

## A JOURNEY TO OPEN UP OTHER JOURNEYS: JUSTICE AND SALVATION

By the Faith and Order Commission  
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PRELUDE

The story that unfolds in the following pages is one that portrays several struggles and breakthroughs during an eight-year period of ecumenical discussion that revolved around the themes of justification, salvation, and justice. While the details of our experiences are chronicled below, we should like to alert the reader that the conclusions we reached are not the expected ones from the usual fare of ecumenical dialogue in the Faith and Order Commission (NCCCUSA). While starting with the traditional modes of ecumenical dialogue for the questions we were handed, we did not find in them a way forward together. We wrote and read papers from our own tradition's understanding of justification, yet not everyone in our group could grasp the importance that some were placing on this doctrine. As will be made clear, the usual trails of ecumenical discussion did not broaden widely enough to let us walk together towards our destination. What follows is a narrative of our journey as we sought to move ahead. Along this journey's path, we discovered two important points for the future of ecumenical dialogue in overcoming harmful divides among the churches regarding salvation and justice: (1) ways of journeying together for multi-lateral ecumenical dialogue; and (2) possible ways of forwarding the conversation regarding the current divides among and within churches who see salvation as primarily pertaining to the realm of the spiritual life (being "saved" from sin and pronounced righteous) and those who see salvation as primarily relating to the realm of the material and social life (being on the side of "justice" by doing works of justice in the world).

From one perspective, then, the result of our endeavors is fundamentally about the process of our journey. What we discovered in this trek is that we were on new terrain in the ecumenical territory—without a map, without an apparent guide, without tools to match the terrain, and without a procedural compass to ascertain our bearings. For much of our journey, we did not know what we were doing because we were doing something new. We learned where the dead ends were located along trails that we thought would get us to where we wanted to be (wherever that might be), as well as where thickets opened unexpectedly into expansive clearings. We learned how to listen to each other so that we all could travel this dense forest together. We believe that the benefit of our story for the churches and the ecumenical movement at large is worth sharing. Indeed, it is that process of our journey that we are now offering to the churches as a gift from our work.

### PART ONE: THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE FIRST QUADRENNIUM (2004-2007)

#### Introduction

While ecumenical dialogue frequently treads upon uncharted and difficult terrain, the journey of the Faith and Order working group eventually called "Justice and Salvation" proved to be more arduous than anyone could have predicted. The task given the group in March 2004 arose from several churches and

societies asking us to engage an inquiry into the general theological area of soteriology. However, as the original title of the working group (“Justification, Sanctification, theosis and Justice: Toward a Theological Anthropology”) reveals, this topic can be dealt with from a number of angles. The 1999 Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) from the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church was to be a touchstone—or perhaps a foundation stone—for our dialogue.[i] How did we see this document from our various communions? Could any of us join with this bilateral effort and thereby add to this already monumental achievement? Was there any agreement on salvation between more groups than just the Catholics and Lutherans?[ii] Did the Orthodox understanding of theosis (“divinization”) fit with any Western schemes of justification or sanctification? Could this group consider how “justification” and “justice”—in relation to God’s salvation of the world—might address a divide in the United States between a tendency for some to emphasize Christian faith almost entirely in individualistic, spiritualistic terms with little connection to the needs of the physical world or to emphasize salvation as the struggle for justice in the world here and now in almost entirely corporate terms with little connection to the inner spiritual aspects of Christian faith?

In addition to these formidable and expansive questions, we were asked to consider how the various understandings of soteriology from our communions might also impact our anthropologies. Did soteriology and anthropology have a greater connection than previously considered, and might this be a way to unite our churches by going around obvious church-dividing issues? With this request, we were also to consider the World Council of Churches Faith and Order statement on “Theological Anthropology.”[iii]

Our minutes from the first few meetings in 2004 and 2005 reveal more confusion than clarity—something frequently experienced by pioneers entering unmapped territory. Where were we to start? How might we engage these topics in a reasonable manner that respected the various traditions and communions at the dialogue table while still attempting to fulfill our task? Should we read JDDJ and respond from our various perspectives as might occur in usual ecumenical dialogue within the Faith and Order Commission? At least one thing was clear: we did not know how to proceed. Had 19 people from 17 different communions as diverse as the Greek Orthodox Church and Pentecostals, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and Reformed, Episcopal and Mennonites, Presbyterians, Methodists, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Roman Catholics, Universalists, Baptists, and the United Church of Christ, ever sat together to engage each other in searching dialogue over these soteriological questions with some attempt to reach an endpoint, whose location and characteristics we did not even know? Clearly we suffered from a dizzying disorientation in the face of such wild growth and rough terrain.[iv]

However, the pioneering spirit of the participants also shows through the minutes of these meetings. Despite the fact that the first quadrennium was more engaged in wandering than marching toward a specific goal, the participants continued to express concern that no one be left behind—wherever it was that we were headed! For groups who may attempt to engage in this ecumenical discussion in the future, we have felt it important to leave some marks along the trail. What things worked in this theological dialogue? What things did not work—and why? We hope others will take up where we have ventured and engage this extremely fruitful if challenging terrain again—for the sake of the visible unity of Christ’s church.

First Attempts: Chopping Away at the Jungle[v]

Our first several sessions spent time reading and interpreting the JDDJ and divergent understandings possible on justification from Reformation Protestantism and Tridentine Catholicism. While we were

thankful for such theological agreement on the important topic of justification and the equally important removal of the mutual condemnations from both groups in the period after the Protestant Reformation, there were some among us (at least one of the Roman Catholic commissioners and one from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) who began to wonder if we were not trying to ask too much of that document by stretching its original intent into a garment that would cover 17 different communions. The point was made that this was a bilateral dialogue and agreement that was poised on a particular soteriological topic with a specific ecclesiastical history. Some among us—we soon learned—did not share that soteriological viewpoint or that history (viz., the Eastern Orthodox, the Anabaptists and the Religious Society of Friends).

Having examined the JDDJ document and read numerous articles on the doctrine of justification that reflected various views since the time of the Reformation, we were beginning to realize that our task had become even more difficult.<sup>[vi]</sup> What we had thought might be helpful to chart a way through the forest—the JDDJ—had ended up dividing us further, undoubtedly because we were asking the JDDJ to do something that it was not readily designed to do. Yet, what we learned was clarifying: that the path tread by others in the JDDJ, while laudatory, would not get us all to a place of convergence in our discussion on salvation and justice. We began to see very clearly that some of us could walk this line of justification in the ways charted for us by the JDDJ, but not all of us would reach such a goal together. A pivotal point in our discussions occurred when the Anabaptists, the Religious Society of Friends, and Eastern Orthodox in the room noted that they rarely (if ever) used the word “justification.” Quite appropriately, they helped the rest of us reconsider how we would proceed: we could walk down this trail together, but the language and theological issues would need to change so as to be more inclusive of the whole; or we could walk on but without them, if we felt that was necessary to fulfill our task. But the issues of Luther, Calvin, and Trent on justification by faith were not their issues in soteriology—or anthropology, for that matter.

This brought our group to the understanding that we needed to move beyond the clearly marked JDDJ path and start chopping away a trail of our own ecumenical discussion on soteriology—if that were even possible. A moment of real learning began to take place among us. We began to ask each other in the group questions like these: “If you don’t use ‘justification’ language in terms of salvation, then what do you use? What is it you see happening in salvation?” The dialogue towards understanding the other began to drive us to clarify our own understandings of salvation in relation to the responses that others were making. While we could not see it clearly at the time, the soteriological language and issues of the JDDJ were perfect places to begin because they allowed us to hope that Christians who were so far apart on such important issues could indeed come to some convergence. It was the JDDJ material that drove us into our own deeper questions about salvation (and eventually justice). We just did not expect the trailblazing to be such hard work!

Embarking on the task of clearing a path with different starting and ending points from the JDDJ, we began to consider whether this word “justification” needed further definition and whether our various communions used different theological or biblical language to express how humans are righteous before God. Therefore, it seemed inevitable that the next territory on the trail we were carving out of the woods was the “land of Paul.”

Once again we chopped away in new territory without being sure of where we were heading. However, we had arrived at a very important principle that operated something like a song that a group of workers chant along together in order to make the work more focused and united. Our refrain was that we all would attempt to make this journey or none of us would continue. We wanted our journey to

continue without losing participants in this important ecumenical discussion. So we began to look at Paul together—more specifically, we considered “the New Perspective on Paul” very carefully. Did Paul speak in terms of “righteousness” as a Jewish rabbi (following W.D. Davies, E. P. Sanders, and N.T. Wright) or as a Roman teacher of God’s grace as some forensic acquittal (Luther and much of the Protestant tradition following him)? We read, listened to scholars, engaged the material fully, and yet still circled back to the same little clearing where we started: none of this discussion assisted us in bringing everyone along towards our goal.[vii]

Early on in our discussion, we realized that how we were reading Paul (especially Romans) was an important indicator of our linguistic understanding of justification and justice. Here again, our group had some steep hills of learning to climb. Some of us expected a rather straight-forward discussion revolving around Paul’s use of *dikaioúnē* | *dikaioúnh* does the word mean “to justify” as in some forensic, external pronouncement that declares us righteous, or does it mean “to make righteous,” as in a more transformational, interior act that makes us righteous? But our steep hill of learning was marked by something even more straightforward: what do we do if some of our communions do not focus on Paul or the word “justification” or even the hairsplitting yet seemingly important debate over how we are righteous in God’s sight? What if the Epistle to the Romans is not the central lens through which the rest of Scripture (and soteriology in particular) is read? What if the Gospels are central—what does justification mean in that context, if anything? What words might be used in a broader, overarching perspective to provide an accounting of God’s design for salvation of humankind?

At the same time that we were studying Paul, we began to engage the idea of *qewčsiV* | theosis, [“deification or divinization”] thinking that this theological concept of salvation might lift us out of our increasingly divergent directions. We heard from experts on the “Finnish Interpretation of Luther” and the attempt by the Finnish Lutherans and Russian Orthodox to come to some understanding of Luther’s broader concept of participation in God as salvific. However, the debate still rages on whether or not there is anything like the Orthodox concept of theosis in Luther. Nonetheless, we did find that this broader concept began to push us into territory that was less dense and more easily cleared together because it offered some categories to speak of salvation without rushing into justification language. It was clear that Western theology could not just “adopt” Eastern theological terminology like theosis without understanding and accepting the entire theological background—especially the anthropology behind it.[viii]

In addition to studying the “New Perspective on Paul” and the possibility of using theosis or “union with God” as our common terms for our soteriological discussions, an Anabaptist commissioner opened our discussion to a potential trajectory that would not focus on Romans or theosis or Paul, but instead utilize more overarching terms like “discipleship” in relation to salvation and justice.[ix] This suggestion focused our attention on dimensions of salvation that were more corporate in nature than individual, more other-centered than inward-centered. It would prove to be an important path towards future work of the study group.

## Second Attempts: Forging a Narrow Path[x]

Now several years into our discussion, we felt stymied in the mud, burdened with such divergent understandings of salvation that we could not imagine a way out. Justification language was simply too narrow. We again wondered if there might be a broader path that would offer a direction and yet leave none of us behind. From our previous meetings, a useful paradigm had surfaced related to the

Mennonite notion of salvation as discipleship. We tentatively began to explore an Anabaptist approach that focused on the coming of God's Reign and Jesus' call to discipleship. Like a rainbow overarching the sky, discipleship language allowed us to consider other overarching themes under which might fit our various salvific categories. While most of us found it promising to move beyond the narrow language of justification or even theosis, not everyone was willing to continue the journey if we took this path, in part because of a desire to retain the original goals and orientation of the study group. However, with a change in focus and language, many more were able to walk along with us than could do so previously. We felt that we were just beginning to clear enough wilderness to make our path a little smoother and clearer. Perhaps we might all yet be able to forge this trail—or at least walk along it until a broader path made itself clear.

During the second half of the first quadrennium (2006-2007), several people mentioned that the group had focused mainly on the "salvation" or "justification" side of the questions that we were originally to investigate together. What about justice—how does it relate to salvation? How might we define justice? Because the discipleship discussion had opened our thinking towards social ministry and justice, we began to consider more carefully what this word might mean—especially in relation to salvation.

How does justice relate to justification? Is there a dichotomy between churches and communions who, on the one hand, emphasize spiritual, inner transformation and the age to come and those who, on the other hand, emphasize physical, social transformation and justice in the world here and now? If so, how might our foray on these two very divergent paths help to find some way for these groups to walk together and learn from each other?

One commissioner brought this tension to the forefront of our discussion by telling a story about a Hebrew exegesis class focused on Amos: the theme under study was a call for Israel to return to the Lord, "Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate" (Amos 5:15; NRSV). One class member had argued that the first clause was a chronologically prior act to the second clause. The first clause focused on turning to God by hating evil and loving the good; the second clause was a response to the turning that occurred in the first clause. Thus, establishing the relationship with God was the prior act upon which one's actions of justice at the gate were to be established. Our commissioner challenged this student's reading, arguing that the verse was an example of synonymous parallelism in Hebrew—the two clauses were basically synonymous and were clarifying each other. In other words, the way Israel returns to the Lord is by establishing justice in the gate. As the commissioner said, "I was insisting that we find a unity that restored justice and justification and he was set on a trajectory of distinguishing them." This particular story was shared several times throughout both quadrennia because it brought our attention to the direction we wanted to go—namely, towards a goal that unifies justification and justice, righteousness and right acts, instead of distinguishing them. We believed that this might help us find common ground but also help us challenge a dichotomy between the inner spiritual life and the outer social life.

We began asking more deeply about justice. With the help of Elsa Tamez, *The Amnesty of Grace: Justification by Faith from a Latin American Perspective*, we engaged a re-reading of Paul as well as a clarification of justice itself.[xi] In other words, we began to see the possibility of holding these two concepts of justification and justice closer together. However, we also learned that the word "justification" was so weighed down with historical and theological baggage that it would be difficult to overcome the tyranny of this term in relation to justice. We searched through various meanings of the term "justice," especially in relation to soteriological expressions in Scripture. We wondered aloud what might happen if we put the term "justice" first in our title.[xii]

In the end, we were further along into the uncharted jungle and had some vague sense of which way we should be heading, but possessed little idea of how to press ahead. Although we all felt a little higher up the mountain, the paths we had forged still seemed to send us back to where we started.

### Third Attempts: Reaching the Cliff

In its final stage of the first four-year period together, the pioneering trailblazers were still plodding along. We had pushed up the uncharted mountain of dialogue but ended at a cliff. How could we have spent four years together without coming to any consensus or conclusion? We were encouraged by the Faith and Order leadership that we were doing something significant by blazing trails where none had gone before, but that message gave us little sense of where we were in the process or what we should do next as we stood looking over the cliff's edge.

So the last year of the first quadrennium saw the modification of the working group's title from its cumbersome start to "Justification and Justice: Beyond the Dichotomies." We stood at a cliff whose divide was so wide that all we could do was chart it on our newly created map: we wanted to get beyond these divisions, but how?

We did not know it then, but we already possessed some ideas for a future bridge. In fact, we had done important work for the next quadrennium's study and direction.

First, we had clarified the nature of the dichotomies. Justification was too narrow a term to overcome the divisions plaguing our churches; indeed its use had caused division within our group. Thus we could not keep everyone on this particular ecumenical journey if justification were the focus. Indeed, in the second quadrennium the group chose "Justice and Salvation" as its title in part as a result of the impasse over the word "justification". However, we also realized that overarching categories like "discipleship" and "Kingdom of God"—while broader than 'justification'—were still not quite right to allow all of us to walk together.

Second, we were concerned that the redemptive work of Christ not be isolated to an atonement theory but should be discussed in a broader connection with the Trinitarian drama of incarnation and resurrection. This was no small agreement! It would prove to be a powerful directive for the next quadrennium.

Third, we noted that the Christian life need not be described solely in soteriological categories so that the preoccupation of the churches is caught up in their own spiritual journey (or even their status before God); the calling of the churches is to follow Christ in the world.

Finally, the mission and purpose of God in the world is not to be confined to the redemption of souls. God's Reign on earth is a better overarching category for understanding this mission ushered in by Christ and the Spirit. To the question whether salvation is personal and interior or social and justice-centered, we responded that it is both, not either/or.

The arrows outlined on our roughly drawn map of uncharted territory would prove to be more helpful in the next phase of discussion. In our journey to this point of the chasm, we had discovered some previously worn paths that led us too narrowly towards a limited goal. If we followed the JDDJ path, not all of us could participate in the journey. We discovered some dangerous traps that threatened to pull

apart our unity. We stumbled onto dense jungles and difficult terrain that kept us wandering about until we returned precisely to where we began. And we had come to a precipice that was so daunting we could not envision a way around it, though we knew—one way or another—we wanted to build a bridge together. After four years, we marked these various areas on our “map” for those who follow us in the hope that the journey will be smoother for them. At the very least, though we did not know it yet, the work helped our next group move across the ditch of dichotomies to the other side of less dense woods and less steep terrain—to the land of “Justice and Salvation.”

## PART TWO: THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE SECOND QUADRENNIUM (2008-2011)

### Getting our Bearings and Retracing our Steps

If during their first quadrennium, the members of the “Justification/Sanctification/Theosis and Justice/Salvation” study group were akin to explorers blindly hacking at thick forests to map new terrain, we began the new quadrennium by taking on new surveyors and crew, restocking supplies, and reexamining the paths we had painstakingly charted the previous four years. At the first meeting of our second quadrennium, we got our bearings by reviewing the “Continuation Report (2008)” prepared at the conclusion of the previous quadrennium, and opening up discussion and opportunity for questions.<sup>[xiii]</sup> Not surprisingly, questions were manifold—some retracing old steps, others proposing possible new directions, still others just trying to see the forest for the trees.

Some hazards and roadblocks quickly came into focus as we scouted the way ahead. To begin, it seemed impossible to be faithful to the multiple agendas given to the group originally (the JDDJ, the “New Paul,” theological anthropology, Justification/Sanctification/Theosis and Justice, and soteriology), and, rather than trying to find an umbrella that would cover the lot, we would need to choose from or narrow within those many agendas. Further, we had come to understand that our hermeneutical commitments were shaping our approach to and framing of the questions themselves. Assuming “being justified” was the commonly-understood heart of the gospel, or approaching Scripture with the question “How do I get saved?” (or even coming to Scripture as a first entry point, period) reflected hermeneutical perspectives that were not necessarily universally shared among us. The word “justification” itself had brought with it entire conceptual frameworks that were not common to all involved.

In fact, the complex and multifaceted study topics we had been given—and which were manifestly complex and multifaceted in our “Continuation Report (2008)” —had never fully settled into a single question (or even a set of related questions) to be answered. This then became the starting point for our next steps: what is the question we are trying to answer in this study group, and how can we ask it in a way that everyone feels they can participate in seeking its answer?

In an effort to agree on a direction to go while not losing any trekkers, new or returning, we posed questions in the broadest of terms, often eschewing baggage-laden theological language in favor of common parlance:

§ Who is the human being and what does the human being do?

§ Is this the question we are asking: “God made these things. These things are us. Then we are messed up somewhere along the way—though we have different ways of understanding what ‘messed up’ means. Then God did something, so now there’s a way of being in right relationship (with God and each other)?

§ Where is the question most urgent? What is the most radical form of the question of justification and justice? For example: how does the scandal of the wealth and violence of actual Christians call into question the truth of the gospel?

§ What is it about our existing patterns of speaking in the church that signal when we talk about justification we are not talking about justice? How has speaking of these—namely, justification and justice—separately made us open to continuing the patterns of violence and sin?

§ How do justification and justice concretely affect the lives of people?

§ What is God's justice, and what is human justice? How are they related?

The sun began to break through the clouds when, at one point, we took time to share stories of experiencing the disconnect between “justification” and “justice,” or when we saw the church not acting with justice. One commissioner told a story about when a member of his church went to court because her son had been arrested, and no one from the church accompanied her there. In the end, she was comforted only by the mother of the victim in the case. This, along with other personal stories that broke through our language and hermeneutical walls, suggested to us that an entry point might be through narrative: specifically, sharing stories from our experiences about “doing the right thing.”

Finally, a road had emerged. We still did not have a study group name that clarified matters, nor did we have a precise “question” to answer, but we had agreed on a direction. Each study group member would take time to reflect on the various topics before us and come to the second meeting of the quadrennium with an articulation of the question he or she would like the study group to try to answer, and a personal tale about “doing the right thing by another human being.”

#### Storytelling, Bible Study, and Discovering a New Road

The forest and jungle had been thick in the first quadrennium, but storytelling quickly provided at least a clearing in the trees, if not a map. “Do the right thing” stories became a way for all of us to enter the conversation about what it means to do justice, about sin and corruption in the church, and about how we determine what is important to believe and to do. One story in particular, told by a Roman Catholic commissioner, seemed to exemplify the dichotomies we were trying to address. The narrative, in the words of her grandmother, was this: “When Mama and Uncle were little...when we were still in the village in Romania, a terrible thing happened. The Catholic kids in the village badly beat a little Jewish boy and left him lying in the village commons. Your Uncle saw them do this and came home crying. So I went and got the boy and brought him to our yard under the grape vine roof by our house... and nursed his wounds. I told Uncle to go and meet the boy's father when he came from the next village from work. And when he came, he did not come into our house, because that is the custom with the Jews. I gave him his child... He was so grateful that he kissed me on both cheeks.” In the end, however, the commissioner's grandmother was excluded by the local priest from receiving the Eucharist for having touched a Jew. Throughout our time together, our group continued to be moved and disturbed by the distorted relationship between salvation and justice exemplified by the story.

Meanwhile, through such sharing of stories, new clusters of questions emerged for our group: Why did Christ become human? How do we talk about justice with people for whom the fundamental Christian question is “How do I get saved?” What do our stories reveal about our priorities—for example, that we should be more concerned about Christians than non-Christians, or about souls than bodies?

We had previously seen that our hermeneutical perspectives shaped the kinds of questions we asked; now it was also becoming clear to the group that our theological viewpoints were rooted in our histories

and experiences as well. It seemed impossible to appreciate fully the questions we were posing (and the answers we might develop) without knowing something of the personal histories and experiences connected to them. We reached significant breakthroughs in our understandings of one another when we heard not only “in my tradition...” but “in my life...” We were deeply blessed when we took time to be aware of and intentional about understanding not only our traditions, but the personal stories of those in front of us who embodied those traditions.

Throughout the journey that followed, returning to narratives became a continuing way to avoid some of the pitfalls of language that had so mired us previously. At key moments when we might have otherwise gotten stuck, we would turn to stories we had heard or tell new ones that offered dynamic insights into our traditions, questions, and theologies. How we told stories, which stories we chose to tell, and the meaning the stories had for us, helped simultaneously to personalize and broaden our understandings of individuals and the traditions from which we came. It also gave us new language, like “do the right thing,” which helped to move us into new avenues of conversation.

In the midst of all of this surveying of the landscape, we decided to plot one other course together as well: Bible study of some of the thornier “justification” texts. The group chose to take significant time to read together and study the Scriptures, as both an intellectual and academic exercise, and as a devotional and prayerful one as well. In fact, Scripture study proved such a crucial part of our process that we decided to share our reflections in a Bible study based on the same texts, which we hope others might use in their own contexts. This Bible study, complete with reflections on our insights and questions for further discussion, comprises Appendix 1.

Thus we cleared more common ground and charted more avenues for future movement. Even as we continued to make sense of and wrestle with how some of our traditions understand the centrality of justification and its related epistemological concerns (such as concepts of total or utter depravity, or election and salvation), we began to approach the issues from new directions. Where we had previously been lodged in “what went wrong?” questions about soteriology and the brokenness of humanity, and in trying to extrapolate the meaning of justice and justification from there, now we began to ask questions eschatologically, from the consummated “end” looking back. We found the incarnation—and thus the churches’ fundamental Trinitarian understanding of God—a fruitful entry point for engaging questions of justification and justice. In due course, we came to a mutually agreeable and surprisingly exciting direction to head: to study the relationship between the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the nature of God’s justice. Three questions would lead the way:

1. How does the incarnation reveal the justice of God [or the justice, love and hope of God for the world?]
2. How is this justice realized in Christian communities under the conditions of existence [or here and now]?
3. What is the goal and consummation of God’s justice?

In particular, it should be noted, none of these questions included the word “justification.”

Further steps down the road: How the incarnation reveals the justice of God  
(or at least what we thought about the question, and how it affected our name)

While we had committed to moving forward together by answering the above questions, we had some baggage to leave behind as we went. Knowing that “justification” was a word loaded with heavy

connotations for some but not others, we took a little detour into Reformed theology to try to come to common understanding of some of these connotations (e.g., total depravity, fallenness, election, wrath, substitutionary atonement). While this mostly served as an exposure and learning exercise for the group, it also offered a reminder to us that both the concept of and word “justification” do not provide sufficient common ground to serve as a starting point for dialogue. This, in fact, was part of the challenge with which we started: that divergent understandings of justification—the how and why—are themselves church-dividing issues. But the more we tried to go down a trail marked “justification,” even to identify what made it “church-dividing,” the more we found ourselves ensnared again. In the end, it was not simply that justification itself was “divisive”; that is, we were not necessarily disagreeing about its meaning. Instead, we were often divided over its magnitude: for some it was too heavy-laden to provide for a wide-ranging discussion, and for others too remote and inaccessible to begin to engage. Overall, the group felt that the use of Reformation categories was not useful by most of us for a multi-lateral statement. Or, put in terms of John Ford’s “resonance, dissonance, and nonsonance” methodology, “justification” offered a little resonance, a bit of dissonance, and a whole lot of nonsonance.[xiv]

So we returned to our question, “How does the incarnation reveal the justice of God (or the justice, love and hope of God for the world)?” and found the question itself brought to light a disconnect many traditions experience between the theology of incarnation and the concept of justice. In responding to the question, some had discovered that their traditions’ strong theological emphasis on other aspects of Christ, such as his death and resurrection or particular soteriological ends, had left their incarnational theology somewhat thin; others found that theologies of justice were more closely tied to aspects of or teachings from the life of Jesus or to other parts of the tradition (such as the prophets) rather than the incarnational act itself. Many of us were challenged to draw direct connections between justice and the incarnation even if both concepts were important individually within our traditions. Searching for connections between the incarnation and God’s justice became an act of discovery and epiphany, and, for some, offered an opportunity for theological creativity.

One response drew parallels between the Pentecostal experience of the overwhelming presence of the Spirit entering and inhabiting humans, Jesus’ reliance on the Spirit to perform miracles, and the human body as the “tabernacle” of the Spirit to assert that, “The enfleshment of the Son of God reveals the justice of God in that the Spirit of God can and does fill humans, transforming their lives and propelling them to act in ways that are holy and just,” and that, “Speaking in tongues, sighs beyond words in prayer, manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit, all point beyond themselves to the shalom of the future life with God where all will be well.” Another, from a Roman Catholic perspective, drew together the idea of God’s “self-othering” in Christ and the recapitulation of all things in Christ to the glory of God as ways in which the incarnation reveals God’s justice—by revealing God’s eschatological desire for the cosmos. A Methodist view offered that, while Wesleyan theology emphasizes the death of Jesus as the salvific act, the grace of the incarnation is itself an act of redemption in which “God the Father wills that God the Son assume our humanity and thus redeem it, that every individual might be granted the possibility of salvation,” and such grace is also the source of new life. We also noticed the teaching of the Religious Society of Friends that “Jesus has come to teach his people himself” dovetailed the Orthodox view regarding the connection between justice and the incarnation: “Incarnation is about God wanting to be with us. We need someone to come and teach us how to be like God—and that person is Jesus Christ.”

As our conversation continued and deepened, we found ourselves asking an even more fundamental question: What, exactly, is God’s justice? How do we know what it is—or can we know at all? Is justice a

primary work for God, or a secondary product of something else God is doing? Answers were wide-ranging. Some perspectives looked backward, before the fall, to see God's justice in what was experienced in Eden; others looked forward to what would be fulfilled in the new creation of the eschaton. Some focused on human relationship with God, saying "God's justice is to make us one with God" or that justice is simply "that which God wants." One emphasized the language of mercy, saying that God's mercy far outweighs God's justice; others underscored that God's justice could not be separated from God's love, grace or mercy. Some saw God's justice primarily in the actions and words of the person of Jesus, and that doing justice would be to do what Jesus did and said to do. Still others mentioned natural order or natural law as a way to see God's justice. There was also discussion around our capacity to understand God's justice given our fallen state. If the prophets tell people to do justice, then presumably people have the capacity to understand in some measure what justice is in order to do it, for example, "God has shown you, mortal, what is good" (Micah 6:8). But is there discrepancy between human justice and God's justice? Paul seems to distinguish the "ultimate justice" of God from the inadequate "distributive justice" of the law and the prophets. To that end, the word of God is a word of justice that goes beyond the law, even the Law of Moses. Our capacity even to comprehend (let alone do) such justice is presumably handicapped by our sin.

Thus our discussion of the first question seemed to have led us not to question 2, but to question 3: What is the goal and consummation of God's justice? Perhaps an eschatological perspective, looking backward from the finale, might help us get at some underlying premises about the nature of God's justice, or how we understand the purpose, means and end of salvation. So we decided to tackle the third question second.

In the meantime, we returned to one other perpetual difficulty: what were we going to call ourselves? We had felt so disoriented and lost under our previous banners that among the group members it seemed time to shed fully those things which had weighed us down. Acknowledging that "justice" had truly emerged as a topic for significant consideration, and agreeing that "salvation" was a word broad enough to encompass most of what we understood to be our task, we settled on a new name for ourselves: The Justice and Salvation Study Group.

And, finally, the name stuck.

This road seems solid, and—hooray!—we're making headway...  
... let's just keep the horizon in sight

Three satisfying and fruitful meetings into the new quadrennium, with good, plotted roads ahead and plenty of fresh supplies for the terrain, we took stock of our surroundings. We had set aside the time we thought was needed for the foreseeable journey, and we had some solid directions to go. But after the years ahead had been spent, we would have to account for the journey: produce a paper, provide worthy analysis or synthesis, find agreeable consensus or otherwise demonstrate why where we had been was of use to the churches that had sent us to blaze this trail.

This meant some new concerns hovered on the horizon: how could we produce something that would resonate with all the churches involved, and not just make sense to them or speak their language, but be of actual, tangible use? What might we offer that could demonstrably forward the unity of the churches? How might we express not only whatever consensus we discovered together, but our process – its pitfalls, challenges and breakthroughs --to help others who might follow the path we had forged?

With these considerations on our hearts and minds, we plunged ahead into our second question (which was really our third question): “What is the goal and consummation of God’s justice?” To begin, we were reminded of the logic of changing the order of the questions: we had started by looking at incarnation, in part to discover if there were Christological or incarnational beliefs built into our concepts of God’s justice that we might hold in common (or at least in parallel), and in part to formulate a new and unexpected question that might get us past both the boundaries of our particular traditions and the pitfalls of language that had bogged us down previously. In the process of answering the first question (about incarnation), we had discovered the need to dig deeper into our understandings of God’s justice and our hermeneutical approaches to them, as well as to see if we might find some consensus through eschatological language, concepts and vision.

It became apparent as we offered our responses that we shared much common ground in how we perceived the goal and consummation of God’s justice: humanity reconciled to God and in right relationship with one another; a healed and redeemed creation; a community marked by love, grace and mercy; freedom from the bondage of sin; the overthrowing of forces of evil; a return to a state of immortality; the redemption of inequality, oppression, suffering and violence (which are, among others, marks of injustice). We also agreed that the consummation of God’s justice would not be accomplished by human efforts, but that through Christ humans had a responsibility to participate in and seek justice in this world even as they await its full consummation.

It seemed that, for the most part, the variations in our perspectives were largely a matter of emphasis (and, in some cases, semantics). Some might consider of primary importance that God’s justice reverses or supersedes the effects of original sin and frees sinners from their imprisoned state. For others, God’s justice restores the gift of immortality lost to humans through the fall, or would reestablish right human relationship with God. Still others might see God’s justice as first an establishment of a just and healed creation, either returned to a previous state of paradise, or entering a new state of perfect grace in the eschaton. We also placed different emphases on human agency: on the ability of the fallen human to understand and carry out justice, and on the role and purpose of the human being—particularly of the baptized and redeemed Christian in the process of sanctification—in God’s justice. Despite the considerable common ground we had uncovered, these varied emphases demonstrated, in the practices of our churches at least, the significant divisions among our traditions; the divergence, for example, between churches that primarily see Christ’s reconciling work as a means to save souls for the world to come, and those that might see life in Christ as a call for a just society in the here and now.

It is important to note here that discovery of the divisions among us came to light over time and upon later reflection. In the midst of the conversation, we were aware that we did not always understand one another, that we sometimes used the same word to mean different things, or that even when we agreed on the meaning of words they held more weight for some of us than others. We often struggled to “get” each other, and to grasp concepts foreign to our own traditions or experiences. Our conclusions came only through trudging again and again over the terrain, taking time to listen carefully to each other, and then looking back together at where we had been.

Nonetheless, we had uncovered a range of concepts, language and beliefs that seemed to reflect substantial convergence among us. With the helpful and skilled synthesis of one of our study group commissioners, we seemed to have come to broad agreement that the goal and consummation of God’s justice was and would be:

Trinitarian in its structure and dynamics – Our understandings of the relationship and work of the persons of the Trinity provide keys to our understanding of the goals of God’s justice.

Relational – This includes human relationship with God, humankind, and creation, restoring or achieving right relationship.

Communal – Whatever the meaning of justice in relation to the individual, it is predicated upon and achieved within a communal justice.

Material – Whatever the consummation of God’s justice may be, it is the fulfillment not the negation of creatureliness. This signifies that the body (including the body of creation) in its needs, limits, and possibilities remain central to ultimate justice. The relational is material and vice versa.

Salvific and Healing – Salvation is not escape or rescue, but restoration. Distributive and retributive justice are located within restorative justice.

Consolatory – From the perspective of the future eschaton, we live with hope and consolation in this present suffering-laden world—an awareness of God’s ultimate justice (“all things are in his hands”) which provides comfort to those who endure this suffering. We recognize that God’s justice exceeds “the unnecessary suffering, which God’s creatures have endured because of the workings of sin.”

Revealing and judging – God’s justice discloses the incomplete nature of all human approximations, points beyond them to fulfillment in the reign of God, and thereby stands as a permanent judgment and call.

Vindicating and transformational – God’s justice vindicates faith and hope in the crucified Christ, and the love that endures forever.

During our discussion, one commissioner suggested that another aspect of God’s justice should express the work of the church and the participation of the church in the *missio Dei* (“the mission of God”). The suggestion brought with it a host of related questions we had not spent much time discussing. In the end, we were unable neither to flesh out this ninth area nor to give it the time and attention we did the other eight. Thus it remains on our list, but as a question still to be explored [see Appendix 2]:

Ecclesial – What role does the church play in dealing with, meting out, and proclaiming God’s justice?

None of these aspects of God’s justice operates independently, nor is there hierarchical order giving priority to one over another. Instead, these are elements in dialogue and mutual relationship with each other, informing, completing and balancing one another. Perhaps what is crucial to this conclusion is that we could not have composed this list independently from one another. We needed to be in dialogue and mutual relationship with each other to come to this place; without each other our individual perspectives were out of balance and incomplete.

At this point, our energy and trajectory seemed to propel us toward a fuller understanding of each of these topics, and we decided to leave behind our third question (which had been question 2), “How is this [God’s] justice realized in Christian communities under the conditions of existence [or here and now]?” We thought that, in some measure, we had already explored that third question in our discussions and that threads of it would appear as we fleshed out the nine areas of discussion listed

above. Most importantly, the original three questions (even partially unaddressed) had done what we hoped they would do: get us beyond impasses and into new and fruitful lands.

But an issue remained: what were we to do with this new territory? How would we pass on our discoveries to others? What would be of most use to the churches that had posed our original topics for study and then sent us on this quest? Many ideas were floated: the creation of a parish study guide that would walk churches through our process of discovery and offer, perhaps, advice for the journey; a series of letters to various communions expressing what we had learned from each other, so that each communion might be addressed through familiar language and perspective but also be able to see how other communions received and understood the topics and conclusions differently; a theological response for other Faith and Order groups and ecumenical partners studying JDDJ, theological anthropology and other related topics that would describe what we had tried, what worked and what did not, and our conclusions derived thereof; a Bible study that would walk churches and ecumenical partners through the scriptural texts we found so illuminating and offer an experience of our journey; a narrative overview of our process, and its challenges, pitfalls and epiphanies.

Whatever the final form of our project took, we knew we wanted it to include two streams from our journey: content (what we discovered and why it seems helpful or productive for the unity of Christ's church), and an emerging process (how we discovered what we did, what helped get us there and what didn't, and how our experiences might offer a map to more fertile plains and avoid some blind alleys and dead ends).

## CONCLUSION

Eventually, we decided on a three-part project: one part that would walk readers through the experience of our first quadrennium, an equivalent for our second quadrennium, and a third that would expand upon the nine topics above. We also added a Bible study that would take readers through our experience of study together and offer them the chance to participate with us in our journey. [xv]

As we proceeded to put together these elements, we encountered a few final hurdles. The more we reviewed our discussions of our nine aspects of the goal and consummation of God's justice, the more we discovered that in fact they were not necessarily points of convergence, and that questions and divergences remained among us. Eventually we chose to describe them as ways in which we had framed our discussion, but not as conclusions or even areas of agreement. Each deserves further study and, we hope and believe, will be important starting points for ongoing dialogue in the movement toward unity.

We also determined that the final report of our study group's eight years needed first and foremost to reflect our process. The narrative of our experience together, we agreed, was what we want to share with the churches, and in fact is the gift of this journey. Our Bible study and nine discussion topics would become Appendices 1 and 2 in order to bring the journey itself to the forefront.

## APPENDIX 1

### Excursus: Carrying the Word

How Bible study together gave strength for the journey  
and richness and depth along the way

Communal Bible study is not foreign to the ecumenical experience. But over the eight years of the Faith and Order Justice and Salvation Group, the study of Scripture became not just insightful for but essential to our journey.

Throughout our time in this study group, questions repeatedly surfaced about biblical passages that were relevant to our topic, and about how such passages were being translated, interpreted and understood among our traditions. These questions came as no surprise, given the nature of our original task and its focus on justification. But the complexity of and our personal connection to the questions raised led us to study Scripture not only as a scholarly and academic task, but devotionally – hearing from one another the breadth and depth of meaning of the texts in our traditions, and to each of us as individual people of faith. What resulted was an immense gift: a chance to talk about the wrestling taking place within our communions over particular Scriptures, to examine the different trajectories our communions had experienced through history related to interpretation of and emphasis on various texts, and to acknowledge the impact our personal experiences play in relating to these Scriptures.

In the process, we encountered some of the major assumptions we each bring to specific texts, as well as what we bring to Scripture in general: how we approach or preference Scriptures, what we tend to notice or not notice, what theologies and perspectives we choose to privilege over others. None of us as individuals and none of our communions were immune to biases or blind spots. We certainly didn't solve or resolve all of the tensions we named, but we did find our struggle and partnership in the journey a revelatory experience.

Each time we gathered for Bible study, we read the text aloud together, noting differences in translation and interpretation, and allowing ourselves to (we hoped) hear the text anew in this ecumenical setting. We discovered, in fact, that reading and listening to a familiar text while seated with friends from diverse traditions and from whom we knew would come varied but trusted perspectives seemed to open us to hearing the text with fresh ears.

What follows is a list of the texts we studied and narrative accounts of some of the key insights we gleaned from each. In some instances, the texts themselves provided insights; other times our process, perspectives, or assumptions were particularly revelatory. Included below are questions – both textual

and process-oriented – that proved enlightening for us, and we commend them to others as they study these scriptures.

## STUDY I: ROMANS 1-5

October 2008, March 2009

### Narrative

Because of Paul's emphasis on justification in the first chapters of Romans, we chose to focus our initial Bible study on Romans 1-5. In addition, these chapters are especially significant in the Reformation traditions in making a case for salvation by grace through faith, an argument that itself became a major fault line between Protestants and Roman Catholics.

As we began to discuss the chapters together, we quickly discovered that, due to our varied traditions and perspectives, we do not all bring the same presuppositions to texts like Romans 1-5, and thus do not emphasize the same themes. For example, while these texts are central to Reformed understandings of justification, an Orthodox participant commented that when she teaches classes on Paul's letters, she does not discuss justification at all. Through the lens of her tradition, Paul's letters are about community, which is a more central theme in Orthodoxy than justification. A commissioner from the Religious Society of Friends said her tradition would see Romans 5 as an affirmation of the peace church tradition, noting that the chapter characterizes the human relationship with God in terms of peace and being at peace with God. Realizing and naming our presuppositions became a major turning point in our conversations and a point of significant learning about each other.

Likewise, one of our major discussions from the beginning had been about the Greek word *dikaiosunē* | *dikaioúnh* and its English translations. English language Bibles translate the word either "justice" or "righteousness," depending on the translator(s) and the context of the translation. Most English translations seem to prefer translating the word "righteousness" more than "justice." For example, we learned that in the 92 times the word appears in the King James Version of the New Testament, it is translated "righteousness" on every occasion. Other translations include a mix of "righteousness" and "justice," or, in adjective form, "righteous" and "just" or "justified." As we thought about these first chapters of Romans, we began to wonder together how these different translation choices influenced our reading of the text. So we chose to read Romans 1-5 aloud and to replace all the instances of the English word "righteousness" with the word "justice" as we went (likewise replacing the cognates, e.g. "made righteous" with "made just"). We found the word change incredibly enlightening, both in terms of broadening our discussion of the relationship among justification, righteousness and justice, and in terms of challenging our preconceptions of the nature and meaning of the familiar text.

### Discussion Questions

Start by reading Romans 1-5, substituting the English words "righteousness" and "made righteous" with the words "justice" and "made just."

1. Does substituting "justice" for "righteousness" in this passage affect how you hear and understand the text? In what ways? Which word choices would you preference, and why?
2. Think of Paul not as a saint or theologian, but as a pastor writing to his flock. In the plain text, what is the pastoral situation Paul is addressing here? What is the struggle of the congregation and how is Paul responding? How would you respond in a similar situation?

3. Many phrases in the text seem to have implicit meaning that may or may not be transparent in our contemporary setting. What do you think of when you hear, “reckoned to him as righteousness,” or “the grace in which we stand,” or “dominion in life,” or “the law of faith”?

## STUDY II: GENESIS 1-3

October 2009

### Narrative

Because Romans 5 says, “one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all,” and this concept, harkening back to Adam, seemed to be a focal point for many related considerations of sin, justification and salvation, we next turned to Genesis to re-read the texts set in the Garden of Eden.

One of the immediate questions raised in our group was about how to read this text on its own, and/or how much theology should be read into Genesis through the lens of the New Testament. That question then led us to try to separate what the first chapters of Genesis actually say from theological perspectives that have been overlaid upon them through later texts, biblical writers, theologians and traditions. As our discussion developed, we discovered the challenge of trying to read Genesis 1-3 on its own without the influence of later interpretations and interpreters. For example, we noted that Genesis 1-3 does not explicitly mention either original sin or a loss of immortality, though both concepts have been read back into the so-called “fall” of Adam and Eve. On several occasions, we found ourselves saying to one another, “But the text doesn’t actually say that.” At one point, we even considered inviting Jewish or Muslim scholars who might be distanced from Christian theological influences to speak with us about their understanding of the text in order to enlighten our own.

Another entanglement arose when we began to discuss the nature of the “work” the humans are called to do both within the Garden, and outside of it. We noted that God begins by doing work, and that work is good; and God rests from the work. The man and the woman are called to work the Garden and take care of it, but after they are expelled from Eden they are also to work the ground outside of the Garden, as well. Are all of these kinds of work “good,” we asked? Are some kinds of work—for example, the creative work of God—better than other kinds of work, like tilling the soil? We noticed we had varied interpretations of the word “work”—interpretations that often seemed to be related to ecclesiastical tradition and history (such as the influence of the “Protestant work ethic,” for example).

All of this caused us to wonder together about the hermeneutical lenses we bring to Scripture. Is it useful or distracting to read such Hebrew Scriptures through the lens of Paul’s writings? Are some lenses and viewpoints “right” or “wrong,” more “appropriate” or more “inappropriate”? Do our personal or denominational lenses cloud our ability to read texts clearly or fully? Or do our lenses help keep us focused in intentional and helpful ways?

Although we did not come to any specific conclusions about how much the New Testament or our traditions should influence our reading of Genesis 1-3, we felt the exercise of ecumenical reflection on the question of “lenses” was illuminating. We each bring perspectives and lenses to the text that causes us to see some things, and perhaps miss others. Our social location, our traditions, our personal beliefs and backgrounds, our culture and contexts, all have an impact on how we read and interpret the Scriptures. Recognizing and examining the lenses we bring is another way in which we are in conversation with both the texts and our traditions that help us interpret them.

## Discussion Questions

Start by reading Genesis 1-3 together. As you read pay close attention to what is actually in the text itself, and what is not. Notice what is missing that perhaps you expected: discussions of immortality, original sin, etc. Notice what is present that you didn't expect.

1. As you read these chapters, what is a surprise to you?
2. Where do you find yourself wanting to fill in blanks or make an assumption about what you think the text implies but doesn't say outright? Where are there gaps between what you thought the text said and which actually is imposed upon it from other sources, like Paul's writings?
3. What do you think is meant by the "knowledge of good and evil"? What is the "knowledge" to which Adam and Eve come? What does the text actually say about this knowledge?
4. As you re-read the story of the Garden, what do you think has been lost, and what needs to be redeemed? From where do you draw your conclusions?

## STUDY III: COLOSSIANS

March 2010

### Narrative

Reading about creation from the book of Genesis brought to our minds the book of Colossians, especially verses that make reference to Jesus as the "firstborn of all creation" (1:15), and that "in him all things in heaven and earth were created" (1:16). Our study group had become curious about exploring the relationship between the creation as it had been established in the Garden of Eden prior to the "fall," the work of Christ as the firstborn of creation, and the reconciliation of all things in the eschaton. In particular, our process had led us to consider the nature of justice as it had been put in place in creation, our capacity to recognize justice and injustice in this world today, and how justice would one day be reestablished in the world to come. These questions arose because of the difficulty we had truly naming or identifying what God's justice looks like in the broken world around us, how such justice functioned, and what our human role in God's justice might be. Would justice be more easily seen in images of the unspoiled creation, perhaps, or in the images of the kingdom of heaven or the world to come?

The book of Colossians became our next reading as, we hoped, a tool to tackle these complex and challenging questions. While we grappled with abstract ideas of teleology and ultimate reality as they related to justice, we also struggled with the dichotomous perspectives offered in the letter. On the one hand, Colossians offers a dramatic picture of a cosmic Christ, through whom God reconciled all things on earth and in heaven (1:20), and with whom we are able to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light (1:12). On the other hand, Colossians simultaneously deals in the seemingly mundane and ordinary: telling hearers to "get rid of abusive language," and not to lie (3:8-9), admonishing children to obey parents and slaves to obey earthly masters. The juxtaposition of such cosmic ideals and practical life lessons left us wondering: is this how God's justice looks? Do such simple, commonplace actions truly encompass what God intends for the redemption of the world? Or perhaps in this life we are not able to understand the full nature of God's justice, and so justice can only be enacted and comprehended in small acts of kindness among disciples? What about transformational, world-upending, salvation-enacting justice? What about cosmic justice? What is the relationship between such justice and our everyday lives? Can we expect or anticipate cosmic justice to break into our lives now, or only in the eschaton? Would we know such justice if we saw it?

## Discussion Questions

1. What do you think of when you hear the word “justice”? What images come to mind?
2. As you read both the first chapters of Genesis and the book of Colossians, where do you see images or concepts of God’s justice? What does God’s justice look like? How does it function? How might we recognize it? How is it like or unlike what human beings consider to be “just”?
3. Do you think the practical exhortations in Colossians 3 and 4 are related to justice? How? Why or why not?

## STUDY IV: MATTHEW 25:31-46

October 2010

As the quadrennium continued, members of our study group noticed something about the texts we had studied together, namely that we had not deliberately looked to the life of Jesus in the Gospels as a particular source for understanding either the nature of the brokenness of creation or of justice and justification. One UCC commissioner noted that the presentations of Jesus in the Gospels seemed “a natural place to speak to the question of how the Incarnation reveals the justice of God.” Likewise, a Quaker commissioner commented that “participation in God's justice has everything to do with the theological understanding of incarnation as revelation-event.”

The text of Matthew 25:31-46 thus proved a fitting text for a fourth Bible study for several reasons, in addition to being from a Gospel: it points to a vision of the last judgment and perhaps the consummation of redemption and salvation, it raises questions about the relationship between individual and corporate faithfulness, and it speaks of specific acts that God requires of humanity, which perhaps might shed light on the nature and manner of God’s justice.

Our group encountered several complexities as we began to delve into the passage. As with other Gospel texts, Jesus identifies himself with those who are poor and marginalized, going so far as to say that actions done toward and on behalf of such people are done to Jesus himself, and that we will be judged based on such actions. But some traditions have at times spiritualized the text by claiming that the people are spiritually in need (spiritually hungry, or spiritually in prison), and that what the Son of Man desires is meeting spiritual (but not necessarily material) needs. There is also inherent tension in this text for traditions that emphasize salvation through faith, as this text seems to point to particular actions as the ways to receive eternal life or punishment.

Perhaps more pertinent to our study itself was the question of what, precisely, is being expressed in this text. What is the relationship between acts of mercy and charity directed toward individuals, and acts of justice? Are these acts – feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the prisoner – images of justice? What are we to make of verse 32, in which it is not individuals but nations that are gathered before the throne of the Son of Man and separated like sheep and goats? Are nations being judged by their actions of justice and mercy?

## Discussion Questions:

1. What is significant to you about the idea that nations are gathered before the throne of the Son of Man? As you read this passage, do you hear the blessings and punishments of the Son of Man directed toward individual followers, or groups, communities, countries? How do you see nations themselves enacting these commands to feed the hungry or care for the sick?

2. Do you think this text is primarily about charity, mercy or justice? Why? How are charity, mercy and justice related to each other? Which most closely aligns to your understanding of the nature of God? Which do you think God most desires from us?

## APPENDIX 2

Nine Areas of Discussion:

What is the goal and consummation of God's justice?

Preface

In our work we recognized that the term "justice" is used in many different ways within and beyond the church. We found it helpful to distinguish seven distinct usages of "justice":

- God's intention for the ordering of human life and community, whether understood as requirement or/call (according to various evidence of general and special revelation, and variously interpreted).
- Human justice that seeks to correspond to God's intention (also variously interpreted).
- Human justice that draws its norms from other philosophical, cultural and religious traditions.
- The peculiar divine justice by which God responds to human injustice transformatively, restoring justice and exceeding the demands and possibilities of law (centered upon the death and resurrection of Jesus, variously interpreted).
- Human justice, especially in the sphere of the Church, that seeks to correspond to God's peculiar justice as demonstrated in the death and resurrection of Jesus (again, interpreted).
- Actual norms, laws, systems and practices that function in religiously and culturally pluralistic contexts under the conditions of existence.
- The relationship between Christian understandings, norms, and practices and civic life in its various forms.

Our study group focused its attention on two of these in particular: the "peculiar divine justice" that centers upon the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and "human justice" that seeks to correspond to that peculiar divine justice.

We approached the incarnation as key to Christian understanding of God's justice in creation, redemption, and salvation, and discussed certain vital characteristics or dynamics of this peculiar justice. At one point, we named nine as aspects of the goal and consummation of God's justice, but

upon further reflection and review, as well as discussion, we came to recognize that even this assertion was perhaps a stronger expression of agreement than was true among us.

Thus we offer these nine characteristics as points of discussion on the nature and dynamics of God's peculiar justice. They are not exhaustive, and best understood as values rather than benchmarks, an inclusive pattern rather than a code, and as interrelated rather than discrete. In the end, these also cannot rightly be understood as points of unanimity or full agreement among us, but areas of connection and common emphasis. All are worthy of further study beyond what we have done here, and what we have included is a record of the road we trod.

We discussed God's justice as being:

- I. Trinitarian in Structure and Dynamics
- II. Relational
- III. Communal
- IV. Material
- V. Salvific and Healing
- VI. Consolatory
- VII. Revealing and Judging
- VIII. Vindicating and Transforming
- IX. Ecclesial

## I. TRINITARIAN IN STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS

Our understandings of the relationship and work of the persons of the Trinity provide keys to our understanding of the goals of God's justice.

As we advanced through what we came to call our "journey to open up other journeys", and as we encountered various "dichotomies" in the originally-named Theosis, Justification, Salvation, Sanctification, and Justice Project—and discovered its various ecumenical dead-ends—, we were brought, somewhat surprisingly but certainly fruitfully, back to the deeper categories of the deepest reality that there is, namely, that of the Triune God. By re-starting with the start of all being, we were able to reconfigure this dialogue to get round the boxes that parts of our divided Christian traditions had eventually got us into (including the assumption of the primacy of "justification" itself).

A certain irony silently arose. We had taken as our starting point the historic 1999 bilateral Roman Catholic-Lutheran Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, only to realize early on that it was too situational a conversation for the wider Body of Christ as a whole (which is who is present in our current project). And yet that important, 480-years-later, breakthrough dialogue had itself been notably advanced by re-starting the old discussion of faith-vs.-works, with all its dichotomies, and re-situating it in a shared Trinitarian theology.

That aside, we did notice the possibilities which opened up before us after over five years of striving. In working from the one God Who is revealed to us as a communion of Persons, Who by nature is related to and creates other persons in that Divine Image (Gen 1:26a), and Who redeems the same in Jesus Christ the Son (Col 1:13-17; I Cor 15:22; I Tim 2:2-6, et al.), and Who is always seeking yet other persons (and by nature/being, rather than from option/choice), we could now think of our subject matter with

the related categories of creation and incarnation. And we did, formulating and working on three connected questions:

1. How does the incarnation reveal the justice of God?
2. How is this justice realized in Christian communities under the conditions of existence?
3. What is goal and consummation of God's justice?

These formulations clearly presaged some new paths forward. Among them were: that God's nature is, first, holiness and love, which is then to be related to (or extrapolated into) human concepts of justice and fairness (i.e., they are not necessarily the same thing); that baptism into Christ via the Triune Name given in Matthew 28:19b is the beginning of acting justly; and that the Church must overcome the prevalent modern practice which abstracts ethics and principles of justice from theology, working "against the long-standing tendency to break apart what is continuously linked together"—aware that this "continuity will run against the grain for many." (Presbyterian commissioner).

We commend to the Church[es] much of what we have learned about salvation's connection to justice, both in what proved to be inert, and in what opened up possibilities for accord within the whole Body of Christ.

But we especially commend to all the Lord's people the wisdom (and, perhaps, the continuing necessity) of beginning the Church's ecumenical, theological, and all, work—be it for the salvation of souls and/or for the furtherance of an holy justice throughout God's creation—with the Three Persons of the Trinitarian God. This work has reminded us that the people of God always begin their lives and vocations with the Divine Being and Name into which all of us Christians of all traditions, past, present, and future, have been baptized.

## II. RELATIONAL

Relationality includes human relationship with God, humankind, and creation, restoring or achieving right relationship.

Right relationship(s) is/are at the heart of justice. In our study group, when we spoke of relationship(s) we referred to our relationship with God, others, and ourselves (vertical and horizontal). Additionally, when we spoke of God's justice, we were concerned not to isolate the work of Christ in redemption only to theories of atonement. Rather, we wanted to also include a broader connection with the Trinitarian drama of God's love in the incarnation (life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Christ); the continual ministry of Christ through the Holy Spirit; and Christ's coming in the eschaton as the goal and consummation of salvation. We noted that any discussion on justice and salvation necessitated a relational approach, constituted by several levels of relationship(s): God–God, God–Human, Human–Human, and God–Human–Creation.

The relationship between divine nature and justice can be expressed in two different ways. These reflect each other and cannot properly be separated. Put another way, we may start with the divine nature and understand justice or we may start with justice in order to understand the divine nature. We chose to begin with the divine nature to understand justice.

God-God

The Cappadocians wrote robustly about the nature of God and the nature of human persons in terms of the disclosure of the divine nature within the Trinity. This was for us a starting point for understanding justice. Hence, the broader discussion of salvation and justice has its beginning point in the communion of the Trinity, which correlates directly to the communion of human persons. In other words, the relationality of the Trinity grounds the relationality of persons who are created as *imago Dei*.

The Augustinian question of whether one can see the Trinity from the observation of reality or if the Trinity is the way of seeing reality yields a both-and proposition. The Trinity is understood from both Scriptural revelation and our participation in it, in particular through the incarnation. Across the represented denominations of this study group, God's nature was described ultimately as love in relationship(s). The benevolence of channeling of God's love is theologically significant and has Trinitarian implications. At the same time, God is Mystery, God is Trinity, and God is Creator.

### God-Human

As Christians, we know the Triune God according to the revelation of inner Trinitarian life through the incarnation, the embody-ment of the Word by the working of the Spirit. In Jesus the Christ, the Word made flesh by the working of the Spirit, we come to know the relationship of God to all the cosmos.

Based on the revelation of God through the incarnation, a goal of God's justice is to bring humanity and all creation into a right (just) relationship with Godself and with each other, thereby restoring the original relationships based on the image of God in humans before *privatio boni* ["privation" or "removal of the good"]. Reconciliation is at the heart of the justifying work of Christ. This goal will be fully achieved in this world with the eschaton, when God will dwell with humans (Rev 21: 3). In this consummation of all things towards which the Spirit directs us, perfect shalom ["peace"] will reign—the wolf will live with the lamb and the leopard will lie down with the kid (Isa 11:6).

The love of God and the love of neighbor for God's sake is in itself an adequate hermeneutical key to all scriptures as well is the *telos* [goal] of the transformed life. However, the only dependable hope is to entrust ourselves to the grace of God and in gratitude seek more and more to be transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit into a life that more perfectly reflects God's intention for humankind as revealed in Christ. God's justice and grace require human responsiveness and responsibility so that while God initiates and completes the work of justice and grace, human persons need to take agency in the process.

### Human-Human

God encourages the faithful to exercise justice in the land because God hates sin (injustice) and loves righteousness (justice) (Ps 45:7). For example, the people of Israel are to make decisions with truth and without partiality, and similar honesty must be applied to economic exchanges like weights and measures (Lev 19:36).

Such behavior conforms to God's own nature of mercy and help for the needy. "The source of all of this righteous conduct is the bestowal of God's judgments (or laws) and righteousness on his people." [xvi] As we grow in God's grace, we begin to reflect on the needs of others and attempt to assuage them. We see acts or systems of injustice and attempt to dismantle them. As an example, the nations are judged and put on sides according to interpersonal actions. On the Day of Judgment, God will not ask, "Did you cry tears at the altar of salvation?" Rather, God will ask: "Did you feed the poor, clothe the naked, and visit the prisoners?" (Matt 25:31-46).

It has been said that justice would not be necessary unless we were, in fact, separate from one another. Justice regulates relationships between strangers. Where there is perfect love and communion, the question of rights and duties becomes moot. They are completely fulfilled. Justice, therefore, mediates between the otherness that arises from our exteriority and the oneness that arises from our interiority. Commitment to just, true, and loving relationships between peoples and across the community of creatures on earth is the call to personal repentance and commitment to follow Jesus.

Although most works of mercy have to do with a Christian's obligations to other individuals in need, they also have broader social and political implications and are to be linked in many cases with the demands of social justice. But the dimension of mercy reminds the Christian that his or her obligations go beyond even those required by social justice.

### God – Human – Creation

God's concern is for all of creation, the whole cosmos whereby Scripture and the Spirit of God assist us in recognizing God's justice in the world. God's love flows through all of creation—human and nonhuman—dictating that the whole of creation be respected. The care and concern that God calls us to show one another are the same care and concern God calls us to show the entire cosmos, especially in the awareness that humans live interdependently with all of the created order (see section IV, "Material").

Thus another goal of God's justice is that creation might flourish such that in the moment of eschatological consummation the unnecessary suffering which God's creatures have endured because of the workings of sin will not overshadow their experience of God's love and goodness in creation. The restoration of the created world (Proverbs 8:19) and the restoration of the immortality of the human being is the goal of God's mercy.

### III. COMMUNAL

Whatever the meaning of justice in relation to the individual, it is predicated upon and achieved within a communal justice.

As referred to in Part One: The Journey through the First Quadrennium (2004-2007), some member churches voiced a concern about an inter-church and intra-church-dividing issue: Does the experience of one's personal salvation or justification by God, by that very fact, impel one to do justice to the earth and other persons? Specifically, some churches emphasize the individualistic, spiritual experience of justification by faith through grace yet do not see the need to relate that specific experience to the demands of the material/social world (or, actively refuse to associate them lest righteousness be seen as dependent on works); on the other hand, other churches so emphasize salvation as impelling the doing of justice in the material/social world yet do not see the need to relate these efforts to the spiritual life of faith (or, actively avoid doing so in reaction to what they perceive as religious escapism). The desire of the commissioners was and is to present a perspective that overcomes the dichotomy between the spiritual experience school and the communal/corporate activity school or, better, to find a way to integrate them.

In myriad ways, we asked: What are the factors that have enabled anyone to imagine being saved or justified without simultaneously being impelled to recognize the common bond among Christians and of all humanity? In this regard, we made frequent reference to two variant interpretations of Amos 5:15 (NRSV): “Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate.” Does this passage mean that we come to hate evil and love good and then perhaps get around to doing what is just? (At one point one of our commissioners argued that all we needed was Paul on justification by faith, not by works, and thus really did not need the contents of the Gospels!) Or, does the hating of evil and loving of good, by that very fact, impel us to do what is just?

During the 2007-2011 Quadrennium, having eschewed the word ‘justification’ because of its thorny multivalency, we have asked: What does justice look like in this world? [see, for example, section IV, “Material”]. And, in telling stories in which both injustice and justice were evident, we came to reflect on the Incarnation of the Word of God as a human being, as the Word that has assumed the matter of the universe in and through the flesh of humanity in the person of Jesus, anointed by the Spirit. This reflection on Christology led us to reflection on the Christ as revelation of the Triune God [see section I, “Trinitarian in Structure and Dynamics”] and on baptism—being plunged into the death of the Lord—as sharing a specific relationship to Christ and each other for the sake of doing what the Christ does: the justice of God in the communal situation of humanity on this earth and in this cosmos.

If baptism is the act of Christ who bestows his Spirit upon the one who is baptized, drawing that person into a set of relationships—with Christ in his victorious death/self-offering and with every other baptized person to the worship of the Father—then care for the common bond with others [see section III, “Relational”] in the Body of Christ, the Church, flows from one’s identity: bound to the other members of the Body of Christ, anointed by the same Spirit by whom Christ is anointed in obedience to the Father. And, the Church of Christ has for its mission the mission of Christ: the peace and salvation of humanity and all creation. (Romans 6; Hebrews; I Corinthians 10-12; Col 1:13-24).

#### IV. MATERIAL

Whatever the consummation of God’s justice may be, it is the fulfillment not the negation of creatureliness. This signifies that the body (including the body of creation) in its needs, limits, and possibilities, remain central to ultimate justice. The relational is material and vice versa.

By material justice we mean aspects of embodied life such as sustenance, security, distributive and retributive justice, economics, bodily integrity, relationality, work, community, and creation. Images drawn from some aspect of material life frequently appear as expressions of and metaphors for the fulfillment of God’s intentions for humankind and creation: the messianic banquet, vine and fig tree, reconciliation of enemies, forgiveness of debts, setting captives free, swords beaten into plowshares, vindication of the poor, etc. The preaching of the prophets and apostles and the gospel witness to Jesus are full of such examples. Embodied life is the central expression of our creatureliness, and affirmation of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting emphasize the positive relationship between embodied (material) life and God’s ultimate justice.

Materiality, we recognize, is sometimes contrasted with spirituality, a division that we believe is a distortion of biblical witness. Here we have a tension to which our reflection turned a number of times. The immateriality of salvation (in some constructions) separates material expressions of justice from salvific significance. As one of our Orthodox members reminded us on occasion, “What is not assumed

(in the incarnation) is not redeemed.”[xvii] That is, if our embodied material life is not taken up in Christ, it is not transformed in Christ. We acknowledged that patterns of opposing soul to body had powerful effects upon understandings of both the meaning and means of justice and salvation.

As justice is sometimes contrasted with spirituality, it is also sometimes contrasted with grace. A mark of God’s peculiar justice, however, is that it cannot be understood apart from grace. A United Methodist commissioner commented, “one cannot speak of God’s justice separate from speaking of God’s grace, so that when speaking of justice, grace becomes the central theme of God’s action toward all creation.” God’s peculiar justice goes beyond the terms of civil, criminal, and religious law, or distributive and retributive justice to be transformed by grace. Nevertheless, God’s grace reveals something essential about the meaning of justice within the realm of existence. It is within the framework of existence that the questions of justice arise, and therefore, that is where it must be understood.

The question of materiality, the body, and justice are engaged in distinctive and often contrasting ways in particular among Pentecostals. Healing of the body is a prominent focus of Pentecostal faith and practice, and in global Pentecostalism there are important openings toward themes of justice, particularly within impoverished southern hemisphere communities. In North America the translation of bodily healing toward justice is much less developed among Pentecostals, yet Pentecostal theology has resources that have much to offer in this direction.

Our reflection led us toward the importance of practices in the discussion of material justice. It is one thing to identify goals of justice, both ultimate and proximate; it is another thing to ask how justice practices are fostered within and among us. An Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commissioner pointed toward ways in which material justice is implicated in the practices by which we are formed as Christian persons and communities: “Christian practices—prayer, study of scripture, initiation [baptism, confirmation], confessing, giving praise, fellowship at the table and beyond, sharing goods—derive their authenticity from their orientation towards justice...Christian life, in solitude or in fellowship will therefore participate in bringing to light, in modeling, in anticipating, God’s desired justice within societies, among communities, and for all persons.”

This lifts up a reciprocal relation between our practices and our values that may go little explored in ecclesial life. By reciprocal, we mean both mutually informing and mutually critiquing. What is the relationship between how we worship and the particular shapes of our lives? How do our practices illumine us about the just life, and how do our understandings of justice illumine us about daily Christian practices? How does the story of Jesus demonstrate justice, and how do Jesus’ stories do so? Such questions are instructional and formational.

These reflections do not indicate a common constructive understanding of what material justice means under the conditions of existence (that is, everyday living), but we believe they do support a common sense that justice and salvation are mutually implicating and mutually forming. The establishment of right relation with God cannot be separated from right relation with neighbor, and right relation to neighbor cannot be established apart from the reality of embodied life in a finite creation, which has been given for the wellbeing of all creatures (Gen 1:29-30). Right relation is both spiritual and material, and encompasses all aspects of personal, communal, and social life.

## V. SALVIFIC AND HEALING

Salvation is not escape or rescue, but restoration. Distributive and retributive justice are located within restorative justice.

For our discussion of salvation and healing with different sets of questions and therefore produce different answers. For our discussion, justice was seen as one entry point into the conversation on salvation and the healing of the human being. Yet there are clear differences with regard to how salvation takes place. For some, the primary approach to salvation involves a substitutionary atonement theology. For others, salvation is understood in terms of discipleship or as theosis. However, the questions that arose during our discussions were many and varied: How does a person achieve salvation? How does one live his or her life in order to come to salvation? What does it take to be redeemed? What does redemption mean? Who is the human being and how do we do justly by each other? What is the role of the body in the salvation of the human being? What type of salvific healing needs to take place? What does the “saved” person look like?

What was clear to all, though, was the importance of the incarnation of Jesus Christ in the salvation of humanity. The coming of Christ initiates a transformation that affects the life of the human being. The incarnation also, for some, brings about a change in the entire created order. There is a cosmological dimension to the incarnation. How Christ’s life, death and resurrection bring about salvation was a point of discussion. Again, for some, atonement for original sin was central, while for others the actions of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden did not influence the decision of God to become human.

Another thread woven through our discussions was the healing character of God’s justice. In some strands of Christian tradition, the redemption offered by Christ is understood to be a restoration and elevation of the original goodness of creation that was lost by sin. The restoration begins with the incarnation, when the Word assumes human flesh, and cannot be understood completely without it (“That which is not assumed is not saved” – see footnote 17).

When this understanding of God’s justice first emerged in our conversations, we explored how it differs from approaches that emphasize the depravity of humanity and focus primarily on the atonement accomplished by Christ’s death. This led to discussion of whether the salvation offered by Christ is a restoration of the original goodness of creation that is still present, at least partially, in humanity or something entirely new that is only possible because of Christ and has no intrinsic connection to the state of creation before sin.

If God’s justice includes the restoration of the original state of humanity, how can it be characterized? Is it the right ordering of relationships? Is it the order of the original created world or, more fundamentally, the order of Trinitarian life?

A related question is whether we, in our current experience of the fallen world, can have real knowledge of the original order of creation. One commissioner pointed out that “Calvin would say we don’t have any knowledge of the human being as such (pre-fall). The only knowledge we have is by the inference of what is restored in Christ. Therefore, to speak of whatever the shadow of injustice and justice are, what it would be for that tradition has to take its starting point with Christ—with God’s justice as it is revealed in Christ.” Another commissioner said that in his tradition the understanding of right order takes its orientation from eschatology rather than from reflection on the original creation: “what will be rather than what was.... There’s a way in which sin affects how we understand what was, we can’t see it clearly, so all we can see is what remains; the only thing we know is the darkness.... the eschatological dimension is the focus, what is going to be which the Spirit is living us into; nothing current is equivalent

to God's order." A third position, articulated by a Roman Catholic commissioner and consistent with points made by representatives of the Orthodox tradition and the Religious Society of Friends, is that our experience of the world gives real insight into God's order and justice, even though our understanding is dimmed by sin.

Overall, the topic of the salvific and healing aspects of justice is still an open discussion that could prove fruitful for future discourse on theological anthropology.

## VI. CONSOLATORY

From the perspective of the future eschaton, we live with hope and consolation in this present suffering-laden world—an awareness of God's ultimate justice ("all things are in his hands") which provides comfort to those who endure this suffering. We recognize that God's justice exceeds "the unnecessary suffering, which God's creatures have endured because of the workings of sin."

It seems a truism that human and creaturely existence is filled with struggle and sorrow. To be sure, on some dark days of life the glimmers of joy and hope shine through, but the grinding out of our existence seems weighted, holding us down to some extent like gravity heavy upon us. As Job expressed in the depth of his tragedy, "...human beings are born to trouble just as sparks fly upward," (Job 5:7; NRSV).

Christians live in hope of God's comfort both in this life and the next. Our consolation from the Holy Spirit in this life is a foretaste of our future consolation in God's presence in eternity. It is the Spirit at work within us, helping us to endure the pain and grow more mature in Christ through it.

Sin has caused humans and all creation to groan under the weight of suffering (Rom 8:22). Pain is clearly experienced (and often caused) by humans in physical and emotional ways, but Paul proposes that even creation itself functions under the strain of sin-caused suffering in which "the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now" (Rom 8:22; NRSV). Granting the created order a personality in response to its pain, Paul views it as waiting eagerly for the day when the children of God will obtain their freedom from this bondage of sin because creation "knows" that such deliverance will rescue it from bondage of decay and death. The world groans in pain and yet also in hope of deliverance. Christians groan deep within due to the afflictions of this life and we groan in hope for the deliverance of our bodies from this system of things (Rom 8:23). Yet in the midst of such groaning and yearning, Christians have the Holy Spirit who groans along with them with sounds that cannot be relayed in any meaningful sentence—except to God (Rom 8:23; 8:26).

Within this oppressive and oppressing setting, Christians are buoyed by the presence of God's Spirit and the hope that has been promised to us that God's goal is twofold: to relieve us eventually from this sin-oppressed world of pain, and to grant us strength, consolation and endurance while we wait for this final deliverance. There is coming a Day of the Lord in which the home of God will be among mortals and God will "wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away," (Rev. 21:4; NRSV). It is towards this Day that Christians look in hope, yet not ignoring the significant sorrow and suffering in this world.

In both Romans and II Corinthians, Paul points fellow-believers to the incomparable glory that will be revealed on that Day. With such hope, the "sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us" (Rom 8:18; NRSV). With such consolation as part of God's goal of

justice, “we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal,” (II Cor. 4:16-18; NRSV).

However, such hope is not groundless nor does it glibly bypass the genuine pain of this life. Some commissioners viewed suffering in a more positive light, noting that it can be an instrument used by God to bring humans to greater perfection in Christ. In this view, suffering can be seen as ‘redemptive’, because God uses the afflictions of life to cause growth towards the goal of being like him. This view might be characterized as understanding redemption through suffering. Other commissioners viewed suffering in a more negative light, remarking that God’s ultimate goal is to deliver humans from this pain of suffering and death. If we ‘sanction’ suffering in the present world, we may end up granting sin a de facto position of authority that foists oppression and suffering on fellow human-beings. The example of slavery was offered here as an illustration of asking people to submit to suffering as ‘good Christians’ who should consider this their position in life and endure it. Some suffering is oppressive and sinful, thereby rendering it as something from which we need deliverance and against which we should fight. This view might be characterized as seeing redemption from suffering.

From the perspective of God’s justice, which is the heart of our consideration here, we focused more on how God consoles us here in the present and in the eschaton rather than on the purposes of suffering. We could not agree on the reason for suffering in this world or the purpose it holds in God’s plan, but we could agree that God consoles us here and now in the midst of our suffering as well as in the future eschaton when all things will be made new, and there will be no more “mourning and crying and pain,” since the old order of things will have passed away (Rev 21:4). Thus inquiring into the intention of God’s justice for humans and all creation, we agree that sin has marred our existence here but that God’s righteous hand will rectify in some way all of the pain of this life. This is the consolation from God that the Spirit brings to us in the present, fostering a hope that does not disappoint (Rom 5:4-5). God’s goal of justice exceeds the unnecessary suffering that God’s creatures have endured because of sin. The suffering of this life is not erased as if it had no value; it is used by God for his purposes; it is redeemed—bought back by God’s grace and justice. Therefore, the goal of God’s justice is that creation might flourish such that in the moment of eschatological consummation the unnecessary suffering, which God’s creatures have endured because of the workings of sin, will not overshadow their experience of God’s love and goodness in creation.

## VII. REVEALING AND JUDGING

God’s justice discloses the incomplete nature of all human approximations, points beyond them to fulfillment in the reign of God, and thereby stands as a permanent judgment and call.

How are injustice and “unjustification” named and known?

Swirling the paired, tensive notions “justification” and “justice”, our study group found again and again, among the ore left at the bottom of the pan, judgments. Injustice calls to be named, to be known. If suffering is to be healed, if the shattered is to be made whole, then injustice must be named and known as such. If there is injustice, there must be justice and it too must be known – known as idea, known also as reality. Unjustification, too, whether we know it as such or not, calls to be known or named. To be out of step with the one in whom we live and move and have our being is to fail to be fully alive, to be

stumbling, bruised, and broken, to fail to have our being. Un-justification is the absence of justification and implies the reality of justification.

Reflecting on this group's first four years of common work, one from our group noted that under the banner of "Justification and Justice" our group spent more time than some had expected focused on justification.[xviii] This led us to these reflections:

An effect of this was to place the question of justice in a secondary position (as far as process). This unintentionally mirrored a theological approach that placed justice in a derivative category. . . It has been also argued, however that the question of justification arises in the first place precisely because of the question of (in)justice. If justice is made the question prior to justification, and if justification is understood to have the purpose of effecting justice, then the relationship between the two is much more complex.

Paul's affirmation that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23; NRSV) might be understood "first of all as a claim founded upon a history and experience of human injustice/unrighteousness," in which case "it tends to lead us toward understandings that emphasize the meaning and means of justice (both ideal and actual) under the conditions of existence." [xix]

What if justice is the prior matter brought ever to the fore by the reality of injustice? Drawn by the power of this thought, this ordering of the matter, our group became the "Justice and Salvation" group. "Salvation" was chosen as fitting because those who experience injustice—whether as victim or agent—stand in need of salvation, of justification.

The constant pressure of injustice drives what we experienced as the tensive relationship between justification and justice, as well as the perhaps more dynamic relationship of justice and salvation. The members of our group found common ground in stories that wove together injustice and justice. A striking part of the narrative of our second four years together highlights the importance of storytelling in the life of the group:

but storytelling quickly provided at least a clearing in the trees, of not a map. "Do the right thing" stories became a way for all of us to enter the conversation about what it means to do justice, about sin and corruption in the church, and about how we determine what's important to believe and to do.

One story in particular, which is told in full in the journey document, recounted the experience of the grandmother of one of the commissioners, who had taken care of a Jewish boy who had been hurt and was subsequently barred from receiving the Eucharist by her priest. It was intriguing that this "do the right thing" story was actually a story of the difficulty placing what happened into the narrative of justice and what is right. Such stories represent a very personal tie to "a history and experience of human injustice/unrighteousness."

A prior question has played mostly just below the surface our long grappling with these matters: why do we think injustice is "injustice"? What leads us to think that there is such a thing as justice, which injustice violates? Why are violence and suffering and pain not simply the order of the world, to be accepted in the same way we accept that it is air that we must breathe? It is perhaps here that revelation, which is in some way judgment, can be drawn forth. Victims of injustice do not need revelation to tell them that injustice brings suffering to its victims (though the unjustified may need

revelation to reveal their unjustification). Revelation shows both victims and agents of injustice that injustice is injustice and not simply the way things must be, or the way things simply are.

Striking in this regard are the Bible's epiphany stories. Moses, tender of Jethro's flocks, informed that he is now on holy ground, in God's presence, and that God is sending him, asks "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" Who am I? In the presence of God, Elizabeth asks "And why has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord comes to me?" (Luke 1:43) God's revelation lays bare one's identity. That is not always good news: Isaiah, in the Old Testament (Isa. 6:1-13), and Peter (Luke 5:1-11, especially v. 8), in the New both find themselves in God's presence and find that in that place they must acknowledge a part of their identity. Equally striking is the way in which in both Isaiah and Peter are revealed to have very different identities than what they can see of themselves (though in neither case is their sense of elements of their own identity denied).

We know injustice for what it is in part through God's self-revelation. Revelation reveals injustice as a distortion, as that which counters God's purpose. It does so by focusing our attention on the undistorted. Revelation opens before us a future in such a way that it highlights and calls us to that future, even as we live in the present. When our group turned its attention to the goal and consummation of God's justice we found significant common ground, even as we were aware of variation across that common ground. Equally intriguing was the way in which it became apparent that our differing traditions have made us attentive to different events/actions/moments in which God is revealed and the undistorted order of things is opened to us: the gifts of the Holy Spirit flowing in and through people, the self-othering of Christ in, for example, the elements of the Mass, our entry in God's presence and ordering in the liturgy, or as the people of God gather and abide together.

#### VIII. VINDICATING AND TRANSFORMING

God's justice vindicates faith and hope in the crucified Christ and the love that endures forever.

Hope is future-oriented, while vindicating is a historical judgment. So in a deep way, the churches stand at a pivot point in any expectation of God's justice, since they cannot hope except that they have heard and seen how God's justice has already made whole our fragmented world.

Just as the churches can only discover the unity that God has already given them, and not make unity themselves, the churches discover also that God's justice has already been given to them in Christ. Faced with systems of violence and injustice in our world, we rely on the Word of God to us in Christ as a gift already given, a gift sufficient to lead us into hope. This Word, incarnate, draws us into communion with God, and thus with each other. What we dwell in is not our own hopes, or imperfect visions of justice, but in God's full capacity to restore creation through the Spirit that gives us hope.

#### IX. ECCLESIAL

What role does the church have to play in dealing with, meting out, and proclaiming God's justice?

The previous eight aspects of God's justice were considered important milestones in our group's search for a path along which we all could walk. However, near the end of the second quadrennium, one of our commissioners noted that we seemed to leave out the role that the Church might play in dealing with, meting out, and proclaiming God's justice. We all felt that the commissioner had struck a chord that we had missed entirely, so our eight aspects suddenly became nine—adding the characteristic of "ecclesial"

to God’s justice. While we thought and wrote about this important aspect, our group simply ran out of time to do this broad topic justice. Therefore, we have decided to leave only the question we found important and not summarize our answers to them. We encourage others to engage in this particular aspect of God’s justice in future dialogue.

### APPENDIX 3

#### FAITH & ORDER COMMISSION STUDY GROUP: “Justice and Salvation”

##### DATES AND PLACES OF THE FIRST QUADRENNIUM: 2004-2007

1. March 2004: Earlham School of Religion, Richmond, Indiana
2. October 2004: Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California
3. March 2005: Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia
4. October 2005: Bangor Theological Seminary, Portland, Maine
5. March 2006: Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA
6. October 2006: Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, California
7. March 2007: Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas
8. October 2007: Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana

##### DATES AND PLACES OF THE SECOND QUADRENNIUM: 2008-2011

1. April 2008: Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia
2. October 2008: Faith Memorial Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
3. March 2009: Florida Theological Seminary, Miami, Florida
4. October 2009: Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois
5. March 2010: Union Theological Seminary, NYC/St. Vladimir’s, Crestwood, New York
6. October 2010: Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California
7. March 2011: Gettysburg Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, PA and the Pennsylvania Council of Churches, Harrisburg, PA.
8. October 2011: First United Methodist Church, Pasadena, California and Fuller Theological Seminary

### APPENDIX 4

#### COMMISSIONERS OF THE FAITH & ORDER JUSTICE AND SALVATION STUDY GROUP 2004 – 2011

##### FIRST QUADRENNIUM: 2004 – 2007

Co-Chairs:

Frank Macchia (2004) [Society for Pentecostal Studies]  
Don Dayton (2004-2008) [Wesleyan Theological Society]  
Despina Prassas (2004-2011) [Greek Orthodox Church of America]  
(Co-chair: 2005-2007)

Participants:

W. Scott Axford (2005-2011) [Council of Christian Churches within the Unitarian  
Universalist Association]  
Paul Blowers (2004-2005) [Christian Churches and Churches of Christ]  
Reginald Broadnax (2004-2005) [African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church]  
Lois Barratt (for Thomas Finger) (2004) [Mennonite Church, USA]  
Monica Coleman (2004-2006) [African Methodist Episcopal Church]  
Terry L. Cross (2004-2011) [Society for Pentecostal Studies]  
(served as recorder for most of the quadrennium and as Interim Co-Chair in October 2004)  
Dorothy Day (2004) [Friends General Conference]  
Dow Edgerton (2004-2011) [United Church of Christ]  
Barry Ensign-George (2006-2011) [Presbyterian Church (USA)]  
Thomas Finger (2004-2007) [Mennonite Church, USA]  
Mark Heim (2004-2005) [American Baptist Churches]  
Jonathon Jensen (2005) [Episcopal Church]  
Richard Jeske (2006) [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America]  
Arthur Kennedy (2004-2006) [Roman Catholic Church]  
Theresa Koernke (2004-2011) [Roman Catholic Church]  
Philip Krey (2005-2007) [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America]  
James Loughran (2004-2011) [Roman Catholic Church and the Graymoor Ecumenical &  
Interreligious Institute]  
Rachel Lyle (2006-2008) [Episcopal Church]  
James Massa (2006) [Roman Catholic Church]  
Aimee Moiso (2004-2011) [Presbyterian Church (USA)]  
Larry Pickens (2004) [United Methodist Church]  
Ben Richmond (2006-2007) [Religious Society of Friends]  
Ann Riggs (2004-2009) [Friends General Conference]  
Gilbert Stafford (2004) [Church of God, Anderson]  
(Gil Stafford was moved to another working group after the first meeting)  
William Schweiker (2005) [United Methodist Church]  
George Vandervelde (2004-2007) [Christian Reformed Church]  
Kevin Wells (2004) [Churches of Christ]

SECOND QUADRENNIUM: 2008 - 2011

Co-Chairs:

Theresa Koernke (2004-2011) [Roman Catholic Church]  
Terry L. Cross (2004-2011) [Society for Pentecostal Studies]

Participants:

Daniel Antle (2008) [Apostolic Catholic Church]

W. Scott Axford (2005-2011)	[Council of Christian Churches within the Unitarian Universalist Association]
Don Dayton (2008)	[Wesleyan Theological Society]
(Don Dayton moved to another working group at the beginning of the quadrennium)	
Dow Edgerton (2004-2011)	[United Church of Christ]
Barry Ensign-George (2006-2011)	[Presbyterian Church, (USA)]
Maria Erling (2008-2011)	[Evangelical Lutheran Church in America]
Ray Kibler, III (2008-2011)	[Southern California Ecumenical Council, Faith & Order Commission]
Sarosh Koshy (2008-2011)	[NCCC Staff]
James Loughran (2004-2011)	[Roman Catholic Church and the Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute]
Rachel Lyle (2006-2008)	[Episcopal Church]
Aimee Moiso (2004-2011)	[Presbyterian Church (USA)]
Zachary Moon (2008-2011)	[Friends General Conference]
Kirsten Oh (2008-2011)	[United Methodist Church]
A. Nevell Owens (2008-2009)	[African Methodist Episcopal Church]
Despina Prassas (2004-2011)	[Greek Orthodox Church of America]
Stephen Ray (2008-2011)	[United Church of Christ]
Ann Riggs (2004-2009)	[Friends General Conference]
Barb Sain (2008-2011)	[Roman Catholic Church]

We note with sadness the loss of two members of our group: George Vandevelde and Gil Stafford.

## APPENDIX 5

### JUSTIFICATION AND JUSTICE: BEYOND THE DICHOTOMIES

A Faith and Order Study Group: 2004-2007  
National Council of Churches of Christ USA

\* Continuation report \*

This continuation report was composed by members of the 2004-2007 Faith and Order study group, Justification and Justice: Beyond the Dichotomies. It is an attempt to put into writing a record of topics and areas of study the group discussed during its first quadrennium, as well as challenges we faced in dealing with the complex and interrelated subject matter. A full list of participants and their communions is listed in the appendix.

We hope that this document will be useful in particular for the new and continuing members of the Justification and Justice study group in the 2008-2011 quadrennium.

Justification and Justice: Beyond the Dichotomies  
March 2008

Justification and Justice: Continuation Report

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART 1: Introduction to the Study Group

PART 2: Areas of Study

- A. Theological anthropology
- B. Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification
- C. Understanding justification
- D. Justice
- E. Theosis
- F. Sanctification
- G. Finnish interpretation of Luther
- H. The “new perspective” on Paul
- I. Discipleship
- J. Salvation and justice in liberationist theologies
- K. Elsa Tamez on justification: The Amnesty Of Grace

PART 3: Justification and Justice: Where do we go from here?

## APPENDIX

Additional text: Justification and justice from an Evangelical Lutheran perspective

## 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY GROUP

The Faith and Order Study Group, *Justification and Justice: Beyond the Dichotomies* (JJ), was developed in response to requests from churches and sending agencies to the Faith and Order Commission, including specific requests from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and Friends General Conference, for further study of theological anthropology. A special impetus came from the Society for Pentecostal Studies, and an initial proposal was circulated and expanded by other groups and persons who broadened the soteriological categories (theosis, sanctification, etc.) to be more representative of the participants in the discussion. It was understood that this work should be undertaken in the wake of and in dialogue with other major ecumenical documents, especially the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (originally agreed upon by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church in 1999[xx]; additionally affirmed by the World Methodist Council in 2006[xxi] ) and the WCC Faith and Order statement on “Theological Anthropology.”[xxii]

A particular focus of the group was on exploring the issues at stake in the “dichotomies” that have divided the church, especially in modern times, between those who have seen Christian faith in terms of personal soteriology (“salvation” or “justification”) and those who have emphasized the struggle for “social justice.” Sometimes these divisions have reflected “confessional” differences between blocks of churches versus other blocks, but more often they have manifested themselves in splitting particular communities down the middle. From the beginning it was understood that this study group was breaking new ground by looking beyond “confessional” issues to the “church dividing” issues of our time which appear to be social and often intertwined with broader cultural and political concerns.

The first quadrennium was from the beginning seen as a provisional series of sample probes that might help clarify the issues and lay the foundation for a more sustained and focused second quadrennium. Special notice was taken of the fact that the words “justification” and “justice” (or “righteousness”) are in the original biblical languages cognates from the same roots. This fact formed the backdrop of many discussions. Much attention was given to analysis and critique of various soteriological terms (justification, sanctification, discipleship, theosis, etc.) in a variety of traditions (Pentecostal, Orthodox, Reformed, Lutheran, Anabaptist, Liberationist, etc.) though some wondered if the linguistic linking of the key words did not require a more fundamental linking of the terms that goes beyond the usual pattern (in the Reformation and elsewhere) of the “justified” doing “good works” of “justice” in thankful response to the grace of God bestowed in “salvation.”

A variety of topics were considered. Major attention was given to the “Finnish Interpretation of Luther” that has emerged in Lutheran/Orthodox dialogues—raising the question of whether Luther might have been more open to a concept of “theosis” than has generally been assumed. Similar attention was given to the “new perspective on Paul” that opens up a reading of Paul more congenial with Wesleyan and Roman Catholic traditions—as well as being more generous in evaluating the continuing relevance of Judaism and the law in the logic of Christian Faith. Sessions were also devoted to approaching the issues from the side of the differing concepts of “justice” that clamor for our attention.

## 2A: THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

At its inception, the title of the study group was “Justification/Sanctification/theosis and Justice: toward a theological anthropology.” The italics are pertinent to what we have accomplished – and to what may need further attention.

As noted in other portions of this set of summaries, the majority of our time has been spent on mining the meaning of the terms in the first portion of the title. This project was and is understandable because of the submitted concern of the churches, that is, the relationship between justification by grace through faith and its implications for living the Christian life. The churches note either an emphasis on personal justification by faith to the exclusion or neglect of societal concerns, or the opposite. As well, at various junctures, issues were raised that would give attention to the second portion of the initial title, “towards a theological anthropology” as a way to address the justification/justice “split.”

We have noted that “soteriological individualism” is de facto, if not technically, theologically part of some Christians’ understanding. Further, “idiosyncratic individualism” is so much a part of our culture and a challenge to living the gospel. It would be helpful to appreciate this challenge and to explore how each tradition addresses this issue.

Increasingly, we are aware that for some churches the role of the Western philosophical tradition in the development of Christian doctrine and practice not only carries within it a type of attention to the individual, but also has been interpreted as advocating dichotomies—rather than distinctions—between spirit and matter, individual and community, male and female, rich and poor (slave and free), and so on, each pair implying superiority and inferiority. It would be useful to explore the impact of the hermeneutical lens that this set of assumptions has provided in the interpretation of both Old and New Testaments in each of our traditions.

Further, we have ruminated on possible starting points, other than justification and justice, such as “Reign/ing of God” and “Discipleship in/for the Reign of God,” that all the traditions could embrace in reflecting on the justification/justice relationship and its implications for life in the church and in society.

At this point, it seems that we may have found the broad entry point: the theological anthropology reflected in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. While requests for a definition of theological anthropology were brought forward, an in-depth discussion of exactly what the term means never took place. Certainly included for further study are biblical creation accounts, as well as Paul’s meaning of “you are a new creation.”

This biblical study of theological anthropology has the potential to be the framework from which to address fruitfully our need for justification by grace through faith and its relationship to gospel discipleship.

## 2B: THE JOINT DECLARATION ON THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church (1999)

The Justification and Justice study group had brief discussion at its first meeting in March 2004, at Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Indiana, about the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). The document was understood as a significant step in the history of the ecumenical discussion on the topic of justification by grace through faith. While appreciating this significance, the study group chose not to study the document. A major part of the reasoning for this was that the

document was seen as a bilateral consensus between two communions. The study group later noted that the World Methodist Council had also “signed on” to the JDDJ at its Assembly in Seoul in 2006.

A re-evaluation of study of this document in a multilateral context by the Faith and Order Commission JJ study group is suggested for the next quadrennium.

## 2C: UNDERSTANDING JUSTIFICATION

Realizing that the terms we use needed clarification and definition, the group further examined the word “justification” late in the quadrennium (March 2007). We approached it this way so as to allow various thoughts about justification to arise in the group from the various traditions, movements or communions. However, we began to feel that we needed some definition of the term itself in order to understand better what we have been talking about.

The paper itself focused on the definition of the terms in Greek and Latin. It offered a paragraph or two on the linguistic moves from *dikaioo* to *iustificare*. A discussion of this idea was offered concerning Augustine and a brief paragraph was provided concerning the medieval period and justification. The paper also focused on Luther and Calvin as Reformers concerned with this doctrine—indeed, so concerned (in Luther’s case) that the entire church was deemed to stand or fall on its outcome. Part of the question of the definition of this term lies with the issue of what occurs in justification. Luther approaches the question from a forensic model, suggesting that in justification a person is declared righteous by God and united to Christ by faith, receiving thereby the alien righteousness of Christ. Thus, “works” viewed as a means to earn God’s favor are disallowed and only the grace of God and the faith of humans remain. Some suggestion was made that we had collapsed Calvin’s doctrine of justification into Luther’s doctrine, thereby missing the Reformed tradition’s view entirely. Perhaps that is an area requiring further consideration. In addition, the Council of Trent was considered. In this Roman Catholic response to the Reformation, it was decided that the Reformation position of being “counted” righteous does not do justice to God’s work in humans whereby they may actually become righteous. The Council of Trent also viewed the isolation of justification from regeneration resulted in an exclusion of transformation. Justification is transformational for the Council of Trent, providing an internal “renewal of humans” and setting the basis for sanctification. There is a “gift of righteousness” (*donatio iustitiae*) in justification that the Reformers have missed.

The group discussed the need for a definition of justification, but questions were raised regarding this particular approach. Was there a historical hermeneutic at work in our group—something assumed but not clearly stated? Was Augustine’s view of justification adequately discussed? Was the variety within the medieval approach presented well enough—where was Thomas Aquinas? Was the view of Calvin subsumed by the view of Luther? Would their differences yield any fruit for helping to define this word? Was Trent accurately described?

The notion of justification as an act whereby sinners are made righteous or declared righteous remains to be discussed thoroughly before a clearer definition (either historically or theologically) can be given.

## 2D: JUSTICE

How does the question of justice arise in relation to justification? In terms of our study group’s process, we found (to our surprise) that the questions surrounding justification required more of our attention than we had foreseen. An effect of this was to place the question of justice in a secondary position (as

far as process). This unintentionally mirrored a theological approach that placed justice in a derivative category such as “sanctification.” It has been also argued, however, that the question of justification arises in the first place precisely because of the question of (in)justice. That is (following Paul’s argument in Romans and Galatians), the failure of the law (whether of Moses or the Gentiles) to produce human justice/righteousness requires the revelation of God’s justice beyond the law, for the purposes of effecting human justice. Paul’s argument in Galatians stresses that the goal of freedom from the law is, indeed, to transform believers toward that justice which lies beyond the power of the law to effect. If justice is made the question prior to justification, and if justification is understood to have the purpose of effecting justice, then the relationship between the two is much more complex.

Our discussions of justice have distinguished (at least provisionally) different dimensions of the term that relate:

- God’s intention for the ordering of human life and community, whether understood as requirement or/and call (according to various evidence of general and special revelation, and variously interpreted)
- Human justice that seeks to correspond to God’s intention (as interpreted)
- Human justice that draws its norms from other philosophical, cultural and religious traditions
- The peculiar divine justice by which God responds to human injustice transformatively, restoring justice and exceeding the demands/possibilities of law (centered upon the death & resurrection of Jesus, variously interpreted)
- Human justice, especially in the sphere of the Church, that seeks to correspond to God’s peculiar justice as demonstrated in the death & resurrection of Jesus (again, interpreted)
- Actual norms, laws, systems and practices that function in religiously and culturally pluralistic contexts under the conditions of existence
- The relationship between Christian understandings, norms, and practices and civic life in its various forms

We might observe that in our discussions it makes a difference how one understands Paul’s claim that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. If we understand it first of all as an onto-theological problem (how the relationship of human being and divine being can be restored), this strongly tends to lead us toward onto-theological understandings of the “solution (justification).” If, on another hand, we understand it first of all as a claim founded upon a history and experience of human injustice/unrighteousness, it tends to lead us toward understandings that emphasize the meaning and means of justice (both ideal and actual) under the conditions of existence. The urgency of Paul’s exhortations toward righteousness/justice, especially as they are founded upon the concern of a mockery being made of grace and freedom by the unrighteousness and injustice of the Christian community, testifies strongly for the importance of the justice claim as an actual claim upon the actual church.

Several of the traditions we have discussed effectively create a one-way relationship between justification and sanctification, whereby sanctification depends upon justification, but justification does not depend upon sanctification (salvation by faith, not by works). This places the priority (both in sequence and importance) upon justification. Sanctification, in turn, becomes identified with personal righteousness (righteousness as a frequently chosen English translation of dik-stemmed Greek words, instead of justice). In that way, sanctification sometimes becomes analogous to works of “law” and opposed by “gospel.” In order to safeguard the position of “grace” and “faith” some Reformers (and their subsequent traditions) tended to harden that opposition. For Luther, it was the second use of the law that applied to justification, that is, the negative accusing function of God’s law. The first use of the

law, which stems from the first article of the creed, creation, and reason, applies to justice and does not necessarily have a negative function. Others (such as some Anabaptists, Wesleyans, and various holiness movements) emphasized the goal of sanctification, with great interest in terms such as “discipleship,” “reign(ing) of God,” “life in the Spirit,” and “church discipline.” For Calvin, the third use of the law instructs the believer, who, sanctified, is prompted (through reverence, gratitude, and the work of the Holy Spirit) to do and exceed what the moral law demands. This may be read as a mediating position, although Calvinism (as distinct from Calvin) has been accused of a protestant legalism. Reformed tradition has also paid great attention to the respective roles of church and civil government in relation to the public good. Pentecostals have affirmed quite contrasting positions on the relationship between orthodoxy and justice praxis, especially in the Americas. The Orthodox response to the differentiation between justification and justice has stressed the interdependence of faith and works (synergia) as an organic whole, and does not divide the two. Roman Catholic reflection has frequently focused upon personal ethics/righteousness as a response to justification, but has also lifted up the role of systemic injustice, public/institutional responsibility, and formation of persons and communities (with emphasis on sacramental formation). Latin American theologies of liberation we have discussed, as well as Womanist and Black theologies, have stressed the priority of the claim and responsibility for justice personally, institutionally, and systemically, and articulated different understandings of the “preferential option” of the gospel toward those who suffer injustice. The question of the relationship of the church(es) to civil government in effecting justice has not yet been much explored among us. Similarly, the discussion of our various approaches to theological ethics has not developed much so far.

## 2E: THEOSIS

The Justification and Justice group expressed an interest in learning about the Eastern Orthodox concept of theosis (union with God) and the role it may play as a possible principle for agreement in the conversation on justification and justice. One member presented the concept from the perspective of the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

Another translation of theosis is “deification.” In II Peter 1:4, the author speaks of becoming “partakers in the divine nature.” The Christian is made in the image and likeness of God. But since the likeness no longer exists as the result of sin, there is a need for a renewed likeness to God. The passage in II Peter is a promise of that renewed likeness.

The question of justification can be seen from the Orthodox perspective in terms of the human being having been made in the image and likeness, having lost that likeness, and the promise of that renewed likeness as well as its meaning. Theosis, effected by the Holy Spirit, takes place when a person is observing the commands of God. One who is deified, which begins with our baptism, acquires virtues and shares in the suffering of Christ. Therefore, one who is deified is taking part in the life of Christ and all that Christ endured, suffered, enjoyed (e.g., communion with the Father), and experienced, as well as his resurrection and glorification.

There were questions raised regarding how this discussion on theosis can be shared with the larger Christian tradition, how this concept relates to theological anthropology, how theosis is lived out in the practical realm and how it applies to pastoral situations, and how theosis may be a link between soteriology and justice. Some other churches represented in the study spoke of transformation and renewal being bestowed by God’s direct work in persons and those members believe their understanding of transformation and renewal to be similar to the Orthodox notion of theosis.

Other areas of interest include scriptural studies on the anthropological passages, specifically Genesis 1:27, that of human beings having been made in “image and likeness” of God, and II Peter 1:4, becoming “partakers of the divine nature.” The discussion on the ontological change (e.g., “a new creation” in II Corinthians 5:17) that takes place as a result of theosis may also prove fruitful for the next study group.

## 2F: SANCTIFICATION

The Justification and Justice group has recognized that the discussion on justification takes place within the broader discussion of soteriology, and sanctification was among several terms that warranted a closer look. The group chose to approach “sanctification” using a comparative method by which each tradition provided an explication of the term. This approach was considered not to be very beneficial, and as a result, the discussion did not produce as much fruit as was hoped.

As the group wrestled with different models of the relationship between justification and sanctification, there were also suggestions made regarding the relationship of sanctification and justification: clustering theosis, sanctification and discipleship under the category of “practical implications of justification”; the actions of God understood as justification, sanctification, and theosis, and their appropriation by human beings; justification and justice as sanctification and social welfare.

The real issue may be that of transformation (personal, societal, etc.), and sanctification and justification can be viewed this way. At the same time, the group considered that salvation and sanctification should be thought of in terms of the whole person and whole cosmos. More work needs to be done with regard to understanding the term sanctification.

## 2G: THE FINNISH INTERPRETATION OF LUTHER

One of the prominent areas of current research related to the ecumenical movement and our theme of justification is the work done by Lutheran scholars in Finland. One of the more cogent interpreters of this Finnish interpretation of Luther in English is Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Fuller Theological Seminary) from whom we heard in Pasadena. This discussion prompted us to investigate further the work on Luther’s view of justification proposed as “radical” and “new” by the Finnish scholars. Therefore, the Justification and Justice group decided to consider this work in greater detail.

Arising out of the dialogues on soteriology in the 1970s between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Finnish Lutheran Church, the Finnish interpretation of Luther proposes to provide a new interpretive framework for Martin Luther’s doctrine of justification. While most Luther scholarship had closed the chapter on Luther’s view of justification, the discussion regarding theosis with the Russian Orthodox Church caused the Finns to reconsider Luther’s occasional use of the term and his concept of “union” in salvation. This led to further considerations of Luther’s view of justification itself. Instead of offering a relationship based on a forensic metaphor, the Finnish view sees Luther’s approach as focusing on the indwelling of Christ that transforms a believer in justification.

Leading this reinterpretation was Tuomo Mannermaa, respected Luther scholar at the University of Helsinki. The question focused on what Luther says really happens in justification in believers. Past scholarship saw the external dimension only in Luther’s writings. We are declared righteous through the alien righteousness of Christ that is imputed to us. Mannermaa sees this forensic side of justification, to be sure, but also the effective side, as he calls it. By this latter term he means the “reality-altering

presence of God.”[xxiii] In addition, Mannermaa sees theosis or some idea of participation throughout Luther’s writings.

A key Lutheran idea (as formulated in the Formula of Concord, for example) is *inhabitatio Dei*, whereby God is “present in those who believe in God.”[xxiv] For Luther, Christ himself is present fully in faith (in *ipsa fide Christus adest*).[xxv] God makes human beings nothing (*nihil*) so as to make them new beings in Christ. God destroys their own righteousness so that only the alien righteousness of Christ remains.[xxvi] Indeed, Christ is the “greatest sinner of all” because in the incarnation he participated fully with his humanity.[xxvii] In this way, he can be the “greatest person (*maxima persona*) in whom the persons of all human beings are really united.”[xxviii] Because Christ is “immersed” in all sins, all sins are immersed in him. The divine nature in Christ fights this sin by gathering it all to himself so that Christ is the “only sinner.”[xxix] In a real sense, “salvation is participation in the person of Christ.”[xxx] A sinner may make a “happy exchange” with Christ.[xxxi] To believe in God, therefore, is to “participate in a real union with Christ.”[xxxii] Since Christ is God, then believers participate in the very essence of God—and hence the similarity with theosis. In faith, Christ and the believer become *unio personalis*—one person (Gal 2:20).[xxxiii]

While Luther scholars have found this renewed study of Luther interesting, not all are convinced of its close reading of Luther, which focuses on the *unio* passages. Timothy Wengert argues that much of the Finnish interpretation tears passages in Luther from their historical and exegetical contexts. Wengert further argues that the “new” interpretation of Luther by the Finns is neither new nor in the final analysis “germane to the heart of Luther’s theology.”[xxxiv] By totally ignoring certain “Luther schools” of thought and specific historians of Luther (like Heiko Oberman), Mannermaa and colleagues are missing these important dimensions that help to define our understanding of Luther. This interpretation is not new, Wengert asserts, because in the 1550s, Andreas Osiander “insisted that the indwelling of the Son of God makes us substantially righteous.”[xxxv] By the 1570s, the Formula of Concord rejected Osiander’s position. Thus, according to Wengert, the end result is that the Finnish Interpretation of Luther reveals what happens when “modern ecumenical agendas and old-fashioned pietism become the chief spectacles through which to view an historical figure.”[xxxvi]

Wengert is not alone in his criticism of the Finnish view. In searching for the connection of the *unio* doctrine in Luther and the idea of ethical behavior to our neighbor, Mark Totten concludes similarly to Wengert. Totten points to the interpretation of the Finns on the concept of *unio cum Christo* and suggests that their reading cannot “account for the centrality of the cross in Luther’s theology.”[xxxvii]

The JJ working group determined that this journey through the Finnish Interpretation was necessary because of its potential fruitful results for understanding Luther and posing an different sketch of justification for ecumenical discussion. However, in the end there were questions regarding the “overreading” of Luther by the Finns and the very narrow promise for the ecumenical dialogue. We are not suggesting that this area does not help such dialogue or investigation, but rather that we found it did not assist us in connecting the Orthodox with the Lutherans.

## 2H: THE “NEW PERSPECTIVE” ON PAUL

The Justification and Justice group decided to read material regarding the “new perspective on Paul” and invite two New Testament specialists on this subject to speak with us at October 2004 meeting in Pasadena, California. It was felt by some members that this was an important component of our biblical research on the topic of justification. When we knew that we were going to be at Fuller Theological

Seminary, we asked Professors Don Hagner and Seyoon Kim to share their understanding of this perspective.

The Fuller professors offered some definitions of terms and concepts in the new perspective on Paul, but their presentations agreed that the overall assessment of the “new Paul” should be negative. Some members of the group recognized this and wondered if there could be other professors near future sites of our meetings who would share with us a more positive view of the “new Paul” so as to balance out these Fuller professors’ assessment. However, we were not able to follow through on this recommendation in this quadrennium.

What is the “new perspective” on Paul? Richard Jeske prepared some background information for a previous summary document in March 2007. He notes that the phrase was coined by James D. G. Dunn in 1982 [Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990, pp. 183-214]. Dunn was influenced by the work of E. P. Sanders, who in turn was trained by W. D. Davies, Sanders’ father-in-law [Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology, 1948].

So what is the new perspective on Paul? A central, foundational thought is this: almost all Western Christian interpretations of Paul are confused by the flawed spectacles of Luther and forensic righteousness. Whereas Christian readings of Paul have viewed him as separating from the rabbinic Judaism of his day, adherents to the new perspective presented Paul as a rabbinic Jew of the first century C.E. rather than the customary “Hellenizer” of the Christian faith. In addition, this perspective sees Judaism at the time of Paul to be a religion of grace, not legalism. E. P. Sanders [Paul and Palestinian Judaism, 1977] understands first-century Judaism to be a type of “covenantal nomism” where the Law provided guidelines for living out the covenant between God and humans. The Jews who lived their religious lives in first-century Judaism did not believe that they earned salvation through the merits of their actions. This was a religion where salvation was from God and by grace. Centuries of Christian interpreters of Paul – especially after the Reformation and Luther’s forensic lenses for reading Paul – have created a mythical Judaism against which Paul contrasted the grace-filled Christian faith. Judaism was not and is not a religion where acceptance with God is earned through the merit of righteousness based on works.

If the new perspective on Paul is correct on this point of revisionary history of first-century Judaism, then the entire interpretive framework through which Western Christians have understood Paul and the Gospel he preached is voided. In addition, our understanding of key phrases and entire arguments in Romans and Galatians must be jettisoned.

What is the replacement interpretational lens of the new perspective? The Pauline conceptual formula for salvation as arriving through justification by grace through faith is no longer central to his theology – and by implication, need no longer be central to Protestant theology. Then what is justification for Paul? It is a pragmatic tactic to facilitate the Gentile mission, but not necessarily useful for the Jews (Hagner). Paul’s calling did not require a radical conversion to a new faith or new religion; rather, it required him to bring the Christian gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul did not have a quarrel with the law or with Judaism. Instead, Paul’s problem was that the Christian faith was a message of exclusion when one offered the gospel only to fellow Jews. Paul wanted simply to explode the boundaries of exclusion raised by the ethnocentricity of the Judaism of his day. So, the

covenantal nomism of the Old Testament and of Judaism in Paul's day is God's way of salvation for Israel. This means that a "law-free gospel" is God's way of salvation for the Gentiles.

The group engaged both Hagner and Seyoon Kim on their presentation of the issues and their critique of them. Both Hagner and Kim suggested that part of Sander's and Dunn's appeal could be discovered not in the thoroughness of his documentation of first-century rabbinic sources or even the cogency of his argument, but rather in the post-Holocaust Zeitgeist of favoring the Jews and smashing anything like anti-Semitism. While recognizing some serious flaws in the arguments of the new perspective on Paul, the group felt that we needed someone who held to this view to present its main features and defend it against arguments like those of Hagner and Kim.

Some of the discussion probed the third use of the Law (as in Calvin and Anabaptist tradition) in relation to Paul and the new perspective. Since this discussion occurred several times in this quadrennium (although not connected to Paul as it was here), it may be helpful in our future work both to define and explicate the uses of the Law in Luther, Calvin, the Roman Catholics of the 16th century and today, and similar ideas developed by the Anabaptists.

Another area of discussion that seemed to require more consideration was the value of recovering the Judaic roots of righteousness and its conceptualization in the New Testament. It was generally agreed that there was much value in recovering these roots, but the sharpness of disagreement lay with whether one can go too far and thereby not see the discontinuity. An additional presentation at this session examined the Old Testament word groups normally translated as "righteousness" and "faith" and proposed that Paul was using their New Testament cognates in much the same sense. "Righteousness" included cosmic and social justice, while "faith" included "faithfulness" or comprehensive lifestyle of obedience to God's commands. If so, Paul's "justification" teaching included social justice, and did not include a justification/justice dichotomy (see Thomas Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004; 136-142).

## 2I: DISCIPLESHIP

The following summarizes a paper presented by a Mennonite representative. It was an attempt to address the dichotomies that arose in our discussions of justification/justice by means of another paradigm.

The coming of God's Kingdom, or Reign, already in the present and extending until its final cosmic consummation, provides the overall horizon for Jesus' call to discipleship. His call includes repentance, conversion, and living out his teachings, actualized his own practice, as the framework for all of life. Discipleship intrinsically includes:

1. Community. Discipleship can only be practiced together, among people committed to following Jesus. Most of Jesus' teachings concern inter-personal relationships, and bringing a new kind of community into being. Co-operation, support, counsel and constructive critique among committed sisters and brothers are essential to living this way.
2. Character Formation. Discipleship is a process of forming persons and communities of a distinct sort, who express the love and behavior of Jesus towards others, energized by the Holy Spirit. While this

goal is unchanging, misdirection, failures and sins often occur along the paths towards it and require patience and mutual forgiveness.

3. Mission. The call to discipleship is also a call to make disciples, to announce and embody the coming of God's Kingdom to all creatures. Individuals or groups who isolate themselves from people who have not, and also people who have, embraced God's Kingdom wrench the call to discipleship from its overall horizon.

4. Social Ministry. The coming of God's Kingdom extends to the whole creation and includes healing, just relationships, release from prison and good news to the poor. Mission, therefore, impacts every dimension of life, human and non-human. Discipleship can and should be expressed and further developed in all of them (though not every disciple, of course, can do everything).

5. Visible Alternative. Since the ways of God's Kingdom conflict with at least some common practices in all societies, disciples aim primarily to make God's ways visible, not simply as ideals, but as viable alternatives, which they invite people to adopt. The visible practice of radical alternatives can often wield greater impact on larger social structures than attempted changes within those structures, which operate within their basic framework. For this reason, mission will usually begin by acting and thinking locally, though the spread of Kingdom practices through larger structures is a highly desirable goal.

6. Personal Transformation. Since the process of discipleship requires repeated repentance and conversion, it also requires profound inner spiritual transformation, though all of these can be experienced in diverse ways. This was evident in Jesus' frequent prayer times with his Father, and the empowering of his actions by the Holy Spirit. Jesus' own mission was also that of his Spirit and his Father, and disciples are called into this outward and inward, social and personal, ultimately Trinitarian mission. It calls for personal conversion as well as communal and social transformation.

7. Conflict. Since Kingdom ways often conflict with society's ways, discipleship often leads to confrontation with other structures and persons, and potentially to ostracism, persecution, and death. These conflicts often provide great though painful possibilities for following and making visible Jesus' way. The disciples' response should be no different, basically, than to other situations: consistent witness to and exercise of Jesus' prophetic proclamation and of his suffering love in face of rejection and violence.

8. Particular Features. Although discipleship extends to the whole of life, several practices often turn out to be more counter-cultural, and perhaps more significant in these cases, than others:

a. Community, practiced so far as possible in all ways of life.

b. Economic sharing, which strikes at the roots of inequality, injustice and war, and therefore at all poverty, oppression, and victimization.

c. Peace, which involves not only refusing to return evil for evil, but even more importantly, overcoming evil with good. It cannot be extracted from the horizon of the coming of God's Kingdom and acting creatively and courageously in its light. It is a call to imaginative, transformative behavior in the church and world, not retreat from the world.

9. Authority. Since Jesus' way and Kingdom conflict with most ways of most societies, his message and person are the primary sources of revelation bearing on all spheres of life. Although this makes the Gospels very significant, the basic meaning of his message is incomprehensible without the Old Testament, and is further refined and clarified by his followers, as found in the New Testament. Discipleship is Christocentric. This does not devalue other sources of knowledge and awareness—religious and a-religious—but provides a framework for appropriating them.

## 2J: SALVATION AND JUSTICE IN LIBERATIONIST THEOLOGIES

In our discussions of justification, theosis, sanctification and justice and ethics, we were operating primarily out of the historical and contemporary doctrinal understandings of the various churches. There

are, however, some theological movements that span various denominations in their understanding of the connections between salvation and justice. In light of this kind of transdisciplinary and interdenominational thinking, a paper was presented on how liberation theologies describe salvation and justice. Drawing on Catholic, Protestant, Latin American, Asian, black, womanist and feminist theologies, the paper contributed (in summary) the following points to our conversations:

- Liberation theologians express salvation as liberation from oppression. They critique the concept of Jesus and salvation that have been offered by the traditional church structures, which have also served as vehicles for oppression. In almost every context of domination and marginalization, Jesus Christ was utilized as a weapon of conquest and a tool of oppression. Liberation soteriologies transform Christian images of salvation so that they have meaning to the particular experiences and contexts of the communities from which they emerge. The story of Jesus becomes a locus of struggle, resistance and hope.
- Despite their particular differences, liberation theologies share several elements in their ideas of salvation. These elements include (1) the interpretation of the entire life of Jesus, culminating in his tragic death, as the locus of atonement; (2) the insistence that Jesus' suffering may be understood as redemptive as it was a suffering in the service of the struggle against oppression; and (3) the development of specific strategies for how to resist evil on a daily basis.
- Summary: The pluralistic context of Asian liberation theology sets it apart from the Christian context of North and South America. Feminist theologies recognize the sexist oppression in theories of atonement, and strive to deconstruct or reconstruct them. Acknowledging their commonalities with feminist and black theologies, womanist theologies push the boundaries even further by redefining liberation as survival. At the end of the day, liberation theologies consistently define sin as oppression and salvation as the liberation from that oppression. They look to images of Jesus' life and death for this salvation. Jesus' suffering is not to be repudiated or ignored but seen as an example and model of God's solidarity with the experiences of suffering and oppression. The conquest of death (suffering and oppression) in the resurrection provides the hope that God really can conquer evil. Jesus' teachings on the kingdom of God, in connection with the lessons from the cross, serve as a telos for the work against oppression for Black, Latino/a and Asian Christians here in this world.

Responses to this presentation included the following:

- Liberationist theologies focus attention on the gospels (as compared to the writings of Paul)
- These theologies note that dominant doctrinal understandings of justification and salvation have contributed to injustice of marginalized people
- The starting point for conversations about justification and salvation is injustice in the world; likewise the ending point for conversations about justification/ salvation is justice in the world
- Religious pluralism shapes how some Christians think about Jesus and salvation; the commonality of justice brings together oppressed people across religious boundaries
- We agreed that this is an important contribution to the discussion; there remain challenges as to how to incorporate a trans-denominational perspective with variations into the way that we normally approach work in Faith and Order study groups

2K: ELSA TAMEZ ON JUSTIFICATION: THE AMNESTY OF GRACE

In an attempt to consider the concept of justification from viewpoints other than Western or North American, the Justification and Justice group decided to read and study a book from Latin America on the subject. Written by Elsa Tamez of Costa Rica, *The Amnesty of Grace: Justification by Faith from a Latin American Perspective*[xxxviii] provides a rich resource on this doctrine by engaging in a thorough biblical study (especially Pauline writings) as well as by presenting powerful contextual theology (especially within the Latin American context of poverty). In our discussions, all agreed that this book offers insights that deepen our understanding of both Latin America and the doctrine of justification, although primarily from a Protestant perspective. In particular, Tamez provided a rationale for connecting the two major themes of the working group: justice and justification.

The original Spanish title notes that the book is viewing justification by faith from the perspective of “the excluded ones” (*desde Los Excluidos*) instead of “from a Latin American Perspective” as the English title tames it down. This is significant for our study because Tamez looks at God’s solidarity with humankind in Jesus Christ, “the prototype of the excluded” (134). The cross of Christ strips Jesus of human dignity and exposes him to the shame of exclusion; in this way, Jesus is in solidarity with all excluded, dehumanized humans. His cry from the cross, “My God, My God! Why have you forsaken me?” is the “cry of the excluded” (160).

Tamez notes three problems that justification by faith has created (perhaps unintentionally) for Latin America. First, justification has been easily identified with forgiveness and freedom from guilt. To say that justification is received “by faith” and not works is to emphasize a rather “cheap grace” for those in power who have committed heinous crimes against the poor. In Latin America, Tamez asserts that justification by faith and not works has come to mean that people who are forgiven need never do anything to receive forgiveness; that such people tend to get off rather easy with their crimes. Second, as Protestants have preached the doctrine, justification by faith has emphasized the “exclusive role of God” in this event—a monergism where God does the work rather than a synergism where humans cooperate in their forgiveness and salvation. Third, justification is viewed as reconciliation with God alone—the vertical dimension is emphasized while the horizontal plane (with other humans) is not. This view tends to fall into individualism and ignores the social dimension of justice wrapped up in justification.

In order to change these three false approaches to justification, Tamez proposes a reconstruction of the doctrine. “The existence of the poor also indicates that there are people responsible for their being poor...”[xxxix] Tamez views sin not simply as an individual’s wrongdoing, but as a “system that threatens the life of many, a mechanism built by specific people, by their practices of injustice guided by their greedy hearts.”[xl] Guided by the biblical themes (especially in Paul), Tamez crafts a renewed doctrine of justification by faith in which justification is connected etymologically with the practice of justice (73). Thus, justification cannot be reduced to the declaration that someone is just or righteous. Since there is no one who is “just,” that is, “capable of doing justice in order to transform the reality characterized by injustice,” (107), then there can be no declaration of righteousness, which rarely if ever points a person to ‘doing justice’ so as to transform the unjust world.

As Tamez states succinctly, “The purpose of justification is to transform human beings into subjects who do justice, whose rescue the truth that has been imprisoned in injustice [Rom 8:4] (110). Since only God is “just” and also the “justifier,” humans must receive this power of justice by faith—and yet this can never imply passivity in relation to “the other.” Thus, Tamez can conclude, “Through love for the excluded person, the logic of grace declares a kind of amnesty that rejects the death sentence both for

the condemned and for the one who condemns to death," (131). This is the "amnesty of grace" which is the Good News that we have to offer the world.

In our discussion of this important text, we focused on issues related to the solidarity of Christ with the excluded ones. Some of us challenged the legitimacy of Tamez's project; others questioned the linguistic turns. The result was that the JJ Group found the Tamez book stimulating, but not (perhaps) convincing for all. At the very least, it is one resource that builds a bridge between the dichotomies that we have identified. Its biblical material remains an important resource for future study since we did not tap any of her exegesis of Paul.

### 3. JUSTIFICATION AND JUSTICE: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

For the final year of the quadrennium, the working title for the group has been "Justification and Justice: Beyond the Dichotomies." The title was considered especially fruitful to some in the group because "justification and justice" points to unfortunate dichotomies in the churches that involve not only faith and works but also body and soul, and spirituality and social concern. "Beyond the dichotomies" indicates that the group wishes to use justification and justice as an entry point for discussing a broader issue deeply affecting the witness of the churches.

At the same time, there were members of the study group who felt that "justification" is too narrow a term; we were not able to achieve the broad theological integration necessary to overcome the dichotomies that plague many of the churches. Furthermore, justification is viewed by some as implying the very dichotomies we wish to overcome and the term excludes those traditions that do not embrace this doctrine. The categories "Kingdom of God" and "discipleship" were mentioned as more encompassing than "justification" and more promising sources of continuity for a holistic vision of the life of the church.

In short, the issue seems to be this: if we begin with justification and justice, we run the risk of a limited and limiting point of departure, but we'll have the focus necessary to explore from the start the problematical dichotomies that we wish to overcome. On the other hand, if we start with "Kingdom of God" or "discipleship" we run the risk of lacking a focus, especially in terms of getting at the dichotomies many churches face, though there would remain rich potential for integration of the many theological emphases involved.

In discussing the dichotomies, the group expressed the following concerns:

1. Christ's work of redemption should not be isolated to an atonement theory but described in broader continuity with the Trinitarian drama of incarnation (kenosis: God's self-emptying) and resurrection (the victory of life over death).
2. That the Christian life not be described solely in soteriological categories so that the preoccupation of the churches is caught up in their own spiritual journey (or, perhaps, status before God) but that the calling of the churches to obediently follow Christ in the world take center stage. Discipleship becomes the overarching category uniting salvation and works of justice, reconciliation, and peace.
3. The mission of God in the world is not to be confined to the redemption of souls. The Kingdom of God becomes the overarching category for understanding God's mission in Christ and the Spirit.

Possible points of interest for the next JJ group:

1. Theological anthropology and the question of the relationship between creation and redemption

2. Atonement theories in light of the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ
3. Models of salvation
4. Justification and cosmic transformation
5. The churches' response to soteriological individualism
6. A more careful look at definitions of terms, especially sanctification
7. Positive responses to the new perspective on Paul
8. The multiple meanings of justice and their relation to justification
9. The role of redemptive suffering
10. A discussion on the hermeneutical commitments that shape our approach to the questions
11. Misunderstandings of justification and justice and their prominence in popular piety

## APPENDIX

### Additional text: JUSTIFICATION AND JUSTICE FROM AN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE

The two kingdom or two reign theory in the Lutheran tradition is controversial within and without the Lutheran tradition, but may have a contribution to make in the Faith and Order's ecumenical discussion of justification and justice. In short, Luther inherited the concept of the two reigns of God from the Augustinian tradition but did not accept one medieval strain in which the church was superior to the government. The two-reign theory is not clearly articulated in Luther but gains complexity and clarity in the tradition. Among many sources that are helpful are *The Freedom of a Christian*, *The treatise on "Temporal Authority and to what extent it should be obeyed"*, and his commentaries on Psalm 82 and 117.

God administers the world with two arms. With the right hand God administers the Gospel and the Church with the left God administers the world and especially government. The second use of the law applies to justification, that is, the negative accusing function of God's law. The first use of the law, which stems from the first article of the creed and creation applies to justice and does not necessarily have a negative function. The Christian lives in both, the Church and the world and there is one God who rules both. The Church preaches law and Gospel to proclaim God's righteousness, which produces justifying faith from the hearers granted by God's grace. Having been justified the Christian is free to live in the world as a saint and sinner and serve the neighbor as a citizen of the world. The baptized Christian lives out his/her baptismal calling in the world without a need to seek holiness in the religious realm. One's secular work is a holy as the work of a religious servant. Sanctification is derivative of justification, but justice is not.

God also rules governments and holds rulers accountable for justice. The role of government is positively construed and not just as a restraining function. It is the responsibility of rulers to consider the commonweal and assure that the weak are protected from the strong and that all have peace, public education, work, health care, homes, and security from their families. According to Luther, the prince is responsible to make the territory like one big hospital of care. Contrary to much contemporary Christian rhetoric, Luther argued that good government that provides peace and security produces good families

and individuals, not the other way around. Families cannot be good when there is anarchy, war, social injustice, and the absence of the commonweal.

Thus the church proclaims the Gospel and God's righteousness that produces free citizens of the world who serve charitably. Faith is the primary category for the church and justification. The church uses persuasion to accomplish its mission of salvation and proclaims the one true faith. The government, which includes persons of all faiths, must necessarily compromise for the good of the whole. The human gift of reason is the primary category for government. When the government is unjust or tyrannical the church protests, demonstrates, and advocates. The government legislates as a result of reason and compromise among a plurality of religious traditions. When the government is unjust, the Church is called to stand over and against the government especially through the church's public leaders. If the church has the authority to rule in the public sector the Lutheran fear is that tyranny results because the church tends not to compromise its values.

Since the church cannot tax the people, its responsibility to the public is for charity. The government is to be held accountable for justice because it has the resources to provide schools, work, healthcare, security, and peace.

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[i] <http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/ecumenicaldialogue/romancatholic/jddj/index.html>

[ii] We learned at the end of this quadrennium that the World Methodist Council had affirmed this document in 2006. See the following document:  
[http://www.lutheranworld.org/What\\_We\\_Do/OEA/Methodist-Statement-2006-EN.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/OEA/Methodist-Statement-2006-EN.pdf)

[iii] <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/v-theological-anthropology/christian-perspectives-on-theological-anthropology.html>

[iv] For a list of the various commissioners, dates of service, and the churches, communions, or societies they represent, see Appendix 4. For a list of the locations and dates of the eight years of Faith and Order Commission meetings, see Appendix 3.

[v] This first section corresponds roughly to the first two years of the quadrennium: from March 2004 (its initial meeting at the Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Indiana) to October 2005 (Bangor Theological Seminary, Portland, ME). See Appendix 3 for a listing of the dates and places of our meetings for both quadrennia.

[vi] Among others, here is some of the material we read related to justification. Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Justice and Justification," in *Reformed Theology for the Third Christian Millennium: The Sprunt Lectures*, 2001, ed. Brian A. Gerrish (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 83-96; Kathryn Tanner, "Justification and Justice in a Theology of Grace," *Theology Today* 55:4 (1999): 510-523; Bruce Marshall: "Declaration and Deification," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 4:1 (March 2002): 3-28; *Justification and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. William Rusch (Liturgical Press, 2003); and a "draft" article by George Hunsinger, "Justification and Justice: Towards an Evangelical Social Ethic." We also read James D. G. Dunn and Alan M. Suggate, *The Justice of God: A Fresh Look at the Old Doctrine of Justification by Faith* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993; Yacob Tesfai,

“Justification and Justice: An Ecumenical Focus,” *Ecumenical Trends* Graymoor Ecumenical Institute (January 1994): 1-2; 12-16; Arland J. Hultgren, “Justification and Justice,” *Word & World: Theology for Christian Ministry*, 7:1 (Winter 1987): 3-4; Mark Thomsen, “On Relating Justification and Justice,” *Word & World: Theology for Christian Ministry*, 7:1 (Winter 1987): 6-11; Jose Miguez Bonino, “The Biblical Roots of Justice,” *Word & World: Theology for Christian Ministry*, 7:1 (Winter 1987): 12-21; “Statement of a Consultation: Justification and Justice: A Meeting of Lutheran Theologians of the Americas,” *Word & World: Theology for Christian Ministry*, 7:1 (Winter 1987): 78-82; Elsa Tamez: “Now No Condemnation: A Meditation on Romans 8,” *Ecumenical Review* 41.3 (July 1989): 446-453; Elsa Tamez: “God’s Election, Exclusion and Mercy: A Bible Study of Romans 9-11,” *International Review of Mission* 82.325 (January 2005): 29-37; Elsa Tamez, “God’s Grace and Human Dignity: Reflections on the theme of the WCC 9th Assembly: God, in your grace, transform the world,” *World Council of Churches: Feature* (10 April 2005) from [media@wcc-coe.org](mailto:media@wcc-coe.org).

[vii]Our meeting in October 2004 at Fuller Theological Seminary gave us an opportunity to hear from respected scholars in these areas. First, we heard from Dr. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen on the Finnish interpretation of Luther. He read a paper entitled “Salvation as Justification and Theosis: Complementary or Conflicting Soteriological Discourses.” [This material eventually appeared in his book, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification*, (Liturgical Press, 2005).] There was opportunity for engagement with Dr. Kärkkäinen as well as a formal response from our Orthodox commissioner. Also, we heard from Dr. Donald Hagner, Pauline scholar at Fuller. He offered some “distilled thoughts” from his article, “Paul and Judaism: Testing the ‘New Perspective’ in Revisiting the Pauline Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001): 75-105; and we heard from Dr. Seyoon Kim, another Pauline scholar at Fuller. He presented a summary of his *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul’s Gospel*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

[viii]In addition, there were some serious concerns about theosis expressed from some of the Reformed representatives. They felt that the concept of “union with God” was not helpful in the theological dialogue. See George Vandervelde, “Justification and Deification,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 37:2 (Winter 2001). This discussion also began in the October 2004 meeting at Fuller Theological Seminary.

[ix]This paper was offered in October 2004 at the Fuller Seminary meeting as well. It was responded to by several commissioners. Dr. Tom Finger presented his paper entitled, “The Social Dimension of Justification,” (A paper presented to the Wheaton Theology Conference, April 2003).

[x]This second segment corresponds roughly to March 2006 – March 2007. There was consistent overlap of these themes and directions, but it was during these sessions that some of the paths we could take began coming into shape.

[xi]Elsa Tamez, *Amnesty of Grace: Justification by Faith from a Latin American Perspective*, trans. Sharon H. Ringe (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993) [ISBN: 0-687-00934-0 /paper]. We read and discussed this material at the October 2005 meeting.

[xii]For purposes of coming to common language about justice, we read Ch. Perelman, “Concerning Justice,” [chapter 1] in *The Idea of Justice and the Problem of Argument* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963; reprinted 1970 and 1977).

[xiii] The title of this document was “Justification and Justice: Beyond the Dichotomies. A Faith and Order Study Group, 2004-2007, National Council of Churches of Christ, USA. A Continuation Report.” We have placed this document as Appendix 5 in the current report.

[xiv] A long-time Roman Catholic commissioner of Faith and Order (USA), Fr. John Ford, offered some guidelines related to ecumenical discussion for the Faith and Order Commission in the USA several decades ago. These have become part of the very fabric of our usual approaches to ecumenical dialogue.

[xv] See Appendix 2 for a discussion of how we viewed these nine aspects of God’s justice, and Appendix 1 for the Bible study.

[xvi] Ps 72:1-2: “        ādēq) be just, righteous,” Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, 2 vols., eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason Archer, Bruce Waltke (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1980). Psalm 72:1-2 reads: “Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king’s son. May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice,” (NRSV).

[xvii] Gregory of Nazianzus (a Cappadocian Father of the AD 300s) offered this formula in several places: “Epistle 51: To Cledonius (The First Epistle Against Apollinarius),” and “Epistle 101,” which is found in English in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004 reprint), p. 444. While this formula is often cited as belonging to Athanasius, it is actually Gregory’s. It reads as follows: “For that which He (Christ) has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved. If only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him that was begotten, and so be saved as a whole,” (Ep. 101). Athanasius provides a similar thought, but not in so concise a formulation: “For He (Christ) was made man that we might be made God,” Incarnation of the Word, 54 in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 4, Athanasius: Select Letters and Works (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004, reprint), p. 65. And again, Athanasius said, “He (Christ) was God and then became man, and that to deify us,” Discourse 1, 39, in Four Discourses against the Arians, in NPNF, 2nd series, vol. 5, p. 329. Later in the same treatise, Athanasius explains: “For though it was after us that He was made man for us, and our brother by similitude of body, still He is therefore called and is the ‘First-born’ of us, because all men being lost according to the transgression of Adam, His flesh before all others was saved and liberated, as being the Word’s body; and henceforth we, becoming incorporate with It, are saved after Its pattern,” Discourse 2. 61, in Four Discourses against the Arians, NPNF 2nd series, vol. 5, p. 381.

[xviii] The group’s struggle with justification is evident in the narratives of work through our two quadrennia.

[xix] “Continuation Document of the Justification and Justice Study Group (2008)”, 2D: Justice. See Appendix 5.

[xx] <http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/ecumenicaldialogue/romancatholic/jddj/index.html>

[xxi] [http://www.lutheranworld.org/What\\_We\\_Do/OEA/Methodist-Statement-2006-EN.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/OEA/Methodist-Statement-2006-EN.pdf)

[xxii] <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/v-theological-anthropology/christian-perspectives-on-theological-anthropology.html>

[xxiii] Tuomo Mannermaa, Christ Present in Faith: Luther’s View of Justification, ed. Kirsi Stjerna (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), xii.

[xxiv] Mannermaa, 3.

[xxv] Mannermaa, 5.

[xxvi] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2004), 43. Also, see *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, eds. Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 10.

[xxvii] Mannermaa, 14.

[xxviii] Mannermaa, 15.

[xxix] Mannermaa, 16.

[xxx] Mannermaa, 16.

[xxxi] Mannermaa, 17.

[xxxii] Mannermaa, 19.

[xxxiii] The best examples of theosis are seen in two sermons in Luther. See Kärkkäinen, 47-48.

[xxxiv] Timothy J. Wengert, "A Review of *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*," in *Theology Today* 56:3 (October 1999). Wengert is a professor at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

[xxxv] *Ibid.*

[xxxvi] *Ibid.*

[xxxvii] Mark Totten, "Luther on *Unio cum Christo*," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31:3 (December 2003): 452, fn. 5.

[xxxviii] Elsa Tamez, *The Amnesty of Grace: Justification by Faith from a Latin American Perspective*, trans. Sharon H. Ringe (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993). The Spanish title is *Contra Toda Condena: La Justificación por la Fe desde Los Excluidos* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI and SEBILA, 1991). Elsa Tamez is a native of Latin America. She was trained in Europe and returned to teach in Costa Rica.

[xxxix] Tamez, 42.

[xl] Tamez, 43.