

The Corporate Aspect of Justification

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Corporate concepts of various kinds constantly impact us. There are legal corporate organizations such as churches, educational institutions, businesses and other such entities. There are corporate boards of authority with members who are elected to sit on boards as members or as trustees, which preserve corporate life, and allow organizations to continue in business. The United States of America with its representative form of government is a corporate entity.

There is a city in Texas named Corpus Christi meaning, literally, “body of Christ.” The Church is a corporate entity and Christ “is the Head of the body, the church” (Col 1:18). Not only is He the Head of the corporate church body Paul also wrote: “I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ” (1 Cor 11:3). Since Christ is the Head of every man, He is the Head of all men – the corporate human race. Mrs White weighed in on the corporate concept thus: “In assuming humanity Christ took the part of every human being. He was the Head of humanity.”¹

My assigned topic for this meeting is corporate justification. The purpose of this paper is to consider concepts and statements that have a bearing on the topic from Scripture, Mrs White, A. T. Jones, E. J. Waggoner, and W. W. Prescott.

When we read of the “in Christ” motif in Scripture and of the two Adams as representatives of the human race we become aware of the sense of the corporate nature of mankind in creation, in sin and in redemption. These two concepts – the “in Christ” motif and the two Adams – are related concepts. If the “in Christ” motif is unhinged from the context of the two Adams, serious misunderstandings arise, such as the corporate nature of sin. Adam’s sin was corporate as well as individual. His individual sin involved others, even the entire race. Another misunderstanding is the Headship and Representative nature of Christ and salvation. His redemptive work is both corporate and particular. He was sent to be “the Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14; 4:42) as well as Savior of the individual believer. Paul summarized both aspects when writing to Timothy – Christ “is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe” (1 Tim 4:10). Our salvation was worked out in Christ, the “last Adam.”

Christ took upon Himself the corporate sin of mankind as well as the nature of man. The Spirit of God caused John the Baptist to proclaim, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Christ not only took it away, but He became “sin itself.”² He was “made...sin for us.” (2 Cor 5:21).

¹ Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, Vol 1, p. 252.

² “He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself.” White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 755.

The two Adams are the corporate representatives of mankind for death and condemnation and for life and justification. Representation by definition is the act or the action of one person standing for another so as to have the rights and obligations of the person represented. The principle of representation is always thus for the human race. And further, this representation is not in the first instance chosen by us. It was chosen for us. This includes death and condemnation also justification and life. The question may arise, “Is there not choice on our part?” The answer is “Yes,” but we are considering, here, that which must precede our choice and that is the choice of God which is the corporate aspect here.

“In” The Two Adams (1 Corinthians 15:20-25)

“Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”

Along with the two representatives of mankind, three resurrections are referred to in this passage. Of the resurrections, one is past, two are future. Following is an outline of events – some are in the past; some are in the future:

The Two Representatives (15:21–22).

1. The first Adam brought about ruin and death for all men (15:21a, 22a).
2. The second Adam (Christ) will bring about the resurrections from the dead of all men, both the saved and the lost (15:21b, 22b).

The Three Resurrections: are “each man in his own order”³ (15:20, 23–24a).

1. First Advent resurrection: of Christ (15:20, 23a). Christ the “firstfruits.”
2. Second Advent resurrection (15:23b): all believers saved eternally.

³ “The word *order* in 1 Corinthians 15:23 originally referred to military rank. God has an order, a sequence, in the resurrection.... When Jesus Christ returns in the air, He will ... raise from the dead all who have trusted Him and have died in the faith (1 Thes. 4:13–18). Jesus called this ‘the resurrection of life’ (John 5:29). When Jesus returns to the earth in judgment [at the end of the millennium], then the lost will be raised in ‘the resurrection of damnation’ (John 5:29; Rev. 20:11–15).” Wiersbe, W. W. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*.

3. Third Advent resurrection at the end of the millennium (15:24): the forever lost.
 - a. Then⁴ comes the end⁵
 - b. Christ “delivers the kingdom to God the Father.”
 - c. “He puts an end to all authority and power (of enemies implied).”
 - d. The final enemy, death, will then be destroyed (15:26).
 - e. The future Kingdom will be established (15:27-28).

No one in the Second Advent resurrection will be lost; no one in the Third Advent resurrection will be saved.

In the Jewish economy, the firstfruits foretold that there would be later harvests. Harvesting the firstfruits and offering them to God was an act of faith in God for future harvests. So, likewise, in the spiritual harvest. The first resurrection is past. That was Christ’s resurrection, “the firstfruits.” This is the promise of assurance for the following two resurrections. The future resurrections are the bringing forth from the graves of all mankind, both the good and the evil. The deliverance from the grave of the wicked, at the end of the millennium, will show that the devil has no power to give life. He is not even in charge of the grave. The second Adam, the God-man has “the keys of hell and of death” (Rev 1:18).

“For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” Those spoken of here – both believers and nonbelievers – all are in the first Adam, therefore they all die. But more than this, they are likewise all in Christ and consequently all will be made alive. Even now everyone – saint and sinner lives because of Christ.

All are in the first Adam, inheritors of the loss and damage that came when he sinned and fell. But they are all likewise in Christ, represented by Him. They all, in Christ, shall be made alive. Some because of their persistent refusal to believe in Jesus as their Savior will die the second death which is forever.

The two Adams are the focal of Romans 5:12-19 as they are in the passage considered above in 1 Corinthians 15. In the letter to the Corinthians the emphasis is primarily on the death and the life of corporate humanity represented in the two Adams. But in Romans 5

⁴ “Then”—after that: next in the succession of “orders” or “ranks.” Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*.

⁵ “the end”—the final judgment and consummation (Mt 25:46). *Ibid*.

there is “much more.” Not only death, but judgment and condemnation are found in the first Adam. In the second Adam along with additions to life, are justification and reconciliation. Let’s consider the following chart that contrasts the two Adams:

Romans 5:12-19

One man – Adam (12, 15)	One man – Christ (15, 19)
Sin entered by one man (12, 15)	Grace entered through one man (15)
Judgment on all by one sin (12, 16, 18)	Justification to all by one gift (16, 17, 18)
Many died by trespass of one man (12, 15)	Grace overflowed by one Man (15)
Death reigned through one man (17)	Those reign in life through One man (17)
Condemnation by one act of sin (18)	Justification of life by one righteous act (18)
The many were appointed/designated/constituted sinners through one man’s disobedience (19)	The many will be appointed/designated/constituted righteous by one man’s obedience (19)

It was, and is, in Adam that the many, virtually all, became sinners. Conversely, the many, again, virtually all, were acquitted in Christ.⁶ In the following chart, along with the one just preceding, we have a figure of speech called an anacoluthon.⁷ This is a figure of speech where the sequence of a thought is broken off, as in verse 12, and is not finished until later, when it is resumed in verse 18. Between verses 12 and 18 we have a parenthetical expression.

Romans 5:12, 18a

Romans 5:12	Romans 5:18a
Therefore, just as through <u>one man sin</u> entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to <u>all men</u> , because all sinned ...	Therefore, as through <u>one man’s</u> offense judgment came to <u>all men</u> , resulting in condemnation...

The conclusion follows in the next chart:

⁶ “In retrospect, according to Paul, it becomes apparent — with the acceptance of the corporate ἑνθρωπος doctrine — that Adam’s disobedience has established the unrighteousness of humankind. This judicial act of καθίστημι, which eschatologically determines and divides history, has a Christological basis in that the person and destiny of Christ are both comprehended in the eschatological καθίστημι of God.” Balz, H. R., &

⁷ “Anacoluthon: The breaking off of a sentence partway through while a new sentence is begun without finishing the first one.” Deppe, D. B. (2011). *All Roads Lead to the Text: Eight Methods of Inquiry into the Bible* (p. 364). See also E. W. Bullinger: *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, p. 723.

Romans 5:12, 18b

Romans 5:12	Romans 5:18a & b
Therefore, just as through <u>one man sin</u> entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to <u>all men</u> , because all sinned ...	Therefore, as through <u>one man's</u> offense judgment came to <u>all men</u> , resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to <u>all men</u> , resulting in justification of life."

Waggoner in 1891 presented this passage similarly:

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

This verse contains a partially stated proposition. You will notice that commencing with the thirteenth verse and continuing down to the end of the seventeenth, there is a parenthesis. Then in the eighteenth verse, the proposition is taken up again and completed. The first part of the eighteenth verse is merely an equivalent to the first part of the twelfth; it is the same truth expressed in other words—"Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Then the closing portion of the verse completed the proposition: "Even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."⁸

Three and a half years later he presented the same theme:

"The judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ." There is contrast all the way through. Everything that came through Adam's fall is undone in Christ; or, better still, all that was lost in Adam is restored in Christ.

"Much More." - This might be taken as the key-note of this chapter. Not only is everything that is lost in Adam restored in Christ, but "much more." "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."....

"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 condemnation came upon all, so the justification comes upon all. Christ has tasted death 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

⁸ E. J. Waggoner, *The General Conference Bulletin*, March 17, 1891, p, 136.

the slightest reason 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 so freely.⁹

Jones likewise proclaimed the same idea in 1895:

“Now let us look at it in another way. Turn to Romans 5:12:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

Now, leaving out the verses in parenthesis for the moment and reading them afterward, read the eighteenth verse:

Therefore, as by the offense of one [that man that sinned] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [that Man that did not sin] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience [that man that sinned] many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [that Man that did not sin] shall many be made righteous.”¹⁰ (The brackets [...] are in the original).

Jones continued:

Wherein, then, was Adam the figure of Christ? In this: That all that were in the world were included in Adam, and all that are in the world are included in Christ. In other words: Adam in his sin reached all the world; Jesus Christ, the second Adam, in His righteousness touches all humanity. That is where Adam is the figure of Him that was to come.... [underlining added]

There are two men, then, whom we are studying: That one man by whom sin entered; that one man by whom righteousness entered....

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....

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

⁹ E.J. Waggoner, “Present Truth,” United Kingdom, October 18, 1894, p. 659.

¹⁰ A. T. Jones, The General Conference Bulletin, February 21, 1895, p. 268.

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, and that touches every one of us and involves every one of us....

"Well," says one, "we are involved in other sins besides that one." Not without our choice. When God said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed," He set every man free to choose which master he would serve, and since that, every man that has sinned in this world has done it because he chose to. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not."--not them who had no chance to believe; the god of this world blinds no man until he has shut his eyes of faith. When he shuts his eyes of faith, then Satan will see that they are kept shut as long as possible. I read the text again: "If our gospel,"--the everlasting gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ which is Christ in you the hope of glory, from the days of the first Adam's sin until now--"if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." It is hid to them "in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds." And why did he blind the minds? Because they "believe not...."

Therefore, just as far as the first Adam reaches man, so far the second Adam reaches man. The first Adam brought man under the condemnation of sin, even unto death; the second Adam's righteousness undoes that and makes every man live again. As soon as Adam sinned, God gave him a second chance and set him free to choose which master he would have. Since that time every man is free to choose which way he will go; therefore he is responsible for his own individual sins. And when Jesus Christ has set us all free from the sin and the death which came upon us from the first Adam, that freedom is for every man, and every man can have it for the choosing.

The Lord will not compel any one to take it. He compels no one to sin and He compels no one to be righteous. Everyone sins upon his own choice. The Scriptures demonstrate it. And every one can be made perfectly righteous at his choice. And the Scriptures demonstrate this. No man will die the second death who has not chosen sin rather than righteousness, death rather than life. In Jesus Christ there is furnished in completeness all that man needs or ever can have in righteousness, and all there is for any man to do is to choose Christ and then it is his.

So then as the first Adam was We, the second Adam is We. In all points He is as weak as are we. Read two texts: He says of us, "Without me ye can do nothing." Of Himself He says: "Of mine own self I can do nothing." These two texts are all we want now. They tell the whole story. To be without Christ is to be without God, and there the man can do nothing. He is utterly helpless of himself and in himself. That is where the man is who is without God. Jesus Christ says: "Of mine own self I can do nothing." Then that shows that the Lord Jesus put Himself in this world, in the flesh, in His human nature, precisely where the man is in this world who is without God.

He put Himself precisely where lost man is. He left out His divine self and became we. And there, helpless as we are without God, He ran the risk of getting back to where God is and bringing us with him. It was a fearful risk, but, glory to God, He won. The thing was accomplished, and in Him we are saved.

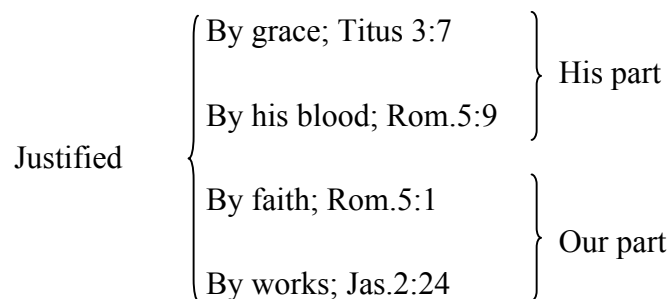
When He stood where we are, He said, “I will put my trust in Him” and that trust was never disappointed. In response to that trust the Father dwelt in Him and with Him and kept Him from sinning. Who was He? We. And thus the Lord Jesus has brought to every man in this world divine faith. That is the faith of the Lord Jesus. That is saving faith. Faith is not something that comes from ourselves with which we believe upon Him, but it is that something with which He believed--the faith which He exercised, which He brings to us, and which becomes ours and works in us--the gift of God. That is what the word means, ‘Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.’ They keep the faith of Jesus because it is that divine faith which Jesus exercised Himself.¹¹

W. W. Prescott

I first read about the corporate nature of justification in Jones’ and Waggoner’s writings, but did not grasp what they were saying. It was not until I read a series of six sermons entitled “The Divine-Human Family” by W. W. Prescott that I began to understand what was being taught by these men concerning justification. Prescott in his third sermon presented two aspects of justification. These aspects are related to God’s part and to man’s part in justification. God’s part is His grace and the death of Christ for all mankind. Our part is to first believe and then as an unvarying consequence we are to work out that which God works in us “both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13).

What “clicked” in my mind – the “aha” moment that came to me – concerning corporate justification was when I studied and pondered Prescott’s diagram which follows.

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



¹¹ A. T. Jones, *The General Conference Bulletin*, February 21, 1895, pp. 268-270.

Justification by grace, Titus 3:7, "Being Justified freely by his grace"; Justified by his blood, Rom. 5:9, "Being justified by his blood;" By faith, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God," Rom. 5:1; By works, "Ye see how that a man is justified by works and not by faith only," James 2:24. Now much confusion has been caused from our failure to apprehend clearly these methods of justification. Justification by grace, divine grace, is the source of all justification. Justification by his blood: The blood of Christ – and the blood is the life – was the divine channel through which justification should come to humanity, in uniting himself, his life, with humanity. By faith: That is the method through which the individual apprehends and applies to his own case the justification which comes from grace through the blood of Christ. By works: The outward evidences that the individual has applied by faith the justification which comes from grace through his blood.¹²

The grace of God and the death of Christ are always the starting points for justification. This is because Christ faced the judgment as the Representative of the fallen race and received in behalf of every individual the full measure of condemnation and thus exhausted the penalty for every person and thus the aggregate, or the whole of humanity.

The second aspect of justification which is "by faith" in Christ alone. It originates from the legal corporate death and justification of Christ and follows from that corporate aspect. Scripture does not acknowledge corporate justification as resulting from the believer's faith. It presents this justification in the corporate death of Christ: "who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification" and "much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." (Rom 4:25; 5:9, NKJV). There should never be the least doubt regarding this matter. Christ crucified is our justification. He was raised from death because He justified us in His corporate death on the cross.

Waggoner was accused of universalism or else he anticipated the accusation because he wrote of a universal, and thus corporate, salvation:

"What! do you mean to teach universal salvation?" We mean to teach just what the Word of God teaches,--that "the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." Titus 2:11, R.V. 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

¹² W.W. Prescott, General Conference Bulletin, February 6, 1895, p. GCB 44.

lost have deliberately thrown away their birthright possession. Thus every mouth will be stopped.¹³

Ellen White

Did Ellen White teach the concept of a corporate justification, or of an acceptance by God, or a restoration to favor with God for the entire human race? Yes she did. In addition to that which we quoted above: “In assuming humanity Christ took the part of every human being. He was the Head of humanity”¹⁴ she wrote earlier, in 1892, this: “In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe.”¹⁵

In *The Desire of Ages*, she penned these words:

To the death of Christ we owe even this earthly life. The bread we eat is the purchase of His broken body. The water we drink is bought by His spilled blood. Never one, saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and the blood of Christ. The cross of Calvary is stamped on every loaf. It is reflected in every water spring.¹⁶

In 1898, she described the prayer of Jesus that followed the fulfillment of “all righteousness” by His baptism (Matt 3:15). His prayer was not only for believers. It was a representative prayer for the human race. The answer to that prayer by the Father was the acceptance of the fallen race in Christ, its representative Head:

And the word that was spoken to Jesus at the Jordan, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” embraces humanity. God spoke to Jesus as our representative. With all our sins and weaknesses, we are not cast aside as worthless. “He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” Eph. 1:6.¹⁷

Again, in 1900 she wrote, “He 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.”¹⁸

And yet again in 1905, she proclaimed:

Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul. The greater the sinner's guilt, the more he needs the Saviour. His heart of divine love and sympathy is drawn out

¹³ E. J. Waggoner, *The Glad Tidings*, pp. 22, 23.

¹⁴ Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, Vol 1, p. 252. This is from *The Signs of the Times*, June 9, 1898.

¹⁵ White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 68.

¹⁶ White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 660.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁸ White, Manuscript 50, 1900, *Selected Messages*, book one, p. 343.

most of all for the one who is the most hopelessly entangled in the snares of the enemy. With His own blood He has signed the emancipation papers of the race.¹⁹

Justification is not a mere formula. It is a Person. It is “the Lord our righteousness.” Christ’s all-encompassing corporate righteousness includes justification, for it is embodied in Him. Justification cannot be separated from Him. It is the life of Christ. And He has given it to us. We receive it when we receive Him.

This is the third angel’s message. Those who “keep the faith of Jesus” are those who are individually justified by His faith. The faith of Jesus is His own personal faith that He exercised while here on earth. The faith of Jesus is corporate in nature, as well as personal, as He is the Head and Representative of the human race. It is by His faith that we are justified. When one believes in Christ he is justified by the faith of Jesus. The Chiastic structure of Galatians 2:16 brings this out.

A Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law,
B but by the faith **of** Jesus Christ,
C even we have believed in Jesus Christ,
B **that** we might be justified by the faith **of** Christ,
A and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh
be justified.

If justification does not extend to all mankind, it extends to none. Justification first must be universal in order to be particular. And it follows that since it is universal, it must be particular – to the believer. Justification is for corporate humanity, as well as for the individual believer. Humanity is protected by the death of Christ. Jesus, by God’s grace tasted death “for everyone” (Heb 2:9). “Christ died for the ungodly... while we were still sinners” even “enemies” (Rom 5:6,7,10). It was that death that justifies (Rom 5:9).

Personal faith does not give to us justification or liberty or rights. They come as gifts from a gracious God. These are not something we “get.” They must be received by the open hand of faith. These are given to us on the basis of the death of Christ because of the grace of God. On a legal basis, corporate justification, of necessity, belongs to each individual member of the fallen human race, but must be received by personal faith in Christ alone. Justification was ordained by God for the people of the world.

¹⁹ White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 89, 90.

Justification by faith as taught in the message from Minneapolis rests upon the foundation of corporate justification, in the death of Christ, for the entire race. Without this foundation true justification by faith is not possible. Thus a failure to comprehend this initiative by God lies at the foundation of misunderstanding concerning justification by faith. This can be seen in at least two ways. Reformed theology recognizes the universal aspect of justification, but they limit it to the predetermined chosen only. This is a qualified universalism in that he is saved eternally regardless of how the elect one behaves. There is another view which maintains that legal justification begins only when a person believes. Both systems accept the idea that justification is a legal declaration only and that justification is never experiential. They relegate experience to the new birth. The new birth is placed under sanctification, not recognizing that when you say “by faith” something changes in the mind. It becomes a new mind or a “new birth” experience and means that justification is not merely a legal declaration.

The faith of Jesus was never intended to be unfriendly or even indifferent to the corporate aspect of justification. Rather it is designed to grant every human being a setting in which he may order his life, through faith in Christ alone, without interference from the rightful legal claim of eternal condemnation and death.

In closing and in summation, we have considered the concept of corporate justification from Scripture, Jones, Waggoner, Prescott and Ellen White, each of which gives us a window into which we may look and a doorway by which we may enter in order to search out the concept and to participate by faith in Christ who is our righteousness and not only for we who believe, but for the human family.