

*Herald*, Oct. 16, 1888 (Emphasis ours).

7. Paxton, p. 137.

8. Could anyone be clearer than Paul on such distinctions? See Rom. 3:27, 28; 4:2-16; 11:6; Gal. 2:16. But the same Paul does not separate the Gospel from the law, or faith from works. See Rom. 3:31; Gal. 5:6.

9. Ellen White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1958), I, 344 is the classic here.

10. Paxton, p. 43.

11. Ewald M. Plass, comp., *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), II, 701.

12. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), Vol. 54, *Table Talk*.

13. Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, tran. Philip S. Watson (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1953), p. 227.

14. "At Wittenberg a light was kindled whose rays should extend to the uttermost parts of the earth, and which was to increase in brightness to the close of time." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), p. 126.

"In his epistle to the Romans, Paul set forth the great principles of the gospel. . . . With great clearness and power the apostle presented the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ. . . . Through all the ages the great truth of justification by faith has stood as a mighty beacon to guide repentant sinners into the way of life. It was this light that scattered the darkness which enveloped Luther's mind, and revealed to him the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from sin. The same light has guided thousands of sin-burdened souls to the true Source of pardon and peace. For the epistle to the church at Rome, every Christian has reason to thank God." Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), pp. 373-374. See also Paxton, p. 18 ff.

15. Minutes of the Biblical Research Institute, Wahroonga, March 23, 1976:

WHEREAS: The Biblical Research Institute has on two occasions, February 3, 1976, at Avondale College, and February 4, 1976, at the office of the Australasian Division, heard the plea of a number of senior ministers who have expressed their concern about the teaching of Theology at Avondale College, particularly in the area of the Sanctuary, the Age of the Earth, and Inspiration, it now desires to present its findings to the administration of the Australasian Division as follows:—

(1) (a) That the Theology Department of Avondale College is committed to generally accepted Seventh-day Adventist doctrinal positions as set forth in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, and

(b) That Dr. Desmond Ford, using the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy and representative Adventist authors, has satisfied the Biblical Research Institute as to the soundness of his doctrinal stance.

16. See Paxton, pp. 113 n; 116 f.

17. See Gal. 2:21 RSV and footnote; Rom. 10:4 RSV; Rom. 1:17 RSV; 3:25 RSV; and compare each with the KJV rendering. See also the Jerusalem Bible, Rom. 4:5; and compare the KJV. The NEB translation of "righteousness" as "acquittal" in II Cor. 3:9 is significant and note that the word translated "justification" in Rom. 5:16 is rendered "righteousness" in Rom. 2:26; 5:18; 8:4; and Rev. 19:8. Compare also Rom. 5:17, 18, 19 in the KJV, RSV and the original. Translators both in English and other languages use the words "justification" and "righteousness" as synonyms.

18. A. J. Mattill, Jr., "Translation of Words with the Stem DIK - in Romans," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 9 (1971), 91.

19. See, for example, chapter four of *Paul* by Herman Ridderbos for a synthesis of up-to-date scholarship on this matter. In official Adventist circles, Raoul Dederen seems to make the identical distinctions between justification and sanctification as does *The Shaking of Adventism*. See "What Does God's Grace Do?" *Ministry*, March, 1978, pp. 4-7.

## IV. Paxton and the Reformers

by Hans LaRondelle

Paxton's book is the first non-Adventist attempt to focus seriously on the doctrinal heart of Adventism, on our understanding of the everlasting gospel. He observes with great sympathy what he calls a "shaking" within our church that is related to our un-

derstanding of "righteousness by faith," and even considers this crisis to be a "sign of grace." His analysis is divided into three parts, one on Adventism and the Reformation, the second on Adventism before 1950, and the third — the book's main part — on Adventism after 1960. It is his purpose to let the historical facts speak for themselves (11). My remarks here will deal only with Paxton's assessment of Adventism and the Reformation.

Paxton acknowledges frankly: "Seventh-

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day Adventists believe in salvation by grace through faith alone as fervently as do most evangelicals. They believe in sanctification by the indwelling Holy Spirit and in the soon return of Jesus Christ in great power and glory” (17). Paxton examines what Adventists consider to be their real mission on earth, and concludes that it is their stupendous claim “to carry forward the message of the Reformation in such a way as no other Christian or Church body is able to do” (18).

Deeply impressed by his discovery of this “astounding” claim and conviction, Paxton apologizes on behalf of evangelicalism for the “terrible oversight” (24) of having failed in the past to see this.

Adventists can only appreciate such sym-

**“The real question is not whether the church preaches the Reformers’ gospel, but whether it preaches the apostolic gospel. . . .”**

pathetic courtesy, while at the same time asking the author, an Anglican, whether he is fully correct in concluding that the Adventist church feels called to maintain “the gospel of the Reformers” (28), or that she has been “struggling with her relationship to the gospel of the Reformation” (29), or that she wants to carry forward “the torch of the everlasting gospel of the Reformation” (19).

Within Adventism such statements sound strange because they identify completely the gospel of God in sacred Scripture with the gospel of the sixteenth century reformers (cf. also 148, 149). Such an absolute identification is found neither in Ellen White’s writings nor in any of the other Adventist writers Paxton quotes in chapter 1. All these authors fall back on Holy Scripture as the norm of the gospel and not on the Reformers’ understanding of the gospel. The question arises, of course: Why then do Adventist books claim that Seventh-day Adventists stand in the line of true succession of the Protestant Reformation and feel called to complete it? (see 22).

Adventists do not make Luther and Calvin their norm or the Protestant creeds their guideline in finding and establishing Bible truth. They do, however, recognize all true reformers as instruments of God to lead men back to the Bible as the supreme authority (*Sola Scriptura*) and to Christ as our sole Substitute and Surety before God. But this does not mean that Adventists accept the reformation gospel as the canon for their understanding of the apostolic gospel. Only the original apostles possessed the gospel in its fullness and recorded it as the norm “for all future ages.”<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White wrote concerning the Protestant reformers: “We should seek to imitate their virtues, but we should not make them our criterion.”<sup>2</sup> To her, the real Adventist mission was to give “evidence of *apostolic succession*” by following both the character and the teachings of the apostles.<sup>3</sup>

The apostolic gospel is the only testing truth for Seventh-day Adventists. To measure Adventism by the “Reformation gospel” or the reformatory creeds has never been a primary concern for the church. Many, indeed, would regard such an agitation as a false “shaking,” appealing to such counsel as Ellen White’s remark that “God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines, and the basis of all reforms. . . .”<sup>4</sup>

The study of the Reformers’ concept of the gospel is certainly helpful and important to Adventists. But the real question is not whether the church preaches the Reformers’ gospel, but whether it preaches the apostolic gospel, which is the everlasting gospel (Rev. 14.6).

**I**n chapter 2 (35-49), Paxton deals with “The Heart of the Reformation,” which he sees as limited to the doctrine of “justification by faith alone.” He summarizes the Reformers’ concept of justification as having two sides: one negative and the other positive. The negative side consists of “the acquittal of the believing sinner on the grounds of the dying of Jesus Christ,” or simply, forgiveness (39). The positive side, Paxton explains, is the justification by which “God credits

Jesus' perfect fulfillment of the law to the believer" (40), which means "to be *pronounced* righteous" (38). For Paxton, the whole conflict between the Reformation and Rome is concentrated on this last aspect. He states: "Whereas Rome taught that justification means to *make* the believer just by work of inner renewal in his heart, the Reformers taught that justification is the *declaration* by God that the believer is just on the grounds of the righteousness of Christ alone, which is outside the believer" (39).

Paxton writes chapter 2 from a clearly polemical angle with regard to both Rome and Adventism. This has led him, however, to deal with justification in *isolation from* sanctification, from fear of confusing the two. He writes, "the righteousness of faith is never to be confused with sanctification. It is not sanctification, nor does it include sanctification. This clear distinction between righteousness of faith and sanctification was the massive breakthrough made by Martin Luther" (45).

He goes so far as to distinguish sharply the work of Christ *from* that of the Holy Spirit, the Christ outside us *from* the Christ inside us, and grace *from* the indwelling Christ, in the teachings of Luther and Calvin. He even concludes; "To make this shift from the God-man to the indwelling Christ is to abandon the Reformation doctrine of justification rather than to honor and perpetuate it" (42). Because of this overriding preoccupation with the distinctions between justification and sanctification, Paxton unfortunately has restricted his focus with regard to the Reformers exclusively to the forensic or purely legal aspect of justification.

This restricted focus on the judicial act of justification, however, was constantly avoided by Luther and Calvin in their writings, for good reasons. They did not want to give the impression that they viewed sanctification as irrelevant or not organically connected with justification.

Paxton, however, is quick to label selected statements in Adventist writings or sermons which do not clearly pass the screen of his concept of forensic justification as "the Roman Catholic approach" (147).

Such a judgment calls for a closer look at

the historic decree on justification at the Council of Trent (see below). Possibly the most important statement of Paxton's whole book is this: "The crux of the problem in modern Adventism lies in understanding *the relation of justification and sanctification*. It was their proper relationship which stood at the heart of the Reformation" (148). If this is true, one may well wonder why Paxton permitted himself to exclude completely any treatment of the *relationship* of justification and sanctification in the Reformation in chapter 2 of his book? How can he fail to deal with such a vital relationship which by his own admission "stood at the heart of the Reformation?" Even more disappointing is the fact that the book contains no chapter or section on the *Biblical* relationship of justification and sanctification. To the infallible norm of *Sola Scriptura*, both the Reformers and Adventists have professed to be willing to submit themselves and to stand corrected.

If that *Biblical relationship* is the "crux of the problem" both for the Reformers and for Adventism, then has not Paxton failed by default to place before us the real dilemma?

Paxton sees the whole conflict between Rome and Reformation concentrated on a radically different interpretation of justification. Rome would say that justification meant to *make* the believer just in his heart; the Reformation saw justification simply as *declaring* him just by imputation only (39). Paxton gives the impression by this contrast, that the Reformers knew of no working of the Holy Spirit in God's act of justification by faith alone, and that they rejected in principle every kind of *making* the believer just as a part of justification.

**T**he first question is, did Rome at the Council of Trent actually state that justification meant only the process of *making* the believer just and did Rome reject the principle of a *forensic* justification? Such a formulation does not explain fully the Roman Catholic position on justification.

First of all, Calvin rejected the Roman Catholic *confusion* of justification and sanctification because Trent took both as if they were one and the same. On the other

hand, Calvin maintained that both gifts of God's grace "are constantly conjoined and cohere," just as in the sun the light and the heat are always inseparably joined together. Calvin's criticism of Trent's decree on justification was carefully balanced:

For example: The light of the sun, though never unaccompanied with heat, is not to be considered heat. Where is the man so undiscerning as not to distinguish the one from the other? We acknowledge, then, that as soon as any one is justified, renewal also necessarily follows: and there is no dispute as to whether or not Christ sanctifies all whom He justifies. It were to rend the gospel, and divide Christ himself, to attempt to separate the righteousness which we obtain by faith from repentance.<sup>5</sup>

As seen here, Calvin did not want to consider justification as a gift *by itself* but only *in relationship* to sanctification. To consider justification a grace apart from the regeneration of the heart meant to Calvin "to rend the gospel and divide Christ himself." In other words, for him the Biblical *distinction* between justification and sanctification never became a *separation* of the two. All those Protestant books which deal exclusively with justification are not, therefore, in the true line of the Reformers. And they certainly are not in line with the Apostle Paul's letters to the Romans (5:1-5) and to the Galatians (2:16-20).

The distinction between justification and sanctification was blurred, however, at Trent so that the two became one and the same. By this fusion, Trent actually taught only a *partial* justification. It spoke of a gradual process of nonimputation of sins and of infused grace, thus denying the *total* character of divine imputation of Christ's righteousness, of acquittal, of grace, of acceptance, and of the assurance of salvation (Chapter IX of Decree).<sup>6</sup> The real concern of the Reformation was not the idea of the gradual making just of the believer but the emphatic denial that Christ alone is our righteousness and the consequent loss of the certainty of salvation through "the figment of partial justification."<sup>7</sup>

The second reason why Calvin rejected the

Tridentine decree of justification was that it stated that justification was dispensed exclusively through the instrumental cause of the *sacraments* of baptism and penance (Ch. VII). Indeed, Calvin said that "the whole dispute is as to the Cause of Justification."<sup>8</sup>

If justification is basically a sacramental process, then it is no longer exclusively by faith in Christ. In the sacramental infusion of grace, the believer is not united with Christ and His salvation; instead, only stimulating grace-power is poured into the soul, without essentially affecting the soul's neutral freewill. The cooperation of the freewill with the supernatural, new inclination of his heart is then considered *meritorious* before God and will cause God to bestow an *increased* justification grace in his heart. The goal of this complicated justification process was, according to Trent: "truly to merit the obtaining of eternal life in due time" (Ch. XVI).

"Faith" was regarded, accordingly, merely as the beginning of the justification process (Ch. VIII), as the preparatory act consisting of an intellectual assent only (Ch. VI), as the so-called "unformed faith." The infusion of sacramental grace (or love) would then give real substance to faith by the gift of an inherent righteousness or love. Thus faith would become a "formed faith." Calvin vehemently rejected this "worse than worthless distinction," because such stages of "faith" never resulted in uniting the heart with Christ and His salvation.

To summarize, in rejecting the whole

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structure of the justification doctrine of Trent, the Reformation was opposing a position determined by the unbreakable unity of the following five constitutive elements:

- 1) The *sacramental* character of the whole justification process;

- 2) The insistence on *inherent* righteousness owned by the soul;
- 3) The *meritorious* character of man's natural freewill;
- 4) The *rejection of the total imputation of Christ's righteousness*;
- 5) The *denial* of the personal certainty of salvation.<sup>9</sup>

These together constitute the spectrum of the basic motifs of the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification which the Reformers were opposing.

When Paxton goes so far as to conclude that within contemporary Adventism there has emerged a "full-grown, distinct" Roman Catholic theology (147), he certainly draws an unwarranted conclusion. Such a radical judgment ignores the inextricable bond of the constitutive elements of the Tridentine justification doctrine. It also overlooks the basic difference between the inherent righteousness of Roman Catholicism and the indwelling Christ of Adventism.

Paxton presents the teaching of Luther and Calvin on justification as a purely extrinsic, forensic act of God outside of man, exclusively as "the *declaration* by God that the believer is just on the grounds of the righteousness of Christ alone, which is outside the believer" (39). "Justification means *to be pronounced* righteous" (38), nothing more. It is, in other words, a purely *verbal* justification in which no regeneration occurs in the believer, because the Holy Spirit's work is a different act of God (renewal, or sanctification), which occurs logically only *after* the act of justification, not as a part of it. As Paxton says, "justifying righteousness is to be found only in the one unique God-man . . . For the reformers, Christ alone meant Jesus Christ the *God-man*, and *not Christ's indwelling the believer by the Holy Spirit* . . . To make this shift from the God-man to the indwelling Christ is to abandon the Reformation doctrine of justification rather than to honor and perpetuate it" (42, emphasis his).

Paxton's concept of justification as a purely theoretical imputation, as a merely verbal pronouncement or abstract crediting of Jesus' law fulfillment to the account of the

believer, is more akin to the traditional interpretation of Luther by *later* orthodox theology and to the Roman Catholic misinterpretation of Luther than it is to Luther's own exegesis of Biblical justification.

Luther never wrote a systematic treatise on justification. So it is perhaps not surprising that the eclectic selection of isolated statements from the full Luther can lead to different schools of Luther interpretation. For example, over against Theodosius Harnack, who interpreted Luther in strictly forensic-imputation terms, Karl Holl maintained that Luther *based* justification on man's spiritual renewal and sanctification and that God's justification was only an anticipatory judgment in view of the time when man's whole life and character would actually *be* just. In the final judgment, God would pronounce the believer just not by the fiction of an "as if," but by the realistic judgment that man finally had become just. In other words, according to Holl, Luther's justification is based on a real *making* righteous of the believer.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, R. Seeberg argued that for Luther the subjective regeneration and sanctification experience was the *basis* for personal certainty of salvation.

In reaction, Paul Althaus has sharply criticized both Seeberg and Holl for ignoring the decisive aspect of imputation in Luther's doctrine justification (see below). Regin Preter has further criticized Holl and Seeberg for their misinterpretation even of Luther's sanctification by identifying the indwelling Christ with an inherent righteousness in the believer.<sup>11</sup>

Seeberg and Holl had appealed mainly to the writings of the early Luther (until around 1520), when he did not yet clearly distinguish between imputation and impartation of Christ's righteousness and still merged the two. For example, in his sermon "Two Kinds of Righteousness," of 1519, Luther says that Christ's "infinite righteousness" becomes ours by faith or "rather, he himself becomes ours."

This righteousness is primary; it is the basis, the cause, the source of all our own actual righteousness. For this is righteousness given in place of the original righteousness lost in Adam. . . Therefore this

alien righteousness, instilled in us without our works by grace alone. . . is set opposite original sin, likewise alien, which we acquire without our works by birth alone. Christ daily drives out the old Adam more and more . . . For alien righteousness is not instilled all at once, but it begins, makes progress, and is finally perfected at the end through death. The second kind of righteousness is our proper righteousness, not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness.<sup>12</sup>

In 1519, Luther evidently does not yet describe Christ's alien righteousness as a forensic imputation, but rather as a progressive impartation, although "instilled in us without our works by grace alone." It should be remembered that Luther is not an abstract systematizer or logician but a preacher who is expressing his own dramatic experience of redemption. He immediately compares the two kinds of righteousness with the consummated marriage relation of the bridegroom (Christ) and the bride (the soul) who receive each other's possessions.<sup>13</sup> In other words, in 1519 Luther *blends* saving alien righteousness with the indwelling Christ, and that not before but *after his tower experience* of saving righteousness by faith alone. Paxton is therefore in conflict with this primary source when he states: "To make this shift from the God-man to the indwelling Christ is to abandon the Reformation doctrine of justification rather than to honor and perpetuate it" (42). In saying this, Paxton condemns Luther's own earlier tower experience! He overlooks here the basic distinction between Trent's doctrine of an inherent righteousness received through the church sacraments, and Luther's experience of the indwelling Christ through the Holy Spirit received by faith alone.

**L**uther's discovery of the gospel in his tower experience was not the intellectual concept of the forensic imputation of Christ's righteousness outside of man. This is the fundamental fallacy of Paxton's whole argument and prepares the ground for his reductional interpretation of Luther's later

developed doctrine of forensic imputation.

Remarkably, Paxton appeals to this very sermon of Luther to prove that Luther clearly distinguished between imputed righteousness (as a "passive" righteousness) and the believer's imperfect "active" righteousness; that is, between justification and sanctification (45). The above quotation of Luther's sermon shows, however, that Luther described the alien, justifying righteousness of Christ as a progressively *imparted* righteousness, even after his tower experience.

Paxton's appeal to Luther's 1519 sermon on "Two Kinds of Righteousness" is all the more curious in light of his claim that Luther in his "Lectures on Romans" of 1515-16 was still a "young evangelical Catholic rather than the Protestant Reformer" (37, note 12). Paxton places Luther's "tower experience" in the fall of 1518 when he received "his great insight into the gospel of justification by faith alone." Many Luther specialists, however, reject 1518, and argue for 1514 (W. Pauck, G. Rupp, etc.). Yet, even on Paxton's basis (1518), Luther's sermon of early 1519 can no longer be classified as being "evangelical Catholic," but as an expression of Luther's "great insight into the gospel of justification by faith alone." We must honestly face the historical fact that Luther as the Protestant Reformer in 1519 still preached that Christ's alien and perfect righteousness was the gracious indwelling Christ in the believer's heart. Luther evidently did not yet make a clear distinction between imputed and imparted righteousness in 1519. Yet, Paxton declares without any foundation that it was in 1518 that this synthesis was rent asunder in the mind of Luther and that the Protestant Reformation was born (45).

This last statement is moreover in direct conflict with Luther's own account, as given in 1545, of his breakthrough to salvation in his tower experience.<sup>14</sup> Here Luther recounts that Romans 1:17 became the open gate to heaven and paradise itself, when "I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which a merciful God justifies us by

faith.” Luther explains there that he had always taken the “righteousness of God” to mean God’s attribute of justice by “which He is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner. Suddenly, the light of a *new* concept of God’s righteousness took hold of his guilt-ridden conscience when he saw from the context that God’s righteousness meant God’s *own* saving action, God’s righteousness as *His gift* to us. The rational distinction

**“The fundamental fallacy of Paxton’s whole argument . . . prepares the ground for his reductional interpretation of Luther’s later developed doctrine of forensic imputation.”**

between imputation and impartation had absolutely nothing to do with the breakthrough in Luther’s glorious tower experience. This is confirmed by Luther’s further words in his account: “I also found in other terms an analogy, as the work of God, that is, what God does *in us*, the power of God, with which he *makes us* strong, the wisdom of God, with which he *makes us* wise . . . .”<sup>15</sup>

Paxton, however, projects Luther’s later theological development back into his original discovery of the gospel. For Luther, the saving discovery of the gospel was not a discovery of the difference between imputed and imparted righteousness, but the concept — new to Luther — that God’s righteousness revealed in the gospel is not God’s “active” *punishing* righteousness but his “passive” *justifying* righteousness “by which the righteous lives by a gift of God.” It was this change of concept and not the distinction between two gifts of God (as Paxton suggests) that generated Luther’s salvation experience and made him in principle the Reformer of the church. Luther’s dramatic change can only be fully understood against the historical background of late medieval theology with its sacramentalism and uncertainty of salvation. Here was the real dilemma! After his dramatic discovery, Luther read Augustine’s *The Spirit and the Letter* and was surprised, he says, be-

cause “I found that he, too, interpreted God’s righteousness in a similar way, as the righteousness with which God clothes us when he justified us.”<sup>16</sup> Luther gradually realized more fully that Augustine did not teach clearly the imputed aspect of the righteousness of Christ, but this realization was not the real point for Luther in his first years as the reformer. Above all, Luther was happily surprised that Augustine also taught salvation by the free grace of God. As Luther says about Augustine: “it nevertheless was pleasing that God’s righteousness with which we are justified was taught.”<sup>17</sup> Exactly how God justified us by His own righteousness as a gift, Luther did not yet realize or understand in his tower experience. He only knew that it was God’s *gift of making us righteous by His righteousness*, through faith alone, without the sacraments.

Philip Schaff insightfully characterizes Luther’s discovery of righteousness by faith when he says that “he experienced this truth in his heart long before he understood it in all its bearings.”<sup>18</sup>

Soon after his tower experience, Luther came to a clearer understanding of what “righteousness by faith” signified in the New Testament. It was actually in his famous Wartburg writing of 1521, *Against Latomus*, that Luther for the first time, but as clearly as anywhere in his later writings, makes, on the basis of Romans 5:15, a sharp distinction between “two goods of the gospel,” that is, between *the grace of God outside us* and *the righteousness of God within us* (as the gift in grace). These two blessings match the twin evils of sin which burden the sinner down: the wrath of God and the corruption of human nature, or, stated differently, guilt and inward evil. Just as the law of God reveals a twofold evil, one inward and the other outward, so “we therefore have two goods of the gospel against the two evils of the law: the gift on account of sin, and grace on account of wrath.”<sup>19</sup>

The grace of God outside us is of a total nature just as the wrath of God outside us is of a total character. As God’s wrath (and condemnation) concerned the whole man, so

God's grace or favor accepts the whole person. Luther then writes:

A righteous and faithful man doubtless has both grace and the gift. Grace makes him wholly pleasing so that his person is wholly accepted, and there is no place for wrath in him any more, but the gift heals from sin and from all his corruption of body and soul. . . . Everything is forgiven through grace, but as yet not everything is healed through the gift. The gift has been infused, the leaven has been added to the mixture. It works so as to purge away the sin for which a person has already been forgiven, and to drive out the evil guest for whose expulsion permission has been given."<sup>20</sup>

F. E. Cranz makes this important observation about Luther's new distinction between grace and gift: "The separation of 1521 reflects a *new distinction* between man's total justification or condemnation on the one hand, and on the other, the gradual sanctification of the Christian."<sup>21</sup>

Since his tower experience (between 1514-18), Luther had basically accepted the *Augustinian* position that the believer who received Christ's righteousness (as a gift) was only *partly* just and *partly* a sinner. Complete justification was therefore only in the future. But after 1521, as a result of further Bible studies, Luther took the new position that the Christian was *totally* justified in Christ and *totally* a sinner outside of Christ, as far as the "flesh" or inherent sinful nature was concerned. It is with respect to sanctification, however, that Luther characterizes the Christian as still partly just and partly a sinner. This was Luther's new doctrine of justification, which he worked out more fully in his *Kirchenpostille* of 1522.

Luther now starts from the *complete* justification of the Christian, already accomplished in Christ, and considers sanctification as a consequence of the already complete justification in Christ. He says in his *Kirchenpostille* that Christ is *both* our gift and our example, but only in this order. "The main part and foundation of the Gospel is that before you take Christ as example, you accept and recognize Him as a gift and present, which is given to you by God and which is your

own."<sup>22</sup> Luther calls our taking Christ as our model to imitate in our life and works "the least part of the Gospel," because our works do not *make* us Christians. Faith corresponds only to Christ as a Gift, while works correspond only to Christ as a Model.

When in the 1530s Luther once more writes on justification, he only revises his conceptions of 1521 into sharper formulations and explicit contrasts (of law and gospel; political justice and theological justice). In Luther's most controversial formula, he calls the redeemed Christian *simul iustus et peccator* (simultaneously just and a sinner). Judged from two different viewpoints, man is totally righteous in Christ, by imputation; yet totally sinful in himself, that is, in his "flesh" outside of Christ. Cranz summarizes it this way: "Luther's cardinal distinction is

**“Paxton is in direct conflict both with modern Luther research and with the sources themselves when he suggests that Luther had no indwelling Christ in his justification message.”**

between our total justification in Christ and our partial justification through the Holy Spirit in the world."<sup>23</sup>

The first Luther calls imputed or reputed righteousness, the second formal or purifying righteousness. Thus the Christian lives at the same time in two realms, but logically speaking "total justification in Christ is always primary and antecedent; partial sanctification in the world is always secondary and consequent."<sup>24</sup>

Before 1521, Luther had used the terms "imputation," "reputation" and "reckoning" to explain the righteousness of God by which He gradually *makes* us just. Following 1530, Luther applied the terms "imputation," "reckoning" and "reputation" to the realm of our *total* acceptance and total justification because of Christ's infinite righteousness. Cranz then draws the significant conclusion that neither before nor after 1530 did Luther "reduce" imputation or reputation



“to a mere divine decision which has no real effect on the Christian himself.”<sup>25</sup>

Paxton takes as his norm for judging Adventism the idea that after 1530 Luther’s justification was simply a divine decision or pronouncement and no longer included regeneration or the Spirit’s renewal; in other words, that justification was no longer an *effective* justification as Luther believed earlier. Yet, both Paul Althaus<sup>26</sup> and Otto H. Pesch<sup>27</sup> strongly reject on the basis of the sources themselves, this correlation of an effective justification to Luther’s early theology and a purely verbal justification to Luther’s later theology. This dilemma may be solved if we see that, for Luther, justifying or saving faith was not faith in Christ’s merits in the abstract (apart from the Person of Christ) or faith in the *doctrine* of imputed righteousness, but was the actual embracing of Christ Himself, the living Savior. Luther never gets tired of stressing that:

true faith takes hold of Christ in such a way that Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object but, so to speak, *the One who is present in the faith itself* . . . Therefore faith justifies because it takes hold of and possesses this treasure, the present Christ. . . 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. . . Faith takes hold of Christ and has Him present, enclosing Him as the ring encloses the gem. And whoever is found having this faith in the Christ who is grasped in the heart, him God accounts as righteous.<sup>28</sup>

Already in 1522, Luther wrote in the introduction to his *Commentary on Romans* that true faith is not a human opinion, nor is it an

idea that never reaches the depths of the heart, and so nothing comes of it and no betterment follows it. Faith, however, is a divine work in us. It changes us and makes us to be born anew of God (John 1); it kills the Old Adam and makes altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and power, and it brings with it the Holy

Ghost. Oh, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith.<sup>29</sup>

This goes back to Luther’s revolutionary discovery of the religious nature of faith; it is generated by Christ Himself and not by the sacraments or by man’s rational will. Paxton is in direct conflict both with modern Luther research and with the sources themselves when he suggests that Luther had no indwelling Christ in his justification message. For Luther, genuine faith in Christ meant *both at the same time*: faith in the God-man in heaven and the reception of the indwelling Christ in the heart. Luther believed in one and the same Christ, not two Christs, one after the other, and not in two gifts, first justification and then sanctification. As also Walther von Loewenich observes in his insightful book, *Von Augustin zu Luther*: “The Christ *extra nos* [outside of us] is always at the same time the Christ *in nobis* [inside of us]. Luther is not an abstract logician, but a realist of the faith experience. The relationship of justification and sanctification is therefore basically no problem.”<sup>30</sup>

One and the same faith in Christ receives both the imputed righteousness and the Holy Spirit in the heart. Both are promised on the same condition by the apostle Paul. *Justification* is by faith without works of law (Rom. 3:28), and also the *Holy Spirit* is by faith without works of law (Gal. 3:2, 5). In Romans 5:1, 5, Paul indicates that the two gifts are inseparably joined together so that the one cannot come without the other.

Althaus notices this effective justification throughout Luther’s work.<sup>31</sup> A few examples of the “mature” Luther may substantiate his dynamic view of justification. In his *Theses Concerning Faith and Law* of 1535, Luther defended this thesis (No. 65): “Justification is in reality a kind of rebirth in newness, as John says: Who believe in His name and were born of God (John 1:12-13; I John 5:1).”<sup>32</sup> This statement of Luther in 1535 shows clearly that Paxton operates with a onesided concept of the mature Luther.

In the *Smalcald Articles* (1537), Luther in the article “How Man Is Justified Before God” states:

“I do not know how I can change what I have heretofore constantly taught on this

subject, namely, that by faith (as St. Peter says, Acts 15:9) we get a new and clean heart and that God will and does account us altogether righteous and holy for the sake of Christ, our mediator . . . Good works follow such faith, renewal, and forgiveness."<sup>33</sup>

Evidently, the mature Luther is not concerned about eliminating the renewal of the heart from this article on justification. What Luther is concerned about is that the new relationship of the justified believer with God is *legally* a perfect standing before God not because of man's works or merit but solely because of God's own work, the righteousness of Christ, as a free gift. In his *Disputation Concerning Justification* of the year 1536, Luther again does not always restrict justification to a mere verbal legal pronouncement nor keep the logical order of imputation and renewal. Here are Theses 22 and 35:

22. He [God] sustains and supports them on account of the first fruit of his creation in us, and he thereupon decrees that they are righteous and sons of the kingdom.
35. The start of a new creature accompanies this faith and the battle against the sin of the flesh, which this same faith in Christ both pardons and conquers.<sup>34</sup>

I therefore agree with Martin Greschat's conclusion concerning Luther's position: "Justification and actual renewal constitute a unity, in which both — in spite of the strictly maintained logical priority of the justification of the godless — nonetheless influence each other mutually."<sup>35</sup> This is an *organic* unity of justification and renewal, because the *living* Christ and His creative word are at the center. It is interesting to notice that Melancthon also in his *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* of the year 1531, still taught the full Biblical justification message that was Luther's:

And "to be justified" means to make unrighteous men righteous or to regenerate them, as well as to be pronounced or accounted righteous. For Scripture speaks both ways. Therefore we are justified by

faith alone, justification being understood as making an unrighteous man righteous or effecting his regeneration.<sup>36</sup>

Here Melancthon and the "mature" Luther appear as perfectly one in teaching an *effective* justification. The modern Luther scholars F. Loofs and E. Schlink have demonstrated that this dynamic view of justification in the *Apology* is no longer maintained in *Formula of Concord* of 1580 (long after Luther's death in 1546), where finally the Holy Spirit's creative transformation is completely eliminated from justification.<sup>37</sup> Yet, Paxton depends heavily on this post-Lutheran *Formula* and theology for his position on Luther's own theology (see 45–46). But the *later* development of Lutheran orthodoxy with its compartmentalizing of justification no longer represents the living Luther or even the earlier Lutheran Confessions, so that "to the present day large Lutheran bodies refuse to acknowledge it [the Formula of Concord] as such"<sup>38</sup> (Schlink, p. xxvi). It is significant that even the greatest Luther scholars today admit that "the living wholeness of Luther's conception" was lost within Lutheran Protestantism because of such a compartmentalizing of justification. The official report of the Commission on Theology of the Lutheran World Federation, published in 1965, states:

In later Lutheranism there is an unmistakable tendency to make the doctrine of justification into a special doctrine. With the good intention of keeping the doctrine of justification pure, only its forensic aspect is stressed; and the fact is disregarded that with justification it is a question of a personal and total act. Justification is the restoration of that relationship between God and man which God wanted in the beginning.<sup>39</sup>

My objection to Paxton's rationalistic justification dogma is not that it is not true in what it affirms or even that it becomes the central focus of theology, but rather that justification is *reduced* to one act of God among others. This *limited* scope is the reason why justification is not regarded in its full and dynamic power, as Luther himself preached it.

Jesus, Himself, gave a beautiful illustration

of the creative reality of justification in His parable of the prodigal son's homecoming. The father expresses his forgiveness by personally embracing and kissing his repentant son and by restoring him fully to sonship and fellowship in the father's home (Luke 15:20-24). This is Jesus' picture of the dynamic reality of forgiveness by the heavenly Father. It is not solely a verbal, theoretical declaration by the Father. It is the creative word of the Creator God. Therefore, in His judicial declaration, there occurs the miracle of rec-

**“Paxton creates the false dilemma of *either* an imputed or an imparted righteousness . . . *either* a Christ outside us or a Christ in us.”**

conciliation and restoration of fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus righteousness by faith is the power of salvation for all who believe in Christ (Rom. 1:16).

Like others before him, Paxton creates the false dilemma of *either* an imputed or an imparted righteousness, *either* God's forensic declaration that we are righteous or God's making us righteous, *either* a Christ outside us or a Christ in us, etc. Luther's reformation gospel, however, held together what his interpreters have frequently put asunder.<sup>40</sup> To represent the authentic Luther and his gospel, one must not stress the doctrine of justification as a legal abstraction, but above all, lift up the living Christ and the living Word as the power of salvation.

**W**e saw earlier that Calvin, in his criticism of Trent, stressed how justification and sanctification each have their different functions *within* the one gospel. Both Calvin and Luther rejected the Roman *confusion* of making the two gifts of God's grace into one, so that judicial justification was completely swallowed up in the process of sacramental “justification.” In view of Paxton's extreme

interpretation of Calvin, it is necessary to take a closer look at the nature of the connection of justification and sanctification in Calvin's thought. To Calvin, these were not two compartmentalized gifts, two separate acts of God, the one following in a chronological order after the other. Such an idea would only be the view of a *synthesis* which has no living principle as a connection.

Calvin's greatest contribution is commonly believed to be his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. For him, the Holy Spirit is the sole effective bond between Christ and the believer. It is the “principal work” of the Holy Spirit to *create* in the heart of man *faith* that accepts Christ and unites the soul with Christ through regeneration of the heart into a new creation.<sup>41</sup> By thus partaking of Christ, we receive “a double grace”: a gracious Father (rather than a Judge) and a sanctified life by Christ's Spirit. Justification and sanctification together constitute a “twofold cleansing,” or a twofold washing.<sup>42</sup> In his commentary on Gal. 2:20, Calvin even states:

Christ lives in us in two ways. The one life consists in governing us by His Spirit and directing all our actions; the other in making us partakers of His righteousness, so that, while we can do nothing of ourselves, we are accepted in the sight of God. The first relates to regeneration, the second to justification by free grace.

Although in his polemic against the confusion of Osiander, Calvin sharply differentiates between justification and the new creation, Calvin's on-going thrust is that both are merely *aspects* of one twofold grace.<sup>43</sup> Just as the light of the sun cannot be separated from its heat, so it is impossible to compartmentalize justification and sanctification.

Ronald S. Wallace concludes, therefore, correctly:

They are distinct, but they can be separated the one from the other only in thought, but never in experience. They are to be seen in their indivisible unity with each other in the person of Christ in relation to whom no one could possibly experience one without the other. To try to separate the one from the other would be like trying to tear Christ in pieces.<sup>44</sup>

A beautiful example is Calvin's interpretation of the wedding garment offered by the King in Christ's parable of the wedding feast (Matt. 22:11). This garment, said Calvin, signified not exclusively the righteousness of faith, but also the renewed, sanctified life, because faith and works cannot be separated.<sup>45</sup>

While Luther directed his *sola fide* doctrine mainly against the work righteousness of Rome, Calvin's specific concern is the position of the Lutheran Quietists who think "that everything is settled with justification."<sup>46</sup> Calvin, therefore, stresses in particular that the Holy Spirit brings our soul into mystical union with Christ, with the total Christ (I Cor 1:30). Thus for Calvin, both union with Christ and justification refer to the same act of God. And this union also

**“For Calvin, both union with Christ and justification refer to the same act of God. And this union also brings our sanctification.”**

brings our sanctification. Calvin stresses, therefore, the thought that we receive the riches of justification and not simply through Christ but “in” Christ (I Cor. 1:5).<sup>47</sup>

Tjarko Stadtland, in his perceptive book *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung bei Calvin* (1972), draws the conclusion: “Calvin wants to transcend Melancthon's juxtaposition [of justification and sanctification] by grasping both in an organic connection.”<sup>48</sup> Stadtland maintains that the heart of Calvin's reformation gospel is not the justification doctrine by itself, but the spiritual union of the soul with the living Christ through the Holy Spirit. From this union flow both gifts of grace: justification and sanctification.

**W**e have found that the heart of the reformation gospel is a living heart indeed. The authentic Luther and Calvin did not restrict the gospel to a purely forensic justification doctrine. Such a restriction came only later, in the Lutheran *Formula of Concord* (1580), long after both Reformers had died. It seems to be

construed to stand in an absolute and deliberate contrast to the Decree on Justification of Trent (1547). The Reformers themselves, however, preached a dynamic and effective justification message as the power of God for salvation (cf. Rom. 1:16). They uplifted the living Christ as the assurance of our total justification, or reconciliation, or adoption as children of God and heirs of salvation. Such a faith in Christ as our personal Savior and Surety on the basis of this substitutionary atoning sacrifice was a gift of Christ Himself.

The immediate effect of such a faith in Christ was the *indwelling* Christ in the heart of the repentant believer. Thus, the one Christ at the same time cured the sinner from his twofold evil: from his guilt and from his evil heart. The guilt was covered by Christ's infinite righteousness, and the selfish heart was reborn and transformed by the Holy Spirit unto willing obedience to all God's revealed will.

In this twofold grace of Christ, the Reformers saw the imputation of God's righteousness as fundamental to the indwelling of Christ in the heart. The relationship between the Christ outside us and the Christ inside us was so intimate that they conceived this not as a synthetic but rather as an organic interrelationship.

I wish to close this investigation with the brief remark that Ellen G. White is in basic agreement with these principles of the Reformation, especially regarding *effective* justification. Here are two of her pertinent statements.

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters.<sup>49</sup>

But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He “will abundantly pardon,” He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than

the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:7-9. 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. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10.<sup>50</sup>

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. E. G. White, *Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1888), p. ix.
2. *Review and Herald*, 67 (1890), 337.
3. E. G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1898), p. 417.
4. *Great Controversy*, p. 595.
5. Calvin's *Acts of the Council of Trent with the Antidote* (1547), in *Tracts and Treatises in Defense of the Reformed Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), III, 116.
6. See J. H. Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*, rev. ed. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977). Decree concerning justification in 16 chapters on pages 408-20.
7. Calvin, *Acts*, p. 116.
8. *Ibid.*
9. See H. Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1961), II, 256f.
10. See O. Wolf, "Die Haupttypen der neueren Lutherdeutung," *Ev. Theol.* (1937), 22f, 104ff.
11. *Spiritus Creator* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1953), p. 97.
12. *Luther's Works*, 31: 298-99.
13. *Ibid.*, 31:300.
14. *Ibid.*, 34:336-37.
15. *Ibid.*, 34:337.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. *History of the Christian Church*, VII, 122.
19. *Selected Writings of Martin Luther*, Th. G. Tappert, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), II, 168.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
21. *An Essay on the Development of Luther's Thought on Justice, Law and Society*. Harvard Theological Studies, 19 (Cambridge: Harvard, 1959), pp. 44-45, my emphasis.
22. Translated from *WA*, X, 11, 12f.
23. *Essay*, p. 68.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
26. P. Althaus states: "Luther uses the terms 'to justify' and 'justification' in more than one sense. From the beginning, justification most often means the judgment of God with which he declares man to be righteous. In other places, however, this word stands for the entire event through which a man is essentially made righteous (a usage which Luther also finds in Paul, Romans 5), that is, for both the imputation of righteousness to man as well as man's actually becoming righteous . . . This twofold use of the word cannot be correlated with Luther's early and later theology." *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 226.
27. O. Pesch concludes: "The early writings know the forensic sense of *justificatio*, the later writings also the effective sense, and sometimes even both meanings of the word occur after each other in the same text." *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin* (Mainz, 1967), p. 176, with documentation.
28. *Luther's Works*, 26:129, 130, 132 (on Gal. 2:16).
29. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. J. Th. Mueller, tran. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), pp. xiv-xv.
30. *Von Augustin zu Luther* (Witten: Luther Verlag, 1959), p. 86.
31. "Justification in the full sense of the word consists in both of these: imputation and man's transformation to a new obedience together." Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, p. 235.
32. *Luther's Works*, 34:113.
33. *Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 315.
34. *Luther's Works*, 34:152, 153.
35. *Melanchthon Neben Luther. Studien zur Gestalt der Rechtfertigungslehre zwischen 1528 und 1537* (Witten: Luther Verlag, 1965), p. 212.
36. *Apology*, IV, 72 and 78; cf. IV, 117.
37. See Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), pp. 105-107, 94.
38. Schlink, p. xxvi.
39. *Justification Today*. Studies and Reports, Lutheran World (New York: National Lutheran Council, 1965), p. 16.
40. See D. W. Lotz, *Ritschl and Luther* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), pp. 130, 136.
41. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III, 1, 4.
42. See *Ibid.*, III, 11, 1; Sermon on Gal. 2:17-18; Commentary on John 13:8.
43. See Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), p. 27.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
45. Commentary on Matt. 22:11; *Calvini Opera*, 45:401; also quoted in Wallace, p. 27.
46. T. Stadtland, *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung bei Calvin* (Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), p. 116.
47. *Calvini Opera*, 49:310; 47:331.
48. Stadtland, p. 131.
49. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1956), p. 114.
50. *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1900), pp. 310, 311, 312.