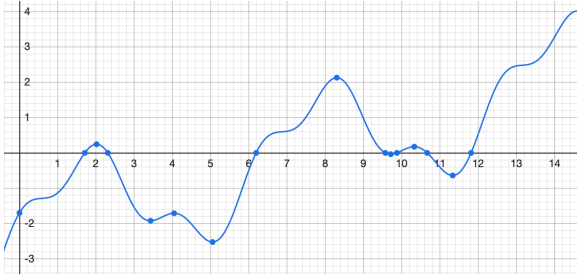


Justification – Christ our righteousness

The heresies of medieval (and modern) Roman Catholicism



“When a coin the coffer rings,
A soul from Purgatory springs”
[attributed to Johann Tetzel, indulgence salesman]



The Reformation



“Is [the Christian] Perfectly righteous? No, for he is at the same time both a sinner and a righteous man [*simul peccator et iustus*]; a sinner in fact, but a righteous man by the sure imputation and promise of God.” [Martin Luther, Lectures on Romans (1515)]

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, **his faith is counted as righteousness**, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God **counts righteousness** apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord **will not count** his sin.” (Romans 4:4–8)

Notice there are two sides to this. It’s not just that our sin is not counted against us. But righteousness is counted to us. Where does this righteousness come from? It is Christ’s righteousness, not our own – an “alien” righteousness (see 1 Corinthians 1:30, perhaps alluding to Jeremiah 23:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

That’s why Paul can say

“[Christ] was delivered up for our trespasses and **raised for our justification**.” (Romans 4:25)

There is an important parallel between the imputation of Christ’s righteousness and the imputation of Adam’s sin

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:12, 18–19).

The New Perspective



According to the former Bishop of Durham, N.T. Wright, “Righteousness” means “covenant membership”

“But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a **righteousness of my own** that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the **righteousness from God** that depends on faith” (Philippians 3:7-9)

Compare Wright, *The Kingdom New Testament*:

Does that sound as though my account was well in credit? Well maybe; but whatever I had written in on the profit side, I calculated it instead as a loss – because of the Messiah. Yes, I know that’s weird, but there’s more: I calculate everything as loss, because knowing King Jesus as my Lord is worth far more than everything else put together! In fact, because of the Messiah I’ve suffered the loss of everything, and I now calculate it as trash, so that my profit may be the Messiah, and that I may be discovered in him, not having my covenant status defined by Torah, but the status which comes through the Messiah’s faithfulness: the covenant status which is given to faith

For Wright, Justification defines what is true about us – we are members of God’s people – but *it doesn’t change our status or our legal standing*.

The problem is the words “righteousness” and “justification” don’t mean a declaration of covenant membership; they are more like a legal verdict. (see e.g. Isaiah 5:22-23)

Fruit of the doctrine of justification

Love of Christ

Assurance

Obedience