

John Henry Newman

The Imparting of Righteousness

Nearly one hundred years ago, Yngve Brilioth wrote in *The Anglican Revival*: “Newman’s ‘lectures on Justification’ of 1838, though they have not generally tempted his biographers to close study, form perhaps the chief theological document of The Oxford Movement, the most important attempt to find the theological expression of its piety.”¹ Writing from his Lutheran background it is not surprising that Brilioth singled out this theme as among the most important; but Brilioth’s point relates to more than a later ecumenical interest in one area of Anglican doctrine. Newman’s *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification* is one of the most important theological documents to come out of the Church of England in the nineteenth century. Writing in 2019, almost one hundred years after Brilioth, Eamon Duffy echoes something of the same sentiment when he writes, “Whatever the inadequacies of Newman’s account of Luther’s teaching, . . . the *Lectures on Justification* struck out in a new direction by placing the indwelling presence of Christ through the Spirit as the agent and meaning of Justification . . . Newman’s introduction of a Trinitarian and Christological dimension to the talk about Justification was a theological insight which would bear ecu-

1. Brilioth, *The Anglican Revival*, 282. Since Brilioth’s apt insight, more recent scholars have thankfully considered Newman’s *Lectures on Justification* in more important light. Charles Hefling, for example, in “Justification: The Doctrine, the Lectures, and Tract 90,” argues for the centrality of the *Lectures* and, notably, his conclusions are similar to ours, namely, that Newman’s understanding of justification was deeply Christological. For the most recent work on Newman, see Benjamin King’s incredible corpus: *Newman and the Alexandrian Fathers*, *Receptions of Newman*, and *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman*.

menical fruit.”² It cut away centuries of ever-narrowing debate, and opened a new vista to Catholic-minded Anglicans. Brilioth was enamored of the notion that theology followed piety among the Tractarians; nowhere was this less true than when Newman considered the doctrine of justification. Newman blazed a new trail, a trail that later found expression in the piety of The Oxford Movement, and especially in its baptismal and confessional practice, later in Swedish Lutheranism, and even later in contemporary ecumenism. David Newsome, in his wonderful final book, *The Victorian World Picture*, would go so far as ranking Newman along with Coleridge and very few others, as a true polymath.³ Yet, in its own time, his *Lectures on Justification* went partially unnoticed. Later, Newman himself almost ignored them when he wrote in the *Apologia*:

I wrote my Essay on Justification in 1837; it was aimed at the Lutheran dictum that justification by faith only was the cardinal doctrine of Christianity. I considered that this doctrine was either a paradox or a truism,—a paradox in Luther’s mouth, a truism in Melancthon’s. I thought that the Anglican Church followed Melancthon, and that in consequence between Rome and Anglicanism, between high Church and low Church, there was no real intellectual difference on the point. I wished to fill up a ditch, the work of man. In this Volume again, I express my desire to build up a system of theology out of the Anglican divines, and imply that my dissertation was a tentative Inquiry.⁴

This was all that Newman recalled in his *Apologia*; but years before, while preparing the manuscript for publication, he wrote to his sister, Mrs. John Mozley:

My book on Justification has taken incredible time. I am quite worn out with correcting . . . I write, I write again: I write a third time in the course of six months. Then I take the third: I literally fill the paper with corrections, so that another person could not read it . . . I cannot count how many times this process is repeated.⁵

Two months later, in March of 1838, he wrote to his other sister, Harriett, “The great difficulty was to avoid being difficult, which on the subject of

2. Duffy, *John Henry Newman*, 116.

3. Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture*, 259.

4. Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 67.

5. Mozley, *Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman*, II, 250.

Justification is not a slight one. It is so entangled and mystified by irrelevant and refined questions.”⁶

The *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, while they received some attention when published, slipped from the limelight in a hurry. How this happened is a matter of purest conjecture; yet, it would not be unreasonable to assume that Oxford’s rapidly changing circumstances offer some explanation. Newman was at his most influential; the battle was being waged on many fronts; University politics were dividing colleges and senior common rooms. There were lectures to be given, students to be seen, manuscripts to be prepared, a magazine to be edited, piety to be exercised, sermons to be written, outside speaking engagements to be met, research to be done. The *Tracts for the Times* were being reprinted, work on the edition of the church fathers was being pursued, Anglican divines were being translated and/or edited and published, works of an original nature were being produced at an astonishing rate. All this was being carried on by a small group of men. The *Lectures on Justification* appeared on the heels of the *Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church*. It is not beyond possibility that the work we are about to consider suffered neglect simply from the pressure of the times and the changing circumstances of the movement.

Newman’s secession certainly did not help his *Lectures on Justification* find an audience. In many minds the leader had become the betrayer. His work could bear no test of sincerity. Coupled with the literary overkill of the 1830s, Newman’s secession managed to obscure his finest Anglican work, but not completely. Owen Chadwick has unearthed a fascinating piece of information related to the reading habits of the Victorian clergy. He writes, “The catalogue of the clerical library in the Lincolnshire archives enables a comparison in shift in balance between what the clergy read in 1840 and in 1898. Just a few withdrawals are common to both ends of the reign: Newman *On Justification*, Maurice’s *The Kingdom of Christ* . . .”⁷

Chadwick has helped us understand that the *Lectures on Justification* had an ongoing effect, but offers us no information as to the nature of the effect. R. W. Church, on the other hand, offers some insight into the immediate effect of Newman’s lecturing:

All this time the four o’clock sermons at St. Mary’s were always going on. But, besides these, he [Newman] anticipated a freedom—familiar now, but unknown then—of public lecturing. In Advent and after Easter a company, never very large, used to gather on a week-day afternoon in Adam de Brome’s

6. Mozley, *Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman*, II, 250.

7. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, II, 108.

Chapel—the old Chapel of “Our Lady of Littlemore”—to hear him lecture on some theological subject.⁸

While these gatherings may have been small, they were enthusiastic, and if Church himself is any indication of the quality of those who attended, they reached an audience that would mold the Victorian Church. Those present at the lectures, Church notes, found in them new ways of seeing old questions:

The force, the boldness, the freedom from the trammels of commonplace, the breadth of view and grasp of the subject which marked those lectures, may be seen in them still. But it is difficult to realize now the interest with which they were heard at the time by the first listeners to that clear and perfectly modulated voice, opening to them fresh and original ways of regarding questions which seemed worn out and exhausted.⁹

On one point all witnesses agree: the *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification* belong to the golden age of The Oxford Movement. They stand as a singular accomplishment in Anglican theology, dealing, as they do, with the theology of grace in a new light.

The new light which Newman brought to the old debate over justification began with the *Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church*. In those lectures he was seeking a principle of authority, but beyond such a principle he was seeking the famous *Via Media*, a system of doctrine for Anglicanism which was grounded in scripture and informed by scripture’s patristic interpretation; a system which resorted to private judgement only when all other authorities had been exhausted. By applying this system to the historic formularies and liturgies of Anglicanism it would be possible to define a system of doctrine for Anglicanism. Newman’s concern for his task was great:

Protestantism and Popery are real religions; no one can doubt about them; they have furnished the mould in which nations have been cast: but the *Via Media*, viewed as an integral system, has scarcely had existence except on paper, it has never been reduced to practice except by piecemeal . . . it was to formulate the *Via Media*, and then to reduce it to practice, that Newman devoted his Anglican career. He believed very strongly that “though Anglo-Catholicism is not practically reduced to system in its fulness, it does exist, in all its parts, in the writings of our divines, and in good measure is in actual operation,

8. Church, *The Oxford Movement*, 132.

9. Church, *The Oxford Movement*, 133.

though with varying degrees of consistency and completeness in different places.”¹⁰

Authority in the life of the Christian community, Newman argued, must begin with scripture; but scripture, taken alone, cannot be the sole authority, for too often it only intimates doctrine. Hence antiquity, the fathers and the early councils, must be consulted. Antiquity forms the tradition of the church, it gives voice to what was first a matter of uniform custom. Antiquity, far from undermining scripture, expands upon scripture and interprets it in an authoritative manner. Antiquity is our best guide because it seeks the *via media*, disregarding outright private judgement and limiting dogmatic assertion. Our appeal to antiquity is the extension of antiquity’s own principle; by appealing to the ancient church we remove the error of the Protestants, the exclusive use of private judgement, and the error of the Roman Catholics, dogmatizing that of which even the apostles had been granted only a partial knowledge. “The English Church,” Newman argued, “takes a middle course between these two. It considers that on certain definite subjects private judgement upon the text of Scripture has been superseded, but not by the mere authoritative sentence of the Church, but by its historical testimony delivered down by the Apostles.”¹¹

Newman was seeking a system of doctrine grounded in scripture, confirmed by the fathers and councils, consistent with the doctrinal and liturgical formularies of the sixteenth century, and supported by the writings of English divines. It was not a new question. Bishop Bull, Newman’s favorite Anglican author on justification, sought much the same thing in the seventeenth century. Newman, and his Tractarian colleagues, managed to shift the discussion away from the kind of internecine bickering that was typical of the first third of the nineteenth century. By their extensive appeal to ancient authority and to the fathers, they reintroduced Anglicanism to patristic studies. Their search for a principle of apostolic authority was misinterpreted by Brilioth as a function of the Romantic age.¹² They may have romanticized their view of the early church, but their principle of authority was drawn directly from Vincent of Lerins.¹³

Having dealt with the question of authority in the *Lectures on the Prophetical Office* of the church, why did Newman then turn to justification? He gives us part of the reason in the advertisement to the first edition of the lectures; “It was brought home to the writer from various quarters, that a

10. Newman, *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church*, 20.

11. Newman, *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church*, 154f.

12. See Brilioth, “The Static View of the Church” in *The Anglican Revival*, 180–210.

13. Newman, *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church*, 63.

prejudice existed in many serious minds against certain essential Christian truths, such as Baptismal Regeneration and the Apostolic Ministry . . .”¹⁴ These doctrines, he argues, were being viewed with suspicion “in consequence of a belief that they fostered notions of human merit, were dangerous to the inward life of religion, and incompatible with the doctrine of justifying faith, nay, with express statements on the subject in our Formularies . . .”¹⁵ Pusey had handled the question of baptismal regeneration, the question of the apostolic ministry was the subject of the first *Tract for the Times*, and continued into the *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church*. Justification, given Pusey’s work, seemed the next logical topic. Later, however, Pusey was to argue about the genesis of the lectures on justification. After the publication of Pusey’s famous letter to the Bishop of Oxford, Newman wrote to him on August 4, 1840: “I have no remark to make on your preface of consequence, except to thank you for the extreme trouble you have taken with me . . . And my lectures were not suggested to me by any one, except the clamour of the subject.”¹⁶ Pusey disagreed. In a letter a week later, he wrote back to Newman, “Indeed you did write your ‘lectures on Justification’ at my suggestion, though you of course felt the difficulties too. It was at my request that you set yourself to remove them.”¹⁷

Whether Newman or Pusey recalled the situation correctly we will never know, but Newman tended to follow Pusey’s lead in weighty matters. This point is more obvious in the following quotation where we see Newman taking the same course in his *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification* that Pusey had taken in *Tract Sixty-seven*:

These considerations have led the writer on, first to deliver, then to publish, the following Lectures, in the hope that he might be thereby offering suggestions towards a work, which must be uppermost in the mind of every true son of the English Church at this day,—the consolidation of a theological system, which, built upon those formularies which were framed in the 16th century, and to which all Clergymen are bound, may tend to inform, persuade, and absorb into itself religious minds, which hitherto have fancied that, on the peculiar Protestant questions they were seriously opposed to one another.¹⁸

14. Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, v, 14.

15. Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, v, 14.

16. Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, II, 79f.

17. Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, II, 80.

18. Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, vi.

The suggestion to which Newman refers is that we must return to scripture and the church fathers to find the basis for a consolidated theological system. This, of course, was precisely Pusey's method.

The Heart of the Matter

Newman's literary ability has long been admired by students of nineteenth-century England. What too often has escaped notice was his ability to cut to the heart of an issue. This latter ability he exercised at the beginning of the third lecture on justification:

Enough has now been said to make it appear that the controversy concerning Justification, agitated in these last centuries, mainly turns upon this question, whether Christians are or are not justified by observance of the Moral Law . . . That, in our natural state, and by our own strength, we are not and cannot be justified, is admitted on all hands, . . . to deny it is the heresy of Pelagius. But it is a distinct question altogether, whether with the presence of God the Holy Ghost we can obey unto justification . . .¹⁹

Here Newman was putting the moral side of the question. Does man cooperate in justification? Newman would answer yes, so long as we recognize the prior existence of righteousness in the individual, a righteousness which is God's work. In truth, Newman was caught in the same dilemma as Augustine had been when he wrote:

. . . we are assured that human righteousness itself, though not arising independently of man's will, is yet to be ascribed to the operation of God. We cannot deny the possibility of its perfection, just because all things are possible for God—both that he does by his own will alone, and what he had ordained to be accomplished by himself with the cooperation of the wills of his creatures.²⁰

If God first makes us righteous, then the possibility exists that we may cooperate in our justification.

Where Augustine had been writing against a single enemy, the Pelagians, Newman was trying to steer a course between two conflicting points of view. The Lutheran view, which he regarded as an outright error, stated that our nature had been so wholly corrupted that even with

19. Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, 62.

20. Augustine, *De Spiritu et Littera*, 7.

God's presence we could not obey the moral law. The overzealous Roman Catholic view, which Newman regarded as less of a total error and more of a perversion of the truth, made spiritual renewal the "one and only true description of justification."²¹

The difficult nature of Newman's task can be seen in the two theses that he establishes for proof. Stated briefly these two theses are: 1) that justification and sanctification are substantially the same, and 2) that justification follows upon sanctification. The first thesis had already been advanced by Pusey. The second thesis was commended to Newman by reading Bishop Bull. Bull, commenting on 1 Peter 1:2, had written, "Justification is certainly subsequent to sanctification, at least the first and yet imperfect sanctification . . . First comes the sanctification of the Spirit to obedience; then follows the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, i.e. to justification."²² As we shall see, these two theses are interwoven throughout Newman's description of justification.

In beginning to define the term "justification," Newman labours to point out that "to justify" means "to count righteous." However, he goes on to state emphatically that counting righteous includes within itself the notion of making righteous: "the sense of the term is 'counting righteous,'" and the nature of the thing denoted by it is making righteous.²³ Thus, there is an abstract sense to justification that means "counting," but there is a deeper, concrete sense which is more adequately spoken of as "making" righteous. If one employs the narrow sense of the term "justification," then it is surely a declaration, and is distinguishable from any act which makes a person righteous. Logically, therefore, justification is the antecedent or efficient cause of renewal. This means that it is legitimate to speak of justification as accomplished through imputation. It is an outside declaration about our past, a declaration which removes accusations concerning that past. In this sense justification is a juridical act. "Justification then," Newman wrote, "is the 'Voice of the Lord' designating us what we are not at the time that it designates us; designating us

21. Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, 31. Alister McGrath points out the weakness of the juxtaposition that Newman constructs. He is especially critical of Newman's interpretation of Luther (see his comments on Galatians) and of Newman's ignoring the strength of the Calvinist position (which he sees as much closer to Newman's ideal). Many over the years have noted Newman's seeming reliance on later German Pietism as his way into Luther. McGrath also notes Newman's possible misinterpretation of the Tridentine decisions as creating a single understanding rather than a "range" of interpretations. See McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, vol 2, 121–34.

22. Bull, *Harmonia Apostolica*, 14.

23. Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, 65. Later in this chapter it will be seen that Newman's own use of "thing" to describe grace should not be interpreted too literally at this early stage of the lectures.

what we then begin to be.”²⁴ Justification is not the gift itself, but the declaration that the gift is being given. It is a statement of pardon. It is a statement of pardon which prepares us for holiness. All of this is encompassed by the logical and abstract sense of justification.

It was precisely over the question of our being prepared for holiness (and subsequently being made holy) by God that Newman took most violent objection to the Lutheran position as he understood it. Not only did he see the Lutheran definition of justification by faith as essentially defective, he saw in it the worst possible contradiction. Luther, he says, denies that we can ever be perfected in holiness; our corruption runs too deep. In a rather lengthy attack on this position Newman not only refutes Luther’s position, but shows the awakening awareness of the medieval tradition that was to grip Wilberforce a decade later. Newman seems to borrow directly from St. Thomas’s *Summa Theologiae*, 1a 2ae, 110, 1,²⁵ when he writes:

our justification is not a mere declaration of a past fact, or a testimony to what is present, or an announcement of what is to come,—much less, as those who follow Luther say, a declaration of what neither has been, is, or will ever be,—but it is the *cause* of that being which before was and henceforth is. Strange it is, but such is the opinion of one of the two schools of divinity which have all along been mentioned, that God’s calling us righteous implies, not only that we have not been, but that we never shall be, righteous. Surely it is a strange paradox to say that a thing is not because He says it is; that the solemn averment of the Living and True God is inconsistent with the thing averred; that His accepting our obedience is a bar to His making it acceptable, and that the glory of His pronouncing us righteous lies in His leaving us unrighteous.²⁶

Newman insists upon the integrity of God’s pronouncements, but he goes beyond that in insisting on the indissoluble link between pronouncement and activity, between saying something is so and making it so. God’s word accomplishes what it declares. This accomplishment is worked out

24. Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, 66f.

25. “Therefore it is not just the forgiveness of sins alone which belongs to grace, but many other gifts of God as well. And even the forgiveness of sins does not take place without some divinely caused effect in us . . .”

26. Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, 78. In this manner of savaging his opponents, Newman remained consistent. Eamon Duffy recounts Newman’s opposition to the Ultramontanes love of dogmatic assertions which Newman describes as *the act of a man who will believe anything because he believes nothing, and is ready to profess whatever his ecclesiastical, that is his political, party requires of him*. Duffy, *John Henry Newman*, 2.

in the arena to which the declaration speaks. Hence, justification consists of imputation, but not imputation alone. If imputation was the only factor involved in justification, then justification would be a one-sided affair in which God's word would cause no corresponding change in the arena (man) to which it was directed. "On the whole, then, from what has been said," Newman writes, "it appears that justification is an announcement or *fiat* from Almighty God . . . 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*."²⁷ God's operation in justification is two-fold, both *counting* and *making* us righteous.²⁸ Hence, for purposes of definition, Newman has subsumed sanctification under justification while still admitting that justification, in its most limited sense, is the declaration of forgiveness, and sanctification, in its most limited sense, is the act of making us righteous. By subsuming sanctification under justification he makes the two terms almost synonymous.

This rather novel method of definition led to many confusions by those who read Newman. Newman's readers were still inclined to think in sequential terms about justification and sanctification, and Newman's desire to conform to Bishop Bull (giving prior position to sanctification), plus his desire to give logical priority to justification, did not aid his readers' understanding. Bishop Sumner of Chester warned his clergy to remember, "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."²⁹ Sumner went on to charge his clergy to remember, as Hooker had written, "The righteousness whereby we are sanctified is inherent, but not perfect. The righteousness whereby we are justified is perfect, but not inherent."³⁰ In Switzerland H. Merle-d'Aubigne was telling his theological students, "Among us justification is the cause, and sanctification is the effect. Among those doctors [the Tractarians], on the contrary, sanctification is the cause, and justification is the effect."³¹

27. Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, 83.

28. Newman understands this to be the real sense of the eleventh and thirteenth *Articles of Religion*.

29. Sumner, "Charge to the Clergy of the Diocese of Chester," in *The Judgement of the Bishops upon Tractarian Theology*, 357f.

30. Sumner, "Charge to the Clergy of the Diocese of Chester," in *The Judgement of the Bishops upon Tractarian Theology*, 358.

31. Quoted by Y. Brilioth in *The Anglican Revival*, 294, footnote 1. The text is from H. Merle-d'Aubigné, *Geneve et Oxford*, 29: "chez-nous la justification est la cause, et la sanctification est l'effet. Chez ces docteurs, au contraire, la sanctification est la cause, et

The confusion was understandable, but avoidable. The seeming contradiction was easily found, and as easily attacked. Had a deeper reading of Newman prevailed, however, it would have been more obvious that he was seeking a synthetic view in which justification and sanctification were removed from the restrictions of logical and durational priorities.

In expanding on the fullest meaning of justification, Newman goes on to say that since the proper work of justification is renewal, it stands to reason that justification and righteousness are almost identical in meaning. Justification makes us truly just, hence it renews us:

The justifying Word, then, conveys the Spirit, and the Spirit makes our works “pleasing” and “acceptable” to God, and acceptableness is righteousness; so that the justified are just, really just, in degree indeed more or less, but really so far as this,—that their obedience has in it a gracious quality which the obedience of unregenerate man has not.³²

Justification, therefore, is not only a principle of the simple negation of sin; it is that, but much more. Justification, for Newman, becomes the positive principle of our acceptableness to God.

Acceptableness, love, spiritual renewal, these are notions that have usually found their home in a doctrine of sanctification rather than justification. By placing them in justification Newman took another step in equating justification and sanctification. Justification, Newman argued, makes us righteous, and because it does so we have within us the power of grace whereby we may please God in what we do. Justification works in us as well as outside us. Justification changes our hearts, it imparts to us an active righteousness which allows us to cooperate with God. Justification and sanctification, essentially the same quality, are the grace of the gospel. This is the grace which “unfetter the will . . . and restores to us the faculty of accepting or rejecting that grace itself. It enables us to obey, not as instruments merely, but as free agents, who, while they obey, are not constrained to obey, except that they choose to obey . . .”³³ Obedience, therefore, which might more often have been spoken of as a part of sanctification, and subsequent to justification, now lies at the heart of justification. Newman writes:

For these reasons, then, though justification properly means an act external to us, it may be said to consist in evangelical obedience; first, because obedience is one with God’s imputation by

la justification est l’effet.”

32. Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, 91.

33. Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, 94.

association; next, because they are one in fact, since He implants in part within us the very thing which in its fullness he imputes to us; and, lastly, because our concurrence in being justified is a necessary condition of His justifying.³⁴

This constitutes the two-fold operation of grace in the life of the individual. A person must cooperate, must freely accept what God offers. God will not give what a person will not accept. By grace that person is prepared for the gift of justification. This preparation to accept justification is the renewal of the heart and will of humans. This, of course, is sanctification. Therefore, in the concrete event of total spiritual renewal, sanctification precedes justification, but justification is the all-encompassing term for everything which takes place.

Newman recognized the danger in his position. He knew that some might interpret this as a doctrine of justification by obedience. Thus, he cautioned his readers to remember that justification is primarily an act of God, a free gift. On man's side justification is a passive quality of righteousness which God himself prepares each to receive. The active agency in justification belongs to God alone; the passive, receptive agency belongs to the person who is made righteous by God's gift. The whole truth of the doctrine of justification, Newman believes, is to be found in a constant awareness of both elements: God's activity and man's receptivity of righteousness. Here, he argues, one finds the basic errors of Protestants and Roman Catholics.

The Protestants place too much emphasis on God's activity, and by so doing disregard the fact that Christ must be in us as well as have his merits imputed to us. The Roman Catholics, on the other hand, err in placing too great a reliance on the passive reception of holiness. This can lead to a notion of justification by obedience; hence, the heresy of Pelagius. In a sermon Newman commented on these errors and their common result:

I have said that there are two opposite errors: one, the holding that salvation is not of God; the other, that it is not in ourselves. Now it is remarkable that the maintainers of both the one and the other error whatever their differences in other respects, agree in this,—in depriving a Christian life of its mysteriousness.³⁵

By now Newman has introduced some of his most important distinctions, chiefly the active-passive distinction. He has introduced the notion of obedience, a central notion in Tractarian theology and piety; and, he

34. Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, 95.

35. Newman, "Righteousness Not of Us, but in Us" in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, V, 140f.

has given immense breadth to the meaning of justification. By justification Newman would have us understand all of God's activity in bringing a person from a state of sin to a state of righteousness; so, too, he would have us understand that justification includes a human's faithful response to the divine activity of grace. God's declaration of our righteousness makes us righteous. God's speaking is his doing, scripture will not have them separated. In a fine synopsis of his view Newman writes:

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 . . . 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. Austin, that is, *explains* it, and Protestants *define* it. The latter describe it theoretically, the former practically. The Protestant sense is more close upon the word, the ancient use more close upon the thing. A man, for instance, who describes bread as “the staff of life,” need not disagree with another who defined it only chemically or logically, but he would be his inferior in philosophy and his superior in real knowledge.³⁶

At first the passive side of justification appears only as acceptance, for at first justification is known only in the moment of forgiveness. As the life of obedience goes on, however, justification comes to be known more as renewal, sanctification, Christ fulfilling the law not only for us but in us. This is the real, practical knowledge for which Newman claims superiority. Real knowledge sees justification in the longer perspective of an active Christian life, the obedient life of those in whom Christ dwells. Therefore, to define justification is of less importance than to explain and describe it. A definition is an arid, static thing; an explanation, however, gives to the event an ongoing vitality built upon the real knowledge of the continual presence of the event in the life of the believer.

36. Newman, *Lectures on Justification*, 97f.