

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH AND THE HEAVENLY DAY OF ATONEMENT

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I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Why we need to understand this relationship:

1. The loud cry message of Rev. 18:1-4 is dependent on understanding it.

2. A true understanding of justification by faith is also essential for a people to stand in “the great day of God” (*RH* Jan 28, 1890).¹

3. The honor of Christ and the success of the final hour of the great controversy requires this clear understanding.

B. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was not raised up to prepare a people to die, but to prepare a people to be translated “in the great day of God.”

II. A BRIEF BIBLE REVIEW.

A. When the angel told Daniel that “then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (Dan. 8:14), the prophet

¹ “Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary, and He is there to make an atonement for the people. He is there to present His wounded side and pierced hands to His Father. He is there to plead for His Church that is upon the earth. He is cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of the people. What is our work?—It is our work to be in harmony with the work of Christ. By faith we are to work with Him, to be in union with Him.

“All heaven is interested in the work that is going on in this world. A people is to be prepared for the great day of God, which is right upon us; and we cannot afford to let Satan cast His shadow across our pathway, and intercept our view of Jesus and His infinite love.” *RH*, January 28, 1890 par. 7.

could have known of the year-day principle in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, and that there is a heavenly sanctuary. (Moses knew of it, Ex. 25:8, 9, and so did David, Ps. 20:1, 2.) The cosmic Day of Atonement was coming.

B. As a thoughtful prophet, Daniel could understand the spiritual connection with the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary (Lev. 16:29, 30; 23:27-29). What is important is not a ritual ceremony, but heart-cleansing. The event is concerned with the fate of the world, and the final triumph of the great plan of redemption.

C. The year 1844 marks the beginning of that final phase of Christ’s High Priestly ministry in the Most Holy Apartment. Great progress was made in the early days of the Advent Movement as those who recognized the change to Christ’s ministry in the Most Holy Apartment cooperated with Him:

1. They accepted the seventh-day Sabbath truth, health reform, dress reform, and in 1856 first recognized that the Laodicean message of Revelation 3:14-21 applied primarily to them rather than to the “nominal churches.” This readiness to accept advancing light was “cooperation” with Christ’s cleansing of the sanctuary.

2. In 1856 the Lord gave Ellen White a vision in which an angel informed her that some present at the May conference in Battle Creek would “be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus” (1 T 131, 132).² This meant that

² The usual explanation is that this promise meant that they would die and come up in a special resurrection. This is

heaven intended the return of Jesus to be within the lifetime of those people.³ “The angel” whom Ellen White quoted word for word was not omniscient (only the Father is), but he was using his best angelic judgment. He knew that the 2300-year prophecy had been fulfilled, a serious-minded people were responding in cooperation with the great High Priest, and had now even accepted the cleansing ministry of the Laodicean message. The angel therefore confidently predicted that “in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall *begin* to sound, the mystery of God should be finished” (cf. Rev. 10:6).

3. Heaven did not let the angel down. The latter rain began well within the lifetime of those people present at the 1856 conference—32 years later.

D. What was to happen after 1844?

1. Heaven’s judgment was to begin. Mal. 3:1-5, 17, 18; Zech. 12:10-13:1. This meant a thorough cleansing of human hearts, for God’s “judgment” is not intended to condemn, but to vindicate. Preparation for such vindication is God’s loving purpose.

2. Sins were to be “blotted out,” “remembered no more.” Acts 3:19; Jer, 31:33, 34. This was antitypical to the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary and people on the typical Day of Atonement.

corrected by the expression “remain upon the earth,” not sleep while buried in the earth.

³ Jesus said that Heaven intended that those who saw the falling of the stars in 1833 should live until the second coming (Matt. 24:34).

3. The latter rain and the loud cry were to complete the gospel commission for all the world. Joel 2:23-25, 32. This blessing was to consist of a “teaching of righteousness.”

4. Christ’s saving power was to be demonstrated “perfectly,” totally. Heb. 2:9-3:1; 4:15; 6:1; 7:25; 9:28, etc. This unique ministry, never before achieved in human history for a “people,” a “body,” is to be realized through Christ’s ministry in the Most Holy Apartment.

5. Although “some few in every generation” as individuals have responded totally to God’s grace, never before has a “*body*” of God’s people from “every nation, kindred, tongue and people” prepared for translation. This special preparation coincides with the opening of the Most Holy Apartment ministry. Rev. 10:7, 8; 11:19; 12:17; 14:12.

6. Never has such “a body” had to meet the demanding challenge of the mark of the beast. Even the martyrs in the Dark Ages did not have to meet so severe a test. And never has a “body” of God’s people experienced the full reception of the seal of God. Only a much more intimate fellowship with Christ *on His cross* can prepare God’s people for that test. Again, this will include representatives from “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.” Rev. 13:13-17; 15:1-4.

7. The ultimate “in Christ” experience will be the preparation of Christ’s church to become the bride at the wedding. A flower girl is innocent and “perfect;” but her only concern at the wedding is the cake and ice cream. The bride has grown up to

maturity, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of her bridegroom (Rev. 19:7, 8). This is of course a never-before accomplishment in history, and can be possible only through Christ's final atonement ministry. This entails learning a new motivation that transcends egocentric concern (cf. DA 480). This again will be true of believers of "every nation, kindred, tongue and people," even those from undeveloped areas.

III. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 1888 MESSAGE.

The Reformers did not break completely free of confusion in that they still embraced Sunday-keeping and natural immortality, legacies of Romanism, errors which must eventually lead to the complete "fall" of "Babylon." Ellen White says the 16th century Reformers came short of recovering the full gospel as it must be proclaimed in the final Day of Atonement, and frequently warns us against relying too heavily on their concepts (cf. "No such message has ever been given in past ages. Paul, as we have seen, did not preach it; he pointed his brethren into the then far-distant future for the coming of the Lord. The Reformers did not proclaim it. Martin Luther placed the judgment about three hundred years in the future from his day." GC 356; R&H June 3, 1890; "Great light was given to the Reformers, but many of them received the sophistry of error through misinterpretation of the Scriptures." FCE 450, 473; "Although these great men were used as instruments for God, they were not faultless. They were erring men, and made great mistakes. We should seek to imitate their virtues,

but we should not make them our criterion." 1 SM 402, etc). She saw the 1888 message as discovering the link between justification by faith and the unique Adventist truth of the cleansing of the sanctuary (cf. EW 254 and her series of R&H articles for the first three months of 1890).

A. Ellen White soon recognized that its main contribution was to impart life to the otherwise "stale, profitless" sanctuary doctrine. She expresses this insight in a series of articles in 1890, building up to a crescendo:

"We are in the day of atonement, and we are to work in harmony with Christ's work of cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of the people. Let no man who desires to be found with the wedding garment on, *resist our Lord in his office work*" (**Jan. 21**, emphasis supplied). "Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary. . . . What is our work? . . . To be in harmony with the work of Christ. . . . A people is to be prepared for the great day of God" [obviously, to meet the final test of the mark of the beast, and for translation] (**Jan. 28**). "The mediatorial work of Christ, the grand and holy mysteries of redemption, are not studied or comprehended by the . . . church to whom God has entrusted the treasures of truth" (**Feb. 4**). "Christ is cleansing the temple in heaven from the sins of the people, and we must work in harmony with Him upon the earth, cleansing the soul temple from its moral defilement" (**Feb. 11**). "How do you know but that the Lord is giving fresh evidences of His truth, placing it in a new setting, that the way of the Lord may be prepared?" [the context is the teaching of Jones and Waggoner on

the nature of Christ and justification by faith] (**Feb. 18**). “The people have not gone into the [most] holy place where Jesus has gone to make an atonement for His children. . . . They oppose they know not what” (**Feb. 25**). “Light is flashing from the throne of God, and what is this for?—It is that a people may be prepared to stand in the day of God” (**March 4**). “We have been hearing His [the Holy Spirit’s] voice more distinctly in the message that has been going for the last two years. . . . For nearly two years we have been urging the people to come up and accept the light and the truth concerning the righteousness of Christ, and they do not know whether to come and take hold of this precious truth or not” (**March 11**; why do they “not know”? Next week she answers.) “If our brethren [leadership] were all laborers together with God, they would not doubt but that the message He has sent us during these last two years is from heaven. Our young men look to our older brethren, and as they see that they do not accept the message, but treat it as though it were of no consequence, it influences those . . . to reject the light. . . . How long will those at the head of the work keep themselves aloof from the message of God?” (**March 18**). “No one has said that we shall find perfection in any man’s investigations, but this I do know, that our churches are dying for the want of the teaching on the subject of righteousness by faith in Christ” (**March 25**). “Several have written to me, inquiring if the [present, 1888] message of justification by faith is the third angel’s message, and I have answered, ‘It

is the third angel’s message in verity.’ . . . God has light for His people” (**April 1**).

B. It was Heaven’s intention that the gospel commission be completed by the time of the 1893 General Conference Session (*Bulletin*, p. 419). This amazing statement seems beyond belief unless we take into account the leadership of the Lord as manifested in the time of the early church, the 16th century Reformation, and the Midnight Cry of 1844.

IV. THE 1888 MESSAGE CONTRIBUTES TO THE DAY OF ATONEMENT DOCTRINE.

A. It joined justification by faith to the Day of Atonement. As the third angel spoke the words of Revelation 14:12, he “pointed” to the Most Holy Apartment “where Jesus stands before the ark, making His final intercession” (EW 254).

B. “The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ’s work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption” (Ev 222). Christ’s saving work is the ministration of justification by faith as a living experience, and it is a message for the world, not just the church.

C. The books of heaven cannot be “cleansed” until first of all the hearts of God’s people on earth are cleansed from all sin. This must include both conscious sin and what is now still unconscious. This is clearly set forth in Jones’s and Waggoner’s books, *Christ and His Righteousness* and *The Consecrated Way*. Sanctification is not the cleansing work; according to the 1888 message,

the cleansing is accomplished through true justification by faith.⁴

D. A new motivation becomes possible for God's people that transcends their egocentric desire to be saved and get a reward in heaven.

They learn to feel a primary concern for the honor and vindication of Christ. This is the true and practical experience of self being "crucified with Christ."

E. Thus the cleansing of the sanctuary, the "final intercession" of the High Priest, is a complete fulfillment of the promise of God in His new covenant. His law at last is written in the hearts of His people, not "some few" individuals, but in a "body" of a church composed of "every nation, kindred, tongue, and people." That holy law is *agape* which at last casts out all fear so that they are prepared to meet the test of the mark of the beast ("Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Rom. 13:10; "There is no fear in love; but perfect love

⁴ The original opposition to the 1888 message maintained that justification by faith is merely pardon for "past sins," as is the current understanding of many Seventh-day Adventists today. When justification by faith is understood as mere pardon for past sins so that the real change of heart takes place only in sanctification, there is an inevitable relapse into legalism. When Waggoner saw that "there is but one thing in this world that a man needs, and that is justification" (1891 *Bulletin*, #4), he was not echoing the "new theology" doctrine that justification by faith is merely a legal declaration and that obedience is not necessary. He saw the glorious power of justification by faith, a truth which has taken us a century to understand.

casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us." 1 John 4:18, 19).

F. But *agape* is a revelation of truth that comes only from Christ's ministry in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary ("Those who rose up with Jesus would send up their faith to Him in the holiest, and pray, 'My Father, give us Thy Spirit.' Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost. In that breath was light, power, and much love, joy, and peace.

I turned to look at the company who were still bowed before the throne; they did not know that Jesus had left it. Satan appeared to be by the throne, trying to carry on the work of God. I saw them look up to the throne, and pray, 'Father, give us Thy Spirit.' Satan would then breathe upon them an unholy influence; in it there was light and much power, but no sweet love, joy, and peace. Satan's object was to keep them deceived and to draw back and deceive God's children." EW 55, 56). The popular churches who do not by faith follow Him there cannot comprehend *agape*, because they believe in the natural immortality of the soul.⁵

G. Justification by faith is vastly more than pardon for "past sins" as our brethren in the pre-1888 era thought, and many today still think.

- (a) It reconciles the alienated human heart to God.
- (b) At the same time it must reconcile the heart to

⁵ The Evangelical doctrines of justification by faith therefore cannot comprehend the full truth of the cross of Christ. They cannot understand how He died the second death for the human race.

God's holy law. (c) That reconciliation must include heart obedience to the fourth commandment (and the seventh!). This is why Ellen White rejoiced to hear the message of Jones and Waggoner: it makes the believer obedient to "all the commandments of God" (TM 91, 92).⁶ If the full message of justification by faith in the light of the cleansing of the sanctuary could be presented to our evangelistic audiences, *those who believe the Good News will immediately begin to keep the Sabbath*. The message also spells the end of fornication, adultery, and all addictions for "every one that believeth." That gospel which Paul says is the "power [*dunamis*, dynamite] of God into salvation" is the truth of justification by faith (Rom. 1:16, 17).

H. It is the final realization of the objective gospel in the subjective experience of God's people. All that Christ died on the cross to accomplish for the human race is at last realized in

⁶ "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. . . . 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."

those who believe, so that His High Priestly ministry is accomplished as He sees His character reflected in the "body" of His people on earth, not merely in a few individuals.⁷

I. It ministers a total revelation of "much more abounding grace." That grace transcends all the "abounding sin" the devil and his angels have invented in these last days. This grace is the brilliance of the "light that lightens the earth with glory." The cross of Christ is uplifted at last so that it "will draw all" in a final separation of honest-hearted souls from "Babylon." Thus justification by faith in the light of the Day of Atonement will result in the most efficient evangelism the world has ever seen. The harvest-work will be accomplished in an incredibly short time as soon as we cease to "resist our Lord in His office work."

J. Contrary to the view of many in the church, this heavenly ministry of the great High Priest will result in sinless living in sinful flesh. This "sinful flesh" is not merely the physical effects of the fall such as hunger, fatigue, etc., but the deep self-centeredness that is natural for all humans since the fall. As Christ denied self in His holy person, resisting temptation "unto blood," so those who

⁷ This is a triumphal victory in the age-long plan of redemption, without which it would ultimately fail. It is impossible that the first resurrection take place until Christ returns personally, for He alone is the Life-giver. Further, it is impossible that He should come until His people are ready, otherwise His coming would destroy them. It follows therefore that the success of the plan of redemption depends upon its final hour the successful completion of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary.

follow Him by faith in the Most Holy-Apartment will “overcome even as [He] overcame.”⁸

The results of the final atonement eradicate the *sin*, the enmity against God; for once, human nature is perfectly reconciled to God. But the redeemed will still have their sinful natures in that they will still be temptible, still able to fail just as he was able to fall. They will simply follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, but in the same “sinful flesh.”⁹

K. In its fundamental essence, the 1888 contribution was declared to be the very heart of the Laodicean message. It was Christ making one last appeal to His people to “repent.”¹⁰

L. The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary will be accomplished within one human lifetime or generation, unless the leadership of the church “resist our Lord in His office work” (cf. Matt. 24:34).¹¹

What does *dikaioo* mean?

(a) *Its usage in Scripture.* Because it is the NT equivalent of the Hebrew *tsadaq*, its OT usage can

⁸ Within history, not merely beyond history, they will stand before the throne “without fault.” See Rev. 14:5.

⁹ One writer stated: “We will never reach sinless perfection.” RH 5-19-66 R. S. Watt.

¹⁰ See The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, p. 1052.

¹¹ This thought occasions much discussion in the church today among different groups. Some express the idea that the large baptisms overseas indicate that Heaven is pleased with our spiritual condition and that a denominational repentance is unnecessary. Others point to the “deplorable” spiritual state of the church in North America where the median age of those who attend is around 60, whereas it was 30 a few decades back.

shed light on its intrinsic meaning in the NT. Hebrew judges had no right to “declare” or “pronounce” a person to be just until they had examined his case and were satisfied that their “declaration” was demanded by solid evidence: “they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked” (Dt. 25:1).

If a judge were on his own to declare a wicked person righteous, that would not make him righteous or even constitute him thus. “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord” (Pr. 17:15). It is evident therefore that the *root* meaning of the verb *tsadaq* is not to “declare” or “pronounce” righteous but to *recognize and confess the evidence* that a person *is* righteous.

The same meaning is carried into the NT. When the publicans “justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John” (Lk. 7:29), they simply recognized God’s character of righteousness and confessed it. Does this mean that God justifies a person because He sees a meritorious righteousness inherent in him? No. When Abraham “believed,” the Lord “counted his faith for righteousness,” recognizing that his faith worked by love and reconciled his alienated heart. We have no righteousness, but a humbled, contrite heart *can appreciate* Christ’s righteousness. *That is faith.* God is “just” to “count it” for righteousness.

Paul cites Abraham’s experience as the primary example of justification by faith (Rom. 4:1-13). When we are “justified by faith,” we too “have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . by

whom we have now received the atonement” (Rom. 5:1, 11). Being justified by faith and receiving the atonement are identical.

The problem arises when we do not understand the NT idea of faith. Faith is not a mental assent to a dogma, a fear-motivated act like signing an insurance proposal form. It is not “accepting Christ” in order to attain personal security. NT faith is a heart appreciation of the *agape* of Christ revealed at His cross irrespective of fear or hope of reward. God asks nothing more from man, because such faith being itself a change of heart makes a person safe to take into heaven.

NT *dikaioo* and its cognate words cannot be understood except in the light of that divine love which arouses faith, and its powerful effect on the believing human heart. The Roman Catholic view says that God justifies a person through the Church’s sacraments, infusing a meritorious righteousness into him; the Reformers’ view says that God justifies a *believing* person only in a legal sense, an incomplete idea which allows the charge of a fictional legal imputation and opens the door to continued transgression of God’s law; the 1888 view says that God has already legally justified “all men” by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ for the world, and when the sinner believes the Good News, he is justified by faith, his heart is changed, he is reconciled to God, and he is made obedient “to all the commandments of God.” Thus no “fiction” is involved.

No works of any kind are involved in justification by faith (but it produces works). The believer, like

the repentant thief on the cross, hasn’t done a thing; he hasn’t kept a sabbath yet nor paid a dime of tithe. But his heart is melted by the love of Christ. He surveys the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died, and he pours contempt on all his pride. Self is “crucified with Christ.” Since *agape* is the fulfilling of the law, in Jones’s and Waggoner’s view, the believer is “made obedient” in justification by faith, because faith works by *agape*. And from now on the believer will respond to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, including Sabbath-keeping and tithe-paying—which life-long experience becomes sanctification.

According to Jones and Waggoner, the believer stands in a new relationship to God, not only in a legal sense but in the sense of his being at-one-with God, reconciled to Him by the blood of the cross. And since no one can be reconciled to God and at the same time not be reconciled to His holy law, it follows in their thinking that the believer who is justified by faith is now obedient to “all the commandments of God.”

“*What is justification by faith?*” asks Ellen White. She answers: “It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself” (Daniells, *op. cit.*, p. 104).

Alas! and did my Saviour bleed? And did my Sovereign die?

Would He devote that sacred head For such a worm as I?

Was it for crimes that I have done, He groaned upon the tree?

Amazing pity! Grace unknown! And love beyond degree.

Well might the sun in darkness hide And shut his glories in,

When Christ the mighty Maker died For man, the creature's sin;

Thus might I hide my blushing face When His dear cross appears,

Dissolve my heart in thankfulness And melt mine eyes to tears.

But drops of grief can ne'er repay The debt of love I owe;

Here, Lord, I give myself away; 'Tis all that I can do.—(Isaac Watts)

“What is justification by faith?” *This is it.*

But is this Roman Catholicism?

(b) *What recent Protestant theology says.*

Protestants are not unanimous in the idea that *dikaioo* means only to “declare righteous” in a legal sense. Keen theologians are moving closer to the Jones and Waggoner view of recognizing (a) that the legal justification applies to all men, and (b) that justification by faith is a change of heart in the believer. They are coming to this simply from more careful Bible study. J. A. Ziesler summarizes the idea thus:

The heart of the present study is the contention that the verb “justify” is used relationally, often with the forensic meaning “acquit,” but that the noun, and the adjective *dikaios*; have behavioural meanings, and that in Paul’s thought Christians are both justified by faith (i. e. restored to fellowship, acquitted),

and also righteous by faith (i.e. leading a new life in Christ). . . . This view, which will be amplified and supported with evidence in what follows, is at odds with the usual Protestant understanding, and was certainly not foreseen when the study was begun. Nevertheless it appears to be demanded by the linguistic and exegetical data which will be presented (*The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul. A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry*, Cambridge, 1972, p. 1).

Ziesler cites numerous Protestant scholars who see in justification by faith something more than a fictional legal declaration. Among them are E. J. Goodspeed, R. Bultmann, D. E. H. Whitely, E. K. Lee, T. W. Manson, Vincent Taylor, and J. Jeremias. He even includes Luther himself (pp. 2-6). He summarizes this development of thinking:

The usual Protestant position . . . has been that righteousness as imputed in justification is real righteousness, which comes from God to man, but *for forensic purposes only*. Man is not righteous, but he is treated by God as if he were, because he stands clothed in the righteousness of Christ. More commonly today, the language of imputation is avoided, partly because of the difficulties to which it has led. . . Instead, it is widely considered that “righteousness” belongs to the language of relationships, and denotes a right relation to God which is not imputed by anyone but really exists. It is a real righteousness, with no “as if” about it, but is purely relational. Because of

this, the noun can be taken to mean “acceptance” (of man, by God), or to mean “forgiveness.”

Thus righteousness from God and justification are the same thing. Both are to do with the granting of a status before God, an undeserved status which *in itself* is not concerned with ethics, but which has ethical consequences. The indicative of justification implies an ethical imperative, but this is subsequent, and the Christian is always *simul justus et peccator*. . . . Clearly, in these terms there is no difference between “make” and “declare” righteous, for it is simply a matter of bringing sinners into a new relationship (p. 8).

Ziesler is even beginning to glimpse the beautiful Jones and Waggoner idea of the corporate “in Christ” motif. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). “As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (Rom. 5:18).

The New English Bible says: “As the issue of one misdeed was condemnation for all men, so the issue of one just act is acquittal and life for all men.” Christ entered the corporate stream of humanity, becoming one with the fallen human race, thus qualifying to be the “last Adam” by virtue of His holy life and His sacrificial death. As Adam’s sin legally condemned “all men,” so Christ’s holy life and His death legally acquitted “all men.” *Here is forensic legal justification, totally undeserved by man, totally*

external to him. “All men” live because of it. The cross is stamped on every loaf of bread.

But this is not NT justification by faith; it is only the ground for it, its source. When the Good News comes to the sinner’s heart and he responds and believes, then comes his personal justification by faith—which *is a change of heart*.

Ziesler’s conclusion:

A quite reasonable sense is obtained if we start from the assumption that Paul uses the *dikai*-word-group in the way indicated by the Hebrew and Greek background. If we take the verb as essentially relational or forensic, and the noun and adjective as describing behaviour within relationship, and if we also make full use of the corporate Christ idea, we arrive at an exegesis which satisfies the concerns of both traditional Catholicism and traditional Protestantism. Nothing is lost: justification is entirely by grace through faith, it is declaratory, yet on the other hand, Paul’s ethical seriousness is fully allowed for, within the one section of vocabulary [that is, *dikaioo* and its cognates] (*ibid.*, p. 212).

If Our Author assumes that the 1888 message teaches that “the sinner is accepted by God on the grounds . . . of a righteousness infused and inherent,” he is quite mistaken. The message sees acceptance by God resting solely on the merits of Christ who “took in His grasp the world over which Satan claimed to preside as his lawful territory, and by His wonderful work in giving His life, He restored

the whole race of men to favor with God” (1 SM 343).

Is Perfect Obedience to God’s Law Impossible?

There is in the 1888 message no “opposition to the legal, forensic use of the word” justify. Now Our Author objects to “the goal of sinless perfection . . . as attainable in this life.”

(a) Neither Jones, Waggoner, nor I use the term “sinless perfection.” Our Author puts words in our mouth. Jones uses the term “Christian perfection,” as does Ellen White.

(b) “Sinless perfection” implies the heresy of perfectionism, which Jones, Waggoner, and I totally reject.

(c) Ellen White says: “While we cannot claim perfection of the flesh, we may have Christian perfection of the soul. . . . When we surrender ourselves wholly to God, and fully believe, the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. . . . Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities” (2 SM 32). Obviously she is not talking about a mere legal status while the believer continues living in transgression of the law of God. Ellen White’s position is precisely our position.

(d) Our Author says “that Paul does not speak of a divine grace by which men are made righteous.” What does Paul say? “The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age” (Titus 2:11, 12, NIV).

The Ground of Justification

This work “accomplished before I was born” was legally accomplished for “all men” (Romans 3:23, 24; 5:18). “Jesus Christ . . . is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5:19).

The real issue is: *When does faith begin to go to work—in justification by faith, or not until sanctification takes place?* Jones and Waggoner maintain that faith begins to work when the sinner’s heart is reconciled to God by the blood of the cross. He has not yet done any “work” of any kind, but his heart is at-one-with God. This is justification by faith.

Seriously, can this be Roman Catholicism?

Catholicism is based almost entirely on magic. By performing certain rituals and speaking certain words, Catholicism forces God to do certain things. In the mass, “Christ” enters the stomach through the wafer. When a person is dying with no conscious mind functioning, the priest can send him on the way to heaven by an incantation. The priest absolves from sin without evidence of genuine repentance. The love of sin continues, yet the “believer” is said to be justified. In contrast, genuine justification by faith is not based on magic nor on any “as if” assumption. God is concerned with genuine heart-religion.

The foundation of Romanism is its concept of the Incarnation, which in turn was shaped to conform to Greek mythology. Christ must be “exempt” from taking the fallen, sinful nature of those He came to

save, and the exemption must include the Virgin Mary (cf. 1 John 4:1-3).

The “bottom line” again is an accommodation for “remaining sin.” The basic idea is that so long as anyone has a fallen, sinful nature, so long is he doomed to “remaining sin,” and genuine victory over sin is for him impossible. Ellen White says that this has always been Satan’s principal contention (cf. DA 24).