

## Newman's Interpretation of Luther: A Reappraisal

Theological Studies  
2017, Vol. 78(1) 121–146  
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DOI: 10.1177/0040563916682323  
journals.sagepub.com/home/tsj



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### Abstract

This article challenges the current scholarly consensus that John Henry Newman wrongly interpreted Martin Luther's theology of justification by faith alone in his *Lectures on Justification*. It contends that what Newman primarily opposed in his *Lectures* was not Luther himself, but "popular Protestantism" and its teaching of justification by mere imputation. The charges against Newman are examined in detail in light of this claim.

### Keywords

Anglo-Catholic, evangelicalism, Galatians 3:10, high church, justification, *Lectures on Justification*, Martin Luther, mere imputation, John Henry Newman, Protestantism, *Via Media*

The year 2017 marks the five hundredth anniversary of Luther nailing his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the Castle Church door at Wittenberg on October 31, 1517 and the start of the Protestant Reformation. Such an auspicious occasion calls for further reflection on the doctrine of justification because, despite there being "a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification," there still remains much division over it in the Western Church.<sup>1</sup> John Henry Newman created a *via media* theology of

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1. The Lutheran World Federation and The Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999) 40, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_31101999\\_cath-luth-joint-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html).

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justification to overcome those historic divisions. Yet Newman's own efforts were hampered by what some have seen as his misinterpretation of Luther. This essay gives a fresh account of Newman's interpretation of Luther with the hope that his *via media* doctrine of justification may serve as a source for greater ecumenical agreement.

Holding that John Henry Newman in his *Lectures on Justification* (1838) wrongly interpreted Martin Luther's doctrine of justification has become commonplace today.<sup>2</sup> The charges against Newman are various: he is said to have held wrongly that Luther taught faith was a "human work" and not a gift of God;<sup>3</sup> to have believed that Protestants taught we are saved on account of faith itself (*propter fidem*) not on account of Christ by faith (*propter Christum per fidem*);<sup>4</sup> to have held the position of the seventeenth-century Caroline divines as a "prototype of his own position";<sup>5</sup> to have held a *via media* theology of justification that rests upon "a fallacious interpretation of both extremes";<sup>6</sup> to have confused the terms "Luther" and "Lutheranism";<sup>7</sup> to have equated the Lutheran understanding of faith with "feelings";<sup>8</sup> to have followed an

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2. Alister McGrath, "John Henry Newman's 'Lectures on Justification': The High Church Misrepresentation of Luther," *Churchman* 97 (1983) 112–22, [http://church-society.org/docs/churchman/097/Cman\\_097\\_2\\_McGrath.pdf](http://church-society.org/docs/churchman/097/Cman_097_2_McGrath.pdf); Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005) 312–17; Scott Murray, "Luther in Newman's 'Lectures on Justification,'" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 54 (1990) 155–78, <http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/murraylutherinnewman.pdf>; Richard John Neuhaus, "Newman, Luther, and the Unity of Christians," *Pro Ecclesia* 6 (1997) 277–88; Joseph S. O'Leary, "Impeded Witness: Newman against Luther on Justification," in *John Henry Newman: Reason, Rhetoric and Romanticism*, ed. David Nicholls and Fergus Kerr (Bristol: Bristol, 1991) 153–93; John F. Perry, "Newman's Treatment of Luther in the *Lectures on Justification*," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 36 (Summer–Fall 1999) 303–17; William Haugaard, "A Myopic Curiosity: Martin Luther and the English Tractarians," *Anglican Theological Review* 66 (1984) 391–401 at 397–99; Ellen T. Charry, "The Beauty of Holiness: Practical Divinity," in *The Vocation of Anglicanism: Sources and Essays*, ed. Ralph McMichael (London: SCM, 2014) 196–243 at 216. The author too had at one time thought the same: "Newman's *Via Media* Theology of Justification," *Newman Studies Journal* 4 (2007) 64–74 at 64, doi: 10.5840/nsj20074226.
  3. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 312–13. This criticism is less forceful in the 3rd ed. of McGrath's work; *Iustitia Dei* 295, 299. McGrath, "Newman's 'Lectures'" 115.
  4. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 299.
  5. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 297, 282–83, 299; Alister McGrath, "Newman on Justification: An Evangelical Anglican Evaluation," in *Newman and the Word*, ed. Terrence Murrigan (Louvain: Peeters, 2000) 91–108 at 106; Perry, "Newman's Treatment of Luther" 305; John Prince Fallows, preface to *Commentary on Galatians*, by Martin Luther, ed. John Prince Fallows, trans. Erasmus Middleton (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1979) vii–ix at viii.
  6. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 297; Murray, "Luther in Newman's 'Lectures'" 156.
  7. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 302.
  8. *Ibid.* 301.

unreliable English translation of Luther;<sup>9</sup> and finally, to have deliberately misquoted a lengthy passage of Luther.<sup>10</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn from the charges against him, we are told, is that he gave an "inept treatment of Luther"<sup>11</sup> with the result that "Newman's historico-theological analysis appears to be seriously and irredeemably inaccurate."<sup>12</sup> In other words, if the charges against Newman's interpretation of Luther can be substantiated, then by implication, Newman was the worst sort of scholar whose *via media* theology of justification can be discounted.<sup>13</sup> If, however, the charges against him cannot be substantiated wholly, then it logically follows that the case against Newman's interpretation of Luther fails, either wholly or in part, and his theology of justification merits reconsideration. My position is that, while Newman cannot be completely exonerated, the charges against his interpretation of Luther are largely unsubstantiated because what Newman primarily opposed in his *Lectures* was not Luther himself, but popular Protestantism and its teaching of justification by mere imputation. This explains the widespread misunderstanding of Newman's interpretation of Luther in his *Lectures* and the reason for its existence. Newman was addressing a contemporary teaching about justification found within some forms of evangelicalism that was only loosely tied to Luther, despite his real disagreements with Luther about the nature of faith, what constituted justification, and good works as justifying. I will examine Newman's interpretation of Luther in detail in light of this claim, keeping in mind that not all

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9. Ibid. 302, 307; McGrath, "Newman on Justification" 96–97; Perry, "Newman's Treatment of Luther" 315–17; Thomas L. Sheridan, "Newman and Luther on Justification," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 38 (Spring–Summer 2001) 217–45 at 228.

10. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 304–7; McGrath, "Newman on Justification" 101–3; Perry, "Newman's Treatment of Luther" 317.

11. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 302; McGrath, "Newman on Justification" 96.

12. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 296.

13. For example, it is said of Newman's *Lectures*, "Newman's misrepresentation of Luther in particular, and Protestantism in general—must cast considerable doubt on the value of the *Lectures on Justification*." McGrath, "Newman's 'Lectures'" 121. "Newman uses historical theology as little more than a thinly-veiled foil for his own theological agenda, which is firmly wedded to the realities of the Church of England in the 1830s." McGrath, "Newman on Justification" 105. "In his attempt to chart a mediating course among these tendencies it was imperative for Newman to understand correctly the position of each. Newman failed to do that, failing most miserably in his attempt to understand and analyze correctly the doctrine of Luther and the Lutherans." Murray, "Luther in Newman's 'Lectures'" 158. "I believe the *Lectures on Justification* have not served well the Catholic understanding of Protestantism, and do not serve well contemporary efforts to heal the breach between Rome and the Reformation." Neuhaus, "Newman, Luther, and the Unity of Christians" 278. "Anglicans, who stand in the tradition of the Tractarians . . . must also correct the historical myopia which has prevented a full recognition of the congruence of much of Tractarianism with the original teachings and heritage of Martin Luther." Haugaard, "A Myopic Curiosity" 399.

scholars agree on such interpretation, as the history of the interpretation of Luther itself bears witness.<sup>14</sup>

## Newman's Interpretation of Luther

Newman's interpretation of Luther was questioned even in his own day. His *Lectures* arose out of a controversy over justification in the pages of the evangelical magazine the *Christian Observer*.<sup>15</sup> In 1837 Newman wrote two letters to the editor of the *Christian Observer* defending the idea of baptismal justification found in Edward Bouverie Pusey's *Tracts on Baptism*.<sup>16</sup> At the end of the second letter Newman promised to write on justification in the future. The editor of the *Christian Observer*, Samuel Charles Wilks (1789–1872), an Anglican evangelical affiliated with the Clapham sect, thought the Tractarians were attempting to revive the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification by inherent righteousness. Bolstering this opinion was the publication of the Anglican evangelical G. S. Faber's work, the *Primitive Doctrine of Justification* (1837), which was written in response to the claims of both the Irish lay theologian Alexander Knox's *Remains* (1836) and the evangelical historian Joseph Milner's *The History of the Church of Christ* (1827) that the early church held justification by inherent righteousness.<sup>17</sup> Faber argued, to the contrary, that the doctrine of forensic justification by faith alone was apostolic.<sup>18</sup> Prior to the publication of Faber's work, Newman kept his promise to write on justification.<sup>19</sup> But instead of another letter to the *Christian Observer*, Newman gave a series of lectures on justification in Adam de Brome Chapel of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Oxford in 1837 that were published the following year as his *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*. Newman's interpretation of

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14. On the variety of interpretations of Luther see Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 199–237.
  15. Newman noted in a letter to J. W. Bowden on April 12, 1837, "As my Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church, rose out of my correspondence with the Abbé Jager, so those on Justification rose out of my controversy with the Christian Observer." John Henry Newman, *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, 32 vols., ed. Charles Stephen Dessian et al. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978–2008) 6:53, esp. n.2 (hereafter cited in text as *LD*). For a good overview of the controversy see Peter Toon, *Evangelical Theology 1833–1856: A Response to Tractarianism*, New Foundations Theological Library (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979) 141–47.
  16. The two letters were republished as Tract 82 and are also found in John Henry Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church*, 2 vols. (1837; repr., London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901) 2:143–94. Pusey's tracts on baptism were tracts 67, 68, 69.
  17. George Stanley Faber, *The Primitive Doctrine of Justification Investigated: Relatively to the Several Definitions of the Church of Rome and the Church of England*, 2nd ed. (London: R. B. Seely and W. Burnside, 1839) 1–11.
  18. Faber, *The Primitive Doctrine of Justification* 29–30, 96–200.
  19. John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed. (1874; repr., London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908) vi–vii (hereafter cited in text as *LDJ*).

Luther in his *Lectures* caused Faber to disagree with his “respected friend” in an appendix added to the second edition of his *Primitive Doctrine of Justification* (1839).<sup>20</sup> Faber’s chief objection to Newman was that,

Throughout his whole Work, Mr. Newman perpetually ascribes, to those who differ from him, a denial that *Any real holiness or any inherent righteousness is ever communicated from above to the justified believer*: and this strange whimsy, thus gratuitously ascribed, he decorates or disguises, apparently from some more than Roman antipathy to the illustrious though not infallible Saxon Reformer, by the intentionally invidious name of Lutheranism.<sup>21</sup>

Faber had a point. What Newman “distinguishes or denounces by the apparent *hateful* name of Lutheranism”<sup>22</sup> was actually a tendency within evangelicalism to think of justification in an overly forensic manner that denied a real change to human nature.

This point was not lost on Julius Charles Hare, who in his *Vindication of Luther Against His Recent English Assailants* (1855) noted this very fact. The “Oxford School of Theology,” Hare said,

draw their notions of what they term Lutheranism from English writers of our so-called Evangelical School, ascribing the opinions which they find in those writers, in the gross to Luther,—or else from Romish polemics, from gossip pickt up no matter how or where, from everything except its one genuine source, the Symbolical Books.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the polemical nature of his comments, Hare rightfully noted that Newman treated Luther as a theological primogenitor of a much later doctrine of justification found within evangelicalism. Hare also pointed out that Newman’s belief that the Protestant doctrine of justification led to a “degradation of the sacraments” was not true of either Luther or Lutheranism as their confessions demonstrated, but it could be said, as Newman had, “of the consequences which necessarily flow from the logical carrying out of the doctrine of Justification by Faith.”<sup>24</sup> And Hare held that Newman had not accused Luther of outright “Antinomianism” in his *Lectures*, but rather that Newman correctly understood Luther to teach that good works flowed naturally from faith.<sup>25</sup>

Oddly, the most sustained critique of Newman’s *Lectures*, congregational minister James Bennett’s *Justification as Revealed in Scripture: In Opposition to the Council of Trent, and Mr. Newman’s Lectures* (1840), gave little attention to Newman’s interpretation of Luther, other than holding that Newman gave what amounted to an *ad hominem* attack against Luther. Bennett said that the purpose of Newman’s *Lectures* was twofold:

20. Faber, *The Primitive Doctrine of Justification* 393.

21. *Ibid.* 423.

22. *Ibid.* 410–11. Emphasis original.

23. Julius Charles Hare, *Vindication of Luther Against His Recent English Assailants*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: MacMillan, 1855) 96.

24. *Ibid.* 96–97.

25. *Ibid.* 97.

“Dr. Newman’s first care has been to destroy the credit of Luther as a divine; and his second, to devise arguments in support of the Roman doctrine of Justification.”<sup>26</sup> To the first point, Bennett claimed that, “Luther is condemned as a self-elected reformer” by Newman.<sup>27</sup> On the second point, Bennett followed G. S. Faber closely in holding that “Luther maintained that Justification was a forensic term, expressive of the act of God when accepting a believer as righteous on account of Christ’s obedience unto death”<sup>28</sup> and that this was nothing other than the “apostolic doctrine of Justification by faith,”<sup>29</sup> both statements to which few modern scholars would give unqualified agreement.<sup>30</sup> Yet, Bennett was, as was Newman, a man of his age.

In more modern times, Newman’s interpretation of Luther has fared even worse. Alister McGrath has given a sustained critique of Newman’s interpretation of Luther that has cast grave doubt on the value of Newman’s *Lectures*.<sup>31</sup> While I will examine the specific charges below in depth, it is enough to point out here that McGrath’s forceful critique of Newman has been followed generally by scholars today.<sup>32</sup> This has led to a less than favorable picture of Newman at the present time and to a discounting of his *Lectures*. And yet, at the same time, Newman’s *Lectures* have been called “the greatest masterpiece of theology that England had produced in a hundred years,” “among the most significant of all his theological writings,” “arguably his most profound and subtle theological work,” and at the very least, “a book that deserves to be ranked at least on par with any of his more widely read writings on theology.”<sup>33</sup> Such high praise for Newman’s *Lectures*, in light of such opposition, begs further examination.

26. James Bennett, *Justification as Revealed in Scripture: In Opposition to the Council of Trent, and Mr. Newman’s Lectures* (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1840) 3.

27. *Ibid.* 342.

28. *Ibid.* ix.

29. Bennett said of Luther, “we venerate his noble struggle to restore the apostolic doctrine of Justification by faith”; Bennett, *Justification as Revealed in Scripture* 340. In this he follows Faber and asserts, “The Church of England is proved by Mr. Faber, to accord with a host of fathers in maintaining justification by faith” (354).

30. Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. R. C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966) 226; Hans-Martin Barth, *The Theology of Martin Luther: A Critical Assessment*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013) 166, 172. “And ‘to be justified’ means to make unrighteous men righteous or to regenerate them, as well as to be pronounced or accounted righteous.” *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* iv, in *The Book of Concord*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959) 97–286 at 117. See also *Apology*, iv, par. 72, 78, 117, 161, 250, 313; vii, 31. In the early church, justification was a matter of being made, not being pronounced, righteous; e.g. *Didache*, *1 Clement*, or *Ignatius*. So respectively, T. F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (1948; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1996) 40, 49, 67.

31. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 295–307; McGrath, “Newman on Justification”; McGrath, “Newman’s ‘Lectures.’”

32. Murray, “Luther in Newman’s ‘Lectures’”; Perry, “Newman’s Treatment of Luther”; O’Leary, “Impeded Witness” 186; Charry, “The Beauty of Holiness” 216.

33. Respectively, Ignaz von Döllinger as cited in Perry, “Newman’s Treatment of Luther” 305; David Newsome, “Justification and Sanctification: Newman and the Evangelicals,”

## Newman's *Via Media* of Justification

In his *Lectures* Newman constructed a *via media* theology of justification that attempted to incorporate the truths of both “justification by faith” taught by Protestantism and “justification by obedience” taught by Romanism (*LDJ* 1). These differing theologies of justification were in reality “two modes of stating the same truth” that became symbols when they were “made the elementary principle of the gospel system” (*ibid.*). When either justification by faith or justification by obedience was “professed exclusively, developed consistently, and accurately carried out to its limits” the gospel became distorted because each belief was then turned into a “symbol” of “what goes by the name Romanism” or of “what is commonly called Protestantism” (*ibid.*). Newman opposed this as a form of theological idealism. Yet he also he recognized there was truth in each system. His *via media* attempted to synthesize these truths into a single doctrine of justification. This was the clearly stated purpose of his *Lectures*:

It shall be my endeavour in these Lectures to take such a view of Justification, as may approve itself to those among us who hold whether the one or the other doctrine in an unsystematic way, yet falls in with neither of them, when they are adopted as the foundation or “leading idea” of a theology. Justification by faith only, thus treated is an erroneous, and justification by obedience is a defective, view of Christian doctrine. (*Ibid.* 1–2)

Newman recognized a range of theologies of justification that were reasonable to be held.<sup>34</sup> But treating either justification by faith or justification by obedience as a “‘leading idea’ of a theology” was problematic because it displaced the Incarnation as the chief doctrine of Christianity and treated justification as the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* (the article by which the church stands or falls).<sup>35</sup> Such thinking

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*Journal of Theological Studies* 15 (1964) 32–53 at 32, doi:10.1093/jts/xv.1.32; Ian Ker, *Newman the Theologian: A Reader* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1990) 29; Henry Chadwick, “Newman’s Doctrine of Justification,” in *Tradition and Exploration: Collected Papers on Theology and the Church* (Norwich: Canterbury, 1994) 170–187 at 170.

34. See, for example, Newman’s description of four different positions based on the two mentioned (*LDJ* 348).
35. “I should myself call the doctrine of the Incarnation the central aspect of Christianity.” John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1989).
36. While Luther did not use the phrase *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*, he did say, “For if we lose the doctrine of justification, we lose simply everything” (*LW* 26:26). The phrase accurately sums up the truth that justification in the Lutheran view is the “first and chief article,” that “Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised,” and that “On this article rests all that we teach and practice”; “Smalcald Articles,” 2.1 in Tappert, *The Book of Concord* 292; and that it is the “ruler and judge over all other Christian doctrines.” *WA* 39.I.205 as in *Joint Declaration*, par. 1.

turned the “principle” of justification by faith into a “rule of conduct” because it substituted faith for love as the highest of the theological virtues.<sup>37</sup>

What Newman actually opposed in his *Lectures* was the theological idealism of each system; the one he termed “Romanism,” and the other “popular Protestantism.” Newman used the terms “Romanism,” “extreme Romanism,” “Popery,” “Popish,” and “Roman system” to describe the extreme Roman Catholic position that he attributed to Cajetan, Vázquez, Suarez, Bellarmine, and also the Anglican Arminians.<sup>38</sup> Conversely, he used the terms “popular Protestantism,” “extreme Protestantism,” and “Protestant system” to describe the popular Protestant position on justification based loosely on the teachings of Luther and Gerhard’s interpretation of Luther.<sup>39</sup> At times, Newman also used the general terms “Roman” and “Protestant” or “Lutheran” for these two positions in his *Lectures*, which, admittedly, has led to a good deal of confusion. But before we discount Newman’s *via media* theology of justification in its entirety for doing so, something more needs to be said.

One could fault Newman for trying to make a *via media* theology of justification that rests upon “a fallacious interpretation of both extremes,”<sup>40</sup> but this would be to

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37. “Now justification by faith only is a principle, not a rule of conduct; and the popular mistake is to view it as a rule. This is where men go wrong. They think that the long and the short of religion is to have faith; that is the whole, faith independent of every other duty; a something which can exist in the mind by itself, and from which all other holy exercises follow;—faith, and then forthwith they will be justified; which will as surely mislead them as the great principle that ‘the Saints are hidden’ would mislead such as took it for a rule, and thought by hiding themselves from the eyes of the world to become Saints. They who *are* justified, certainly are justified by *faith*; but having faith is not more truly the *way* to be justified, than being hidden is the way to be a Saint.” *LDJ* 334–35.
38. Newman spoke often in his *Lectures* of these positions. For example, “Romanism” (1, 117, 118, 186, 378), “Roman scheme” (2), “Romanist” (32, 137, 192, 258, 349, 353, 354, 366, 367, 372, 364 n. 13, 376, 402), “Roman system” (192, 364), “extreme Romanist” (354, 352). Newman stated of the Roman Catholic position, “This school is elsewhere called in these Lectures ultra-Roman or extreme Romanist. Such Catholic divines as Caietan, Vazquez, and Bellarmine were intended by this title, who, by making justification consist in the habit of charity, or again in good works, not in sanctifying grace as an initial and distinct gift from above, seemed to the writer to fix the mind, equally with Anglican Arminians, not on a Divine inward Presence vouchsafed to it, but on something of its own, as a ground to rest upon and take satisfaction in. Of course, such a judgment seems to him now unreal and arbitrary.” So *LDJ* 190n1.
39. For the terms “popular Protestantism” (311n12), “popular Protestant doctrine” (311), “popular Protestant theory” (366), “extreme Protestantism” (16, 278), “Protestant system” (192), and “Protestant account” (264). Newman relied quite heavily on Gerhard’s interpretation of Luther. See *LDJ* 3nn3–4; 4n6; 8nn7–8; 10n9, 11n10; 16n14; 19n15; 20nn16–17; 23n19; 25nn21; 26; 23; 58n22; 59n29; 355, 359, 360, 361, 362, 370, 394.
40. “Newman’s construction of a *via media* doctrine of justification seems to rest upon a fallacious interpretation of both the extremes to which he was opposed”; McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 297. Or that Newman was never Protestant: “In substance, then, Newman’s *via media* was really the position of Rome.” Murray, “Luther in Newman’s ‘Lectures’” 156.



misunderstand his project. Newman was following in the footsteps of G. S. Faber in thinking about certain elements within both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism as representing a “system” of soteriology based on its understanding of justification.<sup>41</sup> To borrow a phrase Rowan Williams used elsewhere of his work, Newman gives a “systematic typology” that is not strictly historical.<sup>42</sup> Yet he should not be faulted for this. Such a “systematic typology” functioned in his day very much like Avery Cardinal Dulles’s theological models of the church and divine revelation have functioned in our own.<sup>43</sup> Even if a bit constricting, theological models remain helpful in describing differing positions. Moreover, just this sort of theological modeling was employed in the US Lutheran and Roman Catholic dialogue document *Justification by Faith* when it concluded that God’s work of grace in justification “can be expressed in the imagery of God as judge who pronounces sinners innocent and righteous, and also in a transformist view which emphasizes the change wrought in sinners by infused grace.”<sup>44</sup> Newman did little more with his forensic model of “popular Protestantism” and his renewal model of “Romanism.” We must conclude that Newman’s interpretation did not rest “upon a fallacious interpretation of both extremes,” but rather was on solid ground using a methodology of theological modeling similar to that employed in the twentieth century ecumenical dialogue on justification, which yielded real ecumenical fruit in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*.

That being said, it is fair to fault Newman for his indiscriminate use of what Henry Chadwick called “the blanket title ‘Lutheranism’” for the popular Protestant position generally in his *Lectures*.<sup>45</sup> Throughout his *Lectures* Newman used the terms “Luther” and “Lutheranism” to refer to the evangelicalism of his own day.<sup>46</sup> In reality Newman was taking issue with the evangelical position that had its roots in German pietists like P. J. Spener (1635–1705) that had developed out of Lutheranism.<sup>47</sup> Newman had preached a sermon in which he criticized evangelicalism as a “system” of thought

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41. “The one System grounds our Justification upon our own Intrinsic Righteousness, infused into us by God, through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The other System grounds our Justification upon the Extrinsic Righteousness of Christ, appropriated and forensically made our own by faith as by an appointed instrument.” So Faber, *The Primitive Doctrine of Justification* iv.
  42. John Henry Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, vol. 4 of *The Works of Cardinal John Henry Newman: Birmingham Oratory Millennium Edition*, gen. ed. James Tollhurst, intro. Rowan Williams (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2001) xlv.
  43. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 2nd. ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1987); Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Doubleday, 1983).
  44. US Lutheran–Roman Catholic Dialogue, “Justification by Faith,” *Origins* 13 (October 6, 1983) 278–304 at 158.
  45. Chadwick, “Newman’s Doctrine of Justification” 175.
  46. Vincent Ferrer Blehl, *Pilgrim Journey: John Henry Newman 1801–1845* (New York: Paulist, 2001) 216.
  47. Chadwick, “Newman’s Doctrine of Justification” 172.

because it taught justifying faith was “spiritual-mindedness.”<sup>48</sup> In a letter responding to Lord Lifford’s questions about his sermon, Newman described a tendency within evangelicalism as the “modern school” to set itself in opposition to the “ancient school” (*LD* 6:128–33). He said that the ancient school of doctrine insisted on the “objects and fruits of faith” as of first importance whereas the modern school instead dwelt on the “spiritual temper” of a person, which amounted to “a direct contemplation of our feelings as *the means, the evidence of justification*” (*LD* 6:130). Newman said, “the so called Evangelical School makes a *certain inward experience, a certain conscious state of feeling, the evidence of justification*” (*LD* 6:131). His opposition was not to “individuals,” but to evangelicalism as a “system” of thought.<sup>49</sup> We may conclude with Thomas Sheridan that “to anyone familiar with the background to the *Lectures on Justification* it is clear that the target of Newman’s polemic is the extreme wing of the Evangelical party in the Church of England of his day.”<sup>50</sup>

This would explain why a note that Sheridan discovered showed Newman had crossed out the words “Wesley” and “Wesleyans & c.” and substituted for them the name “Luther” (*ibid.*). Such a substitution may at first seem illogical, but it is not if by “Luther” and “Lutheranism” Newman meant the tendency within evangelicalism to understand justification by faith alone in terms of “mere imputation.”<sup>51</sup> To bolster Sheridan’s claim, it can be pointed out that such a position was criticized by the non-juror William Law (1686–1761) in his *Of Justification by Faith and Works: A Dialogue between a Methodist and a Churchman*, who is better known as the author of *On Christian Perfection* and *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. Law’s work on justification took the form of an imaginary dialogue between a Methodist and a Churchman that responded to comments made in the *Letters* of John Berridge (1716–1793), an Anglican evangelical and acquaintance of John Wesley and George Whitefield, both of whom preached in his parish church, and he in their London chapels. In the dialogue, the Methodist held that the Churchman’s doctrine of salvation by faith and works was a “Soul-destroying Doctrine.”<sup>52</sup> Law criticized the Methodist position as one of purely forensic salvation, that is, holding that Christ’s imputed righteousness excluded actual righteousness as a result of imputation.<sup>53</sup> While the

48. John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (1891; repr., San Francisco: Ignatius, 1997) 332 (2.15).

49. “On this I would observe in the first place that I believe I have no where in any thing I have written spoken against *individuals* at least as individuals; I have spoken against a *system* and of individuals only so far as they are identified with it, a system which works its way independently of individuals.” *LD* 6:128.

50. Sheridan, “Newman and Luther on Justification” 236.

51. *Ibid.* 238, 236–38.

52. William Law, *The Works of The Reverend William Law*, vol. 8, *Of Justification by Faith and Works: A Dialogue between a Methodist and a Churchman* (1760; repr., Canterbury: G. Moreton, 1893) 217. For the letter and quote see John Berridge, *The Works of the Rev. John Berridge* (London: Simpkin, Marshal, and Co., 1838) 349–64, 362.

53. Law, *Law’s Works* 235.

imputation of Christ's righteousness was "granted on both sides," Law said, "we believe, and contend for an *inward Birth* of Christ's Righteousness in us"; the original righteousness lost in Adam was restored in salvation such that "all that was lost in *Adam*, may be found again in Christ" (ibid.). In his *Lectures* Newman repeated this High Church criticism of the overly forensic doctrine of justification found in some forms of evangelicalism. This stands to reason because the major evangelical works on justification during Newman's time asserted a general Protestant notion of forensic justification loosely tied to Luther as their sparse quotations of him demonstrate.<sup>54</sup> On the whole these lengthy works did not accurately reproduce Luther's theology of justification nor even engage him substantially.<sup>55</sup> So while Newman can be faulted rightly for his indiscriminate use of the terms "Luther" and "Lutheranism," at the same time, he was responding to an overly forensic notion of justification ascribed to Luther by "popular Protestantism."

The overly forensic notion of justification Newman opposed had roots in Lutheranism. Newman said that the "justification by faith only" school "tends to the creed of the rigid Lutherans who opposed Melancthon" (*LDJ* 2). Newman was referring to the so-called Gnesio-Lutherans, the "genuine" or "authentic" Lutherans led by Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–75), Nikolaus Gallus (1516–70), and Nikolas von Amsdorf (1483–1565), who were centered at Magdeburg and the recently founded University of Jena (1547), and opposed the Philippists, or the followers of Philip Melancthon.<sup>56</sup> One of the theological disputes that erupted between the two parties was the Majorist controversy, named for Georg Major (1502–74), a student of Melancthon. Major taught that "good works are necessary to salvation" in defense of

54. Both O'Brien and Faber reduce Luther's teaching to a general Protestant position of forensic justification. Faber, *The Primitive Doctrine of Justification* iv, 114, 126; James Thomas O'Brien, *An Attempt to Explain and Establish the Doctrine of Justification by Faith Only in Ten Sermons* (London: Longman, Rees Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1833) 131–35, 338–41, 385–98.

55. In Faber's *Primitive Doctrine of Justification* "Luther" is mentioned by name eight times (1, 4, 7, 12, 139, 341, 342, 411) and "Lutheranism" twice (410, 423) but Luther is not quoted even once. In O'Brien's *Justification by Faith Only*, Luther is quoted twice in the body of the work (ii, 2) and 7 times in the notes (314, 324, 342, 363, 375, 381, 382).

56. On the Gnesio-Lutheran and Philippist controversy see Robert Kolb, "Dynamics of Party Conflict in the Saxon Late Reformation: Gnesio-Lutherans vs. Philipists," *The Journal of Modern History* 49 (1977) 1289–1305, doi:10.1086/241655; Kolb, "The Flacian Rejection of the Concordia, Prophetic Style and Action in the German Late Reformation," *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 73 (1982) 196–216, doi:10.14315/arg-1982-jg09; Olli-Pekka Vainio, *Justification and Participation in Christ: The Development of the Lutheran Doctrine of Justification from Luther to the Formula of Concord (1580)* (Boston: Brill, 2008) 109–17. Newman probably did not differentiate the radical wing of the Gnesio-Lutherans called the "Flaccianist" as seen in William Forbes, *Considerations Modestae et Pacificae Controversiarum Justificatione, Purgatorio, Invocatione Sanctorum, Christo Mediatore, et Eucharistia*, Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology (1658; repr., Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1850) 301–5.

the *Leipzig Interim*.<sup>57</sup> This idea was opposed by Amsdorf who, to the contrary, taught that “good works are detrimental to salvation” because he thought the necessity of good works undermined the teaching of justification by faith only.<sup>58</sup> This extreme version of “justification by faith only” was condemned in the *Book of Concord* and should be distinguished from the less rigid views of Melancthon, with whom Newman agreed, and from Luther himself.<sup>59</sup> It was a contemporary version of this extreme view of justification by faith only that Newman saw in popular Protestantism of his day and in its teaching of justification by mere imputation.

As we have seen, the real opposition in Newman’s *Lectures* was not so much Luther, although he did disagree with Luther on a number of points, but what he called “popular Protestantism” or a tendency within some forms of evangelicalism to teach justification by mere imputation. Newman was clear that not all evangelical writers were of this mindset, but that “they *tend* to do so” especially in “popular works” (*LD* 6:132). This tendency was found in the chief evangelical work on subject by the Anglican evangelical Bishop of Ossory James O’Brien, whose *Justification by Faith Only* (1833), Newman said, represented “the pure Lutheran theory” (*LDJ* vii). For O’Brien, justification was a forensic declaration of innocence by God that objectively caused a change in status and subjectively only caused a change of mind through faith affecting feelings and influencing conduct that issued in good works.<sup>60</sup>

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57. The *Leipzig Interim* taught “good works are necessary” and that they “merit reward in this life . . . and more reward in eternal life”; Robert Kolb and James A. Nestingen, eds., *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001) 189–91; Kolb, “Dynamics of Party Conflict in the Saxon Late Reformation” 1294. See also *Solid Declaration* 4.1 in *The Book of Concord* 551. On the Majorist Controversy see Kolb, “Georg Major as Controversialist: Polemics in the Late Reformation,” *Church History* 45 (1976) 455–68, doi:10.2307/3164348.
58. On the meaning of Amsdorf’s words see Robert Kolb, “‘Good Works Are Detrimental to Salvation’: Amsdorf’s Use of Luther’s Words in Controversy,” *Renaissance and Reformation* 4 (1980) 136–51, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43434413>. See also *Solid Declaration* 4.3 in *Book of Concord* 551.
59. “We also reject and condemn as offensive and as subversive of Christian discipline that bald statement that good works are detrimental to salvation.” So *Epitome* 4.17 in *Book of Concord* 477; see also *Solid Declaration* 4.38 in *Book of Concord* 557. Luther himself probably is best described as holding justification is an “effective” forensic declaration. So Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith* (New York: Oxford, 2009) 127–28.
60. O’Brien, *Justification by Faith Only* 62, 84. “Justification will, I think, be found to be, in its proper and common meaning, a *judicial declaration of the innocence of the person justified*” (62). The connection between justification and sanctification for O’Brien was the Spirit’s gift of faith for justification and the Spirit’s work in sanctification (170). This consisted of a “change in their condition before God, and the change of mind by which faith has been given to them” (125) and not of their nature that came from “the Spirit’s agency in implanting the principle of faith in the heart” (170) which faith was the cause of “moving his feelings and influencing his conduct” (171–172).

Newman frequently spoke against this sort of theology as justification in his *Lectures*, using various terms: “mere imputation,” “mere declaration,” “mere remission of sins,” “mere acceptance,” “mere act of the Divine Mind” to name a few.<sup>61</sup> Newman’s purpose in doing so was always the same; he opposed any idea of justification as a forensic declaration by God only, which did not also cause a corresponding change in human nature. If original sin was the loss of original righteousness, then justification must restore that original righteousness to human nature (*LDJ* 89–91). If sin was by nature, justification had to be by nature. Anything less would be a shadowy and unreal righteousness. This ran clean contrary to the Protestant distinction between justification and sanctification because whenever sin was forgiven or righteousness in the soul was increased, it was an act of justification according to Newman.<sup>62</sup> There was no imputation apart from renewal by the establishment of actual righteousness in the soul. This is what Newman really opposed in his *Lectures*, not Roman Catholicism or Lutheranism *per se*.

Despite his opposition to justification by mere imputation, Newman did not try to recapture the theology of justification by “faith and works” found in the seventeenth century Caroline divines as a “prototype of his own position.”<sup>63</sup> To the contrary,

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61. Newman spoke of “mere imputation” in the following ways: “merely external gift,” “imputed merely” (41); “pardon merely,” “merely righteous” (43); “not merely by imputation” (53); “only by imputation” (54); “only imputed” (58); “mere external, reputed, conventional righteousness” (66); “merely declare” (79); “mere declaration” (78); “mere remission of sins” (96); “mere acceptance,” “merely declaring” (99); “not merely accounted” (104); “merely external” (136); “mere quality of mind” (139); “mere act of the Divine Mind” (140); “mere change of purpose or disposition in God towards us” (141) “not a change of the Divine Mind merely,” “not merely an act on God’s part,” “merely an imputation” (143); “a mere imputation” (150, 157, 190); “mere imputed righteousness” (158, 361); “a mere external, material, local sign” (175); “mere name of righteousness” (219); “mere forgiveness” (309); “merely by that imputation” (366); “not a mere quality of the mind” (389).
62. In was in this manner that Newman spoke of “justification by Sacraments”; *LDJ* 151–55, 283. This idea was also found in the homilies: “but every man of necessity, is constrained to seek for another righteousness or justification, to be received at God’s own hands, that is to say, the remission, pardon and forgiveness of his sins and trespass, in such things as he hath offended.” John Griffiths, ed., *The Homilies: Appointed to Be Read in Churches*, rev. ed. (Herefordshire, UK: Brynmill/Preservation, 2006) 17.
63. “Newman’s construction of a *via media* doctrine of justification seems to rest upon a fallacious interpretation of both the extremes to which he was opposed, as well as of the Caroline divinity of the seventeenth century, which he regarded as a prototype of his own position.” McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 297. “Newman’s own doctrine of justification, as expounded in the 1837 *Lectures on Justification*, is essentially coterminous with that of the later Caroline Divines just mentioned [Bull and Taylor].” *Ibid.* 282. See also McGrath, “Newman on Justification” 106; “The Commentary might have been written against the false apostles of the Anglo-Catholic movement, who have revived in the Church of England the doctrine of justification by faith and works”; Fallowes, preface to Luther, *Commentary on Galatians* viii; and Murray, “Luther in Newman’s ‘Lectures’” 158.

Newman explicitly referred to this position in his *Lectures* as “English Arminianism” and associated it with the Roman Catholic doctrine of “justification by obedience” (*LDJ* 182–85, 189–90, 190n1). Newman said of English Arminianism,

What Roman writers have brought about by insisting exclusively on the effects of grace, many among ourselves have done by disparaging its sacramental means. The former raise man to capacity, the latter have reduced him to the necessity, of being justified by obedience and nothing else. By the latter divines I mean the Arminians who rose in Charles the First’s time, and have exercised an extensive influence in our Church since 1688. (*LDJ* 182)

Newman had in mind people like Henry Hammond who in his *A Practical Catechism* (ca. 1644) taught that justification was the result of renewal.<sup>64</sup> While Newman desired to hold onto the truth of justification by obedience, it could not be done at the cost of denying the truth of justification by faith as English Arminianism had done.

The charge that Newman was trying to recapture the theology of the Caroline divines as a “prototype of his own position” also fails because Newman held both justification and renewal were a result of God’s divine indwelling presence.<sup>65</sup> It is rightly said that Newman’s *Lectures* “offer not a compromise between two apparently opposed positions, but rather a wholly new perspective which actually changes the nature of the problem.”<sup>66</sup> Both justification and renewal came through God’s presence because the divine indwelling Spirit brought both Christ and his righteousness to the soul for justification and began actual righteousness for renewal. As Newman said,

Lastly, We now may see what the connection really is between justification and renewal. They are both included in that one great gift of God, the indwelling of Christ in the Christian soul. That indwelling is *ipso facto* our justification and sanctification, as its necessary results. It is the Divine Presence that justifies us, not faith, as say the Protestant schools, not renewal, as say the Roman. The word of justification is the substantive living Word of God, entering the soul, illuminating and cleansing it, as fire brightens and purifies material substances. He who justifies also sanctifies, because it is He. The first blessing runs into the second as its necessary limit; and the second being rejected, carries away with it the first. And the one cannot be separated from the other except in idea, unless the sun’s rays can be separated from the sun, or the power of purifying from fire or water. (*LDJ* 154)

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64. “S. What is the dependence between justification and sanctification? / C. This, that the first part of sanctification, the beginning of a new life, must be first had before God pardons or justifies any.” Henry Hammond, *A Practical Catechism*, Parker Society (1644; repr., Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1847) 79.

65. On justification by divine indwelling presence see José Morales, “Newman and the Problems of Justification,” in *Newman Today*, ed. Stanley L. Jaki (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989) 143–64; Ker, *Newman the Theologian* 21–29; Thomas L. Sheridan, “Justification,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, ed. Ian Kerr and Terrence Merrigan (New York: Cambridge University, 2009) 98–136; Holtzen, “Newman’s *Via Media* Theology of Justification.”

66. Ker, *Newman the Theologian* 29.

God's presence brought both justification and renewal. Peter Toon has said of this, "while it is correct to see Newman's doctrine as an attempt at mediation it is wrong to see it as the nineteenth-century exposition of an earlier Anglican position," because the "idea of an implanted 'presence of God' attached to, or affiliated to, the soul," according to Toon, "was novel and few seemingly understood him."<sup>67</sup> Since God's divine indwelling caused an actual righteousness, there could be no justification by mere imputation. As Newman summarily put it, "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" (*LDJ* 150).

### Justification *Sola Fide*

Did Newman misunderstand Luther's theology of justification *sola fide*? Or, perhaps, as will be suggested, did Newman merely have some fundamental disagreements with Luther's doctrine of faith from his Anglican context? The charges here are that Newman thought faith was a "human work,"<sup>68</sup> that faith was equated with human "feelings,"<sup>69</sup> and that he did not understand a person was justified *propter Christum per fidem* for Lutheranism.<sup>70</sup> In answering these charges, we can readily point to places in his *Lectures* where Newman gave a clear, though not exhaustive account, of the Lutheran teaching of justification by faith alone. In doing so, it will be helpful to keep in mind that Newman said his purpose was not purely historical, but "to represent the Lutheran, or extreme Protestant idea of justifying faith in its *internal consistence*; to examine how its parts hang together, and how it disposes of objections which arise, apart from the arguments on which it rests" (*LDJ* 15–16).

In his *Lectures*, Newman was concerned with how the Lutheran idea of faith functioned in the popular Protestantism of his day. Newman described the logic of this understanding of faith as follows:

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67. Toon, *Evangelical Theology* 146.

68. "Newman's critique of Luther in the *Lectures* appears to rest upon the quite fallacious assumption that the Reformer regards faith as a human work. His criticism of Luther for his insistence upon the fiduciary aspects of faith, while neglecting hope, love and obedience, reflects his basic conviction that Luther singled out the *human activity of trust in God* as the defining characteristic of justifying faith. This criticism is inept." McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 2nd ed., 312–13. This criticism is less forceful in the 3rd ed. of *Iustitia Dei* 295, 299. "Newman's criticism of Luther in the *Lectures* appears to rest upon the false assumption that the Reformer understood faith *as a work*." McGrath, "Newman's 'Lectures'" 115.

69. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 301.

70. "Newman appears to believe that Protestants taught that humanity was justified on account of faith." So McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 299.

Faith, an act or motion of the mind produced indeed by Divine Grace, but still utterly worthless, applies to the soul the merits of Him on whom it looks, gaining at the same time His sanctifying aid, and developing itself in good works; which works are the only evidence we can have of its being true. It justifies then, not as being lively or fruitful, though this is an inseparable property of it, but as *apprehending* Christ, which is its essence. (*LDJ* 16)

In this view, faith was the instrumental means of apprehending Christ. As Newman said, "It is the instrument of appropriating the *gift*, for the very reason that it is the means by which the mind receives the *news* of it. Faith, it is argued, *sees* the purchased redemption, and therefore must be able to *take* and *apply* it. It is the eye, and therefore of course it is the hand. Or, in a word, it *apprehends* Christ" (*LDJ* 19). The apprehensive nature of faith was found in Luther, Melancthon, Gerhard, and the Augsburg Confession.<sup>71</sup> The apprehensive nature of faith has been said to be the "essence" of justifying faith for Luther, which the foregoing demonstrates, is exactly what Newman taught.<sup>72</sup> Faith justified because it grasped Christ who was the "sole justifying principle" in faith (*LDJ* 20). Since Christ was present in faith, all his merits were conveyed to the soul by faith. "In this sense Luther seems to speak as if Christ were the *forma fidei*, or that which makes faith what it is, justifying," Newman said (*LDJ* 20–21). Indeed, Luther claimed "just as the sophists [i.e., the Scholastics] say that love forms and trains faith, so we say that it is Christ who forms and trains faith or who is the form of faith" (*LW* 26:130). Newman understood that in Luther's way of speaking there was an overlap between faith and Christ such that justification *sola fide* meant justification *solus Christus*.

This notion of faith differed substantially from the Roman Catholic and High Church Anglican schools. They both taught that "the thought of Christ may be possessed by those who have not Christ" and that this sort of faith was not justifying (*LDJ* 21). Furthermore, faith justified before and without love, for Luther, who thought the scholastics had turned love into a work (*LW* 26:268–70, 127–28, 130, 284), while the Homilies held that faith working through love justified. The Homilies were quite clear on this point. They taught that "faith is taken in the Scripture two manner of ways."<sup>73</sup> The first was "dead faith" or faith without works, which St. James said the devils had and which did not justify (*ibid.*). The second type was a faith that "*worketh by charity*," as St. Paul said in Galatians 5:6.<sup>74</sup> This meant faith had to be lively and accompanied by

71. Newman cites Luther's *Commentary on Galatians* 3:13; Gerhard, *Loci* 156; Melancthon *Loci Theol. de vocab Gratiae* 202; *Apol. Conf. Augustan* 64; *Loci Theol. voc. Fidei* 197, 199. For the modern citations see *Luther's Works*, gen. ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–75) 26:284 (hereafter cited in text as *LW*); Philip Melancthon, *Melancthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci Communes 1555*, trans. Clyde L. Manschreck, A Library of Protestant Thought (New York: Oxford University, 1965) 159, 166; *Book of Concord* 45:28; Gerhard, *Loci* 156.

72. Barth, *The Theology of Martin Luther* 173; McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 227.

73. Griffiths, *Homilies* 26.

74. *Ibid.* 27, 29, 36.



good works to be genuine.<sup>75</sup> In general, Anglicanism differed from Lutheranism because it taught that justifying faith worked through love, which led Newman to the conclusion that Luther held “we may be said to be justified, not only *by or through* faith (as our Article words it), but on *account* of faith; for faith is absorbed into its object” (*LDJ* 22–23).

On this point Newman has been criticized for misunderstanding Luther and assuming that for Luther faith was a human work of believing.<sup>76</sup> Yet to the contrary, Newman had rightly understood one of the central ambiguities in Luther's own theology, namely, faith was a divine gift of God that was “absorbed into its object” or fused with Christ such that faith acted as righteousness. Often Luther spoke of “the righteousness of faith.”<sup>77</sup> Since Christ was in faith, Newman made the argument that popular Protestantism held justification on account of faith itself (*propter fidem*). He was not wrong for doing so because the language of justification *propter fidem* was found frequently in Luther's writings and in the *Apology*.<sup>78</sup> Because Newman knew faith was a divine gift of God for Luther, and that good works followed faith, he cannot be accused of saying Luther held faith to be a mere human work.<sup>79</sup> Rather, Newman's criticism struck at the heart of the Protestant teaching of justification by

75. *Ibid.* 19, 20, 24, 27, 29, 32, 35, 36.

76. See note 8 above.

77. “Righteousness, then, is such a faith” (*LW* 35:371). See also “For Christian righteousness consists in two things, namely, faith in the heart and the imputation of God. Faith is indeed a formal righteousness” (*LW* 26:229); “Therefore our ‘formal righteousness’ is not a love that informs faith; but it is faith itself” (*LW* 26:130); “For, as I have said, these two things make Christian righteousness perfect: The first is faith in the heart, which is a divinely granted gift and which formally believes in Christ; the second is that God reckons this imperfect faith as perfect righteousness for the sake of Christ” (*LW* 26:231); “This is accomplished by imputation on account of the faith by which I begin to take hold of Christ” (*LW* 26:232); “To take hold of the Son and to believe Him with the heart as the gift of God causes God to reckon that faith, however imperfect it may be, as perfect righteousness” (*LW* 26:234); “In this way they [the sophists, i.e., scholastics] prefer love to faith and attribute righteousness, not to faith but to love” (*LW* 26:269); “The righteousness of faith is to believe, according to the statement, ‘The righteous shall live by faith’” (*LW* 26:272).

78. “Therefore this is a marvelous definition of Christian righteousness: it is a divine imputation or reckoning as righteousness or to righteousness, for the sake of our faith in Christ or for the sake of Christ” (*LW* 26:233). For the language of justification *propter fidem* in Luther see Luther's comments on Gal 2:4–5, 3:11, 12, 16 in *LW* 26:87–92, 122–41, 268–76. See also “Apology of the Augsburg Confession” 70 in *Book of Concord* 116. For a Lutheran reply to the use of *propter fidem* see Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. P. F. Koehnke and H. J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1961) 99–100. Schlink argues as Newman does, that Luther spoke this way because of the fusion of faith with Christ.

79. *LDJ* 5–7, 16. “Put crudely, but none the less accurately, Newman appears to believe that Protestants taught that humanity was justified on account of faith.” So McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 299.

faith alone; if faith existed alone, apart from works, it was considered false and did not justify.<sup>80</sup> Newman reasoned, therefore, that faith alone without good works could not by itself justify.

Regardless if one agrees with Newman's conclusion about the internal logic of popular Protestantism, it is clear that he correctly understood Luther taught justification through Christ's imputed righteousness by the divine gift of faith. After Newman pointed out how faith was "absorbed into its object," he said, "And in this sense faith is considered by Luther and his followers as imputed to us for righteousness, by a mode of speech; Christ really, who is spiritually present in the faith, and not the faith itself, being our sole and true Righteousness, in which our acceptance with God consists" (*LDJ* 23). The formula *sola fide* did not thereby exclude the necessity of good works according to Newman, "but the formula 'by faith only, not by works,' meaning simply this, 'by the merit of Christ only, not of works, nor even of faith'" (*ibid.*). On this basis we can conclude that Newman rightly understood that the Lutheran teaching of justification *sola fide* meant justification *propter Christum per fidem*.

By now it should also be clear that Newman had fundamental disagreements with the Lutheran understanding of faith that came from his Anglican context. There are at least two important points to be made in this regard. First, baptism was also an instrument of justification in addition to faith. When Article 11 said, "we are justified by *Faith only*" and the Second Homily on the Passion said that "faith is the *one mean and instrument* of justification" they did not mean the sole means, according to Newman (*LDJ* 223). This was because both Article 27 and the Homilies taught that baptism was the formal "instrument" of regeneration and forgiveness of sins, and logically, if baptism forgave sins, then it could be said to justify (*LDJ* 3–4, 229–31). Newman reconciled these two divergent teachings by holding that baptism was the "outward" while faith was the "inward" instrument of justification (*LDJ* 226). The inward hand of faith received what was offered by the outward hand of baptism.

Second, Newman held to a very different understanding of faith than Luther. Newman followed the High Church understanding wherein faith was primarily a mental assent to divine truth (*assensus*) that existed as a habit rather than as trust (*fiducia*), like Luther held.<sup>81</sup> Faith was an act of the mind "assenting to revelation as divine" and "the mind's perception or apprehension of heavenly things, arising from an instinctive trust in the divinity or truth of the external work, informing it concerning them" (*LDJ* 253). Further, this "faith is a *habit* of the soul" which "disposes the mind to move in

80. "If any men pretend to faith or trust, and do not go on to obey, then they *have not* real trust. This is a proper inference, not that trust can exist without obedience." Newman cites Luther's *Commentary on Galatians* 5:13 in support of his reasoning (*LDJ* 13–14).

81. Thomas Jackson influenced Newman's understanding of faith. *LDJ* 257n1, 261n1, 363, 364. Also, Richard Hooker could speak of faith as "that assent which the oracles of God require," "an intellectual habit of mind," an "assent to his saving truth," etc. Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: A Critical Edition with Modern Spelling*, ed. Arthur Stephen McGrade, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013) 6.63.1–2, 64.2 (2:195–96, 198).

this way, not in that" (*LDJ* 293). Faith was understood only as it subsisted in love and other virtues. In reality this meant that Newman's understanding of faith was closer to that of Roman Catholicism than Lutheranism.<sup>82</sup>

Newman thought one result of the Lutheran idea of faith on people historically was that it "left them in bondage to their feelings" (*LDJ* 340). Newman believed that Luther had taught people to substitute the "outward signs of grace" for the "inward," to trade their belief in "the proper efficacy of the Sacraments" for "his doctrine of faith," and "weaned" people "from seeking assurance of salvation in standing ordinances, at the cost of teaching them that a personal consciousness of it was promised to everyone who believed" (*ibid.*). While Newman's criticisms were certainly not true of Luther's intent, which was to free one from self-doubt because the assurance of salvation was found *extra nos* (outside ourselves) in God's gift of faith, his criticisms did describe the *effects* of the Lutheran teaching of justification by faith alone in the popular Protestantism of his day.<sup>83</sup> As his letters and diaries show, Newman was criticizing the tendency within the "modern school" of evangelicalism to equate faith with feelings and experiences in its use of the Lutheran teaching of justification by faith (*LD* 6:128–33). According to Newman, the "Ancient school" would tell a person to look to the Word incarnate, the Trinity, the sacraments, and cease to do evil for assurance of salvation whereas the tendency in the "modern school" of evangelicalism would instead tell someone "you must utterly renounce yourself and your merits and throw yourself at the foot of the Cross" (*LD* 6:130). Newman believed that in such teaching "spiritual-mindedness" had become the end rather than Christ (*LDJ* 326). Those who followed this tendency within evangelicalism "aim at experiences (as they are called) within them, than at Him that is without them" and "are led to enlarge upon the signs of conversion" (*LDJ* 336). This was not true faith, but a "self-contemplation" that replaced Christ with feelings and experience (*LDJ* 337). It confused the means of faith with the end which was Christ. Newman, to the contrary, thought that faith was "colourless, like air or water; it is but the medium through which the soul sees Christ" (*LDJ* 336). What gave faith its color and substance making it real was subsistence in the virtues.

## Newman's Misquotation of Luther?

Now we come to the two most serious charges against Newman surrounding his citation of a passage from Luther's *Commentary on Galatians* on Galatians 3:10. First, Newman is said to have misquoted the original text of Luther's *Commentary on Galatians* by following an unreliable English translation or because he found the passage in a "mutilated form" or because "Newman may simply have copied the passage

82. Sheridan, "Newman and Luther on Justification" 219–22.

83. "The brilliance of his critique of the eviscerated Protestantism of his time (and ours) is not diminished by his erroneously tracing the problem to Luther's understanding of justification by faith." So Neuhaus, "Newman, Luther, and the Unity of Christians" 288.

in this distorted version from another source.”<sup>84</sup> This first charge deals with the accuracy of Newman’s scholarship. It can be dismissed because the facts plainly show it to be false.

It cannot be substantiated that Newman misquoted Luther because he cited an unreliable English translation of Luther’s *Epistle to the Galatians* done by Erasmus Middleton, which is still published in a revised edition to this very day.<sup>85</sup> A brief comparison of Newman’s English translation with that of Middleton’s shows otherwise. For example, to translate the same passage Newman used the words “embodied,” “artist,” and “composition” in his translation, whereas Middleton used the words “concrete,” “artificer,” and “compound”; and Newman translated a phrase “a gardener of a tree, as in bearing or not” whereas Middleton translated the same phrase “a gardener of the tree being barren or fruitful.”<sup>86</sup> It would appear, therefore, that Newman never substantially followed the Middleton translation. But if this is so, where did Newman get the text he used in his *Lectures*?

We can be almost certain that Newman himself translated Luther’s quotation from a textual tradition derived from Luther’s 1535 Latin *Galatians Commentary* published in 1538.<sup>87</sup> The same passage appears verbatim with slight variations in punctuation and with modernized spelling in the Erlangen edition of Luther’s Latin *Commentary on Galatians* published five years after Newman’s *Lectures*.<sup>88</sup> Newman’s reproduction of Luther’s Latin *Commentary on Galatians* elsewhere in his *Lectures* also follow this textual tradition verbatim.<sup>89</sup> We know from Newman’s reproduction of the first two Latin sentences of the Luther quotation in a footnote that he was following this Latin edition and not an English translation (*LDJ* 300n1). The Latin wording of these sentences matches exactly that of Luther’s Latin *Commentary on Galatians* while it differs substantially from that of the Weimar edition of *D. Martin Luthers Werke* (1883),

84. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 307. See also notes 9 and 10 above.

85. McGrath holds that Newman relied on Middleton. So McGrath, “Newman on Justification” 96–97; McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 307; McGrath, “Newman’s ‘Lectures’” 118–20; and followed by others such as Perry, “Newman’s Treatment of Luther” 315–17; Murray, “Luther in Newman’s ‘Lectures’” 159–62. The current edition of this translation is Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, ed. John Prince Fallows, trans. Erasmus Middleton (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1979).

86. Compare *LDJ* 300–1 with Martin Luther, *A Commentary on Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, trans. Erasmus Middleton, rev. ed. (London: B. Blake, 1833) 202–3.

87. Martin Luther, *In Epistolam S. Pauli Ad Galatas Commentarius*, Adiecto etiam Indice, ed. Maior Georg (Vittebergae: Lufft, 1538) Tert. Cap. 158–59, in Bavarian State Library database, <http://www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10984760-0>, scans 331–33. On the history of editions of Luther’s works see Ulrich Köpf, “Luther’s Works, Editions Of,” in *Religion Past & Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010) 7:672–73.

88. *D. Martini Lutheri Commentarium in Epistolam S. Pauli Ad Galatas*, ed. Johann Conrad Irmischer, 3 vols. (Erlangen: Sumtibus C. Heyderi, 1843–44) 1:381–84.

89. Cf. *LDJ* 28n1 with *D. Martini Lutheri Commentarium in Epistolam S. Pauli Ad Galatas* 1:22–23; and cf. *LDJ* 332n1 with *D. Martini Lutheri Commentarium in Epistolam S. Pauli Ad Galatas* 1:242–43.

published seven years before Newman's death and 45 years after his *Lectures*.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, Luther's Latin *Commentary on Galatians* fits Newman's English translation, whereas the lengthier Latin passage of the Weimar edition does not. Newman likely first came across the Luther quotation, with its distinction between abstract and concrete faith, in Johann Gerhard's *Loci Theologici*, to which he referred his reader for further explanation in a footnote. Yet Newman must have gone back to the original Latin of Luther's *Galatians Commentary* because he quoted a much longer passage in his *Lectures* than appeared in Gerhard's *Loci*, and Newman's quotation is from a different Latin source.

This is not surprising. Newman translated many volumes of various Church Fathers from the Greek and Latin into English, notably, the volume on St. John the Evangelist of St. Thomas Aquinas's *Catena Aurea* from the Latin (for which he also served as a general editor), two volumes of Saint Athanasius from the Greek, and the Greek text of Lancelot Andrewes's much loved *Preces Privatae*. The quality of his translation was, generally speaking, excellent.<sup>91</sup> One could criticize Newman for not knowing German, but given the time period in which he lived, and that Latin was the academic standard of his day, such a charge would be quite unreasonable. The following synoptic comparison shows clearly the similarity between the 1535 Latin edition of Luther's *Commentary on Galatians* (1538) and Newman's English translation in his *Lectures*, and the difference of both with the standard English edition of *Luther's Works* based on the Weimar edition:

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Newman's Latin Text

Deinde hoc modo etiam distinguere solemus fidem, quod fides aliquando accipitur extra opus, aliquando cum opere. Ut enim artifex varie de sua materia, et hortulanus de arbore vel nuda vel gestante fructum loquitur, ita et Spiritus sanctus in scriptura varie de fide loquitur, jam de fide (ut sic dicam) abstracta vel absoluta, jam de fide concreta, composita seu incarnata. Fides absoluta seu abstracta est, quando scriptura absolute loquitur de justificatione sue de justificatis, ut cernere est in epistola ad Rom. et ad Galat.

Newman's *Lectures*

"It is usual with us," he says, "to view faith, sometimes apart from its work, sometimes with it. For as an artist speaks variously of his materials, and a gardener of a tree, as in bearing or not, so also the Holy Ghost speaks variously in Scripture concerning faith; at one time of what may be called abstract faith, faith as such: at another of concrete faith, faith in composition, or embodied. Faith, as such, or abstract, is meant, when Scripture speaks of justification, as such, or of the justified. (Vid. Rom. and Gal.)

Luther's *Works*

In addition, we also distinguish faith in this way, that sometimes faith is understood apart from the work and sometimes with the work. For just as a craftsman speaks about his material in different ways and a gardener speaks about a tree as either barren or fruit-bearing, so the Holy Spirit speaks about faith in different ways in Scripture: sometimes, if I may speak this way, about an abstract or an absolute faith and sometimes about a concrete, composite, or incarnate faith. Thus if Christ is looked at on the basis of outward appearance,

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90. Cf. the opening phrase of the Latin from Luther's 1535 *Commentary on Galatians*: "Deinde hoc modo etiam distinguere solemus fidem" (which is the same found in Newman's footnote) to that of the Weimar edition: "Deinde etiam hoc modo distinguimus fidem."

91. As Louis Bouyer writes of "Newman's rendering and recasting of Andrewes' Greek text in a beautiful English all his own." See Louis Bouyer, introduction to *Prayers, Verses, and Devotions: The Devotions of Bishop Andrewes, Meditations and Devotions, Verses on Various Occasions*, by John Henry Newman (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000) xv–xxiv at xvii.

Quando vero scriptura loquitur de praemiis et operibus, tunc de fide composita, concreta seu incarnata loquitur. Hujus fidei exemplum aliquot recensebimus, ut, "Fides per dilectionem efficax" (Gal. 5:6); "hoc fac et viues" (Luke 10:28); "si vis ad vitam ingredi, serva mandata Dei" (Matt 19:17); "qui fecerit haec, vivet in eis" (Gal 3:12; Lev 18:5); "declina a malo, et fac bonum" (Ps 34:15); etc. In istis et similibus locis (quales sunt innumeri in sacris literis), ubi fit mentio de faciendo, scriptura semper loquitur de fidelibus facere; ut cum dicit: "Face hoc, et viues," hoc vult: Cogita primum, ut sis fidelis, habeas rectam rationem et bonam voluntatem, id est, fidem in Christum, ea habita, opereris. Quid igitur mirum, si illi fidei incarnatae, hoc est, operanti, quails fuit Abelis, vel operibus fidelibus, promittuntur merita ac praemia? Quidni ita varie loqueretur scriptura de fide, cum etiam de Christo Deo et homine varie loquitur, scilicet jam de tota persona, jam de duabus naturis ipsius seorsim aut divina aut humana. Si de naturis seorsim loquitur, de Christo absolute loquitur. Si vero de divina, unita humanae in una persona loquitur, de Christo composito et incarnato loquitur. Exstat regula apud scholasticos usitata de communicatione idiomatum, cum proprietates divinitati Christi convenientes, tribuuntur humanitati ipsius, id quod passim cernere est in scripturis. Lucae 2 (v. 12) vocat angelus infantem ex Maria virgine natum salvatorem hominum, et communem dominum angelorum et hominum, et cap. 1 (v. 32) filium Dei. Hinc verissime dicere possum: Ille infans, qui in praesepio et virginis gremio jacet, creavit coelum et terram, est dominus angelorum. . . . et tamen ut vere dicitur, Iesus Mariae filius, creavit omnia, ita tribuitur etiam justificatio fidei incarnatae seu fidelibus facere.<sup>92</sup>

But when it speaks of rewards and works, then it speaks of faith in composition, concrete, or embodied. For instance: "Faith which worketh by love"; "This do and thou shalt live"; "If thou wilt enter life, keep the commandments"; "Whoso doeth these things, shall live in them"; "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." In these and similar texts, which occur without number, in which mention is made of doing, believing doings are always meant; as, when it says, "This do and thou shalt live," it means, "First see that thou art believing, that thy reason is right and thy will good, that thou hast faith in Christ; that being secured, work." Then he proceeds:—"How is it wonderful, that to that embodied faith, that is, faith working, as was Abel's, in other words, to believing works, are annexed merits and rewards? Why should not Scripture speak thus variously of faith, considering it so speaks even of Christ, God and man; sometimes of His entire Person, sometimes of one or the other of His two natures, the Divine or human? When it speaks of one or other of these, it speaks of Christ in the abstract; when of the Divine made one with the human in one Person, of Christ as if in composition and incarnate. There is a well-known rule in the Schools concerning the 'communicatio idiomatum,' when the attributes of His divinity are ascribed to his humanity, as is frequent in Scripture; for instance, in Luke ii. the Angel calls the infant born of the Virgin Mary, 'the Saviour' of men, and 'the Lord' both of Angels and men, and in the preceding chapter, 'the Son of God.' Hence I may say with literal truth, That infant who is lying in a manger and in the Virgin's bosom, created heaven and earth, and is the Lord of Angels.

He seems to be a mere man. And yet Scripture sometimes speaks of Christ as God, and sometimes it speaks of Him as composite and incarnate. Faith is absolute or abstract when Scripture speaks absolutely about justification or about those who are justified, as you see in the Epistle to the Romans and in the Epistle to the Galatians. But when Scripture speaks about rewards and works, then it is speaking about faith as something compound, concrete, or incarnate. We shall cite some examples of this faith, as for example, "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6); "To the pure all things are pure" (Titus 1:15); "If you would enter life, keep the Commandments" (Matt. 19:17); "He who does them shall live by them" (Gal. 3:12); "Depart from evil, and do good" (Ps. 37:27). In these and similar passages—which are innumerable in Holy Scripture—where mention is made of "doing," Scripture is always speaking of doing in faith. Thus when it says: "Do this, and you will live," it means: "Take care first that you be faithful, that you have right reason and a good will, that is, faithful in Christ. When you have this, you can do good work." It is no wonder, then, if merits and rewards are promised to this incarnate faith, that is, to this working faith, such as the faith of Abel, or to faithful works. And why should Holy Scripture not speak in these different ways about faith when it speaks in different ways about Christ as God and man? That is, sometimes it speaks about His whole Person, sometimes about His two natures separately, either the divine or the human nature. If it speaks about the natures separately, it is speaking of Him absolutely; but if it speaks about the divine nature united with the human in one Person, then it is speaking of Christ as composite and incarnate.

92. The identical text and more modern spelling of the Erlangen text is given here. *D. Martini Lutheri Commentarium in Epistolam S. Pauli Ad Galatas* 1:381–84. The omitted Latin text is as follows: "Hic loquor quidem de homine, sed homo in ista propositione est plane novum vocabulum, et, ut sophistae ipsi fatentur, supponit pro divinitate, id est iste Deus, qui factus est homo, creavit omnia. Creatio quidem tribuitur soli divinitati, quia humanitas non creat, et tamen recte dicitur: Homo creavit, quia divinitas, quae sola creat est incarnate cum humanitate, ideoque humanitas participat iisdem proprietatibus cum

... As it is truly said, Jesus the Son of Mary created all things, so is justification ascribed to faith incarnate or to believing deeds." (LDJ 300–1)

In this sense I can truly say: "The infant lying in the lap of His mother created heaven and earth, and is Lord of the angels. . . . just as it is true to say about Christ the man that He created all things, so justification is attributed to incarnate faith or to faithful 'doing.'"<sup>93</sup>

The conclusion that can be drawn from this comparison is that Newman was using the best scholarship available during his day; there were no better Latin texts for Newman to use, and perhaps most important, his scholarship was accurate. Newman's English translation was faithful to the Latin.

The second, and even more serious charge stemming from Newman's quotation of the above passage is that Newman is said to have intentionally misquoted Luther to make him appear to say what he did not mean. In particular, it is claimed that Newman deliberately omitted a portion of the above lengthy quotation in which Luther said,

divinitate. Quare recte et pie dicitur: Iste homo Iesus eduxit Israel de Aegypto, percussit Pharaonem, et fecit omnia mirabilia ab initio mundi, etc. "Igitur cum scriptura dicit, 'Si vis in vitam ingredi, serva mandata Dei,' 'Hoc, fac, et vives, etc., primum videndum est, de cujusmodi servare et facere loquatur, Nam in his et similibus locis, ut dixi, loquitur de fide concreta, non abstracta, composita, non nuda aut simplici, estque ista hujus loci: 'Fac hoc, et vives,' sententia: Tu vives propter hoc facere fidei, vel, hoc facere dabit tibi vitam propter solam fidem. Hoc modo justificatio soli fidei tribuitur, ut creatio divinitati . . ." For the identical 1538 edition see note 86 above.

93. The omitted text from the American edition of *Luther's Works* is as follows: "I am indeed speaking about a man here. But 'man' in this proposition is obviously a new word and, as the sophists themselves say, stands for the divinity; that is, this God who became man created all things. Here creation is attributed solely to the divinity, since the humanity does not create. Nevertheless, it is said correctly that 'the man created,' because the divinity, which alone creates, is incarnate with the humanity, and therefore the humanity participates in the attributes of both predicates. Thus it is said: 'This man Jesus led Israel out of Egypt, struck down Pharaoh, and did all the things that belong to God.' Here everything is being attributed to the man on account of the divinity. "Therefore when Scripture says (Dan 4:27) 'Redeem your sins by showing mercy' or (Luke 10:28) 'Do this, and you will live,' it is necessary to see first of all what this 'doing' is. For in these passages, as I have said, Scripture is speaking about faith in the concrete rather than in the abstract, in a composite sense rather than in a bare or simple sense. Therefore the meaning of the passage, 'Do this, and you will live,' is 'You will live on account of this faithful "doing"; this "doing" will give you life solely on account of faith.' Thus justification belongs to faith alone, just as creation belongs to the divinity; nevertheless . . ." *LW* 26:264–66.

“Thus justification belongs to faith alone” for the purpose of intentionally trying to make Luther sound like he taught justification by obedience.<sup>94</sup> This charge too, needs reexamination.

Newman’s quotation of Luther occurred in chapter 12 of his *Lectures*. It is the last of no less than eleven examples of how Scripture spoke about “believing deeds” justifying in opposition to the idea of justification by mere imputation.<sup>95</sup> The whole chapter in which it is found was part of Newman’s attempt at demonstrating that Scripture itself taught good works justify by increasing righteousness in the soul. In the quotation Luther made a distinction between Scripture speaking about faith in the “abstract” and “incarnate” or “concrete.” Luther then used the concept of the communication of idioms (*communicatio idiomatum*) to explain why Scripture spoke both ways about faith. Luther argued that just as Christ could be spoken of either in his divine or human nature *or* in both natures, so too faith may be spoken of in the “abstract,” that is without works, or as “incarnate,” that is as “believing deeds.” Thus, Luther concluded that even though faith alone justified, Scripture sometimes spoke of justification by “believing deeds” when it spoke of faith as “incarnate.” This was nothing new, given that Luther himself made the distinction that good works could be said to justify before humans (*coram hominibus*), but not before God (*coram Deo*).<sup>96</sup>

For his part, Newman said of his purpose in quoting Luther, “I will quote a passage from Luther, in which he will be found to corroborate by his testimony what has been said; not willingly as the extract shows, but in consequence of the stress of the texts urged against him” (*LDJ* 300). In other words, Newman used Luther as a reluctant witness “to corroborate” that Scripture spoke of “believing deeds” justifying, not that Luther himself did. A point beyond dispute in his *Lectures* is that Newman knew Luther taught justification *sola fide*. Yet Newman wanted to show that even Luther had to deal with the fact that Scripture itself spoke about “believing deeds” justifying. So over the course of twenty-two pages Newman cited ten examples of how Scripture spoke about “believing deeds” as justifying and then quoted Luther trying to explain

94. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 307; McGrath, “Newman on Justification” 104; Murray, “Luther in Newman’s ‘Lectures’” 190; Perry, “Newman’s Treatment of Luther” 315–17.

95. Prior to his discussion of Luther in chapter 12, Newman gives ten examples from Scripture: St. Paul, St. James, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Daniel, Isaiah, Phineas, Zachariah and Elizabeth, and St. John. *LDJ* 288–300.

96. *LW* 34:198. “Works should proclaim faith, just as fruit the tree. Hence, just as I am able to say that fruit shows the tree to be good through outward manifestation, so also works show forth faith, whether it is true. For I am otherwise not able to know whether I believe, unless the works show it. Therefore, works justify, that is, they proclaim that a man is righteous, that he does not have a feigned faith. . . . Works do not justify, then, from their effect. On the other hand, before men they justify, because it is necessary for us to be as certain before man through the evidence of our faith, as we are certain before God.” On the distinction of *coram Deo* and *coram hominibus* see E. Gordon Rupp, *The Righteousness of God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953) 101, 106–7; McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 226–27.



this scriptural teaching in light of his theology of justification by faith alone (*LDJ* 288–300). Newman's point in using the Luther quotation was not to suggest that Luther believed justification by "believing deeds," as has been mistakenly thought, but rather to show that even Luther had to deal with the fact that Scripture frequently spoke of "believing deeds" justifying. Luther's mere attempt to explain why Scripture spoke so often of "believing deeds" as justifying was in itself proof enough. Newman probably omitted a section of the citation either because the almost two full pages of quotation was already too long—it is the longest quotation in the text of his *Lectures*—or because he disagreed with Luther's application of the theological concept of the *communicatio idiomatum* to faith and works.<sup>97</sup> Regardless, the omission of the idea that "justification belongs to faith alone" did not change the point Newman made in his *Lectures* at all: Scripture spoke about "believing deeds" justifying. It appears in light of the evidence that this most serious charge too remains unsubstantiated as a close reading of Newman's *Lectures* demonstrates. Again, we find Newman was not primarily opposing Luther, but the idea of justification by mere imputation.

In conclusion, it has been remarked that Newman was actually closer to Luther in his theology of justification than he actually thought.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, both Luther and the *Apology*, like Newman, used the word "justification" to refer to both a declaration of righteousness as well as renewal.<sup>99</sup> Later confessional Lutheranism found this way of speaking about justification problematic.<sup>100</sup> So with the rise of Lutheran orthodoxy, justification became commonly understood as forensic in nature.<sup>101</sup> Lutheran orthodoxy did not understand imputation as a "legal fiction," but the emphasis on justification *sola fide* in opposition to works-righteousness in Luther's own theology provided the seeds of the antinomian controversy, which first sprouted in Luther's time.<sup>102</sup> It was such an overly forensic notion of justification that Newman found problematic in

97. Anglican and Reformed scholars rejected the Lutheran idea of the *communicatio idiomatum* because it held to an actual sharing of the two natures (not a mere attribution) as the Lutheran teaching of ubiquity used to explain the bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist showed.

98. Sheridan, "Newman and Luther on Justification" 218.

99. See note 30 above.

100. "Sometimes, as in the *Apology* [4.72, 78, 117, 161, 250, 313; 7.31], the words *regeneratio* (rebirth) and *vivificatio* (making alive) are used in place of justification, and then they mean the same thing, even though otherwise these terms refer to the renovation of man and distinguish it from justification by faith." *Epitome* iv; in *Book of Concord* 474. Among the "errors" condemned in the Solid Declaration are "4. That righteousness by faith before God consists of two pieces or parts, namely, the gracious forgiveness of sins and, as a second element, renewal or sanctification." *Book of Concord* 547–48.

101. Robert Preus, "The Justification of a Sinner Before God," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 13 (1960) 262–277 at 274–77, doi:10.1017/s0036930600051929.

102. "Agricola here was undoubtedly picking up authentic elements in Luther's own teaching, yet without the counterbalance of Luther's realism concerning the Christian's situation as *simul justis et peccator*." Martin H. Bertram's "Introduction" to Luther's *Against the Antinomians* in *LW* 47:102.

the “popular Protestantism” of his day and which he opposed in his *Lectures*. As we have seen, Newman can legitimately be faulted by modern scholarly standards for his indiscriminate use of the terms “Luther” and “Lutheranism” to refer to “popular Protestantism.” Nonetheless, the rest of the charges leveled against Newman examined herein remain unsubstantiated. Newman’s indiscriminate use of the terms “Luther” and “Lutheranism” does not invalidate his critique of justification by mere imputation that separated good works from the life of faith nor his theology of justification by God’s presence. Such findings call for a wholesale re-examination of Newman’s theology of justification for its own merits. Only then, perhaps, it will be seen that Newman’s *via media* theology of justification remains significant even today because of its trinitarian nature. It cuts through the debate over justification by understanding it, not as a doctrine to be quarreled over, but as the presence of the living God in the human soul.

### **Author Biography**

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