# Introduction

> But if faith were emptied [of its meaning], what righteousness would remain for a human being, since "the righteous lives by faith" (Rom. 1:17; Hab. 2:4)?[1]

## FAITH AND JUSTIFICATION IN AUGUSTINE AND HIS LEGACY

Written in 416, *epistula* (*Letter*) 177 reflects the late maturation of Augustine's theology of justification by faith, a mystery of grace which had occupied his attention for over twenty years. It expresses his growing realization that it is not enough to ground human righteousness in faith, or to quote that "the righteous lives by faith." Rather, the grace of justification is preserved only if faith is not "emptied." But what is the meaning of faith, which must not be "emptied"? Why is it that, of all the virtues which could be highlighted by Augustine or Scripture, the righteous lives *by faith*?

Augustine stands behind Western Christianity's centuries of debate over justification in numerous instances by name and countless more implicitly. He appears in Martin Luther's famous recounting of his discovery of the justifying righteousness of God, just after the apostle Paul.[2]

[1] *ep.* 177.11 (ca. 416): "fide vero evacuata quae homini iustitia remaneat, cum iustus ex fide vivat?" Augustine's citations of Hab. 2:4/Rom. 1:17 generally have the singular "iustus" and the present "vivat."

[2] Luther, "Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings," 337: "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." Though note what follows: "Although this was heretofore said imperfectly and he did not



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Centuries before Luther, extracts from Augustine on faith and justification predominate in medieval Latin Christianity's foremost biblical commentary – the *Glossa Ordinaria* – and its foremost theological resource – Peter Lombard's *Sentences* – as well as in the works of major theologians,[3] such as Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*.[4] And in the centuries which followed, Augustine's teaching on justification assumes a central position (and is a central point of debate) in John Calvin's *Institutes*[5] and in the works of other Reformers,[6] at the Regensburg Colloquy's (1541) attempt at reconciliation,[7] in the Council of Trent,[8] in John Henry Newman's *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*,[9] in Karl Barth,[10] and others.[11] He is the only individual named in the body of the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*'s section on justification, which names him as the inspiration for elevating justification as "the most excellent work of God's love made manifest in Christ Jesus and granted by the Holy Spirit."[12] Alister McGrath's *Iustitia Dei*, the only

explain all things concerning imputation clearly, it nevertheless was pleasing that God's righteousness with which we are justified was taught."

[3] For a brief introduction, see van Asselt, "Justification."

[4] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II.109–114. For Aquinas's use of Augustine, see most recently Freddoso, "*spe salvi facti sumus*," 32, which draws especially on the work of Bouillard, *Conversion et grâce chez S. Thomas d'Aquin*. See also Wawrykow, *God's Grace and Human Action*, demonstrating the unique influence of the late Augustine on Aquinas's mature theology of grace.

[5] Calvin, *Institutes* 3.11.15. See also his Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians* 3.21.

[6] See, for example, Visser, *Reading Augustine in the Reformation*; Visser, "How Catholic Was Augustine?;" Fink, "Martin Bucer's *Triplex Iustificatio*;" Fink, "Bullshitting Augustine."

[7] Lane, *The Regensburg Article 5 on Justification*, especially 148–250, "Text and Commentary."

[8] *Concilium Tridentinum* 6.7: "iustitia Dei, non qua ipse iustus est, sed qua nos iustos facit," in Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Trent to Vatican II*; cf. Augustine, *spir. et litt.* 18.31: "iustitia dei, non qua ipse iustus est, sed qua nos ab eo facti."

[9] Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, especially chapter 2, 58–60.

[10] Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV.1*, 524: "The development of the doctrine of justification which began with Augustine was something which belonged specifically to the Western Church;" Barth also calls him "the only name we can consider" before the Reformation (623).

[11] Although the preeminent study of the history of justification in the nineteenth century, Ritschl's *Die christliche Lehre*, begins with Anselm; Ritschl claims that Augustine's doctrine of the atonement was too underdeveloped for inclusion, on top of the fact that his doctrine of justification was too ecclesiologically bound. For a short introduction, see Zachhuber, "Ritschl, Albrecht."

[12] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1994, which then loosely quotes *Io. ev. tr.* 72.3. The *Catechism* also cites Athanasius on deification in this section, though his name only appears in the footnote.

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modern study of the whole Western history of the doctrine of justification, has been tremendously successful in drawing attention to Augustine's theology of justification. McGrath simply designates Augustine "the fountainhead."[13] McGrath offers two reasons: that Augustine is the first Christian author to offer an integrated, coherent account of justification within "a grander theological vision" and that Augustine was uniquely forced to clarify the doctrine of justification by the theological controversies of his day, especially with Pelagianism.[14]

Despite the importance of Augustine's influence on the history of justification in Western Christianity, relatively few modern studies have been written on justification or faith in Augustine, and none of them are comprehensively dedicated to the topic.[15] By comparison, Augustine's doctrine of grace continues to receive ample focus. Augustine's thought on justification was largely ignored in nineteenth-century scholarship, likely due to both the legacy of disputes about justification between Catholics and Protestants and disputes about grace within Catholicism, especially in the shadow of Jansenism.[16] A few shorter works in roughly the first half of the twentieth century addressed faith[17] or justification,[18] usually in a specific context.[19] In the second half of the twentieth century, Alister McGrath's *Iustitia Dei* (1st ed. 1986; 4th ed. 2020) has been the most influential treatment, sparking numerous short responses,[20] though

[13] McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2020), 42. [14] McGrath, 42–43.

[15] As McGrath, 43, acknowledges.

[16] van Asselt, "Justification:" "Perhaps it was in reaction to Jansenism that the term 'justification' gradually disappeared from the vocabulary of Roman Catholic theology and had to wait for reintroduction for more than four centuries, when it was discussed during the Second Vatican Council." Ritschl, *Die christliche Lehre*, begins his study with Anselm, in part due to his conviction that the Reformation doctrine of justification is nonexistent in the patristic period. See also Harnack, "Geschichte der Lehre."

[17] On Augustine's early theology of faith, see Löhrer, *Der Glaubensbegriff des heiligen Augustinus*.

[18] Bavaud, "saint Augustin et la Réforme."

[19] Henninger, *S. Augustinus*, which focuses on the tridentine debate over the *duplex iustitia*; Grabowski, *The Church*, treats justification and faith, but in the context of Augustine's ecclesiology; Snell, "The Place of Augustine in Calvin's Concept of Righteousness;" de Ru, *De Rechtvaardiging bij Augustinus*, compares Augustine, Luther, and Calvin on justification.

[20] In subsequent works, McGrath is the primary scholarly interlocutor. For treatments of Augustine on justification since, see Evans, "Augustine on Justification" (1987); Bammel, "Justification by Faith in Augustine and Origen" (1996); Dodaro, "Justice" (1999); Chae, "Justification and Deification in Augustine" (1999); Williams, "Justification by Faith" (2006); Wright, "Justification in Augustine" (2006); Hiestand, "Augustine and the

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it reflects the earlier, shorter interpretations of John Burnaby,[21] Georges Bavaud,[22] and Peter Riga.[23]

The consensus among these treatments, including those who ultimately disagree with Augustine, has been that justification for Augustine is essentially a matter of charity, not faith. Bavaud says, "The love of man for God is the cause of justification," and "in the eyes of Augustine, it is charity which justifies the sinner."[24] Caroline Hammond Bammel contrasts Augustine and Origen's approaches to justification as a process of renewal in charity for Augustine vs. a forensic moment in faith for Origen.[25] Robert Dodaro largely agrees: "justification is an active process by which God restores human beings to justice, that is, to a proper relationship of obedience to God," where justice is the right "order of love."[26] McGrath himself put the contrast most strongly in his 3rd edition (2005) of *Iustitia Dei*:

> [For Augustine,] faith alone is merely assent to revealed truth, itself inadequate to justify. It is for this reason that it is unacceptable to summarize Augustine's doctrine of justification as *sola fide iustificamur* – if any such summary is acceptable, it is *sola caritate iustificamur*. For Augustine, it is love, rather than faith, which is the power which brings about the conversion of people. . . . The personal union of individuals with the Godhead, which forms the basis of their justification, is brought about by love, not by faith.[27]

Several responses to McGrath since the original publication of *Iustitia Dei* in 1989 have criticized this summary,[28] perhaps leading to its absence in

Justification Debates" (2007); Scheck, *Origen and the History of Justification* (2008); Cary, *Inner Grace* (2008); Ellingsen, "Augustinian Origins of the Reformation Reconsidered" (2011); Cho, "Augustine's Doctrine of Justification" (2014); Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 33–35 (2015); Horton, *Justification*, 1:84–91 (2018); Dubbelman, "Augustine's View of Justification" (2020). See also Pereira, *Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther* (2013), a comparison between Augustine and Luther on justification (although note the serious reservations of Saak, "Review of *Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther*").

[21] Burnaby, *Amor Dei* (1st ed., 1938).

[22] Bavaud, "saint Augustin et la Réforme" (1959).

[23] Riga, "Created Grace in St. Augustine" (1972).

[24] Bavaud, "saint Augustin et la Réforme," 25: "l'amour de l'homme pour Dieu est cause de la justification," 27: "Aux yeux de saint Augustin, c'est la charité qui justifie le pécheur" (my translations); Riga, "Created Grace in St. Augustine," 118, also 121: "charity . . . defines this state of justification." See also Evans, "Augustine on Justification," 277, 280, 282–84.

[25] Bammel, "Justification by Faith in Augustine and Origen," 232–35.

[26] Dodaro, "Justice," 481–82.

[27] McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2005), 46; this passage also appeared in the 1998 and the original 1989 editions.

[28] Pereira, *Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther*, esp. 232–42; Ellingsen, "Augustinian Origins of the Reformation Reconsidered," 13–14; Wright, "Justification in Augustine," 63, 66–67.

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the 4th edition (2020), though the 4th edition does not provide an explanation or replacement.[29] The *sola caritate* (by charity alone), therefore, remains a common reading of Augustine with no clear alternative on offer.[30] On the basis of the existing scholarship, why should it be otherwise?

These approaches do correctly understand that righteousness consists in charity for Augustine, but they strangely miss the essential rootedness of justification *in faith*. The reduction of justification to charity would seem to entail precisely what Augustine had warned against in *epistula* 177: the emptying of faith and therefore the obscuring of justification. Although Augustine does often link charity and righteousness,[31] he speaks just as frequently, if not more, of the identification of faith and righteousness: "your righteousness is your faith;"[32] "this will be your righteousness, to believe in me [Christ] as mediator;"[33] "our righteousness is from faith. . .. This is the righteousness of faith, to believe what you do not see and by the merit of your faith attain to vision."[34] He often describes faith as essential for the proper working of all the other virtues, as if it fundamentally orders, shapes, or arranges them.[35] "Faith in Augustine," concludes Magnus Löhrer, "stands at the core of a religious life."[36] While the expression *iustitia caritatis* (the righteousness of charity) never appears in his writing, Augustine uses the Pauline expression *iustitia*

[29] Cf. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2020), 46.

[30] A notable exception is Byers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine*, 185–214 (2013), whose treatment of justification is wholly independent of McGrath, though her focus is more on the relationship of grace and consent in conversation with Molina and Bañez than on faith and justification. In view of Augustine's psychology, Byers's approach excellently describes how faith is consent to the divine motivating impression (186, n. 62), which justifies as "an interior change in perception and [thus] motivation" (184). In my view, it is necessary to consider, in addition, the inflection of faith according to fear, hope, or love, which Augustine develops in response to his lifelong concern to account for why some believers respond to grace and others do not.

[31] E.g., *nat. et gr.* 63.74: "caritas in cordibus nostris, qua una iusti sunt quicumque sunt iusti;" *div. qu.* 61.4; *spir. et litt.* 36.64.

[32] *en. Ps.* 32.2.1.4: "fides tua, iustitia tua" (see also *en. Ps.* 36.1.6; *ep.* 185.9.40; *en. Ps.* 70.1.4).

[33] *s.* 143.4: "haec erit iustitia vestra, ut credatis in me mediatorem."

[34] *en. Ps.* 109.8: "iustitia nostra ex fide est, et fide mundantur corda nostra. . . quia ergo haec est iustitia fidei, credere quod non vides, et ipso merito fidei ad visionem suo tempore pervenire."

[35] *trin.* 13.20.26.

[36] Löhrer, *Der Glaubensbegriff des heiligen Augustinus*, 174: "Der glaube steht bei Augustinus in der Mitte eines religiösen lebens" (my translation).

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*fidei* (the righteousness of faith)[37] roughly fifty times in his corpus.[38] More recent scholars have noticed this imbalance in the traditional treatment of Augustine's theology of justification,[39] but none so far have offered a sustained analysis of how and why Augustine attributes human justification to faith. Understanding the meaning of faith in Augustine can therefore be traced back to a fundamental and deeply exegetical question: what is the *iustitia fidei*?

The affirmation that righteousness for Augustine consists in charity must be matched by the reality that it subsists in faith. Fundamentally, in Augustine, faith justifies because faith reconciles one to God by receiving the life of Christ and the Holy Spirit. This is evident psychologically in the intellectual, volitional, and fiducial character of faith in Augustine's thought, with faith serving to define human ends, desires, and relationships in reference to their highest good, God. Faith is the indispensable matrix for properly *theological* desire. The *iustitia fidei* is also evident in Augustine's correlation of his theology of justification by faith with ecclesial practices, especially baptism. Faith's epistemological character as trust (*fides*) rather than sight corresponds precisely with the sacramental nature of the incarnation and the human need for an ecstatic reliance on God for grace. But most of all, it is evident in the central thesis of this book: that Augustine eventually develops not one but three distinct ways of interpreting faith, each of which yields a different approach to the righteousness of faith.

Since faith is always both intellectual and affective, these three ways can be distinguished by three paradigmatic motivations for believing:

[37] Rom. 4:11, 10:6; cf. 4:13.

[38] The phrase *iustitia fidei* (or *fidei iustitia*) is by far the most prominent, with 44 citations by my counting. Closely related phrases (*iustitia in fide*, *iustitia ex fide*, *iustitia quae in fide*, etc.) occur at least a dozen times, and can be connected to the use of *iustitia fidei*. Though *caritas iustitiae, amor iustitiae*, and *dilectio iustitiae* also appear around 50 times combined, the inverted phrases – *iustitia caritatis*, *iustitia dilectionis*, and *iustitia amoris* – are unknown. For reference, *iustitia dei* occurs close to 300 times.

[39] Pereira, *Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther*, pushes back against McGrath, noting that Augustine distinguishes between loving faith and demonic faith (236–37), that only *credere in Deum* justifies (234–36), and that "faith is the structure" (237), though I think he exaggerates by opining that the "focus here, in my opinion, is more than love" (236); Wright, "Justification in Augustine," points out that often "faith … is identified with iustitia" and the terms "*iusti* and *fideles*…[are almost instinctively] synonymous" (69). These authors bring forth good evidence of justification by faith from Augustine's texts, mostly linked to Pauline citations, but they do not offer the analysis here of Augustine's development, threefold analysis of *credere*, or how Augustine's theology of faith explains its righteousness.

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fear, hope, and love. Fearful faith is exemplified by schismatics and lax catechumens (who are afraid of the cost of Christian commitment), hopeful faith by baptismal candidates (*competentes*) and penitents who are driven by trust in God's future help, and loving faith by the baptized, persevering faithful (*fideles*). No one faith holds exclusive right to the term *fides* (faith). *Fides* is therefore polyvalent. If by *fides* one means faith paralyzed by fear, this faith is idle assent, what Augustine calls *sola fides* (faith alone) without works, which is insufficient for righteousness, or *fides daemonum* (the faith of demons) – since "the demons believe, but tremble" with fear (James 2:19). Though this bare faith in need of charity is often the interpretation of justification ascribed to Augustine, it represents only one reading of *fides*.[40]

When motivated by hope, however, *fides* means trust, which turns to, pursues, and then obtains the grace of the Holy Spirit. Unlike fear, hope motivates faith to accept the sacrifices of pursuing God's offer of grace, especially in baptism. In this way, the righteousness of faith is the righteousness obtained and enabled by faith; it takes its name from faith's striving for grace, its conditioning of the mind to enable good works, and its anticipation of receiving charity. This represents a second interpretation of the *iustitia fidei*.

But *fides* motivated by love clings to God with the whole heart and mind, thereby reordering the whole soul justly, and participates in Christ's righteousness. Augustine identifies such christoform faith with the scriptural expression to "believe in Christ" (*credere in Christum*), in contrast to the mere propositional belief that Jesus is the Christ (*credere Christum*), which even the demons admit. The *in* with the accusative construction emphasizes that faith sets one in motion in a definitive direction toward a clear end: "to go to him by believing,"[41] as Augustine says. The righteousness of believing *in* Christ is not an anticipation, as with hope, but a synecdoche for the whole of human righteousness. It implies not just what one believes or whom one trusts but, fundamentally, what one is about.[42] Believing in Christ is righteousness.[43]

[40] See TeSelle, "Faith," 350: "In discussing faith as personal adherence, he [Augustine] suggested both that it must be supplemented by *caritas* and that it has an independent role in justification."

[41] *Io. ev. tr.* 29.6.

[42] Perhaps equivalent to the distinctions made by Sessions, *The Concept of Faith*, between the belief, personal relationship, and attitude models of faith. An attitude model of faith signifies an "existential holistic orientation" (21).

[43] A view approximated by Mohrmann, *Études sur le Latin des Chrétiens I*, 198–203, and TeSelle, "Faith," 349. Note the perceptive comment by Cary, *Inner Grace*, 59: "The

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This distinction between the three senses of *iustitia fidei* is a gradual development in Augustine's thinking and never receives systematic deployment. Augustine generally distinguishes the meaning of *iustitia fidei* in paired contrasts – between loving and fearful faith, or between hope and love, or between fear and hope – and not in the full triad. In particular, while love and faith are conceptually quite distinct, Augustine does not offer a clear definition of hope, which blends elements of both. On the one hand, Augustine implies that hope is simply the belief that one has a future good, in which case it seems to be just a kind of faith.[44] But, on the other hand, when he writes that "hope cannot exist without love," hope seems to mean love of a future good, in which case it is just a kind of love.[45] How then is hope distinguishable from love, or hopeful faith from loving faith? The difference is between a desire enkindled by an absent good and a desire enkindled by one present. Hope is the longing for an expected good, while love is the enjoyment of one possessed. When love is broadly defined as "to desire something for its own sake," hope is a love;[46] but when love is defined more narrowly as union and enjoyment, as "a movement of the mind to enjoying God for his own sake"[47] or as "willing to be present in order to enjoy [something],"[48] hope is a foretaste of love. While this distinction is not one that Augustine explicitly makes, this book will argue that it reflects numerous other distinctions, prevents contradictions within his theology of justification, and unlocks its overall intelligibility. The distinct righteousness of hopeful faith and of loving faith is one of the most important legacies of Augustine's theology of justification.

Nonetheless, even from his earliest works, there are clear hints and seeds of the overall development. In *soliloquia* (*Soliloquies*) (386–87), Augustine writes that the cleansing of the soul first depends on faith to know the real nature of health and to recognize its sickness. But since the soul is sick, it will "feel that these commands are harsh" – it will fear

Protestant doctrine of justification by faith *alone* would be impossible without this increasing psychological density of the concept of faith, which allows it to take over some of the theological functions of charity."

[44] *ench.* 2.8. See Byers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine*, 157.

[45] *ench.* 2.8.

[46] *div. qu.* 35.1: "nihil enim aliud est amare quam propter se ipsam rem aliquam appetere."

[47] *doct. chr.* 3.10.16: "caritatem voco motum animi ad fruendum deo propter ipsum."

[48] *trin.* 9.2.2: "quid est autem amare se nisi praesto sibi esse velle ad fruendum se?" Note that this definition is about love of oneself and hence refers to the love of a good already possessed.

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them – and thus "hope must be added." And in order to actually desire and carry out its enlightenment, hope must come to charity.[49] This brief passage contains all three motivations – fear, hope, and love – as growing from and within faith. Thus, while these three ways of accounting for justifying faith do not come to the reader completely pre-assembled, they are more than merely a modern hermeneutical tool. The three paradigmatic motivations for believing follow Augustine's own distinctions and his own insistence on the need to identify the range of meaning of *fides* for understanding justification. Once unpacked, distinguishing fearful, hopeful, and loving faith indispensably illuminates his theology of grace, conversion, sacramental initiation, and justification. Moreover, it shows how righteousness subsists in faith because faith is the crucible of divine desire.

## FUNDAMENTALS: *IUSTIFICARE* AND *IUSTITIA*

Augustine's doctrine of justification held several constitutive features by the height of the Pelagian controversy, the period in which it is most well-known.[50] An early overview of these features, which are familiar to many already and attested throughout Augustine's work, will provide a common basis for understanding the remainder of this project. Justification is the effective beginning of God's salvation.[51] First and foremost, justification is a free gift of grace and a work of God,[52] not a human work or accomplishment:[53] "Christ justifies; man doesn't justify."[54] Although human nature was created good in Adam, it is now universally injured and in need of restoration and pardon;[55] human nature's injury includes the inability to restore itself.[56] Augustine frequently quotes Paul to warn that, if humans could self-justify, then Christ died in vain.[57] Human cooperation is, nonetheless, essential in Augustine's view,[58] since it is not the sleeping but the willing who are

[49] *sol.* 1.6.12.

[50] Most existing scholarship on the topic has been in the form of overviews, so several short, general accounts already exist, of which the most well-known is McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2020). McGrath focuses on situating Augustine within a longer history of disputes about justification and related post-Reformation topics, such as the nature of human and divine righteousness, the relationship of faith and charity, free will, original sin, predestination, and so forth.

[51] *spir. et litt.* 29.51. [52] *ep.* 194.3.7; *c. Iul.* 2.4.9. [53] *gr. et lib. arb.* 11.23–13.25.

[54] *s.* 292.6. [55] *nat. et gr.* 3.3–5.5; *persev.* 2.4. [56] *trin.* 14.16.22.

[57] *nat. et gr.* 2.2.

[58] Augustine's clear affirmations of cooperation are always dependent on divine operation, since God causes human willing, which then cooperates with God, e.g., *gr. et lib. arb.*

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justified. Human free choice[59] is held captive by sin (*liberum arbitrium captivatum*) and has not been annihilated by the fall.[60] In a sermon from around 416, Augustine explains Philippians 3:9, "not having a righteousness of my own:"

> The whole thing is from God, not, however, as though we were asleep. . .. Indeed, there is no will except yours; there is no righteousness except God's. The righteousness of God can exist without your will, but apart from your will it cannot exist *in you*. . .. God made you without you. . . [But] he who made you without you does not justify you without you. . .. Nevertheless, he himself justifies, so that it is not your righteousness.[61]

This cooperation is in no way an independent contribution or an assent preceding God's action. On the contrary, God justifies human beings "with" them precisely insofar as he makes the unwilling become willing.

Justification, then, names God's healing work of making righteous those who are unrighteous.[62] It unites two elements: the forgiveness of sin and interior renewal. In his *contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* (*Unfinished Work in Answer to Julian*), a late work representing his mature thinking, Augustine defines justification as follows: "God, of course, justifies sinners, not only by forgiving the evil deeds they committed, but also by bestowing love so that they avoid evil and do good through the Holy Spirit."[63] God's justification of sinners entails their real rectification and restoration, but this renewal only suffices for righteousness with the erasure of sinners' past guilt. Forgiveness means that the past act is not counted against the presently renewed person: "That which is forgiven is both covered and not imputed."[64] Human righteousness always depends on God's past and ongoing pardon; indeed, "our righteousness in this life consists in the forgiveness of sins rather than the perfection of virtues,"[65] since the virtues contribute to righteousness but never reach perfection. The unworthiness of all for the gift of renewal and

17.33; it seems foreign to Augustine, then, to insist "on human passivity" and that "humans do not collaborate in their justification" (Pereira, *Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther*, 42), at least not without the qualification that the will's operation neither precedes nor follows God's justification but is the simultaneous effect of it.

[59] In order to avoid confusion between the will (*voluntas*) and free choice (*liberum arbitrium*), I avoid the common translation of *liberum arbitrium* as "free will."

[60] *c. ep. Pel.* 3.8.24. See the discussion in McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2020), 54–55.

[61] *s.* 169.13 (emphasis added).

[62] *spir. et litt.* 26.45; *trin.* 14.12.15.

[63] *c. Iul. imp.* 2.165 (see also *s.* 158.4).

[64] *nupt. et conc.* 1.33.38, where forgiveness and non-imputation are equated: "illud quod remissum est et tectum est et non inputatur."

[65] *civ.* 19.27.

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forgiveness underscores the gratuity of justification.[66] Augustine is adamant that justification is not God's recognition of who is already righteous but rather his gracious creation of a new reality.[67] By renewal and forgiveness, justification acquires a distinct beginning when it is "established."[68] But whereas forgiveness is complete once given, renewal is always incomplete and growing:[69] "we have been justified, but this righteousness can grow."[70] Nonetheless, Augustine is adamant that the imperfection of righteousness does not make it illusory or unreal.[71]

In Augustine's own idiom, the terms "Christian" (*Christianus*) and "believer" (*credens*) encompass all who profess the true faith, baptized or unbaptized, and are not synonymous with being saved or justified. Not all "believers" (*credentes*) but only the "faithful" (*fideles*) are justified,[72] that is, baptized believers, since justification requires both faith and baptism.[73] Baptism justifies because it effects the two elements of justification: its washing effects forgiveness, which Augustine links to "no condemnation" (Rom. 8:1), and its gift of the Holy Spirit provides the fulfillment of the "righteousness of the law" (Rom. 8:4).[74] Still, in this life, the justified – though truly made righteous – remain sinners because of lingering evil desires.[75] Their sins are comparatively slight (*levia*) and are pardonable (*venialia*) through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. In this sense, these practices can also be called righteousness[76] and contribute to Christian righteousness.[77] Grave (*gravia*)

[66] *c. Iul. imp.* 1.38: "[Julian:] Righteousness (*iustitia*) . . . is nothing else than a virtue that embraces everything and gives to everyone what is due without fraud and without grace (*sine gratia*)." See McGrath, "Divine Justice and Divine Equity," 316: "For Julian, divine justice means giving each his due without fraud or favour, irrespective of who he is. This concept of divine justice naturally leads to a doctrine of the justification of the *godly*; God rewards those who deserve grace with justification."

[67] *spir. et litt.* 26.45–27.47, 29.50; *ep.* 194.3.6.

[68] *s.* 158.5: "iam in ipsa iustificatione constitutus."

[69] *trin.* 14.17.23; *s.* 71.19, 33; 158.5; McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2020), 49, notes that the beginning and growth of justification seem to describe both an "event" and a "process," though Augustine of course does not use that language. Augustine generally uses *iustificare* to refer to the event; he describes any subsequent process in terms of growth and has various ways of describing the antecedent process of conversion.

[70] *s.* 158.5. [71] *pecc. mer.* 2.12.17; *s.* 156.16.

[72] For a sociological introduction to these terms that is thoroughly documented, see Rebillard, "Religious Sociology." See, among many examples, *ep.* 47.2 (ca. 399): "fideles vocantur, qui baptizantur in Christo."

[73] *nupt. et conc.* 1.33.38; *c. Iul.* 2.8.22–23; *c. litt. Pet.* 3.50.62: "quod gratia dei regeneramur mundamur iustificamur." See Schindler, "Iustificatio," 863.

[74] *s.* 152.3 (Rom. 8:1); *s.* 153.9 (Rom. 8:4).

[75] *nat. et gr.* 62.72; *persev.* 2.4; *c. Iul.* 2.4.8; *ep.* 185.9.40. [76] *perf. iust.* 8.18.

[77] *c. Iul. imp.* 2.8.23.

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or damnable sins, however, such as "impurity [e.g., adultery], apostasy, and murder,"[78] are only forgiven through rigorous penance under the bishop's supervision.[79] Without such repentance, these sins are incompatible with justification.[80]

What is the life of the justified like? Justification is not a possession, making one self-sufficiently righteous. Even the justified are in constant need of grace, especially the grace to persevere in charity and resist grave sin to the end.[81] God has predestined who will be justified and who will persevere,[82] though he works within human wills, not against them.[83] Even then, no one knows if he is predestined and will persevere in grace (or not).[84] The justified must actively choose to work out their salvation, which is why free choice is a necessary gift of God.[85] Though good works are necessary for salvation,[86] Augustine never speaks of justification by works, since works are always consequent on justification.[87] Works do contribute to the reception of eternal life as a reward;[88] nonetheless, all merits are still the result of God's help and initial gifts,[89] and so even the most meritorious good works of the justified are never less than "his own gifts."[90]

Many of these components of his mature teaching on justification only emerge clearly over time, though in several cases, Augustine explicitly changes his view. While scholars disagree on how much Augustine reversed or altered his own thinking, two points are widely accepted because Augustine himself named them in his *retractationes* (*Revisions*). First, prior to the 400s, Augustine takes the speaker in Romans 7:14–25

[78] *f. et op.* 19.34.

[79] *div. qu.* 26; *spir. et litt.* 28.48; *perf. iust.* 9.20; *civ.* 21.27; *ench.* 21.78; *c. Iul. imp.* 2.97. See also Fitzgerald, "Almsgiving;" on penance, see La Bonnardière, "Pénitence et réconciliation I;" La Bonnardière, "Pénitence et réconciliation II;" La Bonnardière, "Pénitence et réconciliation III." Neither these sources nor the widespread patristic practice is considered by Horton in his perfunctory dismissal of justifying penance in Augustine's thought (Horton, *Justification*, 1:111).

[80] Augustine's belief in the necessity of episcopal penance for the forgiveness of certain grave sins (and therefore for justification) is not a major component of his theology of justification, but it follows a well-established patristic tradition and is wholly neglected by many readers, e.g., McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2020); Horton, *Justification*, 1:111, implies that Augustine's theology of baptism denied the need for post-baptismal forgiveness through penance.

[81] *persev.* 7.15. [82] *persev.* 13.33. [83] *corrept.* 14.45.

[84] *corrept.* 13.40; *persev.* 1.1, 22.61–62. [85] *gr. et lib. arb.* 1.1–2.2.

[86] *gr. et lib. arb.* 8.19.

[87] *div. qu.* 76.1. See also Mooney, "James 2:24 Before the Reformation."

[88] *ep.* 194.5.21; *gr. et lib. arb.* 6.15, 9.21. [89] *gr. et lib. arb.* 8.20. [90] *ep.* 194.5.19.

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who says, "the law is spiritual, but I am fleshly" (7:14), to be someone in need of grace, not yet imbued by the Spirit, and thus not the apostle. After the 400s, he increasingly distances himself from this view, concluding that this passage describes the spiritual person under grace, who must constantly fight against concupiscence.[91] If not indicative of a particular change in doctrine, it does demonstrate a shift in emphasis related to justification: even the justified are never free from sin and continuously need grace. Faith's role is not its one-time acceptance of Christ and the Spirit but the continual reliance of the justified on God. Thus, as we will see, Augustine's changing reading of Romans 7 corresponds with his expanded ability to talk about justification by faith not only as a description of a past conversion from sin to righteousness but also as a description of the ongoing state of being caused by faith itself.

Second and most famously, in 396, while writing *ad Simplicianum* (*To Simplician*), Augustine becomes convinced that the initial choice to believe (the *initium fidei*) is not the basis of God's election but a result of it; God chooses or elects who, precisely, will come to faith. Crucially, this means that faith cannot be attributed solely to our free choice but must be seen as the effect of God's choice. Augustine admits that he had been "mistaken, thinking that the faith by which we believe in God is not a gift of God, but that we have it from ourselves. . .. I thought that it was our very own and something we had from ourselves that we assented to the gospel."[92] We will return to both of these changes.

## *Iustificare*

A remarkable point of clear continuity in Augustine's theology of justification is his interpretation of *iustificatio* (justification) fundamentally as "making righteous." For Augustine, justification makes the recipient righteous before God. The Latin term *iustificare* (to justify) has no classical precedents but arises in Latin Christian texts – first the *Vetus Latina* (*Old Latin*) used by Augustine and others, and then the Vulgate – to translate the Greek *dikaioun*.[93] Augustine consistently interprets *iustificare* as a compound of *iustum* (righteous) and *facere* (to make),[94] that is,

[91] *retr.* 1.23(22).1. [92] *praed. sanct.* 3.7.

[93] See McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2020), 46–47, who also notes that *dikaioun* belongs to a factitive word group in Greek just as much as *iustificare* does in Latin.

[94] *Simpl.* 1.3; *cat. rud.* 17.28; *s.* 109.33, 131.9, 169.13, 292.6; *en. Ps.* 34.14; *exp. prop. Rm.* 22; *spir. et litt.* 26.45; *ep.* 160.52, 214.4; *gr. et lib. arb.* 6.13; *praed. sanct.* 18.36. See Dodaro, "Justice," 482 and McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2020), 46–48.

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"to make righteous," just as *vivificare* means "to make (*facere*) alive (*vivum*)" and *mortificare* means "to make (*facere*) dead (*mortuum*)."[95] It is almost a tautology to call Augustine's understanding of *iustificare* factitive given its root in *facere*. Augustine does at some points recognize that Scripture uses *iustificare* to mean "to count righteous," such as when interpreting Romans 2:13 ("those who observe the law will be justified"), but even in these rare instances he explains the declaration by presupposing a prior transformation,[96] thereby reinforcing his factitive understanding of justification.[97] That Augustine is aware of but does not hold to a declarative sense of justification shows that he should not be thought of as blinded into his exegesis by a faulty Latin translation.[98] Augustine's overall reading of justification in Paul as *iustum facere* is a considered theological position rather than a philological accident.

Augustine's understanding of justification corresponds with his interpretation of the *iustitia dei* (the righteousness of God). The *iustitia dei* is not a property of God in the sense of God's own righteousness but names an outpoured gift into the justified: "not that righteousness by which God is righteous but that righteousness with which he endows a person when he justifies him."[99] In characterizing this endowed righteousness, Augustine does not use the distinction of inherent vs. imputed righteousness, the flashpoint of later disputes about the nature of justification.[100] On the one hand, Augustine clearly understands righteousness to be a property given to the justified, one "imparted (*impertita*) by God;"[101] on

[95] *s.* 292.6: "quid est iustificare? iustum facere. quomodo mortificare, mortuum facere; vivificare, vivum facere: sic et iustificare, iustum facere."

[96] *spir. et litt.* 26.45. See also Wright, "Justification in Augustine;" Fink, "Martin Bucer's *Triplex Iustificatio*," 493–94.

[97] McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2020), 47; for other uses of *iustificare*, see *civ.* 8.18 or *c. Don.* 22, where the word carries the sense of defending an argument – even here, however, it depends on the prior rightness or wrongness of what is defended.

[98] See Fink, "Martin Bucer's *Triplex Iustificatio*," 491, n. 13: "We ought not to suppose, rather condescendingly, in my view, that Augustine was incapable of re-evaluating such decisions and arriving at his own conclusions, still less that his entire soteriology was predetermined by a mistranslation of a Greek word . . . he gives evidence on more than one occasion of a willingness to correct a received text in light of better information." Fink also insightfully notes that Latin translators chose the neologism *iustificare* to translate *dikaioun* over the familiar *iudicare*, though the latter has a more forensic meaning.

[99] *spir. et litt.* 9.15: "iustitia dei, non qua deus iustus est, sed qua induit hominem, cum iustificat impium" (see also 18.31).

[100] McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2020), 49.

[101] *s.* 169.2.

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the other hand, Augustine affirms that righteousness "consists in forgiveness,"[102] which is the non-imputation of sins. Together, the imparting of righteousness and the forgiveness of sins point to the holistically restorative nature of justification in his thought, which one reader has nicely coined "ontological and sanative."[103] Because Augustine understands human righteousness to be real and appropriate to this life,[104] albeit incomplete and consisting in forgiveness, there is no evidence of a *duplex iustitia* (double righteousness) in his thought.[105] In fact, that Augustine understands *iustificare* as synonymous with transformation and *iustitia* (righteousness) as an inward gift was well recognized (and critiqued) even among many sixteenth-century Protestant admirers of Augustine.[106]

The recurrent efforts by some scholars to relativize Augustine's universally factitive understanding of justification, or to introduce an imputation of Christ's righteousness, simply misunderstand his texts and insert false dichotomies;[107] at the same time, these readers are right to note that Augustine's account is not exclusively factitive (even if it is universally so).[108] Even if the word *iustificare* is understood factitively, the surrounding theology encompasses declarative elements. Many distinctions commonly treated as irreconcilable – process vs. event, declarative vs. transformational,

[102] *civ.* 19.27: "our righteousness ... consists in the forgiveness of sins rather than in the perfection of the virtues." The contrast is not between forgiveness and virtue but between forgiveness and *perfection*. Righteousness consists in forgiveness and the virtues.

[103] Dubbelman, "Augustine's View of Justification," 53. See especially *nat. gr.* 26.29.

[104] *spir. et litt.* 36.65; *pecc. mer.* 2.12.17.

[105] *Pace* Cho, "Augustine and Bucer on Justification." See also Henninger, *S. Augustinus*.

[106] Calvin, *Institutes* 3.11.15; Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians* 3.21; Luther, "Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings," 337. On Melanchthon's private admission of his disagreement with Augustine, see Fink, "Bullshitting Augustine."

[107] See Ellingsen, "Augustinian Origins of the Reformation Reconsidered," who claims that Augustine is "right in line with" Luther (26); Cho, "Augustine and Bucer on Justification," whose argument relies on distinguishing Martin Bucer from the other Reformers. Ultimately, though, Cho simply attempts to reintroduce a split between two righteousnesses, the first by forgiveness and the second by renewal, for which there is no evidence in Augustine. Horton, *Justification*, 1:89, "Augustine bequeaths...the idea of justification as a sanctifying process. Yet there are moments when Augustine speaks of justification as neither God's inherent righteousness nor an inherent righteousness in the believer but a 'clothing' or 'endowment' with Christ's righteousness," misses that the inwardly imparted gift of righteousness, by participation in Christ, *is* the endowment. For a response, see Dubbelman, "Augustine's View of Justification."

[108] Regarding concerns that McGrath, or at least his earlier edition, tends to the exclusively transformational, see Root, "Alister McGrath on Cross and Justification."

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participatory vs. inhering, forgiveness vs. renewal – can both be found in Augustine.[109] For him, justification is forgiveness of past sins as well as renewal in love, participation in Christ from whom one's righteousness inheres, a declaration on the basis of a transformation, and an event which expands into a process. Rather than seeing Augustine as a partisan of transformation vs. declaration, infusion vs. non-imputation, perhaps the most fruitful way to receive Augustine is as a reconciler of these oft-sundered ideas and biblical texts.

If righteousness is imparted into humans in justification, how does Augustine interpret the reckoning or imputation of righteousness in Scripture, as in Romans 4:5: "his faith is counted (Aug. *deputatur*;[110] Vulg. *reputatur*; Gk. *logizetai*) as righteousness"?[111] While Augustine reads *iustificare* as synthetic – creating what is not previously there – he interprets *deputare* (to count) as analytic – God's analysis of the reality of what he has created.[112] Faith reckoned (*deputatur*) as righteousness is God's reasoned assessment (*existimare*) of what he has already created in justification. Commenting on Psalm 119:119, Augustine equates these terms: "'I have counted (*deputavi*) or considered (*putavi*) or judged (*existimavi*) all sinners on earth as violators of the law.' Our translators have had recourse to various words to represent the one Greek verb *elogisamēn*."[113] In justification, God creates the conditions of righteousness which are simultaneously the grounds for his judgment or analysis.

For Augustine, to reckon a sinner to be righteous by sheer force of declaration alone – to count someone righteous who is not – does not describe a divine act but an all too human one. Such false reckonings call to Augustine's mind precisely what the person does who wishes to "justify himself" (Luke 10:29),[114] asserting that one is righteous despite the

[109] This leads Schindler, "Imputative Rechtfertigung bei Augustin?," 422, to conclude that the contrast between forensic and factitive justification has a very limited usefulness: Augustine has forensic elements (non-imputation) and Luther has factitive ones. Schindler cites Pesch, *Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin*, 178: "…die ganze Alternative zwischen <forensischer> und <effektiver> Rechtfertigung muß heute als unglücklich bezeichnet werden" (my translation: "the whole choice between 'forensic' and 'efficacious' justification must be regarded today as unfortunate").

[110] Augustine's Latin text universally has *deputatur*, as in "credenti in eum qui iustificat impium deputatur fides eius ad iustitiam." For a few of the numerous examples, see *pecc. mer.* 1.14.18; *spir. et litt.* 31.54; *en. Ps.* 30.2.1.6.

[111] For a complete treatment of this question, see Schindler, "Imputative Rechtfertigung bei Augustin?"

[112] For these terms, see McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2020), 188–239.

[113] *en. Ps.* 118.24.7.

[114] Schindler, "Imputative Rechtfertigung bei Augustin?," 421; *spir. et litt.* 26.45.

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opposite reality. Counterfactual declarations describe the tendency of human judgments to declare some to be just or sinners who are really the opposite in the sight of God, as when ignorant or corrupt human beings acquit the guilty or condemn the innocent. God's "reckoning" is often contrary to human estimations, but it is never contrary to the reality; in the case of justification the reality "reckoned" is the very one God has re-created: "'believing in him who justifies the impious' (Rom. 4:5), that is, who makes (*facit*) the pious from the impious with the result that 'faith is counted (*deputetur*) as righteousness' (Rom. 4:5)."[115] God makes the unrighteous righteous and then rightly "counts (*deputatur*)" them among the righteous.

### *Iustitia*

As a lifelong admirer of Cicero, it is not surprising to see that as early as the 380s, Augustine adopted Cicero's famous definition of *iustitia* (the one Latin term translated by both "righteousness" and "justice"): to render to each their due.[116] In this sense, *iustitia* is justice, one of the classical four cardinal virtues. Frequently, however, Augustine reinterprets *iustitia* as the right ordering[117] of all things in love, delight, or charity (by his own insistence, there is no difference in meaning between these terms).[118] According to Augustine, love is not an emotion but a stable disposition to have specific desires or impulses toward actions; this disposition depends on beliefs about the relative value of goods.[119] In this order of loves, he follows Cyprian, Lactantius, and Ambrose,[120] though Augustine also harmonizes this approach with Cicero's by noting that love expresses the true "due" which anyone is owed.[121]

[115] *ep.* 140.20.50.

[116] Cicero, *de inventione rhetorica* 2.160. Although this definition appears comparatively more frequently in the 380s and 390s and then largely disappears during the heart of the Pelagian controversy in the 410s, it can still be found in the late 420s in *de civitate dei* 19.21. See Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 4, who notes *ord.* 1.19, 2.22; *div. qu.* 31.1; *lib. arb.* 1.27; *en. Ps.* 83.11.

[117] On the Platonic roots of this conception of ordered justice, see Plato, *Republic* 443d, as well as Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 5. Augustine likely received it through Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.3.

[118] *civ.* 14.7. See van Bavel, "Love," 509; Byers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine*, 47, 98.

[119] Byers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine*, 96–99.

[120] Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 4; Dodaro, "Iustitia," 869.

[121] *mor.* 1.25.44; *div. qu.* 61.4; *trin.* 8.7.10.

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In this way, the Latin *iustitia* suggests not only justice but also righteousness, or right relationship between the human person and God and all others through God.[122] Justification, then, means the right reordering of human beings in relation to God and each other,[123] and righteousness is love because love disposes one to relate to every good exactly as much as its goodness deserves. Love is the reason for every movement of the soul, and thus the root of every action. And yet, although Augustine often equates righteousness and love,[124] he also does the same with faith;[125] thus, *iustitia* as the *ordo amoris* (order of love) does not lead to a reduction of *iustitia* to love alone but invites a deeper analysis of the relationship between faith, love, and justification.

Is the righteousness of the justified a righteousness created in them, or does it exist only by participation in God, or even only in the divine judgment? Augustine makes it clear that in justification, God both makes human beings participants in his righteousness and renews them through a created righteousness within them; indeed, created righteousness is the effect and form of their participation, without which they could not be said to be participants. One of Augustine's clearest articulations of the real distinction between the divine righteousness and the righteousness created in human beings in their justification arises in *confessiones* (*Confessions*) 12 as part of his interpretation of Sirach [Ecclesiasticus] 1:4, "wisdom was created before everything." There Augustine uses justification to provide an analogy for the difference between divine wisdom and created wisdom. Passages such as this speaking of created wisdom, as with Proverbs 8, were a commonplace in fourth-to-fifth-century Christological debates insofar as they suggested the Arian view that the wisdom incarnate in Christ was the first of God's creation – incomparably exalted, but nonetheless a creature, and thus ontologically distinct and subordinate to God.[126] For defenders of Nicaea, the metaphysical distinction between the created and the uncreated was essential for responding to Arianism. Augustine denies that Sirach 1:4 speaks of Christ because such an interpretation rests on a failure to distinguish the created wisdom from its uncreated cause, which is "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24).

In response, Augustine adopts a common Nicene interpretation: the wisdom named in Sirach 1:4 is not God's own, proper wisdom – which

[122] See Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 4.
[123] McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2020), 50.
[124] *nat. et gr.* 70.84.
[125] *en. Ps.* 32.2.1.4.
[126] See, for example, Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* 1.

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must be co-eternal with God lest we admit that God was for a time without wisdom – but a created wisdom within the world, "an intellectual nature which is light from contemplation of light."[127] He then explains that the difference between God's own wisdom and created wisdom is the "difference between light which illuminates and that which is illuminated."[128] In this analogy, the former light is God's own divine light as illuminating (*illuminat*), while the latter light is the creature's received light as illuminated (*illuminatur*). The former is God, and the latter is created.

Augustine then adds an analogy to *iustitia*, saying that there is also an equivalent difference "between wisdom which creates (*creat*) and wisdom which is created (*creata est*), just as between the righteousness which justifies (*iustitiam iustificantem*) and the righteousness made in justification (*iustitiam quae iustificatione facta est*). For even we are said to be your righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21)."[129] The former righteousness – justifying righteousness – is the proper righteousness of God by which he justifies, just as he has a wisdom by which he makes wise and a light by which he illumines. The latter righteousness – the righteousness made by God in justification – is the created impress of God's righteousness, just as God's own wisdom makes its recipients wise with a created wisdom and God's own light makes its recipients illumined with a created illumination. The created impress is the correlate of the efficacy of the divine form itself. God's wisdom is the source of all human wisdom, just as God's righteousness is the source of all human righteousness. This passage not only demonstrates but explains why the righteousness of the justified is not identical with God's own righteousness but is, instead, something created by him.[130]

To collapse the two *iustitiae* – the divine and human – by proposing that justification entails only a human entrance into the divine righteousness or only a reckoning of divine righteousness is to fall into the same metaphysical confusion of the uncreated and the created which plagues Arianism. The righteousness of the justified is not God's uncreated

[127] *conf.* 12.15.20. [128] *conf.* 12.15.20. [129] *conf.* 12.15.20.

[130] Malloy, *Engrafted into Christ*, 26, in his solid presentation of Augustine, cautiously avoids attributing too much to Augustine: "[Augustine] inchoately anticipates Aquinas's contention that the formal cause of justification is a created justice." But *conf.* 12.15.20 would seem to prove that Augustine, who is acutely aware of the difference between the created and the uncreated, in fact already does understand justification to mean the creation of righteousness. See also Dubbelman, "Augustine's View of Justification," 65, whose essay quotes this passage, but without any metaphysical framing.

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righteousness indwelling. It is a created righteousness made by the uncreated *iustitia iustificans* (righteousness which justifies). But there is nonetheless an analogous metaphysical continuity between the righteousness of God justifying and the righteousness of the human being justified, just as there is an analogous relationship between the wisdom of God *illuminans* (illuminating) and the human being *illuminatus* (illuminated) with created light. They are not identical, but the latter is an effect and reflection of the former. Augustine can speak of "my righteousness," but also "not as properly mine or given to me by myself," since it comes from God.[131] Moreover, just as with light and wisdom, all created righteousness possesses its distinct reality by participation in God's righteousness, and the more one participates, the more righteous one becomes;[132] the created always depends on the creator.

Augustine's understanding of created righteousness undergirds the fundamental realism of his whole theology of justification[133] and, as this passage from *confessiones* shows, stands in basic continuity with his fundamental understanding of the relationship between God and the world, grace, and nature. As a testimony to this realism, Augustine says near the end of his life that "those human beings who are reborn in Christ are made righteous by the same grace by which Christ was born a righteous man."[134] The Christian's righteousness is as real as Christ's, since it shares the same source and nature as Christ's. In short, this passage from *confessiones* provides an unusual level of clarity that Augustine understands the righteousness of the justified human being to be a created righteousness, not the uncreated righteousness of Christ, even though this created righteousness exists only by continuous participation in the uncreated.[135]

[131] *en. Ps.* 70.1.4.

[132] *ep.* 120.4.19: "though righteousness exists in itself, it also comes to be in us when we live righteously by clinging to it, and we are more or less righteous the more or the less we cling to it;" the same passage also speaks of our righteousness "by participation."

[133] Schindler, "Imputative Rechtfertigung bei Augustin?," 422, comparing Luther and Augustine: "Of course, both theologians are united in the conviction that the idea of merit freely earned by human beings or even some small advance payment to receive grace never comes into consideration. What distinguishes them, however, is Augustine's thoroughly held conviction that, in every case, justification means the conversion of the human will through the work of God inwardly, while for Luther salvation depends on the externality of the word of forgiveness and therefore of justification" (my translation).

[134] *c. Iul. imp.* 1.140. See Dubbelman, "Augustine's View of Justification," 74.

[135] On the related question of created charity/grace, see the brief treatment by Riga, "Created Grace in St. Augustine," which offers some evidence for seeing charity as a

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## WHY JUSTIFICATION?

In the twentieth century, numerous concerns have been expressed about the enduring relevance or fittingness of a doctrine of justification – by implication, this includes the enduring relevance of Augustine's doctrine of justification. Biblical scholar Michael Gorman wrote in 2009, "The doctrine of justification is in crisis, or at least in flux."[136] Since at least the early twentieth century there has been a growing sense that justification as a theological *locus* has lost its relevance[137] or ought to be abandoned,[138] while the rise of the New Perspective on Paul has challenged many of the assumptions surrounding traditional Pauline theology stretching back to Augustine about the meaning of justification, works, or *pistis Christou*.[139] Past approaches to justification have often retreated into well-worn polemical ruts. Concerns about their narrow focus on the status of the individual before God have often spurred more Christological or ecclesiological approaches to Christian salvation, because the theology of justification seems locked on the individual's binary relationship to God, rather than the corporate dimension of the Church or the cosmic scope of Christ. The Augustinian doctrine of justification by faith also seems to necessitate a soteriological exclusivism, relying as it does on the anthropological premise that it is impossible for any will to be converted to love without the intellect's conversion to right faith. Is it not the case that this undermines the will's transcendental orientation to the good? Lastly, even if there is a historical value to justification among Western Christians due to the post-Reformation divides between Catholics and Protestants, the landmark Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification might suggest that these issues are no longer in need of further historical investigation. All of these causes have left justification seeming exhausted and exhausting.

Such was not the case for Augustine, who thought a doctrine of justification was necessary and perennially important. For Augustine, the absence of a theology of justification by grace is a distinguishing feature of Pelagianism. In 418, at the height of the Pelagian controversy

created participation in the uncreated Holy Spirit, though he does not mention *confessiones* 12, which seems far more definitive.

[136] Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 41. [137] McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2020), 393.

[138] Campbell and DePue, *Beyond Justification*.

[139] Recently, see McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (2020), 397–409; Thomas, *Paul's "Works of the Law" in the Perspective of Second Century Reception*; Prothro, *Both Judge and Justifier*.

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and after several years of writing in response to the theology of Caelestius and Pelagius, Augustine concludes in *de gratia Christi et de peccato originali* (*The Grace of Christ and Original Sin*):

> In all the writings of Pelagius and of Caelestius that I have been able to read, I have never found that they confessed, as one should confess, this grace by which we are justified, that is, by which 'the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us' (Rom. 5:5).[140]

At its most basic level, then, Augustine concludes that a theology of justification is a necessary implication (and safeguard) of the real efficacy of divine grace. Conversely, the absence of a theology of gratuitous justification is a telltale sign of Pelagianism. Indeed, Julian of Eclanum will later deny that God's righteousness is anything other than his perfectly just rewarding of evil and punishment of good.[141] While Pelagius acknowledged multiple effects of grace – including the gift of free choice, the teaching of the law, the example of Christ, and the forgiveness of sins – Augustine insists that these alone are insufficient apart from the grace of God converting the unrighteous through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Unsurprisingly, what emerge as the two core Pelagian errors – neglecting the effect of original sin on human nature and the necessity of divine help for the free return to God[142] – correspond with the twofold effect of justification: forgiveness and renewal. Justification assumes its importance in Augustine's thought in order to defend the reality of grace, and, as Pierre-Marie Hombert has persuasively argued, a primary reason for defending grace is to defend the necessary conditions for cultivating gratitude and humility in the Christian life.[143] Augustine's doctrine of justification makes his understanding of grace concretely applicable. As such, it also makes concrete humanity's humble thanksgiving to God. Hence, even Christ, says Augustine, "again and again praises this righteousness of faith when he speaks of the Holy Spirit."[144]

Augustine's analysis of the Pelagian controversy also shows why analyzing Augustine's thinking on justification provides crucial insight into ongoing scholarly debates about the development of Augustine's theology of operative grace, especially the status of his early thought. Peter Brown's

[140] *gr. et pecc. or.* 1.30.31.
[141] *c. Iul. imp.* 1.38: quoting Julian, the righteousness of God is "without fraud or grace (*sine gratia*)."
[142] TeSelle, "Augustine and the Pelagian Controversy," 1: "The Pelagian controversy had its origin in two doctrinal questions;" Burns, *Operative Grace*, 119.
[143] Hombert, *Gloria Gratiae*. [144] *pecc. mer.* 2.32.52.

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*Augustine of Hippo* (1967) famously judged the early Augustine to be "on paper, more Pelagian than Pelagius."[145] In his *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace* (1980), Patout Burns argued that Augustine in *ad Simplicianum* (396) understood the operation of God's vocation as "mov[ing] the will by giving knowledge," as opposed to a grace "internal to the will."[146] Many scholars have taken Burns to be arguing for the same conclusion, that the early Augustine held a Pelagian reduction of grace to the gifts of knowledge, free choice, and moral exemplarity. Carol Harrison has especially worried that Burns leaves us with a "Pelagian [early] Augustine, one who defended the role of knowledge, the law, and the intellect, as sufficient to motivate the free will of human beings."[147] Some, such as Brian Dobell[148] and Phillip Cary,[149] have expressed some sympathy for the hypothesis that the early Augustine articulated a Pelagian understanding of the work and necessity of grace for salvation.

A stronger response to the hypothesis of a Pelagian early Augustine is located in Augustine's theology of justification. According to the mature Augustine, the distinguishing failure of Pelagius's theology of grace is not that it counts knowledge, nature, free choice, or moral examples as graces. Instead, by Augustine's own analysis in 418, the distinguishing failure of Pelagius's theology of grace is the absence of a grace of justification.[150] By this metric, it is impossible to count the early Augustine as a Pelagian since an account of this grace is fully present in Augustine even before *ad Simplicianum*: it is the grace of charity poured out by the Holy Spirit in baptism.[151] This is the necessary, transformative grace of justification, which is received by faith, a grace which Augustine's earliest anti-

[145] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 141. See also, McCue, "*Simul iustus et peccator*," 83: "It seems to me at least possible that Pelagius may have been surprised to find Augustine so firmly opposed to him, so much do the 397–412 writings leave themselves open to a Pelagianizing interpretation."

[146] Burns, *Operative Grace*, 44.

[147] Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology*, 275. See also Katayanagi, "The Last Congruous Vocation." Though Harrison makes an excellent case for the ubiquity and necessity of grace in the early Augustine, I worry that her response speaks past the precise analysis of Cary and Burns.

[148] Dobell, *Augustine's Intellectual Conversion*, 87–88, 101–102.

[149] Cary, *Inner Grace*, 85.

[150] This is not to say that this is Pelagius's only failure, in Augustine's eyes, but it is consistently what Augustine identifies as his failure regarding grace. See also *retr.* 2.63 (37); *nat. et gr.* 11.12.

[151] *exp. Gal.* 17.6–10, 20.7, 44.4; *exp. prop. Rm.* 44; *Simpl.* 1.1.14, which is still before the famous insights of 1.2.

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Pelagian works consistently find Pelagius avoiding.[152] Pelagius, by contrast, "wants the charity whereby we live good and holy lives to come not from God to us but from ourselves."[153] Hence, even if the early Augustine does not hold his mature account of predestination as found in the late 420s, this does not make him a Pelagian. And yet, the reason for this is best seen in terms of his theology of the Spirit's gift of justification, since this is what Augustine himself identifies as Pelagius's root error. While it is true that the mature Augustine increasingly expands and specifies when the Spirit's operation of love is needed to move the will, including the will to believe, even Augustine's early view is fully in keeping with his contention in the 410s that Pelagius's failure is a failure to account for the transformative grace of justification.

This study of Augustine's theology of justification will reveal, moreover, that while Augustine's famous letter *ad Simplicianum* in 396 does evince a change in his understanding of God's election, it leaves the ordering and mechanics of justification unchanged. Augustine's new conviction that election precedes any human merit does not undermine his earlier account of faith as obtaining the grace of justification. In fact, even the very late Augustine will still offer a way of defending the Ambrosian understanding that faith leads to, even merits, justification.[154] Nonetheless, as Augustine's thought continues to develop, he gives increasing attention to how grace elicits assent and transforms the desires of faith from fear to hope to love in Christ. This analysis leads to a more precise reading of the development of Augustine's theology of grace.

Despite Augustine's insight into justification in the Pelagian controversy, it would be a mistake to think that the effect of grace was an abstract, polemical matter for Augustine. Rather, for Augustine, a doctrine of justification is the explanatory theological correlate of the phenomenon of Christian conversion. Its absence in Pelagius's thought is detrimental to a truly theological account of Christian experience. Without a theology of justification, Christian conversion is just a human phenomenon that loses its divine origin, orientation, and narrative. It instead appears as a sociological change of religious identity, as a psychological experience, or as a moral reform. With a doctrine of justification, Christian conversion is illuminated theologically as a work of God. For Augustine, with the recognition of such a uniquely divine

[152] *nat. et gr.* 17.18, 23.35, 63.74. [153] *retr.* 1.23(22).1.
[154] See Smith, "Justification and Merit Before the Pelagian Controversy."

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work comes the correspondingly singular public glorification of God: "What work is more magnificent than to justify a sinner?"[155]

More specifically, Augustine's theology of justification is meant to provide a properly theological account of Christian experiences and sacramental practice within the life of the Church. As subsequent chapters will uncover, Augustine's theology of justification by faith – that faith justifies because it seeks and receives the grace of charity – is best understood as a theological commentary on the catechumenate. Who is the one Scripture is describing "who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly" (Rom. 4:5)? It is the catechumen who brings nothing to the sacrament of baptism except his sins and confidence that God promises to justify those incorporated into Christ by bestowing the Holy Spirit. That catechumen's baptism provides a singular image encapsulating justification by faith. For Augustine, these visible, ecclesial practices cannot be seen in a merely human way but must be recognized as what they most deeply are: signs of God's inward work of justification. Thus, at least taken positively, Augustine's theology of justification provides an interpretive lens for uniting Pauline exegesis and sacramental theology.

By analogy, just as fourth-to-fifth-century bishops such as Ambrose and Cyril of Jerusalem engaged in mystagogical catechesis for the recently baptized by discoursing on the mysteries of the creed, baptism, anointing, and the Eucharist,[156] Augustine sees justification as part of the Church's mystagogy. An account of justification reveals the mystery and efficacy of grace in the process of initiation, from the initial assent of the catechumen to Christian doctrine to the final outpouring of grace in baptism. As Augustine's theology of grace grows and develops, his intention is never less than to provide a richer, fuller account of the role of grace in every aspect of the Church's life and Christian experience. Augustine's various distinctions – congruous vocation and interior infusion, conception in grace and in birth, aid and indwelling, *sub lege* (under the law) and *sub gratia* (under grace), operative grace and cooperative grace – are never polemical abstractions. They serve to reveal more and more of the real presence of divine grace in ecclesial activities.

[155] *en. Ps.* 110.3 (see also *Io. ev. tr.* 72.3).

[156] On this genre, see Ambrose, *On the Mysteries*; Ambrose, *On the Sacraments*; Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration*; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catecheses*. See also Mazza, *Mystagogy*; Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*. For an introduction, see Anatolios, "Sacraments in the Fourth Century."

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It is for these reasons that we cannot accept the view that Augustine did not have a doctrine of justification, and it is incorrect that he devoted no letters, sermons, or treatises to the topic, as is occasionally asserted.[157] On the contrary, Augustine wrote numerous letters where justification is a central issue, preached frequently on the topic, and named it a central focus, declared it the greatest of God's works in his sermons, and titled a whole treatise after it: *de perfectione iustitiae hominis* (*The Perfection of Human Righteousness*).[158] But most fundamentally, Augustine makes the absence of a doctrine of Christian justification the defining *lacuna* in Pelagianism, which would entail the ironic conclusion that, if Augustine did lack a doctrine of justification, he was simultaneously by his own standard a Pelagian.

As this chapter's opening quotation of *epistula* 177 stresses, however, what gives life and interpretive purchase to Augustine's theology of justification can only be understood through its grounding in the expansive, polyvalent mystery of faith. Faith provides the consistent root for the ecclesial context of justification, connects justification with the whole of Scripture rather than a few over-emphasized Pauline passages, and unfolds the psychological and Christological depth of justification. Attending to Augustine's theology of justification under the more profound heading of his theology of faith places Augustine's legacy in fresh perspective and conveys how and why he found theological vitality in justification.

## DEVELOPMENT AND MEANING

My argument proposes that Augustine's full theology of justification by faith requires a chronological analysis, since this chronological analysis is

[157] Wright, "Justification in Augustine," 55: "Augustine. . .certainly never devoted a treatise or a sermon or a letter, and barely even a whole chapter or section of one of these, to it. So a good case could be made for holding that Augustine did not have a doctrine of justification;" Pereira, *Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther*, 232, calls it a "marginal issue," adding, "Augustine never dedicated any specific work or chapter of a work to the issue of justification. There is no known letter or sermon in which he addressed the issue of justification in a precise and focused one." Particularly in Wright and Pereira, one wonders if their denial that Augustine has a doctrine of justification arises from a desire to marginalize what Augustine *does* say about justification and in order to bring him more in line with these authors' own views on justification.

[158] That Augustine lacked a doctrine of justification would be true only in the most reductively relativistic sense of what counts as having a "doctrine," as if we were to also say that he lacked a doctrine of the Trinity because he lacked Boethius's definition of a person.

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what exposes both his undifferentiated and his differentiated uses of *fides* and thus the pluripotency inherent in speaking of justification by faith. At the same time, the approach of this project is not strictly chronological. It seeks instead the overarching movements of Augustine's development and its major themes. Works that cannot be reliably dated are still mentioned if they highlight or accentuate a particular theme.

A developmental approach spans Augustine's theological career while attending to how his thought expanded, deepened, and responded to conceptual challenges. Following Johann Sebastian Drey (1777–1853) and John Henry Newman (1801–1890), I use the term development to refer to a natural feature of all ideas in proportion to their intrinsic intellectual fecundity.[159] Development signifies something more specific than intellectual change and distinct from self-correction. Ideas, as mental images, can be mentally examined under a great number of aspects; a living idea is one which "is of a nature to arrest and possess the mind" and thus is under continuous examination.[160] The development of Augustine's account of justification by faith, then, can be viewed as a natural consequence of his continuous mental examination of the idea of the *iustitia fidei*. The development of multiple ways of accounting for justification by faith is not a result of indecision or inconsistency but a sign of the diverse aspects under which the single, capacious idea of the *iustitia fidei* can be viewed.

This expansive, polyvalent understanding of Augustine's reading of the *iustitia fidei* does not deny that there is a baseline meaning to *credere* (believing). Rather, it posits that the baseline meaning is inflected by the motivating affection of faith, thereby acquiring a unique connotation and meaning, and that this inflection is significant enough to produce a distinct idiom for each state of believing, such as *credere Christum* vs. *credere in Christum*. The idea that faith can be polysemic is reflected in Augustine's exegetical theory, which defends the possibility of multiple meanings to Scripture and does not require that each biblical author use the same word with the same meaning or connotation.[161] In fact, it is precisely through exegesis that Augustine finds that Scripture demands a polysemic account of faith.

[159] Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 29: "From the nature of the human mind, time is necessary for the full comprehension and perfection of great ideas;" Drey, *Brief Introduction*, 190.
[160] Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 36.
[161] *doctr. chr.* 3.27.38; *conf.* 12.31.42–12.32.43.

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Development can include adjustment and reexamination, but its use does not signify decay, rejection, or reversal. On this use of the term, Augustine's already noted change of view on election and the *initium fidei* (the beginning of faith) in 396 is best described as a correction or reversal, not a development, insofar as it is judged to be inconsistent with the idea itself. This reversal certainly affects his future theology of grace; still, his later thinking on grace can be read as a further development of that insight into the gratuity of the *initium fidei*. There are certainly instances of discontinuity and self-correction in Augustine's thought, but development as used here is fundamentally a kind of expansive newness in continuity. It reflects the distinction Augustine makes between instances in which he denies his earlier views and instances in which he "made progress" (*profectus*)[162] in the long course of his writing. In some cases, he makes revisions or reversals; but in other cases, he says explicitly what he had earlier held implicitly,[163] or he learns to say what he had neither previously denied nor imagined.[164] These are developments. As he says, "I think that, as I wrote, I made progress by the mercy of God, but not that I started off with perfection."[165]

[162] *persev.* 12.30: "nemo, ut opinor, esset tam iniustus atque invidus, qui me proficere prohiberet;" *praed. sanct.* 4.8.
[163] *persev.* 21.54–55.
[164] *retr.* 1.23(22).1, 2.1(28).1, regarding the subject of Romans 7.
[165] *persev.* 21.55.

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