures, new creations in Christ Jesus; He does adopt us as sons. That is obviously not because of anything good in ourselves, but it is an adoption. We are not like the Jews who were naturally in the vine, but we have been put in the vine, grafted among the children of God. The point is that there is power connected with this, but nevertheless in the Protestant tradition, we limit the idea of justification to that declarative act, but we say that this justification is never simply by itself, it is never alone. But then why do we say that it is by faith alone? It is because of the sharp opposition that is drawn in the scriptures, that is drawn in the writings of the Apostle Paul, between justification by works and justification by faith. The idea that justification is not , that there is complete opposition between justification by worksþif it's not thatþthen faith is the only thing, the only avenue by which one can receive this.

Do I understand the position as Scott presented it? There is something that with God's grace, there is indeed a merit. This is included in the idea of justification and therefore we are not justified by faith alone, but with the infusion of God's grace we are justified on the basis of the merits that we have in Jesus Christ by the work of the Spirit.

Now, you see, that is indeed what the Protestant Reformation rejected, because it saw in Scripture this great opposition between works and faith. And it said that there is no merit connected with justification other than the merit that is in Jesus Christ himself. The Good News of the gospel is a salvation by grace through faith as Scott quoted from Ephesians 2. "For by grace you are saved through faith and not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast."

But do I not also understand that there is a question here of assurance? Is it the case that one needs to be justified and justified and justified because of the grace given to him but nevertheless continued until the issue is finally settled when he dies in grace and is then finally saved? The position it seems to me of Scripture, as the Apostle Paul says in the first verse of the fifth chapter of Romans, "Having, therefore, been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, it is said that Luther wanted assurance, needed assurance, and that was the reason that he came up with the idea of justification. I believe that we all need assurance, and assurance belongs to faith because faith is a firm attachment, it is a certain resting upon Jesus Christ for our salvation. It is indeed not a mere credulity, it is something that has a real foundation in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. As far as uncertainty is concerned....I'm married. Is my relationship with my wife better if it were kept constantly in doubt and uncertainty? There's some modern thinkers who say that, but I wouldn't claim that any of you would say that. But if we know that we are children of God because He has declared us just because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, we have this peace with God of which the Apostle Paul speaks.

As far as faith and works are concerned, there are very, very many subtle things that could be said, and Scott referred to some of them. One of them is that very difficult passage in the writing of James. Let's look at it this way, as some commentators would; let's look at it practically. Supposing a woman says to her husband, "You say you love me. Do something about it!" I think that's the tenor of that passage. He's talking about those who say they have faith and that faith is empty. He even speaks about the empty man, the person who is void, he is empty, who says such a thing. Faith without works is dead; in fact it is no true faith at all. But what James is talking about there is not just cooperation of faith and works unto justification. Isn't he telling us, "This is the kind of faith that saves? After all, he is talking about those who already are saying, Yes, I'm saved by faith. But he's telling them that this is a faith that must show itself, must manifest itself in works. Florists will sometimes say, "Say it with flowers." Indeed our works do speak.

But let me just repeat that, "Justification is an act of God's free grace wherein He pardons all our sin and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone." We do say that justification is by faith alone, but it is not by a faith that is alone. That happened to be something that Professor Norman Shepherd said with which I thoroughly agreed.

HAHN
I want to thank Professor Knudson for a very good job summarizing the Protestant position and interacting with the Catholic position. I also want to take this opportunity to thank him for the respect and sensitivity that he shows in so doing. I hope that the last thirty minutes have been clear in simplifying the differences. There are two views of justification and faith here involved. The Protestant view is built upon God understood primarily in terms of His holiness, as a judge. We are understood primarily in terms of guilty criminals. Christ is an innocent but willing victim substitute. Hang the penalty. Justification then is just simply a legal exchange. We get his legal righteousness; he gets our punishment. The Catholic Church agrees with all of these but regards them as partial truths. The Church tries to put them in the broader context, in this case the notion of the divine family, the notion of divine sonship. God is a holy judge, but even more, He's a loving Father. His holiness and His judgment are

that of father’s heart. God is a loving father; we are the ones He makes His children. Jesus is the one who dies and rises to give us his own divine sonship and nothing less than his own divine sonship. Justification is therefore his declaration of that sonship and, as I’ve mentioned, he does what he declares by declaring it [Isaiah 55:11]. God’s word does not return to Him void. It accomplishes the purpose that He set out to accomplish. So salvation and justification in the Catholic tradition is regarded, then, as growing up to be a mature, loving hard working son of God or daughter of God in His family, the Church of Christ.

Now, I don’t sense that this in any way detracts from the righteousness of Christ. To me it perfectly manifests the righteousness of Christ which is put within our souls, not just legally, but actuallyþalive and powerful because the Holy spirit transforms our nature. When we’re justified we are transformed, we are not only acquitted and forgiven. We are made children of God and not only criminals who are taken off of death row.

Assurance does belong to the Catholic doctrine, that is, the assurance of moral certitude, as the Council of Trent and Catholic theologians define it. It’s the kind of certainty I have that my parents are my parents and I am their child. I have the Holy Spirit, and so I have that moral certitude that comes from the Holy spirit, that comes from my own growth and life in Christ, that I am in fact a child of God. But that moral certitude is not to be identified with my faith itself. My faith is not in my faith, but in Christ who made me a child of God by giving to me his own righteousness. I am a child of God because God has not only imputed but also imparted, and that’s the big difference. Has He only imputed a legal righteousness, or has He also imparted a divine sonship? Has He only decreed me innocent, or has He done what He has decreed by making me a living child of god with the life of the Father living and breathing and moving within me, so that my works are really nothing but my Father’s works in and through me?

The question I’d like to pose, then, is: Is adoption what John Murray and the Protestant tradition teaches, that is, only legal? Is the notion of our share in Christ’s divine sonship actual, spiritual, dynamic and personal? Is that really a grave confusion and a grave error, or is that in fact the doctrine of St. Paul and St. James? And finally, how is that Paul never says we’re justified by faith alone, James does say we aren’t justified by faith alone, but by faith and works, and so why have we formulated a doctrine in the Protestant tradition that contradicts James and says what Paul never said? Who is taking the Bible literally here?

KNUDSON
As far as the question is concerned: Is justification simply legal? I don’t believe that’s a good formulationþsimply legal. It’s a declaration in which God pardonsþwe have here [apparently reading]þHe accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ. There is a legal side of it, very, very much. There is a declarative thing which is what we call forensic It is legal; of course, it is not legal just simply in the sense of the law courts. But nevertheless the point is if we think of justification are we going to think first of all about this declaration of God that we are righteous in spite of the fact there is no righteousness in us that is able to fulfill His holy, complete and perfect will. I would have to look up some of these references to which Scott makes reference, and I would have to look at them more carefully. But my point has been this: that that is essential to the idea of justification as presented in the Scriptures, and that this indeed is by faith alone. The question comes: Why do we say by faith alone? I tried to point that out in my remarks because of the opposition that Paul in Romans and Galatians makes between the two. If faith is not by works and we would not allow merit unto

justification even by the works of the Christian if that is not by works, then what is it? It says by faith and that, then, has to be by faith alone. Let’s get back a moment to what James says there We can admit that there are things in Scripture which are difficult to be understood. The Apostle Peter himself mumbled a bit about the teachings of the Apostle Paul, as you know, that they were rather difficult to be understood. I tried to put that is some perspective by asking us to look at it from the practical point of view. Supposing a person does come to you and say, "I have faith", and he has no works. Faith is, I would say, a living faith. Otherwise, it’s really no faith at all. A living faith, as Scott pointed out, does something. That is true, it does something, but the point is whether it is by faith that we, then, have justification. A faith that will work, it does something. As I tried to point out, the entire context there in James is that the Scriptures speak of Abraham, that Abraham was justified by faith. And what does that mean? I would think that’s the entire context of it. We can’t then think that it’s simply a question of faith and works together for our justification, but what kind of faith is it that justifies? It is a living faith that indeed does something, but it is by faith alone that we can be justified because we can not be justified by our works and there is no merit unto our justification. However, God does make us His sons. He does fill us with life. Our faith is living and we are united with Jesus Christ through faith, and we also live out the life of Christ in everything we do.

MODERATOR
Thank you both. We’ll now have the section for cross-examination, beginning with Mr. Hahn.

HAHN
I believe that we are justified by faith apart from works of the law, but works of the law are works that we perform apart from grace. Romans 2 speaks of how the doers of the law are the ones who will be justified, because grace enables us to just. I want to ask a two part question. First, do you agree with the statement of John Murray that, "To say that men by adoption come to share in Christ’s sonship, and thus enter into the divine life of the Trinity, this is grave confusion and error. No one shares in Christ’s sonship."? And, secondly, in the Westminster statement on justification they emphatically affirm, "Justification involves only the legal imputation of the perfect righteousness of Christ."

KNUDSON
As far as the statement of Murray is concerned, I’m trying to understand what he had in mind there without having the book before me. It would seem to me to make a lot of sense that Murray is denying that in our justification or in our Christian lives we partake of the divine nature, that somehow we would take on divinity, or something of the sort. We would then be mystically immersed in the divine being, or something of the sort. We maintain at our seminary and, I think biblically, always, the difference between the Creator and the creature. However, it is true that we are mystically united to Jesus Christþthat is in the Scripturesþ and we participate in Christ’s life, but not in such a way that is substantial.

HAHN
I want to stress that in the Catholic tradition that mystical element is emphasized because as 2 Peter, chapter 1 says, "We are made partakers of the divine nature." We have a real, and not merely legal share, in the very life of the Blessed Trinity. The Trinity becomes our heavenly home, it becomes our present life, we have eternal life through the Holy Spirit here and now. On the basis of that I would say again

this question: Does God’s decree of justification do what it decrees, or does it fall short, and why is that James who says "not by faith alone" and Paul who never says "by faith alone", how do we get from those two passages the doctrine that all Protestants, all Fundamentalists hold, that we’re justified by faith alone?

KNUDSON
Scott repeats this idea. Again, one would have to look at the entire tradition, I suppose, but on the basis of my knowledge of the Scriptures very definitely I would have to deny that in any way we are united with god in Jesus Christ in a way so as to destroy the relation of Creator and creature. Whatever we become in Christ we become as God’s creatures, and then we are made perfect in Christ Jesus. Now, does the justificatory act accomplish what it says? Yes, of course, because of the fact that even though we are sinners, even though we have fallen short we are declared righteous by god and we are accepted in Him and we have the assurance of our salvation. Now, I know you said no testimonies, but perhaps I can be allowed one sentence [laughter]. I accepted Christ when I was 7 years old. Since that time God has not left me for one moment without the warm sense of His presence as His child and I thank Him for that.

MODERATOR
Thank you, Dr. Knudson. Now it’s your turn to ask Mr. Hahn a question.

KNUDSON
I have been emphasizing a great deal the opposition between Calvin does this too in his Institutes, as you are well awareþthe opposition between justification by good works, as if there was some merit in our works, and the apostle Paul says definitely that is not the case. If that is so, then is not Calvin right when he says that we should not follow Luther in this. Melancthon, I understand, did defend Luther in this interjection ’only’ or ’alone.’ Isn’t this tantamount to saying that there is this cleavage, this opposition that justification is by faith and by faith alone?

HAHN
I’m not sure I understand the question. Is there a cleavage between the Lutherans and the Calvinists?

KNUDSON
The cleavage of which I was speaking is this. If our justification is by works it is not by faith; if it is by faith it is not by works.

HAHN
Right. We emphatically in the Catholic tradition, following James and Paul, denounce any works-righteousness, any notion whatsoever that we are justified by works. We are justified by faith, and as James says, we are justified by faith and works, as Galatians tells us, we are justified by faith working in love. Neither circumcision counts for anything, neither uncircumcision, but faith working in love. So the perspective of the Catholic Church is not that of a Roman courtroom, as J.I. Packer insists it should be, and also John Murray and other Protestant theologians. It’s that of a Hebrew covenant family

in which the judge is a father, and in decreeing judgment and in decreeing righteousness he's doing what he's decreeing by imparting to us his own life. Not that we cease to be creatures; we'll always be creatures ever dependent upon the Creator and ever distinct form the creator, but the Creator who loves is the Father who fathers us to be His children, and thatþdespite whatever we may have seen or heard from individual Catholicsþthat is the ancient teaching of the Church and that is age-old teaching of the Church and I believe that it is perfectly consistent with Paul and James insofar as we're not saying works-righteousness, we're not saying any kind of legalistic scheme. We're justified by faith working in love, which is nothing other than the very real grace of Christ operating in us, enabling us as children to grow up. Are we continually justified? Do children have to keep going over hurtles and immaturities? Of course. Weþre continually justified because our sonship is ever growing as a divine seed within us as children of God.

KNUDSON
I must insist again that it is not right to say that the Protestant view is simply legalistic. But without this declarative act, without this act which has a legal side to it, without the idea that we are justified in spite of the fact that we do not deserve it, merit it, that is the thing. As far as the life that we have, once having been justified, as Paul says in Romans 5:1, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God. Justification is an act of God's free grace in which He pardons and accepts us. Then we live out that life which He gives us throughout our entire lives, persevering to the end in love of Him. But what we do not do is say that there is a continuing justification based on any merit in us.

MODERATOR
Now we'll have audience questions. Please keep them short so that our speakers can get to as many questions as possible.

QUESTION
Professor Hahn, just so you'll know where I'm coming from, I'm an ordained officer in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. I want to say this: Praise God for the work of grace in your heart. I've never heard a better, clearer exposition of the Christian faith than I've heard from you tonight [applause]. I've heard words such as yours from very few men, Catholic or Protestant. My question is this. I know that at Vatican II it was declared that the Church ought to read the Bible and that therefore they ought to have a Bible in their own language and a modern version so they can read it, and I noted that the moderator this evening made the lighthearted observation that you could tell the Protestants from the Catholics by whether they carried the Bible. Now you could only have learned what you've learned from the Bible. What can you do to get more Roman Catholics to read the Bible?

HAHN
My years within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church have led me to the utmost respect for that denomination, and I wish to apologize for my vagueness at the very beginning of the debate. If I was in any way taken to be casting aspersions, doubts and accusations toward the OPC, that is contrary to my intention. I love the brothers and sisters in the OPC and I respect that denomination as much as any Protestant denomination in the world. I am especially grateful for how it's nurtured me in many ways. One of the ways I do it is by teaching scripture with about 110% of my energy. You've seen about 10% of it tonight. My whole being aches and yearns to share Scripture with the Roman Catholic people in

this country. My whole being yearns to share the doctrine of the covenant understood properly, I believe, as a family, and not understood as a contractþI think that was a major diversion from the Protestant reformation after a beautiful insight of recovering the covenant, it misunderstood it as a contract. I think that the covenant is a living and active family and I believe it's the family in which many Catholics live and move without hardly any understanding, largely due to an overreaction to the Protestant use of the Bible alone, they've stopped using the Bible to an extent. I would also add, though, that the Bible was made available in German in 14 different editions before Luther ever translated it; it was made available in over a dozen other languages before Luther was even born. Itþs a myth that I helped perpetrate by taking my girlfriend and several of the young people in the youth ministry out of the Catholic Church by telling them that the Bible always was suppressed by the Catholic Church, when in fact Iþve discovered quite to the contrary: that they made many more translations than I ever knew. The reason why they refused to authorize certain translations of Wycliffe and Luther was because of faults they found in the translations. Especially when Luther added words such as þaloneþ in discussing justification.

QUESTIONER
I'd like to bring you back to the question, Scott, and ask you what specifically we can do to get more Catholics to read the Bible. Try to sum it up quickly.

HAHN
Well, I suppose, hold debates like this where Catholics can discover their traditions. Have Bible studies. I hold three Bible studies a week for an hour and a half almost every week. I have to prioritize my family and my four children accordingly, but I have a burning passion to see a Bible study in every parish, following the Church's teaching, but digging deep. I would encourage you to encourage your Catholic friends to study Scripture, not contrary to the Church, but fully in line with the Church. I would encourage Catholics to buy books about the Bible, read the Bible, pray before reading the Bible and afterwards. My students in my courses get so much Bible!

KNUDSON
I spoke of being properly ecumenical. I sincerely believe that with my heart. I think that one ought to recognize the working of the Spirit wherever it occurs: in the Lutheran Church, in the Catholic Church, in the Presbyterian churches, wherever. I can only say, study the Scriptures! That's what the Bible tells us to do, that we should study them and understand them. I do want to point out, however, that we have brought out real issues this evening. We have referred to the Tridentine statements and the canons, for example. I think issues are drawn very clearly there. I've tried to mention some issues from the other side. So, my reaction to this is, go to it!

QUESTIONER
Dr. Knudson, in one sense from what I've been hearing is that perhaps there's very little difference between the two positions here. Much of what you've talked about is actually the doctrine of atonement, but if you bring in the doctrine of sanctification and put that together with justification is there really all that much difference between the evangelical Protestant and the Roman Catholic view?

KNUDSON
Well, certainly justification doesn't stand alone. It's always paired with other doctrines, never separated from sanctification. The idea of atonement is very important, but in the Protestant tradition and, I believe, in the scriptures, justification itself has this forensic tone, this legal side to it this declarative thing without really all the rest of it, I would say it would be impossible (sic).

QUESTIONER
Would you clarify for the audience what sanctification is?

KNUDSON
Sanctification is that in Christ we are made holy, and not only made holy, but increase in holiness. Referring once again to the Shorter Catechism of Westminster, Question 35 says that sanctification is the work of God's free grace whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die to sin and live unto righteousness. Justification and sanctification in our view and, I believe, the view of scripture are never separated. One of the major things that one of the professors at our seminary, Professor Gavin says, emphasizes so much is our union with Christ. We are united with Christ and we partake of Christ's life and that life ought to be manifested in everything that we do.

HAHN
I do believe that the issues are real and substantial. I have found in my own tradition a strong statement repeatedly made that justification is reducible to a legal declaration, and as the Westminster statement of justification reads, pages 13 through 16, "We deny that justification is in any sense a moral transformation or inner renewal." Now I believe that St. Paul uses the words justification and sanctification almost interchangeably in a way that Protestants do not and almost, I would say, can not. I mention a few verses: Acts 20:32, Acts 26:18, 1 Corinthians 1:2 and many others that you can look up all speak of sanctification as by faith. As a result I suggest that the distinction between justification and sanctification that Protestants make, that justification is only legal and sanctification is a moral change, is not actually in Paul's writings.

QUESTION
There's so much that I agree with, Mr. Hahn, in what you said about salvation and justification, but I suppose the reason I agreed with so much is that I shifted the terminology around because you were using justification and salvation interchangeably. In one sentence you said, "Justification and salvation is" and then you went on. You presented justification as being the Protestant view of salvation, making justification and salvation equal terms, and you present it as though Protestants don't view God as doing the work in the heart, changing us, making us different. I know you don't believe that because that's very much a part of Murray's position, so could you clarify that Protestants do believe that god does all that you said he does: He changes us, makes us new people, and yet it's just that we don't call it justification, because to do that would be to say that the final reason for me being in heaven is I had something to do with it rather than God. So could you clarify the Protestant position of god working in our hearts?

HAHN
I understand that Protestants believe that God changes us, but I also find in their theologians this continual position that there is no share in Christ's divine sonship, which I find embedded in St. Paul's writings. John Murray emphatically repudiates that. Also, with regard to sanctification and justification, listen to 1 Corinthians 6:11: "You were washedþmost commentators think that means baptismþyou were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ." Sanctified comes before justified there. Now I found that as a Protestant I had so emphatically redefined justification as only legal, sanctification as a moral change, so that, you know, Protestants believe in moral change, and my point is not to deny that Protestants believe a moral change comes over the Christian, but that Protestants improperly completely dissociate that from justification. But in Paul's writings we are justified by faith working in love, not in a sense flexing our own muscles and forcing God to fork over some goods in heaven, but it's His life being formed in us in the very act, in the process of justification, that is, receiving sonship.

KNUDSON
It's clear that the scriptures teach that faith works in love, that is true. Faith does something; faith is an active faith. But whatever the order is, the scriptures do not, as I read them, associate a declarative act with sanctification as it does with justification. In sanctification there is a real change, we are transformed. In justification the idea is first of all that we are declared righteous based on the righteousness of Christ. To my mind that is clear teaching from scripture.

QUESTION
Dr. Knudson, perhaps I misunderstood the rest of the debate here, but it seems to me that much of the argument comes down to the status of man vs. God, whether on the one hand it's a son relationship or on the other hand a more status oriented and formal type of relationship. Salvation vs. judgment, in a certain sense. If it is indeed simply a question of your position, doesnþt the Bible consistently, in all portions of the New Testament talk about salvation in terms of Christ coming to bring man into the kingdom of God, to transform man into sons of God. Christ called himself not only the Son of God, but the Son of Man. If that's the case, how does that conform to your position?

KNUDSON
I would say it's simply Scripture teaching that Christ did come to bring us into his kingdom, the kingdom of God, but no one can enter into the kingdom unless there has been this declaration, that he has been declared just. If we're going to be sanctified, we have to have been declared righteous, because otherwise there's no entry into God's kingdom at all.

HAHN
What comes out in the questions and in the presentation is that hairs are being split. I want to stress that the Catholic view is two thousand years old. It didn't change with the Protestant reformation. It's the same as it's always been. Justification has always been stressed as a declarative act, but not merely as a declarative act. That is what Protestants emphasized and required, that it's only legal. The Catholic Church has always affirmed that it's legal and declarative, but because it's God declaring it's also transformative. Sanctification is a word that emphasizes the transformative aspect but it also involves a declarative aspect. In other words the Catholic position is both/and whereas it seems to me that the

Protestant position is either/or. Either faith or works, not faith and works

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QUESTION
I think both of you would allow the discussion of justification to mix in with regeneration. You don't get justified into the family of God, you get born into the family of God, and the Bible splits hairs because it uses the different terms. But however you want to use them I want to ask you this: Can you lose it? And if you can, how do you lose it and how do you get it back?

KNUDSON
As far as the Scripture teaching as I understand it, there is indeed the new birth or the birth from above. Christ speaking to Nicodemis says not to be surprised that you must be born again or born from above. That is exceedingly important. Unless we are moved by God's spirit, unless we are quickened by God's spirit, enlivened by God's spirit we cannot believe.Nevertheless, our attention has focused here on justification because that's the way the debate was set up.

HAHN
In the book of Hebrews, especially chapters 12 and 13, there's a continual warning being given to people in God's family that they have got to hold fast and work out their salvation in fear and trembling, not because God is not faithful, but because sons can grow wayward. They can be disinherited, they can run away, they can rebel. God's grace is always there to restore, God's power and desire are always coordinated to bring back the penitent son, the prodigal, but we have assurance that God knows those who are His from all eternity, and they will be effectually saved. But since we don't have access to the Lamb's book of life to see our own names and know that we are among them, St. Peter tells us to be zealous to confirm our call and election. So I would say that we have the assurance as sons that we are children of God and in his family, but that we have to be zealous to confirm that call and election in the household of faith.

FINAL SUMMATIONS

KNUDSON
Our debate or discussion has focused on these two important questions: Where is the final authority, and I have maintained that the final authority, what we call the infallible rule is found in the Scriptures, and that we cannot accord the same infallibility to church, council or whatever it may be, even though we respect these things very much. Christ himself said that he was the truth. He said he had come to promulgate the truth. He himself in his incarnate form was subjecting himself to the truth, namely the word of God, which he himself was, but in his incarnate form subjected himself to it. The tradition from which I come, to speak of tradition, does emphasize the word very much. Scott says that your tradition does that too, and I respect that very much. But Scott also pointed out the major issue: whether the one that establishes what is the tradition is the Catholic Church, and on that we do indeed differ and we differ very much. According to the Reformation it was said at that time that council and church and so on had indeed made errors. We all make errors. But the enscripturated word is our final touchstone, that is by which everything ought to be judged.
As far as the justification side of it is concerned, I have maintained the Protestant position, the position

as I understand it of the Reformation, that salvation is by faith, that justification is by faith, and it is not by works, lest any man should boast. We donþt want to add anything to translation of Scripture that is not there, but is it not the meaning that it is by faith alone? But as I pointed out, salvationþthat is, justificationþis by faith alone but it is by a faith that is not alone. It is by a faith that is always accompanied by good works.

Now that brings up the point about whether we can ever lose that justification. That was one of Scott's major points in reference to Professor Norman Shepherd at Westminster Theological Seminary. We discussed those matters very very seriously for five years. Mr. Shepherd was indeed saying that on a certain level it was indeed possible for us to lose our justification, and some of us on the basis of the teaching of Scripture had to demur. We did not force him outþat least the faculty did notþbut he was dismissed for the good of the seminary, an action that I did not precisely approve of in that form. If one is once justified, can he then lose it? God has declared that we are just on the basis of the merit of Jesus Christ, the perfect merit of Jesus Christ, and Christ has said that no one will pluck us, grab us, out of his hand. No one. If, then, one rejects the faith, if one shows that there are no works, is it not rather to be said, "No, he never knew Christ." Christ will say, "Depart from me. You never knew me."

HAHN

There is a statement made by Archbishop Fulton Sheen that I heartily concur with. Bishop Sheen said, "I don't believe that there are even a hundred persons in America who really oppose the Roman Catholic Church, although there are millions who oppose what they mistakenly believe the Roman Catholic Church to be and teach." I believed for many years that the Catholic Church was not only wrong but sinfully wrong, dangerously in error. I worked hard to get people out of itþmy girlfriend, several people in my youth ministries. In seminary I was very anti-Catholic not out of any kind of cultural prejudice, but out of a deep sense that if the Roman Catholic Church was wrong it wasn't like another kind of denomination being wrong because no other church on earth claims to be what the Catholic Church claims, and that is God's one, true, universal family, historically tied to Jesus, Peter, the Twelve, the Seventy and the early Church in an unbroken line of succession, transmitting faith, doctrine, morals, worship, prayer, spiritual life. If they're wrong it's a demonic deception, and I respect people who oppose the Catholic Church as evil, because if it's wrong, it isn't slipping or blundering lightly. If it's right, then we have along with Jesus Christ and the Cross, a marvelous work of Jesus Christ in our midst. If Jesus Christ were to walk into this room right now as he walked into rooms in Palestine two thousand years ago, you would be surprised to think that that is the second Person of the blessed Trinity, God in human form. He would sweat, he might be tired, he might need a drink, he might have to even relieve himself in the bathroomþI don't mean to be irreverent in any way, but he was a human, he had a body like ours. Do you realize the kind of faith required of people back then who looked at that person and said, "That is the second Person of the blessed Trinity. Or as St. Thomas said, "My Lord and my God." You're looking at a body which is human, 30-some years old, performing miracles to be sure, but the body of the God-man. What awesome faith God gives to us and we're barely aware of it! How much more difficult it must have been to live in the midst of his own ministry seeing this body that grew weary, tired. He might have had acne as a teenager (laughter). He really was human. The Church carries on that difficulty, because the Church is the Body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the household of the Father. Jesus said, "I will build my church."

It isn't our church, it isn't our denomination. He is the one who established his church on a rock and renamed a real slug named Simon to signify the fact that he could take slugs and nothings like me and you and do great and wondrous things through them. Not because Peter was so great, but precisely because he was so small and god was so great. God can do, through the grace of the Holy Spirit in human lives that are just simply submitted to Him and awesome and wondrous thing throughout the

world in restoring to himself prodigal sons and daughters.
This is the master idea of the Catholic faith. It is seldom understood, and when it is, it is seldom hated. I have a very heavy heart because of all that I've done to detract from the Catholic Church in my past, but I've gotten a far greater joy in the opportunity to share the fact that the Catholic Church has always proclaimed itself to be the one true family of God. As a fulfillment of the Old Testament nation of Israel it is now international, neither Jew nor Greek nor Gentile, male or female. We are all standing before a Father on the basis of what Christ has done and what the Holy Spirit is still doing in preserving the Church.
As hard as I know it is for some of you to hear that the Catholic Church is preserving the truthþbecause we have deep prejudice against any and everything that the Catholic Church isþI urge you, I plead with you and I pray that you would buy this book or a book like it and prayerfully read through it, asking yourself whether God has brought about an evangelical movement in our own day, giving great faith to many people in the Protestant worldþand I believe that I'm a part of that and I believe that God's purpose for it is to bring a lot of people back into the Catholic Church with a great faith and great love for the blessed Trinity as our family, for the Church as our home, for the Pope as a symbol of our family unity. PopeþPapa means father. Mary is truly our mother, not just legally. We believe the saints are our older brothers and sisters, role models who have gone before us to inspire us and who now stand before our Father with a graced love that is perfected so that they love us in a way that we can barely imagine, and when you love someone you pray for them. The whole thing is great, big family, and God I believe is sending out the Holy Spirit stir up our hearts and awaken minds of anti-Catholics to the possibility that like Saul of old, with good and sincere intentions, they were opposing something that we nothing less than the work of God.
We have seen that fallible men have been used by the Holy Spirit to produce infallible Scripture. If God could do it then, why wouldn't He want to raise up fallible men, filling them with the Holy Spirit so that He could infallibly transmit sure and reliable interpretations of the Bible? This book is a family register. It belongs not in the academic environment, not in the ivory tower, but in the Church, the family of God. This I believe is the purpose for my life and I believe it's the purpose of many people who don't realize it yet.
I can't tell you how hard it was for me to read Catholic books. It was so hard for me for years to even pick up a book that was written by a Catholic, it seemed to me to be so wrong. I graduated at the top of my class at Gordon Cornwell, I am a sincere if sinful child of God. The Holy Spirit is great within us. He loves to use nobodies, and that's how I qualify. He loves to use nobodies and speak through them so that God will get all the glory. How does a father get the glory? Does he get it by simply having us bow down and say, "We're nothing, we're nothing, You're everything"? Or does a father get glory by raising up great children? I'm a teacher. I want to be known as a great teacher. Can I go around pasting up billboards saying I'm a great teacher? No one'll believe me. The way I become known as a great teacher is by raising up great students. God fathers well. He fathers us; He makes us what we can't make ourselves. We aren't saved by works of the law that's what we do ourselves but we are saved by a living faith that imparts to us the life of Christ, and not merely his legal righteousness. We are saved by the life of Christ living in us as children of God, sharing divine sonship.
The sacraments were scandalous for me. I couldn't believe what they meant. And then I came to see that baptism corresponds to the natural birth; that the Eucharist corresponds to the Father's sacrifice to provide a family meal, to feed and so constitute His own beloved household. Across the board the Catholic faith can be understood as God's family in every way. God has given the garage mechanic, the cleaning lady, the newspaper boy the raw materials to understand His loving revelation. You don't need a PhD in theology, you don't even need courses in theology per se, although I recommend them highly. God has given us a family on earth as a kind of curriculum, so that we might understand what the whole plan of salvation entails, and that is what the Catholic faith enshrines.

I know it’s hard for you to believe. I urge you to pick up this book, to read it with an open mind, and if you don’t have an open mind, ask God to suspend hostility. I believe that God wants to work in this hour to reunify the children of God. The family of God has been tragically split, rent asunder. Four hundred and fifty years ago theologians and scholars and intellectuals split hairs. Instead of keeping the reform movement within the Church so that holiness would replace hypocrisy, people were impatient and left the Church, insisting that their interpretation alone was the most right one after fifteen hundred years of other views. Could it be that pride got in the way of purification? Could it be that humans, as great as Calvin and Luther and Zwingli were, didn’t understand that they could trust the Holy Spirit to transmit to them through fifteen hundred years of living tradition a truth that could be reinvigorated with the Bible the way they wanted to? I believe that it is true, I believe that it’s possible for evangelicals, for fundamentalists, for charismatics, for non-Catholics of every stripe to look carefully and prayerfully into the Catholic faith, examine the claims, judge the evidence, and I believe there will come a holy shock and a glorious amazement. I’ve already seen it in some of my best students. One of best friends in seminary talked to my wife and tried to get her to think about divorcing me when I became a Catholic; he’s now centimeters away from becoming a Catholic himself as a Presbyterian minister. The other good friend from seminary, the most anti-Catholic of them all, is now dean of men and professor of theology at Christendom College, one of the finest Catholic schools in the country, teaching Scripture and pumping students with life and with truth and with a vigor that is just going to spill out throughout our country and I believe throughout the world.

I just want to end on this positive note. I thank Dr. Knudson not only for being a gentleman but for being a Christian gentleman. I thank all of you for your questions and your patience in listening to this three hour ordeal. But now the work really begins. Some of you I suspect have studied under some great pastors and listened to some great preachers. I did too. I count Dr. Nicole, Dr. Packard, Dr. Sproul, Dr. Girschner and many others my mentors and fathers in the faith. I believe I can only see farther than them because midgets can see farther than giants when they’re standing on their shoulders. The great Protestant theologians can help us, and your own bible reading and your own prayer and your own openness can also help. I don’t mean to be exclusively exhortive, but I do mean to exhort you to reconsider what is just so hard to consider: that the Church as the Body of Christ in its own historical life continues the same scandal that the individual body of Christ had when he was ministering here.

We’re not Jesus, we’re not identified with God or with the God-man, but we are living, vital members of his spiritual body. And so all of our warts, faults and flaws show, and all of the Catholic hypocrisies and sins were there for me to see in the persons of all my Catholic friends who were drunker than me, who were more profane than me. We’ve all got negative experiences, but with much prayer and Scripture study I believe that we can be pleasantly surprised in what we find when we study the Catholic faith. I want to close with a simple question: Could the Reformation have been one of the most tragic episodes in the history of God’s family, taking out great minds and great souls who because of a pride common to us all were not patient enough to bring about inner renewal through patient endurance in the holy Catholic Church? Thank you very much.

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Last modified March 28, 1997.