

Thought Paper on Legal Justification and Justification by Faith

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Introduction

Justification lies at the heart of the gospel. The gospel is the good news about Christ. He is the gospel. Wherever Christ is, there is justification. Our union, by faith, with Christ is the reason that we experience justification. Union with Christ and justification by faith must be understood in relation to each other. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the concept of justification. This will include the legal or forensic aspect and also the experiential or faith aspect.G

Some persons get very nervous because of the use of the term “legal justification.” It is used to give a practical demonstration of what Christ did on Calvary in behalf of mankind in lifting the sentence of condemnation that belongs to mankind because of transgression of God’s law. Some people will not use the term “legal justification” because it is not found in Scripture. These tend to look at the Bible from a verbal inspirational perspective. This perspective is, at times, carried over into the reading of Ellen White. If she does not use the term, these persons will not. These and others do the same with the writings of Jones and Waggoner. If it is not verbally found in their writings, it is not acceptable.

However, quite the contrary, for the most part the Bible is not verbally inspired. A few exceptions are found as follows: 1) in the giving of the ten commandments by God; 2) most time prophecies; and 3) angels with messages directly from God. Notwithstanding these exceptions, the Bible is thought inspired. This being so, we must search for accurate concepts and principles used in the Bible.

For instance, there are no terms in Scripture for the following: substitution, vicarious, representative, objective, subjective, prevenient grace, common grace, investigative judgment, presumption of innocence, moral influence, and surrender (which is the very substance of Christ’s teachings). So, the question to be asked and answered is: “Are these concepts biblically true?”

There was a time when justification was generally understood to be a legal term. BDAG defines justification as follows: “**δικαίωσις, εως, ἡ** *justification, vindication, acquittal* **Ro 4:25 ... acquittal that brings life 5:18.”**¹ In conjunction with the noun, BDAG likewise defines the verb and adverb in legal terms. However, used adverbially, both the legal and the

¹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000). *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed.) (250). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

experientially aspects are presented: “**δικαίως** adverb of δίκαιος. □ **pertaining to being just or right in a juridical sense, justly, in an upright manner;** □ **pertaining to quality of character, thought, or behavior, correctly, justly, uprightly.**”² (This second aspect will be addressed later under the heading: “Justification by faith”).

Easton defines justification as “a forensic term, opposed to condemnation. As regards its nature, it is the judicial act of God. . . . It is the act of a judge and not of a sovereign. The law is not relaxed or set aside. . . .”³

Our own *Bible Dictionary* defines it as an “enactment,” a “righteous deed,” a “judicial sentence,” a “declaration of right” and an “acquittal.”⁴

The “legal justification” concept should not be a strange doctrine to Christians, especially Seventh-day Adventists with our strong insistence on the validity of the law of God and the pre-advent investigative judgment, each of which is recognized as a legal requirement (law) and a legal procedure (investigation) according to judicial procedural rules. Most non-Adventists have no clue as to what the investigative judgment is about. It is true that confusion exists concerning this concept, but shall we abandon the phrase because some are bewildered by the term?

Today, in the Christian world, there is additional confusion over meanings such as “the scapegoat,” “the atonement,” how one is “saved,” etc. Shall we therefore abandon the use of these words because confusion abounds among other Christians? Or should we educate people concerning their meanings?

Regarding the concept of justification, the question that should be addressed is, “When did the word ‘justification’ cease to be a legal term?” The Bible abounds with the concept of legal justification. Therefore, this is not the time to abandon ship over its forensic nature.

Justification has to do with the legal side of salvation. It is a judicial term, a word of the law courts. It is the sentence of a judge in judgment. It is the gracious act of God, as Judge, in the high court of Heaven by which He pronounced a decree of restoration to Divine favor concerning the fallen race because of the Representative of humanity who in His death

² Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed.) (250). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

³ Easton, M. (1996, c1897). *Easton's Bible Dictionary*.

⁴ *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (635). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

exhausted the penalty for man's transgressions of the law. God's justice was complied with in the death penalty contained in the sentence of condemnation imposed on the fallen human race in its Representative.

“Justice moved from its high and awful position, and the heavenly hosts, the armies of holiness, drew near to the cross, bowing with reverence; for at the cross justice was satisfied.”⁵

In our age, the doctrine of justification has faded into the background while the more experiential teachings of regeneration and sanctification are most prominent.

Francis Piper's observation is correct:

“[I]t is a fact that modern Protestant theology, which by the denial of Inspiration has surrendered the Scripture principle and develops doctrine from ‘experience’ and other subjective sources, has discarded the Christian doctrine of justification.”⁶

Justification is not just a nice doctrine; it is the key to our restoration to favor with God. There is need for an understanding of the distinction between the *cause* of justification and its *condition*. The legal aspect of the cross is the *cause*. Our exercise of faith is the *condition* for receiving that legal aspect of justification.

The word “justification” is a legal term that cannot be truthfully denied. It comes out of the legal genre characterized by the subject matter of court language dealing especially with condemnation and acquittal. The opposite of justification is condemnation. There has to be a sufficient legal reason for justification as well as for condemnation.

The Biblical Use

In its first uses in Scripture, the Hebrew verb “to justify” (*sdq*) is directly connected to judicial proceedings with the accompanying legal/forensic meaning. First term uses of the word are neither corporate nor universal. The individual and particular applications come before all other uses in the Bible. This is not to deny the corporate and universal uses as associated with the plan of redemption, but the counter point here is that the corporate and universal aspects are not the initial emphasis in the use of the word. The main point is that it is a legal term.

⁵ Ellen White, “The Signs of the Times,” June 5, 1893.

⁶ Francis Piper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol.2, p.555.

Consider the very first use of the term in Scripture. The word *sdq* refers to a judicial clearing of persons charged with theft:

“Then Judah said, ‘What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear (*sdq*) ourselves? (Gen. 44:16). *The New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*, puts it this way: “So Judah said, ‘What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves?’”

We need to remember that the principle of first use or mention⁷ must have a strong influence in the interpretation of the Hebrew term *sdq*. However, not only are the first uses of *sdq* given in legal settings and forensic transactions, the same meaning is predominant throughout the Old Testament. A sampling of this follows.

In Exodus chapters 21-23 God detailed the ten moral commandments and also instructed His people in civil laws of justice. He gave explicit instructions regarding lying and murdering: “Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify (*sdq*) the wicked” (Ex 23:7). In Israel’s wilderness wanderings, God established the legal system. He gave explicit instructions for carrying out legal proceedings, by judges, for justification of the innocent or condemnation and judicial punishment for those guilty of criminal activity:

“If there be a dispute between men, and they go to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify (*sdq*) the righteous, and condemn the wicked, then it shall be, if the wicked deserves to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows” (Deut 25:1).

Here again, the terms *justify* and *condemn* are set down as opposites in a judicial procedure.

Later, Solomon in his dedication prayer for the temple joined the legal language of judgment concerning justification and condemnation with oath taking:

“When anyone sins against his neighbor, and is forced to take an oath, and comes and takes an oath before Your altar in this temple, then hear in heaven, and act and judge your servants, condemning the wicked, bringing his way on his head, and justifying (*sdq*) the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness” (1Kings 8:31, 32; also 2 Chron 6:23).

⁷ The First Mention Principle: The first mention of a subject or word stands connected with its use found later. This is a sub-set to the Context Principle where light is given upon a subject either in near or remote passages bearing upon the same subject or term.

Before this David used the word in its legal sense (Psa 51:4). He refers to the judicial clearing of God when He is judged. David confessed his sin against God and His confession “justified” God. Paul cites this verse in Rom 3:4, likewise, in a legal setting.

Isaiah wrote about both nations and individuals in a legal context:

“Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring out their witnesses (judicial language), that they may be justified (*sdq*): or let them hear, and say, ‘It is truth’.... Put me in remembrance; let us contend (judicial language) together; state your case that thou may be acquitted (*sdq*)” (margin: “justified”) (Isa 43:9, 26).

If the people of the nations could accurately describe the past and tell the future it would be judicial evidence that they have the truth. Also, if individuals had rational answers with which to meet their accusations they should use them and be justified. But they have them not.

Not only do we observe the legal aspect of justification in the Old Testament, we find it in the New Testament as well. This is especially so in those passages where justification is in close legal association, but in contrast, with condemnation which is another judicial term:

“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge [judicial language] against God’s elect? It is God who justifies; who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (Rom 8:31-34; see also 5:16,18 and Matt 12:37).

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote of the forensic aspect of justification:

“For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not justified by this: but he who judges me is the Lord” (1Cor 4:4). The NET puts it this way: “I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.”

The final use of the forensic aspect of justification as used in Scripture is found in Rev 22:11. Here we observe justification’s legal connection at the close of the pre-Advent judgment. The verse reveals legal declarations based on a final judicial investigative procedure:

“He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous (**δίκαιος**: “A righteous person is one justified by faith”⁸), let him be righteous (**δικαιοσύνη**: “quality or state of juridical correctness with focus on redemptive action, righteousness”^{9 10}) still; he who is holy, let him be holy still” Rev 22:11.

This declaration is the judicial pronouncement of the Judge of the universe at the end of the investigative judgment, as the heavenly court closes with the last decision made. With no cases any longer under discussion, nor any investigation, the judicial sentence in heaven’s court is pronounced in the legal justification experienced by believers along with the legal sentence of condemnation against unbelievers.

E.J. Waggoner wrote: “God has wrought out salvation for every man, and has given it to him; but the majority spurn it, and throw it away. The Judgment will reveal the fact that full and complete salvation was given to every man, and that the lost have deliberately thrown away their birthright possession. Thus every mouth will be stopped.”¹¹

C. S. Lewis captured the thought in *The Great Divorce*: “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’”¹²

Although other Bible passages can be cited, the ones used above are sufficient to establish and demonstrate the fact that, Scripturally, justification has an undeniable legal meaning.

⁸ Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

⁹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000). *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed.) (247). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁰ “‘Righteousness’ renders an important Hebrew root, $\square dq$, that appears over five hundred times in the OT and a Greek root, *dikaio-*, that appears over two hundred and twenty-five times in the NT. The KJV and RSV employ ‘righteousness’ terms about three times as often as ‘justification’ words, but both must be considered in grasping what is a single biblical concept. English has two possible translations: ‘right, righteous, righteousness, be or declare (or make) righteous,’ from an Anglo-Saxon root *rightwise*; and ‘just, justice, justification, justify.’ Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* (1st ed.) (871). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

¹¹ E. J. Waggoner, *Glad Tidings* (1900) 22, 23.

¹² C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, G. Bles, Great Britain, 1946

Use Among Seventh-day Adventists

From *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* we have the following definitions of justification, including “judicial sentence” and “acquittal. We may disagree with the understanding of character as used here, but the legal aspect is clear:

Justification. Gr. *dikaiōma*, “requirement,” “enactment,” “righteous deed,” “judicial sentence,” “declaration of right”; *dikaiōsis*, “justification,” “vindication,” “acquittal.”

“Justification is the opposite of condemnation (Rom 5:16). Neither term specifies character, but only standing before God. Justification is not a transformation of inherent character; it does not impart righteousness any more than condemnation imparts sinfulness.”^{13 14}

Early on, **E. J. Waggoner** defined the legal aspect of justification as “conformable to law” in contrast with condemnation as “the judicial act of declaring guilty” thereby showing the legal meanings of both words:

“Before going further, let us have some definitions to keep in our mind. *Justification* is ‘a showing to be just, or conformable to law, rectitude, or propriety.’ *Condemnation* is ‘the judicial act of declaring guilty, and dooming to punishment.’ The two words are directly opposite in meaning; and we have the inspired declaration that all the world are guilty (condemned) before God, and that by the deeds of the law none can be justified.”¹⁵ (Emphasis original)

Three years later, Waggoner, commenting on Rom 5:18, wrote about the universal as well as the legal aspects of condemnation and justification:

“Justification of Life. – By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” There is no exception here. As the [judicial] condemnation came upon all, so the [judicial] justification comes upon all. Christ has tasted death [judicial penalty] for every man. He has given Himself for all. Nay, he has given Himself to every man. The free gift has come upon all. The fact that it is a free gift is evidence that there is no exception. If it came upon only those who have some special qualification, then it would not be a free gift. It is a fact, therefore, plainly stated in the Bible, that the gift of righteousness and life in Christ has come to every man on earth. There is not the slightest reason

¹³ *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (635). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

¹⁴ This is contestable. Righteousness imparts justification. Condemnation comes because of sinfulness. And character must be transformed by justification by faith.

¹⁵ E.J. Waggoner “Signs of the Times,” November 23, 1891. He used these legal definitions previously in articles in this magazine on March 25, 1886 and September 11, 1884.

why every man that has ever lived should not be saved unto eternal life, except that they would not have it. So many spurn the gift offered ¹⁶ so freely.” ¹⁷

Justification in its legal (as well as its experiential) aspect carries God’s law of righteousness with it to achieve its recognition and its acceptance. On the cross, because of the verdict of justification for, as well as the sentence of condemnation of, the fallen race the law was magnified. Waggoner, writing of the connection between justification and the law penned the following: “Justification carries the law on the face of it.... It establishes the law in the heart. Justification is the law incarnate in Christ, put into the man, so it is incarnate in the man.”¹⁸

Ellen White wrote concerning the difference between justification and condemnation: “Justification is the opposite of condemnation.”¹⁹ In another place, while emphasizing the experience of forgiveness, she first mentioned its legal aspect: “God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin.”²⁰

Man transgressed the judicial restrictions of God’s holy law and consequently came under its condemnation. But Christ stepped in and took our condemnation. Mrs. White wrote about the objective legal aspect of condemnation and its judicial punishment:

“The transgression of God’s law made the death of Christ essential to save man and yet maintain the dignity and honor of the law. Christ took upon Himself the condemnation of sin. He opened His bosom to the woes of man. He who knew no sin became sin for us.”²¹

¹⁶ For many persons the term “offer” means only “to proffer” which in turn means to “hold out (something) to someone for acceptance.” However, this is not the only meaning conveyed in the use of the word. Waggoner is clear that justification is “a free gift” and that it is “offered so freely.” An offer here can mean to give and not merely to make available. The verb means to “put forward” to “give” or “present” as well as to “provide” or “proffer” depending on the context. In some contexts the word “offer” means “to present” something to God. This may be in the form of a sacrifice or when someone offers a prayer. Here the offers are given and not merely extended to Him. One of several examples of “offer” given in Webster’s 1828 Dictionary is: “The heathen women under the Mogul, offer themselves to the flames at the death of their husbands.” Another is “To present in prayer or devotion as, ‘Offer to God thanksgiving.’ Psalm 50:14.

¹⁷ E.J. Waggoner, “The English Present Truth,” October 18, 1894.

¹⁸ E.J. Waggoner, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, Vol. 4, March 12, 1891.

¹⁹ Ellen White, *Manuscript 21, 1891*, pp. 1-11. (“*Christ our Righteousness*,” February 27, 1891)

²⁰ White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, 114. Forgiveness is a judicial act, but is not only this. Compare *Steps to Christ*, p. 25 – “It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart.”

²¹ White, *The Faith I Live By*, 104.

“As man's substitute and surety, the iniquity of men was laid upon Christ; He was counted a transgressor that He might redeem them from the [judicial] curse of the law. The [judicial] guilt of every descendant of Adam of every age was pressing upon His heart; and the [judicial] wrath of God and the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation.”²²

Think of what it must have been like for Jesus, as the cloud of judicial wrath hung over Him! Notice this clear statement for Mrs. White: “He, the sin-bearer, endures judicial punishment for iniquity and becomes sin itself for man.”²³ Think also of the anguish of God when, from His judgment seat, His justice was expressed as He pronounced the judicial death sentence upon His Son: “God permits His Son to be delivered up for our offenses. He Himself assumes toward the Sin Bearer the character of a judge, divesting Himself of the endearing qualities of a father.”²⁴ This was according to the judicial oath of God agreed to by Christ and the Father in the everlasting covenant between themselves in eternity (Acts 2:23; 4:28). It was “through the blood of” that “covenant” (Heb 13:20) that both our condemnation and our justification were legally provided for and administered.

Thus Christ, the “last Adam,” met the legal demands of the law of God for the human race. Just as the first Adam’s trespass brought judicial condemnation upon all men, so Christ’s “righteousness act” brought legal justification – acquittal – and life to all men (Rom 5:18). In becoming the second and “last Adam” Christ reversed the legal “condemnation” brought upon humanity by the first Adam.

A. T. Jones, during the 1895 General Conference meetings, revealed the universality of justification as well as its legal aspect by comparing and contrasting Christ with Adam.

The first Adam touched all of us, what he did included all of us. If he had remained true to God, that would have included all of us. And when he fell away from God, that included us, and took us also. Whatever he should have done embraced us; and what he did made us what we are.

Now, here is another Adam. Does he touch as many as the first Adam did? That is the question. That is what we are studying now. Does the second Adam touch as many as did the first Adam? – And the answer is that it is certainly true that what the second Adam did, embraces all that were embraced in what the first Adam did. What he should have done, what he could have done, would embrace all.

²² White, *The Story of Redemption*, 225.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, 245.

Suppose Christ had yielded to temptation and had sinned. Would that have meant anything to us? – It would have meant everything to us. The first Adam's sin meant all this to us; sin on the part of the second Adam would have meant all this to us.

The first Adam's righteousness would have meant all to us, and the second Adam's righteousness means all to as many as believe. *That is correct in a certain sense; but not in the sense in which we are studying it now.* We are now studying from the side of the Adams. We will look at it from our side presently.

The question is, Does the second Adam's righteousness embrace as many as does the first Adam's sin? Look closely. Without our consent at all, without our having anything to do with it, we were all included in the first Adam; we were there. All the human race were in the first Adam. What that first Adam, what that first man, did, meant us; it involved us. That which the first Adam did brought us into sin, and the end of sin is death [the legal penalty]; and that touches every one of us, and involves every one of us.

Jesus Christ, the second man, took our sinful nature. He touched us “in all points.” He became we and died the death [the legal penalty]. And so in him, and by that, every man that has ever lived upon the earth, and was involved in the first Adam, is involved in this, and will live again. There will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. Every soul shall live again by the second Adam, from the death [the legal penalty] that came by the first Adam.” (emphasis added).²⁵

Not only did the message of Minneapolis bring to the Seventh-day Adventist Church the universal and legal aspects of justification, it also brought justification by faith and sanctification by faith together as they were in the early church. That said, we must remember it was because of Jones’ and Waggoner’s teaching about justification (“the faith of Jesus”²⁶) and not “our faith” nor “our sanctification” that caused the fierce opposition to

²⁵ A. T. Jones, “The Third Angel’s Message,” *The General Conference Bulletin*, February 21, 1895.

²⁶ “The Lord sent a message, and sent his word by that message, saying that the faith of Jesus, righteousness by faith, must be preached. He says that he sent the message of righteousness by faith because the people had lost sight of Christ, in the righteousness of Christ as he is.” A. T. Jones, “Advent Review and Sabbath Herald,” June 20, 1899.

“Gal. 3:22. ‘But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.’ It is impossible to have the words ‘faith of Jesus’ in that verse to be equivalent to faith in Jesus.” A. T. Jones, *The Medical Missionary*, Vol. 16, p. 89, March 20, 1907.

“Gal. 2:16. ‘Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.’ Surely there is here no room for any explication. Both expressions are used in direct connection, and used in a way that makes it impossible that they should be taken as meaning the same thing. And taken for exactly what they say, again there is told the splendid truth that it is ‘the faith of Jesus’ that brings to us and gives to us the justification, the righteousness which we receive by believing in Jesus.” *Ibid.*

“[F]aith in Jesus, is not the faith of Jesus. ‘The faith of Jesus’ is the faith of Jesus himself, the faith which he had and which he exercised in this world in the flesh to show to man and to make sure to

rise up against the message sent from heaven. Those who opposed the message were then presenting a gospel of sanctification, thinking it was the message of justification.

(Today, those who have followed Jones' and Waggoner's lead have separated into two camps, both of which desire to be loyal to this most important message. Each group tends to emphasize either justification or sanctification. Some who emphasize sanctification would like to shut down any and all public presentations on the subject of legal justification.)

Not only did Jones and Waggoner present a forensic justification. W.W. Prescott did also.

W. W. Prescott, during the same 1895 General Conference in which Jones preached about the two Adams, proclaimed a similar message. Following this he presented four related dimensions of justification:

“He [the sinner] will be drawn to Christ, he will be in Christ, and then he will personally receive the benefits of justification of life which came upon all men, just as in the other case when he yields to the tendency to sin he receives the condemnation personally which came upon all men in Adam.

“Now to make clear to the eye this subject, I have put it in this diagram:-

“By grace; Titus 3:7

“By his blood; Rom.5:9 - His part.

“By faith; Rom.5:1 - justified.

“By works; Jas.2:24 - Our part.

.... “Now, justification by grace; that is on God's part. Justification by His blood, that is on God's part and he has done that *for every single human being on his part. He has done all for justification to every human being*; his grace is free to every human being, and his blood is the channel through which it flows *to every human being*, and ‘we thus judge that if one died for all, then all died,’ so that is of God's grace. But while he has done all this for every human being, yet it avails only for those who personally apprehend it by their own faith, who lay hold of the justification provided. One who is truly justified personally, must be justified by every one of them. And when one who is truly justified, manifests one of the four, the other three are all implied....

“Now another thought: This justification, this righteousness, is altogether imputed righteousness. Remember that *it was given to humanity*; that is, this righteousness was provided when Jesus Christ was given to humanity...”²⁷ (emphasis supplied)

man the way of salvation. ‘The faith of Jesus’ is the faith that he had and that he exercised” A. T. Jones, *The Medical Missionary*, Vol. 16, p. 94, March 20, 1907.

²⁷ W.W. Prescott, *General Conference Bulletin*, February 6, 1895, 44.

Years later Prescott wrote:

"The word 'justification,' alike in religious and in common parlance, is a word connected with law. It has to do with acquittal, vindication, acceptance before a judgment seat. To use a technical term, it is a forensic word, a word of the law courts in old Rome... In regard of ... 'our salvation' it stands related not so directly, to our need of spiritual revolution, amendment, purification, holiness, as to our need of getting, somehow in spite of our guilt, our liability, our debt, our deserved condemnation – a sentence of acquittal, a sentence of acceptance, at the judgment seat of a holy God. Not that it has nothing to do with our inward spiritual purification. It has intense and vital relations that way. But they are not direct relations. The direct concern of justification is with man's need of a divine deliverance, not from the power of his sin, but from its guilt." ²⁸

Robert Wieland first wrote of two aspects of justification in 1975:

"The Jones-Waggoner message recognized that there are two phases of justification: (1) forensic, or legal, made for all men, and accomplished entirely outside of us; and (2) an effective transformation of heart in those who believe, and thus, a justification *by faith*." ²⁹

When I read the above quotation I remarked: "He has it!" This is the gospel concept of justification I learned earlier in studying Jones, Waggoner, and Prescott.

Arnold Wallenkampf, then director of the General Conference Biblical Research Department, penned the following in 1988:

"By virtue of the cross, all enjoy life through temporary universal (temporal and forensic) justification....

"Temporary universal justification, in addition to being called forensic, may also be called legal, technical, objective, or impersonal justification. It is based solely on God's goodness toward all, irrespective of the individual's attitude toward Him.... This "justification does not imply ethical change or a change in a person's attitude toward God. It only means that God temporarily deals with sinners as if they were just, or righteous, in spite of their rebellious attitude toward Him....

"Those who are only forensically justified and those who are justified by faith, will not become evident until the course of life has ended—at the final judgment." ³⁰

Jack Sequiera wrote in 1994: "[B]y His doing and dying, Christ *actually* changed mankind's history so that all humanity was legally justified at the cross. Justification by faith is making effective that legal justification in the life of the believer. Faith therefore is more than a mental assent to the truth. It is a heart

²⁸ W.W. Prescott, *The Doctrine of Christ: A Series of Bible Studies for Use In Colleges and Seminaries*, Review and Herald Publishing Association (1920), pp. 118-119.

²⁹ Robert J. Wieland, *The 1888 Message an Introduction*, 74.

³⁰ Arnold Wallenkampf, *Justification*, 37.

appreciation of the cross of Christ which in turn produces obedience or surrender of the will to the truth as it is in Christ (Rom 1:5; 6:17; 10:16; Gal 5:7; 2 Thess 1:7, 8)”³¹

In summary, of this part of the paper, legal justification effected a change of status whereby the race, guilty before God, and therefore under the condemning sentence of His Law, deserving nothing but an eternal grave was received into God’s favor through Christ’s legal atonement in His death on the cross – the source and content of justification. We must never forget that before Christ lives in the heart of the believer, He lived first in history.

Justification by Faith

There are several biblical descriptive phrases that have a mutual relationship with justification by faith. While each set of words brings a specific viewpoint of its own to the table, each one deals with different aspects of the same personal faith experience of union with Christ. These are by no means hollow and meaningless phrases. Some of the phrases are: “righteousness by faith,” “justification by faith,” “justified ... by the Spirit of our God,” “born again,” “Christ in you,” “put on Christ,” “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith,” “partakers of the divine nature,” “partakers of the Holy Spirit”³² and so forth.

A considerable amount of paper and ink have been expended both by Catholic and Protestant writers on the subject of justification by faith. Catholic theologians are clear on the original Protestant understanding of the doctrine. On the other hand, Protestant theologians have never enjoyed consensus on how to interpret the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith. Consequently, today, the Catholic scholars are making strident and critical advances with their doctrine of justification by faith within Protestant circles. It appears that discussion on this topic will not close any time soon. This may be a good thing because there is need for more, not less, clarity.

Most Lutheran scholars insist that justification is forensic only. Accordingly, when one believes he is justified forensically by declaration it is not experientially. It is credited to one’s account but it is not transformational. This line of thought has been followed by

³¹ Jack Sequeira, *Saviour of All Men*, 26, 1994, Glad Tidings Publishers (Italics original).

³² Gal 5:5; Rom 3:28; 1 Cor 6:11; John 3:3; Col 1:27; Gal 3:27; Eph 3:17; 2 Pet 1:4; Heb 6:4.

Evangelicals as well as Lutherans. To proclaim that legal justification is experienced within the believer is considered, by many, to be damnable heresy. Leveled at those who believe that justification by faith is transformational is the charge that this is very Catholic and not Protestant. However, this is the result of a change in Protestantism on the understanding of justification by faith. This change came shortly after Luther died.

Many, if not most, Protestant scholars and pastors have understood justification by faith to be an alien and extrinsic only righteousness residing outside the believer. Imputation is considered as an accounting exercise in a ledger in heaven. Accordingly, justification then refers “exclusively to a change in the status of a sinner.”³³ Justification is considered only in the forensic sense. This one-sided doctrine of justification comes, not from Luther, but it originated with Melancthon and his brilliant student Martin Chemnitz (also spelled Khemitz). Chemnitz was the main contributor to the Formula of Concord (1577; published in 1578 and 1580, 30 years after Luther died in 1546). With regard to justification, the Formula of Concord is at variance with Luther’s teaching on justification by faith.

Today, there are a few voices within Protestantism beginning to question whether justification is forensic only. Questions are put forth regarding Luther’s teaching on justification. Many claim that in his immature years he presented justification by faith as experiential, but the “mature” Luther proclaimed a forensic only justification.

According to Alister McGrath, the concept of an external legal/forensic justification was not developed by Luther, but by his followers beginning with Melancthon “resulting in the doctrine now generally known as ‘forensic justification.’”³⁴

“According to Melancthon, God pronounces the verdict that the sinner is righteous in the heavenly court (*in foro divino*). This legal approach to justification gave rise to the term ‘forensic justification’ from the Latin word *forum* (‘market place’ or ‘courtyard’) the place traditionally associated with the dispensing of justice in classical Rome.”³⁵

Melancthon’s student, Martin Chemnitz, became a leading German theologian and was known with reference to Martin Luther as “the second Martin.” He helped unify the

³³ Eveson, P. H. (1996). *The Great Exchange: Justification by faith Alone in the Light of Recent Thought* (82). Leominster, UK: Day One Publications.

³⁴ Alister McGrath, *Reformation Thought: an Introduction*, third edition, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 108 Cowley Road, Oxford, UK (1999) p. 121.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 199.

Lutheran church following the Reformation and was instrumental in pushing for the forensic only justification doctrine. He was a main contributor to the Formula of Concord.

From the time of Chemnitz and Concord, Lutheran scholars have tended to separate forensic justification from any experience of justification within the believer. In Protestantism, following the Reformation, the tendency has been to emphasize forensic only justification and to deny any transformation in an experiential justification. As a consequence there has been a devaluation of moral renewal. Dry objectivism tends to depersonalize and thus devitalize Christianity.

This has been documented by Professor Tuomo Mannermaa and associates in their Finnish Luther research and which is revising, radically, the understanding of Luther's teaching of justification.

In contrast to Luther's theology, forgiveness (*favor*) justification and the real presence of God (*donum*) in faith are in danger of being separated by the one-sidedly forensic doctrine of justification adopted by the Formula of Concord and by subsequent Lutheranism. In Luther's theology, however, both of these motifs are closely united in his understanding of the person of Christ. Christ is both the *favor* and the *donum* [gift].³⁶

There seems to be two main reasons for the emphasis of forensic justification in the Formula of Concord. One reason is because of the Council of Trent's insistence of inherent and progressive justification within the believer as received through the priest in his administration of, and beginning with, baptism and progressing through the remainder of the so-called seven sacraments of grace – penance, confirmation, the Eucharist (the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated wafer is claimed), holy orders, matrimony, and extreme unction. The second reason for Concord's insistence of forensic justification was because of the Osiander faction among Lutherans. Luther's teaching of justification by faith was lost sight of in "Lutheran tradition because of an over-reaction to Osiandrianism. Melancthon's forensic view of justification prevailed over Osiander's view of the essential indwelling of the righteousness of Christ in the believer."³⁷

³⁶ Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, editors, *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, Eerdmans Publishing Co. (1998), p. 28.

³⁷ Braaten and Jenson, op cit, pp. 72, 73.

According to the Formula of Concord Osiander's doctrine was that "Christ is our righteousness only according to the divine nature." This was condemned in Article III of the Formula of Concord. Finnish Scholar Simo Peura wrote the following concerning this:

The FC [Formula of Concord] came to the conclusion mainly because of its aim to reject Andreas Osiander, who emphasized the indwelling of the divine nature in his doctrine of justification. However, the problem of Osiander's doctrine was not actually his claim that justification was based on God's indwelling in a Christian, but the christological presuppositions of this claim. Osiander (in opposition to Luther) separated Christ's human nature and divine nature from each other and broke the *unio personalis* in Christ. Therefore Christ's human nature and everything that he did as a human being on the cross had only an instrumental and subsidiary role in redemption as well as in justification.³⁸

The Formula of Concord did not follow Luther in justification by faith. Luther taught that Christ is present in grace, in God's Word, and in faith. Faith unites the believer with the person of Christ who is God's righteousness and consequently justification. Justification is said to be "in (ἐν) Christ" (Gal 2:17, NIV). Luther did not separate nor distinguish Christ from His work of justification. His is a Christological approach. Luther taught that justification is embodied in the Person of Christ. Because faith unites the believer with Christ, Christ is personally present along with His justification in the believer. A few excerpts from Luther follow:

Christ is God's grace, mercy, righteousness, truth, wisdom, power, comfort, and salvation, given to us by God without any merit on our part. Christ, I say, not as some express it in blind words, "causally,"²⁹ that He grants righteousness and remains absent Himself, for that would be dead. Yes, it is not given at all unless Christ Himself is present, just as the radiance of the sun and the heat of fire are not present if there is no sun and no fire.³⁹

Where the gospel is preached, there this star shines brightly, there without a doubt Christ is present, there you will assuredly find the church, whether it be in Turkey, in Russia, in Bohemia, or anywhere else. It is impossible that God's word should be proclaimed and God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit not be present.⁴⁰

³⁸ Quoted in Braatan and Jenson, *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁹ The target of Luther's polemic is a doctrine of justification (sometimes associated, though not correctly, with Duns Scotus) which interpreted the act of justification as a "naked act of imputation" of righteousness without reference to the personal presence of the indwelling Christ.

³⁹ Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's Works, vol. 14 : Selected Psalms III* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ps 143:12). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

⁴⁰ Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 52 : Sermons II* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (275). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

“Christ is present in the gospel...”⁴¹ “[I]t is certain that Christ is present and preaches to the hearts wherever a preacher proclaims the Word of God to the ear.”⁴²

Finnish Scholar Simo Peura wrote:

“Whenever Paul preached faith in Christ, he did so with the utmost care to proclaim that righteousness is not only through Him or from him, but even that it is in him. He therefore draws us unto himself, and transforms us, and places us as if in hiding ‘until the wrath passes away.’ ”⁴³

There are those who reject Luther’s understanding of transforming justification. One such objector wrote: “God’s will for us is that we be ‘fully transformed into him...? Can that really be Luther’s meaning? His words cannot be taken to mean quite what they say.”⁴⁴

To this, Peura responded:

Clearly on the grounds of an exclusive forensic understanding of justification and a so-called relational ontology, this passage from Luther is either incomprehensible or reveals a pantheism. But we can discount the possibility of pantheism if we acknowledge the presupposition of Luther’s understanding of transformation, *unio cum Christo*, where Luther’s view of justification appears in its fullness.

The passage informs us that the Christian’s righteousness is completely dependent on Christ. A Christian righteousness only through Christ (*per Christum*), his righteousness comes from Christ (*ab Christo*), and it always turns toward Christ (*in Christum*). The last phrase means that a Christian cannot be satisfied with the righteousness already given to him or with the renewal already effected in him by the gift. He must direct his attention ever more deeply toward the origin of the gift, Christ.⁴⁵

(On those same “grounds” upon which some of Luther’s detractors label(ed) Luther’s writings regarding the union of Christ with the believer in experiential justification by faith, there are passages, in the early 1890s, by E.J Waggoner that some of his detractors have used to saddled him with pantheism. But as with Luther, it is because they cannot comprehend what he wrote because of their understanding “of an exclusive forensic understanding of justification”).

⁴¹ Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 40 : Church and Ministry II* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (220–221). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

⁴² Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 30 : The Catholic Epistles* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (1 Pe 3:22). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

⁴³ Braaten Carl E. and Jenson Robert W. (Editors), *Union With Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (1998), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, p. 61.

⁴⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.* p. 61.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

The “mature” Luther wrote in 1535 that Christ justifies by being present in faith:

[F]aith justifies because it takes hold of and possesses this treasure, the *present* Christ.... Where the confidence of the heart is present, therefore, *there Christ is present*, in that very cloud and faith. This is the formal righteousness *on account of which a man is justified*; it is not on account of love, as the sophists say. In short, just as the sophists say that love forms and trains faith, so we say that *it is Christ who forms and trains faith or who is the form of faith*. Therefore the Christ who is grasped by faith and who lives in the heart is the true Christian righteousness, on account of which God counts us righteous and grants us eternal life. ⁴⁶ (*Emphasis supplied*)

Christ and faith must be completely joined. We must simply take our place in heaven; and Christ must be, live, and work in us. But He lives and works in us, not speculatively but really, with *presence* and with power. ⁴⁷ (*Emphasis supplied*)

He sets forth His Word and with it gives Himself to us, so that all things are ours and we, on the other hand, may cast our weakness off on Christ. If I am a sinner, Christ is righteous; if I am poor, Christ is rich; if I am foolish, Christ is wise; if I am a captive, Christ is present to set me free; if I am forsaken, Christ takes me to Himself; if I am cast down, Christ consoles me; if I am weary, Christ refreshes me. Finally, He pours Himself out for me altogether. Should not these things console me, since they cannot be compared with anything for value? ⁴⁸

This concept was changed by the writers of the Formula of Concord. The Formula, paragraph 54, under the heading entitled “The Righteousness of Faith Before God” states:

⁵⁴ We must also explain correctly the discussion concerning the indwelling of God’s essential righteousness in us. On the one hand, it is true indeed that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is the eternal and essential righteousness, dwells by faith in the elect who *have been justified* through Christ and reconciled with God, since all Christians are temples of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who impels them to do rightly. But, on the other hand, *this indwelling of God is not the righteousness of faith* of which St. Paul speaks⁸ and which he calls the righteousness of God, on account of which we are *declared just* before God. This *indwelling follows the preceding righteousness of faith*, which is precisely the forgiveness of sins and the gracious acceptance of poor sinners on account of the obedience and merit of Christ. ⁴⁹ (*Emphasis supplied*)

⁴⁶ Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 26 : Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ga 2:16). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* on Gal 3:28).

⁴⁸ Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's Works, vol. 17 : Lectures on Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Is 40:26). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

⁸ Rom. 1:17; 3:5, 22, 25; 2 Cor. 5:21, etc.

⁴⁹ *The Book of Concord the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. 1959 (T. G. Tappert, Ed.) (548–549). Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press.

This appears to be a repudiation of Luther's teaching on justification. Finnish scholar Tuomo Mannerma wrote:

In contrast to Luther, justification and the indwelling of God in the believer are conceptually separated from each other in the Formula of Concord. Justification is only the forgiveness of sins. The indwelling of God follows in a logical sense after justification. One must ask here whether what Luther considers damning for the believer to think is exactly what the Formula of Concord calls sound doctrine: in the locus of justification the divine person of Christ is separated from the person of the believer, because justification is only a forensic imputation and does not presuppose the divine presence of Christ in faith.⁵⁰

It appears that there were two leading reasons why the writers of the Formula of Concord emphasized the forensic aspect of justification. One reason was because of differences among Reformers who were arguing about justification by faith and about the divinity and humanity of Christ among other contentions. The Formula of Concord was an attempt to heal the divisive characteristic of the Lutheran movement following Martin Luther's death. The other reason for the almost exclusive emphasis on forensic justification was the Catholic concepts of infused grace through the so-called "Sacraments of Grace" administered by the priests along with insistence of Rome's teaching of "faith formed by love." To the notion of love having to (in)form faith, the Formula earlier dealt with that Scripturally untenable concept:

Now we shall answer the texts that our opponents quote (In the Roman Confutation) to prove that we are justified by love and works. From 1 Cor. 13:2 they quote, "If I have all faith, etc., but have not love, I am nothing." Here they celebrate a great victory. Before the whole church, they say, Paul asserts that faith alone does not justify....

²²⁰ But in this text Paul is not discussing the mode of justification. He is writing to people who, upon being justified, needed urging to bear good fruits lest they lose the Holy Spirit.

²²¹ Our opponents proceed in reverse order. They quote this one text in which Paul teaches about the fruits, and they omit the many other texts in which he systematically discusses the mode of justification. Besides, to other texts that speak of faith they always add the correction that they should be understood in reference to "faith formed by love." Here they do not add the correction: We need the faith that we are accounted righteous because of Christ, the propitiator. Thus our opponents exclude Christ from justification and teach only the righteousness of the law. But let us return to Paul.

⁵⁰ Braaten Carl E. and Jenson Robert W. (Editors), *Union With Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (1998), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, pp 38-39.

²²² No one can draw anything more from this text than that love is necessary. This we grant. It is also necessary not to steal. It would be a fallacy to reason that because it is necessary not to steal, therefore not stealing justifies; for justification is not the approval of a particular act but of the total person. Hence this passage from Paul is not against us; only our opponents should not add their own whims to it. For he is not saying that love justifies but that “I am nothing”; that is, faith is extinguished, no matter how great it may have been. He is not saying that love conquers the terrors of sin and death; that we can set our love against the wrath and judgment of God; that our love satisfies the law of God; that by our love we have access to God even without Christ, the propitiator; that by our love we receive the promised forgiveness of sins—Paul is saying none of these things. He does not believe that love justifies, for we are justified only when we take hold of Christ, the propitiator, and believe that for his sake God is gracious to us. Nor is justification even to be dreamed without Christ, the propitiator.⁵¹

Before the formation of the Formula, Luther dealt with this same Catholic teaching of “faith formed by love.” He contended “against the scholastic definition of faith as *fides [charitate] formata* ‘faith formed by love,’ and therefore not true faith until and unless love is present.”⁵² He also wrote, “what folly it is to invent an unformed faith and to say that faith formed by love justifies!”⁵³ “A faith formed by love—the gloss which attributes everything to love and robs faith of everything—must be completely rejected.”⁵⁴ “What the scholastics have taught about justifying faith ‘formed by love’ is an empty dream. For the faith that takes hold of Christ, the Son of God, and is adorned by Him is the faith that justifies, not a faith that includes love.”⁵⁵

With this false interpretation they have not only done injury to Paul’s words but have also denied Christ and buried all His blessings. Therefore this gloss is to be avoided as a hellish poison, and we must conclude with Paul: By faith alone, not by faith formed by love, are we justified. We must not attribute the power of justifying to a “form” that makes a man pleasing to God; we must attribute it to faith, which takes

⁵¹ *The Book of Concord the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. 1959 (T. G. Tappert, Ed.) (137–138). Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press.

⁵² Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 3: Luther's Works, vol. 3: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 15-20* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

⁵³ Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 3: Luther's works, vol. 3: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 15-20* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ge 15:6). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's Works, vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ga 2:5). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

hold of Christ the Savior Himself and possesses Him in the heart. This faith justifies without love and before love.⁵⁶

If the writers of the Formula of Concord had stayed with Luther's concepts of both aspects of justification – forensic and faith justification, perhaps the Reformation would not have ground to a halt within about 100 years. Ellen White observed:

The great doctrine of justification by faith, so clearly taught by Luther, had been almost wholly lost sight of; and the Romish principle of trusting to good works for salvation, had taken its place. Whitefield and the Wesleys, who were members of the established church, were sincere seekers for the favor of God, and this they had been taught was to be secured by a virtuous life and an observance of the ordinances of religion.⁵⁷

While it was true that “Wesley and his associates were led to see that true religion is seated in the heart, and that God's law extends to the thoughts as well as to the words and actions”⁵⁸ they had no idea of justification in either the forensic or the experiential aspects. After years of endless struggles and methods of seeking holiness and salvation, God led John Wesley into the experience of justification by faith.

Once established in the faith of Christ, his whole soul burned with the desire to spread everywhere a knowledge of the glorious gospel of God's free grace. “I look upon all the world as my parish,” he said; ‘in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation.’⁵⁹

He continued his strict and self-denying life, not now as the *ground*, but the *result* of faith; not the *root*, but the *fruit* of holiness. The grace of God in Christ is the foundation of the Christian's hope, and that grace will be manifested in obedience. Wesley's life was devoted to the preaching of the great truths which he had received-justification through faith in the atoning blood of Christ, and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, bringing forth fruit in a life conformed to the example of Christ.⁶⁰

Ellen White first wrote the above in 1888, the year that God sent a message of justification by faith to our Church – the Seventh-day Adventist Church – and affirmed that it is the “Third Angel's message” and that God commanded that it to be sent to the world:

⁵⁶ Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's Works*, vol. 26 : *Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ga 2:16). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

⁵⁷ White, Ellen, *The Great Controversy* (1888, 1911), p. 253.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

⁵⁹ Whitehead, *Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, page 74. Quoted in *The Great Controversy*, p. 256.

⁶⁰ White, Ellen, *The Great Controversy* (1888, 1911), p. 256

The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.⁶¹

This message of God about justification given in the end of time setting is in view of the fact that “the hour” of God's “judgment is come.” The one great object of “the everlasting gospel” of justification is concerning the preparation of the world for the judgment: to prepare everyone who receives the message to stand in the pre-advent judgment. Justification by “the faith of Jesus” (forensic justification) and by faith in Him (justification by faith) is the judgment hour message. The forensic aspect of justification will prepare people for the legal requirements of the judgment. Justification by the presence of Christ in faith, in those who believe, will ripen them for the judgment harvest of salvation. But for those who refuse the message sent from heaven will subject themselves to the judgment itself in all its terror.

We are present in the judgment right now and we need the presence of Christ in our lives right now. Christ is still present in heart-felt faith, of which Paul writes in Rom 10:9–10 – “if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Christ present in faith is our justification in the ever-present reality of the pre-advent judgment. When this phase of the judgment is over then comes the announcement in heaven: “He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous [Christ present in faith], let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still” Rev. 22:11.

⁶¹ White, Ellen, *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 91-92. (This command is yet to be obeyed)

We have already read some of the forensic justification statements by Jones and Waggoner. Let's read now some that have to do with justification by faith – that makes one righteous.

Jones

Now let us turn to the third chapter of Romans, and begin reading with the 20th verse. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Justified is made righteous, so whenever we read it here, you can just put the words, "made righteous," there instead, and you have the same thing always.⁶²

"Being justified" (made righteous) how? [Congregation: "Freely."] "Being made righteous freely." Is it so? [Congregation: "Yes."] Is it so? [Congregation: "Amen."] Let us thank the Lord that it is so. Let us take it right now. [Congregation: "Amen."] "Being made righteous freely by his grace." Now let us stop here with that word "grace" and turn over to Rom. 11:6, where we read as follows, "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace."⁶³

Therefore we conclude that a man "is justified (made righteous) by faith without the deeds of the law." Is that a right conclusion? [Congregation: "Yes."] ⁶⁴

When the law has made demands upon us that we cannot satisfy by any other possible means except by Jesus Christ *being present in ourselves*, then, will the law of God, as long as we stay there, stand right there and say, "That is right, and I am satisfied with it"? [Congregation: "Yes."] Then if anybody begins to question it and says, "It is not so," then we have witnesses to prove it, have we?⁶⁵ (Emphasis supplied).

Yet it must not for a moment be thought that even all this is given to us by the faith of Jesus, apart from himself. No: He gives us himself, and all this in himself and with himself. And he himself is received by us through faith in him. But when he gives to us himself he gives to us all that is in him and of him. And one of the things that is of him is this very "faith of him." Therefore it is true in this as in all the rest, that by faith in him, we actually receive the faith of him. And this faith of Jesus in us, will accomplish in us, in the flesh for him what it accomplished in him in the flesh for us.⁶⁶

Waggoner

⁶² Jones, A.T., *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, "The Third Angel's Message, February 23, 1893, p. 362.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, February 27, 1893, p. 413.

⁶⁶ Jones, A.T. *The Medical Missionary*, Vol 16, 12, March 20, 1907, pp. 89, 90.

“By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified [made righteous] in His sight....” (Brackets original)

The man who trusted in his own righteousness had none, while the man who prayed, in heart-felt contrition, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” went down to his house a righteous man. Christ says that he went justified; that is, made righteous.⁶⁷

The redemption that is in Christ Jesus is the worthiness or the purchasing power of Christ. He gives Himself to the sinner; His righteousness is given to the one who has sinned, and who believes. That does not mean that Christ's righteousness which He did eighteen hundred years ago is laid up for the sinner, to be simply credited to his account, but it means that His present, active righteousness is given to that man. Christ comes to live in that man who believes, for He dwells in the heart by faith. So the man who was a sinner is transformed into a new man, having the very righteousness of God.⁶⁸

The meaning of the word “justified” is “made righteous.” This is the exact term that appears in other languages, which are not composed of foreign terms.⁶⁹

In a single paragraph Waggoner brings eleven experiences together as one. These are “forgiveness of sins,” being cleared “from guilt,” “is justified,” “made righteous,” “a radical change,” a new or “another person,” “remission of sins,” “putting on Christ,” “the new birth,” “a new creature” and “a new, or a clean heart.”

The *forgiveness of sins* is a reality; it is something tangible, something that vitally affects the individual. It actually *clears him from guilt*, and if he is *cleared from guilt, is justified, made righteous*, he has certainly undergone *a radical change*. He is, indeed, *another person*, for he obtained this righteousness for the *remission of sins*, in Christ. It was obtained only by *putting on Christ*. But “if any man be in Christ, he is *a new creature*.” 2 Cor. 5:17. And so the full and free forgiveness of sins carries with it that wonderful and miraculous change known as *the new birth*, for a man cannot become a new creature except by a new birth. This is the same as having *a new, or a clean, heart*.⁷⁰ (Emphasis supplied)

“By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.” Rom. v. 19. Notice that it is not simply that by the obedience of One we are accounted righteous, but that it is by Christ's obedience that we are actually made righteous. His obedience is not a substitute for our disobedience, but it is actually our righteousness. Oneness with Christ is the Christian standard. We are “crucified with Christ,” “buried with Him by baptism into death,” “risen with Christ,” in order that we might also “live with Him.”

⁶⁷ Waggoner, E.J., *Christ and His Righteousness*, (1890), pp. 55, 58.

⁶⁸ Waggoner, Present Truth, United Kingdom, October 20, 1892, p. 324.

⁶⁹ Waggoner, *The Glad Tidings*, (1900), p. 77.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

He set the example when He was on earth, and now He is to walk over the same road in us.⁷¹

Justification Is Righteousness.-A friend has forwarded to me a severe condemnation of a statement made some time ago, to the effect that to justify means to make righteous. The criticism was based on the fact that “Grove's Greek Lexicon” does not so define the Greek word from which justify is translated. Opening Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon, I find the very first definition of the word in question is “to make righteous.” But that is only by the way. Appeals to Greek Lexicons do not edify people. It was stated that “being justified” means “being made righteous,” because that definition is patent from the reading of the English Bible.⁷²

[T]here is no real righteousness except the righteousness of God, and that cannot be had apart from Him. We can have no perfect righteousness except as His presence gives it to us.⁷³

Ellen White also wrote of Christ's presence in the believer and that He brings His righteousness with Him.

Christ is to live in His human agents and work through their faculties and act through their capabilities. Their will must be submitted to His will; they must act with His Spirit. Then it is no more they that live, but Christ that lives in them. He who does not give himself wholly to God is under the control of another power, listening to another voice, whose suggestions are of an entirely different character.⁷⁴

“The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.”⁷⁵

In conclusion and summary. We have observed that there is one justification with two aspects – forensic and experiential. That Luther taught these is evident. It is evident also that the Formula of Concord taught justification as forensic only in opposition to Luther's teaching of transformational justification. Most Protestant scholars have followed the Formula rather than Luther. As a result, the Reforms started by Luther died because of a dead theology. In spite of this, God raised up others to proclaim elements of His message. Today, we have been given the great privilege of proclaiming justification in its fullness during the time of the pre-Advent investigative judgment. 1844 was the beginning of this

⁷¹ Waggoner, *Present Truth*, United Kingdom, September 5, 1895 p. 564.

⁷² *Ibid.*, April 23, 1896, p. 259.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, August 25, 1898, p. 530.

⁷⁴ White, E. G., *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (1896; 2002), p. 94.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

judgment. The message of 1888 – the loud cry of the three angels of Revelation 14 will prepare us for the finishing of this judgment hour. Justification is embodied and revealed in the Person, Jesus Christ. Justification is inseparable from Himself. It finds its center, its very existence, in Christ. This was revealed in the life and death of Christ. But it did not end there. We receive justification when we receive Christ. Our personal justification is nothing less than our oneness with Him. Christ never imputes nor imparts justification apart from Himself. He is our justification.