

Anglican Reflections on Justification by Faith

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I regularly teach a course entitled *The Anglican Way of Theology* at an “Evangelical seminary in the Anglican tradition.” We begin the course with the English Reformation, and I am repeatedly surprised when I discover every year as I grade student papers that the Reformation doctrine of “justification by grace alone through faith alone” is frequently misunderstood and causes no end of trouble for my students to get their heads around. There seems to be a lot of confusion about just what the doctrine is, and I find that, in their papers, students either regularly defend, or criticize as troublesome or incoherent, something that they call “justification by faith alone” which is not the Reformation doctrine.

I first encountered this confusion when, as a teenager, I was taking Latin from a former Roman Catholic seminarian high school teacher, who had left seminary after having become an atheist, and, when he discovered that I was (at that time) a Southern Baptist, informed me that I must believe as, he said, did John Calvin, that all human beings were basically “dung,” but justification by faith meant that we were “white-washed

dung.” This is, of course, the standard misunderstanding (or misrepresentation) that justification by faith is a “legal fiction,” as if there were no such thing as a Protestant theology of either creation or sanctification.

I encountered similar confusion when I did my Master’s work at a Roman Catholic seminary and was told there that Martin Luther’s doctrine of justification was about *fiducia*, that Luther’s doctrine was that one was required to have confidence in the genuineness of one’s faith and one’s certainty of salvation, and that, if one lacked this confidence, one was not justified, and so, was not saved.¹ Thus certainty of one’s own salvation became identified with the reality of salvation itself. This summary critique confused justification by faith with justification by psychological certitude. It changed the concern of justification into primarily a question about epistemology – “How can I be certain of my salvation?” – and placed the ground of that certainty within the realm of one’s own psychology.

Such a misunderstanding misses entirely the point of Luther’s insistence on “alien righteousness,” one of the central concerns of which was to relieve Christians from the obsessions with the sincerity of their intentions that characterized the late Medieval penitential system. If justification by faith is about “alien righteousness” (something outside me), then it is not about the psychological certainty I have in my own faith (something inside me).

At the same time, this misunderstanding is not entirely without foundation. In the revivalist church in which I grew up, the doctrine of justification by faith was conflated with Jesus’ statement in John 3:7 to Nicodemus that “You must be born again” to equate justification with being “born again,” and equated being “born again” with a specific experience of conversion that took place at a particular moment in time, usually in response to an altar call (called an “invitation”)

at the end of a church service or revival meeting. Those who walked down an aisle during the singing of the hymn "Just As I Am," and "asked Jesus to come into their hearts" were "born again" or "saved," and thus justified. Those who could not remember ever having undergone such a conversion experience were assumed not to be "real Christians," and there was corresponding anxiety about the authenticity of one's conversion experience among those who doubted its sincerity. Some people in my church were "born again" and "again" more than once as they worried about whether the first conversion had been genuine, and walked down the church aisle a second or third time.

There is an irony here in that revivalist and Pietist Evangelical traditions of "born again" Christianity have turned Luther's theology of justification into its opposite. What Luther intended as an antidote to subjectivism, in that one was to look away from one's good works and the sincerity of one's good intentions to Christ's alien righteousness, his finished atoning work outside one's own consciousness, became itself simply one more version of subjectivism as "born again" Christians repeatedly examined introspective consciences as to the authenticity of the faith by which one was supposed to be justified.

A handy illustration of the correct Reformation doctrine over against pietist misappropriation is illustrated by an anecdote that T. F. Torrance tells about the time he was asked by a Scots highlander whether he was "born again." To which Torrance replied that he was. Undeterred, the questioner asked Torrance when he had been "born again." To which Torrance replied that he "had been born again when Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary and rose again from the virgin tomb, the first-born from the dead."²

During my years in graduate school, I also read in Catholic historical theologians the criticism that justification by

faith was an example of the tendency of late Medieval Nominalism to reduce salvation to a matter of a divine voluntarist command, with no correlation to any notion of inherent goodness. As Duns Scotus argued that, all other things being just as they are, Judas could still have betrayed Jesus and Simon Peter could still have repented, yet God in his absolute power could have decided to save Judas and damn Peter rather than the opposite; as William of Ockham argued that, in God's absolute power, he could alter the second Table of the Ten Commandments so that murder and theft were now virtuous actions and kindness and honesty, vices, and God could even command the faithful to hate him, and the faithful would show their love for God by hating him, so, it was said, for Luther, the Nominalist God could declare to be righteous someone who was actually sinful.³ In other words, justification by faith was understood as another way of answering the question "Does God will something because it is good, or does something become good merely because God wills it?" by affirming the latter. That is, the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith is interpreted to mean that God declares to be good that which is really evil. This is a misreading, however. The traditional Protestant doctrine is not that God declares evil to be good, but that, on the basis of Jesus Christ's atoning work, God acquits the evil doer (whose actions are genuinely evil) because of the saving deeds of Christ (whose deeds are genuinely good.)⁴ God does not declare the evil doer to be good, but rather to be acquitted (not guilty). The accusation of Nominalism also falls short when one discovers that someone like Richard Hooker explicitly repudiates the voluntarist answer to the question about the relation between God's goodness and the divine command (which was embraced by Puritans like William Perkins), but nonetheless affirmed justification by faith alone.

I have also come across Roman Catholic apologists who read and interpreted Paul's doctrine of justification through the

affirmation in the book of James that “You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone”(James 2:24). These critics of the Reformation point out that Paul never uses the expression “by faith alone,” so, whatever Paul means by “justification by faith,” he cannot mean what the Reformers claim that he means because this would explicitly contradict the Book of James. This is the approach found throughout Robert Sungenis’s book *Not by Faith Alone*.⁵ Roman Catholic apologists of this bent also point to Jesus’ demand for good deeds (Matt 5:20) and to biblical statements affirming the significance of love or hope and other good works as evidence that justification cannot be by faith alone, but also demands the virtues of hope and charity. Roman Catholic apologists sometimes claim that the the “works of the law” that Paul refers to when he says that we are “justified by faith apart from the works of the law” (Rom. 3:28) are not morally good deeds, but Jewish ceremonial practices like circumcision or dietary laws, or else to good works performed without the assistance of grace.

At the same time, I have also read Roman Catholics who make the opposite claim – that there really is no essential difference between the Roman Catholic position on justification and the Reformation position – that the Council of Trent did not condemn Luther’s theology, but only distortions of it. Hans Küng’s book *Justification*,⁶ on Karl Barth’s doctrine of justification by faith, is pointed to as a major factor in new ecumenical agreement. Küng argued that Barth’s position was not incompatible with that put forward at Trent. In “A Letter to the Author” at the beginning of the book, Barth acknowledged that Küng had gotten his position right. However, Barth was not sure whether Küng had gotten the Tridentine position right! Ecumenically friendly Roman Catholics and formerly Protestant converts to Catholicism sometimes point to the agreed Roman Catholic/Lutheran “Joint Declaration on Justification”⁷ as evidence that there are no

longer any substantial disagreements between Protestants and Catholics on justification.

Similarly, when I was studying under Roman Catholics, I heard Catholic biblical scholars affirm that Paul did indeed teach that justification is a forensic declaration, not an infused righteousness (or a “making righteous”), and that Paul clearly taught that justification is by faith alone. My copies of both the older Roman Catholic *Jerome Biblical Commentary* and the revised *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* follow this line, and both contain the *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur*.⁸ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is ambiguous on these matters, speaking of justification on the one hand as “the acceptance of God’s righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ,” but also saying that justification “*makes us inwardly just* [my emphasis] by the power of [God’s] mercy.”⁹ Is *The Catechism* teaching that inward justice is a consequence of justification, which is fully in accord with the Reformation position, or does *The Catechism* equate justification with “making just” – the position the Reformers rejected? It is not clear.

Among liberal Protestants within the Episcopal Church, I have sometimes heard a sympathetic interpretation of justification by faith in terms of “inclusiveness.” Justification by faith means that God accepts you just as you are, so you do not need to change, and it is wrong to insist that external standards of moral behavior or doctrinal orthodoxy or church discipline should be conditions for church membership. For certain liberal Protestants, justification by faith thus becomes the doctrine that there are no doctrines, except, of course, for the post-modern doctrines of “inclusiveness,” “diversity,” and “tolerance.” Of course, the same people have been more than willing to endorse discipline and impose conditions on those who challenge their doctrine of indiscriminate inclusiveness as a distortion of the Good News that God has made exclusively available in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and in him alone.

In the liberal Protestant wing of the mid-twentieth century, for those influenced by Rudolf Bultmann or Paul Tillich, justification by faith seemed to be about some kind of existential act of decision or authenticity of "experience," and it is on the basis of this understanding of faith as "authenticity" that people are justified. This seems to be a development of the Pietist equation of faith with a moment of conversion that instead of conversion equates faith with an act of existential authenticity.¹⁰ For both Pietists and Liberal Protestants, one is justified not so much by placing one's trust in Christ's alien righteousness, as by having an authentic subjective experience.

In recent years, Protestant New Testament scholars have initiated a new discussion about Paul's understanding of justification, but have also contributed to the confusion. "The New Perspective on Paul," associated with the work of E. P. Sanders, James Dunn, N.T. Wright, Richard Hays, Ben Witherington, and others, challenges the Reformers' interpretation. It should be pointed out that the "New Perspective" is not a single position, since the authors do not completely agree with one another. Yet they do agree in on certain essentials. The New Perspective seems to be saying that Paul is not arguing against a Jewish "works righteousness," but against badges of "Torah covenant membership" – like circumcision and dietary laws – that separated Jews and Gentiles. New Perspective teachers also emphasize the corporate nature of justification, claiming that Paul is not concerned with individual righteousness, but with the question of how to identify those who are members of the covenant people of God. The Jewish claim was that God's covenant people are identified by the external marks of circumcision and kosher diet. Paul's claim to the contrary was that God's covenant people are identified by faith in Jesus Christ, or, perhaps, better, the covenant faithfulness of Jesus Christ. The faith to which Paul refers is not faith "in Christ," but the faithfulness "of Christ" that the church

(corporate) either emulates or participates in. New Perspective advocates also place a strong emphasis on Paul's speaking of a final judgment, based on works. At least some representatives of the New Perspective make a distinction between "getting in," and "staying in." One becomes a member of the church (gets in) through faith in Christ, but one remains a member ("stays in") through good works.

Finally, when I came to teach at the seminary where I work now, I met up with a position among some of my students that I had not encountered previously, a radical appropriation of a Lutheran Law/Gospel hermeneutic, which interpreted Luther as teaching that justification is indeed merely forensic, and results in no intrinsic change whatsoever. This reading of Luther tends to interpret Romans 7:14-25 not as a description of someone who lives under the law rather than under grace, but as a normative account of Christian anthropology. Justification by faith does not lead to good works, but is the constantly needed proclamation of forgiveness for those who do not do good works, and are not expected to do them. Grace does not bring freedom from the enslavement of sin, but freedom from condemnation for those (all of us, really) who continue to be enslaved, but are now forgiven despite our continual sinning. The suggestion that there is an inherent connection between justification and sanctification is resisted as an "imposition of law," a return to "works righteousness" by Protestants who should know better. The "Third Use of the Law," found not only in John Calvin, but endorsed by the Lutheran *Book of Concord*, is viewed as a falling away from the gospel.^{[11](#)}

When I studied under Roman Catholics, I sometimes found myself correcting caricatures of the Reformation doctrine of justification. I was surprised to find myself teaching students who said, in essence, "These Roman Catholic critiques of justification by faith are not misunderstandings, distortions, or caricatures. They are instead the heart of the

doctrine, and we embrace the caricature wholeheartedly!”

Lutheran theologian Gilbert Meilaender refers to this position as “Dialectical Lutheranism.”¹² This radical separation of justification from sanctification has apparently been a recurring problem within Lutheranism, and has had to be resisted by mainstream Lutheranism, including contemporary Lutheran theologians like Meilaender, David Yeago, as well as theologians of the previous generation like Robert Jenson, Carl Braaten, and Wofhart Pannenberg.

Finally, in addition to these “more Lutheran than Luther” students, I occasionally find myself reading the paper of the concerned Anglo-Catholic or just “confused” evangelical Anglican, who tries to make sense of the Reformation doctrine, but finds it full of contradictions, or just worries that justification by faith might lead to antinominianism, or who is happy that we have Richard Hooker (who is thought to be closer to the “catholic” view) as a corrective to Cranmer. If it were not so disconcerting, it would be genuinely humorous to read the papers of students, some of whom express concern on the one hand that Cranmer and the Anglican Reformers might be teaching “works righteousness,” and others who are concerned on the other that the Reformers’ embrace of justification by faith encourages antinominan tendencies, or, at least, contradicts statements the Reformers made elsewhere that there is no salvation without good works.

In light of the above plurality of opinions, it is not so surprising that some of my students have trouble sorting out the Reformation doctrine of justification. The following is my attempt at some clarification. What did the Reformers mean by “justification by grace alone through faith alone”?

1) All Reformation theologians (including Anglican Reformers Thomas Cranmer, John Jewel and Richard Hooker) would have agreed that justification is a “meritorious” work, but that it is entirely a meritorious work that is done by Jesus Christ.

Sinners are justified by the atoning, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they can do nothing to contribute to that work. This is why Luther refers to justification as an "alien righteousness." It is not that Christ's atoning work does not affect me, or that I do not have to make it my own, but that Christ's work is entirely his own, and not mine. The doctrine is that Christ died and rose again for my salvation. I did not. As an example, if I did not know how to swim, and were to fall into a lake and was drowning, if an expert swimmer jumped in and pulled me out, the work of saving me would belong to the swimmer, not to me.

Although Luther, Calvin and Cranmer were not scholastics, sometimes it helps when examining theological questions to incorporate some of the distinctions used by more scholastic theologians like Richard Hooker and those of his generation because they distinguish between different ways in which one thing can be a cause of another, and how something can contribute to an event without being the primary or sole cause of an event.

The scholastics put the question of justification in terms of what is called "formal cause."¹³ The "formal cause" is that which makes something what it is, in the sense that it is "heat" that makes something hot. The Reformers claimed that the "formal cause" of justification is entirely the work of Christ "outside us," apart from our efforts or good works. The Roman Catholic position at the Council of Trent was that the "formal cause" of justification is "infused righteousness," that is, something inside us.¹⁴ Practically speaking, the question resolves to: Is my right standing before God a matter of looking entirely outside myself and my own moral efforts, depending only on what Jesus Christ has done for me in his atoning work? Or do I hope to be righteous before God by looking to how well I have cooperated with Christ, looking inside myself for evidence of good works, and basing my standing on the quality of those good works? In this regard,

the distinction that some Roman Catholic apologists make between good works done through the power of grace, and good works done without grace does not really matter. The key difference is that, for the Reformers, the ground of my standing before God is entirely the work of Christ, done apart from me, and without my assistance. For Tridentine Catholics, the ground of my standing before God is the quality of my own good works, done with the assistance of indwelling grace, certainly, but still, my own work.

2) That the “formal cause” of justification is the finished work of Jesus Christ does not mean that justification has no conditions. “Formal causes” are not the only causes that exist; there can be other causes as well. Reformation Christianity considers faith to be the “instrumental” cause of justification on the part of the one believing. An instrumental cause is the “means by which” something takes place. It is not the “formal cause” in the sense of that which accomplishes the work of our justification—that is Christ’s work alone. However, faith is an instrumental cause as a necessary condition on the part of the one being justified. Let me provide another example: An architect designs a house, and carpenters build it. The formal cause of the existence of the house would be the architect and the carpenters who put the house together. However, there are other causes as well. The bricks and mortar are material causes, without which there could be no house. One could say that the owner of the house is a conditional instrumental cause in the sense that if no buyers exist and no people exist to live in houses, no houses will be built.

Faith is an instrumental (not formal) cause of justification, but, by definition, faith is a cause or condition that looks away from itself toward another. “To have faith” in someone is precisely not to trust in one’s own efforts. If I am an architect who is building a house for myself, I am both the formal and the instrumental cause of my home. If, however, I

am a home owner who is asking the architect to build me a home, I *have faith* in the architect and the carpenters to build the house, because *I am not the one building it*. So, faith, by definition, is a “condition” of justification, but not a work. I am not saved by the sincerity of my faith, but by the total sufficiency of Christ’s work, in the same way that the integrity of the house depends not on the sincerity of the home owner, but on the integrity and hard work of the architect and carpenters.

3) The Reformation understanding is that faith is also a gift of God, but it is a gift that God gives me that enables me freely to act, and to respond to God’s gift of salvation in Christ. The scholastics used the term “concurrent causality” to describe the way that God’s work within me enables me to respond to grace. A perhaps more adequate term that has been used by more contemporary theologians would be “double agency.”¹⁵ The term “double agency” is helpful because it makes clear that God’s agency enables me to be an agent who truly acts. We make a mistake if we think of the relation between divine and human action as a “zero sum” game – where God acts, I do not, and vice versa. To the contrary, because I exist only insofar as I am at every moment created by God, the more God acts within me, the more freedom I have, and the more that act becomes truly my own. It is only by sinning that I can exercise “independence” from God, and sin, far from being an act of freedom, actually enslaves. Of course, such “independence” is actually an illusion, since, in his providence, God uses even my sin to accomplish his own good. So faith is indeed a gift of God. It is a gift that enables me freely to receive the gift of justification. This gift of faith takes place through the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, sent by the risen Christ to unite those who have faith in Christ’s atoning work to himself, and thus both to justify them and to share his risen life with them.

4) While justification is the “alien work” of Christ, whereby

our salvation is effected, and we are thus justified by faith alone (in the sense that we contribute nothing to Christ's work of atonement), the faith by which we are justified is never alone (in the sense that justification would have no consequences in our own lives). Justification is effective. God accomplishes in our lives what he declares to be so, and sanctification necessarily accompanies justification, not as a condition of justification (which is what Trent meant by saying that "infusion" is the formal cause of salvation), but as a consequence or effect of justification.

Human sin produces two negative consequences: guilt (for sins committed) and the enslavement to sin by which sin continues to be committed. Sinful human beings need not only forgiveness and pardon for the guilt of sin (justification), but also transformation, change, and a life that results in a new kind of holiness. Both occur by means of the union with the crucified and risen Christ that takes place through the instrumental (not formal) cause of faith. As I have faith in the finished atoning work of Christ done entirely without my cooperation or contribution, I am forgiven. At the same time, as I place my faith in the risen Christ, I am indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who unites me to the risen Christ, who shares his life with me, and gradually conforms me to Christ's image. So sanctification is not a condition, but rather a consequence or corollary of justification. I am not justified because I am holy; rather, I become holy because I am justified. At the same time, sanctification is a necessary consequence of justification because both justification and sanctification take place through union with the risen Christ. If there is no evidence of sanctification in the life of someone who claims to be a Christian, this is an indication that there is no justification either because it is the same union with Christ that produces both.

5) It is sometimes said that Roman Catholics believe that baptism is the instrumental cause of justification, while

Protestants believe that faith is the instrumental cause.¹⁶ This is a false dichotomy. Both faith and baptism are instrumental causes, but in different ways. The sacraments are instrumental causes in the sense of being material causes by which God mediates that union with the risen Christ in which both justification and sanctification exist. Baptism is the material instrumental cause by which one is initiated into salvation; it is the sacrament of justification by faith. The Eucharist is the material instrumental cause of growth or nourishment in the Christian life. Faith is the subjective internal cause in the sense of the corresponding subjective action on the part of the Christian to the external action of the sacrament. In the traditional Anglican definition, a sacrament is an external [efficacious] sign of an internal grace [faith]. Both faith and the sacrament are necessary, faith as the internal consent of the one looking to Christ, baptism and Eucharist as the external means of communicating Christ's resurrection life to the one who has faith. While Anglicans (as sacramental Christians) do believe that baptism is the mediating material cause of justification, as the Eucharist is the mediating material cause of sanctification, neither are effective unless there is accompanying faith. In the case of infant baptism, the understanding is that it is the Church that exercises faith on behalf of the infants, who must eventually exercise faith on their own, without which faith the grace of the sacrament will be ineffective.

So justification by faith alone does not mean justification without the sacraments. What it does mean is that, again, any righteous standing I might have before God (justification) depends entirely on Christ's righteousness as the finished work of Christ outside of me, and not at all my own good works or moral efforts, which are nonetheless the necessary and inevitable consequence of Christ's work as the Holy Spirit dwells within me and unites me to the risen Christ. Faith is not a "good work" in the sense of a meritorious act by which I earn my salvation; it is no more than the subjective

instrumental means to receive the gift of justification, which always remains a gift. The sacraments are not “good works” either, but are rather the material instrumental causes by which God communicates to me the life of the risen Christ as I am united to him by faith through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

6) What did Thomas Cranmer mean then when he said that the faith by which we are justified is a “lively faith”?¹⁷ By claiming that faith must be “lively,” did Cranmer turn faith into a work? In Greek, the same word, *pistis*, is translated as both “faith” and “belief” in English. Latin distinguishes between *fides* and *credens*. English distinguishes between “belief” and “trust,” and, in English “faith” is the equivalent of “trust.” In English, “belief” can mean simply an intellectual assent that something is true without any corresponding decision to act on that belief. So resolving the so-called contradiction between James and Paul on justification by faith depends on keeping clear two meanings of the Greek word *pistis*. When James says that “The devils believe, and tremble,” he certainly does not mean that the devils have trust in or confidence in God, but rather that they have an intellectual knowledge that God exists, with no corresponding trust. When Paul speaks of justification by faith, he is not referring to a mere intellectual conviction that certain things are true, but to a trust in Christ’s atoning work. We sometimes use the English expression “believe in” in distinction from “believe that” to mean the same thing as “faith,” and we speak of fidelity and “faithfulness” to mean “loyal.” So the husband who knows his wife’s character responds to the suggestion that his wife has cheated on him: “I believe in my wife. She’s faithful to me.”

So Cranmer’s “true and lively faith” is not a meritorious work that in some way earns justification, anymore than the husband’s “belief in” his wife is a meritorious work that earns his wife’s faithfulness. Rather, the husband’s “belief

in" his wife depends entirely on her character, not on his. He may or may not deserve it. When Cranmer speaks of a "lively faith" he is contrasting "faith" in the sense of genuine "trust" in Christ, with faith that is merely an intellectual conviction ("Sure, I believe that a God exists, but I'm not a religious fanatic or anything"), or the hypocritical faith of the person who claims to trust in Christ, but who demonstrates by his or her actions that such a claim is fraudulent. And we all know people like that.

For that reason, faith, for Cranmer and the Anglican Reformers, is something one does, not mere orthodoxy of belief. Such an "orthodoxy" would not be a "lively faith," but a mere cognitive assertion, shared with the devils who "believe" and tremble. But neither is it the case, for Cranmer and the Reformers, that because they also insist that good works are necessary to salvation, "faith alone" is a misnomer. The "faith [alone] that saves" really is enough for salvation, but the "faith [alone] that saves" is a "lively faith," a faith that unites one to the risen Christ. And the risen Christ will produce in the one who trusts in him, repentance, sanctification, and the fruits of the Holy Spirit. These accompaniments are not conditions of justification; they are necessary consequences or corollaries.

If sanctification and fruits of the Holy Spirit were conditions of justification, that would also turn justification by faith into its opposite, for once more, it would mean that I would look toward myself and some accomplishment of my own rather than to what Christ has done for me, and that would turn faith into a "work." This is why Cranmer insists that one must renounce "the merit of all our said virtues of faith, hope, charity, and all other virtues, and good works . . ." ¹⁸ Not because they are not truly good works, nor because they are not good things that God works in us through the presence of his indwelling Spirit who unites us to the risen Christ. They are! But rather because they are not

conditions of our justifying union with Christ, but its consequences.

Justification by faith alone is another way of saying justification by Christ alone.¹⁹ It is therefore more proper to speak not of justification by faith, but of justification by grace alone through faith alone. When we exercise faith in Christ, we look away from ourselves, and any good we have done and depend entirely on Christ for our salvation. It is because Christ alone saves that we can say of any good works or virtues that appear in our lives that these also are simply the gifts of Christ who justifies us, and not something we can do to earn his favor or our salvation. He saves us entirely freely and graciously, out of a love that we do not earn, and toward which we cannot contribute in any way.

How does the above summary address the questions and misunderstandings of justification raised at the beginning of this discussion? What about the Roman Catholic understanding of justification? Is disagreement still as intractable as it was at Trent? Or do the agreed statements between Lutherans and Roman Catholics now mean that former disagreements have disappeared? What about the Liberal Protestant attempt to identify justification with inclusiveness? Or the revivalist tendency to equate justification by faith with “making a decision” for Christ? What about the New Perspective on Paul? To what extent does that challenge the Reformation understanding of justification by faith?

1) Is justification by faith a legal fiction? That is, does justification simply leave me as I was before, a totally depraved sinner, but now a sinner whose sin God now overlooks?

This is, I think, one of the most egregious misunderstandings or misinterpretations of justification by faith. It depends entirely on ignoring the crucial distinction that all Reformation theology makes between justification and sanctification. In classic Protestant theology, justification

is indeed an external and forensic declaration by which Christ's righteousness is imputed to the sinner. Sanctification, on the other hand, is the internal work of the Holy Spirit in the justified by which they actually and progressively become righteous. It is a real and intrinsic transformation. Trent did not consider sanctification separately, and many of the characteristics which the Reformers denied (and Trent affirmed) of justification, the Reformers attributed to sanctification instead.²⁰ Thus, in Protestant theology, "sanctification is real and internal. And justification and sanctification are in fact inseparable, as complementary aspects (not parallel), one external and one internal, of the same act."²¹

Exegetically, this distinction rises out of two kinds of language Paul uses. On the one hand, he uses the word *dikaiosune*, which is translated "justification" or "righteousness." On the other hand, Paul also uses the word *hagiosmos*, translated "holiness" or "sanctification." Modern biblical scholars (including Roman Catholics) recognize that "justification" has a forensic or courtroom meaning. It does not mean "to make righteous," but to "declare righteous."²² On the other hand, "holiness" does indeed refer to a kind of moral quality or character, and Paul insists not only that Christians have been "justified" (declared righteous) by faith in Christ, but also that they have been called to "holiness." Indeed, holiness is so important for Paul that he uses the language of holiness twice as much as the four gospels combined.²³

Theologically, the crucial question is how to relate these two notions of "righteousness/justification" and "holiness/sanctification." Historically, the distinction was simply not recognized in Western theology before the Reformation, largely because the Latin word *iustificare*, used to translate *dikaion* in the Latin Vulgate, means not to

declare righteous, but to “make righteous.” Accordingly, Western Catholic theology simply made no distinction between justification and sanctification, and the Council of Trent continued to speak of justification as a process of being “made” or “becoming” righteous.²⁴ The recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church* uses language that indicates a similar understanding. At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that, despite its use of the Greek New Testament, the Eastern Patristic Church did not seem to have recognized the significance of Paul’s use of forensic language when speaking of justification. This is perhaps, first, because the question of justification became an issue only in Western theology with Augustine’s opposition to the Pelagian heresy, and, second, perhaps because of the Eastern tendency to understand salvation primarily in terms of *theosis* or “deification.”

It would seem then that the recognition of a distinction between a kind of righteousness which has to do with a legal declaration (justification) and another kind of righteousness which involves a genuine transformation and holiness (sanctification) is a unique contribution of the Protestant Reformation. As such, I would suggest that it is a genuine development of doctrine – a necessary implication of a distinction made clearly by St. Paul, but not noticed previously.

This distinction appears almost from the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. In Luther’s sermon on “Two Kinds of Righteousness,” he distinguishes between an “alien righteousness . . . that is the righteousness of another, instilled from without. This is the righteousness of Christ by which he justifies though faith . . . Through faith in Christ, therefore, Christ’s righteousness becomes our righteousness and all that he has becomes ours; rather, he himself becomes ours.”²⁵

In contrast to this alien righteousness, Luther speaks of a

second kind of righteousness:

The second kind of righteousness is our proper righteousness, not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness. This is that manner of life spent profitably in good works, in the first place, in slaying the flesh and crucifying the desires with respect to the self, of which we read in Gal. 5:24, "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." In the second place, this righteousness consists in love to one's neighbor, and in the third place, in meekness and fear towards God.

Luther goes on to say:

This righteousness is the product of the righteousness of the first type, actually its fruit and consequence . . . This righteousness goes on to complete the first for it ever strives to do away with the old Adam and to destroy the body of sin. Therefore it hates itself and loves its neighbor; it does not seek its own good, but that of another, and in this its whole way of living consists. For in that it hates itself and does not seek its own, it crucifies the flesh. Because it seeks the good of another, it works love. Thus in each sphere it does God's will living soberly with self, justly with neighbor, devoutly toward God.

John Calvin was the first clearly to use the distinct terminology of justification and sanctification: "Why, then, are we justified by faith? Because by faith we grasp Christ's righteousness, by which alone we are reconciled to God. Yet you could not grasp this without at the same time grasping sanctification also. . . . Therefore Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify."²⁶

In Anglican circles, the distinction is evident in Thomas Cranmer's use of the language of "lively faith." On the one

hand, Cranmer says that

we must renounce the merit of all our said virtues, of faith, hope, charity, and all other virtues and good deeds, which we either have done, shall do, or can do, as things that be far too weak and insufficient, and imperfect, to deserve remission of our sins, and our justification, and therefore we must trust only in God's mercy, and that sacrifice which our high Priest and Savior Christ Jesus the son of God once offered for us upon the Crosse, to obtain thereby God's grace, and remission, as well of our original sin in Baptism, as of all actual sin committed by us after our Baptism, if we truly repent, and turn unfeignedly to him again.^{[27](#)}

At the same time, says Cranmer, although justification by faith means that we renounce our own righteousness as being insufficient for justification, yet, the "lively faith" by which we are justified inevitably produces the fruit of holiness:

This is the true, lively, and unfeigned Christian faith, and is not in the mouth and outward profession only, but it liveth, and stirreth inwardly in the heart. And this faith is not without hope and trust in God, nor without the love of God and of our neighbours, nor without the fear of God, nor without the desire to hear God's word, and to follow the same in eschewing evil and doing gladly all good works. . . . As the light cannot be hid, but will shew forth itself at one place or other; so a true faith cannot be kept secret, but, when occasion is offered, it will break out and shew itself by good works. And, as the living body of a man ever exerciseth such things as belongeth to a natural and living body for nourishment and preservation of the same, as it hath need, opportunity, and occasion; even so the soul that hath a lively faith in it will be doing alway some good work, which shall declare that it is living, and will not be unoccupied.^{[28](#)}

The distinction between justification and sanctification is spelled out clearly in Richard Hooker's "Discourse on Justification": "There is a glorifying righteousness of men in the World to come, and there is a justifying and a sanctifying righteousness here. The righteousness wherewith we shall be clothed in the World to come, is both perfect and inherent: that whereby here we are justefied is perfect but not inherent, that whereby we are sanctified, inherent but not perfect."²⁹ Hooker is willing to use the language of "infusion," but in relation to sanctification, not justification.³⁰

The "Arminian" Anglican founder of Methodism, John Wesley, said: "[T]his [salvation] consists of two general parts: justification and sanctification. Justification is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveness of all our sins and, what is necessarily implied therein, our acceptance with God. . . . And at the same time that we are justified . . . sanctification begins. . . . There is a real as well as a relative change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God."³¹

Despite this Reformation consensus, a reversion to the "Catholic" stance of Trent seems to reappear in Anglo-Catholic John Henry Newman, who, while still an Anglican, wrote: "[J]ustification and sanctification [are] in fact substantially one and the same thing."³²

In more recent Protestant discussions of justification by faith, there have been several moves that I find helpful. First, there is an emphasis on "union with Christ" and the significance of "in Christ" language in Paul. Both justification and sanctification are understood as consequences of this union. Reformed scholars note that "union with Christ" is a central theme in Calvin's theology.³³ Anglicans can look to Richard Hooker, whose sacramental

theology centers on union with Christ, for a similar emphasis. Anglican Reformers like Thomas Cranmer and John Jewel closely link the sacrament of baptism with justification as the sacrament of new birth, and the Eucharist with sanctification as the sacrament of nourishment or “spiritual feeding” on Christ.³⁴ Both sacraments are associated with union with Christ, baptism being the sacrament by which we are initially brought into union with Christ, the Eucharist the sacrament by which we are nourished by sharing in the risen humanity of his body and blood. Thomas Cranmer’s “Prayer of Humble Access” in the Communion Service of the *Book of Common Prayer* ties together well the mutually interrelated themes of justification by grace alone through faith alone, sanctification as genuine transformation, and union with Christ as the lynchpin that holds it all together:

We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen. Book of Common Prayer, 1662.

The second helpful move has been the twentieth century discovery of the significance of the centrality of the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ preaching and the centrality of eschatology in all the writings of the New Testament. This bears on the theology of justification in that justification is an anticipation of the eschatological judgment of the last day. The pardon of justification anticipates God’s gracious judgment on the sinner as a promise that is “already but not yet” actualized. Similarly, sanctification is the process in

which the justified sinner, indwelt by the Holy Spirit who unites him or her to the risen Christ, is progressively conformed to the image of the risen Lord in the time “between the times,” awaiting the final redemption of the last day. This eschatological tension is expressed well in Paul’s words: “And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (Rom. 8:23).

Third, there has been a great deal of writing in recent Evangelical theology about the significance of “Speech-Act Theory,” influenced by J. L. Austin’s book *How to Do Things with Words* and John Searle’s *Speech Acts*.³⁵ “Speech-act” theory focuses on uses of language that do not merely describe a state of affairs, but also perform an action. Thus, Scripture is not merely a communicative account of information, but also a divine communicative action that is addressed to the reader in a manner that demands a response. In a recent discussion with N. T. Wright, Kevin Vanhoozer proposes a notion of justification along the lines of “speech-act theory”: “To declare someone righteous is to declare that person *incorporated* into Christ’s righteousness: ‘I now pronounce you man in Christ.’” Vanhoozer claims that justification and union with Christ need to be thought together: “[B]oth justification and sanctification flow from out union with Christ.” Vanhoozer suggests that Paul’s forensic language of justification should be thought of in terms of “adoption,” a central theme in Paul that he does not find developed in Wright’s Pauline exegesis. Vanhoozer suggests that justification is “a trinitarian communication of righteousness: the Father adopts strangers by uniting them to Christ by the Spirit through faith. The Father declares, the Son enables, and the Spirit effects the sinner’s right standing.”³⁶

2) *But doesn’t simul iustus et peccator confirm Catholic suspicions about Luther’s theology of justification?*

If Luther (or the Reformation tradition) understood justification to be merely a “legal fiction” with no ontological or moral consequences, this might be the case. That is, the justified sinner would be understood to be merely “imputed as righteous,” but in actuality continues to be just as corrupt and sinful as before.³⁷ However, as the answer to question 1 demonstrates, the mainstream of Reformation thought has never understood justification this way. Justification is a forensic act by which a sinner who exercises faith in Christ is declared to be righteous. But this declaration is an effective declaration. Sanctification is a *real* (not fictional) change that occurs as a consequence of union with Christ that takes place through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

At the same time, the insistence of Roman Catholics (since Trent) that the *simul* is incompatible with Catholic theology is based on a distinction that Catholics make and Protestants do not between sin and concupiscence. Trent affirmed that baptism completely removes original sin, leaving no trace whatsoever of sin in the justified. At the same time, Trent affirms that concupiscence (understood as a tendency to sin) does remain, and so the baptized have to struggle against temptation. However, concupiscence in itself should not be understood to be sin.³⁸ Official Catholic responses to the Roman Catholic/ Lutheran dialogues on justification continue to point to this difference as an unresolved impasse.³⁹

Writing only as an individual, and not an official representative of either the Lutheran or Roman Catholic churches, I think a good argument can be made that the differences between Roman Catholics and Lutherans about whether concupiscence should or should not be considered sin is largely a matter of definitions of terms. Roman Catholics are not denying that a tendency to sin continues to be present after baptism, and this tendency needs to be struggled against. Lutherans are not saying that a tendency or

temptation to sin constitutes sin in the same sense as a consciously committed act of sin. There is a difference between being attracted to someone who is not one's spouse and actually committing adultery with that person.

As someone who is familiar with the pre-Reformation Catholic theology of thinkers like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, I cannot help but think that Trent's clear-cut distinction between actual sin and concupiscence may reflect the loss of teleology and the embrace of nominalist occasionalism that infected much late Medieval theology. In my reading, Trent seems to be thinking about sin in terms of concrete discrete acts, reminiscent of late Medieval voluntarist understandings of will. In contrast, the theologies of both Augustine and Aquinas are teleological in orientation. They regard salvation as a pilgrimage, a "process," and the baptized Christian as a *viator*, someone who is "on the way" to salvation, but has not yet attained the goal. Sin is not a positive thing, but a privation, and all sinful acts are parasitic on the Good. Give an understanding of sin as privation, it would seem to follow that morally good, grace-inspired acts, can nonetheless also be tainted by what Luther understands as the fallen will's tendency to turn in on itself. Within a traditional Augustinian or Thomist understanding of spirituality, it should not be a problem to say that even the best that we do is tainted with concupiscence.

Traditional Catholic mystical theology portrays the spiritual journey as progressing in three stages: purgation, illumination, union. The first stage, purgation, is a slow and gradual weaning from any idols that stand between the pilgrim and God. And, again, in Catholic mystical theology, it is those who have progressed furthest on the spiritual journey, who are most aware of their own sinfulness. *Ways of Imperfection*, the title of a book on the history of spirituality written by one of my favorite Roman Catholic authors, Simon Tugwell, concisely expresses the

understanding.⁴⁰ Sanctification as pilgrimage, as found in Augustine and Aquinas, as well as the positions of other Catholic spiritual writers summarized by Tugwell, seem to me to be entirely compatible with the affirmation that the pilgrim is simultaneously just (in certain senses) and sinful (in others).

3) *Does justification by faith reflect Nominalist influence on Luther's theology?*⁴¹

I would agree that there are numerous areas of Luther's theology that show Nominalist influence, especially in his doctrine of double predestination: Luther's distinction between the hidden and revealed God almost exactly parallels the Nominalist distinction between God's absolute and ordained power; Luther's understanding of divine freedom is the voluntarist understanding of human freedom projected into God's omnipotent will; Luther seemed to understand human freedom entirely according to the Nominalist notion in which teleology and eudaemonism played no role; accordingly, he rejected any notion of human freedom as inevitably Pelagian. And the Nominalist version certainly was. Luther's rejection of the Augustinian and Thomist notions of habit, created grace, and infused grace seems to follow directly from his Nominalism. Luther's understanding of law seems to be largely Nominalist – law understood entirely in terms of divine command, and entirely negative, serving only to condemn the sinner. Luther's understanding certainly contrasts with Thomas Aquinas's portrayal of law as the positive principle by which God governs the universe and promotes divine and human friendship.

At the same time, Luther's understanding of justification came out of a recognition that the language in which Paul talked about righteousness is forensic. Luther's understanding of justification by faith alone was his interpretation of Paul's contrast between faith and works of the law. The appropriate

questions here are exegetical questions, not those of philosophical theology. That is, did Paul understand justification to mean "make righteous" or to "declare righteous"? What did Paul mean by "works of the law"?

That later Reformers (like Hooker) were able to affirm justification by faith while re-appropriating the teleological and euadaemonistic aspects of Augustine's and Aquinas's theology of grace, the language of sanctification as "infusion," and positive distinctions between eternal, natural and positive law, shows that there is no inherent connection between the Reformation understanding of justification and Nominalism.

4) *What about the radical Lutheran position, and, especially the Law/Gospel hermeneutic?*

In any theological tradition, there will inevitably be successors who try to take the founder's views to logical extremes that he or she did not embrace, and would have been horrified by. So there have been Lutherans who are more Lutheran than Luther! This Lutheran antinomianism is characterized by a rejection of the so-called "Third Use of the Law." However, the mainstream of the Lutheran tradition has rejected this view as a distortion of Lutheran theology. Thus the *Book of Concord*, whose theology is understood by Lutheran theologians to provide an authentic interpretation of Lutheranism, affirms the Third Use. Most Lutheran scholars recognize that, while not using the language of Third Use, Luther affirmed its basic principle, as can be seen in his "Two Kinds of Righteousness," "The Freedom of a Christian," discussion of the Ten Commandments in his "Small Catechism," and "Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount."⁴²

As for the Law/Gospel hermeneutic, the jibe is that a Lutheran pastor can take any passage in Scripture and find a way to turn it into a sermon about Law and Gospel. While the distinction between law and gospel has some basis in Paul's

letters to the Galatians and Romans, it is not a central theme even in Paul's writings, but rather is used to illustrate certain aspects of his theology of justification.⁴³ Other Reformation traditions have been able to embrace the theology of justification by grace alone through faith alone without embracing an overly narrow Law/Gospel hermeneutic. The Reformed have focused on the significance of the covenant. Historically, Anglicans have often pursued the more positive Thomist influenced notion of law found in Hooker, and union with Christ as a hermeneutical lens to talk about grace, justification, and sanctification.

5) *What about the Pietist and liberal Protestant understandings of justification by faith?*

One of the more helpful themes in Luther's theology of justification is "alien righteousness." The crucial logic of justification by faith is that one depends on Christ's work alone for salvation, and faith means looking away from one's own good works to depend entirely on what Christ has done for one in his incarnation, life, death and resurrection.

However, human beings are incredibly resourceful, and so there have been plenty in the Reformation churches who have forgotten the significance of "alien righteousness," and have instead turned justification by faith into its opposite, focusing on the significance of the faith that is the condition of justification, as if faith were not simply an instrumental means of justification, but was, instead, in terms of the language used during the Reformation debates, the "formal cause" of justification. In this distortion of Reformation theology, Protestants disagree with Roman Catholics in that, while Catholics affirm that "good works" is the "formal cause" of justification, Protestants believe that the "formal cause" is faith. That is, the disagreement between Catholics and Protestants boils down to whether God accepts us on the basis of our good works or on the sincerity of our

faith.⁴⁴ The Reformers consistently rejected this understanding as “turning faith into a work.” Nonetheless, it became a common misunderstanding.

A fundamental distortion of the doctrine of justification by faith included the at least implied Protestant Scholastic assumption that one is not justified by the finished work of Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone, so much as one is justified by holding the correct doctrine of justification by faith alone. Against what was perceived as the “dead orthodoxy” of this Protestant Scholasticism, Lutheran Pietism insisted that genuine faith demanded a sincere conversion and not simply a commitment to a correct doctrinal position concerning justification by faith. This legitimate insistence on genuine conversion parallels Thomas Cranmer’s language of “lively faith,” but nonetheless led to the Pietist equation of conversion with the “new birth,” and of “new birth” with justification. English speaking heirs of the Pietists included Anglican Evangelicals, Methodists, and the later Revivalist movements associated with “born again” Christianity. This equation of justification by faith with a moment of conversion tended to forget the significance of “alien righteousness,” focusing instead on the sincerity of the moment of conversion, thus replacing Luther’s focus on the objectivity of alien righteousness with an appeal to a subjective emotional experience that had affinities to the late Medieval subjectivist introspection against which Luther’s theology was supposed to be a corrective; thus, justification by faith alone was turned into something like its opposite – justification by sincerity.

Liberal Protestantism began in the nineteenth century with the writings of Friedrich Schleiermacher, a son of Lutheran Pietists, who combined the Pietist understanding of faith as a primarily emotional experience with a Kantian epistemological dualism that forbade knowing anything of God in himself. Schleiermacher re-interpreted justification by faith in terms

of *Gefühl*, the subjective awareness or “feeling” of absolute dependence on God. There is a more or less direct line from Schleiermacher to later liberal Protestants like Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich and their own equation of justification by faith with existential authenticity, to more recent post-modern Liberal Protestant equations of justification by faith with “inclusion” and “tolerance.”

All of these approaches completely miss the central point of Luther’s insistence on “alien righteousness.” Justification by faith does not mean that we are justified by the authenticity of our faith, whether understood in the Pietist sense as sincere conversion or the nineteenth century liberal Protestant sense as an awareness of or feeling of absolute dependence on God, the mid-twentieth century sense of existentialist authenticity, or the twenty-first century sense of “tolerance” as inclusiveness of alternative sexual orientations. Theologically, the underlying error here is the forgetting that justification is not about the sincerity of one’s faith as a psychological achievement, but is rather about the sufficiency of Christ’s atoning work performed apart from and without the assistance of the human being’s subjective psychological contribution.

6) *What about the Lutheran and Roman Catholic agreements on justification by faith?*

One of the advantages of an infallible magisterium is that it is supposed to provide certainty on controverted questions. Such certainty seems not to exist about the implications of the Lutheran/Roman Catholic agreements about justification. The crucial dividing issues at the time of the Reformation concerned (1) whether justification was a forensic declaration or a “making” righteous; (2) whether the formal cause of justification was the finished work of Christ apart from human works (alien righteousness) or the inherent righteousness by which Christ’s work was appropriated (infused righteousness or merit); (3) whether there is a clear-cut distinction between

justification and sanctification, with sanctification being a consequence of justification, or, rather, whether justification and sanctification were understood to be the same thing.

The most substantive agreement between Catholics and Protestants seems to have taken place in the area of Pauline exegesis. As noted above, Roman Catholic biblical commentaries now recognize that *dikaiosisune* is courtroom language, and so, justification, for Paul, is forensic, not a matter of "making righteousness." There is also recognition that Paul is referring to justification by faith in Christ, apart from merit, and thus justification is entirely gratuitous. There is little or nothing here to which Reformation Christians could object.

The official "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church" states that "a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics," and that "The teaching of the Lutheran churches presented in this Declaration does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this Declaration."⁴⁵ The document can certainly be read as indicating that basic agreement has been reached. However, in his book *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue*, Tony Lane points out that the document ignores certain key issues, such as the "alien imputed righteousness of Christ." It would seem then that the agreement does not address the crucial area of Reformation disagreement, the "formal cause" of justification. Moreover, according to Lane, the consensus of the document is really more that of a common Western Trinitarian Christological Augustinian theology than a resolution of the Reformation difficulties. At the same time, Lane notes that the consensus has been achieved primarily by compromise on the

part of Roman Catholics, who have been willing to “move beyond the positions of the sixteenth century.”⁴⁶

Lane also notes that there has been little evidence of this new consensus in everyday Roman Catholic life, and, here, I have to agree. While anecdotal evidence is risky, I am going to point to my personal experience of attending a Roman Catholic funeral in which I heard the priest pronounce in his sermon that we knew that “Bob is in heaven.” How did we know this? According to the priest, we knew Bob was in heaven because he was an optometrist who always treated his customers fairly, and, moreover, he was a member of the Lion’s Club. That is precisely the kind of justification by good works that concerns Reformation Christians.⁴⁷

Lane also points out that the ecumenical consensus has failed to permeate Roman Catholic theology. He points to the *Catholic Catechism*, in which justification is barely discussed. I was keenly disappointed the first time I picked up a copy the new *Catechism*, turned to the section on justification, and found that the language of justification as being “made righteous” is still used. Judging only by the new *Catechism*, one could have the impression that the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues had never taken place.

Of course, there also exist numerous examples of the traditional anti-Protestant polemics of Roman Catholic apologists like Robert Sungenis, in his book *Not By Faith Alone*. There is still a long way to go.

7) *What about the New Perspective on Paul? Does it undermine the Reformation position? Does it change everything?*

The “New Perspective on Paul,” represented by the work of New Testament biblical scholars such as E.P. Sanders, James D. G. Dunn, Richard Hays, and N.T. Wright has become pivotal in recent discussion of justification by faith because of its challenge of traditional Reformation exegesis of Paul,

especially that of Luther. Occasionally, one comes across Roman Catholic apologists who suggest that the New Perspective proves that the Council of Trent was right, after all. More frequently, traditional Protestants (such as John Piper) vigorously attack the “New Perspective” (notably N. T. Wright) as not only a betrayal of the Reformation, but a distortion of Paul’s theology.⁴⁸

I am neither a biblical scholar, nor an expert on the “New Perspective”; a few observations follow.

First, as has been pointed out on numerous occasions by the scholars themselves, the “New Perspective” is not a single position. Its advocates have some significant mutual disagreements. For example, Wright notes that he and Dunn disagree about Paul’s Christology, about Romans 7, the meaning of *pistis Christou*, and the question of Israel’s continuing exile. Wright states (without giving details) that there are numerous areas where he disagrees with Sanders.⁴⁹

Still, there are broad areas of agreement. Some of them have significance for the Reformation understanding of justification, but many, I think, do not.

First, in spite of exaggerated rhetoric of both advocates and critics, the New Perspective does not amount to a simple rejection of the Reformation understanding of justification. For example, broadly speaking, New Perspective scholars are clear that justification language in Paul is the language of the courtroom, and is thus forensic. Some tend to emphasize the relational character of the language in light of its Old Testament use, but (contrary to Trent and Catholic apologists) none of the New Perspective scholars is claiming that justification means to “make righteous.”

Second, New Perspective scholars continue to affirm that justification in Paul is “by faith alone.” (There seem to be one or two exceptions. At least one New Perspective scholar

with whom I am familiar suggests that Paul's doctrine is that we "get in by faith," but "stay in" by works. I think that is fundamentally mistaken, and would be a radical departure from the Reformation.)

Third, there are some mildly controversial readings of Paul by New Perspective scholars that, while interesting, in my opinion do not really alter the traditional playing field. For example, many New Perspective scholars interpret Romans 10:4 – "Christ is the end of the law" – to mean not that Christ has done away with the law, but that Christ is the *goal* of the law. (As in English, the Greek word *telos* can mean "end" in either sense.) A significant area of disagreement is whether Paul's expression *pistis Christou* should be translated "faith [or faithfulness] of Christ" or "faith in Christ." Richard Hays, N. T. Wright, and Brevard Childs (who does not endorse the "New Perspective") argue for "faith of Christ." James Dunn, to the contrary, argues that parallels in Paul's antitheses between "works of the law" and "faith" points to "faith" as an antithesis to "works," and thus *pistis Christou* must be translated in the traditional way as "faith in Christ."⁵⁰

A more important realization of the New Perspective is that Paul's doctrine of Israel and the church is central to his discussion of justification, specifically the identity of Gentile Christians in relation to Israel as God's covenant people. Romans 9 to 11 is understood to be central to Paul's argument about justification, not a peripheral discussion. The crucial question of justification is, then, a question about the identity of the people of God, and how one becomes a member of God's covenant community. This is a significant insight, and a helpful corrective to earlier Western understandings (both Catholic and Protestant) that tended to view justification as entirely a question of individual salvation, which frequently overlooked the significance of the Old Testament, and, of Israel, for New Testament theology.

Even more of a distortion was the radical Lutheran tendency to view the Old Testament law in exclusively negative terms. To the contrary, biblical scholars recognize that the law is itself a gift of grace. Similarly, the observation of New Perspective scholars that the Judaism of Second Temple Judaism, was not characterized by a legalistic “works righteousness,” is a significant corrective to earlier mischaracterizations.

There are two new readings that I think are more significant. In a discussion with N.T. Wright, Kevin Vanhoozer points out that a fundamental area of disagreement is whether the courtroom imagined in Paul’s forensic understanding is a criminal courtroom, or a civil courtroom: “Is God prosecuting a civil case between Israel and the nations over who has legitimate right to the title ‘people of God,’ or a criminal case in which all humanity have been charged with ‘crimes against divinity?’”⁵¹ Vanhoozer points to the early chapters of Romans to suggest that the latter is the case, although Wright seems to think in terms of the former. Here, I think a plain sense reading of the logical structure of Paul’s argument shows that Vanhoozer (and the traditional Reformation reading) has it right. Paul’s argument in the early chapters of Romans establishes that all stand guilty before the divine tribunal, and the judicial verdict of justification is “acquitted,” or “not guilty.” (Romans 3:23-26).

The second more serious controversial reading of the New Perspective has to do with the interpretation of Paul’s expression “works of the law” (*ergon nomou*):

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in [or “the faithfulness of”] Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Jesus Christ, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. (Gal.

2:15-17). *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in [God's] sight, since through the law comes the knowledge of sin. . . For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Rom. 3:20,28).*

Advocates of the New Perspective tend to interpret “works of the law” in terms of “boundary markers,” specifically the distinctions of second Temple Judaism that set Jews apart from Gentiles: circumcision, kosher diet, and sabbath keeping. N. T. Wright puts it succinctly: “[Works of the law] are not . . . the moral ‘good works’ which the Reformation tradition loves to hate. They are the things that divide Jew from Gentile; specifically, in the context of the passage . . . the ‘works of the law’ which specify, however different Jewish groups might have put it at the time, that ‘Jews do not eat with Gentiles.’”⁵²

While I certainly would agree with Wright *et al* that circumcision and “eating with Gentiles” provided the occasion that led to Paul’s theology of justification, I have not been able to convince myself that this is the heart of his logic of justification as Wright, Dunn, and others, maintain. And the reason is that I think that Paul’s discussion of “law” in the early chapters of Romans argues against the narrow interpretation of “works of the law” as boundary markers. The logical structure of Romans 1 through 3 is to show that both Gentiles and Jews stand in need of the righteousness that God brings about through Christ’s life, death, and resurrection because all have sinned, and thus violated not only the boundary markers of circumcision, and kosher, but the moral dimensions of the law. Romans 1 speaks of God’s wrath against those (Gentiles) who “by unrighteousness suppress the truth.” (Rom. 1:18). Romans 2 introduces the notion of “law” for the first time when Paul says in verse 12, “For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.”

In what follows, Paul specifically addresses the Jew who lives “under the law”: “But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God . . . because you are instructed from the law . . .” (Rom. 2:17) Paul goes on to address the *moral* failings of those who live “under the law”: stealing, adultery, idolatry. “You who boast of the law dishonor God by breaking the law.” (v. 24). Note that Paul identifies “breaking the law” here with specific moral violations of the Ten Commandments. He does go on to refer to the specific “boundary marker” of circumcision, but identifies “law” not in terms of the boundary marker, but rather in terms of its moral content: “For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.” Paul continues to speak of the Gentile, who, though uncircumcised, “keeps the precepts of the law” (v. 25). In verses 14-15, Paul speaks of “Gentiles, who do not have the law, [but] by nature do what the law requires,” and thus “show that the work of the law (*ergon tou nomou*) is written on their heart . . .” If “law” or “work of the law” in this context meant “boundary markers,” Paul’s argument would make little sense because the Jews who practiced circumcision would not be in violation, while the uncircumcised Gentiles could not (by definition) “keep the precepts of the law” or have the “work of the law” written in their hearts. In Romans 3:9, Paul pronounces the same verdict on both Jews and Gentiles: “For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Gentiles are under the power of sin.” And it is precisely this condemnation of sin that provides the context for Paul’s conclusion that no one is justified by “works of the law” in Rom. 3:20, 21. Why is no one justified by “works of the law”? Because, writes Paul, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

I may simply be missing something here, but it seems clear to me that the logical flow of Paul’s argument is to move from circumcision as one element of “works of the law” (the New

Perspective's emphasis) to the greater moral demands of the law as expressed in the Ten Commandments, and, on that basis, goes on to claim that unless one keeps fully the moral requirements of the law as well, that circumcision and kosher will do one no good. Since both Jews and Gentiles are guilty of idolatry, theft, lying, and adultery, all stand condemned before the moral requirements of the law, and can only be justified by God's free gracious gift in Christ.

As I read it, Paul consistently uses "law" language to push beyond mere boundary markers to focus on the violation of the moral dimension of the law. Further confirmation comes from Paul's language in Romans 6:19, where he identifies sin with "lawlessness"; Romans 7:7 where he identifies the law with the Ten Commandments' forbidding of covetousness, and Rom. 8:4, where the "requirement of the law" is fulfilled in those who "walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

Unless one can make a convincing case that Paul uses "works of the law" and "law" in two very different senses in Romans (one sense referring to "boundary markers" and one sense referring to the law's moral requirements), then the context of Paul's general usage of the term "law" seems to indicate that the New Perspective is overly specific here. The justification "apart from works of the law" to which Paul refers is precisely justification apart from moral good works, not merely justification apart from the boundary markers of circumcision and kosher diet.

Concluding Thoughts

Justification by grace alone through faith alone is a summary way of saying that Jesus Christ saves. The point of Paul's forensic language of justification and Luther's language of "alien righteousness" is not to affirm that justification is a "legal fiction" or that justification is "mere imputation" without any effect or change in the justified, but that our moral standing before God is based entirely on the saving work

of Jesus Christ alone: his incarnation, life, death, and resurrection. For the same reason, the point of using the language of justification by faith is not to focus on the act of faith, as if sinful human beings were saved by good intentions, but to note again, that justification is Christ's work, not ours. In faith, we look away from ourselves and our own moral efforts, to receive a salvation that is entirely a gift of the triune God.

At the same time, God's justifying gift in Christ is effective. Christ's atoning work does not leave us in our sins. As those who have faith are united to the risen Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit, their lives are transformed as they share in the vicarious life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Justification and sanctification are parallel aspects of union with Christ, justification dealing with the objective reality of guilt through forgiveness and acquittal, sanctification dealing with the ongoing presence of sin through transformation to holiness.

This union with Christ is sacramentally mediated. Baptism is the sacrament by which those who have faith in Christ "are ingrafted into Christ, . . . made partakers of his justice," and become members of his body, the Church. In the Eucharist, the sanctified are nourished through sharing in Christ's resurrected life.^{[53](#)}

The eschatological implications of union with Christ also bear on justification and sanctification. Justification is the eschatological anticipation of that last judgment when sinners will be acquitted because Christ has been judged in their place. Sanctification is the ongoing transformation in which those who have faith in Christ are conformed to Christ's image in the "already but not yet" tension between the the time of this fallen yet redeemed world and its final glorification.

Finally, justification has ecclesial implications. As the "New Perspective" on Paul has rightly discerned, justification is

not simply about an individual relationship with God and Christ. Justification concerns the question of how one enters into the covenant people of God, whether through keeping "works of the law" (including, I would suggest, its moral dimensions) or through faith in Christ and being conformed to the faithfulness of his cruciform life, death, and resurrection. Union with Christ is union with his Church, and this has implications for relations between Jews and Christians, but also for those Christians who live this side of the Reformation, and have been divided, among other things, by differing understandings of justification.

1 This interpretation of Luther's doctrine seems to go back at least to the Council of Trent, which in Canon 13, of its Decree on Justification asserts the following: "If any one says, that it is necessary for every one, for the obtaining the remission of sins, that he believe for certain, and without any wavering arising from his own infirmity and disposition, that his sins are forgiven him; let him be anathema." <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent.html>

2 Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 95.

3 "In his doctrine that Christ's imputed justice suffices Luther is doubtless heir to nominalism." R. W. Gleason, *S. J. Grace* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1962) 194. The publication date of Gleason's book makes it a superb example of the traditional Tridentine understanding of justification and grace as well as the Roman Catholic understanding of the Protestant position that prevailed before Vatican II and the subsequent effects of ecumenism.

4 The traditional Reformation understanding is that God imputes to the justified sinner the righteousness of Christ. An historic disagreement arose as some Protestants have argued that it is not Christ's saving deeds but the believer's faith that is imputed as righteousness, based on the premise that

Christ's deeds cannot be "imputed" as righteous because they are *in fact* righteous. Faith can be imputed because it is *not* righteous. Recently, N.T. Wright has argued against the imputation language. Rather, he claims that the meaning of the courtroom language of justification is that the defendant has been declared not righteous, but "in the right." N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2009) 135. A crucial question here is likely whether the verdict of the courtroom is that of a civil or criminal trial. In a civil trial, a successful defendant would be declared "in the right." But presumably in a criminal trial, the verdict would presumably be "guilty" or "acquitted." See the discussion below.

[5](#) Robert A. Sungenis, *Not by Faith Alone: The Biblical Evidence for the Catholic Doctrine of Justification* (Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing Company, . 1997).

[6](#) Hans Küng, *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

[7](#)

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html.

[8](#) Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy, Raymond E. Brown, eds. *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968); Raymond E. Brown, Joseph E. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy, eds. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990).

[9](#) Vatican City, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (NY:Doubleday, 2003) 2nd. ed., #1992, 537.

[10](#) Paul Tillich's famous sermon "You are accepted" is the quintessential illustration of a liberal Protestant understanding of justification by faith: "Do we know what it

means to be struck by grace? It does *not* mean that we suddenly believe that God exists, or that Jesus is the Saviour, or that the Bible contains the truth. To believe that something *is*, is almost contrary to the meaning of grace. . . . Sometimes . . . a wave of light breaks into our darkness, and it is as though a voice were saying: 'You are accepted.' *You are accepted*, accepted by that which is greater than you, and the name of which you do not know. Do not ask for the name now; perhaps you will find it later. Do not try to do anything now; perhaps later you will do much. Do not seek for anything; do not perform anything; do not intend anything. *Simply accept the fact that you are accepted!*" *The Shaking of the Foundations* (NY: Scribners, 1948) 153-163.

[11](#) "The Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord V. The Third Use of the Law," *The Book of Concord*; <http://bookofconcord.org/sd-thirduse.php>; John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 2, ch. 7, 12.

[12](#) Gilbert Meilaender, "Hearts Set to Obey" in Christopher R. Seitz and Carl E. Braaten, eds. *I Am the Lord Your God: Reflections on the Ten Commandments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 253-275.

[13](#) For the significance of "formal cause," see C. Fitzsimmons Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003).

[14](#) "Sanctifying grace, or the grace of the *just*, is not a mere extrinsic favor of God but a permanent created gift *inhering in the soul*. It can be defined as a *formal principle* of justification. A form is a kind of quality, an accident that modifies the substance in which it inheres. . . . [G]race is a *form inhering in the soul*; it modifies the soul and renders it 'such.' " (my emphasis) Gleason, 67.

[15](#) I borrow the term "double agency" from Anglican

philosophical theologian Austin Farrer and Reformed Barthian scholar George Hunsinger. Austin Farrer, *Faith and Speculation* (NY: New York University Press, 1967) 52-67; George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of his Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 185-224.

[16](#) So, John Henry Newman, who was actually contrasting not the Roman Catholic and Protestant, but the Anglican and Lutheran positions on justification. John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification* (London: Rivingtons., 1874) 4.

[17](#) Thomas Cranmer, "A Short Declaration of The True, Lively and Christian Faith," *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer*, John E. Cox, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846) 135-141.

[18](#) "Homily on Salvation," *Miscellaneous Writings*, 128

[19](#) "Justification means justification by Christ alone – that is the reference of the expressions *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, *sola scriptura*, used in Reformed theology. Justification means that we look exclusively to Christ, and therefore that we look away from ourselves altogether in order to live out of him alone." Thomas F. Torrance, "Justification: Its Radical Nature and Place in Reformed Doctrine and Life," *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 150-164, 161.

[20](#) Gleason summarizes the Tridentine position well: "Justification is not only a genuine remission of sin but a profound interior transformation of man by which he is enriched with the presence of the indwelling God, becomes intrinsically just, a friend and son of God, and the heir to eternal life. He is justified by an interior gift which the Holy Spirit diffuses in his heart, and this gift remains in him as a permanent principle, bringing with it the three supernatural virtues of faith, hope and charity." Gleason, 216.

[21](#) C. Moeller and G. Phillips, *The Theology of Grace and the*

Oecumenical Movement, trans. R. A. Wilson (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1961).

[22](#) *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* states: "When . . . Paul says that Christ has 'justified' human beings, he means that by his passion, death, etc., Christ has brought it about that they now stand before God's tribunal acquitted or innocent – and this apart from deeds prescribed by the Mosaic law." *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 1397. Contrast this with the earlier traditional Tridentine view expressed in Gleason: "In St. Paul one finds not the doctrine of Luther but the doctrine of the Council of Trent, which declares that God's justice is interiorly communicated to us." Gleason, 90. Well, no. Not quite.

[23](#) See the essay by Marcus Bockmuehl, "'Keeping It Holy': Old Testament Commandment and New Testament Faith," Carl E. Braaten and Christopher Seitz, eds. *I Am the Lord Your God: Reflections on the Ten Commandments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 95-126.

[24](#) "Justification itself, . . . is not remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man, through the voluntary reception of the grace, and of the gifts, whereby man of unjust *becomes just*, and of an enemy a friend, that so he may be an heir according to hope of life everlasting." [my emphasis] *The Council of Trent*, "The Sixth Session: Decree on Justification" ch. 7. Trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), 30-53; <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct06.html>

[25](#) Martin Luther, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," <http://www.mcm.edu/~eppleyd/luther.html>.

[26](#) *Inst.* 3.16.1.

[27](#) "Homily on Salvation" *Miscellaneous Writings*, 128-134.

[28](#) "Homily on Lively Faith," *Miscellaneous Writings*, 136.

[29](#) "Of Justification," *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker, Volume Five: Tractates and Sermons*, General Editor, W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 5:109. (Spelling modernized).

[30](#) "Thus we participate Christ partly by imputation, as when those things which he did and suffered for us are imputed unto us for righteousness; partly by habitual and real infusion, as when grace is inwardly bestowed while we are on earth, and afterwards more fully both our souls and bodies made like unto his in glory." *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* Bk 5, 56.ii.

[31](#) "The Scripture Way of Salvation," in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler (NY: Oxford University Press, 1964), 273-274.

[32](#) John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, 63.

[33](#) See, for example, Thomas F. Torrance, "Justification:," and, more recently, the comments by Kevin Vanhoozer in conversation with N.T. Wright in "Wrighting the Wrongs of the Reformation? The State of Union with Christ in St. Paul and Protestant Soteriology," *Jesus, Paul and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N. T. Wright*, Nicholas Perrin and Richard B. Hays, eds. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011) 234-261.

[34](#) See especially, Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Bk. 5, 51-56; Cranmer states: "[In baptism] we receive not only the Spirit of Christ, but also Christ himself, whole body and soul, manhood and Godhead, unto everlasting life, as well as in the holy communion. . . . 'As many as be baptized in Christ, put Christ upon them' : nevertheless, this is done in divers respects; for in baptism it is done in respect of regeneration, and in the holy communion in respect of nourishment and augmentation." Thomas Cranmer, "Against Stephen Gardiner," *Writings and Disputations of Thomas Cranmer Relative to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, ed. Parker

Society, John E Cox, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1844) 25. According to Jewel, “[W]e affirm that Christ is absolutely present in his Sacraments. In Baptism, that we may be clothed with His Spirit. In the Communion, that we may receive Him by Grace and Faith, and have Eternal Life through his Cross and Passion.” John Jewel, *Apology of the Church of England*. Compare Thomas F. Torrance: “In Baptism we are ingrafted into Christ to be made partakers of his justice by which our sins are covered and remitted, and in the Supper we are continually nourished through that union with Christ.” “Justification,” 152.

[35](#) Richard S. Briggs, “Speech-Act Theory,” *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006) 763-766.

[36](#) Vanhoozer, “Wrighting the Wrongs,” 250-251, 256-257. Wright also speaks of justification as a “speech-act” in *Justification*, 69.

[37](#) This is, of course, how many Roman Catholics have interpreted Luther. So, for example, R. W. Gleason, summarizing Luther: “Grace, the love of God, although it brings peace, does not transform man interiorly.” *Grace*, 194.

[38](#) Council of Trent, “Decree Concerning Original Sin,” 5.

[39](#) “[I]t remains difficult to see how, in the current state of the presentation, given in the Joint Declaration, we can say that this doctrine on “simul iustus et peccator” is not touched by the anathemas of the Tridentine decree on original sin and justification.” “Response of the Catholic Church to the Joint Declaration of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on the Doctrine of Justification.” http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_01081998_off-answer-catholic_en.html

[40](#) Tugwell summarizes Augustine: “[T]here can be no question

of perfection in this life, because perfection must result from perfect love of God, and we shall only love God perfectly when we see him perfectly. Until then we are subject to the grim compulsion of sin, which lasts until our sickness is entirely healed and we receive such freedom that we shall be freely and happily constrained to live well and sin no more . . .” Simon Tugwell, *Ways of Imperfection: An Exploration of Christian Spirituality* (Springfield: Templegate Publishers, 1985) 65.

[41](#) Gleason, 194.

[42](#) “Luther does not use the expression “the third function of the law” [*tertius usus legis*] . . . In substance, however, it also occurs in Luther.” Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 273.

[43](#) Brevard Childs suggests (following Paul W. Meyer) that the radical Lutheran understanding of “law” in Romans 7, crucial to the Law/Gospel hermeneutic, is mistaken: “Paul is not concerned in Romans 7 with the malevolent power of the law, but rather with that of sin. . . . [C]hapter 7 concerns the demonic force of sin in perverting the law that was intended by God to procure life, but has actually brought forth the exactly opposite result. . . .By isolating works from law, Paul is able to contrast God’s righteousness, not with righteousness from the law, but with Israel’s own righteousness. The just requirements of the law have been fulfilled in Christ, and are now made available to all who walk in the Spirit (8:4).” *The Church’s Guide for Reading Paul” The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) 105.

[44](#) Fitzsimmons Allison’s book *The Rise of Moralism* documents the rise of this theology of justification by good intentions in the theology of some of the later Anglican Caroline divines.

[45](#)

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html

[46](#) A. N. S. Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue: An Evangelical Assessment* (New York: Continuum, 2006) 223-231.

[47](#) Admittedly, funeral sermons are always good occasions for bad theology. I have attended at least one Evangelical funeral in which the preacher viewed the service as a prime opportunity to manipulate the captive audience of the perceived non-“born again” Christians present to “make a decision for Christ.”

[48](#) John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2007).

[49](#) N. T. Wright, *Justification*, 28-29.

[50](#) For the contrast, see especially, Wright, *Justification*, 117-121; James Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 379-385.

[51](#) Vanhoozer, “Wrighting the Wrongs,” 249.

[52](#) Wright, *Justification*, 117. Also, see Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 354-371.

[53](#) Torrance, *Justification*, 152.