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Volume 47

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Cardinal Newman



Letters

“Essays on Election”

Sir: While I found the recent issue on election of some value in criticism of abuses of this doctrine, I did not find the issue very valuable as a positive contribution to my understanding of election. But I take heart, for surely you will again return to one of the many subjects on which you write so well. If you are going to write on election only every three years, I can look for much valuable and insightful theology on justification, etc., in other issues.

Donald D. Crowe
Pennsylvania

Sir: I wish to commend you for publication of Robert J. Hiliman’s “Scriptural Election: The Third Way”. It is the most clarifying and lucid exegesis of predestination and election from the scriptural standpoint that I have been privileged to read. Taking the whole issue out of the realm of philosophy and cold rationalism and placing it back in its proper scriptural setting is a masterly way of handling the subject. This should answer once for all the “symmetrical,” “logical” conclusions accepted by many.

Donald E. Kohlstaedt
Washington

Unwarranted Contention

Sir: Your emphasis on the objective gospel is indeed good news for today and for every age. The depth of scholarship is stimulating. However, your biases and contention for the truth sometimes swing you to making ridiculous statements. In Geoffrey Paxton’s article, “The Gospel and a Controversial Text,” is the unwarranted contention that the Spirit is not an independent area of study. Your bias against the subjective results of the gospel shows through in your attitude toward the Spirit, since He is the Agent in the changes within the believer.

Bruce L. Blowers
Nazarene Mission Director
New Guinea

Justification and New Birth

Sir: I would respectfully submit that the question of the relationship between justification and new birth can be likened unto the situation where a man would labor many extra hours in the evenings and weekends and give his all to purchase for his betrothed a most perfect gift for her adornment at their wedding. It would be a crude, most ungrateful and wretched bride who would think and talk only of her gift and forget totally her beloved and the price that was paid to purchase that gift. Are not many churches today in danger of the same offense? While feigning to speak of Jesus, the major concern in so many churches and teachings is about anything that might center on or exalt man, not God.

The relegation of the Lord and His work to a position of secondary (if any) import and concern (after our works or the work done in us) is the evidence of that age-old sin, idolatry (Ex. 2:3), which has always accompanied so-called men of religion from the Jews in Jeremiah’s day, through the Pharisees of Christ’s time, to many today. This apparently minor change in emphasis attempts to totally undermine the work of Christ and commends the worshipping and serving of the creature more than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). There is a consistent heresy the flesh always preaches and leads men toward one of works-righteousness, which must result in an all-encompassing concern and preoccupation for and about one’s self and not Jesus. If these views were just idle and ill-advised ramblings, we could ignore them; but these words are words and life of antichrist and must be seen for what they constitute—an attack on the very heart of the gospel.

Being “born again” is a gift no man can ever purchase, a great and precious gift from God most perfect in every way. No one would (if in living faith) dare speak against rebirth, for without it one cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. But as we find ourselves in an age in which it is not uncommon to find disgusting demonstrations of selfishness and egotism among worldly brides, is it any wonder that the carnal and fanciful notions of a deceived world (and her ministers) would make gods of God’s most perfect gifts, thereby once again giving the flesh a chance to exalt itself in endless vain and egocentric self-testimonies and discourses? While falsely claiming to be speaking as Christ’s bride, the spirit which gives birth to such distortions is readily shown to be that of the whore of hell—antichrist. Test the spirits behind the words and works of antichrist in the churches today, and see the whorish façades of good works and good men (self-justification) spring up like those which resisted Jeremiah’s indictments against Israel. Oh weep ye churches, for the Lord must expose these whoredoms, whoever and whatever the source, so that we might be led to trust in Him who alone can save. If He stifled not the truth to cover the sins of His nation’s king but from the lips of Nathan in the sight of all indicted David, are we so foolish as to think that the “kings and kingdoms” of religion today are not to be touched by the truth when whoredoms are found in them?

The center of salvation is the Lord Jesus and what He has done, and not ourselves and what we have done (nor, more subtly, what has been done in us). Beware of any false prophets and teachers who would cause us to look to ourselves and attempt to keep us from trusting in Christ and what He has done. Let our testimonies be of Jesus, and let our lives be forever filled with all the gifts and fruit which the Lord intended to proceed from His most perfect work.

Frank Kopczynski
Pastor
New Hampshire

Amen. You ‘re a kindred spirit!—Ed.

Agrees with Luther

Sir: Your journal is a source of real blessing to me. The articles are well written, the topics presented are timely. You have helped me immeasurably to see the centrality of the doctrine of justification by faith and to thus love my Lord more for His doing and dying on my behalf. I would certainly agree with Luther that this doctrine is the one on which the church stands or falls. I am also in agreement with you in stressing the need for this emphasis in this day of doctrinal laxity and indifference.

Normund W. Leas
Maryland

Ministry Changed

Sir: While reading some back issues of your journal, I recovered the truth of justification through faith in Jesus Christ, my Righteousness and Substitute. Praise God! This has changed both my entire life and my ministry. My personal blend of process theology, liberation theology, neo-orthodoxy (a la Emil Brunner) and holiness theology (a la Charles Finney) has given way to Jesus Christ and the great gospel truth of justification by faith.

In this day of extreme religious subjectivism (both from within Christianity, liberal and conservative, and from without, especially from the Eastern religions), only the gospel (the *objective* gospel) truly provides the answer to save a moribund world.

Jay Zaremba
Baptist Pastor
California

Likes Letters

Sir: May I say a word of appreciation for the Letters-to-the-Editor section. Don’t ever discontinue it! If nothing else can be said for it, it surely stirs up and energizes one’s mind.

Howard Hallett
Minnes

Editorial Introduction

Newman's Significance Today

The year 1979 is the centenary of John Henry Newman's elevation to the cardinalate. Newman, who had been an Anglican churchman, was converted to Roman Catholicism in 1845.

The circumstances which led to Newman's defection from the Protestant movement caused a great stir in the mid-nineteenth century. His influence has not waned. *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* says, "His influence, within both the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, has been immense."¹ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* says that "his genius has come to be more and more recognized after his death, and his influence can hardly be exaggerated."²

The Western church was divided in the sixteenth century over the doctrine of justification by faith. John Henry Newman saw the Church of England as standing between Romanism and Protestantism. He became the spokesman for a *via media* theology – a theology which tried to synthesize Romanism and Protestantism. Newman succeeded in antagonizing the evangelicals and disturbing the old-fashioned High Churchmen. He consequently felt more at home in Rome than he did in Canterbury.

In some respects Newman was a man before his time. His work had great ecumenical significance, but the nineteenth century was not ready for ecumenism. It now appears that Newman's hour has come. Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars are working to find a *via media* and to synthesize the theology of Rome and the Reformers. The sentiments of John Henry Newman are being voiced again by leading Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians.

In April 1975 a convocation of 150 Newman scholars met for a symposium in Rome. They were granted an audience with Pope Paul VI. In his address to these scholars on April 7, the Pope said:

Many of the problems which he [Newman] treated with wisdom – although he himself was frequently misunderstood and misinterpreted in his own time – were the subjects of the discussion and study of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, as for example the question of ecumenism, the relationship between Christianity and the world, the emphasis on the role of the laity in the Church and the relationship of the Church to non-Christian religions. Not only this Council but also the present time can be considered in a special way as Newman's hour.³

¹ Art. "Newman, John Henry (1801-1890)," in J. D. Douglas, gen. ed., *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 703.

² Art. "Newman, John Henry (1801-90-)," in F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 966.

³ Pope Paul VI, "Cardinal Newman's Thought and Example Relevant Today," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 17 Apr. 1975.

Justification by Faith and John Henry Newman

Robert D. Brinsmead

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New International version.

Part I

A Brief Sketch of Newman's Life

John Henry Newman was born in London in 1801, the eldest of six children. His family had evangelical sympathies, and these evangelical roots had the strongest influence on his early religious life.

Newman entered Trinity College, Oxford, in 1817 and was elected to a fellowship at Oriel College in 1822. While there, he began to relinquish the kind of evangelicalism he was acquainted with. A number of friends had a significant influence on his life at this time. R. Whately impressed upon him the divine appointment of the church, and Hawkins taught him the value of tradition. E. B. Pusey, J. Keble and R. H. Froude also moved him toward High Church beliefs.

In 1828 he became vicar of St. Mary's Church in Oxford. In the early 1830's he associated with the Oxford Movement and became its leading spirit. The aim of Newman and his friends was to show that the Church of England was a *via media* between Romanism and Protestantism. These views were published and widely disseminated through Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (1834-1842) and *Tracts for the Times* (1833-1841). In 1838 he delivered his now famous *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*. They contain the heart of the theology which was to take him into Rome.

In 1841 Newman wrote *Tract No.90*, in which he tried to reconcile the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England with Roman Catholic dogma. This brought him under heavy fire. About this time he began to have grave doubts regarding the validity of the Church of England. He resigned his appointment at St. Mary's in 1843 and was received into the communion of the Roman Catholic Church on October 9, 1845.

Newman's life within Romanism was not without strain, but after overcoming some early misunderstandings, he gradually won the confidence of Rome. In 1879 he was made a cardinal by Leo XIII. Newman died in 189

Part II

The Development of Newman's Thought

Newman's life was a spiritual pilgrimage which took him from evangelicalism to High Anglicanism and from High Anglicanism to Romanism. If we are to understand that pilgrimage, we must follow the development of Newman's thought on justification by faith. Contemporary Roman Catholic scholar, Louis Bouyer, who was also converted from Protestantism to Romanism, agrees that justification is the key to understanding Newman.¹

Newman's development may be conveniently divided into three stages: the early Newman, Newman in transition and Newman's attempted synthesis of the Protestant and Roman Catholic faith.

¹ See Louis Bouyer, *Preface to Newman on Justification*, by Thomas L. Sheridan.

The Early Newman

Newman's religious upbringing was basically within the evangelical wing of the Church of England. At the age of fifteen he experienced a remarkable evangelical conversion under the ministry of the Rev. Walter Mayers. Mayers directed the serious and youthful convert to the writings of Thomas Scott. Scott left the deepest impression on Newman's early thinking. Scott was a moderate Calvinist, a product of the Wesley-Whitefield revival of the eighteenth century. He held the orthodox Protestant doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, which he understood to be distinct but never separate from sanctification. Two features in Scott's teaching left a lasting impression on Newman's mind: a strong antipathy toward antinomianism (which Scott tried to offset by greatly stressing regeneration) and a preference for practical divinity rather than abstract, speculative theology.

In the years 1817-1822 the youthful Newman, to use his own words, was "devoted to the evangelical creed and more strict in his religious duties than at any previous time."² He was earnest, intense, serious beyond his years and, like young people who take themselves too seriously, somewhat strongly opinionated and lacking in humor. His experience at this time was not unlike the experience of the Wesleys and Whitefield in the Holy Club at Oxford one hundred years earlier.

From the documents of this early period which are available, we know that Newman believed in forensic justification (imputed righteousness) on the ground of the atonement and in regeneration by the Holy Spirit. However, like many pietists, his great interest seemed to be in the inner work of regeneration. He tended to conceive of it as a higher stage in the soteriological process than "mere" justification. This should not surprise us, since the Wesley-Whitefield revival often had the same tendency.

Newman in Transition

In April 1822 Newman was honored by being elected to an Oriel Fellowship. Here he came into contact with High Churchmen who opposed the evangelical party by stressing apostolic succession, tradition, the importance of the visible church and the sacraments. Pusey undermined Newman's belief in justification by an imputed righteousness and influenced him toward seeing baptism as the instrumental means of justification and regeneration. Hawkins taught Newman the value of tradition in determining the dogmas of the faith. This was not altogether bad counsel for young Newman. He was an immature young Christian wrestling with theological problems far too much on his own. He needed to identify with the experience of the church down through the centuries. However, Hawkins influenced Newman with the extreme position that the normal channel of Christian truth is the teaching of the church rather than the Bible. Whatley also influenced Newman toward such High Church views as the idea of apostolic succession and the impartation of the Holy Spirit through association with the visible church. Keble and Froude further led him to reject evangelicalism in favor of High Church views.

Newman's developing thought in this period of time should also be seen as a reaction against certain tendencies within the evangelical movement. Some of these had already been drawn to his attention by reading Scott. Newman's own observations at the parish level reinforced his reaction. After a period of thorough pastoral visitation in 1824, Newman noted in his diary that the religion he had received "from John Newton and Thomas Scott would not work in a parish."³

The main elements in evangelicalism which troubled Newman were:

1. Antinomianism. Within Protestantism there has often been a tendency to separate regeneration from justification and to reduce justification to an abstract theory of imputed righteousness which leaves the convert essentially unchanged. Newman struggled for a long time with the problem of the relationship of justification to regeneration until he came to his final synthesis in 1838.
2. Individualism. Much of the evangelicalism that Newman encountered did not do justice to the corporate aspect of redemption, to the biblical doctrine of the community. Among evangelicals Newman witnessed an exaggerated and unbiblical individualism.

² John Henry Newman, *Autobiographical Writings*, p.80.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.73, 79

3. Subjectivism. Along with the individualism which stressed a private conversion experience that devalued baptism, the Supper and the visible church, Newman discerned that many evangelicals were far too subjective. Perhaps he reflected on the subjectivism of his own evangelical experience. Many tried to find the assurance of salvation in their own conversion experience. Newman felt that evangelicalism was leading them into bondage to their own feelings.

4. Speculative Theology. Newman inherited from Scott a dislike for abstract, scholastic theology. He saw that the Calvinist teaching on predestination, which tended to be presented in an abstract, speculative framework, was useless on a pastoral level. Even the great Protestant doctrine of justification by an imputed righteousness tended to be presented as a celestial abstraction. In the 1820's the extreme individualism and intellectualism which prevailed in the church had produced a great surge of liberalism. About 1827 Newman struggled briefly against the temptation toward liberalism, but then reacted by making his final break both with liberalism and with evangelicalism. About this time Newman began a systematic reading of the church Fathers. He did not find support in the Fathers for the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith. When a group of clergy with High Church sympathies launched the Oxford Movement in 1833, Newman soon became one of its leading spirits. Newman saw the Church of England as a *via media* between the evangelicals and Rome. He thought that both Luther and the Council of Trent had erred from the purer form of teaching found in the church Fathers. His aim and the aim of his colleagues was to make the theology of the Fathers normative for the Anglican Church.

Newman Develops a Synthesis

In 1838 Newman published his *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*. Roman Catholic scholar Thomas L. Sheridan is right when he says, "The *Lectures on Justification* remain, for all practical purposes, Newman's last word on the subject."⁴ In his *Lectures* Newman arrived at what Sheridan calls a "synthesis of justification and regeneration."⁵ What Protestantism had always regarded as two distinct (though inseparable) gifts, Newman finally conceived as one gift. At this time Newman still retained some misgivings about Romanism, but he found evangelicalism even more objectionable. He tried to create a synthesis between the theology of Protestantism and Romanism – a synthesis that would satisfy both sides. He succeeded only in coming to a position in harmony with Rome. Consequently, he joined her communion in 1845.

The history of Newman proves a vital lesson which should not be lost in this ecumenical age when many are emulating Newman's idea of creating a synthesis between Protestantism and Romanism. Rome can accept the synthesis and still be Rome. Protestantism, however, cannot accept the synthesis and still be Protestant.



⁴ Sheridan, *Newman on Justification*, p.239.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.108.

Part III

An Analysis of Newman's Synthesis

Newman began his *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification* with a survey of both the Lutheran and Roman Catholic positions.

Newman's Criticism of the Protestant Position. Newman called Luther's position the "extreme Protestant idea of justifying faith."¹ One does not need to read far to see that Newman was not really analyzing the theology of Luther. Rather, his eye was on the contemporary evangelical scene. The *Lectures* clearly demonstrate that Newman had not grappled with Luther firsthand, but he was reading contemporary evangelicalism with all its distortions back into Luther. He blamed Luther's teaching for all of evangelicalism's antinomianism, its extreme individualism, its devaluing of the sacraments and the visible church, and its bondage to religious feelings. Newman claimed that the Lutheran doctrine was not taught in the church until the sixteenth century and hence must be seen as a novelty which only enjoyed the patronage of the previous three hundred years. The Protestant theory which came from Luther, said Newman, could only be supported by those who, "like the Arians, entrench themselves in a few favorite texts."² It was "an utter perversion of the truth."³

Newman attacked a caricature of Luther, but he also attacked as unscriptural the heart of the Protestant faith – that is, the distinction between justification and sanctification. In 1519 Luther broke through the medieval system when he discerned the distinction between the passive righteousness of faith and the active righteousness of the believer's life. Before this these two gifts of God – the imputation of Christ's merits and the impartation of the Holy Spirit – were always fused as one, even in great teachers like Augustine. The Reformation stands or falls on this proper distinction between gospel righteousness and law righteousness. Neither Luther nor any of the Reformers denied the necessity of righteousness of life – that is, a righteousness which consists in Spirit inspired obedience to God's law (Rom. 8:4) – and it was lack of insight on Newman's part to impute antinomianism to Luther. But Luther and the Reformation declared with one voice that law-keeping righteousness, either with or without the Holy Spirit's aid, is no part of the righteousness which justifies us before the tribunal of God. The only righteousness which can stand before God in judgment is the holy obedience of Jesus Christ. Those whom God freely justifies He also gives His Holy Spirit, who enables them to live in new obedience; and God justifies no one whom He does not sanctify. But the two gifts must be distinguished so that the glory of our salvation may be ascribed to the finished work of Christ and so that troubled consciences may not have to ground their acceptance on their spiritual attainments. Newman, however, called this distinction between justification and sanctification "technical and unscriptural."⁴

As for the Protestant doctrine of justification by an imputed righteousness alone, Newman likened it to Judaism and its "shadows of religion."⁵ He called it a "visionary system," "an unreal righteousness"⁶

And then he exclaimed:

Away then with this modern, this private, this arbitrary, this unscriptural system, which promising liberty conspires against it; which abolishes Christian Sacraments to introduce barren and dead ordinances; and for the real participation of the Son, and justification through the Spirit, would, at the very marriage feast, feed us on shells and husks, who hunger and thirst after righteousness. It is a new gospel, unless three hundred years stand for eighteen hundred.⁷

¹ John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, p.15.

² *Ibid.*, p.61.

³ *Ibid.*, p.60.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.41.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.57.

⁶ *Ibid.* Thomas L. Sheridan, *Newman on Justification*, p.146.

⁷ *Ibid.*

These seeds of disaffection toward the Protestant doctrine of imputed righteousness had been growing in Newman's mind for more than ten years. Fourteen years before his celebrated *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, we find Newman recording in his diary:

I am lodged in the same house with Pusey, and we have had many conversations on the subject of religion, I arguing for imputed righteousness, he against it, I inclining to separate regeneration from baptism, he doubting its separation, etc.⁸

Newman was not to succeed in converting Pusey to his opinions, but Pusey was eventually able to convert Newman. In sermons which Newman preached this same year (1824) and for some time after, he still distinguished between justification and regeneration. But by January 13, 1825, the seeds of anti-evangelical High Churchism began to take effect. He wrote in his diary:

I think, I am not certain, I must give up the doctrine of imputed righteousness and that of regeneration as apart from baptism.⁹

But in his sermons Newman continued making the Protestant distinction between forensic justification and effective regeneration until about the time he began reading the Fathers (1827) and having intimate fellowship with High Churchman Richard Froude (1829). Newman wrote of Froude, "He made me look with admiration towards the Church of Rome, and in the same degree to dislike the Reformation."¹⁰ From as early as 1822 one can trace the growing tendency in Newman to merge justification and regeneration more and more closely until he arrived at his synthesis in his 1838 *Lectures*.

Newman's Criticism of the Roman Catholic Position. In his *Lectures* Newman was the spokesman of a *via media* theology. He saw both sides – Protestantism and Romanism – as somewhat of a distortion of the truth. But he was clearly more congenial to Roman Catholicism. While he called Luther's position "an utter perversion of the truth," he merely said that the Roman Catholic position "does in some respects come short" of the truth.¹¹ Rome's position, said Newman, is "not unsound or dangerous in itself [like Protestantism], but in a certain degree incomplete, – truth, but not the whole truth."¹²

It is very interesting to observe that while Newman seemed to do his best to caricature Luther's theology, he represented the Roman position quite accurately. Here is his sympathetic summary of the Roman Catholic theology of justification:

It is affirmed then, that since man fell, he has lain under one great need, in which all other needs are included, in supplying which all blessings are secured; and which, in proportion as he has understood his real state, he has ever desired, ever struggled after, in vain. He is by nature born in sin, and consequently the child of wrath; and he needs a new birth unto righteousness, that he may become the child of God. He needs a destruction of the old Adam, of the body of original death, and thereby a restoration to the light of God's countenance. What has made him hateful to Infinite Purity, what exposes him to death eternal, is disobedience; take away that disobedience, and you take away his guilt, peril, misery, all that needs taking away; and in proportion as you rid him of the one, you rid him of the other. This then is really our one burden; not merely a sense of guilt, or guilt itself, but that which is the cause both of guilt and the sense of guilt. Man did not become guilty except by becoming sinful; he does not become innocent except by becoming holy.

God cannot, from His very nature, look with pleasure and favour upon an unholy creature, or justify or count righteous one who is not righteous. Cleanness of heart and spirit, obedience by word and deed, this alone in us can be acceptable to God; that is, this alone can constitute our justification. And as certain is it, we cannot acquire it for ourselves; but, if it is to be ours, it must come from God only.

⁸ John Henry Newman, *Autobiographical Writings*, p.203.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 25, quoted in Thomas L. Sheridan, *Newman on Justification*, p.146.

¹¹ Newman, *Lectures on Justification*.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.30.

We needed then a justification, or making righteous; and this might be vouchsafed to us in two ways, either by our Maker's dispensing with that exact obedience which the Law required, or by His enabling us to fulfill it. In either, but in no other conceivable way, could our moral state, which by nature is displeasing, become pleasing to God, our unrighteousness become righteousness. Now, according to the doctrine I am engaged in expounding, the remedy lies in the latter alternative only; not in lowering the Law, much less in abolishing it, but in bringing up our hearts to it; in preserving, in raising its standard, and in refashioning them, and so (as it were) attuning them to its high harmonies. As regards the past indeed, since it cannot literally be undone, a dispensation or pardon is all that can be given us; but for the present and future, if a gift is to be vouchsafed us, and we may anticipate what it should be, this is what we have to pray for, – not to have the Holy Law taken away, not to be merely accounted to do what we do not do, not a nominal change, a nominal righteousness, an external blessing, but one penetrating inwards into our heart and spirit, joints and marrow, pervading us with a real efficacy, and wrapping us round in its fullness; not a change merely in God's dealings towards us, like the pale and wan sunshine of a winter's day, but (if we may seek it) the possession of Himself, of His substantial grace to touch and heal the root of the evil, the fountain of our misery, our bitter heart and its inbred corruption. As we can conceive God blessing nothing but what is holy, so all our notions of blessing centre in holiness as a necessary foundation. Holiness is the thing, the internal state, because of which blessing comes. He may bless, He may curse, according to His mercy or our deserts; but if He blesses, surely it is by making holy; if He counts righteous, it is by making righteous; if He justifies, it is by renewing; if He reconciles us to Himself, it is not by annihilating the Law, but by creating in us new wills and new powers for the observance of it.¹³

Newman's Understanding of Justification

We come now to an analysis of the heart of Newman's theology – his understanding of justification.

1. Justification Is Fused with Regeneration. No good Protestant divines have ever quarreled with the idea of seeing justification and regeneration in the closest, indeed, an inseparable relationship. But Newman made the fatal mistake of arguing from their union to make a fusion of the two. In the years preceding his *Lectures* Newman wrestled with this problem of the relationship between justification and regeneration. We can sympathize with his concern over the tendency among Protestants to separate regeneration from justification and to reduce justification to an abstraction which fails to do justice to the transforming power of the gospel. But as Newman reacted against this antinomian element, he moved closer to the fusion of the two gifts. In his *Lectures* he achieved this synthesis. Using David's penitential Psalm (Psalm 51), Newman argued that because David prayed for both forgiveness and renewal, "we are forgiven by *being*, or *while* we are renewed."¹⁴ Forgiveness, therefore, said Newman, "relates not only to the past but to the present" – that is, it consists in pardon plus renewal.¹⁵

"Gospel righteousness," Newman said, "is obedience to the Law of God, wrought in us by the Holy Ghost."¹⁶ "The Law written on the heart, or spiritual renovation, is that which *justifies us*."¹⁷ The righteousness of God spoken of in Romans 3:21 was said to be this renewing work of the Spirit in the heart.¹⁸ Newman then cited Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 3:5-8 and Galatians 5:18 to show that regeneration and justification are the same. Thus:

Justification and sanctification were [are] in fact substantially one and the same thing.¹⁹

Justification, then, as such, is an imputation; but the actual Gospel gift called justification is more, it is renewal also.²⁰

Justification renews, therefore I say it may fitly be called renewal.²¹

It is a parallel mode of speaking, to say that justification consists in renewal, or that renewal constitutes justification.²²

Justification... consists of two parts, acceptance and renewal. . . . *Justification is a change of heart.*²³

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.41.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.43.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.44.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.45.

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, p.50.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.63.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.66.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.86.

²² *Ibid.*, pp.86-7.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.88.

In the next statement we see that Newman argued from the fact of the union of the two things to make a fusion:

I have been arguing from the essential union between justification and renewal, that they are practically convertible terms.²⁴

Calvin and Melanchthon saw justification as "consisting in the remission of sins"; Rome sees it "as consisting in renewal." Newman said that both are right.²⁵ Hence his synthesis. Referring again to Titus 3:5-8, Newman concluded that "renewing of the Holy Ghost" is equivalent to "'being justified by His grace.'"²⁶

2. Justification Is a Declaring Righteous and a Making Righteous. Newman was quite well aware of the classical Protestant argument on the forensic meaning of *justification* in the Hebrew and the Greek – a meaning which had first been brilliantly defined by Melanchthon, Calvin and Chemnitz. That is to say, the word *justify* means a *declaring righteous* by the judge. Newman evidently felt the strength of this Protestant argument and was not disposed to refute it, as many Roman Catholic scholars had vainly tried to do for three hundred years. Roman Catholics had contended that the word *justify* signifies a *making righteous* (*justum efficare*). They based their interpretation largely on the meaning of the Latin word instead of basing it on the Greek and Hebrew. On this contentious point Newman achieved what appeared to be a brilliant synthesis between the two positions. In other features of his *Lectures* we are inclined to agree with Faber when he said that Newman's *Lectures* are a "tissue of contradictions and inconsistencies."²⁷ But with respect to the argument about whether *justify* is a declaring righteous or a making righteous, Newman produced the most subtle synthesis. We need to give the closest attention to this point, not just because it is the heart of the Newman octopus, but because the same subtle arguments are now being reproduced by both Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars, as we shall see later.

In the first place, Newman, like many contemporary Roman Catholic scholars, admitted that justification is a counting righteous²⁸ and that the verb *to justify* does mean "to declare righteous."²⁹ Now let us follow how Newman tried to reconcile this with the Roman Catholic idea of justification being a making righteous:

It is a pronouncing righteous while it proceeds to make righteous. As Almighty God in the beginning created the world solemnly and in form, speaking the word not to exclude, but to proclaim the deed – as in the days of His flesh He made use of the creature and changed its properties not without a command; so does He new-create the soul by the breath of His mouth, by the sacrament of His Voice. The declaration of our righteousness, while it contains pardon for the past, promises holiness for the future.³⁰

The justifying grace of God effects what it declares. "The Voice of the Lord is mighty in operation, the Voice of the Lord is a glorious Voice." It is not like some idle sound, or a vague rumor coming at random, and tending no whither, but it is "the Word which goeth forth out of His mouth;" it has a sacramental power, being the instrument as well as the sign of His will. It never can "return unto Him void, but it accomplishes that which He pleases, and prospers in the thing whereto He sends it. "Imputed righteousness is the coming in of actual righteousness. They whom God's sovereign voice pronounces just, forthwith become in their measure just. He declares a fact, and makes it a fact by declaring it. He imputes, not a name but a substantial Word, which, being "ingrafted" in our own hearts, "is able to save our souls."³¹

God's word, I say, effects what it announces. This is its characteristic all through Scripture. He "calleft those things which be not, as though they are," and they are forthwith.

Thus in the beginning He said, "Let there be light, and there was light." Word and deed went together in creation; and so again "in the regeneration."³²

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.102.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.138.

²⁷ George Stanley Faber, *The Primitive Doctrine of Justification Investigated*, p.427.

²⁸ See Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, p.65

²⁹ See *Ibid.*, p.74.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp.79-80.

³² *Ibid.*, p.81

It would seem, then, in all cases, that God's word is the instrument of His deed. When, then, He solemnly utters the command, "Let the soul be just," it becomes inwardly just.³³

On the whole then, from what has been said, it appears that justification is an announcement or fiat of Almighty God, which breaks upon the gloom of our natural state as the Creative Word upon Chaos; that it declares the soul righteous, and in that declaration, on the one hand, conveys pardon for its past sins, and on the other makes it actually righteous.³⁴

When man makes a thing, it is an effort on his part passing into a result; when God creates, it is by His fiat, by a word issuing in a work. He does not make, He says, "Let it be made." The Hebrew style accurately sets forth this token of Divine Majesty. The Psalmist says, not "He spake, and He did," but "He spake, and *it was done*." It was only a word on His part, but a substantial Word, with a work close upon it as its attendant shadow. In like manner it seems a true representation of the Scripture statements on the subject, to say, that He does not make us righteous, but He *calls* us righteous, and we are forthwith *made* righteous. But, if so, justification, which in its full meaning is the whole great appointment of God from beginning to end, may be viewed on its two sides –active and passive, in its beginning and its completion, in what God does, and what man receives; and while in its passive sense man is made righteous, in its active, God calls or declares. That is, the word will rightly stand either for imputation or for sanctification, according to the grammatical use of it. Thus divines, who in the main agree in what the great mercy of God is *as a whole*, may differ as to what should be called justification; for according as they view it as active or passive, God's giving or man's receiving, they will consider it God's accounting righteous or man's becoming righteous. One party, then, in the controversy consider it to be a mere acceptance, the other to be mainly renewal. The one consider it in its effects, the other in its primary idea. St. Augustine, that is, *explains* it, and Protestants *define* it. The latter describe it theoretically, and the former practically. The Protestant sense is more close upon the word, the ancient use more close upon the thing.³⁵

Newman's theological forerunner was Osiander, who also confounded justification with regeneration and rejected the purely forensic understanding of justification. There was, however, a subtle difference in that Newman was able to make his point in a more plausible way. Osiander had said that God cannot declare the sinner to be righteous unless He first makes him righteous. Osiander rejected the forensic meaning of the word *justify*. Both Chemnitz and Calvin had soundly refuted Osiander on the plain biblical meaning of *justify* – that it means "to declare righteous."³⁶ Newman, as we have seen, admitted this point, but then turned the old argument backward by saying that since God's word creates what it declares, justification is both a declaring righteous and a making righteous.

Newman's argument, however, still leads to the old Roman error of confounding God's work *for us* and His work *in us*. Though differing in style, Newman's position is the same in substance as Osiander's theory. The close affinity between Newman and Osiander is even more apparent when we consider the real ground of the sinner's justification.

3. Justification by the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Osiander had contended that the basis of justification is the indwelling of the essential or divine righteousness of Christ. With an eye on Osiander, the Lutheran Formula of Concord had declared emphatically, "This indwelling of God is not the righteousness of faith."³⁷ The Reformers fiercely contended this point because here is the heart of the issue with Rome. Is the ground of the sinner's justification the atonement of Christ *alone*, or is it the renewal of the sinner's heart? Rome, of course, always professed salvation by grace alone, but it was a justification by God's transforming grace. Hence, its doctrine of justification rested on sanctification. On this matter of the basis of justification, Newman aligned himself with Rome and Osiander. Newman's theory was that the believer is justified by the renewing of the Holy Spirit. This error is really a Trinitarian error. It improperly ascribes our justification to the work of the Third Person instead of to the Second Person of the Godhead and utterly confounds the work of the Mediator and High Priest with the work of the Holy Spirit. Said Newman:

³³ *Ibid.*, p.82.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.98-99.

³⁶ See Formula of Concord, "Epitome. III. Of the Righteousness of Faith before God." *Book of Concord: The Symbols of the Ev. Lutheran Church*, pp.219-21; Formula of Concord, "Thorough Declaration. III. Of the Righteousness of Faith before God," *Book of Concord*, pp.250-55; John Calvin, "Refutation of Osiander's Doctrine of 'Essential Righteousness,'" *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, bk. 3, chap. 11, sees. 5-12.

³⁷ Formula of Concord, "Thorough Declaration. III. Of the Righteousness of Faith before God," *Book of Concord*, p.254.

The coming of the Holy Ghost, to write the Divine Law in our hearts: that Law then so implanted is our justification. . .

Justification, or the imparting of righteousness, is not infrequently mentioned as an act depending on our Lord's Resurrection, and therefore, according to the analogy of faith, more naturally connected with the Holy Ghost.³⁸

Christ then does not keep the power of justification solely in His own hands, but by His Spirit dispenses it to us in due measure.³⁹

The Holy Ghost is given us unto or in order to, renovation and justification. . . . Justification is wrought by the power of the Spirit, or rather by His presence within us.⁴⁰

Justifying righteousness, then, consists in the coming and presence of the Holy Ghost within us.⁴¹

In like manner "Christ in us" is said to be "the hope of glory." Christ then is our Righteousness by dwelling in us by the Spirit: He justifies us by entering into us, He continues to justify us by remaining in us. This is really and truly our justification, not faith, not holiness, not (much less) a mere imputation; but through God's mercy, the very Presence of Christ.⁴²

It is the Divine Presence that justifies us.⁴³

Justification is the setting up of the Cross within us.⁴⁴

Justification is wholly the work of God.⁴⁵

Newman categorically denied that men are justified solely by Christ's atonement. He argued that since the redemptive work of Christ must be applied by the Holy Spirit, it is really Christ's work plus the Holy Spirit's work in us which justifies us before God.⁴⁶

4. Justification by the Instrument of Baptism and on the Condition of Faith. We have left Newman's sacramental view of justification to the last because one's views of the sacraments are generally the formal expression of the spirit of one's theology. Newman's mystical theory of justification is well summarized in his following statement:

We are new-created, transformed, spiritualized, glorified in the Divine Nature – that through the participation of Christ, we receive, as through a channel, the true Presence of God within and without us, imbuing us with sanctity and immortality. This, I repeat, is our justification.⁴⁷

Once we see that this mystical indwelling of grace/Spirit/Christ is the principle of Newman's justification, we can then see how in this theory the sacraments of the church are like a filling station through which "justifying grace" is infused into the believer. But if one starts with the sacramental means of justification instead of the principle of justification, one may easily be thrown off the track. Many hastily conclude that Newman's sacramentarianism is the heart of his error, just as too many think Rome's sacramentarianism is the heart of her error. They think they part company with Newman or Rome because they part company with their view of the sacraments. This represents a very superficial, even dangerous, grasp of the real issues at stake.

In Newman's view, baptism rather than faith was the real instrument of justification. Whereas most Protestants see faith as the instrument and baptism as the symbol of the reality, Newman turned it the other way around. Faith was the "symbol,"⁴⁸ and it could only be called an inward instrument" as it "unites the soul to Christ through the Sacraments."⁴⁹ With Newman, faith was more of a condition of justification for adults, though not for children.

³⁸ Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, pp.46-7.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.54.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.133.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.139.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.150.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.154.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.173

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.175.

⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, pp.174-176.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.219.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.251.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Thus, instead of the subjective looking to faith and a bondage to one's religious feelings (as Luther's theology was caricatured), Newman said that his view gave people an objective basis of assurance – baptism and membership in the visible community to whom God had vouchsafed the Holy Spirit. When he spoke of faith justifying, Newman broadened the concept of faith so that it became synonymous with obedience. Thus, he could speak about "justification by obedience" just as comfortably as "justification by faith." In this his synthesis between Protestantism and Romanism is also apparent.⁵⁰

Being a synthesis theology, Newman's theology blurs all proper distinctions:

1. He removed the distinction between faith and obedience (works).
2. He removed the distinction between justification and regeneration (sanctification).
3. He removed the distinction between Christ's work for us and in us.
4. He removed the distinction between the work of the Second Person and the work of the Third Person of the Trinity.
5. He removed the distinction between the righteousness of faith and the righteousness of life.
6. He removed the distinction between the law and the gospel.

Newman concluded his *Lectures* by saying that works justify, faith justifies, grace justifies, and the sacraments justify. Protestants are right. Rome is right. Both sides are part of one glorious truth found in his synthesis.

In his book, *John Henry Newman*, Roman Catholic scholar C. S. Dessain very adequately summarizes Newman's aim:

Newman's aim in writing this work *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification* was irenic and ecumenical. He wished to show that the teaching of Roman Catholic theologians on God's gift of grace to men, and that of all Protestants (except those *extreme* Evangelicals who held a rigid doctrine of justification by faith only), could be reconciled. . . Newman wished to reconcile the Lutheran view that it is faith which makes men pleasing to God, and that of 'the Romanists that justification consists in spiritual renovation'." ⁵¹

⁵⁰ See *ibid.*, pp.44, 63.

⁵¹ Charles Stephen Dessain, *John Henry Newman*, p.46.

Part IV

Newman Alive and Well Today As we said in the introduction, Newman was in some respects ahead of his time. But the late Pope Paul VI showed that he well understood the religious climate today when he declared, "The present time can be considered in a special way as Newman's hour."¹

Among both Catholic and Protestant scholars today, John Henry Newman is alive and well. For two reasons the religious climate is now right for the favorable reception of Newman's views.

1. Within a degenerate Protestantism we see the same tendencies which provoked Newman to react against evangelicalism. Who can deny that Protestantism is rife with antinomianism, an exaggerated individualism, frantic subjectivism and run-away liberalism?

Just as Newman saw these perversions in his day and blamed them on Luther's "extreme" doctrine of justification by faith, so many today are prone to see these same perversions as an out-growth of the Protestant faith. Rome bides her time, for she has always predicted that these evils would be the fruit of the Reformation. But Protestant scholars are also reacting against these "isms," especially against antinomianism, by backing away from the Reformation principles of the centrality of justification and its strictly forensic character.

2. Ecumenism is the spirit of this age, and Christian leaders and teachers are more often employed in exploring the unity that exists between Protestants and Catholics than in stressing the distinctions. The fact that we now live in a post-Christian society in which all Christians are in a distinct minority and threatened by a hostile secularism contributes to this growing feeling of harmony between the two great branches of the Christian church. This is certainly not entirely bad. We can all be thankful that much of the invective has disappeared from apologists and disputants on either side of the theological gulf.

But we are seeing scholars on both sides bending their efforts to effect a synthesis between the theologies of Romanism and Protestantism. It should not surprise us, therefore, that John Henry Newman lives again. In fact we must ask, Was Pope Paul VI right when he said that the present time is Newman's hour?

Let us now show from concrete examples how theologians on either side have resurrected Newman's synthesis.

Hans Kung

Catholic scholar Hans Kung amazed Karl Barth when he argued that Barth's theology could be reconciled with the best Catholic tradition.² The significant thing about Kung's approach is its resurrection of Newman's thesis. Like Newman, Kung admits that the Protestant definition of justification is correct. "The term 'justification,'" he says quite forthrightly, "means a declaring just."³ But then he employs words which must have come directly from Newman's Lectures:

It is a matter of God's declaration of justice and not man's word: the utterance of the Lord, mighty in power. Unlike the word of man, the word of God does what it signifies. God said "Let there be light" and there was light. He says "Be clean" and it was clean. God commands the demons, and they get out. He speaks harshly to the wind and the waves, and there is a deep calm. He says "This is my body." And it is His body. He says "Stand up." And the dead man rises. The sinner's justification is exactly like this. God pronounces the verdict, "You are just." And the sinner is just, really and truly, outwardly and inwardly, wholly and completely. His sins are forgiven, and man is just in his heart. The voice of God never gets lost in the void. "The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness, the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord makes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forests bare: and in his temple all cry, 'Glory!'" (Ps. 29.4-9; cf. Ps. 147.18).

¹ Pope Paul vi, "Cardinal Newman's Thought and Example Relevant Today," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 17 Apr.1975.

² See Karl Barth, "A Letter to the Author," in Hans Kung, *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection*, pp. xvii-xx.

³ Kung, *Justification*, p.203.

Hence God's declaration is not a mere recording of past fact, nor a testimonial to an established one, nor the announcement of something wholly in the future. Much less is it a declaration of something which never was and never will be. The declaration of justice is the cause of something which before now was not, but now is. What man accomplishes by action, God accomplishes by speech, through His Word, filled with spirit and power:

"Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23.29; cf. Ezek. 12.25). It is the efficacious Word of God; His verdict is the creative fiat of the Almighty. In brief, God's declaration of justice is, as God's declaration of justice, at the same time and in the same act, a making just.⁴

Kung concludes his chapter, confident that he has reconciled the main thesis of both Protestants and Catholics:

Protestants speak of a declaring just which includes a making just; and Catholics of a making just which supposes a declaring just. Is it not time to stop arguing about imaginary differences?⁵

In his *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism* Louis Bouyer also writes:

The fiat which saves must be a creative fiat: it causes what it enunciates, and makes us just in complete reality.⁶

Karl Barth

In his *Church Dogmatics* Barth says:

There is no room for any fears that in the justification of man we are dealing only with a verbal action, with a kind of bracketed "as if," as though what is pronounced were not the whole truth about man. Certainly we have to do with a declaring righteous, but it is a declaration about man which is fulfilled and therefore effective in this event, which corresponds to actuality because it creates and therefore reveals the actuality. It is a declaring righteous which without any reserve can be called a making righteous. Christian faith does not believe in a sentence which is ineffective, or only partly effective.⁷

Paul Althaus

Paul Althaus represents some modern Lutheran scholars who say that the doctrine of a purely forensic justification comes from Melancthon and not from Luther. Luther is said to have taught an "effective justification." If by effective justification these scholars meant that God's act of justification has sanctifying effects in the life, they would be in harmony with the best Protestant tradition. But the entire history of effective justification is suspect. This expression comes from the Latin *justum efficare*, which was used as a slogan by the Roman Catholic opponents of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. *Justum efficare* means "to make righteous." Effective justification is a technical term for Newman's theory, which says that when God declares a sinner to be righteous, His word effects what it declares.⁸

In an article on Newman, H. Cunliffe-Jones says:

What is especially significant, however, is that the greater number of leading contemporary Protestant theologians have given up the purely intrinsic⁹ declaration of justice [e.g., Althaus, Schlink, Lachmann, Asmussen, Heidland]. It is without any doubt significant that today there is a fundamental agreement between Catholic and Protestant theology, precisely in the theology of justification – the point at which Reformation theology took its departure.¹⁰

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 203-4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.211.

⁶ Louis Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, quoted in Robert M. Horn, *Go Free!* p.126.

⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Part One*, p.95.

⁸ See Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, pp.224-242.

⁹ The author means forensic justification.

¹⁰ H. Cunliffe-Jones, "Newman on Justification," *The Clergy Review* 54 (Jan.1969): 117-123.

The echoes of Althaus can be seen in Michael Rogness' *Philip Melancthon: Reformer without Honor*. This Lutheran scholar fuses justification with regeneration.¹¹ Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson appear to compromise the strictly forensic nature of justification when they say: "Am I right? Or am I merely *declared* right? There is no difference."¹²

One of the most significant features of the movement to synthesize Protestantism and Romanism is the use being made of Luther. Once the apostle of the great sixteenth-century schism, Luther has become the apostle of unity. Protestant and Catholic scholars have found that they can synthesize their differences by returning to the young Luther – that is, the pre-1519 Luther. According to his own testimony, Luther broke through into the true Protestant faith when he made the distinction between the passive righteousness of faith and the active righteousness of sanctification.¹³

Luther's great *Commentary on Galatians* (1531-1535) is built around this distinction. Prior to 1519, Luther was still basically a Roman Catholic, and his confounding of the righteousness *for us* and the righteousness which is a quality *in us* was Augustinian. But in recent years the mainstream of Luther scholarship has ignored his own testimony on the dating of his great enlightenment and has shifted his "breakthrough" back to about 1513 or 1515. In this way these scholars can contend that Luther did not teach forensic but effective justification – that is, a theology which fuses rather than distinguishes between justification and renewal. Lutheran scholar Dr. Lowell C. Green, who is a Luther-Melancthon specialist, shows that this return to the young (Catholic) Luther has had a stranglehold on Luther studies in recent years.¹⁴ Luther is resurrected looking astonishingly like John Henry Newman. It is amazing to see who is being swept along in this movement which compromises forensic justification in favor of the synthesis theology.

J. A. Ziesler

In his scholarly monograph, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, Ziesler attempts a synthesis between the Roman Catholic and Protestant positions. He does this by saying that justification by faith means to declare righteous, but righteousness by faith means to make righteous. Ziesler calls this "some sort of reconciliation between Protestant and Catholic traditional exegesis"¹⁵ He says that his interpretation is "an exegesis which satisfies the concerns of both traditional Catholicism and traditional Protestantism."¹⁶ We would suggest, however, that Ziesler and others attempting this kind of synthesis are treading Newman's path. It will be proved in this twentieth century, as Newman proved in the nineteenth, that Rome can accept the synthesis and still be Rome, but a Protestant cannot accept the synthesis and still be Protestant.

Part V

Some Concluding Reflections on Newman's Theology

Newman's greatest weakness was his failure to grasp the nature of the gospel at its most fundamental level. We can agree with him that an abstract theory of forensic justification is not the gospel. But neither is Newman's reduction of the gospel to a mystical internal experience. The alternative to dry Protestant scholasticism is not mystical internalism.

¹¹ See Michael Rogness, *Philip Melancthon: Reformer without Honor*, pp.113-18.

¹² Eric w. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings*, p.68.

¹³ See Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol.34, *Career of the Reformer: IV*, pp.327-37.

¹⁴ See forthcoming book by Dr. Lowell C. Green, *How Melancthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel*.

¹⁵ J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry*, p.171.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.212.

The gospel is the proclamation of a historical event. The framework of the gospel is neither rationalistic nor mystical, but historical. In a concrete event, God broke into history in the person of His Son. In one infinite awesome act of judgment and deliverance, Jesus Christ fulfilled all that the Old Testament had promised. He dealt with sins, defeated the enemy, destroyed death, brought in everlasting righteousness and reconciled the world to Himself. In the Christ event, God recapitulated Old Testament history. He rewrote the history of Adam and Israel. And in the place of man's history of failure, He gave him a new holy history. The new creation took place in Christ, for in His death and resurrection humanity was saved from sin, made righteous and glorified at God's right hand. That is the gospel.

We cannot talk correctly about justification, new birth, the Spirit, faith, sanctification or anything that applies to the individual until we have first settled that the gospel is the proclamation of the absolutely finished deed of redemption which has taken place in history altogether outside the individual's experience. When we talk about justification, new birth and sanctification, we are talking about the application and benefits of the work of Christ to the individual believer. In order to participate in and benefit from the saving event which took place in history, the sinner must be *incorporated* into this holy history of Christ – that is to say, he must become vitally identified with Christ in such a way that Christ's life, death, resurrection and ascension all belong to him and become part of his existence. In this context it is proper to talk about hearing the gospel, faith and the work of the Holy Spirit. By these the sinner is incorporated into the new history and the new creation which has already taken place in Christ. And by this baptism of faith and of the Spirit, he becomes justified, born again and sanctified. All these are as inseparable as the fingers on a hand, but they are just as distinguishable.

This incorporation into Christ accomplishes the sinner's justification. Justification pertains to the way the sinner stands before the Judge and before the eyes of the law. When we say that justification is strictly *forensic*, we mean that justification is based on the holy history of Christ plus nothing. It means that the believing sinner must look to nothing in himself but solely to what Christ has done and suffered. If justification were not strictly forensic, then the righteous life and blood of Jesus would not be enough. Thus, a denial of forensic justification is a denial of the gospel.

We do not insist on forensic justification in order to maintain some legal abstraction, as Newman and the opponents of the Reformation faith claim. God's saving act in Christ constrains us to confess that nothing can be added or needs to be added to this perfect redemption. For the glory of Christ and for the comfort of troubled consciences, that finished work of Christ must remain the sole and all-sufficient basis of a right standing before the judgment of God.

Forensic justification does not mean a justification which takes place apart from regeneration and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. For when the sinner is incorporated into what exists for him in Christ, his state will be changed as well as his standing. He is given participation in the new creation and becomes a sharer of the Spirit and of the life of the new age. Thus, justification and regeneration are absolutely *inseparable*. But they must remain *distinguishable* since in this life the believer only experiences the firstfruits of the Spirit (Rom. 8:23). The believer's *completeness* is found only in Christ at God's right hand (Col. 2:9; 3:1-3). Since the righteousness by which he stands approved before the judgment of God must be whole and lacking nothing, the believer cannot find this in his regenerate state but only in what Christ has already done.

Newman, however, utterly confounded the believer's standing with the believer's state. He transferred the righteousness of faith from the finished work of Christ to the unfinished work of the Spirit in the heart. In calling forensic righteousness a shadow and an abstract fiction, Newman showed how little he valued the holy history of Christ.

Not grasping the reality of what God has already done prior to either our justification or sanctification, Newman saw the work of Christ merely as a stepping stone to secure the Holy Spirit. Then he ascribed our justification to the work of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity rather than to the Second Person. Instead of seeing the Spirit's work as incorporating us into the holy history of Christ, he saw the Spirit adding to the work of Christ.

Newman's failure to grasp the objective, historical gospel led him to propose that the individual's justification brings the new creation into existence. This is the theology of what has come to be called "effective justification." It contends that God's justification is not a "bare," "mere" verdict but a creative word which creates what it declares. Thus, when God *declares* a sinner to be righteous, His word is said to *make* the sinner righteous – just as God said, "'Let there be light,' and there was light."

The truth, however, is that the new creation or the making righteous took place *prior* to the verdict of justification. It took place in God's act *in Christ*, and this is what the gospel announces. Newman's creation analogy is inappropriate to describe the reality of justification, for the first is an imperative command and the second is a statement of a fact. The verdict of justification finds a truer analogy in what God declared at Christ's baptism: "This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). We would like to ask the advocates of effective justification two simple questions about God's verdict upon His Son. Did that verdict make Christ pleasing to the Father? And if not, is this precious statement from the lips of the Father to be called a "bare," "mere" verdict?



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The Judgment of the Bishops upon Tractarian Theology

W. Simcox Bricknell

Editorial Note: An edited collection of judgments on the theology of Newman and his associates (known as the Tractarian theology) was published in 1845 by the Rev. W. Simcox Bricknell of Worcester College. These judgments were written by Anglican bishops between 1837 and 1842. The following statement from this collection is an excellent presentation on the matter of justification.¹

Justification

The principle by which, in all ages and countries, the power of Satan has been most successfully assailed, and the human heart most strongly actuated, is that of simple reliance on Christ Jesus; simple acceptance of the truth, that He is "made unto us of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Accordingly, this doctrine, that, lying under God's wrath and condemnation, we are justified by Faith in Jesus Christ; this plain and simple truth has uniformly been assailed by every instrument which the enemy could bring to bear against it. From the time when certain men went down from Jerusalem and troubled the Church at Antioch;² from the time when Paul had to grieve over the disciples in Galatia, that they were "removed from the grace of Christ into another Gospel;³ which was not another," for it was no Gospel at all; from the earliest days until now, this has been the point of attack, because on this all depends. We are still experiencing the same, and from the same cause.

Through the merciful providence of God, the true principles of the Gospel were prevailing through the length and breadth of the land, and effects were following which they alone are capable of producing.

Meanwhile the enemy is on the watch; knows well where his danger lies; and contrives to cast reproach upon the Doctrine which is the hinge of Christian truth and Christian practice; to confound things which ought to be kept distinct; things inherent in man with things extraneous to man; individual duties with vicarious merits; and so to reduce religion to that doubt and uncertainty which never has led, and never will lead, to a consistent course of action.

It is notorious that this attempt, frequently made, and too often successful, has been renewed in the present day.

The Author of our Salvation, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and the knowledge of the truth," has commanded that the Gospel should be preached to every creature. Those have now risen up who affirm that the Doctrine of the Gospel, the propitiation made for sin, is a doctrine too dangerous to be openly disclosed, too mysterious to be generally exhibited; and would thus deprive the sinner at once of his motive to repent, and his comfort in repenting.

It has been another part of the same system to involve the article of our Justification in obscurity; what has been done for us, and what is to be wrought in us, are confused together; and, practically, man is induced to look to himself, and not to his Redeemer, for acceptance with God.

In all this, there is nothing that was unforeseen. The Apostle has plainly warned us to "beware of philosophy and vain deceit," lest they turn us aside from the simplicity of the Gospel; that very simplicity which fits it for the reception and benefit of all, but of which some men profess to be afraid, lest mercy should be too free, and the way of return to God too open. It is, in truth, the offence of the cross renewed under a fresh disguise; the objection which corrupt nature has always opposed under various forms to the Apostolical Doctrine, "By grace are ye saved, through Faith: not of works, lest any man should boast."

¹ Reprinted from W. Simcox Bricknell, *The Judgment of the Bishops upon Tractarian Theology* (Oxford: J. Vincent, 1845), pp. 356-360.

² See Acts xv. 1-25.

³ Gal. i. 6.

The Scriptural truth is as clear as it is simple. "When all were dead, Christ died for all;" so that "he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son, hath not life." By one way alone can man possess the Son; that is, by believing in him. And therefore, faith alone can justify; faith alone can appropriate to us that remedy, which God has appointed for the healing of our plague: faith alone can give us an interest in that sacrifice, which God has accepted as the satisfaction for sin. Thus, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ."

It is true, that, being thus accepted with God, and endued with his Spirit, man becomes a new creature. But he is not accepted with God, because he is a new creature, but because Christ has made atonement for the wrath which in his old nature he had incurred. His faith in that atonement which led to his acceptance, leads also to his doing works meet for one who is accepted: but the works which follow his being justified, and are its effect, can never also be the cause of his Justification. If a remedy were proposed to a man lying under a mortal disease, and by applying it he were restored to life; it would be sophistry to affirm, that, after all, it was not the remedy which saved, but that the constitution, strengthened by the remedy, resisted the disease. It would be injustice to the remedy, and ingratitude to the physician. And so it is injustice and ingratitude to depreciate the virtue of Christ's propitiation, by mixing up with it the righteousness of his redeemed people. Let no misrepresentation pervert, let no false philosophy corrupt the wholesome truth, that man is "delivered from the wrath to come," "not by works of righteousness which he has done," or may do, but by Him alone who "died for our sins, and rose again for our Justification." The statement which came fresh from the Reformer's age, is the statement to which we must still recur. "There is a righteousness which is inherent, and a righteousness which is not inherent. The righteousness whereby we are sanctified, is inherent, but not perfect. The righteousness whereby we are justified, is perfect, but not inherent." This is the fundamental and characteristic article of all the Reformed Churches: laid as it were their cornerstone; that we are accounted righteous before God through the merits of Christ alone, and not "for our own works or deservings:" that a lively faith is known by its works, as a sound tree by its fruits: but that they do not bear the root, but the root them. And we are at no loss for the reason why the Reformers were so diligent in laying this foundation. They had seen the consequence of departing from it. If works are to contribute to Justification, "then grace is no more grace." If man can assist in expiating his own sin, he is not the corrupt being which needs redemption. And such was, in fact, the process through which human error superseded Scriptural truth. Our Reformers knew how the corruption of man had been first lost sight of, and then the atonement made for it virtually neglected: they knew how the satisfaction of Christ had been set aside, and human works substituted in its stead, often such works as were neither acceptable to God, nor profitable to man; till at length a system overspread the world, under the name of Christianity, which had neither God for its Author, nor the welfare of mankind for its end: who were debased by what was sent to purify them, and deceived by what was ordained to deliver them from error.

If these facts have been forgotten, as they seem to have been forgotten, by the tendency of certain writings which have been lately pressed upon our attention, it is high time that they be brought back to our remembrance. But if I endeavor to stir up your minds by this mention of them, it is not because I believe that such admonition is needed here, or that you have ceased to make the ruin of man by sin, and his restoration through the sacrifice of the cross, the cardinal point of all your teaching. God forbid you ever should, or so close the door against your own ministerial usefulness.

There are many other subjects of instruction; but all must proceed from this as from a centre. Many duties are to be performed; and that they may be performed, must be inculcated: but they must be so inculcated, that the great principle of Salvation by grace may be preserved in all its integrity and consistency.

It is necessary to "keep under the body, and bring it into subjection," by abstinence, and mortification, by whatever means experience has shown to be profitable. Still, for what purpose? Not that we may atone for the offences of the body by the maceration of the body, but because "this is the will of God, even our Sanctification." It is necessary to cultivate humility, to practice charity, to exercise piety; not, however, that we may be hereby justified, but because we are justified: for "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his," not justified at all.

Ingenious men may find much to urge against this simple truth. They who have studied religion in the closet rather than in the world, or who know more of other history than of the history of the human heart, may think that we are thus leaving the narrow gate too widely open, and making the road to heaven too smooth. So it has been from the beginning. The apostles were accused of encouraging sin, by proclaiming the abundance of Divine grace. The Jews were jealous that Christians should enjoy immunity from a burthen which they themselves had borne, and escape the ordinances of the law of Moses. And the adversaries of the Christian faith made it one pretence of their opposition, that it offered the Divine favour to the profligate and malefactor.

But they to whom the truth was committed, did not meet these imputations by denying that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." They did not escape from a false accusation by a reserve of the truth which was assailed. They did not confound the propitiation which atones, with the sanctification which that propitiation works on the believer's heart. So far from it, we find Paul on this matter speaking with a vehemence unusual to him. "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."⁴

And surely we find here, as we might expect to find, that "God destroys the wisdom of the wise, and brings to nothing the understanding of the prudent." For whilst learned men are elaborately proving that outward rites and services are the only means of holiness on which we can depend, that "bodily exercise" and "voluntary humiliation"⁵ are the proper mode in which the sinner may approach his God, the plain preacher of the Gospel is confuting them, not by words, but by faith, and the honest disciple is showing that "they who have believed in Christ will be careful to maintain good works." In religion, as in other things, many a truth which the philosopher passes by, is picked up by the simple and unlearned; whilst many a theory in which the philosopher prides himself is contradicted by ordinary observation. And thus, in the present question, experience proves that the only doctrine which conveys real comfort to the soul, is the only doctrine which produces the genuine spirit of Christian piety. Experience proves, that the more we labour to establish ourselves in the practice of holiness, the more need we find of clothing ourselves in the righteousness of our Redeemer. And again, the more firmly we trust to that righteousness which is not our own, the nearer we advance towards the personal righteousness which we are striving to attain, and cannot be satisfied without attaining.

Justification: Its Relation to the Work of the Holy Spirit

James Buchanan

Editorial Note: James Buchanan's masterful volume on *The Doctrine of Justification* was first published in 1867. It remains one of the greatest classics on the subject in the English language. We are pleased to reprint his lecture on the relation of justification to the work of the Holy Spirit. It is obvious that Buchanan wrote this superb passage for the purpose of refuting John Henry Newman's theory of justification by the indwelling Spirit.¹

There is, perhaps, no more subtle or plausible error, on the subject of Justification, than that which makes it to rest on the indwelling presence, and the gracious work, of the Holy Spirit in the heart. It is a singularly refined form of opposition to the doctrine of Justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, for it merely substitutes the work of one divine Person for that of another; and it is plausible, because it seems to do homage to the doctrine of Grace, by ascribing to the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit the production of faith, and all the effects which are ascribed to it, whether these belong to our Justification or to our Sanctification. It is the more difficult to expose and refute error, when it presents itself in this apparently spiritual form, than when it comes before us in its grosser and more common shape, as a doctrine of justification by works, because it involves some great truths which are held as firmly by those who advocate, as by those who abjure, the Protestant doctrine of Justification. Yet, subtle and plausible as it is, and difficult as it may be to disentangle the error from the partial truth which is involved in it, nothing can be more unscriptural in itself, or more pernicious to the souls of men, than the substitution of the gracious work of the Spirit in us, for the vicarious work of Christ for us, as the ground of our pardon and acceptance with God; for if we are justified solely on account of what Christ did and suffered for us, while He was yet on the earth, we may rest, with entire confidence, on a work which has been already 'finished'—on a righteousness which has been already wrought out, and already accepted of God on behalf of all who believe in His name,—and we may immediately receive, on the sure warrant of His word, the privilege of Justification as a free gift of God's grace through Christ, and as the present privilege of every believer, so as at once to have 'joy and peace in believing.' Whereas, if we are justified on the ground of the work of the Holy Spirit in us, we are called to rest on a work, which, so far from being finished and accepted, is not even begun in the case of any unrenewed sinner; and which, when it is begun in the case of a believer, is incipient only,—often interrupted in its progress by declension

⁴ Gal. i. 9.

⁵ See 1 Tim. iv. 8; Col. ii. 18.

and backsliding,—marred and defiled by remaining sin,—obscured and enveloped in doubt by clouds and thick darkness,—and never perfected in this life, even according to the low standard of a relaxed law, if that law is supposed to require any definite amount of personal holiness in heart and life. For these reasons, it is of the utmost practical importance, to conceive aright, both of the Mediatorial work of Christ, and of the internal work of His Spirit, in the relation which they bear to each other, under the scheme of Grace and Redemption: and with the view of aiding the serious inquirer in doing so, we lay down the following propositions.

[I.] The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are revealed as concurring together in the whole purpose and plan of man's redemption; but as sustaining, each of them, a distinct office, and undertaking a different part of the work, in carrying that purpose and plan into effect.

Their common purpose of saving sinners, and their harmonious co-operation in its accomplishment, might be inferred from the unity of the divine nature, which necessarily implies unity in the counsels of the divine will; but the personal distinctions of the Godhead could never have been so clearly revealed in any other way than by the distinct offices and operations, which are ascribed to them in connection with the work of salvation. It is to mark at once their harmony of purpose, and also their several agencies, in this work, that every believer is required to be baptized,—not simply into the name of God,—but 'into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;'² and that each of the three is distinctly invoked in the Apostolic form of benediction: 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.'³ The preparatory baptism of John, which is described as 'the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,'—and which was administered to the people who attended his ministry,⁴ that they might be taught to 'believe on Him who should come after him,' and 'baptize them with the Holy Ghost,'—was imperfect, as compared with Christian baptism, because it did not distinctly specify the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and accordingly it was superseded on the establishment of the Christian Church.

Each of the three Persons in the Godhead sustains a distinct office, and undertakes a work which is ascribed peculiarly to Him, in connection with the divine method of saving sinners.

The Father is revealed as representing the majesty, — exercising the sovereignty, — and maintaining the prerogatives, of the Godhead. It is said of Him that 'He loved us,'—that 'He blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ,'—that 'He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,'—that 'He predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved,'—that 'He gave His only-begotten Son,'—that 'He sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world,'—that 'He made Him to be sin for us,'—that 'He set Him forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood,'—that 'He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up to the death for us all,'—that 'He commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,'—that 'it pleased the Lord to bruise Him,'—that 'He raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God,'—that He 'crowned Him with honour and glory, and did set Him over the works of His hands,'—and that 'God hath exalted Him with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance, and remission of sins.'⁵

The Son is revealed as acting in official subordination to the Father,—as 'sent,'—as 'given,'—as 'coming to do His will,'—as 'making Himself of no reputation,'—as 'taking upon Him the form of a servant, and appearing in the likeness of man,'—as 'humbling Himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,'—as being 'made under law,'—as being 'made sin for us,'—as being 'made a curse for us,'—as 'wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities,'—as bearing 'our sins in His own body on the tree,'—as 'giving Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour,'—as 'crucified in weakness, but raised in power,'—as ascending up into heaven, and sitting down 'for ever on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool,'—as 'highly exalted, and having a name given to Him which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'⁶

The Holy Spirit is revealed as 'proceeding from the Father,'—as 'sent by the Son from the Father,'—as 'testifying' of Christ, —as 'glorifying Christ,'—as 'bearing witness' of Him,—as 'convincing the world of sin, because they believe not on Him,'—as 'shining into the hearts of men, and giving them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,'—as 'renewing them in the spirit of their minds,'—as 'quickening them' into spiritual life—'as 'the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Christ,'—as 'the Spirit that dwelleth in us'—that 'worketh in us'—that 'guideth us into all truth'—that 'helpeth our infirmities'—that 'witnesseth with our spirits that we are the children of God,'—as 'the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.'⁷

These testimonies are sufficient to show, —first, that there is a real distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, since many things are revealed concerning each of them which cannot be affirmed of the other two;—and secondly, that they sustain different offices under the same scheme of grace, and execute different parts of the same work of redemption. If these fundamental truths are clearly revealed, it follows that we can only involve ourselves in inextricable confusion by overlooking the fact that such distinctions exist, and by ascribing that to the Father which Scripture ascribes to the Son, —or that to the Son which Scripture ascribes to the Spirit, —or, conversely, that to the Spirit which the Scripture ascribes to the Son. Yet this is the very error with which those are justly chargeable who substitute the work of the Spirit in us, for the work of Christ for us, as the ground of our Justification.

[II.] The work of the Holy Spirit is as necessary for our Justification as the work of Christ Himself; but it is not necessary for the same reasons, nor is it effectual for the same ends.

That the work of the Holy Spirit in us is as necessary, in some respects, for our actual Justification, as the work of Christ for us, has never been denied by sound Protestant divines; and the fact is proved by those passages of Scripture in which the two are expressly connected with each other. For example, the Apostle says to believers, 'Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,'⁸—words which clearly imply, that there is a distinction

between our being 'sanctified' and our being 'justified;' but that both blessings are connected, although it may be in different ways, with the work of Christ, and also with the work of His Spirit,—for we are 'sanctified,' as well as 'justified,' 'in the name of the Lord Jesus,' and also 'by the Spirit of our God.' Again, the Apostle says, 'After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, —not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life;⁹ —words which clearly imply that our whole salvation, —including regeneration, justification, adoption, and eternal life,—depends equally on the 'kindness,' 'love,' and 'grace' of God,—on the work of 'Jesus Christ our Saviour,'—and on 'the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' The same truth is clearly taught in those passages of Scripture which affirm, that not one saving privilege can be enjoyed without the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, and that every Gospel blessing is conferred through His agency on the souls of men. Without the effectual work of the Spirit there is no salvation. This is set forth in the strongest way, negatively, and positively. First negatively: 'Verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again,' or 'from above' (*another* supreme, which is explained as 'born of the Spirit'), 'he cannot see the kingdom of God;—'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His;—and 'no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."¹⁰ Then positively, —through His agency, we are united to Christ, and are made, at one and the same time, partakers of all the blessings of His redemption; for,—'Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.'¹¹ From these explicit testimonies it is clear, that no man is a partaker of any of the blessings of salvation, until he is renewed by the Spirit of God; and that every man is made a partaker of them all, as soon as, by the Spirit's agency, he is united to Christ, and enabled to believe on His name. Any doctrine, therefore, which excludes the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in order to our Justification,—either by representing faith as a mere intellectual belief, and ascribing it to the natural exercise of our faculties on the truth and its evidence, —or by describing it as the product of man's free-will, acting spontaneously and without the effectual influence of divine grace, —is at variance with the express teaching of Scripture, and should be rejected, as it was by Augustine, because it does not sufficiently recognize, either the natural depravity of man, or the efficacy of divine grace.

But, while the work of the Holy Spirit in us is as necessary for our Justification as the work of Christ for us, it is not necessary for the same reasons, nor is it effectual for the same ends. There were two great evils in our natural condition, each of which must be redressed and removed, by means appropriate to itself, if we were to be thoroughly reconciled to God. The first was the guilt of sin, the second was the dominion of sin. By the one, we were exposed to the wrath of God, and to the curse of His law; by the other, we were slaves to our own evil passions, and subject to that carnal mind which is 'enmity against God.' Both evils must be redressed, if there was to be a thorough reconciliation between God and man; His displeasure, on account of sin, must be averted, and man's enmity, on account of His holiness, must be subdued; and Christ undertook, as Mediator, to accomplish each of these ends, but in different ways. He undertook to do and suffer all that was necessary to procure,—not Justification only, and far less mere salvability, —but a complete salvation, for His people; to expiate their guilt,—to avert from them God's wrath and curse,—to earn for them a title to eternal life,—and to obtain for them, as the reward of His own work, the grace of the Holy Spirit, which was 'the promise of the Father' to Him. He further undertook, as Mediator and Administrator of the covenant, to dispense the gift of the Holy Spirit for the benefit of His people, —that they might thereby be enabled to believe on Him for their entire salvation, and to look to Him for their Sanctification, as well as for their Justification. He contemplated, therefore, both evils, and provided a remedy for both; but His own work, in so far as it is distinct from that of the Holy Spirit, consisted in the vicarious fulfillment of the divine law, both in its precept and penalty,—so as to lay a solid foundation, in the first instance, for their pardon and acceptance with God; and also to procure for them, that He might freely bestow, the gift of the Holy Spirit, by which they might be made 'a willing people in the day of His power.' But the work of the Spirit was to be entirely distinct from that of the Son, and was neither designed to supersede, or to supplement, it, for its own special and peculiar ends; on the contrary, it was to consist mainly in persuading men effectually to 'receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation, as He is freely offered in the Gospel.' Christ was 'exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance' as well as 'the remission of sins;' and we must be indebted to Him for both; for 'being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He shed forth' the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and has continued to dispense it, as the fruit of His purchase, and the gift of His grace, in all ages of the Church down to the present day.

The Mediatorial work of Christ is thus clearly distinguished from the internal work of the Spirit. By the former, all the blessings of salvation were procured; by the latter, all these blessings are effectually applied. The work of the Spirit is not the cause, but the consequent, of our redemption; and it forms no part of the ground, although it is the evidence, of our Justification. That blessing, like every other which is included in salvation, depends entirely on the sacerdotal work of Christ, by which He fulfilled the conditions of the Covenant; and it is dispensed by Him in the exercise of His prophetic and regal offices, as Administrator of the Covenant. The Holy Spirit is His Agent in the exercise of these offices, and by His grace and power men are enabled and persuaded to rely on Him for salvation; but in fulfilling the conditions which were imposed on Christ as Mediator, or in accomplishing 'the work which the Father had given Him to do,' the Spirit had no part, except in so far as He was 'given to Him without measure,' and sustained His holy human soul in obeying and suffering, when 'through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot unto God.' Apart from such concurrence,—which might be equally affirmed of the Father Himself, —the Holy Spirit did no part of the work by which our redemption was secured; and it is Christ's work alone, therefore, which is the ground of our Justification. That is said of Christ and His work, in this respect, which is never said of the Spirit and His work. It is said of the Son,—but never of the Spirit,—that He became incarnate, and 'took upon Him the form of a servant, and appeared in the likeness of men,'—that 'He was made under law,'—that He was 'made sin for us,'—that 'He was made a curse for us,'—that 'He bore our sins in His own body on the tree,' —that 'He died for us, the just for the unjust,' —that 'He redeemed us to God by His blood,' —that 'He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth on His name,'—that 'He obtained eternal redemption for us,'—that 'now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself,' —and that 'this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.' From these testimonies it is manifest that a peculiar work is ascribed to Christ which is nowhere ascribed, in whole or in part, to the Holy Spirit; a work which was 'finished' on the Cross, and is different even from that which He is still carrying on in the Church by the agency of His Spirit, and the

instrumentality of His Word,—a work which had a direct reference to the expiation of human guilt, and the satisfaction of the law and justice of God,—and a work which constitutes the only, but all-sufficient, ground of our Justification. If that work accomplished the end for which it was designed, no other ground of acceptance is either necessary, or possible; and the work of the Spirit Himself cannot be supposed to supersede, or even to supplement, it, without dishonour to the efficacy of that 'precious blood,' and the merits of that perfect righteousness, by which Christ satisfied the Law and Justice of God. But this important truth will become still more evident, if from the peculiar work which is ascribed to Christ, we proceed to consider that other work, equally peculiar, which is ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

[III.] The work of the Spirit consists in 'bearing witness to Christ,' and applying to men the redemption which He obtained for them, so as to make it effectual for their complete and everlasting salvation.

'It is the Spirit which beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth;'¹² and the great subject of His testimony is Christ—Christ crucified, and Christ exalted:—'He shall testify of Me;'—'He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.'¹³ The testimony of the Spirit relates to Christ as the only Saviour of sinners; and He bears witness to Him both in the Word, which was written by His inspiration, and in the hearts of His people, when He is given unto them 'as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,'¹⁴ by which they obtain 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'¹⁵ Accordingly, so far from leading us to rest on His own work in us, as the ground of our acceptance with God, that work itself mainly consists in applying to us the redemption which was procured by Christ,—by convincing us of our need of it, —by revealing its all-sufficiency,—by 'making known to us the things that are freely given to us of God,'—and disposing, and enabling, us to trust in Christ alone.

The question, 'How, and by whom, was salvation procured for sinners?' should not supersede, but should rather lead on, to that other question, 'How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?' The scriptural answer to this question is—By its being effectually applied to us by the Holy Spirit. If it be asked again, 'How does the Spirit apply Christ's redemption to us?' the scriptural answer is—By working faith in us, and uniting us to Christ. And if it be still further asked, 'How does He work faith in us, and unite us to Christ?' the scriptural answer is—that 'He persuades, and enables, us to receive and rest on Christ alone for salvation as He is freely offered to us in the Gospel.' This is the grand object of His whole work in conversion, to bring a sinner to close with Christ, and to rely on Him as his own Saviour. This result may not be effected without a preparatory process, of longer or shorter duration, in different cases; for the sinner must be convinced of his sin, and misery, and danger, before he can feel his need of a Saviour, or have any serious desire for salvation,—he must be enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, in the glory of His person, and the nature of His redeeming work, before he can see in Him the very Saviour whom he needs,—and he must be made willing,—for naturally he is not willing to be saved, in the full scriptural sense of that expression, and still less to be saved in this way,—by the mere mercy of God through the righteousness of another; but then there comes a critical moment when he is effectually persuaded to receive and rest on Christ alone; and he is free to do so at once, for there is no barrier between him and Christ, except his own unbelief, or his own unwillingness. Receiving Christ by faith, he is united to Him; and being united to Him, 'he is complete in Him,'—Christ's righteousness becomes his for his Justification, and Christ's Spirit becomes his also for his Sanctification.

If such be the nature of the Spirit's work, its necessity for our actual Justification cannot arise from any defect in the righteousness of Christ, for its great design is to lead the sinner to receive and rest on Christ alone; it must arise only from the depraved state of our own minds, which is such that, were we left to ourselves, we would never close with the gracious call of the Gospel, —partly because we are insensible of the evil and demerit of sin,—partly because we are spiritually blind, —and partly because we are unwilling to be saved in God's way, and on God's terms. Hence arises the indispensable necessity of the Spirit's work, in applying the redemption, which was procured by Christ, for our Justification; while its necessity for other ends arises from the very nature of salvation itself, which consists in deliverance from the power and practice of sin, as well as from its guilt and punishment, and is designed, not only to give us a title to eternal life, but also to 'make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.' For the doctrine of a free Justification, by grace through faith alone, is miserably misunderstood or perverted, if it be supposed to cancel that unalterable law of Christ's kingdom—'This is the will of God, even your Sanctification,' and 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'

[IV.] Regeneration and Justification are simultaneous; and no man is justified who is not renewed, nor is any man renewed who is not also, and immediately, justified.

By the agency of the Holy Spirit, who works faith in us, by enabling and persuading us to receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation, we are united to Christ; and by our union with Him, we are made partakers of all the blessings which He died to purchase, and is exalted to bestow. We are united to Him as our federal, or representative, Head, and are thus made partakers of His justifying righteousness,—and we are united to Him, at one and the same time, as our spiritual, or life-giving, Head, and are thus made partakers of His sanctifying grace. With reference to the former effect of our union to Christ, it is said, that 'we are accepted in the Beloved,'—that 'we are made the righteousness of God in Him,'—that 'in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.' With reference to the latter effect of our union to Christ, it is said, that 'we are sanctified in Christ Jesus,' —that 'if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature,'—and that from Him 'as the Head, all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.'¹⁶ And with reference to both effects of our union to Christ, it is said, 'Ye are complete in Him,' and 'of God are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' It is from 'the fullness that is in Christ,' that all saving blessings flow; for 'it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell,' and 'of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.'¹⁷ So intimate and endearing is the union between Christ and His people, that they are said to be in Him, and He in them. 'Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, or apart from me, ye can do nothing.'¹⁸ The work of the Spirit produces, and maintains, this

union with Christ by faith; for 'we are strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, ... that we may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God.'¹⁹ The Holy Spirit, so far from withdrawing our confidence from Christ, that it may rest on His own work within, teaches us to rest on Him alone for all the blessings of salvation, and to 'hold fast the beginning of our confidence even to the end.' So far from making Christ less 'precious' to us, the Spirit endears Him to us the more, as at once 'the Author and the Finisher of our faith,' and teaches us to 'rejoice in Him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.'

If the work of the Spirit in us consists merely in the effectual application of the work of Christ for us, and in making us partakers of all the blessings of His redemption, it follows that Regeneration and Justification are simultaneous, and that no man is justified who is not renewed, nor is any man renewed who is not also justified. This is a most important truth, and one that is sufficient to neutralize the two great errors, which have been maintained by opposite parties on this subject. The one is the error of the Antinomians, who have spoken of Justification as being antecedent to, and independent of, Regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and have identified it sometimes with God's eternal election,—at other times with the redeeming work of Christ,—as if there were no difference between an eternal purpose to save, and the execution of that purpose in time, or between the procuring of redemption, and the actual application of it to the souls of men. The other is the error of Popish writers, and some of their followers in the Protestant Church, who have spoken of Justification as dependent, not on the finished work of Christ alone, but on our personal obedience and final perseverance; and have virtually postponed it till the judgment of the great day, as if it were not the present privilege of believers, and of every believer on the instant when he is united to Christ,—or as if he did not receive Christ for his sanctification, and even for his perseverance, as well as for the free pardon of all his sins, and the gracious acceptance of his person and his services. These two errors may be said to lie at opposite extremes from each other; but they are equally false and dangerous. Paul was 'a chosen vessel,' and was redeemed by the blood of Christ; but he was not justified while he was 'a blasphemer and a persecutor;' it was not till he was convinced and converted, that he 'obtained mercy,'²⁰—but then immediately he could say, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him till the great day;'—'I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved ME, and gave Himself for ME.'²¹ And so, invariably in the case of every true convert, there is a critical moment when he 'passes from death unto life,'—from a state of 'wrath' to a state of 'reconciliation,'—from being 'without Christ,' and therefore 'without hope, and without God in the world,' to being 'in Christ,'²² as 'a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God;' and it is equally certain—that he was not justified before,—and that he is justified now.

It has sometimes been asked—Whether Regeneration or Justification has the precedency in the order of nature? This is a question of some speculative interest, but of little practical importance. It relates to the order of our conceptions, not to the order of time; for it is admitted on all hands that the two blessings are bestowed simultaneously. The difficulties which have suggested it are such as these,—How God can be supposed, on the one hand, to bestow the gift of His Spirit on any one who is still in a state of wrath and condemnation, —and how He can be supposed, on the other hand, to justify any sinner while he is not united to Christ by that living faith which is implanted only by the Spirit of God? But such difficulties will be found to resolve themselves into a more general and profound question; and can only be effectually removed, by falling back on God's eternal purpose of mercy towards sinners, which included equally their redemption by Christ, and their regeneration by His Spirit. The grand mystery is how God, who hates sin, could ever love any class of sinners,—and so love them, as to give His own Son to die for them, and His Holy Spirit to dwell in them. The relation which subsists, in respect of order, between Regeneration and Justification, is sufficiently determined, for all practical purposes, if neither is held to be prior or posterior to the other, in point of time, —and if it is clearly understood that they are simultaneous gifts of the same free grace; for then it follows,—that no unrenewed sinner is justified,—and that every believer, as soon as he believes, is pardoned and accepted of God.

¹ Reprinted from James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification: An Outline of Its History in the Church and of Its Exposition from Scripture*, 1867 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. 387-404. See pp.213-19.

² Matt. xxviii. 19.

³ 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

⁴ Acts xix. 2-6.

⁵ John iii. 16; Eph. i. 3, 4, 5; 1 John iv. 14; 2 Cor. v.21; Rom. iii. 25, viii. 32; Isa. Liii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 21; Heb. ii. 7; Acts v.31.

⁶ Phil. ii. 7; Gal. iii. 13; Isa. Liii.; Eph. v.2; Heb. x. 12; Phil. ii. 9, 10.

⁷ John xv. 26, xvi. 14; 1 John v.6; John xvi. 8, 9; Eph. i. 17, 14.

⁸ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

⁹ Tit. iii. 4-7

¹⁰ John iii. 3, 5, 6; Rom. viii. 9; 1 Cor. xii. 3.

¹¹ 1 Cor. i. 30.

¹² 1 John v.6.

¹³ John xv. 26, xvi. 14, 15.

¹⁴ Eph. i. 17.

¹⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

¹⁶ 1 Cor. i. 2; 2 Cor. v.17; Col. ii. 19.

¹⁷ Col. i. 19; John i. 16.

¹⁸ John xv. 4.

¹⁹ Eph. iii. 16, 17.

²⁰ 1 Tim. i. 16.

²¹ Gal. ii. 20.

²² Eph. ii. 12, 13.