

Some “helpful” notes on McGrath By Matt Blackmon



A brief review of the doctrine of Justification from ST104

Historical Developments (AD 400-1400)

- From **dikaiwqhnai** (Gk.—to be *declared* righteous) to *iustificari* (Lat.—to *be* righteous)
- Justification as *impartation* of righteousness
 - Justification as event and process
 - Not *imputation* but *infusion*
 - Link to sacraments (baptism, [later] penance)
 - Increasing emphasis on preparation for grace

Historical Developments (Reformation)

- From *iustificari* back to **dikaiwqhnai**
- Justification as *declaration* of righteousness
- Justification as *imputation* of *alien* (not *infusion* of *inherent*) righteousness
- Justification as forensic event (distinct [but inseparable] from sanctification)
- Rejection of preparation and indulgences

Historical Developments (Trent)

- “If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and remains in them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema.”
- “If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of its increase, let him be anathema.”

Historical Developments (Summary)

- Historically, “justification” became essentially a technical term for salvation.
- In Roman Catholicism, justification consists of the infusion of Christ’s righteousness in the sacraments throughout the Christian life.
- In Protestantism, justification consists of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness at conversion, followed by sanctification.

Some helpful sources

A plethora of reviews on *Iustitia Dei* including Scott S. Ickert, *Dialog* 27 Autumn 1988:308-316.

See Michael J. Vlach’s review. Located at <http://www.theologicalstudies.org/mcgrath.html>

Chung, Sung Wook, ed. *Alister E. McGrath and Evangelical Theology: A Dynamic Engagement* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003).

Bauman, Michael, “Alister E. McGrath” in *Handbook of Evangelical Theologians*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993).

Some helpful vocabulary

articulus stantus et cadentis ecclesiae

iustitia Dei

iustitia distributiva

iustitia commutativa

iustitia salutifera

The article by which the church stands or falls

Righteousness of God

Justice: render to you in society (equal opportunity)

Reward Virtue/Punish Vice (a norm to judge)

“poetic justice” or getting what you deserve (individual)

right behavior in the context of a relationship

Some questions to consider (Part 1 up to the Reformation)

Why did McGrath write this book?

What is his intention for the book?

Is the book aptly titled? In other words, are there any key exclusions from his study?

What is his distinction between concept and doctrine? Is it valid?

How does he compare and contrast the development of the underlying words behind the English term justification?

What was significant about Augustine?

What impact did Augustine make?

How was the Medieval Period different?

“Justification refers not merely to the beginning of the Christian life, but also to its continuation and ultimate perfection, in which the Christian is made righteous in the sight of God and the sight of men through a fundamental change in his nature, and not merely his status” (41).

Evaluate the contributions of the following:

Thomas Aquinas,
Duns Scotus
Anselm
Peter Abelard
William of Ockham.

“Aquinas is especially important because of his substantial *Summa Theologiae* and his attempt to unite Christian doctrine with Aristotle. Godescalc and his view of double predestination are also given attention by McGrath.”

Michael J. Vlach

Evaluate the schools of thought

Dominican
Franciscan
Augustinian

The Bottom Line of the Medieval Period: “It is impossible to speak of a single homogeneous ‘medieval Augustinian tradition’ during the Middle Ages in relation to justification” (179).