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Martin Luther — A 'Pathfinder'?

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The commemoration of the quincentenary of Luther's birth was marked by an impressive range of new Luther studies. Although one wonders if Luther would be entirely happy with some of the interpretations presented, it is, to say the least, surprising that Luther has been given so much positive attention especially in some parts of the world where he was once considered an enemy.¹ There is always a serious danger that the adulation connected with an anniversary celebration can result in hagiography rather than an objective effort to learn more about an historical figure, and some of the recent publications were marred by an uncritical approach to the subject, or an effort to identify Luther with contemporary causes.³ But, overall, the serious attention given to Luther studies has had useful results. Unfortunately, extensive historical research does not assure resolution of long-term historical controversies. Although few subjects are more crucial for an understanding of Martin Luther and the 16th century Reformation than his doctrine of justification, the quincentennial did not produce a consensus on the long debated questions concerning the nature of Luther's 'Reformation breakthrough'.³ The debate has ranged over a wide variety of questions including the dating of Luther's so-called 'Tower Experience', its relationship to mediaeval doctrine, and the degree to which Luther clearly taught the later Protestant doctrine of forensic justification. Although it would be presumptuous even to attempt a review of the extensive literature on these subjects, much less to offer an original contribution, it may be useful to examine in simple terms the single issue suggested by the title of this article to introduce the non-specialist to the maze of complex issues involved in the debate.

The title is taken from a chapter in B.A. Gerrish's Book, *The Old Protestantism and the New*, entitled, 'The Pathfinder: Calvin's Image of Luther' where he argues that, although Calvin recognised that he and Luther were not in agreement on all aspects of the faith, Calvin always considered himself a follower of Luther's, whom he viewed as 'A pathfinder — a pioneer, in whose footsteps we follow and whose trial has to be pushed on further.'⁴ Calvin described Luther as 'a

remarkable apostle of Christ through whose work and ministry most of all, the purity of the Gospel has been restored to our land.⁵ He was, of course, referring to Luther's doctrine of justification which Calvin considered the principal article of the Christian religion and Luther's great contribution to the Reformation. Luther would have been in total agreement with the younger reformer's analysis, because he considered the doctrine of justification the basic and chief article of the faith on which the Church stands or falls, and on which its entire doctrine depends. He called it 'the summary of Christian doctrine' and in another place, the unique possession of Christianity which 'distinguishes our religion from all others.'⁶ Yet this was the doctrine which was always most threatened, because it was in conflict with our reason and Satan sought constantly to undermine it. It was, therefore, a doctrine on which there could be no compromise. The introduction to the Article on Justification in the Smaldcald Articles of 1537 reads:

Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised . . . On this article rests all that we teach and practise against the pope, the devil and the world. Therefore we must be quite certain and have no doubt about it. Otherwise all is lost.⁷

Even though Luther certainly believed that his understanding of justification differed from that of the mediaeval church, scholars have not always been as certain. One line of thought is that Luther was not a pathfinder at all. Rather he merely restated the mediaeval or Augustinian doctrine of justification which had been corrupted by late mediaeval accretions. Those who hold this point-of-view often argue that Luther became a reformer in reaction to the semi-pelagianism of late mediaeval nominalism. They maintain that Luther's discovery was not really new. It was only new for Luther, who, as a result of his training in late mediaeval scholasticism, was insufficiently familiar with the teaching of the great high mediaeval theologians like Thomas Aquinas.⁸ This was such a commonly held belief that it found its way into a popular textbook on the English Reformation which maintains that Luther's doctrine of justification by faith 'was not a particularly new idea, for it finds a place in the teaching of St. Augustine.'⁹ In linking Luther's doctrine to that of the great 5th century Latin Church Father, the author was also not presenting a new idea. It began, in fact, with Luther's own colleague, Philip Melancthon, and continues to have many followers today. Some have even maintained that Luther's doctrine was taught in every period of the Church's history. The 19th century Scottish theologian, James Buchanan, stated this in a most uncompromising fashion:

It is simple to prove as a matter of fact . . . that the protestant doctrine of justification was not a novelty introduced for the first time by Luther and Calvin – that it was held and taught, more or less explicitly by some writers in every successive age – and that there is no truth in the allegation that it had been unknown for fourteen hundred years before the Reformation.¹⁰

Another group of scholars argue that Luther's position was unique, and that, although he did not express the fully developed doctrine of forensic justification, he was, in fact, the pathfinder who broke with the mediaeval doctrine and led the way to later Protestant definitions. This is the position I find most convincing and what follows is an effort to explain and defend it utilizing the evidence from some of the more recent studies holding this or a similar point-of-view.¹¹

In order to do this one must first examine the mediaeval doctrine of justification. Unfortunately, it has been seriously misunderstood especially by Protestants who often simplistically contrasted the Reformation and mediaeval doctrines by stating that whereas the mediaeval Church taught 'salvation by works' the Reformers taught 'salvation by faith.' Serious scholars have, of course, never misunderstood the teachings of the mediaeval church so blatantly, but it was difficult to isolate clearly its teaching on justification, since a number of different positions were expressed during the long period of the Middle Ages and the Church's official doctrine was not specifically defined until the Council of Trent in 1547 in reaction to the doctrine of the Reformers.

The doctrine of justification provides an answer to the simple question — how is a right relationship established between God and human beings or how does one become righteous in the eyes of a righteous God? There are at least three basic possibilities which have been advanced in the course of the Church's history. First, it can be argued that one is judged righteous on the basis of a virtuous life. This is normally what we mean by the phrase 'salvation by works'. Second, it can be claimed that one is *made* righteous through the action of God's grace in one's life. Finally, justification can be viewed as being *declared* righteous by the gracious judgment of God on the basis of the external or imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. The logical extension of this doctrine involves the use of a legal metaphor and views God as a judge in a law court who declares the sinner righteous. This doctrine is labelled Forensic Justification. In the course of the Church's history before the Reformation variations of the first two beliefs were held at different times. The third is the Reformation doctrine of Luther which was developed to its logical extension by Melancthon and Calvin. A related question is the rôle of human beings in their justification. None of the three positions

necessarily implies that they have no rôle. The first approach normally assumes that they have the major responsibility, but it may be argued that God aids one to live a virtuous life. The second position can also involve human effort to a greater or lesser degree depending on how much they cooperate with God's grace in making them righteous and who initiates the process. The third possibility normally places the emphasis on God's work, but man can certainly have a rôle, since faith is the method by which Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer, and, if faith is initiated by man rather than God, human beings once again have a principal rôle.

A variety of views on justification were expressed in the early church and there was even a serious danger that the first option would triumph. This did not happen, to a large degree, because of the contribution of Augustine of Hippo. In the Pelagian Controversy he succeeded, after a very difficult struggle, in having the church reject the most extreme forms of the first option. Augustine was the first Church Father to write extensively on justification and his position became the foundation for the teaching of the mediaeval church. He clearly ruled out human merit as the basis of our justification, maintaining that justification is solely the gift of God who makes the believer righteous through his grace. However, for Augustine, justification was a process in which God made the sinner righteous over a period of time. Thus he fits clearly into the second category. Justification meant to *make* righteous. It was a process which began when God created faith in a human being and continued throughout one's life. Although Augustine taught the non-imputation of sin, he did not teach the imputation of Christ's righteousness. According to McGrath 'Augustine has no need for the concept of the imputation of righteousness, for man actually possessed righteousness being made righteous in the process of justification.'¹² The initial act in justification is entirely God's work since human beings are so thoroughly separated from God by their sin that they cannot even respond to God's grace until God heals the human will. But once this has happened one can cooperate with divine grace. However, even though human beings can earn merit after God has initiated the process of justification, it is the grace of God which makes this possible, so God rewards not man's merit but His own.

Although the mediaeval church remained faithful to Augustine's teaching on justification as a process initiated by God and made possible by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, it was possible to interpret this in a manner which placed a much greater emphasis on human effort. There was, furthermore, the problem of what happened after death if the process of justification was not completed during one's earthly life. Augustine considered the possibility of it continuing in purgatory, but he did not make the doctrine of

purgatory a clear part of his teaching. Under the heading 'it is not impossible that some may pass through a purgatorial fire in the future life' he wrote in chapter 69 of *Enchiridion*:

It is a matter that may be inquired into and either ascertained or left doubtful whether some believers shall pass through a kind of purgatorial fire and in proportion as they have loved with more or less devotion the goods that perish be more quickly delivered from it.¹³

However, after the pontificate of Gregory the Great the doctrine of purgatory played a major rôle in the Church's teaching on justification. Thus justification was not only a process which continued throughout one's life, but for most people it was completed after death in purgatory before the believer was fit to enter heaven. In addition the whole process became inextricably intertwined with the sacraments. The process of justification was initiated at baptism solely through the grace of God. But after baptism human beings could co-operate with God's grace. Sin necessitated re-entering the process of justification through the use of the sacrament of penance. This involved contrition, repentance and absolution by a priest. It was completed by satisfaction or meritorious works done by the penitent sinner. As Toon points out, 'the more dynamic idea of being made righteous, as presented by Augustine, was in danger of being lost as the process of growth in righteousness was made dependent on sacraments whose validity was guaranteed by the church.'¹⁴

Over a millenium passed between the death of Augustine and the beginning of the Reformation. During that period Augustine's teaching was interpreted in a variety of ways. The best mediaeval theologians like Thomas Aquinas continued Augustine's emphasis, although in an Aristotelian framework, maintaining that no man can merit justification, because God alone can and does cause the process to begin, and it is solely dependent upon the grace of God in Jesus Christ. However, there was also another emphasis which was most prevalent in the late middle ages among a group of theologians called the Nominalists. This teaching is especially associated with the English Franciscan, William of Occam and his disciple Gabriel Biel. They tended in many subtle ways to emphasize the place of human merit in salvation. Although historians continue to debate what the Nominalists actually believed, it is clear that whatever they meant to convey, their teaching could be misinterpreted in the direction of the first option on justification.¹⁵ This is certainly what happened at the popular level as the complex theological formulations of the theologians were not clearly understood by the average parish priest whose education was limited. Evidence from a variety of sources suggests that popular religion viewed God as a judge who expected human beings to earn their own salvation with the help of the church.

Furthermore, there was a tremendous emphasis on purgatory in the late middle ages and the laity devoted a good deal of money to endowments for chantry priests to say masses for their souls and those of their relatives in purgatory.¹⁶ Popular religious practices also involved a variety of efforts to appease God and to attain salvation through human effort. Indulgences, which were provided by the church as a method of lessening or avoiding the suffering in purgatory, were very popular, and it is no surprise that the theology behind indulgences was misunderstood and misrepresented by avaricious indulgence sellers so that people actually believed they were buying forgiveness of sins. Popular depictions of God in woodcuts and the like also emphasized the image of God and Jesus Christ as a judge weighing each individual's actions and determining his eternal fate on the basis of how well the demands of a virtuous life were met. So it seems clear that despite the teachings of the theologians the popular mind did not draw their careful distinctions between being involved in the process of justification and actually being justified on the basis of one's own actions.¹⁷

This was, of course, the environment in which Luther grew up, and it should not be surprising that the popular piety of late mediaeval Germany had a major impact on his thought even after he had become a priest. Furthermore, his early theological training was centered at the University of Erfurt where the nominalism of Occam and Biel was the prevailing theological emphasis. Consequently, it seems to me that Luther actually went through three stages in the development of his doctrine of justification. Influenced by German popular piety and nominalist teaching he began with our first possibility — one is justified by living a virtuous life. Then, as he became more familiar with the Scriptures and the teaching of Augustine, he moved to our second possibility — justification is a process initiated by God in which we are made righteous by the grace of God in Jesus Christ working within us. Finally, he came to an understanding of justification as the imputation of the alien righteousness of Jesus Christ by which God declares the sinner righteous. Although this explanation clearly does not resolve all the problems being debated by specialist scholars in the field, it does offer a reasonable way of understanding Luther's development, and unless one assumes these three stages in the development of Luther's thought his actions are very difficult to explain. It also fits Luther's own description of his gradual theological development and the importance of his personal experience: 'I didn't learn my theology all at once. I had to ponder over it ever more deeply and my spiritual trials were a great help to me in this.'¹⁸

When Luther entered a reformed Augustinian monastery after a sudden brush with death in a thunderstorm in July 1505, his decision reflects his belief, nurtured by his upbringing in late mediaeval piety,

that the monastic life was the most secure road to salvation, because there, free of worldly distractions, one could devote one's full efforts to earning salvation. And he certainly worked very hard to securing 'salvation by works'. In various sources he described the anguish he felt and his desperate efforts to appease a righteous God. Despite his efforts he found himself overwhelmed by his inadequacies. He later said his basic problem was that he viewed Christ as a 'severe and terrible judge' whom he hoped to please by his works of piety:

I tortured myself with prayer, fasting, vigils and freezing; the frost alone might have killed me . . . What else did I seek by doing this but God, who was supposed to note my strict observance of the monastic order and my austere life? I constantly walked in a dream and lived in real idolatry, for I did not believe in Christ: I regarded Him only as a severe and terrible judge portrayed as seated on a rainbow.¹⁹

Although his fellow monks jested with him and counselled him that he demanded too much of himself, they could not comfort him, because his understanding of justification did not make allowances for human frailty. Luther probably still held our first option on justification when he went to Rome on a mission for his order in 1511 and tried to take advantage of all the practices of popular piety to aid his salvation. By this time he had already begun his theological studies at Erfurt where there was a strong emphasis on nominalist teaching. After he returned from Rome, he completed his doctorate and assumed the chair of Biblical studies at the newly founded University of Wittenburg. He began his Biblical lectures in 1513 with the Psalms and followed this with his famous lectures on Romans in 1515–16. Then he lectured on Galatians, Hebrews and Titus, returning again to the Psalms in 1519. During the same period, on 31st October 1517, he published his *95 Theses*, an event which is normally considered the beginning of the Reformation, and in June and July of 1519 he engaged in the famous Leipzig Debate with Eck. Sometime in those years he moved to an Augustinian doctrine of justification and then finally to the Reformation doctrine.

Scholars have examined every aspect of Luther's life and teaching during that period in minute detail, and there is still no consensus on when he actually made his Reformation breakthrough. Certainly he had arrived at an Augustinian position when he was lecturing on the Psalms and Romans, but the unanswered question is whether they, especially the Romans lectures, also reveal his fully developed Reformation doctrine. Many scholars believe that they do, but, if they are right, Luther was wrong when he later described what has been called his Tower Experience, because it supposedly took place in the tower of the Augustinian monastery in Wittenburg. Luther related that experience in three separate accounts. The longest and most detailed is included in the preface to the 1545 edition of his

Latin works. In it he clearly states that it occurred in the year that he was preparing his second lectures on the Psalms. This was in 1518; so by his own testimony he had not made his Reformation breakthrough at the time he was lecturing on Romans or even when he wrote the *95 Theses*. However, there are a number of problems with the account which make it difficult to know precisely what he discovered and whether or not it was actually different from the Augustinian position. Since the account is crucial for our analysis it is necessary to quote large segments of it:

Meanwhile, I had already during that year returned to interpret the Psalter anew. I had confidence in the fact that I was more skilful, after I had lectured in the university on St. Paul's epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the one to the Hebrews. I had indeed been captivated with an extraordinary ardour for understanding Paul in the Epistle to the Romans . . . but a single word in Chapter 1, [;17], 'in it the righteousness of God is revealed,' that had stood in my way. For I hated that word 'righteousness of God,' which, according to the use and custom of all the teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically regarding the formal or active righteousness, as they called it, with which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner . . . By the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.' There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.' Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally new face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me.²⁰

It seems clear from Luther's description of his experience that it was a dramatic breakthrough which freed him of his initial misunderstanding of the Gospel, but it is considerably more difficult to understand how his discovery differed from Augustine's teaching. For that reason many have argued that all he discovered was the Augustinian position and, therefore, he was not an innovator or a pathfinder at all, at least on the question of justification. Certainly, the portion of the account cited above does not necessarily describe a new discovery as Augustine and many other mediaeval commentators understood the phrase, 'righteousness of God' as the righteousness by which God justifies the sinner. However, in the remainder of the account Luther makes clear that he did not find the same teaching in Augustine:

And I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before hated the word 'righteousness of God.' Thus that

place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise. Later I read Augustine's *The Spirit and the Letter*, where contrary to hope I found that he, too, interpreted God's righteousness in a similar way, as the righteousness with which God clothes us when he justifies us. Although this was heretofore said imperfectly and he did not explain all things concerning imputation clearly it nevertheless was pleasing that God's righteousness with which we are justified was taught.²¹

This part of the account is the key to understand what Luther discovered. Although he says he found a 'similar' teaching in Augustine, it is important to note that in the next line he clearly says Augustine 'did not explain all things concerning imputation clearly.' Since the imputation of Christ's righteousness was the basis of Luther's teaching on justification and the point at which he differed from Augustine, this qualification is of utmost importance. Luther's commentary on Romans and other writings reveal that he had arrived at the Augustinian position on righteousness well before 1518, but it is only afterwards that his works reveal the fully developed Reformation doctrine of justification.²²

Luther's mature doctrine attributed justification entirely to the alien righteousness of Jesus Christ freely imputed to the sinner by the Grace of God through faith. In 1520 Luther wrote in his pamphlet, *The Freedom of a Christian Man*:

Christ is God and man in one person. He has neither sinned nor died, and is not condemned, and he cannot sin, die, or be condemned; his righteousness, life, and salvation are unconquerable, external, omnipotent. By the wedding ring of faith he shares in the sins, death, and pains of hell which are his bride's. As a matter of fact, he makes them his own and acts as if they were his own and as if he himself had sinned . . . Her sins cannot now destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up by him. And she has that righteousness in Christ, her husband, of which she may boast as of her own.²³

That righteousness which Christ has won cannot be acquired by our own powers or works, rather only faith can lay hold of it because it is 'outside of us and foreign to us.'²⁴ In his response to the papal bull of excommunication Luther compared the righteousness of Christ imputed to the believer as a cover or shield: 'the righteousness of Christ must be our cover. His perfect godliness must be our shield and defence.' While he quoted 'the beautiful saying of St Augustine 'that sin is forgiven in baptism; not that it is no longer present, but it is not imputed' he did not attribute to Augustine the concept of the imputation of Christ's righteousness.²⁵

In agreement with Augustine Luther believed that the faith which received Christ is also the gift of God. Faith is not something man initiates simply by believing what the Church or even the Bible teaches. Human beings are dead in trespasses and sin and cannot

even respond to God's call. Rather, God through the Holy Spirit brings them to life and creates faith so that both the heart and the mind can turn to Christ. However, justification does not mean that the believer ceases to be a sinner. He remains justified and sinner at the same time. Although fully righteous through faith, he also remains fully and completely a sinner. The flesh or old nature remains so that there is an on-going struggle between the new nature created by Christ and the old sinful nature which continues throughout the believer's life. The new nature, however, is no longer under any compulsion to do good works for the sake of justification. Rather it struggles against the old and seeks to do the will of God in response to God's love in Jesus Christ.

This was Luther's 'Reformation breakthrough' and, although the difference from Augustine's teaching seems to some a theological nuance, it was critical to the Reformation and made the break with the mediaeval church almost inevitable. Despite his emphasis on the free grace of God which makes justification possible, for Augustine righteousness in justification was something within man: 'something that is wrought by God within . . . located within man and which can be said to be a part of his being.'²⁶ In justification the sinner is made righteous, but he has a rôle to play. For Luther the righteousness of Christ was always external and alien and can never be said to belong to human beings. It is entirely a free gift and the sinner has no rôle to play in his justification. Rather than becoming more righteous in the course of his life, with the possibility of the process being completed after death in purgatory the sinner needs only to rely on Christ's righteousness. This makes an enormous difference! All those aspects of mediaeval teaching and practice which were a part of the process of becoming righteous, such as meritorious works, purgatory, the infusion of grace through the sacraments, a priesthood which mediates between unrighteous man and a Holy God, indulgences, and the popular religious practices associated with those teachings had no place in Luther's theology. Sinners stand before God throughout their lives clothed in an alien righteousness and they can in no way earn merit, because they already have all the merit they could possibly need since it was earned by Christ. They have direct access to God, because in His eyes they are righteous, and when they die, they will be taken directly into His presence. While they live, they do not need to worry about their standing before God, because, assured by faith that they are righteous before God, they can freely serve Him without any concerns about rewards or punishments, in freedom motivated by the love which God has shown them in Jesus Christ.

This doctrine was the unique contribution of Luther which became the hallmark of Reformation theology. Throughout his life his central concern was that it be preserved against the inevitable efforts to

modify it by re-interjecting human involvement and merit. Melancthon and Calvin taught the same doctrine, but they took what Luther had expressed in a highly unstructured way in a great variety of hastily written and often polemical works and stated it in a systematic fashion. It is to them that we owe the fully-developed doctrine of Forensic Justification which Melancthon stated so clearly in Article IV of the *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*: 'To be justified does not mean that a wicked man is made righteous, but that he is pronounced righteous in a forensic way.'²⁷ But the original Reformation breakthrough was made by Luther who was the 'pathfinder' who pointed the way to those who followed and whose contribution Calvin so readily acknowledged. This is what I think Luther would want us to remember on the anniversary of his birth date. He may well have disapproved of many things said and written about him during the quincentennial year, and he certainly would have been upset about the adulation given his name, for he always pointed away from himself to the doctrine which he identified as the doctrine of Christ. For a truly 'Lutheran' perspective on the anniversary publications it may be well to remember Luther's own words written in 1522 when his followers first began to use his name to identify themselves:

What is Luther? This is not my doctrine. I have not been crucified for anybody . . . How did a poor, stinking bag of worms like me come to have the children of Christ called by his wretched name? Do not do it, dear friends. Let us wipe out the partisan name and call ourselves Christians after him whose teachings we follow.²⁸

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NOTES

- 1 One example is the quincentenary pamphlet entitled, *Theses Concerning Martin Luther 1483-1983* (Dresden, 1983) which was produced by the German Democratic Republic.
- 2 For a devastating critique of the effort 'to make Luther useful to the present day' by 'constructing a Luther who addressed our problems in our language and our attitudes' see G.R. Elton, 'Commemorating Luther', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34 (October, 1984), p. 615.
- 3 See M.U. Edwards, 'The Luther Quincentennial', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34 (October, 1984), pp. 597 ff for a bibliographical essay on the quincentennial publications.
- 4 B.A. Gerrish, *The Old Protestantism and the New* (Chicago, 1982), p.39.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p.38.
- 6 Cited by Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia, 1966), p. 244.

- 7 T.G. Tappert ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia, 1959), p. 292.
- 8 Joseph Lortz, *The Reformation in Germany* (London, 1968) and Erwin Iserloh, *Geschichte und Theologie der Reformation in Grundriss* (Paderborn, 1980) are some of the best known examples of this approach.
- 9 David H. Pill, *The English Reformation 1529–58* (London, 1973), p. 38.
- 10 James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* (Edinburgh, 1967), p. 94.
- 11 I have relied largely on Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His road to Reformation 1483–1521* (Philadelphia, 1985); Alister E. McGrath, 'Forerunners of the Reformation? A Critical Examination of the Evidence for Precursors of the Reformation Doctrine of Justification', *Harvard Theological Review* 75:2 (1982), pp. 219ff and Peter Toon, *Justification and Sanctification* (London, 1983). Unfortunately, McGrath's forthcoming three volume study, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* was not available to me at the time of this writing.
- 12 McGrath, p.232.
- 13 Philip Schaft ed. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, 1956), p. 261. Gregory the Great systematized the doctrine and made Augustine's 'suggestion about purgatorial fire, made tentatively and in passing . . . something that had to be believed.' Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition; a History of the Development of Doctrine* Vol I (Chicago, 1971), p. 355
- 14 Toon, p. 51.
- 15 Heiko A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Beil and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge Mass., 1963); Francis Oakley, *The Western Church in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1979), pp. 146–147.
- 16 J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (London, 1984), pp. 19f., illustrates the widespread nature of this practice. Those who could not afford their own chantry priest joined with others in lay fraternities to provide for their souls after death. 'They were inseparably connected with the doctrine of Purgatory and the whole idea of satisfaction for sin, veneration of saints, the intercession of Mary and the rest of the heavenly host.' *Ibid.*, p.20.
- 17 Even the 'revisionist' historians, while disputing the pejorative interpretation of late mediaeval popular piety and the tendency to draw a sharp discontinuity between the late and high middle ages characteristic of older interpretations, do not deny the large scale nature of practices which suggest that a significant segment of the population viewed justification in terms of appeasing a demanding diety. Oakley, pp. 113ff; L.G. Duggan, 'Fear and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation', *Archive fur Reformations Geschichte* 75 (1984) pp. 153f.
- 18 Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, *Luther's Works* Vol. 54 (St Louis and Philadelphia, 1955–), p.50.
- 19 *Ibid.* Vol. 24:24.
- 20 *Ibid.* Vol. 34:336–37; other accounts are found in Vol. 54:193–94; 442–43.
- 21 *Ibid.* Vol. 34:337
- 22 For a fuller discussion of the difficulties involved in interpreting Luther's description of his 'tower experience' see W.D.J. Cargill Thompson, 'The Problems of Luther's Tower-Experience and its Place in His Intellectual Development' in Derek Baker ed., *Studies in Church History* Vol. 15 (London, 1978), pp. 187–212. Since Cargill Thompson wrote, Edwards has pointed out that 'The debate seems to have made little progress in the last decade, and it may be wise to declare the problem important but insoluble at least as it is currently stated' p. 609. Brecht, on the other hand, believes the account 'is completely clear despite the criticisms advanced by many scholars' p. 226.
- 23 *Op. cit.* Vol. 31:351–52.
- 24 *Ibid.* Vol. 34:153.
- 25 *Ibid.* Vol. 32:28
- 26 McGrath, p. 231.
- 27 Tappert, p. 143. McGrath points out 'Luther himself did not teach a doctrine of

forensic justification in the strict sense. The concept of forensic justification necessitates a deliberate and systematic distinction between justification and regeneration, a distinction which is not found in Luther's earlier works. Indeed Luther can be regarded as remaining faithful to the Augustinian understanding of justification as both event and process, embracing the beginning, continuation, and perfection of the Christian, and thereby subsuming regeneration under justification.' p. 225.

28 Cited in H.G. Haile, *Luther: An Experiment in Biography* (New York, 1978), p. 37.