



How Are We Saved?

6. Purgatory.

Do We Need "Elevating" Grace?

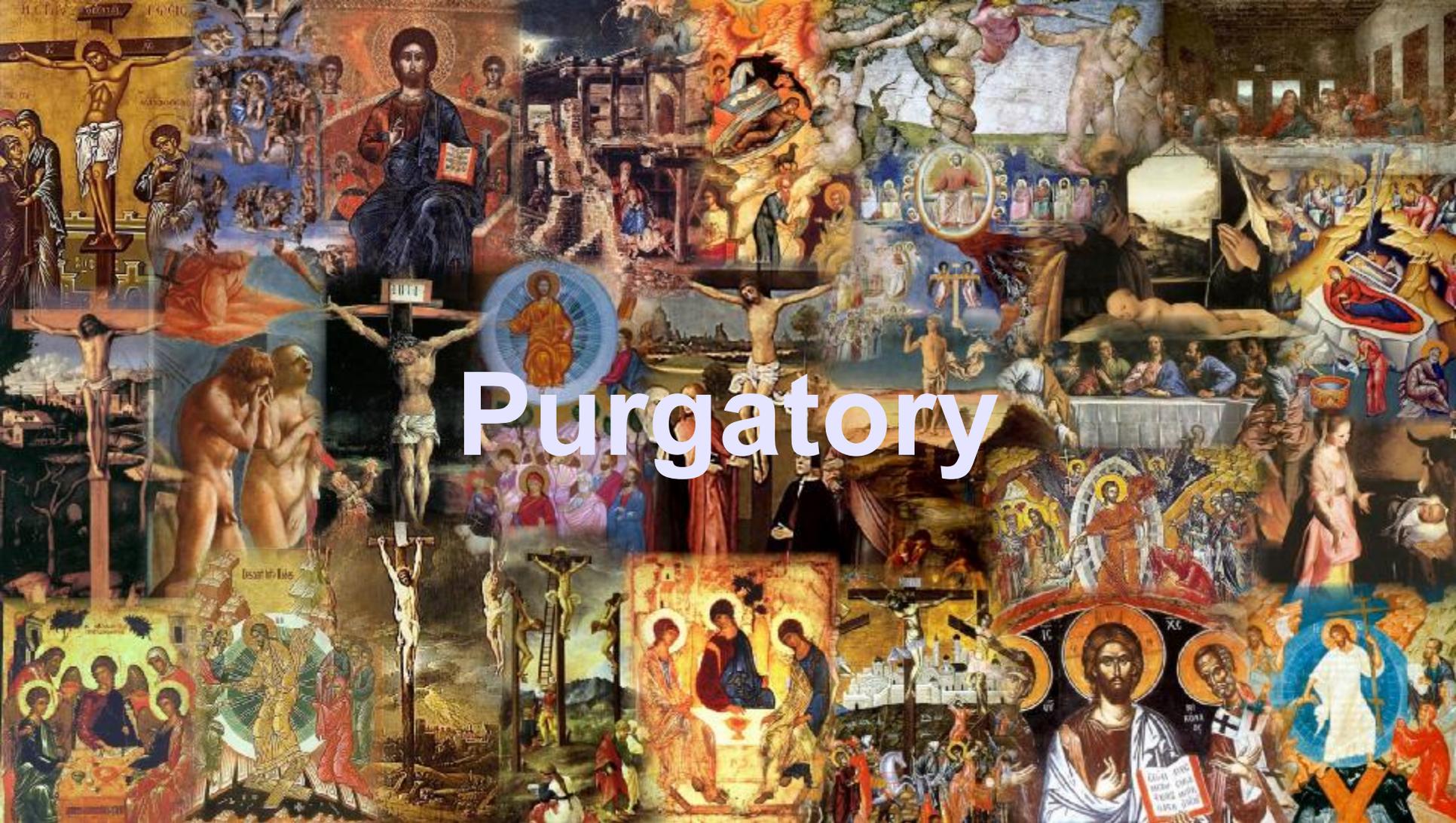
The Origin of Our Souls and Original Sin.

The Energies of God.

St. John in the Wilderness

■ Christ, the true light, who enlightens and sanctifies every person coming into the world, let the light of Your countenance shine upon us that we may see Your unapproachable light; and guide our steps in the way of Your commandments. Lord our God, the source of all wisdom and truth, send down upon us the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of discernment. Enlighten the eyes of our souls with the light of Your knowledge, that we may learn from Your wisdom and grow in virtue, to the glory of Your name. Amen.

■ From An Orthodox Prayer before Study, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese



Purgatory

Purgatory

- The concept of **Purgatory** is a uniquely Roman Catholic idea.
- The Churches of the Protestant Reformers reject it.
- Eastern Christianity (for much different reasons) rejects it.
- Why do Roman Catholics think they may need it?
 - "may" -- belief in Purgatory is not required to be a "good" Catholic. ■

Purgatory

- Catholics say **Purgatory** addresses two problems:
 - 1. not being holy "enough" (= sanctified enough) when we die to be able to enter heaven.
 - 2. not having yet paid back all the debt or punishment due to our sins before we die.
 - We must first pay back all the debt or punishment due to our sins before we can enter heaven.
- The first problem -- not being holy enough to enter (or enjoy) heaven -- is a problem all Christian traditions acknowledge as a possibility. ■

Purgatory

- For Eastern Christianity, becoming "holy" enough to enter heaven is the very purpose of our life on this earth.
- Rather than speak of "sanctification," or "becoming holier," they prefer to speak of the process of "theosis:" to develop, grow our capacity to participate in the divine life.
- That capacity is part of our renewed human nature, made possible by God becoming human (allowing humans to become divine). ■

Purgatory

- Eastern Christians are unclear on how much growth in holiness (in "theosis") during our life on this earth is "enough" to enjoy heaven.
- There is a sense that more is better, but it is rather unclear how little is too little. ■

Purgatory

- For Western Christians in the Reformation Churches, the focus is primarily on the need to become "justified" in order to enter heaven.
- In "justification," we are externally "cloaked" with the radiant goodness and righteousness of Christ.
- Faith in Jesus is all we need to receive this radiant cloak.
- Even though we ourselves are still sinful and corrupt inside, the external "cloak" of the radiant goodness and righteous of Christ is enough to get us a ticket into heaven. ■

Purgatory

- The Reformation churches suggest that the external cloak of the radiant goodness and righteousness of Christ will slowly change us inside, slowly "beach" our sinful, corrupted selves, making us holier, more sanctified.
 - Lutherans would say our inner selves are changed very little over a lifetime.
 - Methodists would say we can achieve a great deal of holiness ("entire sanctification", "Christian Perfection")
 - Reformed Christians lie in between Lutherans and Methodists (although closer to Lutherans). ■

Purgatory

- All Reformation Churches would agree that after we die, God will "purify us" *fully*, make us *fully* holy before we enter heaven (usually called **glorification**).
- But how that happens is rather vague. ■

Purgatory

- So for Catholics, **Purgatory** is the answer to a problem other Christian traditions also have but are somewhat vague about -- how do we get fully "holy" after we die in order to get into or enjoy heaven?
- The second reason Catholics cite for **Purgatory** however, is a problem *only* Catholics are worried about: somehow we must find a way to pay back *all* the debt due to our sins, debt that we did *not* fully pay back during our lives. ■

Purgatory

- Recall that in the "**Satisfaction**" Theory and "**Penal Substitution**" Theories of atonement:
 - Our sins are an offense against the infinite God.
 - The offense of our sins generates an infinite debt, a debt we as finite creatures cannot possibly pay.
 - Yet God's sense of justice requires the debt to be paid, and only a human being can pay it.
 - The only solution to this quandary: the second person of the triune God became a human being, and Jesus paid the infinite debt from all our sins by suffering and dying on the cross. ■

Purgatory

- Now Eastern Christians *completely reject* the **Satisfaction Theory** and **Penal Substitution Theory** of atonement.
- God does *not* require payment of any debt for our sins.
- There is *no* "infinite" debt that needs to be paid because our sins offended the infinite God.
- God forgives our sins and that is *all* that is needed.
- The idea that God's "sense of justice" requires a debt or "satisfaction" be paid for every sin is a *Western hang-up*. ■

Purgatory

- Western Christians however are worried about the debt or satisfaction required because of our sins.
- For Protestants however, Jesus' suffering and death on the cross solves the *entire* "debt" problem.
- Jesus' suffering and death on the cross paid back *all* the debt due to *all* human sin for *all* time. ■

Purgatory

- But Jesus' suffering and death on the cross does *not* completely solve the debt problems for Roman Catholics.
- Roman Catholics say:
 - Jesus' suffering and death on the cross pays back the "infinite" debt due to our sins as an offense against the infinite God, *but*
 - there still remains a finite "temporal" debt due to our sins being an offense against our finite fellow human beings, or an offense against our finite selves, and we must pay back that finite, temporal debt *ourselves*. ■

Purgatory

- There are several ways we can pay back that "finite, temporal debt" during our lives:
 - 1. "*ex opere operato*" by conscientiously performing the penance for our sins imposed on us when we confess our sins in the sacrament of Penance / Reconciliation
 - 2. "*ex opere operantis*," by self-imposed penances (prayer, fasting, almsgiving ...), and by patiently bearing the suffering and trials sent by God during our lives
 - 3. by earning "**indulgences:**"
 - We can draw on the surplus of "merits" of the saints and Jesus stored in a treasury in heaven, and those "merits" can be "reckoned" to us as payment of some of the debt or satisfaction we owe because of our sins. ■

Purgatory

- The Roman Catholic church no longer "sells" **indulgences**, but "earning" indulgences is still a part of the doctrine and spirituality of Roman Catholic Christians.
- If you die without fully paying back the finite, "temporal" debt you owe for your sins, you will have to spend time in **purgatory** until you have paid back that debt.
- People still alive can reduce your time in **purgatory** by earning **indulgences** for you. ■

Purgatory

- This aspect of the doctrine of **purgatory** -- a place we go after we die to pay back the finite, "temporal" debt due to sins -- is an aspect:
 - *no* Protestant can accept, for Protestants profess that Jesus' suffering and death on the cross paid back *all* the debt for our sins.
 - *no* Eastern Christian can accept, for Eastern Christians profess there is *no* debt or satisfaction in the first place to be paid. ■

Purgatory

- If however you jettison the finite, temporal debt side of the Catholic doctrine of **Purgatory**,
- if you think of **Purgatory** only a possible answer to the question, "how are we made fully holy (how are we fully sanctified or "glorified") before we enter heaven?"
- then **Purgatory** could be a possible answer to a question *all* Christian traditions have. ■

Purgatory

- **Purgatory** is usually envisioned as a "place," but there are alternative views.
- One famous Roman Catholic theologian has suggested that **Purgatory** is not a place, but a "moment:"
 - the purifying fire of that moment after we die and are face to face with God,
 - and see our lives, what we have done, and what we have not done, from God's perspective.
 - The fire of that moment is what purifies us, makes us holy.
 - The fire of that moment is the "moment" of **Purgatory**.
- The Roman Catholic theologian who suggested this was Joseph Ratzinger,
 - later to become Pope Benedict XVI, currently the first Pope Emeritus. ■



Do We Need "Elevating" Grace?

“Elevating” Grace?

- What is a human being?
- Are we part of nature or above nature? Are we mortal or immortal?
- Are we body and soul? Or body, soul and spirit? Or a unity: an ensouled body, an enfleshed / embodied soul?
- Are we essentially good or essentially evil?
- Are we "sinners" because we commit sin? Or do we sin because we are, by nature, sinners? ■

“Elevating” Grace?

- These are questions that are part of the study of what is called **theological anthropology**.
- We'll look at a couple issues in “theological anthropology” that can color views of how we are saved.
- The first: Do We Need "Elevating" Grace to live eternally with God? ■

“Elevating” Grace?

- All Christians would agree:
 - 1. Human beings are creatures with the very special status of being created in God’s own image and likeness.
 - Human beings are essentially good.
 - 2. As a consequence of sin entering into the world through Adam and Eve, ("The Fall"), human beings come into the world as "fallen," estranged from God and their own true being.
 - They are born “damaged goods,” inheriting a spiritual corruption that pervades every aspect of their being, leading inevitably to personal acts of disobedience to God. ■

“Elevating” Grace?

- Eastern Christians and Protestant Christians would say that God *made* human beings *for eternal life with God*, for "divine" or "supernatural" life.
- Adam and Eve were made to live eternally with God.
 - Pristine human nature, human nature before "The Fall" had one foot in nature and one foot in the divine world.
- But as a consequence of "the Fall," Adam and Eve and all their descendants lost the capacity for eternal life with God.
- We then needed God's help and grace to *rescue us* from the consequences of “The Fall,” fix our human nature, so once again we could fulfil that for which we were created, our destiny of eternal life with God. ■

“Elevating” Grace?

- Roman Catholic Christians, coming from the theology of Thomas Aquinas, put things somewhat differently.
- Aquinas made a sharp distinction between the natural world and the supernatural world. He suggested:
- Adam and Eve were created with a capacity *only* for a mortal life on this earth.
 - Pristine human nature was *not* capable of supernatural divine life.
- The capacity for eternal life was then given to Adam and Eve as a *gift*, a *grace* that "elevated" their mortal nature, a special grace making them capable of eternal life with God. ■

“Elevating” Grace?

- One way of understanding Aquinas' reasoning is this:
 - Did God ask your permission to be created?
 - Did God sit down with you and say, “I've got a deal for you.
 - I'll give you say, max 100 years of finite life on this place called earth (although it could be much shorter).
 - You may experience moments of beauty and splendor in the grass, but also pain and suffering.
 - You may learn to love and be loved, but you may also experience rejection and hate,
 - If you do well, you can have eternal bliss in heaven, but if you don't do well, you might end up suffering eternal torment in hell.
 - Sound okay?” ■

“Elevating” Grace?

- But God did not ask you. He just went ahead and created you “to sink or swim.”
- So God, Aquinas decided, understood that by so doing, God has certain “obligations” to you:
 - God's “obligation” to us in creating us as human beings is our natural, mortal life on this earth.
 - Eternal life however is not an obligation to us, that would be “beyond the call of duty,” a gift; that would be pure “grace.”
- So Aquinas wanted to make a distinction between:
 - natural, mortal life (not a gift),
 - eternal life (a gift). ■

“Elevating” Grace?

- We have talked about the Roman Catholic idea (following Aquinas) of **Sanctifying Grace**: a “created” grace:
 - where God “molds,” “shapes” our souls, so we have a soul:
 - with the shape or habit of a soul that has “practiced” love for years and years,
 - with the shape or "habit" of a soul that has “practiced” hope for years and years,
 - with the shape or "habit" of a soul that has “practiced” faith for years and years.
 - that makes us creatures capable of acts of love, hope, and faith.
 - that makes us intrinsically holy. ■

“Elevating” Grace?

- Roman Catholics (following Aquinas) also teach that **Sanctifying Grace** "elevates" our natures so we become capable of eternal life with God.
- In fact they emphasize that **Sanctifying Grace** is *primarily* a grace:
 - that *elevates* our nature so we become capable of supernatural life with God,
 - and to a lesser degree a grace that heals the consequences of the Fall.
- Even Adam and Eve -- before they sinned -- *needed* (and possessed) **Sanctifying Grace** so they could have eternal life with God. ■

“Elevating” Grace?

- Protestant and Eastern Christians on the other hand, teach that human nature before the Fall was fully capable of eternal life with God.
- We need God's grace only to fix the consequences of the Fall. ■



The Origin of Our Souls and Original Sin

Origin of Our Souls

- Another difference among Christians that falls under "theological anthropology" is whether we are creatures who are:
 - "tripartite" / "trichotomous," having *three* distinct aspects, components, or substances in every human person:
 - **body, soul** and **spirit**, or:
 - "dichotomous," having *two* distinct aspects, components, or substances in every human person:
 - **body**, and **soul**, or
 - psychosomatic unities that cannot be "sliced" into separate substances. ■

Origin of Our Souls

- Eastern Christians traditionally have taught **trichotomy**: we are **body**, **soul** and **spirit**:
 - The **soul** is the "mediating organ" of the human being; the animating life force that surpasses the physical body but does not survive bodily death.
 - The **spirit** is the higher substance or dimension of a human person that radically transcends physical and the animating life-force.
 - It is capable of communing with God both in the body and (after death) out of the body. ■

Origin of Our Souls

- Western Christians have traditionally taught **dichotomy**: we are **body** and **soul**.
- For Western Christians, the **soul** is like the Eastern spirit: the higher substance or dimension of a human person that radically transcends the physical, capable of communing with God both in the body and (after death) out of the body. ■

Origin of Our Souls

- **Holism** is a relatively recent view that we are psychosomatic unities that cannot be "sliced" into separate substances.
- Many modern scholars feel it is actually the more biblical view. ■

Origin of Our Souls

- The view we are:
 - **body** and **soul** (in the West), or
 - **body**, **soul** and **spirit** (in the East)
- also invites questions on the origin of the **soul** (in the West), or the **spirit** (in the East).
- The two primary views, still alive today, are:
 - 1. **Creationism**
 - 2. **Traducianism** ■

Origin of Our Souls

- **Creationism** is the view that each human **soul** is created *de novo* by God and united at or before birth to the body produced by the human parents.
 - (not to be confused with the belief among some fundamentalist Christians today that God created the universe a mere several thousand years ago) ■

Origin of Our Souls

- **Traducianism** is the view that the human **soul** comes into being at the moment of conception, a product of conception, not requiring the "intervention" of God.
- The soul starts out as a tiny zygotic soul, and gradually develops into an embryonic soul, a fetal soul, and finally a baby soul as the developing human zygote becomes an embryo, a fetus, and finally a human baby.



Origin of Our Souls

- **Traducianism** was perfect way to explain the transmission of Original Sin.
- As the Western theologian Tertullian famously quipped, *tradux animae, tradux peccati* -- the “propagation of the soul is the propagation of sin.” ■

Origin of Our Souls

- Augustine, who formulated the Doctrine of Original Sin so influential in the West, waffled all his life between **Creationism** and **Traducianism**, unable to decide between them.
- **Traducianism** was a very "natural" explanation for the transmission of Original Sin, but Augustine felt it:
 - infringed on the sovereignty of God, giving to human parents the "power" to make an immortal soul, or,
 - threatened to make the soul look like a material thing, something corporeal. ■

Origin of Our Souls

- On the other hand, if Augustine embraced **Creationism**, he would have to say that God was creating *de novo* a human soul *corrupted* by Original Sin and implanting it at or before birth in the body of the human parents.
- Augustine did not like the idea of God creating a "corrupt" human soul.
- The mighty Augustine never found a solution that satisfied him. ■

Origin of Our Souls

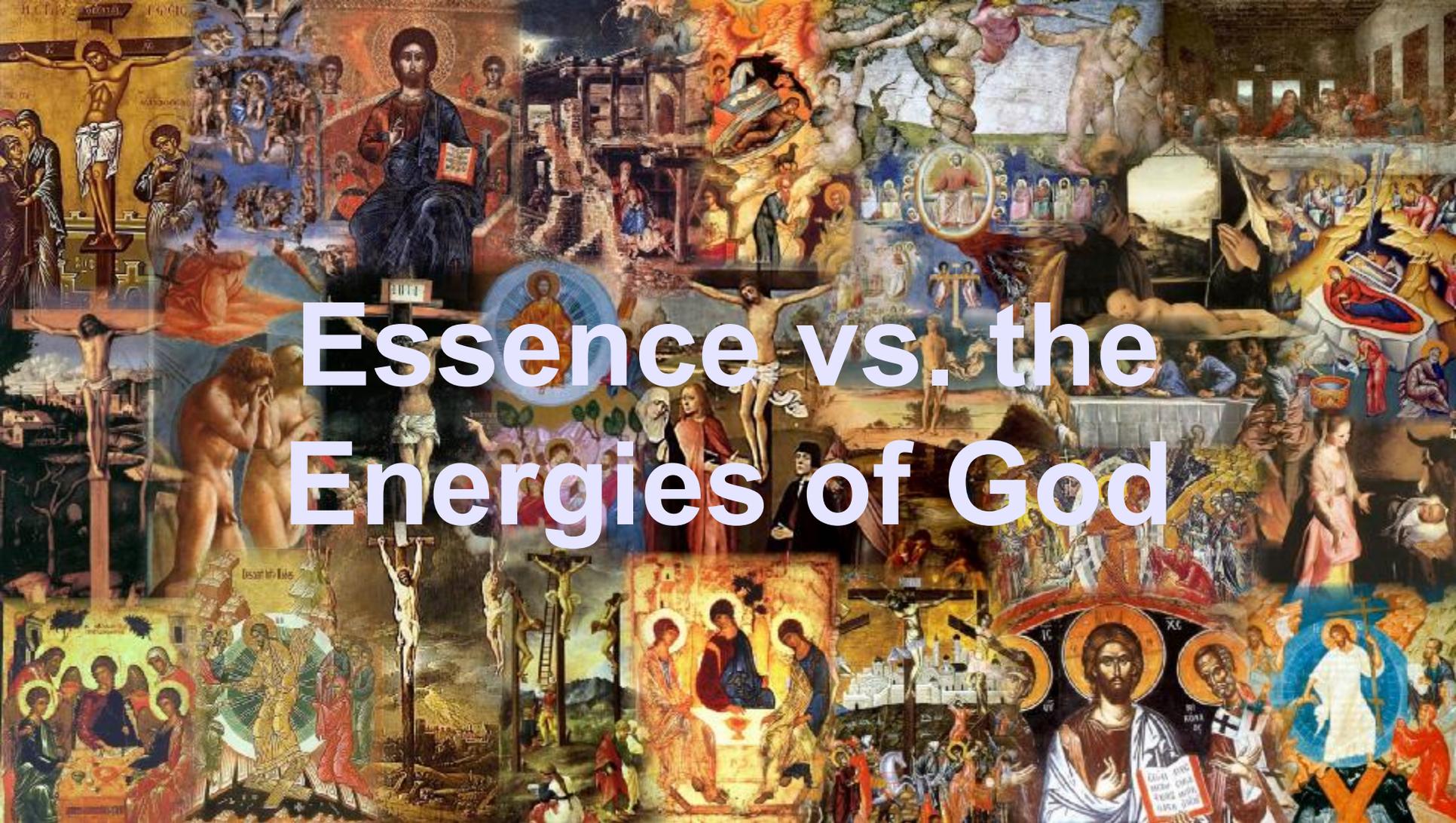
- Thomas Aquinas was a Creationist.
- Martin Luther was a Traducianist.
- John Calvin was a Creationist, although many later Reformed leaders were Traducianist. ■

Origin of Our Souls

- *Aside*: the distinction between **Creationism** and **Traducianism** is not merely academic today.
- The Roman Catholic Church today teaches a particular form of **Creationism**: God creates *de novo* the human soul and unites it to the body produced by human parents *at conception*.
 - This is not a little "embryonic" soul of **Traducianism**, but a *full-fledged, fully* capable and ready, "adult-status" human soul created by God, a soul just waiting for the body to develop so it can experience life on this earth as intended by God.
 - Abortion therefore is wrong because it denies that full-fledged, fully capable and ready, "adult-status" human soul, created by God, the life intended by God. ■

Origin of Our Souls

- You can make a case against abortion if you are a **Traducianist**, but it would have to be a somewhat different argument. ■



Essence vs. the Energies of God

Energies of God

- What can we look forward to in the life to come?
- Western Christian might cite the **Beatific Vision** of God:
 - to see and experience God not through a glass darkling, but at last "face to face,"
 - to see at last God's pure essence.
- This immediate and eternally fulfilling vision of God's very essence will be the core of eternal happiness for the redeemed. ■

Energies of God

- Western Christians speculate:
 - Will our first vision of the essence of God be in heaven?
 - Or is it possible to see the essence of God on this side of death, in mystical experience?
 - Some say there are indeed a few saints on earth who are blessed to have such a vision through mystical experience. ■

Energies of God

- In the twentieth century, two great Western theologians:
 - **Karl Barth**, the great Protestant theologian from the Reformed tradition, and
 - **Karl Rahner**, the great Roman Catholic theologian,
- both developed theologies promoting the “identity” between:
 - the **imminent (or inner) Trinity**, and
 - the **"economic" Trinity**.
- That is: they taught that:
 - the God revealed to us in the "economy" of salvation: through Scripture and through Jesus Christ,
 - is *the same as* the hidden triune God of the Trinity. ■

Energies of God

- But Eastern Christians would disagree with *all* of this.
- No one, not the angels, not the saints in heaven have seen the true essence of God.
- The inner life of the Trinity is ultimately unknowable, incomprehensible, inaccessible, an infinite abyss we will never penetrate.
- Western theology, the East says, seems incapable of grasping the idea that God is bigger than what is revealed of God. ■

Energies of God

- The East suggests that what we know and encounter of God are the **"energies" of God**.
- The **energies of God** are God himself, active within his creation.
- The **energies** can be thought of as a penumbra of glory that surrounds the unknowable, impenetrable divine **essence of God**.
- It is through the **energies** *alone* that God is known to us.
- When we encounter God in his **energies**, we are still encountering God himself.
- Nonetheless, the **energies of God** are *not identical* to the unknowable, impenetrable **essence of God**. ■

Energies of God

- The term **energy or energies** derives from the fact that the energies of God have at times been experienced as "light" by human beings:
 - The "light" of God's glory at the burning bush seen by Moses was an experience of the **energies of God**,
 - The "light" that radiated from Christ in the Transfiguration, seen by three disciples, was an experience of the **energies of God**.
- These experiences of light were not hallucinations or visions.
- The light was not something that belonged to creation; it was **"uncreated" light**.
- The experience of Moses and of the three disciples was rather a participation in, a union with the **energies of God**. ■

Energies of God

- The monks of the Holy Mountain, Mount Athos in Greece, are called “hesychasts” (from the Greek *hesychia*, meaning “quietness,” “tranquillity”) because of their commitment to silent prayer,
- These monks have claimed in their prayers to experience God himself in the form of transfiguring light.
- In their encounter with “**uncreated light**,” Eastern Christians say the monks are not merely encountering God himself, but finding union with God. ■

Energies of God

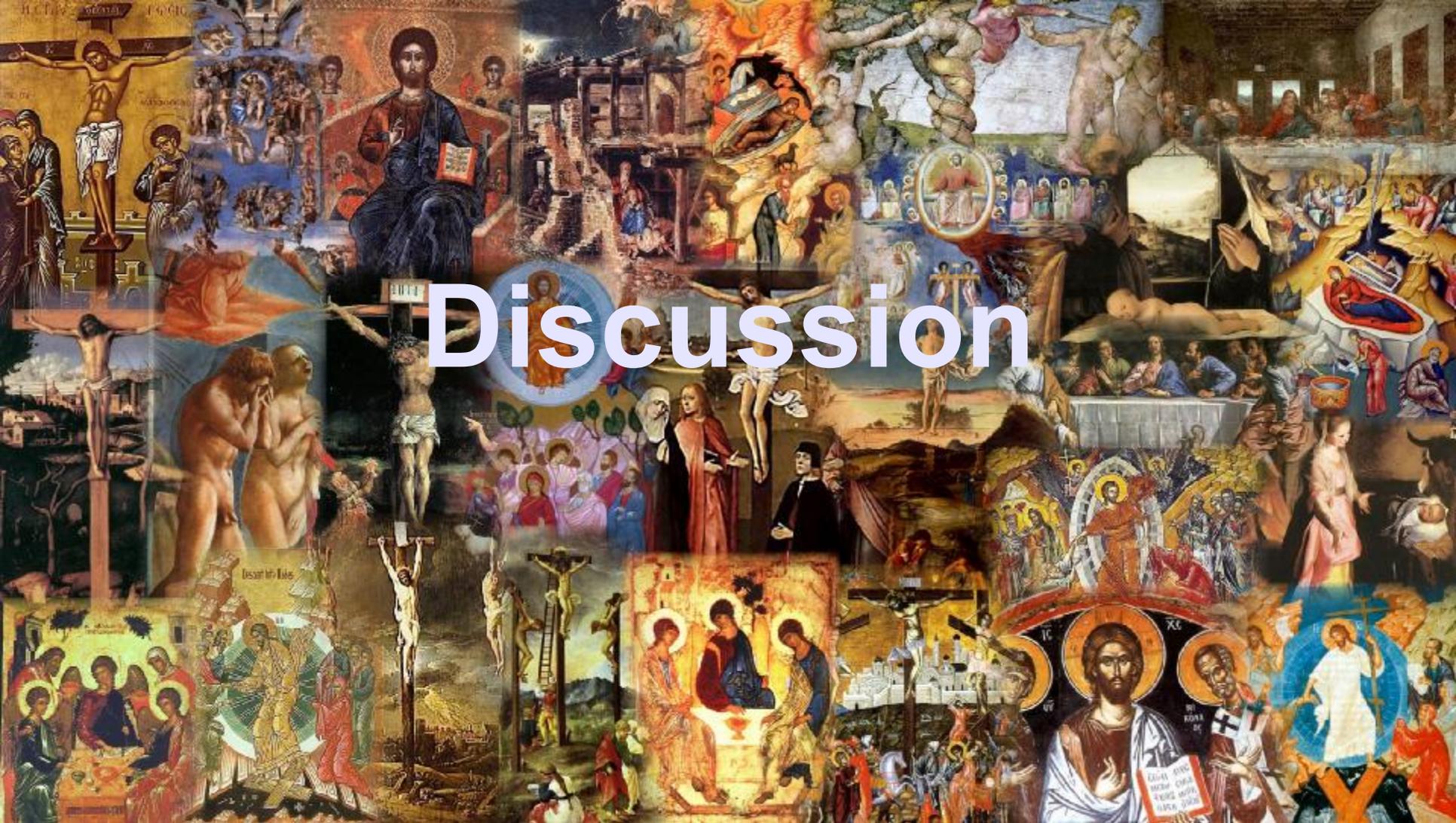
- What Western Christians call "grace", Eastern Christians would prefer to call **divine energies**. ■

Energies of God

- It is through the **energies** that God relates to the creation, and opens the divine life to our participation.
- Within the Triune Godhead, the Father, Son, and Spirit "participate" in and share the One divine life of the Godhead, Three in One, in constant intercommunion with each other.
- What Eastern Christians say we can look forward to in the life to come is a similar sharing and participation in the divine life:
 - *not* (of course) with the **essence of God**,
 - but with the **energies of God**. ■



Next Week:
Salvation: East and West



Discussion