

The cover features a stylized white outline of an open book. The pages are represented by solid black shapes. In the center of the book, there is a white-bordered octagonal frame containing the title text.

The Historical Development of
“Objective Justification”

by Larry A. Darby

The Historical Development of "Objective Justification"

Objective justification is the teaching that God has forgiven all sins and justified (declared righteous) all people. Examples of objective justification among modern Lutherans include:

"The Bible compels us to teach that God has, for Christ's sake, forgiven the entire world of all its sin."

"The God who justifies the ungodly is the God who has justified everyone."

"The doctrine of universal justification, which teaches that the sins of all men are forgiven, and the doctrine of objective justification, which teaches that a man's sins are forgiven whether he believes it or not, are extremely important."

"Objectively speaking, without any reference to an individual sinner's attitude toward Christ's sacrifice, purely on the basis of God's verdict, every sinner, whether he knows it or not, whether he believes it or not, has received the status of a saint."

"After Christ's intervention and through Christ's intervention, God regards all sinners as guilt-free saints."

"When God reconciled the world to Himself through Christ, He individually pronounced forgiveness on each individual sinner whether that sinner ever comes to faith or not."

"At the time of the resurrection of Christ, God looked down in hell and declared Judas, the people destroyed in the flood, and all the ungodly, innocent, not guilty, and forgiven of all sin and gave unto them the status of saints."

How did so-called "objective justification" arise in the Missouri Synod and WELS? How does it compare to the old teaching of Justification? How has the teaching of objective justification changed among Lutherans since 1872? How does this teaching compare to Holy Scripture? Could the modern teaching of objective justification help explain why Lutheranism has grown spiritually lukewarm? The author answers those questions and others in this exposé of doctrinal evolution.

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The Historical Development of “Objective Justification”

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The author welcomes comments and suggestions.

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Keep thee far from a false matter; and
the innocent and righteous slay thou not:
for I will not justify the wicked.

Exodus 23:7

He that justifieth the wicked, and he
that condemneth the just, even they
both are abomination to the LORD."

Proverbs 17:15

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*I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins:
for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*
John 8:24

*"The doctrine of universal justification, which teaches that
the sins of all men are forgiven, and the doctrine of
objective justification, which teaches that a man's sins
are forgiven whether he believes it or not, are extremely important."
Rev. William Bischoff, LCMS,
October 1995 Trinity Trumpet Newsletter,*

Introduction and Disclaimer

Why is Lutheranism so lukewarm today?

Why are the thunderings of Law and judgment seldom proclaimed from Lutheran pulpits?

When was the last time you heard a Lutheran sermon which made you tremble at the fate which awaits all non-Christians?

When was the last time you heard a Lutheran sermon which railed for any length of time against very specific sins?

When was the last time you heard a Lutheran sermon address specific sins so explicitly that you squirmed in your pew?

How did the terror of God's Law get neutralized by a shrug of the shoulders and saying "We're all sinners"?

When was the last time you heard a Lutheran sermon which reminded you that "if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:26)?

Why do so many "conservative" Lutherans today fight for their causes with the same sinful, humanistic tactics as their "liberal" opponents?

Why is church discipline so rare in modern Lutheran churches?

Why are most modern Lutherans complacent toward gambling, gossip, disobedience to parents, women asserting authority over men in the church, evil speaking, drunkenness, worldliness, lust and cursing?

How can it be that even "conservative" Lutherans today generally watch the same sin-filled television programs and movies as the general population?

When was the last time your Pastor taught that "the wrath of God abideth on him" that believeth not the Son? (John 3:36)

When was the last time your Pastor taught that "whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified"? (Romans 8:30)

If you find these questions relevant then I urge you to consider the historical development of so-called *objective justification*. It helps explain what has happened to Lutheranism.

The Lutheran teaching of Justification has changed. This is not an opinion but an historical fact. Examine side-by-side the 1912 and 1991 Catechism (Chapter 5) and see how the same questions get totally different answers. Or, compare the Brief Statement of 1897 (Chapter 4) to the 1932 Brief Statement (Chapter 7). Or, see how the English *Christian Dogmatics*, published around 1950, repeatedly distorted Franz Pieper's explanation of objective justification set forth between 1917 and 1924 in the German *Christliche Dogmatik* (Chapter 6). This report will prove that the Lutheran teaching of Justification has changed dramatically.

For Lutherans, the teaching of Justification was first summarized in the words of Article IV of the Augsburg Confession:

"Also they [Lutherans] teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4."

That is what Lutherans confessed in 1530. Notice that men are justified "through faith when they believe." Today, both Missouri and WELS teach that God justified ALL people and forgave ALL sins when Christ died and rose, around A.D. 30. This new teaching is called *objective justification*.

A Major Change in Lutheranism

Most observers will admit that there has been a major shift over the past 100 years among people who call themselves Lutheran:

- Tolerance for sin has increased greatly.
- Preaching of God's "Law" has declined significantly.
- Preaching against sin is very general when it does exist.
- Outward peace and harmony are considered virtues *per se*.
- Bible memorization at all ages is practically non-existent.
- Publications are focused on public relations and practical problem solving rather than proclaiming the very words of Scripture.
- The Seminary curriculum is far more practical and far less doctrinal.
- Exhortation to holy living almost never occurs.
- A zeal for measurable results has replaced a zeal for truth.

What are modern Lutherans being taught, compared to their ancestors, that might cause these changes? For example, could the teaching that "all sins are forgiven" lead people to become more complacent toward sin? Could it encourage them to neglect the means by which we used to teach God "...daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers"?¹ If people are taught that

¹ Meaning of the Third Article, Luther's Small Catechism.

all sins are *already* forgiven, and all people *already* justified, could that lead to the very changes that we see in Lutheranism? If *you* believed that all sins are already forgiven, and all people already justified (declared righteous by God):

- Would that make you more complacent toward sin?
- Would it make you less willing to be exhorted in holy living?
- Would it make you less hungry to learn and memorize the spirit and life words of Scripture?
- Would it make you less willing to contend against errors like open communion and women pastors?
- Would it make you more eager to embrace Church Growth techniques in order to get more people in the pews where they too can learn that they are already forgiven and already justified?
- Would it make you more eager to join in ecumenical activities so that every impenitent sinner hears the wonderful message that his sins are already forgiven?

A Disclaimer

While researching this book, I learned that instant scorn is heaped upon anyone who questions *objective justification*. Those who refuse to say that all sins are forgiven and all people are justified are accused of many heinous things, and seldom given a chance to refute the allegations:

- They have been accused of denying that Christ died for all.
- They have been accused of *synergism*, the false notion that man cooperates with or assists in his conversion.
- They have been accused of saying that faith is something *on our part* which causes God to justify us.
- They have been accused of putting their own hope for salvation in their own personal faith.
- They have literally been expelled from "conservative" Lutheran churches for refusing to agree that:

"At the time of the resurrection of Christ, God looked down in hell and declared Judas, the people destroyed in the flood, and all the ungodly, innocent, not guilty, and forgiven of all sin and gave unto them the status of saints." (Faith Lutheran Church, Kokomo IN. WELS)²

"Do you believe that the sins of all the world were forgiven in 30 AD when Christ was raised from the grave." (Trinity Lutheran Church, Bridgeton MO. LCMS)³

It is true that some people who fought against the evolving concept of *objective justification* held some of the above errors. But that does not prove that objective justification is correct. In secular matters one is usually safe to support things

² See Chapter 10.

³ My wife and 3 other families were excommunicated for refusing to answer an unconditional 'yes' to this question. Our children were expelled from the church day school.

that our enemy opposes, but in the spiritual realm we are contending against a far more intelligent enemy. Christians must judge every doctrine only by the very words of Scripture.

A Personal Testimony

The facts speak for themselves: if you will read this report, you will know that the conservative Lutheran Synods *have* changed their teaching of justification. In a nutshell, they used to say that a man is justified by grace through faith. Now they say, without qualification, that all people are justified and all sins forgiven. This doctrinal evolution should frighten Bible-believing Lutherans. In order to give these historical facts a chance to speak for themselves, I take this opportunity to publicly reject all the errors listed above and confess, with God-wrought faith, the following words of Scripture, words which are "spirit and life" and "quick and powerful" to impart the truth that they contain:⁴

But He was wounded for our transgressions, *He* was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (Is. 53:5-6)

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:3)

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. (Titus 3:5)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

. . . He died for all . . . (2 Corinthians 5:15)

. . . we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. (1 Timothy 4:10)

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. (1 John 4:14)

⁴ John 6:63; Hebrews 4:12.

And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ . . . (2 Corinthians 5:18)

Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life. (Romans 5:18)

For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Timothy 2:3-6)

So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:26-28)

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16a)

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-26)

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:28)

“The words of the LORD are pure words”

These words of Almighty God need no explanation, for “they are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.⁵ Jesus said “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.”⁶ We can know that “the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”⁷ The first priority of every Christian is to proclaim these words, knowing that “he that is of God, heareth God’s words.”⁸

But history shows that the enemy constantly distorts the clear words of God, giving them a false *meaning*. Therefore, a *secondary* job of the church to rebut false interpretations of God’s words.⁹ That is what this book seeks to do in regard to objective justification. The words of God speak the truth clearly . . . our human explanations do not make them more quick and powerful, or more plain, or more spirit and life. The Bible says “add thou not unto the words which I command you” because they are sufficient to convey the truth. But our words (doctrinal articles, confessions, creeds, historical studies such as this book) can help refute false interpretations of those divine words.

There is considerable risk involved when rebutting false interpretations of God’s words. In our zeal to guard against a particular error, it is easy to put our own explanation on God’s words which goes beyond what the words actually say. It is also possible to explain God’s words in such a way that we diminish from what they say. Even when engaged in battle against obvious false teaching, let us lay to heart warnings such as these:

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. (Deuteronomy 4:2)

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:19)

⁵ Proverb 8:9

⁶ John 6:63

⁷ Hebrews 4:12

⁸ John 8:47

⁹ This is essentially what the Three Ecumenical Creeds accomplished in regard to such divine words as “Father, Son and Holy Ghost.” The Book of Concord is also, essentially, an exposition of certain words of Scripture against false interpretations being taught at that time.

When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. (Ezekiel 3:18)

My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. (James 3:1)

Everyone admits that "objective justification" and its corollary (subjective justification) are not the words of God; they are words devised by men (hopefully) to rebut particular errors, especially the error of synergism.¹⁰ It is possible to use man's words to expose what is wrong with particular false teachings, but it is also possible thereby to add to or detract from God's words. When we develop a theological concept, such as objective justification, to refute a particular error, let us be on guard against these pitfalls:

- Is there anything in our concept that contradicts any *other* teaching of Scripture? For example, if our concept does a good job of defending the truth that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," but distorts another truth, such as "I am the LORD, I change not," then we need to adjust it or abandon it.
- Does our theological concept use words (such as "justify," "forgive," or "saint") exactly the same way that Scripture uses those same words? For example, if God says that forgiven sins are "removed as far as the east is from the west" and our concept says that He punishes sins after He forgives them, then we need to adjust or abandon our concept. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" and "he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD."¹¹

Let us keep these dangers in mind as we study the historical development of *objective justification*. Even if our sincere desire is to defend truth, let us not thereby add to God's words by asserting something which He Himself has not asserted:

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish [ought] from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you." Deuteronomy 4:2

¹⁰ Synergism is the error that man contributes in some way toward his conversion or salvation. Some synergism is blatant (words righteousness) while other forms are more subtle ("I made a decision to believe Jesus" or "I asked Jesus into my heart.") The best way to refute synergism is with the quick and powerful words of Scripture, such as "you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. 2:1.

¹¹ 1 Peter 4:11; Jer. 23:28.

"Every word of God [is] pure: He [is] a shield unto them that put their trust in Him. Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." Proverbs 30:5-6

This historical survey will demonstrate that the words used to explain Justification *have changed*. Anyone can see that by comparing the Brief Statements of 1897 and 1932 (Chapter 4 and 7) or the Catechisms of 1912 and 1991 (Chapter 5). The modern teaching of Justification, which is usually labeled objective justification, makes assertions that the Bible Itself does not make. Some of these assertions contradict things that Scripture does say.

Only the very words of Scripture are able to spiritually convey the truth of "justification": who is justified, how they are justified, and when they are justified. That is not the purpose of this historical analysis. The Appendix of this report lists all the verses using the term "justify" (Greek: DIKAIΩO) and its derivatives. We urge readers to review those spirit and life words before studying the historical development of objective justification. If Scripture never uses the word "justify" (Greek: DIKAIΩO) as something that God does to all people, neither should we. Likewise, if God never says He forgave all sins, neither should we. The primary purpose of this book is to trace how *objective justification* got to the point where Lutherans now claim that all people are *justified* and all sins are *forgiven*.

*But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father
which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.
Mark 11:26*

*"God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven all sinners all of their sins."
Rev. Rolf Preus, LCMS
Christian News, April 28, 1997, p. 11.*

Chapter 1

What Is *Objective Justification*?

The teaching of *objective justification* has changed over time, and still varies from teacher to teacher.

- Some people claim that *objective justification* means only that “Christ died for all.”¹²
- Some people think that *objective justification* is just a quick way to say that the *causes* of a man’s justification are all *objective*: not something that the *subject* (i.e. the person justified) contributes toward. Although that may have been the common meaning of this term at one time, we will soon see that modern *objective justification* means far more.
- At least one prominent Lutheran taught that *objective justification* is synonymous with the so-called *objective reconciliation*—a term which theologians use to summarize the truth that Christ “died for all,” God’s Justice is “satisfied” with the ransom paid by Christ, and “God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”¹³
- Most modern teachings of *objective justification* include these assertions: “God has forgiven all sins,” “God has justified all people,” and “God’s wrath toward sinners has been stilled or appeased.”
- Some modern teachings of *objective justification* include the assertion that “At the time of the resurrection of Christ, God looked down in hell and declared Judas, the people destroyed in the flood, and all the ungodly, innocent, not guilty, and forgiven of all sin and gave unto them the status of saints.”
- To make it even harder to understand what objective justification means, the early versions included extensive qualifications such as “God’s wrath still abideth on the unbelievers,” “all sins are forgiven, but only *in Christ*,” “God has forgiven all sins, but only *in Himself*.” These important qualifications are conveniently omitted when modern Lutherans quote those early sources to support *their* version of objective justification.

This makes it nearly impossible to define objective justification. So when someone says, “Pieper taught objective justification,” we must not assume that he taught what modern theologians teach.

The best way to understand what objective justification *means today* is to read various verbatim teachings. That will be done throughout this report, beginning with 1872 and extending to 1991. This historical survey will necessarily be detailed, for there is no other way to expose the gradual evolution of this doctrine. When we trace the changes that led to the modern version, it is much

¹² 2 Cor. 5:15. The people who define objective justification in that manner usually define the so-called *subjective justification* as “Christ died for me.”

¹³ 2 Cor. 5:15. Isaiah 53:11. 2 Peter 3:9.

easier to see its flaws. For that reason, I urge readers to read this report in chapter sequence.

For those readers who are not at all familiar with the concept of *objective justification*, I offer here some sample teachings. I do not claim that all advocates of objective justification (hereafter called OJ'ers) agree with all these statements. But it is fair to offer these statements as a representative teaching because *all* OJ'ers are responsible to know how others understand and use their pet terms. Even if pastor-teacher John Doe does not mean *these* things when he teaches objective justification, he needs to know how others are interpreting his words, since he will be held to a stricter accounting.¹⁴

Sample Teachings of Objective Justification

- "God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven all sinners all of their sins." "The Bible compels us to teach that God has, for Christ's sake, forgiven the entire world of all its sin." "The God who justifies the ungodly is the God who has justified everyone."¹⁵
- ". . . through the resurrection . . . mankind . . . became righteous . . ." ¹⁶
- "The doctrine of universal justification, which teaches that the sins of all men are forgiven, and the doctrine of objective justification, which teaches that a man's sins are forgiven whether he believes it or not, are extremely important."¹⁷
- ". . . the fulcrum of our faith is the full forgiveness of all sin for all people."¹⁸
- "God declared all people in all the world 'Not guilty' of their sins. This is sometimes called universal justification or objective justification." ¹⁹
- "We note that the Bible speaks of this justifying act of God as applying to the whole world, as having taken place in the death and resurrection of Christ, and as an accomplished fact. THIS IS OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION!"²⁰
- "God justified (declared 'not guilty', innocent) the world on the basis of Christ's death and resurrection as our substitute." ²¹

¹⁴ "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." James 3:1. Also Matt. 23:14; Eze. 3:18ff; Heb. 13:17.

¹⁵ Rev. Rolf Preus, LCMS, Christian News, April 28, 1997, p. 11. (Rev. Preus joined the ELS after writing the essay where those words appear.)

¹⁶ F.A. Schmidt, "About the Doctrine of Justification" delivered to the First Convention of the Synodical Conference in 1872. Translated by Kurt Marquart 1982, Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 10. We will study this essay in the next chapter.

¹⁷ Rev. William Bischoff, LCMS, October 1995 Newsletter, Trinity Lutheran Church, Bridgeton Missouri.

¹⁸ "Portals of Prayer," CPH, March 20, 1995, written by Rev. J. Barclay Brown.

¹⁹ *Martin Luther's Small Catechism - A Handbook of Christian Doctrine*, by Rev. Mike Sydow, 1988, p. 122.

²⁰ Tract entitled "Every Sinner Declared Righteous" issued by the WELS Conference of Presidents in 1954. Emphasis in the original. Copy available from author. We will study this tract in Chapter 9.

- "Why do you say, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sin '? I believe in the forgiveness of sins because through Christ God has declared pardon and forgiveness to all sinful humanity." ²²
- "My faith is a weak and faltering thing. My personal feelings betray the weakness in my heart. But God has already declared the whole world righteous in Christ's death and resurrection. Sinner that I am, I know that I am included."²³
- "Scripture makes it clear that justification is an accomplished fact. God has forgiven the whole world for the sake of Christ's perfect life and substitutionary death on the cross." ²⁴
- "Objectively speaking, without any reference to an individual sinner's attitude toward Christ's sacrifice, purely on the basis of God's verdict, every sinner, whether he knows it or not, whether he believes it or not, has received the status of a saint." ²⁵
- "After Christ's intervention and through Christ's intervention, God regards all sinners as guilt-free saints." ²⁶
- "When God reconciled the world to Himself through Christ, He individually pronounced forgiveness on each individual sinner whether that sinner ever comes to faith or not." ²⁷
- "At the time of the resurrection of Christ, God looked down in hell and declared Judas, the people destroyed in the flood, and all the ungodly, innocent, not guilty, and forgiven of all sin and gave unto them the status of saints." ²⁸

This report will examine the doctrinal evolution that led to statements such as those. As opportunity arises, it will also compare these statements to Scripture.

What is the issue?

Many claim that "objective justification" is not a *new* teaching, but merely a convenient way to describe the same Scriptural truths which true Lutherans have always confessed. In particular, there are those who feel that *objective justification* is simply an assertion of *grace alone* against Romanists and

²¹ *Martin Luther's Small Catechism - A Handbook of Christian Doctrine*, by Rev. Mike Sydow, 1988, p. 122.

²² *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*, Concordia Publishing House, 1991, p. 160.

²³ "Every Sinner Declared Righteous," Tract Number 3, Issued by the Conference of Presidents, WELS, 1954, p. 7. We will study this tract in chapter 9.

²⁴ *Our Great Heritage*, Vol. 3, 1991. Editor's introduction to essay by John P. Meyer entitled "Objective Justification." General Editor Lyle Lange, NPH, p. 34.

²⁵ *Ministers of Christ*, Prof. John P. Meyer. Quoted in *Our Great Heritage*, Vol. 3, 1991, General Editor Lyle Lange, NPH, p. 49.

²⁶ Kokomo Statement 2, WELS, 1979-1980. Also found in *Ministers of Christ*, Prof. John P. Meyer, NPH, p. 107. We will study the Kokomo Statements in Chapter 10.

²⁷ Kokomo Statement 3, WELS, 1979-1980. Also found in *Ministers of Christ*, Prof. John P. Meyer, NPH, p. 109. We will study the Kokomo Statements in Chapter 10.

²⁸ Kokomo Statement 4, WELS, 1979-1980. See chapter 10.

synergists; *universal grace* against Calvinists, and *the means of grace* against all three.²⁹ However, modern-day objective justification asserts far more than “grace alone,” “universal grace,” and the “means of grace.” It usually asserts:

1. There was a distinct, divine, judicial act that occurred sometime between the death and resurrection of Christ (around A.D. 30).

2. At this judicial act God *forgave* every sin and *justified* (declared righteous) every person.

3. Thus, by this distinct, divine, judicial act the status of each individual person actually *changed*. God declared each person to be righteous, or gave each person the status of “saint.” Some teachings actually claim that each person *received* this status.

4. The bloody cross marks a *change* in God. Usually this is described as the cessation or appeasement of His wrath toward mankind.

5. The object of saving faith, the Gospel message which any person must believe in order to be saved, is the “fact” that God has already justified all people and forgiven all sins. When a person believes that alleged fact, then he is said to be *subjectively* justified.

6. If John Doe is not “subjectively justified”—that is, if he does not believe in objective justification = all sins are already forgiven and that God has justified all people—then John Doe will be punished eternally in hell for those sins that God “forgave.”

Do these assertions conform to Scripture? We must answer this question with only the words of Scripture. If anyone is deceived by objective justification, he will not be excused on Judgment Day because he can point to many “good” Lutherans who found nothing wrong with ‘all sins are forgiven’ and ‘all people are justified.’”³⁰

Is the danger universalism?

Does objective justification move toward universalism, the false notion that all people are (eventually) saved? Yes and no. Modern-day objective justification tries to avoid universalism by saying “no,” all men are not actually saved *because a person must believe in objective justification in order to receive the benefits of his justification*. This requirement is usually called *subjective justification*. If a person is not *subjectively* justified, if he does not believe that God has already forgiven and justified all people, then that person is not saved. On the other hand, it is hard to understand how at the time of Christ’s death (around A.D. 30) people who were already in hell were suddenly *justified* (“declared righteous”) and yet remained in hell. It is also hard to understand how New Testament unbelievers are sent to hell *after* God forgives *all* their sins.

²⁹ See Chapter 2.

³⁰ “Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them” (Luke 16:29). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Since objective justification says that God forgave *all* sins when Christ died and rose from the grave, does that not include the sin of unbelief?

Some OJ'ers say that only the sin of unbelief is punished in hell.³¹ This contradicts the explicit statements of Scripture which talk about *all* sins being punished and degrees of punishment in hell?³² Also, to say that only the sin of unbelief is punished in hell contradicts the meaning of *all*: if *all* sins were forgiven at the time of the cross, does that not include the sin of unbelief?

Other OJ'ers will admit, when forced to answer this question, that *all* sins of unbelievers get punished in hell. This distorts the Biblical meaning of "forgiveness." The Bible speaks about *forgiven sins* being removed as far as the east is from the west . . . cast into the depth of the sea . . . not to be remembered by God.³³ Should we really describe God as One Who punishes a sin after He Himself says "I forgive that sin"? Modern-day objective justification says God punishes sins after He forgives them because the person did not believe it was true.³⁴

The modern version of *objective justification* leads to a different church mission. In the old Lutheran church the *leading* message was the LAW: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24).³⁵ But with modern-day objective justification, the leading message to the unbelieving world becomes "you and the rest of mankind are already forgiven . . . believe that and you too will be saved!" God's Law and wrath against sin is ignored or obscured. Consider for example the fast growing Church Growth Movement in the "conservative" Lutheran church bodies. What message is being proclaimed to get all those people in the pews, and what part of God's truth is ignored?

- Is God's LAW and WRATH being taught above the guitar music?
- Are the Pastors of these meta-churches warning the "me generation" about the pet sins of our modern culture: worldliness, coveting, selfishness, lust and drunkenness? Is anyone preaching "know ye not that the friendship of

³¹ By "unbelief" they mean rejecting objective justification—not believing that all people are justified.

³² For example: Luke 12:36-48; Mark 12:38-40; Matt. 23:13-14; Luke 20:46-47; Matt. 11:21-24; John 9:39-41; John 19:10-11; Rom. 2:6ff; Matt. 16:27; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 2:23.

³³ Ps. 103:12; Mic. 7:19; Is 43:25; Jer. 31:34; Jer. 50:20; Heb. 8:12; Heb. 10:17.

³⁴ If you FORGIVE your neighbor for stealing your lawn mower, and then prosecute him because he did not believe it was true, then did you really forgive him in the first place?

³⁵ C.F.W. Walther devoted an entire lecture to this very point in his best known work, saying "How can faith enter a heart that has not yet been crushed? How can a person feel hungry and thirsty while he loathes the food set before him? No, indeed; if you wish to believe in Christ, you must become sick; for Christ is a Physician only for those who are sick. He came to seek and to save that which is lost; therefore you must first become a lost and condemned sinner." *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, p. 92.

the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4)?

- Do those churches, which are focused on meeting the *felt needs* of their audience, ever mention that "if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:26)?

There is abundant evidence that God's Law is no longer the leading message of modern Lutheranism to the wicked world we live in. Instead, the leading message has become some form of "you are already forgiven—you are already declared righteous by God—God's wrath is appeased." Replacing the Law with such a message is bound to have a profound effect.

But I Thought *Objective Justification* Meant . . .

Many people claim that *objective justification* just means "Christ died for all" and man does not contribute in any way toward his justification or salvation. If that were true, why would we need this theological concept to convey what Scripture already says with perfect clarity:

- . . . he died for all. . . (2 Corinthians 5:15)
- Who gave himself a ransom for all. . . " (1 Timothy 2:6)
- Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4)
- The Lord is. . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)
- And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; (Ephesians 2:1)
- So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

Some people think that the only thing wrong with objective justification is the fact that it sometimes employs fuzzy language and the teacher often fails to teach simultaneously the so-called *subjective justification*.³⁶ For example,

- Should we really refer to Judas and other hell-dwellers as "saints"?
- Should we really say that the sins of hell dwellers were suddenly "forgiven" around A.D. 30, even though the punishment of those sins continued the instant *after* they were "forgiven"?
- Should we really suggest that a change occurred in God at the time of Christ's death and resurrection, when God Himself says "For I *am* the LORD, I change not" (Malachi 3:6a)?

³⁶ *Subjective justification* is usually explained as what happens when a person believes in objective justification, that is, he believes that all sins are forgiven and all people are justified. Then he receives the benefits of his prior forgiveness/ justification.

- Should we really say that the wrath of God has ceased, or been appeased, when Scripture tells us that His wrath "abideth" on unbelievers (John 3:36)?
- Should we really say that God "justified" *all* people after He Himself said "I will not justify the wicked"? (Exodus 23:7)

Folks who are concerned about the ambiguous *language* of modern-day objective justification have noticed that the disclaimers necessary to prevent false conclusions rarely accompany this teaching anymore, as they did in the past. Usually the ambiguous language of modern-day objective justification is not clarified until it is openly challenged, at which time the teacher can be heard to say things like "I did not mean that . . . , " and "You are reading more into my teaching than I intended. . . I'm just saying that Christ died for all." That is not how a teacher should tremble at God's words (Is. 66:2) and speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11). This report will prove that OJ'ers often employ ambiguous *language* which can be interpreted several ways.

Some people feel that the concept of *objective justification* is fundamentally flawed no matter what language is used to explain and qualify it. Some of these people may hold to other errors and reject *objective justification* because they are Synergists or Calvinists. Others do not hold any of these errors and reject objective justification because it goes beyond the very words of Scripture, it builds doctrine on logical deductions, and it changes the meaning which Scripture gives to particular words.³⁷ In other words, they feel that *objective justification* will confuse and mislead no matter how well it is clarified and qualified.

It is hard for modern Lutherans to consider the possibility that one of their cherished theological constructions, affecting the very heart of the gospel, may be faulty. Perhaps that is why fervent attacks have been launched against *anyone* who questions objective justification, even those who say nothing to indicate the errors they are accused of. However, these fervent attacks must not deter us from examining this issue because if the modern teaching of *objective justification* is flawed, then blood-bought souls are in danger: both hearers and teachers.³⁸ Moreover, if objective justification is flawed, then it may explain what is *fundamentally* wrong with Lutheranism today and why efforts to expel other errors will continue to fail.

³⁷ Keep in mind that there is a vast difference between using non-Scripture words to summarize divine truths (Trinity, sacrament, vicarious satisfaction, etc.) and re-defining a word which Scripture already uses: justify and justification.

³⁸ "Then said He unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe [unto him], through whom they come!" Luke 17:1.

The Purpose of this Report

This report examines how *objective justification* was introduced to the old Synodical Conference, how it evolved, and how it has come to be taught today. Along the way I have added the following commentary:

1. Point out from Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions (*The Book of Concord*) flaws in the arguments that were used to advance this concept;
2. Point out how modern-day *objective justification* undermines explicit words of Holy Scripture;
3. Point out various subterfuges that were used to promote the modern version of objective justification;
4. Point out the superior words found in Scripture to refute the errors which objective justification was intended to refute.

*"Whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."
John 20:23*

*"The Bible compels us to teach that God has,
for Christ's sake, forgiven the entire world of all its sin."
Rev. Rolf Preus, LCMS
Christian News, April 28, 1997, p. 11.*

Chapter 2

"Universal Justification" as Taught by Prof. F.A. Schmidt - 1872

"About the Doctrine of Justification," Doctrinal essay delivered at the First Convention of the Synodical Conference, 1872; Translated from German to English by Kurt Marquart and published in 1982 by the Concordia Theological Seminary Press, Ft. Wayne, IN (request copy from Concordia Theological Seminary, 6600 N. Clinton Street, Ft. Wayne, IN 46825).

Biographical Sketch of Prof. F.A. Schmidt

F. A. Schmidt was born in Germany in 1837, graduated from Concordia Seminary in 1857, and was the Norwegian Synod professor at Concordia Seminary from 1872-1876. After leaving Concordia he became a virulent enemy of the Missouri Synod over the issue of predestination and led the opposition to Missouri on this important issue.

- Luther Seminary 1876-1886
- Anti Missouri Seminary 1886-1890
- Augsburg Seminary 1890-1893
- United Norwegian Church Seminary 1893-1912

Here is one description of Schmidt's role in the Predestination Controversy:

"In January, 1880, Prof. F.A. Schmidt, a former student of Dr. Walther, violently assailed the statements made by his former teacher, and in his new magazine, *Altes und Neues*, declared that he must 'sound the alarm' against the new 'Crypto-calvinism' of Missouri as expressed in the Synodical report of the Western District of 1877. On September 29, 1880, a public conference was held at Chicago at which five hundred pastors of the Missouri Synod were present and took part in the discussion. A proposal on the part of Dr. Walther not to carry on the controversy publicly was flatly refused, **as Professor Schmidt declared that he had been commanded by God to wage this war . . .**" ³⁹
[emphasis added]

Needless to say, we should subject the teachings of such a man to the closest scrutiny.

Background to the Essay

This essay was presented in German at the first convention of the Synodical Conference in 1872 (to which the Missouri Synod, Norwegian Synod and Wisconsin Synod belonged). The English translation was done by Professor Kurt Marquart and published by Ft. Wayne Seminary Press in 1982. Coming as it did during the controversy between Walter A. Maier Jr. and J.A.O. Preus on

³⁹ "Dr. Francis Pieper - A Biographical Sketch," by Th. Graebner. CPH, 1931, p. 28.

the subject of *objective justification*, it lent support to the charge that Prof. Maier's concerns about objective justification were (at best) unfounded and (perhaps) unscriptural.

Although the translator offers some warnings about the use of objective justification at the end of the essay, his general purpose is to show that the concept has deep roots in confessional Lutheranism and can therefore be safely used. The implicit argument is that since C.F.W. Walther and other respectable Lutherans did not protest this 1872 teaching of *universal* justification, neither should we. The possible bias of the translator is suggested in several ways:

1. By his choice of a title for this essay. In the Conference minutes, the original essay was titled "About the Doctrine of Justification." Professor Marquart titles it: "Justification - Objective and Subjective: A Translation." Not once in the essay does F.A. Schmidt use the words "objective" or "subjective" in regard to justification. Also, Schmidt attached many qualifications to his teaching of universal justification which make it quite different from the objective-subjective justification that was being taught when Prof. Marquart did his translation.

2. By his failure to point out an obvious subterfuge used by Schmidt to support his teaching with the Lutheran Confessions.

3. By his use of the Tappert version of the Lutheran Confessions, as further explained below.

We will examine this essay in detail because it represents the seed which evolved to modern-day objective justification in Missouri and WELS. We will see that in 1872 F.A. Schmidt added many disclaimers and qualifications to his teaching of *universal justification* to make it acceptable to his Lutheran audience and to avoid the erroneous conclusions that easily arise when we say "all people are justified." These disclaimers and qualifications were simply omitted in later teachings of objective justification. Church historians will recognize a familiar pattern here: when error is first introduced it is extensively qualified in order to gain tolerance; eventually the qualifications are dropped and the error asserts its dominance.

How Schmidt Explained *Universal Justification*

There is much in this essay that follows the form of sound words. We would be surprised if that were not the case, since it was presented at the first Convention of the Synodical Conference where many astute "old" Missouri and Wisconsin theologians were in attendance. Even when Schmidt eventually introduces his concept of *universal* justification, he qualifies it so extensively that one is tempted to say "well, if that's all he means by universal justification, then I suppose it is okay." Indeed, if modern theologians taught Schmidt's many important disclaimers alongside *objective justification*, the concept probably would never have gained its present popularity.

The essay does a particularly good job of presenting the truth that salvation is totally a work of God, and that God "will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Much of Schmidt's terminology is the same as that used by other Lutheran forefathers. For example, right on page 1 Schmidt makes this important statement emphasizing the role of "faith":

"In the pure doctrine of justification, as our Lutheran church has presented it again from God's Word and placed it on the lamp-stand, it is above all a matter of three points:

- 1. Of the doctrine of the universal perfect redemption [Erloesung] of the world through Christ.*
- 2. Of the doctrine of the power and efficacy of the means of grace*
- 3. Of the doctrine of faith."*

This undoubtedly helped satisfy many listeners that nothing new was being taught in this essay. Notice that Prof. Schmidt states emphatically that there is no such thing as the "pure doctrine of justification" without the "doctrine of faith." In Chapter 1 we saw modern Lutheran teachings such as this: "The doctrine of universal justification, which teaches that the sins of all men are forgiven, and the doctrine of objective justification, which teaches that a man's sins are forgiven whether he believes it or not, are extremely important."

Likewise, on page 2 of this translation the author again emphasizes the importance of faith with these words:

*"Only when we know and **believe** that we poor sinners are reconciled [versoehnt] with God the Father by grace through Christ and obtain the righteousness which counts before God only through that faith which the Holy Spirit alone works, only then does the doctrine of the Holy Trinity become a doctrine full of comfort and salvation." [emphasis added]*

For many pages, Schmidt quotes Luther as he defends the article of justification against various errors. As late as page 8, the author had this to say about justification:

*"For when one wishes to **present the whole doctrine of justification**, one speaks as a rule of three causes, that is, if one wants to describe the whole doctrine by means of the principle of causes. One then asks first of all, what is the efficient cause, what the motivating cause, and finally, what the instrumental cause, through which that which the efficient cause has intended for me, comes into my possession." [emphasis added]*

Here is how Schmidt describes the so-called "instrumental" cause:

*"Of the instrumental causes there are again two kinds, the one kind from God's side, the other from the side of man. From God's side they are Word and Sacrament . . . from the side of man it is **faith** . . ." [emphasis added]*

This is "old" Lutheran terminology, as long as we understand (as Schmidt teaches) that even the so-called instrumental cause *on the side of man* (i.e. faith) is solely the work of God ("So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17)

The Subterfuge Begins

The troubling aspects of Schmidt's essay begin shortly after Thesis 4. The Thesis says one thing, while the defense of the Thesis goes much farther:

*Thesis 4: "As in Adam all men have fallen and come under the wrath of God and eternal damnation as punishment for sins, so also all men are truly **redeemed** from sin, death, devil and hell, in Christ as the second Adam, and God is truly **reconciled** with them all." [emphasis added]*

Note this Thesis carefully. It talks about all men being truly redeemed *in Christ* and the reconciliation which God has toward them. We urge the reader to remember those words "in Christ." Based on this Thesis, we have a right to expect that his defense of this Thesis will teach the same thing as the Thesis itself. But that is not the case. In the pages which follow Thesis 4, Schmidt goes far beyond his Thesis and introduces concepts which subsequent theologians used as a springboard for their own teaching of universal, objective justification. They ignored the Thesis itself and Schmidt's extensive disclaimers.

We cannot know whether Prof. Schmidt deceitfully introduced universal justification under an orthodox Thesis. But all must agree that the honorable thing to do is to present in the Thesis the point that one then goes on to prove in the text. One wonders whether this essay, and the concept of *universal justification*, would have ever survived that first convention of the Synodical Conference if Thesis 4 had read:

"Thesis 4 (revised to fit Schmidt's subsequent arguments): As in Adam all men have fallen and come under the wrath of God and eternal damnation as punishment for sins, so also God declared the whole world of sinners to be righteous and all sins forgiven when Christ died and rose again."

That is essentially what Thesis 4 should say to fit the author's subsequent explanation (ignoring for a moment his extensive disclaimers).

On page 8 Schmidt begins to build his defense of Thesis 4. Notice that the Thesis itself says "all men are truly redeemed...in Christ" and "God is truly

reconciled with *them* all.” However, the defense of the Thesis concludes with universal *justification*: mankind is declared righteous. I urge all readers to obtain a copy of this essay for themselves from Ft. Wayne Seminary Press so they can see for themselves the author’s logic. In a nutshell, here is how Schmidt gets from the Thesis to his conclusion, using direct quotations in key places.

1. Through Adam the consequences of the Fall "came upon" all people. . . .
2. . . . so likewise the redemption by Christ was "for" all people
3. . . . therefore the debt/penalty of all sins is paid in full
4. . . . and since "the Resurrection of Christ was an act of God through which Christ was declared righteous" . . . [!!!]
5. . . . but since Christ was not "condemned for His own Person, but rather for mankind"
6. . . . so too Christ did not really "become righteous through the Resurrection"
7. . . . but "rather, mankind, for whom He died and rose, became righteous."

That, in a nutshell, is the logic used to introduce *universal* or *general justification* in the Synodical Conference at its very first convention. Schmidt’s argument goes far beyond his own Thesis and we will see shortly that Schmidt uses direct subterfuge when he quotes the Lutheran Confessions to support this teaching. We will also see that Schmidt makes many disclaimers which contradict the clear meaning of “mankind became righteous.”

In the logical argument outlined above, Schmidt laid the chief cornerstone of universal, general and objective justification: the notion that the Resurrection of Christ represents a change in God’s attitude toward mankind, and a change in man’s status. Mankind became righteous in God’s eyes *at that time*. We will examine that notion throughout this report. For now, we urge the reader to keep these clear words of Scripture in mind:

- For I *am* the LORD, I change not; (Malachi 3:6)
- Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, (1 Peter 1:20 AV)
- Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Timothy 1:9)
- According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love (Ephesians 1:4)
- I [Jesus] pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. (John 17:9)

More Subterfuge

On page 9 of the essay, in support of his notion that "mankind became righteous," the author says this:

*"By way of explanation of the words: Christ is the second Adam, **what the Apology says is useful:***

*"But the world was subject to him through the law; for by the commandment of the law all are accused and by the works of the law none is justified, that is, by the law sin is recognized but its guilt is not relieved. The law would seem to be harmful since it has made all men sinners, but when the Lord Jesus came **He forgave all men** the sin that none could escape and by shedding his blood canceled the bond that stood against us (Col. 2:14). This is what Paul says, 'Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more' (Romans 5:20) through Jesus. For after the whole world was subjected, he took away the sin of the whole world, as John testified when he said (John 1:29), 'Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" [IV, 103, Tappert, pp. 121-122, emphasis added]*

A. For a moment, let us concede the use of the Tappert version of the Apology which the translator chose to use with this 1872 essay. Go to page 122 of Tappert and notice where Prof. Schmidt chose to stop his excerpt. The sentence which immediately follows *in the same paragraph* is:

"So let no one glory in his works since no one is justified by his deeds."

In other words, even Tappert's version clearly shows that the previous argument (about which we will say more shortly) was offered simply to point out that justification is without works, *not to prove the argument that all men are "justified" or "forgiven!"*

To further demonstrate this subterfuge, notice the *next* sentence of the same paragraph from Tappert's version of the Apology, also conveniently omitted:

*"But **he who is righteous has it as a gift because he was justified after being washed.**" [emphasis added]*

If this sentence had been included, it would have contradicted Prof. Schmidt's assertion that the Resurrection was the justification of **all** people! The paragraph of the Apology which Schmidt excerpted to prove universal justification actually teaches the opposite: that some people are justified and this is "after being washed." Please notice also that it does *not* say the person "receives the benefit of justification" after being washed, but "was justified."

There is even more evidence to prove what the Apology *is* saying in this portion of Article IV. The VERY NEXT sentence of this SAME paragraph (also omitted by Prof. Schmidt) reads: *"It is faith therefore that frees men through the blood of Christ;"* The word "therefore" demonstrates that the point of the previous argument is that men are justified through faith, without works. This summary statement makes no sense if the previous portion of the Apology was asserting that mankind was "justified" and all sins "forgiven."

More Subterfuge

There is something else quite troubling about Schmidt's use of this excerpt from the Apology, something which suggests *intentional* subterfuge. He attributes this excerpt to the Apology (*"By way of explanation of the words: Christ is the second Adam, what the Apology says is useful"*) and yet the excerpt is only a quote from Ambrose to a certain Irenaeus which the Confessors included to show that at least one Church Father also understood that "justification" is through faith without the works of the Law!

To demonstrate this subterfuge most clearly, let us now forsake the use of Tappert's version of our Confessions, which confessional Lutherans know to be unreliable in many other areas, and go instead to the Triglotta, page 151. In the section immediately preceding this excerpt, the Confessors repeatedly make the argument that justification is by grace through faith without works. Read several pages preceding this excerpt. Let us compare Schmidt's excerpt to the real thing:

Triglotta, Apology, p. 151

*Prof. Schmidt's excerpt from Apology, to prove universal justification*⁴⁰

"Is 53:11: By His knowledge shall He justify many. But what is the knowledge of Christ unless to know the benefits of Christ, the promises which by the Gospel He has scattered broadcast in the world? And to know these benefits is properly and truly to believe in Christ, to believe that that which God has promised for Christ's sake He will certainly fulfill. Here and there among the Fathers similar testimonies are extant. For Ambrose says in his letter to a certain Irenaeus: Moreover, the world was subject to Him by the Law for the reason that, according to the command of the Law, all are indicted, and yet, by the works of the Law, no one is justified, i.e. because, by the Law, sin is perceived, but guilt is not discharged. The Law, which made all sinners, seemed to have done injury, but when the Lord Jesus came, He forgave to all sin which no one could avoid, and, by the shedding of His own blood, blotted out the handwriting which was against us. This is what he says in Romans 5:20: "The Law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Because after the whole world became subject, He took away the sin of the whole world, as he [John] testified, saying, John 1:29: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And on this account let no one boast of works, because no one is justified by his deeds. But he who is righteous has it given him because he was justified after the laver [of Baptism]. Faith, therefore, is that which frees through the blood of Christ, because he is blessed "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," Ps 32:1. These are the words of Ambrose, which clearly favor our doctrine; he denies justification to works, and ascribes to faith that it sets us free through the blood of Christ." [emphasis added]

"But the world was subject to him through the law; for by the commandment of the law all are accused and by the works of the law none is justified, that is, by the law sin is recognized but its guilt is not relieved. The law would seem to be harmful since it has made all men sinners, but when the Lord Jesus came He forgave all men the sin that none could escape and by shedding his blood canceled the bond that stood against us (Col. 2:14). This is what Paul says, 'Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more' (Romans 5:20) through Jesus. For after the whole world was subjected, he took away the sin of the whole world, as John testified when he said (John 1:29), 'Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" [emphasis added]

Comments

1. Notice that this section of the Apology is clearly teaching that justification is by grace through faith *without works*. Prof. Schmidt quotes part of a paragraph to "prove" that all men were justified at the time of the resurrection, but that is not

⁴⁰ Page 9 of translation.

what the Confessors say. In fact, their constant stress on the moment of *faith* as the time when justification occurs contradicts the notion that "all men . . . became righteous . . . through the resurrection."⁴¹

2. Notice that the Apology only brings up this quote of Ambrose to testify to its own teaching that justification is by grace through faith without works. They wanted to show their Roman antagonists that even some of their own Church Fathers understood this truth: "These are the words of Ambrose, which clearly favor our doctrine; **he denies justification to works, and ascribes to faith** that it sets us free through the blood of Christ." [emphasis added]

3. Prof. Schmidt neglected to mention that his chosen excerpt is *not* a teaching of the Apology, but rather a portion of a letter written by a Church Father. Since our Confessors did not quote Ambrose to support universal justification at the time of the resurrection, neither should Prof. Schmidt.

4. Moreover, if we read all of Ambrose's remarks in the Triglotta we see that Ambrose himself was not teaching a divine act of universal justification at the time of the resurrection.

5. Why did the translator fail to point out these obvious matters? He did add many other comments and footnotes to his translation.

The Exegesis of Prof. Schmidt

Also troubling is the way Prof. Schmidt translated certain portions of Scripture in order to promote universal justification. Let us look briefly at this matter:

Prof. Schmidt - Rom. 5:18-19 ⁴²	Literal translation of Majority Text ⁴³	Authorized Version - Rom. 5:18-19
"As through the sin of one condemnation has come upon all men, so also through the righteousness of one <u>justification of life has come upon all men.</u> For just as through one man's disobedience many became sinners, so also through one man's obedience many become righteous."	So then as through one offense to all men to condemnation so also through one righteous act to all men <u>to justification of life as.</u> For through the disobedience of the one man sinners were constituted the many so also through the obedience of the One righteous will be constituted the many.	"Therefore as by the offence of one [judgment came] upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one <u>[the free gift came] upon all men unto justification of life.</u> For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

⁴¹ And note carefully that they do not describe the moment of faith as the time when a person "receives the benefits of justification," which is the teaching of modern-day objective/subjective justification. Rather they say simply that this is when the person *is* justified.

⁴² Page 9 of translation.

⁴³ *Pocket Interlinear New Testament*, Jay P. Green, Sr. Editor. Baker Book House Company, 1991.

Prof. Schmidt, and most teachers of objective justification, would have us believe that Romans 5:18-19 *means* that God justified all people by a judicial act at the time of Christ's death and resurrection, around A.D. 30. "All" people must include those already dead in unbelief and those whom God knew would eventually die in that condition. Neither the literal Greek text nor the Authorized Version leads to such a conclusion. Both of them allow us to understand "the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" to mean the same thing that these verses say:

- He died for all (2 Corinthians 5:15)
- Who gave himself a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6)
- For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, (Titus 2:11)
- But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God [which is] by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (Romans 3:21-25)
- He shall see of the travail of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:11)

Martin Luther on Romans 5:18-19

Luther's commentary on Romans 5:18-19 also contradicts Schmidt's interpretation. The great Reformer understood these verses to say that "acquittal and life" comes to those who are brought to saving faith.

"Then, as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, that is, the judgment of death, so one Man's, Christ's, act of righteousness leads, by grace, to acquittal and life for all men, that is, it came to many, or all who are justified in no other way than through His righteousness, etc. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." ⁴⁴ [italics in original, underline emphasis added]

According to Luther, Romans 5:18-19 say that because of Christ's righteousness, justification came upon "many" people. Which people? Those who are justified by trusting in His righteousness rather than some righteousness of their own. We do not mean to suggest that Luther's interpretation is verbally inspired, but it proves that these verses can be understood as having nothing to do with universal justification. Therefore, these verses cannot prove such a doctrine.

⁴⁴ *Luther's Works*, American Edition, Vol. 25, Lectures on Romans, p. 48

The Tappert translation of the Book of Concord chosen by the translator for this 1872 essay promotes confusion on these verses. It translates Rom. 5:18 to read: ". . . one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men."⁴⁵ The more reliable Triglotta translates this same portion ". . . by the righteousness of One justification of faith came to all men."⁴⁶ Note the similarity between *that* truth and the clear truth of Titus 2:11: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." To say that "justification of faith came to all men" or "the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" is not the same as "leads to acquittal for all men."

The disclaimers which Schmidt attached to *universal justification*

We have seen that Prof. Schmidt set forth universal justification by mis-quoting a portion of the Apology and presenting it under a Thesis which makes no mention of it. But that is not all. He also extensively qualified what he meant by "mankind became righteous" to forestall the obvious objections. If these qualifications had stayed with *universal, objective justification*, we doubt whether this concept would have gained its widespread popularity. Instead, we will see later theologians adopted and expanded Schmidt's universal justification while dropping his extensive disclaimers. Modern OJ'ers ignore the parts of this 1872 essay which contradict their teaching.

Here is how Schmidt reconciles *universal justification* with the wrath of God, which the Bible says "abideth" on unbelievers (John 3:36). We urge you to pay special attention to the portions in boldface:

*"If it be asked how this is to be rhymed that on the one hand Scripture teaches that through Christ's resurrection the whole world is **absolved**, and that on the other hand it testifies that **the debt remains on the unbelievers**, as long as they continue in unbelief, it must be answered: One must distinguish two ways in which God regards men. When God regards the world in Christ, His Son, He looks at it with the most fervent love; but **when He regards the world outside of Christ, then He cannot look at it otherwise than with burning wrath. Whoever therefore does not believe in Christ, yes rejects Christ, upon him the wrath of God remains**, despite the fact that when God regards him in His Son, and remembers how He has made satisfaction also for him, then He looks upon him with eyes full of love; as Scripture says in John 3:16: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." According to this God did two things; He was wroth toward sinners, and at the same time He loved them so ardently that He gave His only-begotten Son for them. If now He loved the world already from eternity, how certainly He will still love it now, **after He has been***

⁴⁵ Formula of Concord, TD, III, Tappert, p. 540.

⁴⁶ Formula of Concord, TD, III, Triglotta, p. 919.

rendered satisfaction! When God now looks at the world in this respect, in which satisfaction has been made for it and its debt paid by His Son, then He sees it as a reconciled world. But now the individual comes along and rejects this reconciliation: him God cannot regard otherwise than with eternal burning wrath, since he is without Christ. Speaking according to the acquisition of salvation, He is wroth with no man any longer, but speaking according to the appropriation He is wroth with everyone who is not in Christ. One may say therefore, in so far as a man is a part of the whole redeemed mankind, God is not wroth with him, but in so far as he is for his own person an unbeliever, God is wroth with him. But here lies an inexpressible and incomprehensible mystery. For in God there are no movements, as in us man, who are minded now this way now that, have now these emotions, now those. Of Him it is written: 'You remain as You are.' But everything that God thinks and wills is one with His Being. Just this unity and immutability of God, with what Holy Scriptures ascribes to Him against the sinner, when he does not believe, and again when he believes, is an impenetrable mystery, which is why we are not in a position to form a clear notion of how God can love the whole world and yet at the same time be wroth against the individual unbeliever. But Scripture clearly teaches both. Now it is the Lutheran way: if we find two sorts of things in God's Word, which we cannot rhyme, then we let both stand and believe both, just as it reads. Yet in this there is no contradiction, that Holy Scripture teaches both: God loves the world and hates the unbelievers; one must simply add mentally: in another respect."

Comments on Schmidt's Disclaimers

1. Notice the words "Scripture teaches that through Christ's resurrection the whole world is absolved." Scripture teaches no such thing and Prof. Schmidt offers no proof that it does. Indeed, the word "absolved" is not a Bible term.
2. Notice the word "after" in boldface. This is a constant hallmark of universal or objective justification: suggesting that there was a moment *in time* when satisfaction was rendered in God's eyes: that before such a time God had one attitude and after that time God had a different attitude. But time does not apply to God or to His plan of salvation:
 - Christ is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. 13:8)
 - Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, (1 Peter 1:20)
 - God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Timothy 1:9)
 - According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (Ephesians 1:4-5)

It is wrong to suggest that God changed when Christ died on the cross or rose from the grave around A.D. 30. "For I am the LORD, I change not." (Malachi 3:6). Suggesting such a change is a step toward pantheism because it suggests that God is not One, that God the Father at some time had a different will or attitude than God the Son. In Chapter 9 and 10 we will see the fruits of this error.

3. Notice the words "then" and "now" in boldface. Here is another example of how *universal justification* injects *time* where it does not belong. It obscures God's perfect foreknowledge and the fact that "he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). Schmidt also wrongly implies that God's wrath and condemnation does not come upon a person *until* he "rejects this reconciliation." That is false: "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation" and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." (Romans 5:18, Romans 8:1).

Emphasis on the ongoing wrath of God

Notice how many times Schmidt reiterated the LAW and JUDGMENT in this *one* paragraph so as to assure his listeners that his teaching of universal justification does not signal any change in doctrine: [emphasis added]

" . . . the debt **remains** on the unbelievers, as long as they continue in unbelief."

- Later we will see that modern objective justification says all people are "free."

" . . . the individual comes along and rejects this reconciliation: him God cannot regard otherwise than with **eternal burning wrath**, since he is without Christ."

"He is wroth with everyone who is not in Christ."

"Whoever therefore does not believe in Christ, yes rejects Christ, upon him **the wrath of God remains** . . . "

" . . . in so far as he is for his own person an unbeliever, **God is wroth** with him."

" . . . yet at the same time be **wroth** against the individual unbeliever."

- Later we will see that modern objective justification says God's wrath has ceased and/or been appeased.

"God . . . **hates** the unbelievers;"

- In Chapter 1 we noted that modern Lutherans claim: "After Christ's intervention and through Christ's intervention, God regards all sinners as guilt-free saints."⁴⁷

The historical development of objective justification is primarily the process of dropping disclaimers such as these.⁴⁸ If modern OJ'ers told unbelievers "God has forgiven all your sins, but He also hates you while you remain in unbelief," we wonder if objective justification would have gained its widespread popularity. Even where the Law is still proclaimed in Lutheran churches today, it is usually so lukewarm that the listener gets the impression that he is only being asked to agree that we humans have not measured up to God's standard of perfection. Gone are the days when the Law was preached in such a manner that every listener either hardened his heart or despaired of all self-help and threw himself upon the mercy of God. Do modern Lutherans still believe that *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Hebrews 10:31)?

What happens when we tell people that God has already forgiven their sins and declared them to be righteous?

- Unbelievers are encouraged in their carnal security (after all, how wrathful can God really be if He has already forgiven all sins?)
- Professing Christians begin to neglect the very means by which God "daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers."
- Sin abounds and people resent anything that might take away their "assurance" that their sins really are forgiven and that God's wrath has been removed. God warns us against such vain words: "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." (Ephesians 5:6)
- When confronted with a guilty conscience regarding their pet sins, people comfort themselves with the mantra of objective justification: "Well, all sins were forgiven when Christ rose from the grave, so these sins of mine are no big deal."
- People will not tolerate stern preaching of the Divine Law because it makes them feel the wrath of God which objective justification says has been removed. God warned us this would happen: "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits." Isaiah 30:10. People who are taught objective justification become convinced that all they need to be saved is to

⁴⁷ Kokomo Statement 2, WELS, 1979-1980. Also found in *Ministers of Christ*, Prof. John P. Meyer, NPH, p. 107. We will study the Kokomo Statements in Chapter 10.

⁴⁸ See especially Chapter 9 and 10. My wife was excommunicated from an LCMS congregation because she would not give an unqualified 'yes' to the question "Do you believe that the sins of all the world were forgiven in 30 AD when Christ was raised from the grave?" Her attempts to qualify this sentence (were all the sins of the hell-dwellers of that moment also forgiven?) were ignored.

keep 'believing' that all sins are forgiven. That becomes the object of their faith, instead of Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

More disclaimers regarding *universal justification*

Schmidt attached many more disclaimers and qualifications to his concept of *universal justification* in this 1872 essay. Let us quickly review the major ones [emphasis added]:

*p. 17: "Righteousness is fulfilled in us; **not indeed in every individual person, but in our humanity.**"*

Comment: Later we will see that advocates of universal justification dropped this disclaimer, and now teach that every individual person was justified and forgiven when Christ died and rose again.

*p. 18: ". . . but alas, proud man does not want to know anything of this most precious gift of God, which He offers and presents in the Gospel, yes, **properly understood**, even imparts to the whole world. It is **better, however, not to use the word "impart"** [mittheilen] of the universal justification of the world, because **in our German language it almost always signifies not only a presenting from God's side, but also an accepting from man's side.**"*

Comment: Schmidt warns here that universal justification must be "properly understood" and never used to suggest that every person actually receives any benefit from this justification. Beware of theological concepts which contain the expression "properly understood." If a theological concept needs to be "properly understood," then it does not yet speak as the oracles of God.

*p. 18: "Thesis 5. As through the substitutionary death of Christ the whole world's **debt of sin** was wiped out and the punishment for it was endured, so also **righteousness, life and salvation** have been **brought** again for the whole world through Christ's resurrection, and have come upon [ueber] all men **in Christ as the Substitute of all mankind.**"*

Comment: Remember that Schmidt had earlier said ". . . the debt *remains* on the unbelievers, as long as they continue in unbelief." Yes, the "debt" of sin was fully paid if that means the words of 1Timothy 2:6: "Who gave himself a ransom for all." Yes, righteousness, life and salvation have come upon all men *in Christ*, as long as we remember that

to be *in Christ* means to have God-wrought faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified.⁴⁹

So what good is it?

Schmidt's extensive disclaimers to universal justification bring us to a most important question: *why did we need this concept? What is inadequate about the words of Scripture to explain whom God justifies, and how He does it:*

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God **which is by faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being **justified freely by his grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and **the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus**. Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that **a man is justified by faith** without the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:21-28)

Schmidt admits that ". . . the debt *remains* on the unbelievers, as long as they continue in unbelief." Why not simply preach the spirit and life words of Scripture—law followed by gospel—which alone can bring a person out of unbelief? If we still believe that "faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" and "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"⁵⁰ then why did we need the concept of universal justification? What purpose does it serve?

The Book of Acts records many divine words that were used to create saving faith:

- Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Acts 2:38
- Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; Acts 3:19

⁴⁹ We will study "in Christ" in Chapter 7. For now, we call your attention to Romans 8:1: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

⁵⁰ Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23.

- Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. Acts 8:22
- And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Acts 16:31
- Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 20:21
- But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. Acts 26:20

Why do many modern Lutherans forsake words such as those provided by God, **and** prefer to speak their own words:

- "Through Christ's resurrection the whole world is absolved"
- "God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven all sinners all of their sins."
- "The Bible compels us to teach that God has, for Christ's sake, forgiven the entire world of all its sin."
- "The God who justifies the ungodly is the God who has justified everyone."
- "Through the resurrection mankind became righteous"
- "The doctrine of universal justification, which teaches that the sins of all men are forgiven, and the doctrine of objective justification, which teaches that a man's sins are forgiven whether he believes it or not, are extremely important."

Which message causes more offense with the unbelieving world? **Which** message is more likely to alienate hypocrites within the church who do not want **their** religion to interfere with the way they live their life? **Which** message is **more** likely to bring about the truth that "ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake"⁵¹

Using *universal justification* with professing Christians

OJers claim that professing Christians need the assurance of universal **justification** to overcome doubts about their own salvation.⁵² They claim that **when** a professing Christian is beset with doubts or fears, he can take comfort in **the** fact that "since God has already forgiven all sins and justified all people, I **am** certainly included." But is that where God wants us to turn for comfort and **assurance**? The answer is "no" because nowhere in Scripture is such comfort **offered**: it was not offered by Christ Himself or by His apostles writing under **divine** inspiration. Where *does* God want us to go for comfort when doubts arise **because** of the sin that so easily besets us? The very promises of He Who

⁵¹ Luke 21:17

⁵² See especially the WELS tract "Every Sinner Declared Righteous" (Chapter 9) and the Kokomo Four Statements (Chapter 10).

cannot lie, promises which are “spirit and life” to those who hear them, promises such as these:

- “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9)
- But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (Romans 5:8-9)
- “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1)
- “Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:27b-28).
- For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; (1 Corinthians 15:3)

Do Lutherans still trust God’s “quick and powerful” words to overcome a Christian’s doubts and fears? Do we trust God’s way of dealing with our fears, as modeled by David in Psalm 30: “Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled. I cried to Thee, O LORD: and unto the LORD I made supplication. . . Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be Thou my helper. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness”? Why do modern Lutherans need something more, the comfort of being told “all sins are already forgiven and all people justified—just keep believing that and you will be saved”?

Some may say that we need *universal justification* to assure ourselves that we are *personally* included in God’s general promises. Is that true? Lutherans used to say that the *Sacraments* are the individual *seal*, or *guarantee*, that the general promises of the Gospel apply to me individually:

*“For this reason also Christ causes the promise of the Gospel not only to be offered in general, but He seals it through the Sacraments which He attaches as seals of the promise, and thereby confirms it [the certainty of the promise of the Gospel] to every believer in particular.”*⁵³

All around us we see professing Lutheran Christians who tolerate sin and neglect the means by which God has said He will forgive our sins. Should we be surprised that such results follow when people are told that all sins are already forgiven and all people are already justified? Do Lutherans still believe the simple words which explain the Third Article of the Apostle’s Creed: “. . . in which Christian Church God daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers”?

⁵³ Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1075.

Yet More Disclaimers by Prof. Schmidt

Let us continue to examine the qualifications and disclaimers that Schmidt attached to his 1872 teaching of universal justification [emphasis added]:

p. 41: " . . . righteousness and salvation are, according to the acquisition, **available** for all men, and although we also teach, for another thing, that this treasure is also **offered and presented** to all in Word and Sacrament, we nevertheless do not deny, that God in Christ and through Christ regards an individual, **if only he accepts this treasure**, as one who has this righteousness, and that he is at the same hour, so to speak, written into the book of Life, and that this is the justification which is in **ecclesiastical usage** simply called the justification of a poor sinner, because here every individual stands before God in judgment and is acquitted by Him for his person. This *actus forensis*, i.e. juridical dealing, continues throughout the whole life of man, for God is always anew declaring man free from sin, death and judgment."

Comment: Again, notice the terminology Schmidt uses to soften his teaching of universal justification. We do not need universal justification to teach that "righteousness is available for all men. . . and offered and presented to all in Word and Sacrament." Jesus already said "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." (John 6:63).

Schmidt contradicts Scripture when he says that at the same hour that someone accepts this treasure he is written into the book of life:

- The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. (Revelation 17:8)
- Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (2 Timothy 1:9)

p. 41: "Before faith the sinner is righteous before God only according to the acquisition and the divine intention, but **actually righteous**, righteous for his own person, righteous in fact, he is **only when he believes**."

Comment: The two preceding disclaimers deny what modern objective justification teaches: all individual people were justified (declared righteous by God) at the time of the cross and resurrection. Disclaimers such as these no longer accompany the teaching of objective justification.

Translator's Comments

Professor Marquart offers in note 3 a summary of what he thinks this essay is teaching: "*Objective justification is here [in this essay] understood as the assertion of grace alone against Romanists and synergists; of universal grace against the Calvinists, and of the means of grace against both.*" If that were indeed the only point which Prof. Schmidt and other teachers of objective justification were trying to make, then it would not contradict so many clear statements of Scripture. But we have already seen that Schmidt asserts more than that. Once Schmidt's disclaimers and qualifications were dropped by later theologians, his teaching of universal justification became far more than a rebuttal of works righteousness, synergism and Calvinism. It became "God has already forgiven all sins and justified all individual people."

Recap of Schmidt Essay

1. The author of this essay was a member of the Norwegian Synod who became "virulently anti-Missourian" eight years after delivering this essay. That alone should make us suspect any form of words which he introduced to the Synodical Conference.

2. Schmidt turned against Missouri on the doctrine of election. He accused Walther and Missouri of being Crypto-Calvinists because they insisted on teaching the relationship between election and justification, as set forth in Article XI of the Formula of Concord. We have seen and will continue to see that universal, objective justification constantly obscures the truth that God "hath chosen us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world." (Ephesians 1:4). His teaching of universal justification can be seen as an effort to soften this unpopular truth by creating a scenario whereby all men have the same status at the time of Christ's death and resurrection. It is less offensive to teach that God only condemns to hell those people who refuse to believe that mankind is *already justified*.

3. Schmidt put his questionable teaching of universal justification under a Thesis that does not in any way suggest "through the resurrection of Christ mankind became righteous." At best, he is guilty of sloppy scholarship; at worst, intentional deceit.

4. Schmidt took a small portion of Article IV of the Apology and offered it as support for universal justification. He omitted the sentences before and after that excerpt which disprove the universal justification which he asserted.

5. Schmidt characterized this excerpt from the Apology as something our Confessions teach, whereas it was really part of a letter from a Church Father (Ambrose). Schmidt ignored the sentences immediately before and after his excerpt that showed that our Confessors were quoting this Church Father to convince Rome that at least one of their own also taught justification by grace

through faith without works. Our Confessors did not quote Ambrose to support universal justification, and neither should Prof. Schmidt.

6. Prof. Schmidt's doctrine of universal justification is built on this logical deduction: the Resurrection of Christ was an act of God through which Christ was declared righteous, but since Christ was not condemned for His own Person, but rather for mankind, so too Christ did not really become righteous through the Resurrection, but rather, mankind, for whom He died and rose, became righteous. There are two fundamental flaws in this argument:

- 1) Doctrine should be built only on the explicit words of Scripture, not on logical deductions; and
- 2) Scripture never says that the Resurrection of Christ was an act of God through which Christ was declared righteous (justified).

7. When Schmidt introduced his version of universal justification, he offered extensive disclaimers and qualifications. He went out of his way to emphasize the importance of the Law and the ongoing wrath of God which abides on unbelievers. He also asserted that only "mankind" was justified, not any individual person until he believed. Schmidt's disclaimers contradict modern-day objective justification, which insists that God forgave all sins and justified all individual people, including unbelievers.⁵⁴ Modern OJ'ers resist any effort to qualify their teaching with the disclaimers that Schmidt employed in 1872.

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.

Luke 18:13-14

"The God who justifies the ungodly is the God who has justified everyone."

Rev. Rolf Preus, LCMS

Christian News, April 28, 1997, p. 11.

⁵⁴ We will see this especially in Chapter 9 and 10.

Chapter 3

General Justification as Taught by Prof. Georg Stoeckhardt - 1888

Background

C.F.W. Walther, the founder of the Missouri Synod, died in 1887. The next year a newly elected Professor of Exegesis at Concordia Seminary published a slightly revised version of universal justification from that taught by F.A. Schmidt in 1872. Although Stoeckhardt's teaching was essentially the same as Schmidt's, he omitted most of the qualifications which Schmidt had attached to universal justification.

Professor Georg Stoeckhardt was born in Germany in 1842. He studied and taught in Europe as part of the State Church until about 1876, when he joined the Saxon Free Church. In 1878 he became pastor of Holy Cross Church in St. Louis and in 1879 a part-time lecturer on Old and New Testament exegesis at Concordia Seminary. He was elected a full-time Professor of exegetics in 1887, the year of Walther's death.

The essay we will study is titled "General Justification" and first appeared in *Lehre and Wehre*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 6, (June 1888). It was translated to English by Otto Stahlke and appeared in the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, April 1978. Readers may obtain a copy of this essay from Concordia Theological Seminary, 6600 N. Clinton Street, Ft. Wayne, IN 46825.

Overview of the Essay

Stoeckhardt's opening sentence is noteworthy: "*Genuine Lutheran theology counts the doctrine of general justification among the statements and treasures of its faith.*" As one reads that introductory remark, and the subsequent essay, one is reminded of the preacher who pounded on the pulpit whenever he said something that he could not prove from Scripture. What makes Stoeckhardt's comment noteworthy is the absence of a single "statement" from "genuine Lutheran theology" (the Lutheran Confessions) remotely like the "general justification" he went on to teach. Moreover, the *subsequent* 1897 Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod (Chapter 4) and the 1912 Catechism (Chapter 5) make *no* mention of this "treasure" of our faith. What we see is a concept that was gaining ground among Seminary professors but which was not yet deemed appropriate for public use.

Here is how Stoeckhardt presents *general justification*, "the statement and treasure of genuine Lutheran theology":

"Lutherans teach and confess that through Christ's death the entire world of sinners was justified and that through Christ's resurrection the justification of the sinful world was festively proclaimed." (p. 139)

Comment: I challenge every reader to find where “genuine Lutheran theology” teaches and confesses what Stoeckhardt says in that statement. Indeed, there is much in our Confessions that contradicts his statement. For example, consider this *definition* of justification offered in the Apology:

"And because 'to be justified' **means** that out of unjust men just men are made, or **born again**, it means also that they are pronounced or accounted just. For Scripture speaks in both ways. [The term 'to be justified' is used in two ways: to denote, **being converted** or **regenerated**; again, being accounted righteous.] Accordingly we wish to show this, that **faith alone** makes of an unjust, a just man, i.e., receives remission of sins." [emphasis added]⁵⁵

This *definition* certainly does not allow us to say that the “entire world of sinners was justified.” And “genuine Lutheran theology” *did not change* by 1580 when we read this definition of “justify” in the Formula of Concord:

"Accordingly, the word *justify* here means to declare righteous and free from sins, and to **absolve one from eternal punishment** for the sake of Christ's righteousness, which is **imputed by God to faith**, Phil. 3:9. For this use and understanding of this word is common in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament."⁵⁶ [emphasis added]

Unbelievers are not "absolved from eternal punishment" since they are all suffering in hell that very thing. Notice the words "one" and "faith." This definition, like the one in the Apology, contradicts the general *justification* which Prof. Stoeckhardt claimed was the “statement and treasure of genuine Lutheran theology.”

Let us continue with Prof. Stoeckhardt's essay:

"This doctrine of general justification is the guarantee and warranty that the central article of justification by faith is being kept pure." (p. 139)

Comment: That is another bold statement by Stoeckhardt, but in brief rebuttal we point out that *The Book of Concord* kept the "central article of justification by faith" pure without ever saying that “the entire world of sinners was justified through Christ's death.” Moreover, the Bible does not say that Christ's resurrection was proof or proclamation of this universal justification. If it did, could we not expect that Prof. Stoeckhardt would quote the appropriate chapter and verse?

⁵⁵ Apology, IV, Triglotta, p. 141.

⁵⁶ Formula of Concord, TD, III, "Righteousness of Faith," Triglotta, p. 921.

How did our Reformation forefathers keep the article of "justification by grace through faith" pure without saying that all men were justified at the time of Christ's death and resurrection? How can we teach that a man is justified by faith without suggesting that faith is something on his part which he contributes to his justification? It is not difficult if we believe that the very words of God are "quick and powerful" and which "are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge":⁵⁷

- "Who [God the Savior] will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:4
- "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16
- "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Titus 3:5
- "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Ephesians 2:8-9
- ". . . He died for all . . ." 2 Corinthians 5:15
- ". . . we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." 1 Timothy 4:10
- "[Jesus] gave himself a ransom for all . . ." 1 Timothy 2:6
- "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son [to be] the Saviour of the world." 1 John 4:14
- "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for [the sins of] the whole world. 1 John 2:2
- "And all things [are] of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ . . ." 2 Corinthians 5:18
- "For this [is] good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For [there is] one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." 1 Timothy 2:3-6

⁵⁷ Proverbs 8:9

- "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17
- "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth . . ." Romans 1:16
- "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matthew 26:26-28
- "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Romans 3:28

Divine words such as these do a marvelous job of setting forth "the central article of justification by faith" while refuting synergism and limited grace. They do not say that the entire world of sinners was justified.

Let us continue with Stoeckhardt's teaching of *general justification*:

"Whoever denies general justification is justly under suspicion that he is mixing his own work and merit into the grace of God." p. 139

Comment: This tactic has continued to the present time. This writer knows firsthand that anyone who questions so-called *universal, general, objective justification* is immediately accused of many heinous things, even things which one specifically denies.⁵⁸ For example, even when one affirms that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," he is still accused of making faith a work of man which earns justification. Chapters 4 and 5 will demonstrate that as late as 1912 our Lutheran forefathers were quite capable of proclaiming justification by grace through faith without universal or general justification.

After his bold introduction, reprinted above, Stoeckhardt goes on to set forth the argument of those who deny general justification. It is the classic *straw-man* argument, where the argument of one's opponent is set forth in

⁵⁸ Shortly after writing this book, this writer was expelled from an LCMS congregation (Rev. William Bischoff, Trinity Lutheran Church, Bridgeton MO.) without a vote of the congregation. My wife was expelled from the same congregation several months later for refusing to sign a 10-part Loyalty Oath, the first statement being: "Do you believe that the sins of all the world were forgiven in 30 AD when Christ was raised from the grave?" When she asked whether this included the sins of the people occupying hell at that time, and whether the punishment for those sins ceased when they were now forgiven, Rev. Bischoff refused to answer her question.

such a way that it is easy to refute. We use Stoeckhardt's own words as he characterizes the opposition to *general justification*.

"When they [opponents of general justification] treat of justification they lay down approximately the following sequence of thought: God through Christ has reconciled the sinful world with Himself through the sacrificial death of Christ. That salvation and reconciliation which is effected through Christ Jesus, Christ's obedience, suffering, and death, must be definitely distinguished from the actual forgiveness of sins. Through this reconciliation God has only made it possible for Himself to impart to sinful man further demonstrations of His grace. He has so far suppressed His wrath that He further concerns Himself with the sinners of the world. Reconciliation has opened the way for the possibility of the forgiveness of sins, of justification. As a consequence of reconciliation God pursues sinners further, calls them through the Gospel, and seeks to effect their conversion. And when a sinner is converted and believes on Jesus Christ, then that possibility becomes a reality; only then, as far as God is concerned, does it develop into justification, forgiveness of sins. One may look into the textbooks of Thomasius, Kahnis, Martensen, Luthardt, Frank, Philippi, and everywhere one will become aware of the structure of doctrine which has been briefly sketched here."

Comment: We concede that the people listed here by Stoeckhardt may have taught justification according to his characterization. Some people *We admit that some have opposed the concept of universal, objective justification* because they embraced some form of synergism or Calvinism. However, we do not need universal, general, or objective justification to refute those errors:

1. If anyone teaches that *"through [Christ's] reconciliation God has only made it possible for Himself to impart to sinful man further demonstrations of His grace"* then they are wrong. With the all-knowing God, there is no such thing as "possibilities." Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions stress that all things pertaining to the salvation of the elect were ordained by Him before the foundation of the world: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."⁵⁹

2. If anyone teaches that *"as a consequence of reconciliation, God pursues sinners further, calls them through the Gospel, and seeks to effect their conversion"* then they are wrong. Scripture and Article XI of

⁵⁹ 2 Timothy 1:9. Also: "The eternal election of God, however, not only foresees and foreknows the salvation of the elect, but is also, from the gracious will and pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, a cause which procures, works, helps and promotes our salvation and what pertains thereto." Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1065. Also: "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18) and (1Pe 1:20): Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world. . ." Also Rev. 13:8.

the Formula of Concord teach that God foreknows all things, including all things pertaining to salvation, and ordained all things pertaining to the salvation of His elect before the foundation of the world.⁶⁰ God did not become reconciled when Christ died on the cross and “as a consequence” pursue sinners further. Nor did Christ’s atoning death around A.D. 30 “make it possible for Himself to impart to sinful man further demonstrations of His grace.”

- For I am the LORD, I change not. (Malachi 3:6).
- Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. (2 Timothy 1:9).
- Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, (1 Peter 1:20 AV)
- And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8 AV)
- According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (Ephesians 1:4 AV)
- Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:30 AV)

There are many synergists who believe that man cooperates or contributes toward his own conversion and salvation. Sometimes synergism is overt (“I decided to follow Jesus”) and other times it is more subtle (“Don’t you want to believe on the Lord Jesus and be saved?”) We do not need *general* or *objective justification* to refute synergism; the very words of Scripture are quick and powerful in this arena as they are in every arena:

⁶⁰ Ibid. Also: “. . . the entire doctrine concerning the purpose, counsel, will and ordination of God pertaining to our redemption, call, justification, and salvation should be taken together . . . namely, that God in His purpose and counsel ordained: 1. That the human race is truly **redeemed** and reconciled with God through Christ, who, by His faultless obedience, suffering, **and** death, has merited for us the righteousness which avails before God, and eternal life. 2. **That** such merit and benefits of Christ shall be presented, offered, and distributed to us through **His** Word and Sacraments. 3. That by His Holy Ghost, through the Word, when it is preached, **heard,** and pondered, He will be efficacious and active in us, convert hearts to true repentance, **and** preserve them in the true faith. 4. That He will justify all those who in true repentance **receive** Christ by a true faith, and will receive them into grace, the adoption of sons, and the **inheritance** of eternal life.” Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1065.

- And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; (Ephesians 2:1)
- Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (James 1:18)
- Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) (Ephesians 2:5)
- For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (1 Peter 1:23)
- So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

Although Stoeckhardt successfully uses *general justification* to refute the straw-man argument set forth above, that does not prove that general justification is true: *using "A" to disprove the false "B" does not prove that "A" is true*. Let us trust the very words of Scripture, not man-made doctrinal deductions based on those words.⁶¹

The Forgotten Doctrine of Election

In Chapter 2 we noted that Prof. Schmidt later turned against Missouri on the doctrine of election. Objective justification constantly obscures or ignores the simple fact that "he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). Notice that Stoeckhardt attributes to his opponents a sequence of causes to the process of salvation (i.e. "*As a consequence of reconciliation God pursues sinners further, calls them through the Gospel, and seeks to effect their conversion.*") Such teachings are false, not because they deny that all sins are forgiven and all people justified, but because they contradict clear words of Scripture such as:

Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (2 Timothy 1:9 AV)

⁶¹ A spirit of pragmatism pervades Christendom and Lutheranism—the false notion that if a concept or technique is *effective*, then it is right. We dare not embrace universal, objective justification because it helps to refute the false notion that faith is a work of man or something we contribute toward our justification. Instead, let us follow Him Who said: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (Ephesians 1:4-5)

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. (John 6:37)

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30).⁶²

We do not need to say mankind or all people are justified to refute Synergism or the false notion that each step in the plan of salvation made possible the next step. It is noteworthy that Stoeckhardt *nowhere* addresses God's eternal election in his essay. Let us remember that "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" and Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world."⁶³

Perhaps after the long and acrimonious Predestination Controversy, many Missouri theologians chose *not* to use that truth to refute their pseudo-Lutheran opponents. This may help explain Stoeckhardt's use of *general justification*. The world and our carnal flesh rebels against the simple truth that "whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:30). The Lutheran Confessions were not afraid to assert the relationship between election and justification:

"The eternal election of God, however, not only foresees and foreknows the salvation of the elect, but is also, from the gracious will and pleasure

⁶² The founder of the Missouri Synod was not ashamed of the link between God's eternal election and justification: "There is no doctrine of Holy Writ which more confirms, illumines, and explains to us the doctrine of justification than the doctrine of election. For if it is true that those who are saved have in eternity been appointed to salvation, and that God has at the same time ordained that He will convert them, bring them to faith, and keep them in faith unto the end, despite the fact that He has beheld naught that is good in them, -- is there anything that can serve more strongly to confirm the doctrine of justification than the above teaching? For if God has decreed in eternity that we shall be saved, He must have acted from His own free grace, and we have no reason for boasting . . ." C.F.W. Walther, quoted in *Theological Quarterly*, Vol. XVIII, 1914, p. 157, emphasis added. See also earlier footnotes referencing Article XI of the Thorough Declaration.

⁶³ Acts 15:18; Rev. 13:8; 1 Peter 1:20.

*of God in Christ Jesus, a cause which procures, works, helps and promotes our salvation and what pertains thereto."*⁶⁴

" . . . the entire doctrine concerning the purpose, counsel, will and ordination of God pertaining to our redemption, call, justification, and salvation should be taken together . . . namely, that God in His purpose and counsel ordained:

1. That the human race is truly redeemed and reconciled with God through Christ, who, by His faultless obedience, suffering, and death, has merited for us the righteousness which avails before God, and eternal life.

2. That such merit and benefits of Christ shall be presented, offered, and distributed to us through His Word and Sacraments.

3. That by His Holy Ghost, through the Word, when it is preached, heard, and pondered, He will be efficacious and active in us, convert hearts to true repentance, and preserve them in the true faith.

*4. That He will justify all those who in true repentance receive Christ by a true faith, and will receive them into grace, the adoption of sons, and the inheritance of eternal life."*⁶⁵

*"Thus far is the mystery of predestination revealed to us in God's Word, and if we abide thereby and cleave thereto, it is a very useful, salutary, consolatory doctrine; for it establishes very effectually the article that we are justified and saved without all works and merits of ours, purely out of grace alone, for Christ's sake. For before the time of the world, before we existed, yea, before the foundation of the world was laid, when, of course, we could do nothing good, we were according to God's purpose chosen by grace in Christ to salvation, Rom. 9:11; 2 Tim. 1:9. Moreover, all opinions and erroneous doctrines concerning the powers of our natural will are thereby overthrown, because God in His counsel, before the time of the world, decided and ordained that He Himself, by the power of His Holy Ghost, would produce and work in us, through the Word, **everything** that pertains to our conversion."*⁶⁶ [boldface added]

*"From this article also powerful admonitions and warnings are derived, as Luke 7:30: They rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Luke 14:24: I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper. Also Matt. 20:16: Many be called, but few chosen. Also Luke 8:8, 18: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear, and: Take heed how ye hear. Thus the doctrine concerning this article can be employed profitably, comfortably and savingly [and can be transferred in many ways to our use]."*⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1065.

⁶⁵ Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1065. Notice the words "will justify."

⁶⁶ Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1077. "Everything" means exactly that.

⁶⁷ Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1079.

The Methods of an Exegete

After refuting the straw-man argument of the opponents of objective justification, Stoeckhardt goes on to "prove" his version of general justification from the second half of Romans 5. We will spend much time considering this argument because Romans 5 is still one of the favorite proof texts for modern-day objective justification. Stoeckhardt's use of Romans 5 illustrates the danger of building doctrine on exegesis instead of on the clear statements of Scripture which explicitly set forth that doctrine and which allow only one interpretation.

We urge you first to read the words of Romans 3 and 4 either in the Greek Majority Text, Luther's German Bible, or the King James. As you do so, repress all presuppositions and simply receive the natural meaning of the words, as if you were reading it for the first time. Then follow along as we present Romans chapter 5:

Romans 5 (KJ)

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only [so], but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

11 And not only [so], but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

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

13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

15 *But not as the offence, so also [is] the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, [which is] by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.*

16 *And not as [it was] by one that sinned, [so is] the gift: for the judgment [was] by one to condemnation, but the free gift [is] of many offences unto justification.*

17 *For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)*

18 *Therefore as by the offence of one [judgment came] upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [the free gift came] upon all men unto justification of life.*

19 *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

20 *Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*

21 *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Commentary on Romans 5:1

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"

The word "therefore" tells us that the Holy Ghost is about to summarize what He has taught previously. What has He said? The words following "therefore" provide the answer: ***"Therefore being justified by faith . . ."*** What could be simpler language than that? What does it mean to be justified by faith? Romans 1, 2, 3, and 4 provide the answer:

- First, chapters 1, 2, and the first 20 verses of chapter 3 tell us that "justification by faith" means it is without any merit or work or cooperation from man because of our natural and total depravity. Thus, "to be justified by faith" means first that "...by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). God requires a perfect righteousness to justify a person, and "there is none righteous, no not one" (Romans 3:10).
- To be "justified by faith" also means what is set forth in Romans 3:21 through Romans 4. Here are those words, with underlines on those portions which pertain especially to "being justified by faith":

3:21 *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;*

22 *Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:*

- 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
- 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
- 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
- 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.
- 27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.
- 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.
- 29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:
- 30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.
- 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.
- 4:1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?
- 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.
- 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.
- 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.
- 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.
- 6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,
- 7 *Saying*, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.
- 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.
- 9 *Cometh* this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.
- 10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.
- 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:
- 12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

- 13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.
- 14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:
- 15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, *there is no transgression*.
- 16 Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,
- 17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.
- 18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.
- 19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:
- 20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;
- 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.
- 22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.
- 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;
- 24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;
- 25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Thus we learn what the Holy Ghost, speaking through Paul, means in the opening words of Romans 5: "*Therefore being justified by faith . . .*". In the rest of the chapter we will learn an important *consequence* or *benefit* of being justified by faith.

***"Therefore being justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"***

In Romans Chapter 5 the Holy Ghost teaches us one of the important consequences of being justified by faith:⁶⁸ ". . . ***we have peace with God . . .***" These words need no explanation. We call them to your attention as you study the rest of Romans 5 because most OJ'ers ignore them. If any verse in Romans

⁶⁸ Incidentally, in Romans 6, 7 and 8 the Holy Ghost sets forth other *consequences* of being justified by faith in the righteousness of Christ: freedom from sin ("For he that is dead is freed from sin." (Romans 6:7), freedom from Law ("Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ" (Romans 7:4) and freedom from condemnation ("*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" (Romans 8:1).

5 is used to say that "all men are justified," then let that same explanation prove that all men have "peace with God," which would contradict many explicit statements of Scripture:

- Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (Romans 8:7)
- Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; (Exodus 20:5)
- He that hateth me hateth my Father also. (John 15:23)
- Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. (James 4:4)
- Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: (Ephesians 4:18)

" . . . through our Lord Jesus Christ"

These words confirm that Romans 5 is talking about Christians, people who have peace with God "through our Lord Jesus Christ." Some people may exhibit a form of peace, but it is not the peace spoken of here if it is not "through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Holy Ghost is limiting the argument of Chapter 5 to believers in Christ crucified.

With that introduction we can better understand the "peace with God" set forth in the rest of Chapter 5, a *peace* which:

- enables us to *rejoice in hope* (verse 2)
- enables us to even *glory in tribulation* (verses 3-5)
- is *not built on our strength* or merit but on the love of God (verses 6-8)
- has the assurance that *we shall be saved* from His wrath since He reconciled us to Him when we were enemies (verse 9-10)
- also allows us to *joy* in God (verse 11)
- even overcomes *the death* which came upon all men because sin entered into the world, a death which reigned over all (verses 12-21)

We will see shortly that Martin Luther also understood this chapter as talking about a benefit of being one of those people who is justified by faith. This chapter is not teaching WHAT justification is, or HOW it happens, or to WHOM it applies. It is teaching one of the key *benefits* to those who are justified in the

manner set forth in Romans 3 and 4. We remind our Lutheran readers that Romans 3 and 4 are the only Bible verses mentioned in Article IV of the Augsburg Confession (Of Justification):

Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4. [emphasis added]

Stoeckhardt the Exegete

Let us now examine and refute Stoeckhardt's claim that Romans 5, especially verses 18-19, teach universal justification. We begin by noting that Stoeckhardt boldly asserts that Romans 5:18-19 is a summary of everything else taught in Romans about "justification." Like his bold opening statement, Professor Stoeckhardt makes this claim without Scriptural support:

p. 141: "What St. Paul has taught from Romans 1:16 on concerning justification he sums up in chapter 5, verses 12-21, as in a recapitulation. And the sum of this section is again given in the two verses, 18 and 19. There we read: 'Therefore, as by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.'"

Stoeckhardt uses much sophisticated exegesis to support his interpretation of these verses. We can summarize his argument as follows:

Just as Adam's sin was imputed to all men for their condemnation, the righteousness of Christ was imputed to all men, which is their justification.

A careful reader will note that this teaching is essentially the same argument used by F.A. Schmidt to introduce the concept of universal justification (Chapter 2). Prof. Schmidt, however, was careful to say that only "mankind" was declared righteous by the resurrection of Christ, while also saying "not indeed. . . every individual person." Prof. Stoeckhardt drops that distinction and says "all men" are justified without qualification.

Let us first examine his bold assertion that Romans 5:18-19 is summarizing everything taught previously about justification:

- Why did our Reformation forefathers not use these verses to prove the truth about justification?⁶⁹

⁶⁹ We will examine the evidence shortly.

- Does it make sense that within an argument talking about the *benefits of being justified by faith* we now learn that *all people* are justified without faith?⁷⁰
- Should we say "yea" and "nay" when God says "our word toward you was not yea and nay" (2 Corinthians 1:18)?

Let us refute Stoeckhardt's interpretation of these verses from two respectable Lutheran sources: The Book of Concord and Martin Luther.

Testimony of *The Book of Concord* on Romans 5:18-19

We offer this testimony for Lutheran readers who accept the Book of Concord as a true exposition of Scripture. The only place where our Confessions reference both Romans 5:18 and 5:19 is The Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, Article III.⁷¹ This article is called *Righteousness of Faith* [!]. The setting alone makes it clear that our orthodox forefathers did not interpret either verse 18 or 19 as teaching a righteousness (justification) of all people without *faith*.

Here is how the Lutheran Confessions explain Romans 5:18-19:

*"Therefore it is considered and understood to be **the same thing** when Paul says that we are justified by faith, Romans 3:28, or that faith is counted to us for righteousness, Romans 4:5, and when he says that we are made righteous by the obedience of One, Romans 5:19, or that by the righteousness of One justification of faith came to all men, Romans 5:18."⁷² [emphasis added]*

Our Confessors understood these verses, which Stoeckhardt uses to prove that **all** people are justified apart from faith, to mean nothing other than "we are justified by faith" and "faith is counted to us for righteousness." They understood the "we" in Romans 5:19 ("we are made righteous") to refer to those who are justified by faith. They did *not* understand the clause "by the righteousness of **one** the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom. 5:18) to say "**all** men are justified." Indeed, we can understand those simple words the same way we understand the plain words of Titus 2:11: "For the grace of God that **bringeth** salvation hath appeared to all men."

Martin Luther on Romans 5

As an additional witness to rebut Prof. Stoeckhardt's exegesis, we offer Martin Luther. When lecturing on Romans 5, he introduced this chapter with the following summary statement:

⁷⁰ By way of analogy, when describing the advantages of living in St. Louis, would I conclude my argument by casually asserting that all people live in St. Louis?

⁷¹ Note: The Formula of Concord also references Romans 5:19 twice to prove that Christ is our righteousness by faith according to both His natures, Triglotta, p. 793 and 935.

⁷² Formula of Concord, TD, III, Righteousness of Faith, Triglotta, p. 919.

*"The apostle demonstrates the power of faith in the justification of the believers, because death reigned from Adam to Christ."*⁷³

This introduction of Romans Chapter 5 contradicts modern Lutherans who want isolated verses in this chapter to teach the justification of all people without faith. Luther understood this chapter as teaching a benefit ("power") of the fact that people are justified by faith.

To reinforce the fact that Romans chapter 5 presents the peace which comes only by justification through faith, Luther in the more detailed comment ("scholia") on verse 5:1 says

*" . . . note how the apostle places this spiritual peace only after righteousness has preceded it. For first he says, 'since we are justified by faith' . . . "*⁷⁴

Professor Georg Stoeckhardt claims that verse 18 ("*. . . even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life*") means that all men *are* justified, declared righteous by Almighty God at the time of Christ's death and resurrection. As we read Luther's comment on this verse, keep in mind that this is a section of Scripture presenting the peace which comes *after* a person is justified by faith, and that the Lutheran Confessions understand this verse to mean "the same thing" as "we are justified by faith" and "faith is counted to us for righteousness." The words in boldface italics are Luther's translation of the verse, and the other words are his commentary:

*"17. For if because of one man's, Adam's, trespass, through that which the trespass deserved, death reigned through that one man, namely, Adam, the one who committed the trespass unto death, much more will they, the faithful in Christ, who receive the abundance of grace, by which not only that one trespass but all other sins are forgiven, and the free gift of righteousness, because our righteousness is a free gift and grace, that is, it is given in mercy and grace, and when they have triumphed over death, they will reign in life through the one Man Jesus Christ, the Author of the righteousness that brings life. 18 Then, as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, that is, the judgment of death, so one Man's, Christ's, act of righteousness leads, by grace, to acquittal and life for all men, that is, it came to many, or all who are justified in no other way than through His righteousness, etc. 19. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."*⁷⁵

⁷³ *Luther's Works*, AE, Vol. 25, Lectures on Romans, p. 43.

⁷⁴ *Luther's Works*, AE, Vol. 25, Lectures on Romans, p. 285.

⁷⁵ *Luther's Works*, AE, Volume 25, Lectures on Romans, p. 48.

Luther's translation of verse 18 (see the key word "for all men") and his commentary ("that is, it came to *many*") denies what Stoeckhardt claims: that verse 18 says all people are justified or acquitted. This is made more emphatic by an important footnote Luther inserted at the end of his commentary on Rom. 5:19, which also proves he did not interpret these verses as saying that all men are justified:

*"Here [in verse 19] he [Paul] uses the term "many" and not "all" in order to indicate that in the preceding verse [18] he was **speaking not of the number of sinners or righteous people** but of the power of sin and grace. For if sin was so strong that one sin could destroy many people, indeed, all people, then grace is even stronger still, for the one grace can save many, indeed all people, from many sins, **if all are willing.**"* ⁷⁶
[emphasis added]

By quoting Luther to rebut Prof. Stoeckhardt's exegesis of Roman 5:18-19, we do not pretend that Luther was verbally inspired, or that he always spoke as the oracles of God. Rather, we present his interpretation of these verses to show that respectable Lutherans can interpret these verses *without* universal justification; therefore these verses cannot be used to prove that doctrine. Doctrine should be built only from clear Bible verses that do not permit multiple interpretations. On those Bible verses that permit multiple interpretations, let us go to clear verses such as those found in Romans 3 and 4 where Paul explicitly sets forth what WHOM God justifies and HOW He does it.

Prof. Stoeckhardt's explanation of Romans 5:18-19 is a good example of how exegesis can be used to distort the clear sense of God's words. Stoeckhardt had a preconceived notion, "universal justification," and went looking in Scripture for evidence to support it:

- He looked in a portion of Scripture, Romans 5, which does not set forth the *how* and *whom* of justification. He chose a section of Scripture which sets forth one of the *benefits* which accrues to those who are already justified through faith.
- He takes two verses out of their *broad* context, interpreting them in a fashion that contradicts the opening verse in the argument: Romans 5:1.
- He takes verse 18 out of its *narrow* context (notice how verse 17, to which 18 is linked with the word *therefore*, is referring to "they which **receive** abundance of grace." We know this does not apply to all men.

Stoeckhardt uses wrong exegesis to assert what the clear words of Scripture do **not** assert. "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Luther's Works, AE, Volume 25, Lectures on Romans, p. 48.

⁷⁷ Proverbs 30:6.

Summary - Romans 5:18-19

1. Contrary to Stoeckhardt's bold assertion, these verses are *not* a summary of all that has been taught about justification. Romans 3 and 4 explicitly set forth the *how* and *whom* of justification. Verse 1 of Romans 5 clearly establishes that Paul is presenting one of the *benefits* of being justified by faith in Christ's righteousness. Verses 18 and 19 are part of the argument that a believer's peace even overcomes the sentence of death which came upon all men through sin. To say that "by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life" is not saying that all people are justified.
2. Martin Luther's understanding of these verses contradicts Prof. Stoeckhardt's claim that all men are justified.
3. The Lutheran Confessions understood these two verses to mean "the same as" "we are justified by faith, Romans 3:28, and "faith is counted to us [believers] for righteousness, Romans 4:5."

A Practical Example of Wrong Exegesis

We have seen that Prof. Stoeckhardt wants to build a doctrine of what justification IS based on Romans 5:18-19. These verses are found in a chapter that teaches a *benefit* of being justified by faith. For laypeople who are unfamiliar with the dangers of exegesis, I offer the following practical example. Assume you read the following account of an accident, given by an eyewitness whom you know to be trustworthy. The sentences are numbered to make the analysis easier to follow:

1 The red Ford was definitely at fault.

2 I looked up and saw it turning right in the path of the oncoming blue Chevy.

3 The driver of the blue Chevy honked real loud, and I think he tried to slam the brakes.

4 I jumped on this rock so I could see better.

5 The driver of the red Ford tried to turn out of the way of the blue Chevy, but that Chevy kept right on coming and slammed him right in the side.

6 The brakes on the blue Chevy didn't stop it.

7 The blue Chevy creamed the red Ford."

- We would distort the testimony if we concluded that the blue Chevy caused this accident based on the 5th sentence alone. No matter how thoroughly we expound on the exact meaning of each word in that sentence, we still reach an erroneous conclusion. **Rule:** Let the immediate context of a statement, or a Bible verse, guide our interpretation *when more than one interpretation is possible*. **Rule:** When more than one interpretation of a verse is possible we must look to other *clearer* Bible verses to determine which interpretation is correct. Romans 5:1 introduces the subject of the entire chapter in a clear,

unambiguous manner: the peace which comes when we are justified by faith. Let us not interpret any verse in the subsequent argument in a manner that contradicts that clear statement UNLESS that is the only possible interpretation of that verse. We have already seen that both our Lutheran Confessions and Martin Luther offer interpretations of Romans 5:18-19 which contradict general justification.

- We would also distort the testimony if we concluded from the 6th sentence that the brakes of blue Chevys are unreliable. The witness was not addressing the subject of brake reliability in general, or this Blue Chevy's brakes in particular. Likewise, let us not use Romans 5:18-19 to determine what justification *is*; this entire chapter is an argument about one of the *consequences* of being justified by faith. **Rule:** Let us learn to distinguish between what a matter IS and its BENEFITS. Sometimes the Bible addresses one, sometimes the other.
- We would be in error if, based on the 4th sentence, we concluded that one can "see better" by jumping on a rock. The accident witness is not teaching us how to improve eyesight. **Rule:** Let us build doctrines from those Bible verses which explicitly set forth that particular doctrine. Since Romans 5 does not set out to teach *how* men are justified, or *whom* God justifies, we dare not use selected verses therein to answer those questions, especially when our conclusion contradicts what is taught in the clear verses (Romans 3 and 4) where the *how* and *whom* of justification are explicitly set forth.

In the next chapter we will study the Brief Statement of 1897 and discover that it contains nothing of *general justification*, which Stoeckhardt claimed in 1888 was "the statement and treasure of genuine Lutheran theology"!

*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us
unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.
Galatians 3:24*

*"We note that the Bible speaks of this justifying act of God as applying to the
whole world, as having taken place in the death and resurrection of Christ, and
as an accomplished fact. THIS IS OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION!
"Every Sinner Declared Righteous"
The WELS Conference of Presidents, 1954*

Chapter 4

The Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod - 1897

Franz Pieper was the protégé and chosen successor of C.F.W. Walther. He joined Concordia Seminary as a Professor in 1878 and became its President in 1887, the year Walther died. He remained Seminary President until his death in 1931 and also served as Synodical President from 1899-1911. There is no claim that “God has forgiven all sins” or “God has justified all people” in the two Missouri public confessions of his tenure: the 1897 Brief Statement and the 1912 Catechism. We will see (Chapter 6) that Pieper did tolerate the use of this term in his later Dogmatics (published between 1917 to 1924) but he used it differently than modern Lutherans. He also qualified the term in such a way that false deductions were less likely to occur. In particular, F. Pieper explained *objective justification* in a way that did not contradict:

- the doctrine of election
- the ongoing wrath of God which abideth on unbelievers
- the fact that *all* sins of unbelievers, not just the sin of unbelief, will be punished eternally in hell
- the fact that the object of saving faith, the true Gospel message, is the Jesus Christ and Him crucified, **not** the "fact" that all men are forgiven.

Since Franz Pieper was the towering theologian in the Missouri Synod from 1887 through 1931, his teaching on justification is worth careful examination. In this chapter we will examine the Brief Statement of 1897 which he authored. In Chapter 5 we will examine the 1912 Catechism and compare it to Missouri's 1991 version. Finally, in chapter 6, we will examine the *Christliche Dogmatik* authored by F. Pieper from 1917 - 1924, and compare its teaching to the English translation (*Christian Dogmatics*) done around 1950.

Here, briefly stated, is what we will find:

1. The 1897 Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod makes no mention of *universal, general, objective* or *subjective justification*. It does not say that God has forgiven all sins or justified all people.
2. Missouri's 1912 Catechism makes no mention of *universal, general, objective* or *subjective justification*. Nor does it use *any* of the language which has come to be associated with this concept (“all sins are forgiven,” “all people are declared righteous,” “God’s wrath is removed or appeased.”). In Chapter 5 we will see how the 1991 Catechism makes many changes to the 1912 edition.
3. Pieper's *Christliche Dogmatik* (published in German from 1917 to 1924), did use the term objective justification but he qualified it extensively. In Chapter 6 we will see that F. Pieper’s teaching of objective justification changed remarkably in the English translation done around 1950.

Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod - 1897

The reader may recall that Professor Stoeckhardt boldly opened his 1888 essay on general justification with these words: *"Genuine Lutheran theology counts the doctrine of general justification among the statements and treasures of its faith."* If that were true, it is surprising that the 1897 Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod, written 9 years later, does not mention either the term or the concept behind the term. **There is no claim that all people were justified through the Resurrection of Christ.** This need not surprise the reader, because universal, general or objective justification does not appear in the Book of Concord either.

To remind the reader how "old" Missouri taught justification, and all things pertaining to it, we print below the parts of the 1897 Brief Statement which relate to this article. There is *no* suggestion that all men were declared righteous, or justified, or forgiven when Christ died or rose from the grave. It refutes works righteousness, synergism and Calvinism without saying all sins were forgiven and all people justified.⁷⁸

Of Redemption

We believe that the second person of the Godhead, i.e., the Son of God, was made man, and this in the following manner, viz., that in the fullness of time He received into His divine person a true human nature from the Virgin Mary by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Accordingly, we believe, regarding Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, that He is "true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary," true God and true man in one undivided and indivisible person. This miracle of the incarnation of the Son of God has taken place to the end that He should become the Mediator between God and man, namely, that in the place of mankind He should fulfill the Law, suffer and die, and thus reconcile all mankind with God, and bring them again unto life. All of which is testified by the Holy Ghost through St. Paul, who says: "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," Galatians 4:4-5.

Comment: We call the reader's attention to the following points:

- The essence of redemption is the *"incarnation"* of God's Son and the fact that *"in the place of mankind [He] fulfilled the Law, suffered and died";*
- The *result* of the vicarious satisfaction was the fact that Christ is the Mediator between God and man: (It was done *"to the end that He should become the Mediator between God and man"*);

⁷⁸ This English translation of the 1897 Brief Statement was published in the Theological Quarterly, Vol. VIII, January 1904. It was translated from the German by W.H.T. Dau.

- To be the Mediator means: ". . .and thus reconcile all mankind with God, and bring them again unto life." Soon, the Brief Statement will teach us that the Holy Ghost, working through the so-called means of grace, brings sinful, penitent men to Christ-the-Mediator where they receive the forgiveness of sins which Christ has procured for all, at which time **they** become reconciled toward God. Note especially that in 1897 there is no suggestion that the "end" of Christ's redemptive work is the "justification of all sinners" or "the forgiveness of all sins." Why did modern Lutherans change these words?

Of Faith in Christ

Since Christ by His vicarious life, suffering, and death is the sole Redeemer of men, and since God has the salvation, which was wrought out by Christ, proclaimed to men through the Gospel, to the end that they may believe this salvation, and thus become sharers therein, we profess that faith in Christ is the only way for men to obtain salvation, as Christ Himself testifies: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," John 3:36.

Comment: Notice how the 1897 Brief Statement stresses both the importance of *faith* and the immutable wrath of God right after setting forth "Redemption." We are told plainly that "*he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*" However, this disclaimer is rarely attached to the modern version of objective justification, thus allowing many to falsely conclude that God's wrath has ceased and all men are righteous in His sight because of Christ's death and resurrection.

Of Faith in Christ (continued)

However, by faith in Christ we understand faith in the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake, i.e., this confidence of the heart, that God by grace, for Christ's sake, without our works, forgives all our sins, and receives us to everlasting life. We reject the doctrine, which in our time is widely disseminated, especially among the sects in our country, and according to which faith in Christ is not understood to be faith in the Gospel, i.e., in the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake, but human efforts to fulfill the Law of God.

Comment: Notice the meaning of "forgiveness of sins" according to the 1897 Brief Statement. It does not say, as Missouri's 1991 Catechism claims (Chapter 5), that "forgiveness of sins" means we believe *all* sins have been forgiven to all men. No, in 1897 faith in the "forgiveness of sins" meant that God, by grace, for Christ's sake, forgives "*our*" sins. This is a significant issue raised by objective justification: Does one's eternal salvation depend on believing that God has already forgiven *all* people? This writer has been told by many OJ'ers that while he denies the universal forgiveness of all sins, he is outside the true faith and

heading for hell. The Bible says the object of saving faith—the thing that is believed with God-wrought faith—is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Objective justification says it is the “fact” that God has already justified all people and forgiven all sins.

Of Conversion

Faith in Christ, by which alone men are saved, is not by nature found in man, but is wrought in man by conversion.

Regarding conversion, we believe that it is neither wholly, nor one half, nor one thousandth part, the work of man, but the work of God alone, who by grace for Christ's sake works the same in man by His Word. We believe thus, because it is the plain doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. Scripture, namely, states, in the first place, regarding unconverted man, that he is dead in sins, Eph 2:1, and that he does not advance toward salvation in Christ, but regards it as foolishness, 1 Cor 2:14. In the second place, Scripture explicitly declares conversion to be the work of God alone, yea, to be an operation of divine omnipotence. Eph. 2:4-5: "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." Eph 1:19-20: "We believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead."

Comment: Notice how these words refute synergism without saying God has justified all people and forgiven all sins.⁷⁹ This writer knows from personal experience that those who question objective justification are always accused of making faith the object of their faith, even when they say nothing suggesting such a thing.

Of Conversion (continued)

We, furthermore, profess that the Holy Spirit is willing to work conversion not only in a few, but in all hearers of the Word, and that, if a part of the hearers, nevertheless, remain unconverted, this is due not to a deficiency in the grace of God, but must be ascribed solely to the obstinate resistance of man, as Christ says of unbelieving Jerusalem: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not," Matt. 23:37, and as Stephen says of the unbelieving Jews: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye," Acts 7:51. Grace, although it is seriously intended, yea, although it is an almighty grace, Eph 1:19-20, can nevertheless be resisted on the part of man. Man cannot promote his conversion, but he can hinder it.

⁷⁹ Synergism is the false notion that we contribute toward or cooperate with our conversion.

Comment: Compare the first sentence of the previous paragraph to Question 167 of the 1991 Missouri Catechism (Chapter 5), which tells us that the "*Holy Spirit wants to convert all people.*" We will see that the 1912 Catechism follows the 1897 Brief Statement, by saying that "*Although it [the forgiveness of sins] has been procured for all men, and is offered by the Gospel to all that hear it*" [emphasis added]. By 1991 the Missouri Synod was no longer content to confess that the Holy Ghost is willing to work conversion in all hearers of the word: since all people had been justified at the time of Christ's Resurrection, it teaches that the Holy Spirit *wants* to convert all people.

Of Justification

*All its teachings regarding the love of God to a sinner-world, regarding the salvation wrought out by Christ, regarding the insufficiency of all men to acquire salvation through themselves, and regarding faith in Christ as the only way to obtain salvation, the Scripture sums up in the article of justification, by which it teaches the reasons why, and the manner in which, a person is accounted righteous before God, and received unto eternal life. Holy Scripture, namely, teaches that God does not receive men on a basis of their own work or their own merit, as the blind world and nominal Christians imagine Him to do, but **that without the deeds of the Law, alone by grace, on account of the perfect merit of Christ, He justifies them, i.e., He regards as righteous all those who believe in Christ, i.e., who believe on the authority of the Gospel, that for Christ's sake their sins are forgiven them.** Thus the Holy Spirit testifies through St. Paul: "There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Romans 3:22-24. And again: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law," Romans 3:28. [emphasis added]*

Comment: Read carefully the boldface portion and compare it to the modern teaching that "God has forgiven all sins and justified all people." Notice the prominence that our forefathers gave to God-wrought saving faith in the justification of a sinner. Why does Missouri now claim that all people are justified without faith? Why did Lutherans need new words to refute the errors confronting them? Do Lutherans trust the very words of Scripture to refute the false synergistic notion that faith is something on our part which *causes* our justification? And as for the so-called limited grace of Calvinism, do Lutherans trust the simple words of Scripture to prove that God "is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9)?

Of Justification (continued)

This doctrine we believe with all our heart, and pray God to graciously preserve us and our posterity in the same. For only by this doctrine Christ

*is given the honor due Him, viz., that by His life, suffering, and death He is our only Redeemer, and only by this doctrine poor sinners receive this abiding comfort, that God is assuredly gracious to them. Regarding this doctrine we hold, in harmony with our fathers, that it is "the principal article of the Christian doctrine;" this doctrine is the real secret of Scripture, by which Scripture is distinguished from all false books of religion; for only Scripture teaches this article, that **men are saved by faith in Christ crucified**, and not by their own works. We also profess that only where this article has entered into a heart by faith there are Christians, and there is the Christian Church found, while **all men who do not believe this article must be numbered with the unbelieving**, even though they are found in external communion with the Church. [emphasis added]*

Comment: Please note the continued stress on personal "faith" and the fact that the Gospel message believed by Christians is not the universal forgiveness of sins, but "Christ crucified."

Of Justification (continued)

*Accordingly, we also profess that the Christians of all times must exercise holy zeal and the greatest care to have this article taught with perfect purity, i.e., to have all works of men, by whatever name they may be called, excluded from the same. We do not only reject the well known gross error of the merit of works, which the sect of the Papists teaches, and the equally gross error, which certain so-called Protestants teach, who state that God receives a person unto grace if he strives after virtue, as far as he is able; but we also reject all modern doctrines, by which the renewal and sanctification of men, designated as "ethical conception of faith," or "inwardness of the Christian belief," is made a cause of justification alongside the grace of God and the merit of Christ. For, while it is true that faith, whenever it enters a heart, effects also an inward renewal and sanctification, and brings forth good morals and good works, still it is not through these features that faith justifies in the sight of God, but solely through **the act of believing and accepting the merit of Christ from the Word of the Gospel**. [emphasis added]*

Comment: Please note that the so-called object of saving faith (the thing believed with God-wrought faith) is not universal forgiveness or universal justification.

Of Justification (continued)

Finally, we declare that by every kind of synergism, i.e., that by every doctrine which ascribes to man a cooperation unto conversion or unto the acquisition of faith, the article of justification is corrupted. For even if people rightly say, in harmony with the Church, that man is justified without works "by faith," or even "by faith alone," still by their false doctrine

of conversion they have made faith itself, in part, a work of man, and thus they have again introduced man's work into the article of justification.

*We reject as fundamental corruptions of the Christian faith all heresies by which man's own works, and his own merit, is mingled into the article of justification. For the Christian faith is none other than this, that we obtain the forgiveness of sins and salvation, without our works, alone by grace for Christ's sake, **through faith.***

Comment: Please note again the prominent role of "faith" in the *only* justification taught by the 1897 Brief Statement.

Summary

The 1897 Brief Statement did not use *any* of the language which is associated with universal or general justification. It does not say that God forgave all sins or justified all people or mankind. It did not teach two types or stages or facets of justification, *objective* and *subjective*. The term *justification* was applied to that action by which God declared an individual person righteous who is brought (by God) to saving faith in Christ crucified. The 1897 Brief Statement also refuted works righteousness, synergism and Calvinism. Why did Missouri theologians later feel the need to say that all people were justified at the time of Christ's death and resurrection? Why did the truth of justification have to change after 1897?

*That seeing they may see, and not perceive;
and hearing they may hear, and not understand;
lest at any time they should be converted,
and their sins should be forgiven them.*

Mark 4:12

*"Why do you say, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sin'?
I believe in the forgiveness of sins because through Christ
God has declared pardon and forgiveness to all sinful humanity."
Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation,
Concordia Publishing House, 1991, p. 160.*

Chapter 5

Missouri's Small Catechism 1912 compared to 1991

In the previous chapter, we saw the "old Missouri" understanding of justification set forth by the Brief Statement of 1897. It contains none of the language of general justification which Professor Stoeckhardt claimed in 1888 was the "*statement and treasure of genuine Lutheran theology*." It provides a benchmark for the doctrinal evolution that has occurred since that time.

In this chapter we examine the 1912 Missouri Catechism, published by Concordia Publishing House and used to instruct many members of the Lutheran church. Our study will reveal that as late as 1912 there was still no teaching of universal forgiveness or universal justification in Missouri's public confessions. Nor was there any mention of a twofold justification (objective and subjective). This chapter alone should convince any sincere observer that the current teaching of objective justification is indeed "new."

To illustrate the doctrinal evolution, we will compare the 1912 Catechism to Missouri's 1991 version.⁸⁰ Our analysis and comparison will focus on selected parts of the Second and Third Articles of the Apostle's Creed. Some of the changes are relatively minor and we ask your forbearance as we study them: even the minor changes will help reveal the important doctrinal evolution, and how this new teaching arose. We have underlined the changes which will be discussed.

The Second Article - Of Redemption

1912 Catechism

127. What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true. [page 78].

1991 Catechism

What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true. [page 116].

⁸⁰ The Small Catechism itself is copyright 1986. The "Explanation" is copyright 1991.

Comment: From 1912 to 1991 the only change in the Explanation of the Second Article is "creature" to "person." Therefore, we would expect that the subsequent questions and answers (the explanation of the Explanation, so to speak) do not change either. But that is not the case. The authors of the 1991 Catechism did not modify the highly visible Explanation of the Second Article, but they give it a different explanation.

1912

150. For what purpose did Christ humiliate Himself?
To redeem me, a lost and condemned creature.

1991

133. Why did Christ humble Himself?
Christ voluntarily humbled Himself in order to "redeem me, a lost and condemned person"

Comment: No significant change.

151. Wherefrom has Christ redeemed you?
From all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil.

134. From what has Christ redeemed you?
He has redeemed me "from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil."

Comment: No significant change.

152. In what respect has Christ redeemed you from all sins?
He has freed me from the guilt, the punishment, and the dominion of sin.

135. How has Christ redeemed you from all sins?
A. He took my guilt and punishment upon Himself.
B. He freed me from the slavery of sin.

Comment: No significant change.

153. In what respect are you redeemed from death by Christ?
I need not fear temporal death, since eternal death has no longer any power over me.

136. How has Christ rescued you from death?
Through His suffering, death and resurrection, Christ has triumphed over death. Since He now gives me eternal life I need not fear death.

Comment: Notice how the 1991 Catechism takes the word "redeemed" from the Explanation of the Second Article and changes it to "rescue" in this question. They keep the word "redeemed" in the highly visible Explanation of the Article, but change its *meaning* to "rescue" in the explanation of the Explanation. There is a difference between "redeemed" and "rescued:"

"Redeemed" focuses on the ransom paid by Christ and the resulting change in ownership:

- Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Timothy 2:6)

- Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (Acts 20:28)
- For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:20)

On the other hand, when something is “rescued” that is generally understood to mean that it is no longer in danger.⁸¹ We should not suggest that someone who is “bought” is out of danger when the Bible specifically says otherwise:

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (2 Peter 2:1)

The 1912 Catechism said nothing in the Second Article which contradicted the simple words in the meaning of the Third Article: “. . . in which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers.” On the other hand, by employing the word “rescue” in the Second Article, the 1991 Catechism lays the groundwork for the universal justification which it teaches in the Third Article.

1912

154. In what respect has Christ redeemed you from the power of the devil?

He has overcome the devil, and conquered him, so that he can no more accuse me, and I can now victoriously withstand his temptations.

1991

137. How has Christ rescued you from the power of the devil?

Christ has completely conquered the devil. Therefore the devil can no longer accuse me of my sins, and I can resist his temptations.

Comment: The preceding comment discussed the change from “redeemed” to “rescued.”

1912

155. Wherewith has Christ redeemed you?

Not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.

1991

138. With what has Christ redeemed you?

Christ has redeemed me, “not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.”

Comment: No significant change.

⁸¹ The primary definition of “rescue” is “to free or save from danger.” Webster’s New World Dictionary.

1912

156. How does this work your redemption?
Christ has thereby rendered satisfaction for me, and paid the penalty of my guilt.

1991

139. How does this work of redemption
benefit you?

Christ was my substitute. He took my place under God's judgment against sin. By paying the penalty of my guilt, Christ atoned, or made satisfaction, for my sins (vicarious satisfaction).

Comment: Notice the major change in focus between these two questions. In 1912 there was no reason *at this point* to ask how Christ's redemption "benefits" a person because that question requires an understanding of the entire plan of salvation, including the work of the Holy Ghost presented in the Third Article. However, the 1991 Catechism teaches that Christ's work of redemption by itself "benefits you." One of the hallmarks of modern-day objective justification is that the cross and Resurrection in time changed the status of all individual people and put them on an equal footing around A.D. 30: God forgave all sins and justified all people.

1912

157. Whose own have you become by the redemption?

Christ has redeemed me, purchased, and won me, so that I am now His own, and He is my Lord.

Comment: It is significant that this question is omitted from the 1991 Catechism. Why omit such a question? Perhaps because it reminded the reader what "redemption" meant to "old" Lutherans: a "purchase" by the payment of a ransom, not a "rescuing" from danger.

1912

158. Has Christ redeemed only you?
No, me and all lost and condemned mankind.

1991

140. Has Christ redeemed, purchased, and won you only?

No, Christ has redeemed me and all people (universal atonement).

Comment: As you read Question 140, keep in mind that the 1991 Catechism has already presented "redeemed" and "rescued" as interchangeable. Therefore, if "Christ has redeemed me and all people," then all people are also *rescued*, which is true only if Christ's redemptive work on the cross led God to forgive all sins and justify all people. Those are the chief assertions of modern day objective justification and presented in the 1991 Catechism's questions regarding the Third Article of the Apostle's Creed.

The Third Article of the Apostle's Creed

As with the Second Article, the 1991 Missouri Catechism keeps the same explanation of the Third Article, changing only *Holy Ghost* to *Holy Spirit*. As with the Second Article, this is misleading because the questions and answers which

follow the Explanation give an entirely different meaning to those old words. This is especially true in regard to the meaning of the "forgiveness of sins." The 1991 Catechism keeps the highly visible Explanation unchanged, but changes the explanation of the Explanation.

Let us quickly review the Third Article and its Explanation:

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit - 1991] has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers, and will at the last day raise up me and all the dead, and give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

Both the 1912 and the 1991 Catechism start with this same Explanation of the Third Article; now let us see how differently they explain the Explanation:

1912

177. What has the Holy Ghost done to bring you to Christ and sanctify you?

He has called me by the Gospel
Luke 14:17

1991

158. What has the Holy Spirit done to bring you to faith?

The Holy Spirit "has called me by the Gospel," that is, He has invited and drawn me by the Gospel to partake of the spiritual blessings that are mine in Christ.

Romans 1:16

2 Thess. 2:14

Rev. 22:17

Bible narratives: Invitation to the wedding banquet of the king's son (Matt. 22:1-10).
Invitation to the great banquet (Luke 14:16-17)

Comment: Notice how the 1912 Catechism focuses on the fact that the Holy Ghost, by the call of the Gospel, **brings us to Christ**. Being "called by the Gospel" in 1912 meant "bringing us to Christ and sanctifying us". On the other hand, the 1991 Catechism changes that to say that the Holy Spirit "has called me by the Gospel, that is, He has invited and drawn me by the Gospel to partake of the spiritual blessings that are mine in Christ."

- Why does the 1991 Catechism omit mentioning that one must be brought to Christ? Why would any Christian want to obscure such a truth? Such an

omission is consistent with the notion that all sins are already forgiven—even people who are not yet brought by the Holy Ghost to Christ.

- Why did the 1991 Catechism drop the 1912 reference to “sanctification” in this question? What was wrong with the 1912 teaching? Such an omission is consistent with the modern notion that God has already justified all people: If God forgave Billy Unbeliever’s sins and declared him to be righteous when Christ died and rose from the grave, why tell Billy he needs to be sanctified?
- Why does the 1991 Catechism go far beyond the 1912 version and say that these spiritual blessings are already “mine” *before* I am called by the Gospel? Where does the Bible teach such a thing? Such a change is consistent with the modern teaching of objective justification that all sins are already forgiven—the blessings are already “mine.”

Now read this important question from the 1912 Catechism and see how it changed by 1991:

1912

183. Is the Holy Ghost willing to work all this in every one who hears the Gospel?

Yes; but most men obstinately resist the Word and Spirit of God, and are thus lost by their own fault.

1991

167. Does the Holy Spirit want to do this in the lives of all people?

God the Holy Spirit earnestly wants to convert all people and bring them to salvation through the Gospel.

Ezekiel 33:11

1 Timothy 2:4

2 Peter 3:9

168. Then, why are not all people saved?

Many reject the Word and resist the Holy Spirit; therefore, they remain in unbelief and under judgment by their own fault.

Comment: Here we see how objective justification obscures the doctrine of election as that is summarized in Article XI of the Thorough Declaration of the Formula of Concord. In 1912, Missouri Lutherans were content to teach that the Holy Ghost is willing to bring to Christ *everyone who hears the Gospel*, which does not contradict clear teachings such as:

- To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (Romans 3:26)
- But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (Romans 4:5)
- Seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. (Romans 3:30)
- Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. (Acts 15:18)

- Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)
- Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (2 Timothy 1:9)
- According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (Ephesians 1:4-5)

By 1991, these truths are obscured by saying “the Holy Spirit wants to convert all people” without mentioning the role of “hearing.” When speaking about God’s will to save all people, let us use the very words of Scripture which present this divine will in the context of conversion:

- Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4)
- The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)
- Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Ezekiel 33:11)

When we say without qualification that the Holy Ghost “wants” to convert all people, we undermine the unity of God: “And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments [is], Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord” (Mark 12:29). Recall that at the time of His death, Jesus Christ did not pray for the conversion of all people. . .

- I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. (John 17:9)
- Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; (John 17:20)

. . .though He “would have gathered” them to Him:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen *doth gather* her brood under *her* wings, and ye would not! (Luke 13:34 AV)

Finally, we note briefly the change from "most men obstinately resist the Word" (1912) to "many reject the Word" (1991). This seems like a deliberate effort to obscure what God's words say:

- Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)
- So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen. (Matthew 20:16)
- Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: (Romans 9:27)
- Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. (Romans 11:5)

"The Forgiveness of Sins"

In the 1991 Catechism, the most blatant teaching of universal, objective justification comes in the explanation of "the forgiveness of sins" in the Third Article. The Apostle's Creed states that "I believe in the . . . forgiveness of sins." Lutherans used to say this meant "I believe. . . in which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers." But notice the dramatic evolution of doctrine:

1912

195. Why do you say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins"?

Because by the Scriptures I am assured that God by grace, for Christ's sake, through the Gospel, daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers.

Mark 2:7 "Who can forgive sins but God only"?

Ps 130: 3-4 "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared."

Ps 103:2-3 "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases."

Eph 1:7 "In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

Romans 3:28 "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law."

1991

180. Why do you say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins"?

I believe in the forgiveness of sins because through Christ God has declared pardon and forgiveness to all sinful humanity.

Ps 130: 3-4 "If you, O Lord, keep a record of my sins, O Lord, who can stand? But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared."

2 Cor 5:19 "God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them."

Comment 1: This is a dramatic change. In 1912 "I believe in the forgiveness of sins" meant that I believed that God *daily* forgives *my* sins and the sins of all believers. In 1991 that same confession means that God *has forgiven all* sinful humanity. Is that what one must believe in order to be saved? Most teachers of objective justification say "yes," which helps explain why they vehemently attack anyone who questions this concept. In their minds, to deny that all sins were forgiven and all people justified around A.D. 30 is to put oneself outside the Christian faith. To question whether "all sins are forgiven" undermines the object which they rest their faith upon.

Comment 2: In 1991, Missouri teaches that "I believe in the forgiveness of sins because through Christ God has declared pardon and forgiveness to all sinful humanity." We see the fruits of this doctrine throughout modern Lutheranism: "You are already forgiven, just believe this and you will be saved!" If this assertion is true, we would expect to find such a message prominently recorded throughout Scripture. For example, consider the book of Acts, which records many God-inspired sermons. Nowhere do we find the message that God has declared pardon to all sinful humanity; in fact, just the opposite message is preached:

- Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:38)

- Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; (Acts 3:19)
- Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. (Acts 7:51)
- Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. (Acts 8:22)
- And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 22:16)
- But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. (Acts 26:20)

Notice, for example, how in Acts 3:19 the hearers were not told that upon conversion they will *receive* the blessings of the fact that their sins are already forgiven, but that at such time those sins will actually be "blotted out" by God Himself. What happens when people are told that God has already forgiven all sins and declared all people to be righteous? Does it not lead to the very thing we see all around us: unwillingness to hear God's Law, complacency toward sin, apathy toward Bible memorization and neglect of confession and repentance?

Comment 3: Notice how the authors of the 1991 Catechism drop all but one of the 1912 proof texts for this doctrine, and add a totally new one. This shows, in case there was any doubt, that the doctrinal shift was intentional:

- They had to drop Mark 2:7 because if "all sins are already forgiven" then Jesus did not need to "see the faith" of the palsied man (Mark 2:5) before saying "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."
- They had to drop Ps. 103:2-3 because verses 13, 17, and 18 of that Psalm show that David is speaking only of *believers*.
- They had to drop Eph. 1:7 because that verse makes it clear that it is only *in Christ* that "we" have forgiveness of sins. This verse contradicts the notion that that "God has declared pardon and forgiveness to all sinful humanity."
- They had to drop Romans 3:28 because its words (Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law) also contradict the notion that "God has declared pardon and forgiveness to all sinful humanity."
- They should have dropped Ps. 130:3-4. Read the entire Psalm to see that the Psalmist is speaking about forgiveness of *his* sins. Note that

when he cries his hope on behalf of *Israel* (verse 7-8), this does not include all people.

- They added 2 Cor 5:19 which is an interesting proof text for universal or objective *justification*. Read this portion of Scripture with no presuppositions and see it is asserting that all sins have been forgiven and all people have been justified:

2 Corinthians 5

- 17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
- 18 And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
- 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.
- 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.
- 21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

- Verse 19 cannot be interpreted to say that all people are reconciled toward God because verse 20 expressly says: “be ye reconciled to God.” Not every person is “in Christ” or a “new creature” (verse 17) and not every person is “reconciled to God.” That is why the “ministry of reconciliation” (verse 18) and the “word of reconciliation” (verse 19) was (and still is) committed unto preachers and teachers.
- Nor can this verse mean that God *never* imputes any man’s trespasses unto him. In Paul’s letter to the Romans he quotes David to say: “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”⁸² Many Bible verses make it clear that God does impute sins to unbelievers, though He often waits a long time:

Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. (Exodus 23:7)

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless that taketh his name in vain. (Deut. 5:11)

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins. (John 8:24. Notice the plural sins; it is not just the sin of unbelief that they would die in.)

⁸² Romans 4:8.

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: (Romans 2:5-6)

We offer three possible explanations of 2 Cor. 5:19 which do not assert that God has pardoned all sins:

1. Some have interpreted verse 19 to mean the so-called objective reconciliation of God toward men, His satisfaction with Christ's ransom, His will to save all, His will that all should come to repentance, His readiness to forgive. The so-called objective reconciliation of God toward mankind is best expressed with the "quick and powerful" words of Scripture Itself, not our doctrinal summaries:
 - Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." (Isaiah 53:10-11).
 - Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4)
 - The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)
 - For thou, Lord, [art] good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. (Psalm 86:5)
2. Others feel that 2 Cor. 5:19 refers to the still ongoing work of salvation going on throughout the world: Since the Garden of Eden, God has been reconciling people in the world one-by-one unto Himself, through the ministry of reconciliation, by creating saving faith in human hearts. As that work is accomplished in a particular person God no longer imputes that person's sins to him. In the Old Testament, this ministry of reconciliation was the promises of a coming Messiah who would bruise Satan's head. In the New Testament, this ministry of reconciliation is the words regarding Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2).
3. There is a third possible interpretation of 2 Cor. 5:19 which also refutes the claim that God has pardoned all sins: Because of Christ's foreseen and foreordained ransom payment, God did not *immediately* impute man's sins as He justly could. He is "not imputing their trespasses unto them" while the

ministry of reconciliation is still available to a person. He delays the full imputation of our trespasses while the word of reconciliation is drawing people from all parts of the world into His sheepfold. We see this delay of imputation beginning with Adam and Eve, when God sought them out after their fall instead of letting them remain in spiritual death.

Note that 2 Cor. 5:19 does not contain the word "justify" or "forgive." Let us tremble at God's words and answer the question "who is forgiven" by those verses which use that particular word. And as for the phrase "reconciling the world" (2 Cor. 5:19), we note that Paul uses a similar expression elsewhere where it clearly does not refer to God pardoning all sins:

For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what *shall* the receiving of *them* be, but life from the dead? (Romans 11:15)

"Reconciling the world" is not the same as "forgiving the world" or "justifying the world."

The fifth chapter of 2 Corinthians does not set out to teach the "how" or "whom" of justification. Would Paul wait until his second letter to this church to bring up some facet of justification that does not appear in his earlier letter? Notice that in Chapter 15 of his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul reminds them of the gospel which he had delivered unto them; that gospel does not say that God forgave all sins or justified all people:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4)

For Lutheran readers, we also note that the only place the Lutheran Confessions use 2 Cor 5:19 is in Article VII of the Formula of Concord ("Of the Holy Supper"), to teach that Christ's divine nature and human nature are personally united without being confused. Why are modern Lutherans able to find something in this verse that so many generations overlooked?

Believing God's Promises

Do I need to believe that "God has declared pardon and forgiveness to all sinful humanity" in order to believe that *my* sins are forgiven? Are the very promises of God, found throughout Scripture, sufficient to create and sustain saving faith? Or, are there times when we need to reformulate God's very promises into

something that is more comforting? That is the fundamental issue which objective justification raises.

Scripture says that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). This is vividly demonstrated in the Old Testament when God’s people were expected to believe His promises, even though there was no tangible evidence in support. For example, God *promised* Abraham a son after that seemed to be impossible and “what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness: (Romans 4:3).

God also promised the Israelites the land of Canaan and expected them to believe this promise; those who did not died in the wilderness:

And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As *truly* as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, *concerning* which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. (Numbers 14:26-30 AV)

Undoubtedly, the unbelievers of that generation felt God's simple *promise* was insufficient assurance that He would fulfill what He had promised. After all, the Canaanites still possessed the land with many giant warriors, walled cities and large armies. But we know from the case of Caleb and Joshua that God’s promise was sufficient to create faith, though many rejected it. “He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God.” (John 8:47)

Likewise, do we not dishonor God when we say that His promises regarding forgiveness of sins—the ones contained in Scripture—are not sufficient? Why are modern Lutherans not satisfied with quick and powerful promises such as these:

- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)
- If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7:14)

Dare we respond by saying "I need to be assured that all sins are forgiven or I cannot believe that my sins are forgiven!"?

Likewise, modern OJ'ers claim that if we do not assert that *all* sins are forgiven, then we will fall into the synergistic error that faith is something on our part which contributes toward our justification and salvation. This claim also betrays a lack of confidence in the very words of Scripture. For example, the Bible says (in regard to a Christian) that "his faith is counted for righteousness." Does that mean that faith is our own decision or effort, something which we contribute toward our forgiveness? No, because Scripture also says:

- Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)
- And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; (Ephesians 2:1)
- Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (1 Peter 1:23)

The question which I urge every Lutheran to earnestly consider is "why do we need something other than the "spirit and life" promises of Almighty God, promises such as:

- "But He [was] wounded for our transgressions, [He was] bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace [was] upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:5-6
- "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." 1 Cor. 15:3
- "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16
- Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55:7
- He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh [them] shall have mercy. Prov. 28:13

- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

Some Concluding Remarks

This chapter has proven doctrinal evolution. The same questions got remarkably different answers in 1991 compared to 1912. In 1912, the Missouri Catechism did not teach that all sins are forgiven; by 1991 it taught exactly that.

- Was the new doctrine developed because it softens the terrors of the Law? Study Question 180 of the 1991 Catechism carefully and think about how you would actually apply that teaching to *your* life. Do you prefer to be told that God *daily* forgives your sins and the sins of other believers (1912), thus reminding you of the need for constant repentance and crucifying of the flesh? Or do you prefer to be told that God has already declared pardon for all sinful people? Which teaching is likely to breed carnal security?
- Likewise, when you find yourself in willful sin⁸³ and are bothered by doubts about your salvation, which do you prefer to be told:

"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Acts 8:22

or:

"God has already forgiven all sins and justified all people. Just keep believing that and you will be saved."

Therein, I believe, lies the great appeal and the great danger of objective justification.

And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. Luke 11:4

"Scripture makes it clear that justification is an accomplished fact. God has forgiven the whole world for the sake of Christ's perfect life and substitutionary death on the cross."

Our Great Heritage, Vol. 3, 1991. Editor's introduction to essay by John P. Meyer (WELS) entitled "Objective Justification." General Editor Lyle Lange, NPH, p. 34.

⁸³ For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, (Hebrews 10:26)

Chapter 6

Christliche Dogmatik compared to *Christian Dogmatics*

Between 1917 and 1924, the Missouri Synod published Franz Pieper's three volume *Christliche Dogmatik*. In 1944, the Centennial Committee of the Missouri Synod requested Dr. Theodore Engelder to translate these books into English. He did not finish the work before he died in 1949. The following people are credited in the English foreword with completing the translation: Prof. Walter W.F. Albrecht, Dr. Frederick E. Mayer, and Prof. Lorenz F. Blankenbuehler. In 1950, Volume 1 of the English edition (called *Christian Dogmatics*) was released, followed by Volume 2 in 1951 and by Volume 3 in 1953.

Franz Pieper was a student of C.F.W. Walther. He served many years as the president of the St. Louis seminary (1887-1931) and the president of the Missouri Synod (1899-1911). His textbooks taught two generations of Missouri Synod pastors. Therefore, we should not be surprised that modern Lutheran OJ'ers often say that "Pieper taught objective justification." This chapter will reveal what F. Pieper meant by *objective justification* and how that differed from the modern teachings.

While researching this book, this writer learned that Pieper's English translators had falsely inserted the twofold principle of Scripture interpretation.⁸⁴ In hindsight, it is now generally recognized that this twofold principle of Scripture interpretation opened the door to much theological mischief in the Missouri Synod, paving the way for both higher criticism and Gospel reductionism.⁸⁵ Since the English translators had altered Pieper's text to support *that* modern concept, it seemed prudent to see whether they had also changed or embellished Pieper's teaching on *objective justification*. This suspicion turned out to be true, as we will demonstrate in this chapter. Franz Pieper carefully qualified the term *objective justification*, equating it with the so-called *objective reconciliation* of God toward mankind. Equally important, Pieper taught other truths (especially the doctrine of election, the immutability of God's attributes, and the abiding wrath of God on unbelievers) alongside *objective justification* which limited the mischief that could be done with this concept.⁸⁶ However, the English translation expanded Pieper's use of *objective justification* and obscured the disclaimers that Pieper attached to this concept. As you read this chapter keep in mind that error had already formally been tolerated in the Missouri

⁸⁴ "Common Seed or Common Creed," by LCMS Pastor Martin Noland.

⁸⁵ When there are two *principles* of Scriptural interpretation (Scripture = formal principle; Gospel or "faith" = material principle) many theologians inevitably use the narrow Gospel to limit the authority of Scripture. For example, "It doesn't matter whether God really created the world in six 24-hour days because that doesn't affect the Gospel"; "Scripture doesn't really forbid women to assert authority over men in the church because that would be inconsistent with the Gospel."

⁸⁶ We saw in Chapter 2 that F.A. Schmidt also attached extensive qualifications and disclaimers to his teaching of universal justification.

Synod when this English translation was done. Many of our leaders, especially professors, were pushing Missouri in a new direction.⁸⁷

The analysis in this chapter is necessarily detailed. Some of the alterations made to the German text may seem minor, but they are all clues to help us understand the agenda of the translators. The changes from German to English reveal the evolution of so-called objective justification. We will lay them side-by-side: the left-hand column is a *literal* English translation of Pieper's original *Christliche Dogmatik* done by Dr. John Drickamer. The right-hand column is the English translation published between 1950 and 1953. In the German version we have underlined those sections which were *omitted* or *changed* in the English translation. In the English translation we have underlined those portions which significantly *add to* or *change* the German text.

At times, it will seem that this writer is defending F. Pieper's explanation of objective justification. That is not my intention. Although Pieper's words *can* be interpreted in accordance with Scripture, they are often ambiguous enough to permit wrong conclusions. He, like all teachers, would do better to use the very words of Scripture to answer the question "whom does God justify?" and "how is a person justified?" But it is an undeniable fact that the English translators expanded Pieper's teaching of objective justification, and have him saying things which he did not say in the German.

We begin with Pieper's first mention of *objective justification*, in Volume 2 under "The Resurrection of Christ":

[*Christliche Dogmatik* - Vol. 2, p. 379 ff]
The Resurrection of Christ. With respect to the *causa efficiens* [efficient cause] of the Resurrection, Scripture says on the one hand that God the Father awakened Christ from the dead, [889] on the other hand that Christ awakened Himself or rose from the dead in His own power.[890] Both Scriptural statements are to be let stand equally. The Scriptural statements according to which God the Father awakened Christ from the dead refer to Christ as the Mediator between God and men, on Whom God had laid the sins of men, [891] and Whom He had delivered into death because of the sins of men. [892]

889 Rom. 6:4: *egerthe Christos ek nekron diates doxes tou patros* ["Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father"].

[*Christian Dogmatics* - Vol. 2, p. 320 ff]
The Resurrection of Christ. As regards the efficient cause (*causa efficiens*) of the resurrection, Scripture declares, on the one hand, that God the Father has raised Christ from the dead, as in Rom. 6:4: "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father"; Eph. 1:20; Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; and others. On the other hand, Scripture also states that Christ raised Himself, or that He rose from the dead by His own power, as in John 2:19, 21: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up . . . But He spake of the temple of His body" (cp. also John 10:17-18). Both series of statements must be accepted side by side, as they read. The passages which ascribe the resurrection of Christ from the dead to God the Father refer to our Savior as the Mediator between God

⁸⁷ The best known errors being tolerated by this time were in the ecumenical "Common Confession" of 1938 and the "Statement of the Forty Four" in 1945. Frederick A. Mayer, one of the translators of *Christian Dogmatics*, was one of Missouri's leading mediating theologians throughout this period.

Eph. 1:20; Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10, etc.

890 John 2:19-20: *en trisin hemerais egero auton* ["in three days I will raise it up"], namely *ton naon tou somatos autou* ["the temple of His body"]. John 10:17-18: *exousian echo--palin labein auten* [I have power--to take it again"], namely *ten psychen mou* ["My life].

891 John 1:29; Is. 53:6.

892 Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:3.

and man, on whom God had laid the "iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:6; John 1:29) and whom the Father therefore had delivered into death for the sins of all men (Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor 15:3).

Comment: Although it may seem to be a minor alteration, the addition of the word "therefore" in the English translation is worth noting. The modern version of universal, objective justification constantly obscures the truth that "he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" and "whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Eph. 1:4, Romans 8:30).⁸⁸ Instead, modern theologians use the event of Christ's resurrection to prove a *change* in God (usually described as the cessation of His wrath) and a *change* in the status of all people (the forgiveness of all sins and the justification of all people) at that time. This obscures the truth that "I am the LORD, I change not." (Mal. 3:6). The word "therefore" is inappropriate and lays the groundwork for objective justification.

When we do not present the plan of salvation, and every part of that plan, as something that God ordained from before the foundation of the world, we easily slip into the *logic* of universal justification. It makes sense to our human reason that God must have changed when Christ died and rose again. It makes sense to our human reason that since Christ "gave Himself a ransom for all," then the status of all people must have changed in some way *when* that ransom was paid around A.D. 30. It sounds logical that since God "will have all men to be saved," (1 Tim. 2:4) and since Christ "died for all" (2 Cor. 5:15), and since God was "satisfied" by Christ's ransom (Isaiah 53:11a), then the resurrection must *therefore* signal:

- God's wrath ceased or was appeased
- God forgave all sins
- God justified all people

That is what happens when we fail to live only "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4). On the other hand, when we cast "down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5) then we know these deductions are wrong because they contradict explicit statements of Scripture:

- For I *am* the LORD, I change not. (Malachi 3:6a)
- And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8)
- According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the

⁸⁸ "The eternal election of God, however, not only foresees and foreknows the salvation of the elect, but is also, from the gracious will and pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, a cause which procures, works, helps and promotes our salvation and what pertains thereto." Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1065. [emphasis added]

adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (Ephesians 1:4-5)

- Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (2 Timothy 1:9)
- Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)
- Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, (1 Peter 1:20)
- He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3:36)
- I will not justify the wicked. (Exodus 23:7b)
- But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses. (Mark 11:26)
- I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: (Luke 18:14a)

Let us now return to our analysis of Pieper's *Dogmatics*:

[Christliche Dogmatik]

The Resurrection of Christ [continued]

Now if God awakened Christ from the dead again, then He declared through the act of awakening that the sins of men were completely atoned for and that men are considered righteous before the divine court. The situation comes to be expressed sharply in Romans 4:25: *hos pardothe dia ta paraptomata hemon kai egerthe dia ten dikaiosin hemon* ["Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification"]. Diakaisios designates here the act of divine justification which was completed through the act of awakening Christ from the dead, therefore the so-called objective justification of the whole world of sinners. 893 This is the truth of which especially Walther emphatically reminded [people] in this country, namely the truth that the awakening of Christ from the dead is an actual absolution of the whole world of sinners.

[Christian Dogmatics]

The Resurrection of Christ [continued]

Now, then, if the Father raised Christ from the dead, He, by this glorious resurrection act, declared that the sins of the whole world are fully expiated, or atoned for, and that all mankind is now regarded as righteous before His divine tribunal. This gracious reconciliation and justification is clearly taught in Rom. 4:25: "Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." The term diakaisios here means the act of divine justification executed through God's act of raising Christ from the dead, and it is for this reason called the objective justification of all mankind. This truth Dr. Walther stressed anew in America. He taught that the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the actual absolution pronounced upon all sinners. To refer the words: "Who was raised again for our justification," to the so-called subjective justification, which takes place by faith, not only weakens the force of

⁸⁹³ [Walther,] Evangelienpostille, Easter, pp. 160 ff. Contrary to the context, a weakening of the words *egerthe dia ten dikaiosin hemon* ["was raised again for our justification"] is present if one wants to refer them to the subjective justification which takes place through faith. Calov, following Gerhard, is correct when he says about the relationship between Christ's awakening and our justification: Christ's resurrection occurred "with respect to the actual absolution from sin. So in Christ, God punished our sins, which were placed upon or imputed to Him as our Substitute, so that in quickening Him from the dead, by that fact itself He absolved Him of our sins which had been imputed to Him; so then He also absolved us in Him" (Bibl. Illust. on that passage).

the words, but also violates the context. Calov, following Gerhard, rightly points out the relation of Christ's resurrection to our justification as follows: "Christ's resurrection took place as an actual absolution from sin. As God punished our sins in Christ, upon whom He laid them and to whom He imputed them, as our Bondsman, so He also, by the very act of raising Him from the dead, absolved Him from our sins imputed to Him, and so He absolved also us in Him."

Comments: Here is the first use of objective justification in the German. As we will see, Pieper's use of *objective justification* in *Christliche Dogmatik* was qualified both by the way he defined the term and by the other truths of Scripture which he taught alongside it, especially:

- The immutability of God's attributes, including His ongoing wrath which abideth on unbelievers;⁸⁹
- The fact that *all* sins of unbelievers will be punished in hell, not just the sin of unbelief;⁹⁰
- The fact that no unbeliever can properly be called a "saint";⁹¹
- The Church must first preach the Law to secure sinners, and not tell people "you are already forgiven!";⁹²
- And the fact that the Gospel message, the thing believed with God-wrought saving faith, is Jesus Christ and Him crucified, not the alleged fact that "all sins are already forgiven."

Now let us examine the underlined parts of the above text:

1. Notice how Pieper refers to the resurrection simply as the "act of awakening." The English translators call it the "glorious resurrection act." This embellishment fits the teaching of modern-day objective justification, which wants to make the Resurrection of Christ proof of some concurrent change in God and in the status of mankind.
2. Notice how Pieper cites Walther to say that "the awakening of Christ from the dead is an actual absolution of the whole world of sinners." The English changes this to read "the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the actual absolution pronounced upon all sinners." Pieper and Walther were willing to speak about the event of the resurrection as *one* actual absolution, not suggesting it was the only one, or the one in which every sin is actually remitted. However, the English version says this event is *the* absolution, which fits the teaching that all sins were forgiven at that time. If the English translation is correct, and that event was the actual absolution of the whole world of sinners, what about all the divine words spoken in the Old Testament, beginning with Genesis 3:15? Was there no remission of sin until Christ's death and resurrection, around A.D. 30? The change from "an" to "the" is a significant movement toward modern-day objective justification because it supports the false notion of a change in God at the time of Christ's death and resurrection.

⁸⁹ *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I, p. 440.

⁹⁰ *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, p. 547.

⁹¹ *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, p. 9, 55, 86, 167, 400, 411.

⁹² *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I, p. 67; Volume III, p. 236.

3. Also, let us remember what "absolution" means. On Sunday morning does the mere hearing of the words of absolution remit the sins of the hearer? Of course not. Most Lutherans know that the words of absolution spoken by a Pastor do not remit the sins of people who hear the words but do not believe them. Therefore, for Pieper to say that Christ's Resurrection is "an absolution of the whole world of sinners" does not assert that all sins were thereby remitted. Most people do not believe Christ's Resurrection so they do not believe what Pieper claims is an absolution. We also remind the reader that the risen Christ only appeared to His chosen people; even on the road to Damascus, the soldiers did not see Him.
4. Pieper says that ". . . men are considered righteous before the divine court" without saying this is all men. The English changes it to read "all mankind is now regarded." If anyone claims that people are counted righteous by God without saving faith, we remind them of these plain words of Scripture:

- **And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. (Genesis 15:6)**
- **For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (Romans 4:3)**
- **But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (Romans 4:5)**
- **Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. (Galatians 3:6)**

We do not think that Pieper intended to say that all people are counted righteous without faith because his other words point out that unbelievers are still very much in their sins and under condemnation:

- ". . . by the fall of Adam **all men** have become sinners, according to the sentence of divine justice as pronounced in the Law, **subject to damnation** . . ." ⁹³
- "If I do not believe it, I **remain** in my condemnation." ⁹⁴
- "But where unbelief is, then also **all** other sins assume their damning character again." ⁹⁵
(We trust that the reader understands that "unbelief is" in every person who has not yet heard or believed what Pieper calls "an actual absolution of the whole world of sinners.")

One way to interpret what Pieper means by ". . . men are considered righteous before the divine court" is to go back to Prof. Schmidt (Chapter 2). Schmidt used similar words but clarified them by saying that God **ALSO** regards the world outside of Christ with burning wrath:

"If it be asked how this is to be rhymed that on the one hand Scripture teaches that through Christ's resurrection the whole world is absolved, and that on the other hand it testifies that the debt remains on the unbelievers, as long as they continue in unbelief, it must be answered: One must distinguish **two ways in which God regards men**. When God regards the world **in Christ**, His Son, He looks at it with the most fervent love; but when He regards the world **outside of Christ**, then He cannot look at it otherwise than with burning wrath. Whoever therefore does not believe in Christ, yes rejects Christ, upon him the wrath of God **remains**, despite the fact that when God regards him in **His**

⁹³ *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 3.

⁹⁴ Quote from Luther found on p. 23 of *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II.

⁹⁵ *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, p. 548.

Son, and remembers how He has made satisfaction also for him, then He looks upon him with eyes full of love . . .⁹⁶ [emphasis added]

If universal, objective justification still carried this disclaimer, we doubt whether it would have its current popularity. People who are outside of Christ, unbelievers, would be reminded that God regards them with "burning wrath." Instead of either the words of Prof. Schmidt or Pieper, why not simply quote Scripture verses such as Romans 8:1 and John 3:36:: "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" and "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*"?

Notice how the English translators change Pieper's words to say: ". . . all mankind is now regarded as righteous before His divine tribunal." In the German, Pieper describes the Resurrection as an absolution, but does not present it as representing a *change* in God. The word "now" does assert such a change, and obscures God's perfect foreknowledge and simple truths such as:

- **According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (Ephesians 1:4)**
 - **Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (2 Timothy 1:9):**
5. In brief rebuttal of F. Pieper's assertion (in the German) that the "justification" referred to in Romans 4:25 refers to a divine decree justifying all mankind, we note the following:
- First, this disagrees with Martin Luther, who said in reference to this verse "His resurrection . . . produces it [righteousness] in us, ***if we believe it***, and it is also the cause of it."⁹⁷ [emphasis added]. Luther understood the "our" in Romans 4:25 to refer to believers.⁹⁸
 - Second, the Lutheran Confessions understand Romans 4:25 as referring to believers.⁹⁹
 - Third, we note that Pieper's exegesis of Rom. 4:25 violates its context, which gives us every reason to interpret "our" to mean believers, not all mankind:

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. 1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

- A. Chapter 4 of Romans is addressing the fact that Abraham, not all mankind, was justified by grace through faith. Would Paul, after explaining how this man was justified, now contradict himself by saying that *all* people are justified?¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ See discussion of F.A. Schmidt essay in Chapter 2.

⁹⁷ *Luther's Works*, AE, Vol. 25, "Lecture on Romans," p. 284, commenting on Rom. 4:25.

⁹⁸ We are *not* asserting that Luther's interpretation is verbally inspired. Rather, we remind the reader that doctrines should be built on the clear Bible verses which permit only one interpretation. Since the "our" of Romans 4:25 *can* refer to just believers, we cannot use this verse to prove universal justification. Notice that the "us" and "we" in verses 4:24 and 5:1 refer to believers, not all people.

⁹⁹ The *Book of Concord* refers to Rom. 4:25 only once, when teaching the proper distinction between the Law and the Gospel. The context is clearly not all people, but the person who is justified through God-wrought faith. *Formula of Concord*, TD, V, Triglotta, p. 959.

- B. The subject of the sentence that begins with verse 23 is believers. The "us" and "we" of verse 24 and 5:1 is clearly believers. There is no signal in the text that Paul suddenly changes the subject from believers (v. 24) to "all mankind" (v. 25) and then back to believers (v. 1)! Please note this carefully: to say that Paul is speaking about believers in verse 25 is **not** to deny that Christ was delivered for the offenses of all mankind (first "our" in our Authorized Version). We know that Christ **was** delivered for the offenses of the whole world because other unambiguous passages of Scripture teach that fact, such as 1 Timothy 2:6. In Romans 4 Paul is specifically teaching how a person is justified; in that context, he points out that Christ was delivered for their offenses and raised again for *their* justification. Isaiah 53:11 also addresses the fact that Christ was delivered for the sins of His "seed": "He shall see of the travail of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."
- C. Also, when the Bible says that Christ was "raised again for our justification" it is not thereby asserting that His resurrection is our justification, or that our justification is simultaneous with His resurrection. By way of analogy, when I say "Mr. Jones works hard for his kid's college education," I am not saying that his hard work *is* their education. Their education may follow years after his hard work.
6. In this section, where Pieper first introduces the term, he explains *objective justification as an absolution of the whole world of sinners*. This is significant. Pieper, quoting Walther, equates the so-called *objective justification* with an actual absolution of the whole world of sinners. Since "absolution" is not a Bible term, we must understand what men like Pieper and Walther meant by it. Perhaps the best way to demonstrate our forefather's understanding of this term is to look at the familiar words of the "old" Lutheran Hymnal (p. 16):

What precedes the Absolution? The Confession of sins.

"Then [after the Confession] the Minister shall pronounce the Absolution. **Upon this your confession**, I . . . announce the grace of God unto all of you, and . . . I forgive you all your sins . . ." [emphasis added]

Or, turning to page 48, consider these words: "The Absolution. And now I ask you before God, who searcheth the heart:

"1. Do you sincerely confess that you have sinned . . .

"2. Do you heartily repent . . .

"3. Do you sincerely believe . . .

"4. Do you promise . . . you will henceforth amend your sinful life . . .

"5. Finally, do you believe that through me, a called servant of God, you will receive the forgiveness of your sins? As you believe, even so may it be unto you. Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office . . . forgive you all your sins . . ."

If an impenitent person hears these words of Absolution, are his sins *forgiven* thereby? No. Are the sins forgiven for someone who hears the Absolution, but does not believe them? No. Are the sins of any dead person forgiven by these words of Absolution? No. Are the sins of someone who does not hear this particular Absolution forgiven by that particular Absolution? No.

If we understand and explain "absolution" in this manner, then describing Christ's Resurrection as "an absolution of the whole world of sinners" does not mean that all sins

¹⁰⁰ By way of analogy, would it make sense to teach that the friendliest people in Poland are the red haired ones, and then conclude the teaching by saying that all people in Poland are red haired? Paul did not teach both "yea" and "nay" and neither should we.

were forgiven—which must include the damned in hell—at the time of that Resurrection (around A.D. 30). Let this remind us of the need to “speak as the oracles of God” by using the same words that Scripture uses.

Likewise, can a pastor *today* with confidence state the words of Absolution as they are found in *The Lutheran Hymnal* without knowing the hearts of all his hearers . . . whether they believe the words being spoken? Absolutely yes! Why? Because the Bible gives us this clear PROMISE: “If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). When a pastor begins the Absolution with the words “Upon this your confession . . .” he can be absolutely sure that anyone in the audience who does confess his sins is, in fact, having his sins remitted: “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them” (John 20:23).

To prove further how our orthodox forefathers understood Absolution, and therefore what Pieper meant by *objective justification*, we point out this important historical fact: when the Missouri Synod was founded, there was a movement to make it a constitutional requirement that congregations practice only *individual* confession and Absolution, not the general form used in Lutheran public worship today. They understood that *general* confession and Absolution, like open Communion, might give impenitent sinners a false assurance of their own forgiveness. Although this requirement was not adopted by the Missouri Synod, for many years many congregations voluntarily restricted *general* confession and Absolution for services attended only by members, in preparation for Holy Communion. The form of words devised for *general* Absolution in the old hymnal were carefully designed so that impenitent listeners do not receive false comfort.

This is how our forefathers understood absolution.¹⁰¹ F. Pieper, the first time he mentions “objective justification,” equates it with an absolution of the world.

7. Notice next how the words “in Christ” appears twice in footnote #893. One of these gets omitted in the English translation, while the other gets obscured. We dare not overlook the importance of those words. According to Scripture, all people are not “in Christ:”
- [There is] therefore now no condemnation to them which are **in Christ** Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Rom. 8:1)
 - Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were **in Christ** before me. (Rom. 16:7)
 - Therefore if any man [be] **in Christ**, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Cor. 5:17)

To say that “all sins are absolved in Christ” can be understood to mean that all those who are “in Christ” are absolved. It is better, however, to speak as the oracles of God and use words like “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*” (Romans 8:1)

Let us continue F. Pieper’s teaching on the resurrection of Christ:

¹⁰¹ A succinct understanding of the “old” understanding of absolution is offered on page 22 of the 1912 Missouri Catechism under The Office of the Keys: “What do you believe according to these words [John 20:22-23]? Answer: I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, especially when they exclude manifest and impenitent sinners from the Christian congregation, and, again, when they absolve those who repent of their sins and are willing to amend, this is as valid and certain, in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself.” [emphasis added]. Absolution, according to our forefathers, was an act to be applied only to the penitent sinner. The Old Testament also teaches the proper *application* of absolution (following confession): 1 Ki. 8:30, 33-36, 38-39, 46-50; 2 Chr. 7:14.

[Christliche Dogmatik]**The Resurrection of Christ [continued]**

Therefore Scripture also says that justifying and saving faith has as its object that God Who awakened Christ from the dead, Rom. 4:24: *ton egeironta lesoun ton Kyrion hemon ek nekron* ["Him That raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead"]. Just as in Rom. 10:9: he is saved who believes *hoti ho theos auton [lesoun] egeiren ek nekron* ["that God hath raised Him [Jesus] from the dead"].

[Christian Dogmatics]**The Resurrection of Christ [continued]**

For this reason Scripture also says that justifying and saving faith has that God for its object who raised Christ from the dead. Rom. 4:24: ". . . if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead." The same truth is asserted in Rom. 10:9: "If thou shalt . . . believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Comment: Thus ends the entire teaching of F. Pieper on "objective justification" in regard to the resurrection of Christ. This is the first place this term is used in the entire *Dogmatik*, and here it is referred to only ONCE. Later we will see how many times *objective justification* is added to the English translation's index.

Let us now go to the next section of F. Pieper's *Christliche Dogmatik* where the term *objective justification* appears. This is in a section entitled "Objective and Subjective Reconciliation." As before, we compare a literal translation of the German text¹⁰² (left column) to the English *Christian Dogmatics* (right column). As before, we have underlined in the German text those portions which were omitted or changed in the English translation, and have underlined in the English translation those portions which embellish or change the German text.

[Christliche Dogmatik - Vol. 2, p. 411-415]**Objective and Subjective Reconciliation**

According to Scripture there is an objective reconciliation of all men with God, that is, one which is not first to be brought about by men, but which was brought about by Christ 1900 years ago. The reconciliation is there, is present before and apart from everything men do. It is an accomplished fact, like the creation of the world. Rom. 5:10: "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son"; therefore at that time when Christ died, our reconciliation with God came to be. As Christ's death lies in the past, so also [does] the accomplishment [achievement, realization] of our reconciliation. 2 Cor. 5:19: "God was in Christ (that is, at that time, when Christ lived and died on earth) reconciling the world unto Himself."

[Christian Dogmatics - Vol. 2, p. 347-351]**Objective and Subjective Reconciliation**

Scripture teaches the *objective reconciliation*. Nineteen hundred years ago Christ effected the reconciliation of all men with God. God does not wait for men to reconcile Him with themselves by means of any efforts of their own. He is already reconciled. The reconciliation is an accomplished fact, just like the creation of the world. Rom. 5:10: "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." When Christ died, God became reconciled. As Christ's death lies in the past, so also our reconciliation is an accomplished fact. 2 Cor. 5:19: "God was in Christ reconciling " (namely, when Christ lived and died on earth) "the world unto Himself."

Comments:

1. Notice how Pieper, in the very first sentence, explains what he means by "objective": it is something "that is . . . not first to be brought about by men." If that were all that is meant by "objective" in the phrase "objective justification," then it would pose little danger. Justification is not something "first to be brought about by men." However, *objective justification* has come to mean far; it means that all people were justified and all sins forgiven at the time of Christ's death and resurrection.

¹⁰² The literal translation of Pieper's German was done by Dr. John Drickamer

Notice how Pieper's English translators restructured the sentences to obscure what Pieper intended as a definition of "objective."

2. Notice how Pieper speaks of "the reconciliation" while his translators change that to say "God is reconciled." This change again promotes the idea of a change. Let us remember that "God is one" and "I am the LORD, I change not." The Plan of Salvation was ordained before the foundation of the world, and neither the Father, nor the Son, nor the Holy Ghost changed ("was reconciled") when Christ died or rose again. The so-called reconciliation was already there when God sought out Adam and Eve after their fall into sin. Isaiah 53:10 also reminds us that the Son did not have to reconcile God or the Father: "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put [him] to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see [his] seed, he shall prolong [his] days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand."
3. Pieper says this *objective reconciliation* "was brought about by Christ 1900 years ago." His translators take that comment, which is the third part of a three part sentence, and give it extra prominence by making it a separate sentence. Modern-day objective justification requires an event *in time* to build their case for a judicial act by God around A.D. 30 forgiving all sins and justifying all sinners. Pieper's statement in the German is regrettably ambiguous, but in its context it can be understood to mean: "This objective reconciliation was manifested by Christ *in time* 1900 years ago."¹⁰³ Let us not obscure the fact that Christ crucified "was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20). Likewise, Article XI of the Thorough Declaration reminds us that ALL things pertaining to our salvation were ordained by God before the foundation of the world. Let us not speak in a way ("God is reconciled") that suggests that God changed when He Himself says "I am the LORD, I change not (Malachi 3:6)."

[Christliche Dogmatik]

Objective and Subjective Reconciliation [continued]

The *katallassein* [reconciling], Rom. 5:10, and 2 Cor. 5:19, designated --that must be pointed out again and again--not a change in attitude on the part of men, rather a process in the heart of God. At that time, when Christ made His atoning sacrifice, God let go of His wrath against men. That is not a human [statement] but the Apostle's statement when to the words: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," he adds: *me logizomenos autois ta paraptomata auton* [not imputing their trespasses unto them], in that He did not impute their sins to them, that is, already at that time in His heart [God] forgave sin to the whole world, justified the whole world. For according to Scripture's method of speaking (Rom. 4:6-8), "not to impute sin" is as much as "to forgive sin," "to justify" the sinner.

[Christian Dogmatics]

Objective and Subjective Reconciliation [continued]

The *katallassein* of Rom. 5:10 and 2 Cor. 5:19 does not refer -- let this fact be noted -- to any change that occurs in men, but describes an occurrence in the heart of God. It was God who laid His anger by on account of the ransom brought by Christ. It was God who at that time already had in His heart forgiven the sins of the whole world, for the statement:

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" means ---and that is not our, but the Apostle's own interpretation -- that God did "not impute their trespasses unto them." And "not imputing trespasses" is, according to Scripture (Rom. 4:6-8), synonymous with "forgiving sins," "justifying" the sinner.

¹⁰³ F. Pieper correctly taught both the perfect foreknowledge of God and the doctrine of election in *Christliche Dogmatik*. Therefore, we should not interpret "was brought about by Christ 1900 years ago" in a way that contradicts his other clearer statements.

Comments:

1. We see here that the 1950 English translation is an almost word-for-word translation of Pieper's German. Why did the English translators make so many changes elsewhere?
2. Pieper says that God let go of His wrath at a particular time (notice how he twice uses the expression "at that time"). We should speak as the oracles of God. Those oracles contradict the notion that God has let go of His wrath: ". . . he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36) and "For I am the LORD; I change not" (Malachi 3:6).

We will see shortly that Pieper (elsewhere in *Dogmatik*) acknowledged this ongoing and unchanging wrath of God. Therefore, we could interpret his words to mean something like this: "From the perspective of a New Testament believer, one on whom the wrath of God does not abide, we can look back to that time and see the end of God's wrath toward us."

3. Likewise when we hear Pieper saying that "in His heart [God] forgave sin to the whole world, justified the whole world," we must see the difference between those words and modern-day objective justification:
 - Modern OJ'ers do not confine *forgiveness* to something that is "in God's heart." They say it is the public, judicial act of forgiveness which really casts sins into the depth of the sea, removes them as far as the east is from the west, never to be remembered by God. Pieper's words ("in His heart") can be understood to mean that Christ procured the forgiveness of sins for all people by giving Himself a ransom for all.
 - Second, let us recall the other things that Pieper taught alongside those truths in the same textbook. For example, although Pieper's words here do imply that God changed at a particular time, he elsewhere affirmed the immutability of God and His attributes, including His wrath:
 - *"God is immutable also in all His attributes, e.g., His kindness (Is. 54:10), His wrath (John 3:36), His will (Prov. 19:21). Scripture draws a twofold lesson from God's immutability: 1) To warn the wicked, because God's wrath is unchangeable (Mark 9:44) . . . "*¹⁰⁴ [emphasis added]
 - *"We must so imagine God to ourselves that the God which is immutable in Himself is gracious or angry according to each of the various objects. God is a gracious God to the humble, the poor sinners or broken hearts, but an angry God to the proud and self-righteous (1 Peter 5:5: "God resists the proud, but to the humble He gives grace"; Luke 18:9-14: Pharisee and publican; Luke 1:52-53: "He pushes the mighty from the chair and elevates the lowly; He fills the hungry with goods and leaves the rich empty."¹⁰⁵*

¹⁰⁴ *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, p. 440.

¹⁰⁵ The above is taken from the German, Volume I, page 541. Compare it to the English translation: "We must so think of God that God, who in His being is immutable, is angry or merciful according to the difference in the object of His affection. We must so conceive of God that in spite of the immutability in His essence He is a gracious God to the humble, poor, and contrite sinners, but a jealous God to the proud and self-righteous (1 Pet. 5:5; Luke 18:9-14; Luke 1:52-53). God remains immutable, but there is mutability in the objects of His affection." (*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, p. 440.) Why distort the German by adding twice "of His affection," which undermines the fact that impenitent sinners are objects of God's wrath? Why change "angry" to "jealous"? Does this not reveal the underlying agenda behind objective justification?

- "According to Gal. 3:13; John 3:36, etc., Christ bore the adequate punishment of sin in our place, and whoever rejects this full and complete payment must pay it himself eternally."¹⁰⁶

We do not condone Pieper's words ("in His heart [God] forgave sin to the whole world, justified the whole world") just because they can be interpreted in accordance with Scripture. "Forgive" has a specific meaning in Scripture. We call God a liar when we say He forgives sins and then punishes people forever in hell for those same forgiven sins. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."

Let us continue with Pieper's teaching where we left off earlier.

[Christliche Dogmatik]

Objective and Subjective Reconciliation [continued]

Further, according to Scripture, the fact of the awakening of Christ from the dead is a factual absolution or an objective justification of the whole world of sinners. Rom. 4:25: *egerthe dia ten dikaiosin hemon.* 983

[Christian Dogmatics]

Objective and Subjective Reconciliation [continued]

The resurrection of Christ is, as Holy Writ teaches, the actual absolution of the whole world of sinners. Rom. 4:25: "Who was raised again for our justification."

983 Compare the more detailed presentations on p. 380 and in note 983

Comments: Here we see a deliberate effort to distort what Pieper meant by *objective justification*.

1. Notice that Pieper structured this single sentence in such a way that "a factual absolution" is equated to "objective justification." This is consistent with Pieper's first use of the term analyzed earlier. Since everyone knew what "absolution" was and when it remits sins, Pieper used *that term* to explain what he meant by *objective justification*. Let us remember the old meaning of "absolution": it follows the confession of sins and it does not remit the sins of dead people, people who do not hear it, impenitent hearers or people who do not believe what it says.
2. Notice next that the English translators changed the word "a" (" . . . a factual absolution . . . ") to "the" (" . . . the actual absolution . . . "). That is a significant change. We refer the reader to our earlier comments on this change. We ought not suggest that the Resurrection of Christ was the only absolution of man's sins; sins have been remitted since the Garden of Eden. The change from "a" to "the" also suggests a change in God at that time, which is a hallmark of modern objective justification.
3. *Note carefully that the English translators actually drop one of Pieper's uses of objective justification!* This is strong evidence of deliberate distortion. Why would they fail to mention *objective justification* in a place where Pieper clearly does? **BECAUSE THEY DO NOT WANT TO EQUATE THAT TERM WITH A FACTUAL ABSOLUTION OF THE WORLD** as Pieper does in this passage! Modern teachers of objective justification want this concept to carry much more meaning than "Absolution" because too many Lutherans still know that an absolution does not remit the sins of the impenitent and the unbeliever. If the English translation had kept this reference to objective justification, readers could see that Pieper's understanding of this term differed from its modern usage.

¹⁰⁶ *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, p. 458.

[Christliche Dogmatik]**Objective and Subjective Reconciliation
[continued]**

So clearly does Scripture attest the objective reconciliation of all men with God brought about by Christ once and for all! 984

984 So Meyer also correctly [says] in his explanation of 2 Cor. 5:18-19: "Because their sin had not been atoned for, men were burdened with God's holy wrath, *extroi theou* ["enemies of God"], Rom. 5:10, *Deo invis* ["enemies to God"]; but through this that God . . . had Christ die, He brought about the atonement for their sins, through which also God's wrath ceased. The same thought is contained in Rom. 5:10, only in a passive way of speaking . . . The reconciliation of all men happened objectively through Christ's death."

[Christian Dogmatics]**Objective and Subjective Reconciliation
[continued]**

At that time we were objectively declared free from sin. (See the section "The Resurrection of Christ.") 34

34 Meyer on 2 Cor. 5:18-19: "Mankind was on account of its uncanceled sins under God's holy wrath, *extroi theou*, Rom. 5:10, *Deo invis*, the object of God's hatred; but with the cancellation of their sins, effected by the death of Christ, God's wrath came to an end. The reconciliation of all mankind took place objectively through the death of Christ."

Comment: Here we see a blatant, deliberate effort to distort the words of Pieper's German:

1. Pieper refers to "the objective reconciliation of all men with God." His English translators change it to "we were objectively declared free from sin." Pieper is speaking of the *fact that* "objective reconciliation" exists, which the Bible describes better with such words as "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied"; "Who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth"; "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." His English translators go far beyond that and tell us that all people are declared free from sin! This mis-translation is strong evidence of a deliberate effort to distort Pieper's understanding of objective justification.
2. When Pieper quotes a certain portion of another man's teaching in order to support a point he himself has made, should not his translators quote the same thing, in the same way? Notice the difference in the Meyer quotation. By choosing not to include the entire quotation, the import of Meyer's remark is changed from what Pieper intended it to say. And by omitting the word "also" in the introduction of Meyer's quote, the English reader does not see that Pieper quoted Meyer *only* to make the point he himself had already made, not to go beyond it, as occurs with the English translation.
3. Next, notice how the English translators literally change the words attributed to Meyer in the footnote:
 - a. Pieper quotes Meyer as saying: "Because their sin had not been atoned for . . ." His translators change it to read ". . . on account of its uncanceled sins . . ." Since Pieper quoted Meyer to make a particular point, by what right do the translators quote different words from that man? These words do not say the same thing. We call the reader's attention to the fact that in the Old Testament there was an atonement made by the High Priest. . .

"And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD." (Exodus 30:10)

. . .but that "forgiveness" is not mentioned until the sinner comes with the offering to the Priest:

- Le 4:20 And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin offering, so shall he do with this: and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them.

- Le 4:26 And he shall burn all his fat upon the altar, as the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings: and the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.
- Le 4:31 And he shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat is taken away from off the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn *it* upon the altar for a sweet savour unto the LORD; and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him.
- Le 4:35 And he shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat of the lamb is taken away from the sacrifice of the peace offerings; and the priest shall burn them upon the altar, according to the offerings made by fire unto the LORD: and the priest shall make an atonement for his sin that he hath committed, and it shall be forgiven him.
- Le 5:10 And he shall offer the second *for* a burnt offering, according to the manner: and the priest shall make an atonement for him for his sin which he hath sinned, and it shall be forgiven him.
- Le 5:13 And the priest shall make an atonement for him as touching his sin that he hath sinned in one of these, and it shall be forgiven him: and *the remnant* shall be the priest's, as a meat offering.
- Le 5:16 And he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.
- Le 5:18 And he shall bring a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass offering, unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his ignorance wherein he erred and wist *it* not, and it shall be forgiven him.
- Le 6:7 And the priest shall make an atonement for him before the LORD: and it shall be forgiven him for any thing of all that he hath done in trespassing therein.
- Le 19:22 And the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before the LORD for his sin which he hath done: and the sin which he hath done shall be forgiven him.
- Nu 15:25 And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them; for *it is* ignorance: and they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD, for their ignorance:
- Nu 15:28 And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him.

b. Pieper quotes Meyer saying: "God's wrath ceased." That statement contradicts Scripture (Malachi 3:6 and John 3:36) but in the context of the sentence where it appears, we *can* interpret it to mean: "God's wrath ceased to be an insurmountable burden upon mankind." That is probably what he meant since Pieper elsewhere clearly teaches God's immutable wrath:

"The Immutability of God: While all creatures perish, are changed like a dress (Ps. 102:27, 28), it is said in the same place and in sharp contrast with reference to God: "Thou remainest as Thou art." And as immutability is ascribed to God in His being, so also in His attributes. Is. 54:10: "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee." And John 3:36: "The wrath of God abideth on him."¹⁰⁷

Compare the critical portion of these two sentences to see how the English translators build the case for a distinct, divine judicial act in time:

¹⁰⁷ *Christliche Dogmatik, Vol. I, p. 540.*

Christliche Dogmatik

". . . men were burdened with God's holy wrath. . . but through this that God had Christ die, He brought about the atonement for their sins, through which also God's wrath ceased."

Christian Dogmatics

"Mankind was on account of its uncanceled sins under God's holy wrath, but with the cancellation of their sins, effected by the death of Christ, God's wrath came to an end."

Pieper quotes Meyer in such a way that the truth of God's election is not obscured. His words can be understood to mean that God "had Christ die" and "*through*" that ordained and foreseen reality, God's wrath ceased to be an inescapable burden to mankind: since before the foundation of the world He "will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." This is not the same as saying the event of Christ's death is the cancellation of all sins.

c. By changing "God . . . had Christ die" to "the death of Christ," we see another deliberate attempt to change Pieper's words to support modern objective justification. Meyer's comment (as quoted by Pieper's German) reminds us that God was "in on" Christ's redemptive death from the beginning . . . which refutes the notion that God was changed when that death occurred around A.D. 30. "For I am the LORD; I change not." (Malachi 3:6a). On the other hand, the English translation permits the reader to view Christ's death *in time* as some sort of intervention which motivated a change in God's attitude toward all men at that time. This idea of Christ intervening to change God's wrath will appear in later versions of objective justification (Chapter 9 and 10).

d. The English translators omit Meyer's comment that "the same thought is contained in Rom. 5:10" This is most significant. The translators do not want us to interpret Meyer's comment on 2 Cor. 5:18-19 the *same way* Meyer explains Rom. 5:10. Meyer explains Romans 5:10 as teaching that God is reconciled toward all men "objectively through Christ's death." Meyer (and Pieper who quotes him!) meant this to be the same thought that is expressed in 2 Cor. 5:18-19. If the English translators did not remove this little comment, then modern-day *objective justification* would have lost one of its two primary "proof texts": 2 Cor. 5:18-19 *because it is impossible to use Romans 5:10 to teach the universal forgiveness of all men.*

Romans 5

9 "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

Comment: The "we" who are "now justified by his blood," are believers, not all people.

- It is only believers who "shall be saved from wrath."
- It is only believers who "were enemies": all others are still enemies ("Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" James 4:4).
- It is only believers who "were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." 2 Cor. 5:20 points out that not all people are reconciled to Him.
- It is only believers who "shall be saved by his life."

Let us continue comparing *Christliche Dogmatik* to *Christian Dogmatics*:

[Christliche Dogmatik]**Objective and Subjective Reconciliation
[continued]**

984 [footnote continued] The 1883 report of the Southern District of the Synod of Missouri, etc. deals explicitly with this object, pp. 20 ff. There it says: "Through the work of Christ a perfect reconciliation of God with men has been brought about. The work which Christ accomplished as the 'Mediator' (1 Tim. 2:5) between God and men was well pleasing to God, as it says about Christ in Eph. 5:2 that He "hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." As God in grace made Christ, Who knew no sin, to be sin for men (2 Cor 5:21), that is, reckoned the sins of men to Christ as His own, so He also considered the atonement accomplished by Christ as if it had been accomplished by men themselves. In 2 Cor. 5:14, the Holy Ghost writes through St. Paul: "We thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead." Through Christ's suffering and death, the sins of all men have been completely atoned for, as if the thousands of millions of men had suffered the eternal punishments of hell. The result is now: God has been completely reconciled with all men, and with every individual one of them. No man still needs to do or to suffer anything in order to reconcile God, to attain righteousness and salvation. For holy Scripture also explicitly testifies that. We read in 2 Cor. 5:19: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," that is, at that time, 1900 years ago, when Christ fulfilled the Law for men and suffered the punishment for the transgression of the Law for men and suffered the punishment for the transgression of the Law on the part of men, God reconciled men to Himself. Here we must keep in sight the simple, clear words and let them work on us. We know indeed what it means to be reconciled to someone. We say of someone that he has then been completely reconciled with another when he has let go from his heart all the anger which he previously held against the other for whatever reason. So God also has, for the sake of Christ's work, let go of all the wrath against men, with whom He was angry

[Christian Dogmatics]**Objective and Subjective Reconciliation
[continued]**

34 [footnote continued] Proceedings of the Southern District, 1883, p. 20 ff.:

"As God, prompted by His grace, made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us men (2 Cor. 5:21), that is, imputed the sins of mankind to Christ as His own, so He also regarded the satisfaction rendered by Christ as though it had been rendered by men (2 Cor. 5:14).

By Christ's suffering and death the sins of all men have been atoned for so completely as though all the thousand millions of men had themselves endured the torments of hell. The result is: God is perfectly reconciled to all men and with every individual among them.

No man need henceforth do or suffer anything to reconcile God to obtain righteousness and salvation.

2 Cor. 5:19: Nineteen hundred years ago God reconciled the world unto Himself.

We know what it means to be reconciled to someone. A person is reconciled to someone when he has dismissed from his heart all wrath against him.

Now, just so God has for Christ's sake dismissed from his heart all wrath against men, with whom He was angry because of their sins.

because of their sins. That is expressed in the words: 'God reconciled the world unto Himself.' In Christ God now takes the attitude toward men as if they had never offended Him with their sins, as if an estrangement between God and men had never occurred.¹⁰⁸ Here the so-called objective justification is clearly taught: for if God has been reconciled with men by Christ, if He has nothing more against them, then He has acquitted [spoken them loose or free] in His heart from their sins, then He considers them righteous for Christ's sake . . . So according to Scripture there is a reconciliation of God with men and a justification of the same before faith. The circumstances of Christ's death also point to that: Christ's shout: 'It is finished!' [John 19:30], the darkness until the ninth hour, when Christ died (at the ninth hour the sun broke forth again as a picture of the sun of grace, which has risen for us again through Christ's death), and the tearing of the curtain in the temple (for through this miraculous occurrence God actually declared that every sinner now has free access to Him)."

God now feels toward men as though they had never offended Him by sinning, as though never a disagreement between God and men had occurred. Here, then, the so-called objective justification is clearly taught: If God is reconciled with men, if He no longer has anything against them, then He has evidently in His heart absolved them of their sins, then He regards them as righteous for Christ's sake.

Hence, according to Scripture, the reconciliation between God and men, their justification, took place before they came to faith. This fact is indicated also by the circumstances of Christ's death: by His cry: 'It is finished' . . .

and by the rending of the veil (for God has actually declared by that miraculous occurrence that every sinner now has free access to Him)."

Comments: Here are several more deliberate efforts to obscure what Pieper (and the Southern Convention Report) meant by the so-called *objective justification*:

1. Notice first how the English translators choose to omit the opening part of the excerpt from the Southern District Convention. Since Pieper chose to include this excerpt to support a particular point he was making, his translators should do likewise. By this omission, the English translators obscure a very important point: *The Southern Convention Report, like Pieper, equated the so-called "objective justification" with the pre-existing reconciliation which God has toward men!* Read the opening portion which was omitted and see that for yourself. The omitted portion makes it clear that the Convention Report was talking about the reconciliation which God has toward mankind, a far cry from modern-day objective justification.
2. Next, notice the key sentence in the Southern Convention Report (German version) right before introducing 2 Cor. 5:19: "No man still needs to do or to suffer anything in order to reconcile God . . ." This shows that these men understood 2 Cor. 5:19 to be addressing the fact that God already has an attitude of reconciliation toward mankind which does not need our efforts or merit. This is proved also by the portion which the English translators choose to omit, and by the very next sentence, the transitional sentence leading to 2 Cor. 5:19: "For holy Scripture also explicitly testifies that. We read in 2 Cor. 5:19 . . ." The word "that" shows that they cited 2 Cor. 5:19 to prove the previous point, that no man needs to do or to suffer anything in order to reconcile God toward him (i.e. to cause God to be willing to forgive and be graceful).
3. Next, notice how the English translation omits that important comma after the word "God" and also changes "attain" to "obtain":

¹⁰⁸ The previous three sentences prove beyond doubt that Pieper understood "God reconciled the world unto Himself" to mean that God has had an attitude of reconciliation toward sinful mankind, not the reconciliation of people toward God (so-called subjective reconciliation).

a. The word "attain" means to "gain through effort."¹⁰⁹ That is an excellent word to use here, since no true Lutheran believes that man still needs to *gain through effort* his salvation or to *do or suffer* anything to reconcile God toward him. Nor do true Lutherans believe that man must *gain through effort* "righteousness" or "salvation." All human effort and merit is excluded by clear words such as "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph 2:1). However, the English "obtain" means something entirely different: "to get possession of . . . to receive."¹¹⁰ *Christian Dogmatics* says that nothing more needs to *happen* in order for man to *get possession of or receive* righteousness and salvation! That is false. What still needs to *happen* for men to get possession of and *receive* righteousness/salvation is that the Holy Ghost has to regenerate us. It is frightening to think how teachings like this could go unopposed.

b. The omission of the comma after "God" obscures the truth even further. With the comma, we can interpret the statement of the Southern Convention Report to say:

"No man still needs to *gain through effort, do or suffer anything* in order to:

- reconcile God to himself. . .
- . . . to receive righteousness and . . .
- . . . to receive salvation.

On the other hand, the English translation ("No man need henceforth do or suffer anything to reconcile God to *obtain* righteousness and salvation") says: "*Nothing has to happen in order for any man to reconcile God, which is to say that nothing has to happen for any man to receive righteousness and salvation.*"

Without the comma we are led to believe that "receiving righteousness and salvation" follows automatically from God being reconciled toward mankind: Christ's bloody cross = God reconciled toward all people = all people receive righteousness and salvation. We trust the reader recognizes how that statement contradicts Scripture. The English translation distorts Pieper's words and takes a major step toward the modern version of objective justification that we will study in chapters 9 and 10.

4. Theologians like to come up with labels to summarize the truths of Scripture. The term *objective reconciliation* was originally devised to summarize what is said better with such Bible words as "He shall see of the travail of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied" and Christ "died for all," and "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," and "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,"¹¹¹ Likewise, theologians chose the term *subjective reconciliation* to summarize what happens when people are converted: they become reconciled toward God = they drop their enmity toward Him = "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in [your] mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Col. 1:21). We do not need the philosophical concepts of "objective" and "subjective" to convey these truths. Many modern Lutherans have forgotten what objective reconciliation was meant to say. They speak as if Christ's work on the cross, by itself, effected peace and reconciliation **between** God and man (i.e. in both directions). Scripture constantly teaches that unregenerate people are not reconciled toward God until they are converted:

- Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20)
- And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and

¹⁰⁹ Webster's New World Dictionary, Third College Edition.

¹¹⁰ Webster's New World Dictionary, Third College Edition.

¹¹¹ Isaiah 53:11, 2 Cor. 5:15, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9.

settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; (Colossians 1:21-23)

- Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (Romans 8:7)
- Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. (James 4:4)
- Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (Romans 5:9-10)
- The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. (John 7:7)
- This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: (Ephesians 4:17-18)

a. That is the point which the Southern District Convention Report is trying to make. In the German, it says "so according to Scripture there is a reconciliation of God with men . . . before faith." The word "with" here [mit] is understood to mean "to" or "toward" by the text which follows. But in the English it says "Hence, according to Scripture, the reconciliation between God and men . . . took place before they came to faith." "Between" means a *two-way* reconciliation, which contradicts Scripture. To say that there is reconciliation "between" God and man says that unregenerate people are not at enmity toward Him, a blatant error. This is the sort of ambiguity which the modern version of objective justification has thrived on.¹¹² Scripture speaks clearly about two types of reconciliation: the first, which Pieper calls *objective reconciliation*, is God's always existing reconciliation *toward* mankind, *manifested in time* by Christ's bloody cross and resurrection around A.D. 30. This so-called objective reconciliation is better expressed with the very words of Scripture such as "He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11). The second reconciliation, which Pieper and other theologians like to call *subjective reconciliation*, is when the Holy Ghost, working through the means of grace, reconciles a person *toward* God by creating saving faith: "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in [your] mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Col 1:21). The English translation obscures these two reconciliations and says there is reconciliation between God and men.

b. The English Christian Dogmatics says "Hence, according to Scripture, the reconciliation between God and men, their justification, took place before they came to faith." This goes beyond what the German says and contradicts Scripture. There is no reconciliation BETWEEN God and man until man drops his enmity toward God, and this does not happen until God converts that person. Also, Scripture never speaks about a person being justified apart from faith (see Appendix).

¹¹² If there is already *two-way* reconciliation "between" God and men, then it won't be long before the message of Lutheranism to the unbelieving world is mystical and New-Age: "Even though you don't know it, you really do love God and are at peace toward Him and have no enmity toward Him! Just believe this, even though you willfully reject all His words and break all His laws."

5. Finally, notice how the English translators omit the words "In Christ" in the sentence: "In Christ God now takes the attitude toward men as if they had never offended Him with their sins . . ." These two words are essential to a proper understanding of the "old" meaning of objective justification. "In Christ" means to be a Christian (Romans 8:1; Romans 16:7; 1 Peter 5:14; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Cor. 3:1; 2 Tim. 3:12)! If all men were "in Christ," then they would indeed be justified. People who are "outside" of Christ are not justified, and the wrath of God abideth on them.

We continue our comparison of *Christliche Dogmatik* to *Christian Dogmatics*:

[Christliche Dogmatik]

**Objective and Subjective Reconciliation
[continued]**

The Gospel is the message of this objective, accomplished reconciliation, which is why it is called *ho logos tes katallages* ["the word of reconciliation"] in 2 Cor 5:19. And therefore it comes about that men now on their part or subjectively are reconciled to God through nothing other than faith (*sola fide*). Yet differently expressed: We are now reconciled to God through faith for this reason that the reconciliation is already present through Christ's satisfaction and is proclaimed and offered in the Gospel. Paul calls [people] to faith in the objectively present reconciliation in 2 Cor. 5:20 with the words: *katallagete to theo* ["be ye reconciled to God"], and in the name of all Christians he confesses in Rom. 5:11 that we have "now"--that is, upon becoming believers and in justification--"received the atonement" [in German, "atonement" and "reconciliation" are the same word]. 985

985 Philippi correctly [says] about Rom. 5:11: "The *katallage* [reconciliation] is present; we receive it through faith, so that *katallagen lambanein* [to receive reconciliation] = *dikaiousthai* [to be justified]; compare 2 Cor. 5:20: *katallagete to theo* ["be ye reconciled to God"]."

Comment:

1. In the second sentence, Pieper explains "subjective reconciliation" as the event when men *on their part* are reconciled *toward* God. This fits the point he made previously about *objective* reconciliation being God's pre-existing reconciliation toward men based on Christ's ransom. Pieper kept these two reconciliations separate, but the English translation constantly obscures their difference. In this section, the translators remove Pieper's point that *subjective reconciliation* is when "men on their part are reconciled to God." They do not want to define "subjective reconciliation" here (as Pieper does) because it would reveal too clearly what Pieper meant by "objective reconciliation." Pieper's explanation of these two reconciliations contradicts the notion that the reconciliation **between** God and man was completed at the time of the cross.

[Christian Dogmatics]

**Objective and Subjective Reconciliation
[continued]**

The message of this finished reconciliation is brought to us by the Gospel ("the Word of Reconciliation," 2 Cor. 5:19), and thus the subjective reconciliation takes place only by faith (*sola fide*).

In other words: only for this reason does faith reconcile us with God (subjectively) that reconciliation has already been effected through Christ's satisfaction and is proclaimed and proffered to us in the Gospel.

"Be ye reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20) -- believe and accept the objective reconciliation procured by Christ and now offered to you.

"We have now" in coming to faith, in being justified, "received the at-one-ment (reconciliation)," Rom. 5:11.35

35 Philippi on Rom. 5:11: "The reconciliation has been achieved, and we receive it by faith, so that *katallagen lambanein* means to be justified; cp. 2 Cor. 5:20: 'Be ye reconciled to God.'"

2. Pieper makes it clear that Rom. 5:11 is addressing believers while his translators conveniently remove that point! When we recognize that Rom. 5:11 (like Rom. 5:1 which begins the argument) is speaking about people who have come to be "subjectively" reconciled *toward* God, then the modern version of objective justification loses one of its favorite "proof texts": Rom. 5:18-19.
3. The English translators also significantly change the footnote in this section to obscure what Pieper meant by *objective justification*:
 - a. Pieper says that Philippi's point on Rom. 5:11 is "correct." His translators omit that point because when we agree that Philippi is "correct" to equate "to *receive* reconciliation" with "to be justified," then it becomes clear that we should not say that any man is justified apart from receiving reconciliation = being born again = conversion. 2 Corinthians 5:20 is ample proof that all people have not "received reconciliation." So the English translators removed this footnote.
 - b. Pieper has Philippi saying that the (objective) reconciliation "is present"; his translators have Philippi saying that the (objective) reconciliation "has been achieved." This promotes the idea of a change and distorts the truth that "I am the LORD, I change not" and "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." It promotes the error that God changed His attitude toward men at the time of the cross, forgiving all sins and justifying all people.

[Christliche Dogmatik]

Objective and Subjective Reconciliation [continued]

The Lutheran confession[s] also Scripturally emphasize the truth that there is only one way of subjective reconciliation of man with God: that through faith in the reconciliation or forgiveness of sins procured by Christ. The Apology: "Faith reconciles and makes us righteous before God when and at the time we grasp the promise through faith." "So thus we are reconciled to the Father and receive the remission of sins when through faith we seize the promise of mercy for the sake of Christ" "Faith reconciles us to God," namely "because it receives the remission of sins" 986

986 Apol. Mueller, p. 144; 101, sec. 81; 108, sec. 114; 119, sec. 61.

[Christian Dogmatics]

Objective and Subjective Reconciliation [continued]

This Scriptural truth that there is but one way of obtaining the subjective reconciliation, namely, by believing that Christ has already procured reconciliation and the forgiveness of sins, is the teaching of our Confessions. The Apology declares: "Faith, however, reconciles and justifies before God the moment we apprehend the promise by faith" (Trigl. 213, Art. III). "Thus, therefore, we are reconciled to the Father and receive remission of sins when we are comforted with confidence in the mercy promised for Christ's sake." (Trigl. 143, Art. IV [II], 81.) "Faith reconciles us to God . . . because it receives the remission of sins" (Trigl. 155, *ibid.*, 114; 171, Art. III, 61).

Comments: Here we see a major effort to obscure what F. Pieper meant by *objective justification* by altering his explanation of "subjective reconciliation." Pieper talks here about ". . . subjective reconciliation of man with God"; the English translation restructures the first sentence so the underlined portion is left out. Pieper's statement tells us that *subjective reconciliation* means individual people being reconciled *toward* God, which in turn reminds us that *objective reconciliation* means God's (always-existing) reconciliation *toward* mankind. We have seen repeatedly that the modern version of objective justification must obscure these two different reconciliations and act like reconciliation **between** God and man is complete.

Pieper stressed the so-called *objective* reconciliation of God toward man. He would have done better to express this truth with the very words of Scripture: "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied"; "not willing that any should perish"; "will have all men to be saved." God has

always had this reconciliation, so it certainly precedes the creation of faith in any human heart. Our coming to faith does not cause God to become willing to forgive us—we would never be brought to faith if it were not already true that "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee" (Psalm 86:5). Pieper repeatedly tried, though imperfectly, to equate *objective justification* with a properly understood *objective reconciliation*. This equation was constantly obscured by the English translation.

[Christliche Dogmatik - pages 474 ff]

The Application of Salvation - Preliminary Survey

One must proceed from the objective reconciliation or justification of the whole world of sinners. Everything that Scripture teaches about the appropriation of salvation, it bases on the historically accomplished fact, lying in the past, that God has reconciled the world of men with Himself through Christ's vicarious satisfaction. This reconciliation consists, as we say, not in a change in attitude on the part of men, but in a change of attitude on the part of God in this way that God in His presence, "before the divine court," let the forgiveness of sins take the place of wrath against human sin, *me logizomenos autois ta paraptomata auton, di' henos dikaiomatos epi pantas anthropous eis dikaiosin zoes* ["not imputing their trespasses unto them," "by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life"]. The reconciliation is also, as was also presented, a complete one--extensively and intensively perfect--, because we have a right to limit neither the conception *kosmos* ["world"] (2 Cor. 5:19) and *pantes anthropoi* ["all men"] (Rom. 5:18) nor the conception *ou logizesthai ta paraptomata* ["not to impute trespasses"] and *dikaiosis* ["justification"] (loc. cit.). These Scriptural statements speak not only of a new relationship between God and men, but quite explicitly of a deed of God, according to which He did not impute to men their sins, forgave sins to them, justified them in His heart. That is the meaning of objective reconciliation as it is taught in 2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 5:18-19; 5:10; 4:25.

[Christian Dogmatics - pages 398 ff]

The Application of Salvation - Preliminary Survey

All soteriological teaching must be based upon the historical, accomplished fact of the objective reconciliation, or justification, of all sinful mankind, namely, that through Christ's vicarious satisfaction God has reconciled mankind unto Himself. This reconciliation, as Scripture plainly tells us, does not consist in a change of heart in man, but in a change of heart in God. God no longer looks upon sinful man with wrath, but "before His divine tribunal" forgives the sins of mankind, does not impute their trespasses unto them (2 Cor. 5:19). "By the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom. 5:18).

And this reconciliation, is, as has been shown, complete and perfect, extensively and intensively, for we certainly have no right to restrict the meaning of either the terms "world" (2 Cor. 5:19) and "all men" (Rom. 5:18) or the terms "not imputing their trespasses" (2 Cor. 5:19) and "justification" (Rom. 5:18). Nor do these passages speak merely of a new relation between God and man, but they state definitely that God's action produced the new relation, God's action in not imputing their sins unto men, in forgiving them their sins, in justifying men in His heart. This is the meaning of the objective reconciliation, as taught in 2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 5:18; 5:10; 4:25.

Comment: This section reveals two efforts to expand and obscure what F. Pieper meant by objective justification:

1. First notice how the English translators omit the first sentence. The introductory words "One must proceed" are not trivial. Those words remind us that Pieper understood that one's understanding of reconciliation (or justification) *is not complete* by understanding the *objective reconciliation* of God toward man which had just been presented. By omitting these words, the English translators give an autonomy to *objective reconciliation* (versus *subjective reconciliation*) and *objective justification* (versus *subjective justification*).

2. Pieper's German says that because of the vicarious satisfaction of Christ, God "let the forgiveness of sins take the place of wrath against human sin." Although those words can be interpreted in such a way that they contradict clear statements of Scripture, they can also be interpreted to mean that because of Christ's foreseen vicarious satisfaction, God has a twofold manner of regarding mankind: one of grace (forgiveness) "in Christ" and the other of abiding wrath "outside of Christ." Note how the English translators alter this text to read "God no longer looks upon sinful man with wrath" suggesting, as they have done repeatedly, that this is the **only** way God regards mankind, and that this represents a **change** in God at the time of the cross. That is the hallmark of modern-day objective justification, and not what F. Pieper said.

The Immutability of God

God said "I am the LORD, I change not." (Malachi 3:6a). God also said that His wrath abideth on unbelievers after the cross and empty tomb (John 3:36). We have noted repeatedly how objective justification undermines these truth by saying that God changed *at the time of* Christ's death and resurrection. This change is described in various ways: "God no longer looks upon sinful man with wrath," "God's wrath ceased," "God's wrath was appeased," "God forgave all sins" and/or "God justified all people." That is not the way objective justification was explained by F. Pieper and F.A. Schmidt, who taught a twofold manner in which God regards the world . . . both manners existing since before the creation. One manner was of grace "in Christ" and the other was of wrath "outside of Christ." The modern teaching of objective justification constantly obscures God's immutability, and we see this particularly true in the English translation of *Christliche Dogmatik*:

[Christliche Dogmatik, Vol. I, p. 540 ff]

The Immutability of God

While all creatures perish, are changed like a dress (Ps. 102:27, 28), it is said in the same place and in sharp contrast with reference to God: "Thou remainest as Thou art."

And as immutability is ascribed to God in His being, so also in His attributes. Is. 54:10: "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee." And John 3:36: "The wrath of God abideth on him." Also of God's will it is said in Prov. 19:21: "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand." Scripture applies the immutability of God as a warning to the godless (Mark 9:44: the fire that is not quenched) as well as a comfort for the pious, Is. 54:10: "My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed."

Comments:

1. Notice that the only Bible verses not translated into the English (John 3:36, Mark 9:44) are the two which most clearly address God's immutable wrath! These Bible verses are clear proof that God's wrath has not ceased, been appeased, or changed in any way.

[Christian Dogmatics, Vol. I, p. 440 ff]

The Immutability of God

The Psalmist brings into the sharpest possible contrast the change and decay to which all creatures are heir and the immutability of God when he says: "They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end" (Ps. 102:26-27). God is unchangeable in His essence. He is immutable also in all His attributes, e.g., His kindness (Is 54:10). His wrath (John 3:36), His will (Prov. 19:21: "The counsel of the Lord shall stand").

Scripture draws a twofold lesson from God's immutability: 1) to warn the wicked, because God's wrath is unchangeable (Mark 9:44); 2) to comfort the pious, because God's grace can never depart (Is. 54:10).

2. By including more of Psalm 102 than Pieper did, the English translation softens the point that Pieper was making about God remaining *the same*. In the English translation, we get the impression that Pieper was simply stressing the *eternity* of God, which was not the case.
3. "My kindness shall not depart from thee" is not the same as "God's grace can never depart." Pieper quotes most of Isaiah 54:10 which stresses that God will not withdraw His kindness from His chosen people ("from thee") while the English paraphrases the verse to suggest that God's grace *cannot* (ever!) depart from any person! They soften God's immutability to promote the modern version of objective justification, taking a major step toward universalism. These are significant distortions of Pieper's words.

[Christliche Dogmatik]

The Immutability of God . . . continued

When Scripture ascribes a change of attitude to God (God repents, that He has created men, made Saul king, Gen. 6:6; 1 Sam 15:11), also testifies to a change of place of God (Gen. 11:5: "The LORD came down"), then this occurs in accommodation to our human ideas. That this change is not to be transferred to God's being, Scripture teaches in those passages in which God and man are contrasted, such as 1 Sam. 15:29: "He is not a man, that He should repent"; Jer. 23:24: "Do you think that anyone can hide himself so secretly that I would not see him?" God enters time and space without having become temporal or spatial in His essence.

Comment: This is an accurate translation.

[Christliche Dogmatik]

The Immutability of God . . . continued

From this it follows: Scripture speaks of God in a twofold way: a. of God in His majesty, as exalted above time and space (beside 1 Sam. 15:29 and Jer. 23:24, also Ps. 90:4: a thousand years as one day in the sight of God); b. of God as entering into the human idea of time and space, as 1 Sam. 15:11; Gen. 11:5. Only according to the latter way is God conceivable for us men. We must imagine God to ourselves in such a way that the God Who is immutable in Himself is gracious or angry depending on the various objects. God is a gracious God to the humble, to the poor sinners or broken hearts; on the contrary a wrathful God to the arrogant and self-righteous, 1 Pet. 5:5: "God resisteth the proud (hyperephanois), and giveth grace to the humble (tapenois)"; Luke 18:9-14: Pharisee and Publican; Luke 1:52, 53: "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away."

[Christian Dogmatics]

The Immutability of God . . . continued

When Scripture ascribes to God change of mind (Gen. 6:6; 1 Sam. 15:11; Jonah 3:10) or change of place (Gen. 11:5), it does so to conform to our mode of thinking in terms of time and space, cause and effect. But God is above these, and therefore no change or mutation can be predicated of God's essence. Scripture teaches this very clearly in all those passages in which God and man are placed into sharp antithesis, for example, in 1 Sam. 15:29: "God is not a man that He should repent." God enters into time and space without becoming temporal or local in His essence (Jer. 23:24).

[Christian Dogmatics]

The Immutability of God . . . continued

Scripture speaks of God in a twofold manner: 1) In His majesty as being above time and space (cp. especially Ps. 90:4: "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday"); 2) in accordance with our human views as being in time and space. Only in the latter manner is God comprehensible to us. We must so think of God that God, who in His being is immutable, is angry or merciful according to the difference in the object of His affection. We must so conceive of God that in spite of the immutability in His essence He is a gracious God to the humble, poor, and contrite sinners, but a jealous God to the proud and self-righteous (1 Pet. 5:5; Luke 18:9-14; Luke 1:52-53). God remains immutable, but there is mutability in the objects of His affection.

Comments: These significant changes reveal the translators' agenda: to downplay the ongoing wrath of God in order to promote the modern version of objective justification.

1. Pieper's German says simply that "God is gracious or angry depending on the various objects." To say that He is "gracious to the humble" and "wrathful to the arrogant" does not violate His immutability because He has had these attributes forever . . . before the foundation of the world. But Pieper's English translators have him saying, "God is angry or merciful according to the difference in the object of *His affection*." Pieper says that God is angry toward some objects; the English version tells us that even the objects of God's anger are "objects of His affection." That is a very mixed message which Scripture does not give.
2. This distortion is compounded by changing "wrathful" to "jealous." It is true that God is jealous, because He Himself says so. But it is also true that His wrath abideth on unbelievers, and wrath is more than jealousy.

These distortions of what Pieper taught regarding God's immutable wrath suggest that a major motive behind objective justification is to downplay the Law in order to make Missouri less offensive to the world. In the 1940's and 1950's, when this translation was done, the major focus of the Missouri Synod was *effectiveness*. It had shed its German heritage. Pieper was dead along with his insistence on full doctrinal agreement before any church fellowship. Mergers were the talk all around Christendom. If one believed that teaching God's immutable *wrath* is an unnecessary offense to the world, and maybe even an impediment to the "Gospel," then you would make the very changes that were made above to Pieper's teaching.

Let us examine another place where the English translation distorts Pieper's teaching of justification:

[Christliche Dogmatik, Vol. 2, p. 480]

The Application of Salvation

In the same moment in which faith in the forgiveness of sins arises in the heart of a man, the man becomes a partaker of the forgiveness of sins for his person through this faith, or--which is the same thing--he is justified by God (subjective justification). The basis for this is none other than this, that the forgiveness of sins or justification does not still need first to be won by people, rather [it] exists in God's heart through Christ's life and suffering and is proclaimed by God in the Gospel so that it may be believed by the man. Therefore it goes into effect for the individual man as soon as the man believes it.

[Christian Dogmatics, Vol. 2, p. 403]

The Application of Salvation

As soon as a person believes in the remission of his sins, he comes, by means of this faith, into personal possession of the remission of sins; in other words, he is justified before God (subjective justification).

Why is this the case? The sinner is not called upon to earn the remission of sins, or justification, but God has already forgiven him his sins on account of the life and suffering of Christ and has promulgated this blessed truth in the Gospel in order that men should accept it.

Hence it becomes effective in the case of the individual as soon as he accepts it by faith.

Comments:

1. First, notice how Pieper says a man is "justified **by** God" *when saving faith arises in his heart*, and he calls this event "subjective justification." Pieper clearly considered **this** to be that person's justification. It is when he is "justified **by** God," not when he receives the benefit of his prior justification! Notice how that truth is obscured by the English translation, which changes "by" to "before." The word "by" leaves no doubt that *this* event (which Pieper calls *subjective justification*) is the act of God by which an individual person is declared righteous. The word "before" leaves that point in doubt. To say a person is "justified before God" does not tell us when it happened or Who made it happen, both of which are answered by Pieper's word "by." The English translation is consistent with the modern version of objective justification which claims that God already justified all people at the time of the

cross. According to modern Lutheran theologians, when a person is brought to saving faith ("subjectively justified") all that happens is that he receives the benefits of the fact that he was already justified.

2. Second, notice that Pieper refers to the fact that "forgiveness of sins *exists in God's heart*." This can be understood to mean that God is ready to forgive: "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee" (Psalm 86:5). What F. Pieper meant by objective justification is that "forgiveness of sins exists in God's heart." The English translation, however, distorts Pieper's words to say "God has already forgiven him his sins." We call God a liar when we say that He has forgiven all sins and still eternally punishes those "forgiven" sins for anyone that does not believe it. Scripture never speaks about "forgiveness" in such an ambiguous manner. Many Bible verses prove that all sins are not forgiven:
 - Matthew 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
 - Mark 4:12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them.
 - Acts 8:22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.
 - 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The Index to *Christliche Dogmatik* compared to *Christian Dogmatics*

Another way to demonstrate how the English translators expanded F. Pieper's use of *objective justification* is to examine the respective indexes.

1. In the index to *Christliche Dogmatik*, Justification is presented under a single heading: Justification. In the index to *Christian Dogmatics*, there are two sections: "Objective Justification" and "Subjective Justification."
2. The index to *Christliche Dogmatik* lists 97 different entries under "Justification," but there are only three references to "objective justification." The index to *Christian Dogmatics* contains 37 references to *objective justification*.
3. Finally, the English index puts a number of comments under "Justification, Objective" which are not in the German index. For example, they make these bold assertions, which one will not find in the work they were supposed to be translating: "Only he who accepts God's objective justification through operation of Holy Ghost is believer" and "their [all men's] justification took place before they came to faith."

Conclusion

When one studies the evidence, it is undeniable that the English translators expanded and distorted Franz Pieper's teaching of *objective justification*. There is enough evidence to call these changes deliberate. Pieper was willing to use the term, but he used it sparingly. He tried to equate it to 1. the so-called objective reconciliation of God toward mankind; 2. *an absolution of the world of*

*sinner*s; 3. the fact that forgiveness of sins exists in God's heart. In *Christliche Dogmatik*, Pieper also qualified his teaching of objective justification by setting forth God's immutable wrath which abideth on unbelievers and God's eternal election of some people to salvation. The English *Christian Dogmatics* repeatedly changed Pieper's words and softened his qualifications to give objective justification a broader meaning.

For I am the LORD, I change not.
Malachi 3:6

*"After Christ's intervention and through Christ's
intervention, God regards all sinners as guilt-free saints."
Kokomo Statement 2, WELS, 1979-1980.
Also found in Ministers of Christ,
Prof. John P. Meyer (WELS), NPH, p. 107.*

Chapter 7

Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod - 1932

Overview

We have seen that neither the 1897 Brief Statement nor the 1912 Missouri Catechism teach “all people are justified” or “all sins are forgiven.” In this chapter, we will see that the 1932 Brief Statement also does not teach that *all sins are forgiven* and *all people justified*. Nor does the 1932 Brief Statement say there was any change in God at the time of Christ's death and resurrection, around A.D. 30. There is one ambiguous half-sentence of the Statement which *can* support *objective justification*, but this requires us to ignore its context and the two words: “in Christ.”

We will examine four sections of the 1932 Brief Statement which lead up and include justification:

- Of Redemption;
- Of Faith in Christ;
- Of Conversion;
- Of Justification.

Of Redemption

*8. We teach that in the fulness of time the eternal Son of God was made man by assuming, from the Virgin Mary through the operation of the Holy Ghost, a human nature like unto ours, yet without sin, and receiving it unto His divine person. Jesus Christ is therefore “true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary,” true God and true man in one undivided and indivisible person. The purpose of this miraculous incarnation of the Son of God was that He might become the Mediator between God and men, both **fulfilling the divine Law and suffering and dying in the place of mankind.** In this manner God has reconciled the whole sinful world unto Himself, Gal 4:4-5; 3:13; 2 Cor 5:18, 19. [emphasis added]*

Comments: The Brief Statement speaks of Christ “fulfilling the divine Law and suffering and dying in the place of mankind.” This assertion is better stated with the very words of Scripture: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil,” Christ “died for all,” and “Who gave himself a ransom for all.”¹¹³ The Brief Statement goes on to say that “In this manner God has reconciled the whole sinful world unto Himself.” We assume this refers to what theologians like to call *objective reconciliation*¹¹⁴ = the satisfaction of God’s Justice:

- He shall see of the travail of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied (Is. 53:11a)

¹¹³ Matthew 5:17, 2 Cor. 5:15, 1 Timothy 2:6.

¹¹⁴ See Chapter 6 for a thorough discussion of what theologians like to call “objective reconciliation.” F. Pieper tried to equate *objective justification* with this so-called objective reconciliation = satisfaction of His Justice = willingness to forgive.

- Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4)
- The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

There is no suggestion in the Brief Statement that this reconciliation was a *change* in God at the time of Christ's death and resurrection, as claimed by modern-day objective justification. When we view Christ's bloody cross and resurrection around A.D. 30, let us remember:

- Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20a)
- For I *am* the LORD, I change not (Malachi 3:6a)
- Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (2 Timothy 1:9)
- And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8)

Please note that the 1932 Brief Statement does not mention "justification" or "forgiveness" in the Article on Redemption.

Of Faith in Christ

9. Since God has reconciled the whole world unto Himself through the vicarious life and death of His Son and has commanded that the reconciliation effected by Christ be proclaimed to men in the Gospel, to the end that they may believe it, 2 Cor 5:18-19; Rom 1:5; Therefore faith in Christ is the only way for men to obtain personal reconciliation with God, that is, forgiveness of sins, as both the Old and the New Testament Scriptures testify, Acts 10:43; John 3:16-18, 36. By this faith in Christ, through which men obtain the forgiveness of sins, is not meant any human effort to fulfill the Law of God after the example of Christ, but faith in the Gospel, that is, in the forgiveness of sins, or justification, which was fully earned for us by Christ and is offered in the Gospel. This faith justifies, not inasmuch as it is a work of man, but inasmuch as it lays hold of the grace offered, the forgiveness of sins, Rom 4:16. [emphasis added]

Comments:

1. The Brief Statement understood there to be two "reconciliations" involved in the matter of Justification: one is the so-called objective reconciliation = the satisfaction of God's Justice and His attitude of reconciliation *toward* men. The other (the so-called "subjective reconciliation"), is an individual person's reconciliation *toward* God, and the Brief Statement equates *this* reconciliation

with the forgiveness of sins: "...for men to obtain personal reconciliation with God, that is, forgiveness of sins..."

2. The second sentence of this section asserts that a person is not forgiven except through "faith in Christ." This contradicts the modern teaching that God forgave *all* sins when Christ died and rose from the grave. When speaking about forgiveness, let us keep in mind these Scripture truths:
 - For as the heaven is high above the earth, [so] great is his mercy *toward them that fear him*. As far as the east is from the west, [so] far hath he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:11-12).
 - But thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob: but thou has been weary of me, O Israel . . . I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake and will not remember thy sins. (Is. 43:22, 25).
 - But this [shall be] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for *they shall all know me*, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jer. 31:33-34)
 - Who *is* a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth *in* mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:18-19 AV)
 - For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. (Hebrews 10:14-17)

Please remember that the modern teaching of objective justification says that God *forgave* all sins, but that a person is still eternally punished for his "forgiven" sins if he did not believe they were forgiven during his lifetime. We call God a liar when we say that He punishes sins after He forgives them. God's word is not "yea" and "nay."

3. This section of the Brief Statement correctly points out that "faith" is not a human effort or achievement. Modern OJ'ers contend that we need to say "all sins are forgiven" and "all people are justified" to avoid making "faith" something on our part which contributes toward our justification. Scripture refutes this error without saying all people are already justified: "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17) "And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).
4. The Statement points out that not just "any faith" is required but "faith in the Gospel," which we learned in the previous article is what theologians like to call Christ's *vicarious satisfaction*: "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:2). This truth is obscured by objective justification, which makes universal justification the object of saving faith. For example, we saw in Chapter 5 that the 1991 Missouri Catechism that modern-day objective justification says we believe in the forgiveness of sins "because through Christ God has declared pardon and forgiveness to all sinful humanity." Many modern Lutherans teach that a person cannot believe he is forgiven unless he believe all people are forgiven. We will see more of this confusion in Chapters 9 and 10.

Of Conversion

10. *We teach that conversion consists in this, that a man, having learned from the Law of God that he is a lost and condemned sinner, is brought to faith in the Gospel, which offers him forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation for the sake of Christ's vicarious satisfaction, Acts 11:21; Luke 24:46, 47; Acts 26:18. [emphasis added]*

Comments:

1. Notice that in 1932, Missouri still taught that the Gospel "offers" forgiveness of sins. Today, the teaching is "God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven all sinners all of their sins." That is doctrinal evolution.
2. Notice the Brief Statement's stress on the necessity of contrition: *before* anyone can be brought to faith in the Gospel message, he must first learn from the Law that "he is a lost and condemned sinner." The modern teaching of objective justification omits or obscures that point.¹¹⁵ In Acts 8:22 the Apostle Peter told the ex-sorcerer "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." He did not tell this man that the wicked thought of his heart was already forgiven, along with all other sins. Nor did he say that if he repented and prayed to God, he would receive the benefit of the fact that this sin was already forgiven. He said "perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee"!

¹¹⁵ Instead of preaching the Law followed by the Gospel, the message of the church becomes something like "You are already forgiven--just believe that and you will be saved."

Of Conversion...continued

11. All men, since the Fall, are dead in sins, Eph 2:1-3, and inclined only to evil, Gen 6:5; 8:21; Rom 8:7. For this reason, and particularly because men regard the Gospel of Christ, crucified for the sins of the world, as foolishness, 1 Cor 2:14, faith in the Gospel, or conversion to God, is neither wholly nor in the least part the work of man, but the work of God's grace and almighty power alone, Phil 1:29; Eph 2:8; 1:19; --Jer 31:18. Hence Scripture calls the faith of man, or his conversion, a raising from the dead, Eph 1:20, Col 2:12, a being born of God, John 1:12, 13, a new birth by the Gospel, 1 Pet 1:23-25, a work of God like the creation of light at the creation of the world, 2 Cor 4:6.

12. On the basis of these clear statements of the Holy Scriptures we reject every kind of synergism, that is, the doctrine that conversion is wrought not by the grace and power of God alone, but in part also by the co-operation of man himself, by man's right conduct, his right attitude, his right self-determination, his lesser guilt or less evil conduct as compared with others, his refraining from willful resistance, or anything else whereby man's conversion and salvation is taken out of the gracious hands of God and made to depend on what man does or leaves undone. For this refraining from willful resistance or from any kind of resistance is also solely a work of grace, which "changes unwilling into willing men," Ezek 36:26; Phil 2:13. We reject also the doctrine that man is able to decide for conversion through "powers imparted by grace," since this doctrine presupposes that before conversion man still possesses spiritual powers by which he can make the right use of such "powers imparted by grace."

Comments: Section 11 and 12 of the Brief Statement stress that "faith" or "conversion" is wholly a work of God. Modern Lutherans claim that we need "all sins are forgiven and all people justified" to rebut the synergistic error that faith is something on our part which causes our conversion.

Of Conversion...continued

13. On the other hand, we reject also the Calvinistic perversion of the doctrine of conversion, that is, the doctrine that God does not desire to convert and save all hearers of the Word, but only a portion of them. Many hearers of the Word indeed remain unconverted and are not saved, not because God does not earnestly desire their conversion and salvation, but solely because they stubbornly resist the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost, as Scripture teaches, Acts 7:51; Matt 23:37; Acts 13:46.

Comments: We do not need to teach that all sins are forgiven and all people justified in order to refute the error that "God does not desire to convert and save all hearers of the Word." Let us trust the quick and powerful words of Scripture to refute this error, words such as "Christ died for all" and God "will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Of Conversion...continued

14. As to the question why not all men are converted and saved, seeing that God's grace is universal and all men are equally and utterly corrupt, we confess that we cannot answer it. From Scripture we know only this: A man owes his conversion and salvation, not to any lesser guilt or better conduct on his part, but solely to the grace of God. But any man's non-conversion is due to himself alone: it is the result of his obstinate resistance against the converting operation of the Holy Ghost, Hos. 13:9.

15. Our refusal to go beyond what is revealed in these two Scriptural truths is not "masked Calvinism" ("Crypto-calvinism")¹¹⁶ but precisely the Scriptural teaching of the Lutheran Church as it is present in detail in the Formula of Concord (Triglot, p. 1081, & 57-59, 60b, 62, 63; M., p. 716f.): "That one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind, while another, who is indeed in the same guilt, is converted again, etc. --in these and similar questions Paul fixes a certain limit to us how far we should go, namely, that in the one part we should recognize God's judgment. For they are well-deserved penalties of sins when God so punished a land or nation for despising His Word that the punishment extends also to their posterity, as is to be seen in the Jews. And thereby God in some lands and persons exhibits His severity to those that are His in order to indicate what we all would have well deserved and would be worthy and worth, since we act wickedly in opposition to God's Word and often grieve the Holy Ghost sorely; in order that we may live in the fear of God and acknowledge and praise God's goodness, to the exclusion of, and contrary to, our merit in and with us, to whom He gives His Word and with whom He leaves it and whom He does not harden and reject . . . And this His righteous, well-deserved judgment He displays in some countries, nations, and persons in order that, when we are placed alongside of them and compared with them (*Quam simillimi illis deprehensi*, i.e., and found to be most similar to them), we may learn the more diligently to recognize and praise God's pure, unmerited grace in the vessels of mercy . . . When we proceed thus far in this article, we remain on the right way, as it is written, Hos 13:9: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help." However, as regards these things in this disputation which would soar too high and beyond these limits, we should with Paul place the finger upon our lips and remember and say, Rom 9:20: "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" The Formula of Concord describes the mystery which confronts us here not as a mystery in man's heart (a "psychological" mystery), but teaches that, when we try to understand why "one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind, while another, who is indeed in the same guilt, is converted again," we enter the domain of the unsearchable judgments of God and ways

¹¹⁶ It is worth noting that Prof. F.A. Schmidt (Chapter 2) accused Missouri of being "Crypto-Calvinists" when he started the Predestination Controversy. This writer believes that a misunderstanding or rejection of God's eternal election (summarized in Article XI of the Formula of Concord) contributes to the modern version of objective justification.

past finding out, which are not revealed to us in His Word, but which we shall know in eternal life, 1 Cor 13:12.

16. Calvinists solve this mystery, which God has not revealed in His Word, by denying the universality of grace; synergists, by denying that salvation is by grace alone. Both solutions are utterly vicious, since they contradict Scripture and since every poor sinner stands in need of, and must cling to, both the unrestricted universal grace and the unrestricted "by grace alone," lest he despair and perish.

Comments: Sections 14, 15 and 16 of the Brief Statement point out need to *tremble* before the words of God (Isaiah 66:2) and never go beyond what Scripture has revealed. God has given us in Scripture the "quick and powerful," "spirit and life" words to convey all the truths that He would have us know. These words are sufficient to refute Roman Catholic, synergistic and Calvinistic errors. We do not need to say all sins are forgiven and all people justified.

Of Justification

*17. Holy Scripture **sums up** all its teaching regarding the love of God to the world of sinners, regarding the salvation wrought by Christ, and regarding faith in Christ as the only way to obtain salvation, in the article of justification. **Scripture teaches that God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ, Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor 5:18-21; Rom 4:25; that therefore not for the sake of their good works, but without the works of the Law, by grace, for Christ's sake, He justifies, that is, accounts as righteous, all those who believe in Christ, that is, believe, accept, and rely on, the fact that for Christ's sake their sins are forgiven. Thus the Holy Ghost testifies through St. Paul: "There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Rom 3:23,24. And again: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law," Rom 3:28. [emphasis added]***

Comments: Study carefully the single sentence marked in boldface. Modern theologians have used the first part of this sentence to "prove" that old Missouri taught the modern version of *objective justification*. But careful analysis will prove just the opposite.

The clause ("God has already declared the whole world to be righteous . . .") *can* be interpreted to support the modern version of objective justification. Such ambiguous language in a public confession is regrettable. But to interpret this clause in that manner requires that we ignore three things:

1. The broad context of the entire section "Of Justification": what was taught in the preceding sections;
2. The medium context of this clause: the sentence which precedes it and the two sentences which follow;

3. The narrow context of this partial sentence, namely, the two words "in Christ" which follow it and the second half of the same sentence.

When the broad, medium and narrow context is used to interpret this half-sentence, it does not support the modern teaching that "all sins are forgiven and all people justified." Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that men chose such ambiguous words to convey the simple truths of Scripture.

A. First, let us put this entire section (#17) in its overall context: "Of Justification" follows "Of Redemption," "Of Faith in Christ" and "Of Conversion," (see above). If we interpret this section as teaching something that was not taught in the earlier articles, then we have reason for concern. Supporters of *objective justification* take the half-sentence, "God has already declared the whole world to be righteous" out of its broad context to claim that "old" Missouri taught that "God forgave all sins and justified all people." "Of Redemption," "Of Faith in Christ" and "Of Conversion" contain *nothing* to support the modern version of objective justification.

B. Second, notice the two words "in Christ" which comes at the end of the much-quoted "God has already declared the whole world to be righteous..." Modern theologians like to omit or ignore those two words when promoting the modern version of objective justification. But these two words limit the argument to those who are "in Christ," believers. Let us examine how the Bible uses "in Christ":

- "There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1.
- "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me." Romans 16:7
- "Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace [be] with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen." 1 Pet. 5:14
- "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called [to be] saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" 1 Cor. 1:2
- "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, [even] as unto babes in Christ." 1 Cor. 3:1
- "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 3:12

- "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace [be] unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Col. 1:2.

Clearly, not all people are "in Christ." Only those whom God has converted are "in Christ." Thus, when this half-sentence of the 1932 Brief Statement says: "Scripture teaches that God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ" we can understand it to mean "God has declared everyone that is in Christ to be righteous."

C. Now, let us examine the entire sentence in which this ambiguous phrase appears: *"Scripture teaches that God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ, Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor 5:18-21; Rom 4:25; that therefore not for the sake of their good works, but without the works of the Law, by grace, for Christ's sake, He justifies, that is, accounts as righteous, all those who believe in Christ, that is, believe, accept, and rely on, the fact that for Christ's sake their sins are forgiven."*

Read this sentence several times. Since the second part of the sentence says that "He justifies, that is, accounts as righteous, all those who believe in Christ" we should not interpret the first part of the sentence to mean that God justified all people. To claim such a thing would be to say "yea" and "nay" in the same sentence!¹¹⁷ The last referenced Bible verses, Romans 3:23-24 and Romans 3:28 clearly teach that God justifies individual people through faith, without any merit or works on their part:

Romans 3

- 21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;
- 22 Even the righteousness of God [which is] **by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe**: for there is no difference:
- 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
- 24 **Being** justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
- 25 Whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation **through faith in his blood**, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
- 26 To declare, [I say], at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and **the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus**.

¹¹⁷ By way of simple analogy, let us suppose that I am asserting that *all* white people are racists. Would I then *conclude* my argument, in the same sentence, by asserting that "therefore only red-haired white people are racists"?

Whether one agrees or not with modern-day objective justification ("God forgave all sins and justified all people"), let him admit that this is not the way justification was taught by the 1897 Brief Statement, the 1912 Catechism or the 1932 Brief Statement. The only way to use this half-sentence of the 1932 Brief Statement to support modern-day objective justification is to ignore the broad context, the two words "in Christ," and the second half of the sentence. Doctrinal evolution is undeniable.

Finally, please note that the sentence in Section 17 under examination is explicitly addressing whom "God justifies," *not* "who receives justification" or "who receives the benefits of his justification." This is important, because it refutes the modern teaching of subjective justification that when a person is converted he simply receives the benefits of God's prior universal justification.

We now conclude the 1932 Brief Statement's teaching Of Justification:

Of Justification. . . continued

*18. Through this doctrine alone Christ is given the honor due Him, namely, that through His holy life and innocent suffering and death He is our Savior. And through this doctrine alone can poor sinners have the abiding comfort that God is assuredly gracious to them. **We reject as apostasy from the Christian religion all doctrines whereby man's own works and merit are mingled into the article of justification before God.** For the Christian religion is the faith that we have forgiveness of sins and salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, Acts 10:43. [emphasis added]*

19. We reject as apostasy from the Christian religion not only the doctrine of the Unitarians, who promise the grace of God to men on the basis of their moral efforts; not only the gross work-doctrine of the Papists, who expressly teach that good works are necessary to obtain justification; but also the doctrine of the synergists, who indeed use the terminology of the Christian Church and say that man is justified "by faith," "by faith alone," but again mix human works into the article of justification by ascribing to man a co-operation with God in the kindling of faith and thus stray into papistic territory.

Comment: There is nothing here which asserts that God forgave all sins and justified all people.

Final Comments

We have seen that in the 1932 Brief Statement a half sentence was introduced into the teaching of "justification" which can be interpreted two ways. If the half sentence is interpreted in its broad and narrow context, and proper emphasis given to the words "in Christ," it contradicts the modern version of objective justification ("God has forgiven all sins and justified all people"). However, if the half sentence is removed from its context and the words "in Christ" are ignored

or mis-understood, then one can say that it supports modern-day *objective justification*. The evidence suggests that the majority of the Missouri Synod in 1932 did not intend the Brief Statement to teach anything new on the subject of justification. Nevertheless, we must not pretend that the introduction of this ambiguous half sentence was an accident. . . there was a reason that the language used to present justification changed from the 1897 Brief Statement (Chapter 4). A new generation of theologians were taking control of the Missouri Synod. We saw (Chapter 6) that this new generation changed F. Pieper's teaching of objective justification from *Christliche Dogmatik* (1917-1924) to *Christian Dogmatics* (1950-1953). We also saw (Chapter 5) how the 1991 Missouri Catechism teaches objective justification while the 1912 Catechism did not..

A Brief Recap

The key elements in the historical development of objective justification are now in place. In the next chapter we will see how *Popular Symbolics* (1934) took a significant step toward the modern teaching. Then, in Chapter 9 and 10, we will examine two examples of the fully modern version of objective justification: a 1954 WELS tract "Every Sinner Declared Righteous" and the Kokomo Four Statements of 1979-1980. Those chapters will show, better than any amount of abstract argument, the fruit and danger of *objective justification*.

In the historical development of objective justification there were several key developments:

1. At first, the teaching of this concept was accompanied by extensive disclaimers and qualifications, making it appear harmless. We saw this especially in the 1872 essay by Professor F.A. Schmidt, which had all the elements of modern-day objective justification but included qualifications such as "the debt remains on the unbelievers, as long as they continue in unbelief," "Righteousness is fulfilled in us; not indeed in every individual person, but in our humanity," and "Whoever therefore does not believe in Christ, yes rejects Christ, upon him the wrath of God remains." Future pruning of these qualifications would reap the version of objective justification which prevails today: "God has forgiven all sins and justified all people."
2. Some opponents of the early concept of *objective justification* probably held synergistic notions (Chapter 3). This opposition gave *objective justification* a certain credibility, as many Lutherans probably saw it as a useful way to refute the error that faith is something on our part which contributes toward our justification. After the Predestination Controversy, Missouri also seems to have been reluctant to use God's words regarding predestination to refute their pseudo-Lutheran opponents, and developed objective justification instead. However, we have repeatedly demonstrated that the very words of Scripture do a better job of refuting synergism.

3. The 1897 Brief Statement and 1912 Catechism do not teach that God has forgiven all sins or justified all people. They do not mention objective justification.
4. In *Christliche Dogmatik* (1917-1924) F. Pieper was willing to use the term *objective justification*, but he used it sparingly. He explained it variously as "an actual absolution of the whole world of sinners," "a justification of mankind *in Himself*," and one of the "factual absolutions of the world." At that time, Missouri understood that no absolution remits the sins of people who do not believe its words, so this would certainly apply to any "factual absolution of the world." Pieper also qualified objective justification by saying that "all sins are absolved *in Christ*," which can be understood to mean that all those who are "in Christ" are absolved. He also said that "*in Christ* God now takes the attitude toward men as if they had never offended Him with their sins . . ." In *Christliche Dogmatik*, Pieper tried to equate objective justification with the so-called objective reconciliation: the satisfaction of God's justice = His reconciliation toward mankind = willingness to forgive. In *Christliche Dogmatik*, Pieper also set forth the other Scripture truths which reduce the danger that *objective justification* will be misunderstood: God's perfect foreknowledge, the immutability of His wrath which abideth on unbelievers, God's election of His people to salvation before the foundation of the world, and the need for God-wrought contrition before offering the Gospel. Finally, Pieper never suggested that the object of saving faith—the thing that must be believed in order for a person to be saved—is the forgiveness of all sins and the justification of all people.

All of these elements in Pieper's teaching of objective justification were distorted or obscured by the English translation *Christian Dogmatics* done around 1950.

5. The label change from "universal" or "general" to "*objective*" justification probably lulled many into thinking that this term simply meant that the causes of our justification are "objective" and not something the subjects contribute toward.

All these factors combined to give the concept of objective justification breathing room until a new generation of theologians took over whose priority was *not* pure doctrine. Indeed, history proves that as soon as F. Pieper died in 1931 there was considerable agitation in Missouri for *change*. The new generation had a goal of making Missouri more *effective*. This new generation of churchmen proved time and again their willingness to adjust or downplay doctrine in the name of *effectiveness*.¹¹⁸ Dividing justification into two stages, objective and

¹¹⁸ Look, for example, at the error-filled "Common Confession" approved by the Missouri Synod in 1938 in the hopes of building a unified Lutheran church. The Statement of the Forty Four in 1945, whose primary purpose was to promote merger with other Lutherans, also reveals the mindset of this new generation of Lutheran theologians. For at least 50 years, the focus has been *effectiveness*, not truth.

subjective, is less offensive because it downplays the Law and God's wrath; anyone who has ever spoken the words of God to an unbeliever knows that "you're already forgiven and justified" goes over a lot better than "the wages of sin is death and God is angry with the wicked every day." Objective justification also obscured the always offensive truth that "he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" and "whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Ephesians 1:4, Romans 8:30)

For these reasons, the development of modern-day objective justification may be partly explained as part of a larger effort to make the Synodical Conference more *effective*. And since objective justification breeds carnal security and neglect of God's very words, it weakened or destroyed God-wrought faith wherever it was taught. Humanly speaking, this makes it highly unlikely that objective justification will be turned back wherever it is entrenched. On the other hand, "with God nothing shall be impossible."

*The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power,
and will not at all acquit the wicked:
Nahum 1:3*

*"God declared all people in all the world 'Not guilty'
of their sins. This is sometimes called universal
justification or objective justification."*

*Martin Luther's Small Catechism
A Handbook of Christian Doctrine
Rev. Mike Sydow, 1988, p. 122.*

Chapter 8

Popular Symbolics - 1934

The 1934 publication of *Popular Symbolics* represented another step toward modern-day *objective justification*. It was written by four professors: Th. Engelder, W. Arndt, Th. Graebner, and F.E. Mayer. Two of these four professors went on to become major dissidents in the Missouri Synod, with both Graebner and Arndt signing the error-filled "Statement of the Forty Four" in 1945.¹¹⁹ F.E. Mayer was one of the major mediating theologian in the Missouri Synod, also probably having the dubious distinction of falsely introducing the twofold principle of Scripture interpretation into the English translation of F. Pieper's *Christliche Dogmatik*.¹²⁰

What is especially important about *Popular Symbolics* is that it taught objective justification without any of the qualifications we saw with Prof. F.A. Schmidt (1872) and Pieper's *Christliche Dogmatik*:

- It does not mention a *twofold* manner in which God views the world: one of grace *in Christ* and the other of wrath *outside of Christ*;
- It does not mention the immutable wrath of God which *abides* on unbelievers ("He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" John 3:36)
- It ignores the simple truth that "he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" and "whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Ephesians 1:4, Romans 8:30).

Popular Symbolics says without qualification that the sins of the world are forgiven. For that reason, it represented a major step in doctrinal evolution, setting a foundation on which the next generation could build. It is remarkable to note that this change occurred only 2 years after the 1932 Brief Statement which does not say such a thing. When Franz Pieper died in 1931, the pieces were apparently already in place to implement a shift in doctrine.

We will present the teaching of justification in *Popular Symbolics* with only brief comment because earlier chapters addressed its key points.

89. JUSTIFICATION IS A JUDICIAL ACT OF GOD. THE SINS OF THE WORLD BEING FORGIVEN BECAUSE OF THE VICARIOUS ATONEMENT OF CHRIST (OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION), GOD PRONOUNCES THE SINNER

¹¹⁹ Th. Graebner spent the late 30's and 40's actively promoting union with heterodox Lutheran churches, especially from his position as Editor of "*The Lutheran Witness*."

¹²⁰ "Common Seed or Common Creed" by Martin Noland concluded that Mayer was probably responsible for the false introduction of the material and formal principle into *Christian Dogmatics*. Mayer was also one of the translators of *Christliche Dogmatik*, which expanded and changed F. Pieper's teaching of objective justification (Chapter 6).

RIGHTEOUS WHO BY FAITH ACCEPTS THIS UNIVERSAL PARDON OFFERED IN THE GOSPEL, IMPUTING TO HIM THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST (SUBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION).¹²¹

Comments: Notice the first part of the second sentence: "The sins of the world being forgiven . . ." This is a radical departure from the form of sound words used in the Brief Statements of 1897 and 1932, the 1912 Catechism, *Christliche Dogmatik*.

- Before, the Missouri Synod was content to teach that Christ *procured* forgiveness of sins for all people, or "all sins are forgiven in Christ." Now, without qualification, prominent Professors of the Missouri Synod said all sins are actually "forgiven." Forgiveness now became an accomplished reality for all people, not something that takes place when the Holy Ghost converts a person and brings them to Christ. For the first time, Missouri was explicitly calling God a liar by saying He punishes sins (of unbelievers) after He Himself says "I forgive your sins."
- The 1934 teaching does not say that this universal forgiveness is only IN CHRIST, thus dropping the most important disclaimer that accompanied Prof. Schmidt's teaching of universal justification (Chapter 2) and Pieper's objective justification in *Christliche Dogmatik* (Chapter 6)
- The 1934 formulation does not mention the immutable wrath of God which continues to abide on unbelievers. Readers will recall from Chapter 2 that God's abiding wrath was repeatedly stressed with the 1872 version of universal justification.
- *Popular Symbolics* leaves the impression that God changed toward mankind due to Christ's "vicarious atonement" around A.D. 30. Let us remember these simple truths:
 - For I *am* the LORD, I change not (Malachi 3:6a)
 - Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20a)
 - And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8)

It is noteworthy that *Popular Symbolics* does not present "immutability" as one of the attributes of God in the section dealing with that matter. That is a significant departure from Pieper's *Christliche Dogmatik*, which explicitly said that God's wrath is immutable and that it abideth on unbelievers (Chapter 6).

- *Popular Symbolics* omits the truth that "he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" and "whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Ephesians 1:4, Romans 8:30).

¹²¹ Page 63 of *Popular Symbolics*.

The only thing about *Popular Symbolics* which keeps it from the fully modern version of objective justification is that it does seem to suggest that individual people are not forgiven until they come to faith. It says that all sins are forgiven, but immediately says that "GOD PRONOUNCES THE SINNER RIGHTEOUS WHO BY FAITH ACCEPTS THIS UNIVERSAL PARDON OFFERED IN THE GOSPEL." We suspect that this ambiguous language was deliberate. It is easy to see why later theologians would conclude that since "the sins of the whole world are forgiven," without any qualification, then all individual people must also be forgiven, justified, and declared to be saints. Let this remind us what happens when men chose not to speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11) and prefer to use their own words to reformulate what Scripture says.

What is the Gospel Message To Which Saving Faith Clings?

The second problem with the language employed by *Popular Symbolics* is easily overlooked, but is perhaps more important. Study carefully this phrase from the earlier excerpt [emphasis added]:

" . . . GOD PRONOUNCES THE SINNER RIGHTEOUS WHO BY FAITH **ACCEPTS THIS UNIVERSAL PARDON OFFERED IN THE GOSPEL . . .** " [emphasis added]

This statement can be understood to mean that the pardon offered to *you* is the same one offered to every other hearer of the Gospel, the same offer which was intended for all people and actually presented to those who hear it through the Gospel. On the other hand, this statement can also be understood to mean that unless *you* believe ("accept") the fact that all sins of all men are forgiven, then God does not pronounce *you* righteous.¹²² This ambiguity raises a fundamental question that Lutheranism never had trouble conveying before objective justification came along: what is the *object* of saving faith? What is the thing which God-wrought saving faith believes? Lutherans used to teach that saving faith believes the explicit Scripture PROMISES regarding "Jesus Christ and Him crucified."¹²³ Earlier chapters showed how modern-day objective justification changes the object of saving faith. Indeed, this writer has often been told that he is on the road to hell while he refuses to believe that all sins are forgiven and all people justified.

The bottom line is an important one: *Must I believe that all men have been forgiven in order to believe that God has forgiven my sins? Can one have God-wrought saving faith in the simple words of Scripture (such as "If we confess our*

¹²² Modern-day objective justification fails to tell us why, since *all* the sins of all the world are already truly forgiven, does that not include the sin of not believing in this universal forgiveness? And why does "all sins are forgiven" not include the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost?

¹²³ For example: "But He [was] wounded for our transgressions, [He was] bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace [was] upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Is. 53:5

sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" 1 John 1:9) without believing that all people's sins are forgiven? Indeed, how does one believe the promise of 1 John 1:9 and simultaneously believe that God has forgiven ALL sins of people who do not confess those sins?! Is the 1991 Missouri Catechism correct when it claims that believing in the forgiveness of sins (Third Article of the Apostle's Creed) means "I believe in the forgiveness of sins because through Christ God has declared pardon and forgiveness to all sinful humanity"?¹²⁴

- The answer of the Three Ecumenical Creeds is clearly "no."¹²⁵
- The answer of the Augsburg Confession is also clearly "no."¹²⁶
- The answer of Martin Luther and the Small Catechism is also clearly "no."¹²⁷
- Scripture's answer is also a clear "no" because it often points out that all sins are *not* forgiven:

But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses. Mark 11:26

That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. Mark 4:12

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Luke 18:14

Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. Acts 8:22

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

We urge each reader to examine himself on this matter: what is the thing that you believe as the Gospel message? Is it the very words of promise found in Scripture regarding "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" or is it the universal justification of all people ("God has justified everyone, so that certainly includes me.")? If it is the latter, how can you believe such a thing with God-wrought faith

¹²⁴ Question 180. See Chapter 5 for detailed analysis of this issue.

¹²⁵ Re-read the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds to see that they do not require that our faith include the universal pardon / justification of all people.

¹²⁶ "Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that *they* are received into favor, and that *their* sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Romans 3 and 4." Augsburg Confession, IV, Triglotta, p. 45. [emphasis added]

¹²⁷ Recall the explanation of "forgiveness of sins" in the Third Article: ". . . in which Christian Church He *daily* and richly forgives all sins to me and *all believers*."

when God Himself never said such a thing? In fact, how can you believe such a thing with God-wrought faith when Scripture repeatedly denies what you say you believe:

- Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. (Exodus 23:7)
- In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. (Isaiah 45:25)
- Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:10-11)
- I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke 18:14)
- Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. (Romans 3:28-30)
- Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)

If God has not said that He justified everyone, neither should modern Lutherans. If God has not said He forgave all sins, neither should modern Lutherans. If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11a). Let us lay to heart this warning and promise: “but to this *man* will I look, even to *him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word*” (Isaiah 66:2).

Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

Acts 8:22-23

“Man's debt of sin is no longer charged against him. Sinful man is free!”

“Every Sinner Declared Righteous”

WELS Conference of Presidents, 1954

Chapter 9
"Every Sinner Declared Righteous"
Tract by WELS Conference of Presidents, 1954

In this chapter, we will study a tract put out by the WELS Conference of Presidents in 1954. This was a time when WELS and the Missouri Synod were still in fellowship, although there were efforts underway on both sides to separate. This tract represents the logical consequence of what Prof. Schmidt claimed in 1872: "through the resurrection mankind became righteous." In 1872 that statement was extensively qualified by saying that God's wrath continues to abide on unbelievers and by saying that only "mankind" became righteous, not individual people until they were converted. By 1954 those qualifications were dropped and "conservative" Lutherans asserted that God has forgiven all people's sins and justified every person.

Like Professor Georg Stoeckhardt in 1888, this tract set up straw-man arguments to belittle opposition to its teaching. It also quotes the 1932 Brief Statement out of context, ignores the doctrine of election and the foreknowledge of God, and contradicts clear statements of Scripture. This tract, along with the Kokomo Four Statements of 1979-1980 (Chapter 10), illustrate the fruits of objective justification. For that reason, we will examine this tract word-for-word, adding commentary along the way:

Every Sinner Declared Righteous

The Picture in the Bible

"God is 'the Judge of all the earth' (Gen. 18:25). He has a holy Law which demands perfect obedience of all mankind (Deut. 27:26; Lev. 19:2; James 2:10). Every sin is a transgression of this Law (1 John 3:4), and since 'all have sinned' (Romans 3:23), the whole world stands convicted as guilty before His bar of justice (Is 64:6). Neither is there anything man can do to repay this debt of sin or to justify himself before God, for 'by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight' (Romans 3:20). Nothing less than the eternal wrath of God, the punishment of hell, is the sentence which the justice of God's Law demands (Romans 6:23; Eph. 2:3; Matt. 25:46)."

Comment: The opening words of this tract pose no problem. Notice especially the phrase: "the whole world stands convicted as guilty before His bar of justice." The verb tense there is present . . . not past. Let us remember that every person is conceived in sin and under condemnation until they are converted: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). The rest of this tract will contradict this truth.

"Into this world of sin came Christ, "to save that which was lost" (Matt. 18:11). He, the eternal Son of God, paid the debt of sin for the whole world (John 1:29), both by His perfect obedience to the Law of God (Matt. 3:15; Gal. 4:4; Romans 5:18-19), and by the sacrifice of His life as a ransom for the sins of the world (Is. 53:6; 1 Timothy 2:6). On the basis of His redeeming death and triumphant resurrection He pleads the cause of sinful mankind before the throne of God (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 9:24; 1 John 2:1)."

Comments: The last sentence of the preceding paragraph is unScriptural. Scripture does say that Christ died for all, but it does not say that "He pleads the cause of sinful mankind before the throne of God." In fact, Scripture says just the opposite:

John 17

- 6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.
- 7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.
- 8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.
- 9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.
- 20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

Hebrews 7

- 25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

The day before His death, Christ did **not** pray for all people—but only for those elected to salvation. Also, He ever liveth to make intercession for "them that come unto God by him." If the reader has trouble accepting the fact that "Christ died for all" but does not plead for all sinful humanity, remember that Christ is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" and He "verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world."¹²⁸ Every aspect of the plan of salvation was known and ordained by God (the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost) long before the bloody cross around A.D. 30. God not only knows all things, but also elected some people to salvation before the foundation of the world:

¹²⁸ Rev. 13:8; 1 Peter 1:20.

- According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (Ephesians 1:4-5)
- Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (2 Timothy 1:9)
- Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)

The Lutheran Confessions affirmed this unpopular truth¹²⁹ [underline added]:

- "God sees and knows everything before it happens, which is called God's foreknowledge, [and] extends over all creatures, good and bad; namely, that He foresees and foreknows everything that is or will be, that is occurring or will occur, whether it be good or bad, since before God all things, whether they be past or future, are manifest and present." Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1063.
- ". . . the children of God . . . were elected and ordained to eternal life before the foundation of the world was laid, as Paul says, Eph. 1:4-5: He hath chosen us in Him, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ." Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1065.
- "The eternal election of God, however, not only foresees and foreknows the salvation of the elect, but is also, from the gracious will and pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, a cause which procures, works, helps, and promotes our salvation and what pertains thereto; and upon this divine predestination our salvation is so founded that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, Matt 16:18, as is written John 10:28: Neither shall any man pluck My sheep out of My hand. And again, Acts 13:48: And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1065.

¹²⁹ This report has stressed the so-called doctrine of election because that particular truth gets distorted by objective justification. This writer knows that teaching election is not the first priority of the Church. But modern Lutheran pastors have been taught to use the doctrine of election *only* to comfort troubled Christians, and that contradicts the Lutheran Confessions: "Accordingly, the Scriptures teach this doctrine in no other way than to direct us thereby to the [revealed] Word, Eph. 1:13; 1 Cor. 1:7; exhort to repentance, 2 Tim. 3:16; urge to godliness, Eph. 1:14; John 15:3; strengthen faith and assure us of our salvation, Eph. 1:13; John 10:27 f.; 2 Thess. 2:13 f." Formula of Concord, TD, XI, "Of God's Eternal Election," Triglotta, p. 1067.

- “. . . namely, that the entire doctrine concerning the purpose, counsel, will and ordination of God pertaining to our redemption, call, justification, and salvation should be taken together; as Paul treats and has explained this article Rom. 8:29 f.; Eph. 1:4f., as also Christ in the parable, Matt. 22:1 ff . . .” Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1069.

The Bible verses listed by this tract to prove that Christ “pleads the cause of sinful mankind” (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 9:24; 1 John 2:1) do not say any such thing:

Romans 8

29. For **whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate** [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.
- 30 Moreover **whom he did predestinate**, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.
31. What shall we then say to these things? If God [be] for **us**, who [can be] against **us**?
- 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give **us** all things?
- 33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of **God's elect**? [It is] God that justifieth.
- 34 Who [is] he that condemneth? [It is] Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for **us**.

Comment: The “us” of verse 34 is clearly “God’s elect” of verse 33, not all mankind.

Hebrews 9

- 7 But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of **the people**:
- 8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:
- 9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;
- 10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed *on them* until the time of reformation.
- 11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;
- 12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.
- 13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

- 14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
- 15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, **they which are called** might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.
- 16 For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.
- 17 For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.
- 18 Whereupon neither the first *testament* was dedicated without blood.
- 19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,
- 20 Saying, This *is* the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.
- 21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.
- 22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.
- 23 *It was* therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.
- 24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God **for us**:
- 25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;
- 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.
- 27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:
- 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and **unto them that look for him** shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Comment: In the context, the "us" of verse 24 is easily understood to refer to God's people, those that are called. Two chapters earlier, in Hebrews 7:25, the writer had already pointed out that "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession **for them.**" Other portions of Scripture remind us that God "hatest all workers of iniquity," He "is angry with the wicked every day," and His wrath abideth on unbelievers."¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Psalm 5:5, Psalm 7:11, John 3:36.

The tract also claims that 1 John 2:1 says that Christ pleads for all sinful mankind before the throne of God. That is not true:

1 John 2

1. **My little children**, these things write I unto **you**, that **ye** sin not. And if any man sin, **we** have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for [the sins of] the whole world.

Comment: "My little children" refers to believers, not all mankind. The Apostle John uses the same expression elsewhere always in reference to those who have been converted (1 John 2:12, 2:13, 2:18, 2:28, 3:7, 3:18, 4:4). It is that "we" who have Christ as an advocate with the Father in 1 John 2:1. This is further proved by verse 2, where John first presents Christ as the propitiation for "our" sins ("our" in verse 2 is the same as the "we" of verse 1 who have an advocate with the Father), and *then* points out that He is *also* the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.¹³¹

Let us examine the next paragraph of this tract:

"The Judge in heaven examines this evidence. He declares His verdict. It is one of acquittal. Man's debt of sin is no longer charged against him. Sinful man is free! 'Therefore as by the offence of one (Adam) judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one (Christ) the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous' (Romans 5:18-19). 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation' (2 Cor. 5:19). 'Who (Christ) was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification' (Rom. 4:25). We note that the Bible speaks of this justifying act of God as applying to the whole world, as having taken place in the death and resurrection of Christ, and as an accomplished fact. THIS IS OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION! It stands there by itself, not as something which demands faith to make it complete, but as a comforting assurance to give faith to helpless sinners. The entire hope of sinful man rests upon the fact "that God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ" (Brief Statement, Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod). The supreme

¹³¹ Lest anyone think that Christ being a propitiation for the sins of the whole world (last part of 1 John 2:2) is the same as saying Christ pleads for all people, we refer them to Romans 3:25 which tells us that God has set Him "forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. . . "

importance of this doctrine has been set forth by Luther and others. It is the article by which the church stands or falls."

Our examination of this paragraph will be detailed because it contains the essence of modern-day objective justification. In fact, careful readers will note the similarity between this teaching and Prof. Schmidt's 1872 teaching (Chapter 2). The main difference is the omission of Schmidt's extensive disclaimers and qualifications.

Let us start with the first sentence of this paragraph:

The Judge in heaven examines this evidence. He declares His verdict. It is one of acquittal.

Comments:

This statement distorts Scripture by suggesting that God ("The Judge") *changed*. "For I am the LORD, I change not."¹³² Let us remember that "God is One" and Father, Son and Holy Ghost purposed the plan of salvation from before the foundation of the world. The "evidence" that the Judge examines is what He Himself had ordained to happen! Let us remember that the Father *sent* the Son.¹³³ Let us remember that Christ is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" Who "verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world."¹³⁴ Let us remember that "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world...having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."¹³⁵

- Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (2 Timothy 1:9)
- Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. (Acts 15:18)
- Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (Isaiah 53:10)

¹³² Malachi 3:6.

¹³³ Isaiah 6:8; 1 John 4:10, 4:14; John 3:17, 5:37.

¹³⁴ Rev. 13:8; 1 Peter 1:20.

¹³⁵ Ephesians 1:4-5

This last verse alone should put to shame any suggestion that the Father was a passive bystander in the plan of salvation Who was *changed* by the death of His Son around A.D. 30.

This particular sentence of the WELS tract lays the chief cornerstone of modern-day objective justification: a *change* at the time of Christ's death/resurrection whereby God forgave all sins and justified all people. We are led to believe that the process of salvation went something like this:

1. God pronounced the sentence of condemnation over all mankind, due to its sin.
2. Then Christ paid the ransom for all people by His active and passive obedience from approximately 4 BC to A.D. 30.
3. Upon the death of Christ, God examined the "evidence" (the guilty condition of mankind, the ransom paid by Christ) and He decided to acquit mankind, forgive their sins and justify all people (= objective justification)
4. Christ's resurrection (around A.D. 30) was proof of the judicial verdict which God had just determined.
5. Those who believe this judicial verdict (that all sins are forgiven and all people justified) receive the benefits of this justification (= subjective justification).

We dare not go beyond Scripture in any area: "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." (Proverbs 30:6) That is what we do when we attribute to God a decision around A.D. 30 in order to explain Christ's resurrection. Scripture never says that Christ's resurrection is proof of a divine judicial decision regarding mankind. Christ Himself said regarding His life: "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."¹³⁶ He fulfilled the demands of the Law by paying the wages of sin for the sins which He bore.¹³⁷ His resurrection, like His death, was ordained from before the foundation of the world and prophesied in the Old Testament.¹³⁸ It did not signify a change in God. "God is One." "The Father sent the Son." "It pleased the LORD to bruise him; He hath put him to grief."

Man's debt of sin is no longer charged against him. Sinful man is free!

Comments: This statement is unScriptural. Scripture says that sinful man is *not* free, and these divine words are "spirit and life" and "plain to him that understandeth":¹³⁹

¹³⁶ John 10:18

¹³⁷ Romans 6:23; 1 Peter 2:24.

¹³⁸ John 20:9; Is. 25:8, 53:10; See also Matt. 16:21, Mark 8:31, 9:9.

¹³⁹ John 6:63, Prov. 8:9

- He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)
- Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. (Acts 8:22-23)
- Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. (John 8:34)
- But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. (Romans 6:17-20)
- There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1)
- For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; (Romans 1:18)
- He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (1 John 5:12)
- He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3:36)
- God is angry *with the wicked* every day. (Psalm 7:11b)
- Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. (Ephesians 5:6)

We especially call your fervent attention to the last Bible verse lest *you* be deceived by vain words such as: "Man's debt of sin is no longer charged against him. Sinful man is free!"

Remember that God has perfect foreknowledge of all things. If someone wants to say that "He examined the evidence" of Christ's ransom, then let him admit that this examination took place before the foundation of the world, "before" God elected some people to salvation. Objective justification constantly obscures God's perfect foreknowledge ("known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" Acts 15:18) and the fact that "he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). How many people in WELS would have protested vigorously if this part of the tract had read: "*Man's debt of sin was never charged against him, since God foreknew the examination of evidence before the foundation of the world. Sinful man is, and always was, free!*" Universalism is only a small step from this 1954 WELS teaching.

As additional evidence of the tract's error on this important point, consider these additional factors:

- Where is a single instance where an Old Testament prophet proclaimed that all men were "free," or ever would be "free"? Does not God's working through one chosen nation (Israel) in the Old Testament refute such nonsense?
- Where is a single statement of Christ Himself, or His Apostles, telling all people that they are *already free*?
- Why did Christ never speak the words of forgiveness except in the context of *faith*:
 - And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. (Matthew 9:2)
 - But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. (Matthew 9:22)
 - When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. (Mark 2:5)
 - And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague. (Mark 5:34)
 - And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way. (Mark 10:52)
 - And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. (Luke 5:20)
 - And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. (Luke 7:50)

- And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace. (Luke 8:48)

Let us continue examining this tract:

'Therefore as by the offence of one (Adam) judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one (Christ) the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous' (Romans 5:18-19).

Comments: In Chapter 3 we refuted the notion that Romans 5:18-19 says all sins are forgiven, or all people are justified, or all people are "free." We briefly note again, for those readers who have skipped ahead, that WELS' interpretation violates the context of Romans 5 and contradicts both the Book of Concord's and Martin Luther's understanding of these verses. In Romans 5:18, the phrase "by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" does not say "all people are justified." We can understand the plain meaning of Romans 5:18 the same way we understand Titus 2:11: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men"?

'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation' (2 Cor. 5:19).

Comments: As in previous chapters, we note that the advocates of objective justification are trying to prove their doctrine from Scripture passages which do not expressly set forth "who is justified":¹⁴⁰

- Romans 3 and 4 expressly set forth the HOW and WHOM of justification. Those are the only verses referenced by the Augsburg Confession to support its summary of justification. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians is primarily a defense of the holy ministry in general and his ministry in particular. This particular verse, and the verses surrounding it, do not even use the words "justify" or "forgive."
- Note carefully that in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Paul *explicitly* reminds this congregation of the gospel which he *had* spoken to them, and by which people are saved, and this gospel says nothing about all men being free, forgiven, or justified:

¹⁴⁰ For example, the only place the Book of Concord references 2 Cor. 5:19 is in the Thorough Declaration to teach the union of Christ's two natures in the Lord's Supper. Triglotta, p. 985. ." Why do modern Lutherans find new things in Bible passages that our forefathers did not see?

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

Are we to believe that Paul waited until his second letter to this congregation to reveal a truth about justification that does not appear in his earlier summary of the gospel?

Let us therefore examine 2 Cor. 5:19 to see if it says that "Man's debt of sin is no longer charged against him. Sinful man is free!"

2 Corinthians 5

- 17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
- 18 And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
- 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.
- 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.
- 21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

- Verse 19 cannot be interpreted to mean that all people are reconciled toward God because verse 20 expressly says: "be ye reconciled to God." Not every person is "in Christ" or a "new creature" (verse 17) and not every person is "reconciled to God" (verse 20). That is why the "ministry of reconciliation" (verse 18) and the "word of reconciliation" (verse 19) was (and still is) committed unto preachers and teachers.
- "Reconciling the world" cannot be interpreted to mean that God forgives or justifies or frees all people in the world. Paul uses the same expression in Romans 11 where it means no such thing:

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to

emulation *them which are my flesh*, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them *be the reconciling of the world*, what *shall the receiving of them be*, but life from the dead?" (Romans 11:11-15)

- Nor can 2 Cor. 5:19 mean that God *never* imputes any man's trespasses unto him or her because that would contradict other statements of Scripture. For example, in Paul's letter to the Romans he quotes David to say: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."¹⁴¹ Many Bible verses make it clear that God does impute sins to unbelievers, though He often waits a long time:

Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. (Exodus 23:7)

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless that taketh his name in vain. (Deut. 5:11)

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins. (John 8:24) Notice the plural sins; it is not just the sin of unbelief that they would die in.

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: (Romans 2:5-6)

We offer three possible explanations of 2 Cor. 5:19 which accord with the rest of Scripture and which do not assert that all sins are forgiven, all people are justified or all people are free:

1. Some have interpreted verse 19 to mean the so-called objective reconciliation of God toward men, the satisfaction of His Justice by Christ's ransom, His will to save all, His will that all should come to repentance, His readiness to forgive. The so-called objective reconciliation of God toward mankind is best expressed with the "quick and powerful" words of Scripture Itself, not our doctrinal summaries:
 - Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." (Isaiah 53:10-11).

¹⁴¹ Romans 4:8.

- Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4)
 - The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)
 - For thou, Lord, [art] good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. (Psalm 86:5)
2. Others feel that 2 Cor. 5:19 refers to the still ongoing work of salvation (reconciling people toward God) going on throughout the world: Since the Garden of Eden, God has been reconciling people in the world one-by-one unto Himself, through the ministry of reconciliation, by creating saving faith in contrite human hearts. As that work is accomplished in a particular person God no longer imputes that person's sins to him. In the Old Testament, this ministry of reconciliation was the promises of a coming Savior; in the New Testament, this ministry of reconciliation is the words regarding the Savior Who has come and "died for all." (2 Cor. 5:15).

In considering this possible explanation of verse 19, we need to deal with the past tense of the word "was." If the verse read "To wit, that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" then this verse would certainly refer to the ongoing work of salvation: the fact that God is working throughout the world to reconcile people unto Himself by leading them to repentance and saving faith in Jesus Christ. Why did God choose the word "was" instead of "is"? Perhaps to remind us that all things pertaining to salvation were always an accomplished reality to Him. Notice how these Bible words (spoken about 700 BC) also refer to Christ's work as an accomplished reality before it actually happened in time:

Isaiah 53

- 3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
- 4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.
- 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, *he* was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.
- 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.
- 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.
- 9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.
- 10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

We also call the reader's attention to another familiar verse which presents our salvation, which would include "God reconciling us unto Himself," as something that happened before we were even created:

Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (2 Timothy 1:9)

3. There is a third possible interpretation of 2 Cor. 5:19 which also refutes the WELS claim that all sins are forgiven, all people are justified and all people are free: Because of Christ's foreseen and foreordained ransom payment, God did not *immediately* impute man's sins as He justly could. He is "not imputing their trespasses unto them" while the ministry of reconciliation is still available to people. Although God does punish sin somewhat in this life, He delays the full imputation of our trespasses while the word of reconciliation is drawing people from all parts of the world into His sheepfold. We see this delay of imputation beginning with Adam and Eve, when God sought them out after their fall instead of letting them die in their sins as they deserved.

Let us continue with the next sentence from this section of the tract:

'Who (Christ) was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification' (Rom. 4:25).

Comments: This verse does not say that all people are justified or all sinful men are free. We spent considerable time in Chapter 6 refuting that interpretation, and offer here a brief summary of that evidence:

- Martin Luther said in reference to this verse "His resurrection . . . produces it [righteousness] in us, ***if we believe it***, and it is also the cause of it."¹⁴²

¹⁴² *Luther's Works*, AE, Vol. 25, "Lecture on Romans," p. 284, commenting on Rom. 4:25.

[emphasis added]. Luther understood the "our" in Romans 4:25 to refer to believers.

- The Lutheran Confessions did not use Romans 4:25 in reference to all mankind, but rather in reference to believers.¹⁴³
- Most importantly, the context is believers, not all people. The entire chapter and the previous and subsequent verses are talking about believers:

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. 1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Also, when the Bible says that Christ was raised again "for" someone's justification, it is not thereby asserting that His resurrection **is** that person's justification, or that his justification is simultaneous with His resurrection. When I say "Mr. Jones works hard **for** his kid's college education, I am not saying that his hard work *is* their education. Their education may follow years after his hard work.

Why No Opposition to This Teaching?

We have seen that this WELS tract makes several statements that are clearly unScriptural, and references certain Bible verses which do not say what the tract claims. Is it not remarkable that no one has publicly challenged what is clearly wrong with this tract?¹⁴⁴ Could that be because people *want* to believe the modern version of objective justification and therefore willingly overlook the evidence which speaks against this "comforting" concept? Let us examine this possibility.

Let us use the example of John Doe, a professing Christian who begins to doubt whether he really has true saving faith. There are at least two possible explanations for his doubt:

1. First, John may be the target of some of Satan's fiery darts, darts which are occasionally able to make even a strong Christian question his own salvation. Occasionally John Doe, like most of us, looks at his sins and begins to wonder whether he is really a Christian. John goes to his Pastor, who ascertains two important things:

¹⁴³ The *Book of Concord* refers to Rom. 4:25 only once, when teaching the proper distinction between the Law and the Gospel. The context is clearly not all people, but the person who is justified through God-wrought faith. *Formula of Concord, TD, V, Triglotta, p. 959.*

¹⁴⁴ In recent correspondence a "conservative" Lutheran pastor sent me this 1954 tract to overcome my concerns about objective justification. More than forty years after it was issued by the WELS Conference of Presidents, it is still being used to "prove" the validity of modern-day objective justification!

- John's "doubts" are based on nothing more than sins of weakness -- he shows no sign of willful persistence in any sin. He is not one to whom Hebrews 10:26 applies.¹⁴⁵
- John shows no sign of impenitence. Although he may not show as much contrition as other people, he confesses and does not cover his sins and his sinfulness. John Doe acknowledges his unworthiness and is not visibly trusting in any self-righteousness.

In this situation, John needs to re-hear the Gospel words regarding Christ crucified. Those words are "spirit and life" to build his faith and overcome his doubts. We would exhort John "as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."¹⁴⁶

2. However, there is another possible explanation: John Doe's doubts may be a *legitimate* warning that sin has gotten dominion over him. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."¹⁴⁷ The Bible says that "sin shall not have dominion over" a Christian, (Romans 6:14) and sin may have gained dominion in John's life. John has either fallen from faith, or is in that imminent danger.

In this situation, John must be treated differently than in example #1. Let us say that there is evidence of willful persistence in sin, or impenitence. Perhaps John refuses to call sin what it is ("I can worship God on my boat every weekend," "I know God wants me to get a divorce because I'm so unhappy," "everybody does the same thing" etc.) For example, perhaps the Pastor discovers that John has left his wife without Scriptural cause. John refuses to admit this is sin and refuses to amend. Which of the following counsels do you think John Doe *wants* to hear from his pastor:

- **Counsel 1:** "John, God already forgave all sins of all people when Christ rose from the grave! Stop tormenting yourself with doubts about God's

¹⁴⁵ "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." (Hebrews 10:26)

¹⁴⁶ 1 Peter 2:2

¹⁴⁷ Hebrews 10:26-27. See also the 31st Evening Lecture in *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* by CFW Walther. Or consider this warning from Martin Luther "When a person sins against his conscience, that is, when he knowingly and intentionally acts contrary to God, as, for instance, an adulterer or any other criminal, who knowingly does wrong, he is, while consciously persisting in his intention, without repentance and faith and does not please God. . . It is absolutely impossible for these two things to coexist in a person, viz., faith that trusts in God and a wicked purpose, or, as it is also called, an evil conscience. Faith and the worship of God are delicate affairs; a very slight wound inflicted on the conscience may drive out faith and prayer. Every tried Christian frequently is put through this experience." St. L., X, 1706.

mercy for you! Just keep believing that all sins are forgiven and you too will be saved!" or,

- **Counsel 2:** "John, know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. Husbands love your wives even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. Flee fornication! If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Sin shall have no dominion over you! They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts!"

I trust that all readers will admit that Counsel 1 is far less painful *to hear*. And pastors will admit that Counsel 1 is far less painful *to say*. **Let us admit that the modern version of objective justification is a very comforting concept!**¹⁴⁸

- It downplays the Law and anesthetizes the voice of conscience.
- It hides the fact that "if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."¹⁴⁹
- It obscures the truth that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."¹⁵⁰
- It takes the bite out of words like: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ But let us not assume that a doctrine is correct by the amount of comfort it offers: Universalism, the false notion that God is planning to save all people from hell, is most comforting, but deadly wrong. The notion that there are no absolutes, that sin is different for every person, is also very comforting, but wrong.

¹⁴⁹ For Lutheran readers, we note that Lecture 20, 30 and 31 in Walther's *Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* address the fact that willful sin destroys saving faith.

¹⁵⁰ Galatians 5:24.

¹⁵¹ Romans 6:11-16

Only God knows how many pastor-teachers are giving the false comfort of objective justification to *everyone* who expresses doubts about his or her salvation, including those who need to hear a far different message. These Pastors are in great spiritual danger:

- Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. (Matthew 7:6)
- Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment? (Malachi 2:17)
- "Because with lies ye have . . . strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life" (Eze. 13:22)
- "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (James 3:1)
- When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked [man] shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. (Ezekiel 3:18-19)

In this writer's opinion, that is the best explanation of why objective justification went largely unchallenged as it evolved from 1872 to 1991. It does not offend the unchurched, and it appeals to the professing Christian who has fallen from faith and the old man which resides in true believers:

- It causes less offense in the world.
- It softens the Law and allows us to "justify" those pet sins that we have no intention of giving up.
- It avoids the pain of daily confession and the ongoing struggle against the old man.
- It anesthetizes the voice of conscience.

Could not the comfort of objective justification—"sinful man is free!"—explain why so many modern Lutherans take a "so what?" attitude toward sin? How else do we explain the fact that modern Lutherans exhibit so little fear regarding sins that terrified our forefathers, sins like gambling, covetousness, pride, worldliness, drunkenness, and lust? Does anyone think that our God-fearing ancestors would watch the television programs that modern Lutherans watch?

Could the teaching that “all sins are already forgiven” explain why modern Lutheranism is so *lukewarm*?

Let us examine the next sentence in this 1954 WELS tract:

We note that the Bible speaks of this justifying act of God as applying to the whole world, as having taken place in the death and resurrection of Christ, and as an accomplished fact. THIS IS OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION!

Comments: Despite this bold claim, we have seen that none of the Bible verses listed by the tract prove that there was a universal “justifying act of God taking place in the death and resurrection of Christ.” God says “to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My word” and “if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.” (Isaiah 66:2; 1 Peter 4:11). Scripture does not speak of a justifying act of God applying to the whole world, and neither should we. If this alleged justifying act of God applied to the whole world, then God declared every person to be righteous at that time. “Every person” includes those who were already in hell, which means God continued to punish these people for sins *after* declaring them to be righteous! This calls God a liar and contradicts many clear statements of Scripture:

- Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. (Exodus 23:7)
- I tell you, this man [the publican] went down to his house justified rather than the other [the Pharisee]: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke 18:14)
- To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (Romans 3:26)
- Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:28)
- Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)

Let us continue with the tract:

It stands there by itself, not as something which demands faith to make it complete, but as a comforting assurance to give faith to helpless sinners.

Comment: Here we see again the straw-man argument which Professor Stoeckhardt first used to promote his version of universal justification (Chapter

3). If someone says that "faith is required to complete the justification of a sinner" then let us quote the quick and powerful words of Scripture which point out that God chose His elect before the foundation of the world, *before* they came to faith, and He chose them according to the good pleasure of His will, not because He foresaw that they would come to faith:

- According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (Ephesians 1:4-5)
- Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (2 Timothy 1:9)
- Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)

If a professing *Lutheran* says that "faith is required to complete the justification of a sinner," we could also point them to Article XI of the Formula of Concord which points out that a person's election—before the foundation of the world—is a *cause* of their coming to faith and everything else pertaining to their final salvation.¹⁵² We do not need to say that God forgives all sins or justified all people in order to refute the synergistic error that *anything in us*, including our faith, causes God to justify us.

Note how the tract claims that this universal, objective justification is a "comforting assurance to give faith to helpless sinners." Why are the spirit and life promises of God—the very words contained in Holy Scripture—not sufficient to give and sustain faith to helpless sinners? Since when did our doctrinal statements, reformulations of God's words ("sinful man is free"; all sins are forgiven and all people are justified" etc.) become quick and powerful alongside the very words of God?

- So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)
- It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life. (John 6:63)
- Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. (Luke 8:11)

¹⁵² Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1065.

- Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (James 1:18)
- Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (1 Peter 1:23)

Is it not probable that the widespread teaching of objective justification helps explain the widespread neglect of the very words of the Bible? Who needs to read the Bible, or memorize Scripture, or guard the pure doctrine, once he has been told that “your sins and the sins of the whole world are already forgiven—just believe that and you will be saved!”?

But is God's General Promise Meant for *Me*?

But what about the professing Christian who begins to doubt whether God's general promises are meant for him personally? Perhaps he hears the promise of John 3:16 (“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”) and he says “How can I know that this promise is directed to *me*?” Does God want such a person to reassure himself with the promise of objective justification, (“all sins are already forgiven, including unbelievers, so yours are too”)? No. The Bible provides a better way for people to know that God's general promise is also meant for them personally:

- The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: (1 Peter 3:21)
- After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. (1 Cor. 11:25)
- And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:27-28)

Modern Lutherans say that people need objective justification to know that they are included in God's gracious promises. But the Lutheran Confessions say that God gives a different kind of assurance to supplement the general promises found in Scripture:

"For this reason also Christ causes the promise of the Gospel not only to be offered in general, but He seals it through the Sacraments which He

attaches as seals of the promise, and thereby confirms it [the certainty of the promise of the Gospel] to every believer in particular."¹⁵³

Does the reader find the explicit promises of Scripture to offer insufficient comfort? Do you need something else in addition to general promises such as "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is none else*," "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," "The Lord is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"? If so, I urge you to meditate upon the words of God regarding Baptism and the Lord's Supper: notice how Baptism involves water applied to ONE person . . . while the Lord's Supper involves the body and blood of Christ received by ONE person. What more assurance could one need that God's general promise is also meant for him?

Let us continue examining this official WELS teaching.

The entire hope of sinful man rests upon the fact "that God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ" (Brief Statement, Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod).

Comments: This is a false statement. The "entire hope of sinful man" does not rest, and cannot rest, on doctrinal statements devised by men. Our hope rests, and must rest, on the very promises of God found in Scripture, which alone are "spirit and life" and "quick and powerful." These promises do not need our reformulation: "He that is of God heareth God's words" and "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."¹⁵⁴ One does not need to believe that *all* sins are forgiven in order to believe divine words like "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."¹⁵⁵ Jesus was not joking when He said "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Only God's words are 'spirit and life,' "quick and powerful." OJ'ers must wonder whether our forefathers were really in the true faith, since their "hope" was not resting upon what this tract says "the entire hope of sinful man rests upon." Neither the Book of Concord, the 1897 Brief Statement nor the 1912 Catechism contain the statement listed above, or anything like it. One does not have to believe that all sins are forgiven and all people justified in order to have God-wrought faith that *your* sins are forgiven.

If the reader has not already read Chapter 7, where we analyzed this half sentence from the 1932 Brief Statement, we urge you to do so at this time. This

¹⁵³ . Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1075.

¹⁵⁴ John 8:47; Romans 10:17.

¹⁵⁵ 1 John 1:9

WELS tract takes this phrase out of context and ignores what is meant by “in Christ.” This is shallow scholarship at best, and intentional deceit at worst.¹⁵⁶

The supreme importance of this doctrine has been set forth by Luther and others.

Comment: If this statement were true, surely there would be some mention of it in the Book of Concord, all of which Luther wrote or heavily influenced. And yet our Lutheran Confessions do not teach that all sins are forgiven, or all people are justified. Instead, they teach justification by grace, through faith, without works or merit on the part of sinful man. Notice the similarity between this bold, unsubstantiated claim and the same one made by Professor Stoeckhardt back in 1888 (Chapter 3).

It is the article by which the church stands or falls.

Comment: This is a bold statement which cannot be substantiated with Scripture. It is folly to claim that the church of Almighty God stands or falls on a theological concept of puny men—a concept which cannot be set forth with *only* the very words of Scripture. Consider the book of Acts which records many sermons and exhortations: there is not a single suggestion that God forgave all sins or justified all people, and yet the church grew mightily throughout the world!

How do we explain the fanatical support for objective justification? Why are modern Lutherans willing to expel people from the church who refuse to agree that all sins are forgiven and all men are justified, when such a notion does not appear in Scripture, the Book of Concord, the 1897 Brief Statement or the 1912 Catechism? Some would say this fanaticism is simply a desire to refute synergism, the error that man contributes in some way toward his salvation. But that explanation breaks down when we remember that the old Confessions refute synergism without saying all sins are forgiven or all people justified. Scripture contains many words which thoroughly refute all synergistic notions; why are they not sufficient for this work? This writer believes that the fanatical support of objective justification is explained by two factors:

- The comfort it offers to professing Christians who have embraced sin;¹⁵⁷
- The offense it removes when dealing with the unchurched world. It is far easier to tell secure sinners “you are already righteous in God’s sight”

¹⁵⁶ It also demonstrates the need to be extremely precise with doctrinal pronouncements, and stick to a form of sound words which cannot be interpreted two ways. Unfortunately, this half sentence in the 1932 Brief Statement does permit a wrong interpretation if taken out of context and if the words “in Christ” are not given adequate consideration.

¹⁵⁷ By “embraced sin” we mean the willful sin which destroys saving faith. Hebrews 10:26. See also Galatians 5:24, Romans 6:4, 2 Timothy 4:2-3, Ephesians 5:6.

then to say "repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."
(Acts 26:20)

Earlier, the WELS tract asserted that the only hope for the sinner is based on his acceptance of the universal forgiveness of all mankind: unless I believe that *all sins* are forgiven then I cannot believe that I am forgiven, no matter what I might *think* I believe. Now we are told that the very church itself stands or falls on this concept! Without offering a long rebuttal to this claim, I simply point out that the church survived quite well, and prospered in fact, long before justification was divided into two parts, objective and subjective. During the Reformation, the church grew mightily without saying all sins are forgiven and all people are justified. And the fastest growth in the Missouri Synod occurred before it formally adopted the terminology of universal, objective justification.

The WELS tract goes on to set up a straw-man argument against its teaching of objective justification, using the old Ohio Synod as a whipping boy. Again, we concede the fact that some who object to objective justification may do so because they have embraced some synergistic error. But we cannot prove the truth of a concept by the fact that it is opposed by some false teachers. In spiritual matters, the enemy of my enemy is not necessarily my friend. Keep in mind as you read this straw-man argument that the Ohio Synod fell away from the Synodical Conference on the doctrine of election. They refused to accept that "he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world," and "whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Eph. 1:4, Romans 8:30). We should not be surprised if they also distorted the truth of justification.¹⁵⁸

We continue with the tract:

About fifty years ago this picture was distorted by the old Ohio Synod, a church body which later became a member of the American Lutheran Church. Ohio taught: 'Through the reconciliation of Christ the holy and merciful God has made advances to us, so that forgiveness of sin and justification have been made possible on His part; justification itself, however, does not occur until through God's grace the spark of faith has been kindled in the heart of the sinner' (Kirchenzeitung, June 17, 1905).

¹⁵⁸ "There is no doctrine of Holy Writ which more confirms, illumines, and explains to us the doctrine of justification than the doctrine of election. For if it is true that those who are saved have in eternity been appointed to salvation, and that God has at the same time ordained that He will convert them, bring them to faith, and keep them in faith unto the end, despite the fact that He has beheld naught that is good in them, -- is there anything that can serve more strongly to confirm the doctrine of justification than the above teaching? For if God has decreed in eternity that we shall be saved, He must have acted from His own free grace, and we have no reason for boasting . . ." C.F.W. Walther, quoted in *Theological Quarterly*, Vol. XVIII, 1914, p. 157.

Comment: We will assume that this one sentence is a correct characterization of the teaching of some who opposed objective justification. It is easy to refute what is wrong with this teaching of the Ohio Synod without saying that all sins are forgiven and all people justified:

- We ought not to say that “Through the reconciliation of Christ the holy and merciful God has made advances to us” because that suggests that God *changed* because of the reconciling work of Christ. Neither God, nor God the Father needed to be cajoled or entreated into the plan of salvation. All Three Persons of God were full willing participants from the beginning:

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (Isaiah 53:10)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:16-17)

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me. (Isaiah 6:8)

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. (John 17:9)

- God (Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost) ordained all things pertaining to salvation of the elect before the foundation of the world:

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)

Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (2 Timothy 1:9)

In Romans 8:29-30 we see that those whom He has predestinated are (past tense) “called,” “justified,” and “glorified.” Therefore, when “God makes advances to us” there is no uncertainty regarding the outcome. Those whom God has predestinated to salvation will be converted, and the credit for their

conversion is entirely God's. God does not approach people with the *possibility* of forgiveness/justification ("I'll forgive you IF you believe.") Rather, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." (Acts 15:18) and "whom he called, them he also justified." Since Christ is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" men like Abraham were justified by faith long before the bloody cross occurred in time: (Abraham "believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" Genesis 15:6) ¹⁵⁹

- We ought not to say that "forgiveness of sin and justification have been made possible *on His part*" because that implies that there is something on *our part* which still needs to be done. God *has* ordained that faith is a necessary element in His scheme for saving lost sinners. . .

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:28)

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (Romans 4:5)

To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (Romans 3:26)

. . . but that does not mean that faith is something *on our part* which we contribute toward our justification. True saving faith is entirely a work of God:

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (1 Peter 1:23)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

In sum, we do not need to say that all sins are forgiven and all people justified in order to refute the false notions of some who want to make faith something on our part which contributes toward our conversion and justification. Let us judge every teaching only by the explicit words of Scripture, and never endorse a concept simply because it is rejected by some false teachers.

¹⁵⁹ We also take this opportunity to point out that God did not elect anyone to salvation because He foresaw that this person would come to saving faith. The Lutheran Confessions point out that faith does not cause election, but rather our election causes our coming to faith. Formula of Concord, Triglotta, p. 1065. Ephesians 1:4-5 says that the basis on which God chose His elect was simply "according to the good pleasure of His will."

Let us examine another part of the straw-man argument used by this WELS tract to "prove" that "Sinful man is free!"

"Perhaps we should go to a courtroom for a moment to see how distorted this picture is [the position of the Ohio Synod / ALC]. A group of prisoners stands before the bar of justice. Their debt is established. Their guilt is proved. A man walks in with the announcement that he has paid in full and pleads for the release of the prisoners. But what does the judge now do in this case? He recognizes the fact that payment has been secured and provided for all prisoners, but strangely enough he announces no verdict of acquittal. Instead, he invites all the prisoners before his bar of justice and tells them that he will acquit them only upon the condition that they first show their willingness to accept his verdict. He will do his part if they in good faith will show him the proper attitude and spirit of cooperation. 'Without faith, no justification.' Those are his terms of justice."

Comments: There are many problems with this straw-man argument:

1. One can reject universal, objective justification and not claim that "God will do His part if the prisoners in good faith will show Him the proper attitude and spirit of cooperation." That *is* an error, but we refute it without saying that all sins are forgiven and all people justified. The quick and powerful words of Scripture tell us that "you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins,"¹⁶⁰ and a spiritually dead person cannot "show Him the proper attitude and spirit of cooperation." That can be done only by those who are already quickened and justified.
2. All things pertaining to the salvation of the elect were ordained before the foundation of the world: "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world," "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified," "Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."¹⁶¹ Therefore, the underlying premise of the above courtroom scene is absurd. God has always known who would end up in heaven and in hell: His grace was given to those whom He predestinated "before the world began." At no time have His elect ever been in danger of almost being condemned by the Judge, as described in this courtroom scene. It is absurd to present salvation in such a way that God was about to pronounce judgment on His people when suddenly (and unexpectedly!) Christ walks into court having paid our penalty, forcing Him to reconsider His decision. God the Father was not "cajoled" into the plan of

¹⁶⁰ Eph. 2:1

¹⁶¹ 1 Peter 1:20; Rom. 8:30; 2 Timothy 1:9

salvation. "For I am the LORD; I change not." "God is One." "The Father sent the Son." Let us remember that "it pleased the LORD to bruise him, he hath put him to grief." This courtroom scene depicts God as having multiple wills, and thereby takes a step toward pantheism.

3. We noted earlier in this chapter that Scripture does *not* teach that Christ pleads the case for all sinners with His Father. Just the opposite: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word"¹⁶² Although Scripture says that God "will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," and "He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance," it also says that Christ is interceding only for "them which thou hast given me."
4. The courtroom scene described in this WELS tract suggests that God would be unfair if He did not announce the universal verdict of acquittal upon the pleading of our Substitute ("He recognizes the fact that payment has been secured and provided for all prisoners, but strangely enough he announces no verdict of acquittal.") Let us remember that nothing God does is unfair. God certainly did not *wait* to "announce a verdict of acquittal": "Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."¹⁶³ Moreover, God announced His grace in Christ beginning at the earliest possible moment: after Adam and Eve fell into sin. Even though God has always known who would not be saved, He sent His Son to "die for all," thus ensuring that "every mouth may be stopped" on that Great Day.

Objective justification calls God a liar by having Him say: "I truly did forgive all your sins and justified each one of you. But since you did not believe that during your lifetime, I now am going to punish you for all those sins that I had earlier forgiven." God's word of forgiveness is not "yea" and "nay."

We do not need the theological construction known today as *objective-subjective justification* to communicate divine truth. We have shown that the Book of Concord, the 1897 Brief Statement and the 1912 Catechism present justification without saying all sins are forgiven and all people justified. Even when our words do accurately summarize divine truth, they are not spirit and life to *convict* the hearer. Let us learn again to "speak as the oracles of God" recalling that "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² John 17:9, 20

¹⁶³ 2 Timothy 1:9

¹⁶⁴ 1 Peter 4:11; John 6:63.

In support of the modern version of objective justification, the WELS tract sets up one more straw-man argument, which touches upon several issues previously addressed:

"Where do we wish to have our faith rest as we approach that final hour? What comfort do we wish to have brought to us as this court of justice again passes before our eyes? Will it be no more than this: 'My justification has been made possible by God, and I know that He will finally pass judgment in my favor because I am sure that I have a personal and saving faith in my heart'? No, it must be nothing less than this: 'My faith is a weak and faltering thing. My personal feelings betray the weakness of my heart. But God has already declared the whole world righteous in Christ's death and resurrection. Sinner that I am, I know that I am included.'"

Comments: There are two major problems with this statement:

1. First, it gives the false impression that the only alternative to *universal justification* is to believe that 'My justification has been made possible by God, and I know that He will finally pass judgment in my favor because I am sure that I have a personal and saving faith in my heart.' That is a false argument. True Christians certainly do not rest their faith in their faith, but neither is the object of saving faith the universal acquittal of all mankind. True Christians believe (with God-wrought faith) the PROMISES of God regarding "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:2), promises such as these:

- But he was wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)
- For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust (1 Peter 3:18)
- Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

Alongside that faith, they also believe (with a God-wrought faith) God's PROMISES regarding the *benefits and results* of Jesus Christ crucified, such as:

- . . . the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 6:23b)

- For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

And alongside that faith, true Christians also believe (with God-wrought faith) the PROMISES regarding how that great gift is imparted to individual people:

- He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; (Mark 16:16a)
 - So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)
2. The second major problem with this portion of the WELS tract is that it maligns God-wrought faith. It calls it a "weak and faltering thing." We concede the possibility that the writer of this tract, and its sponsors, had a weak and faltering faith. We also admit that many other Christians have a weak and faltering faith. But that is not the fault of God, nor is it the nature of true faith, nor is it something that God desires:

- The Bible constantly rebukes *weak* faith:

And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. (Luke 1:20)

He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. (Mark 9:19)

And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. (Matthew 8:26)

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed. (John 20:29)

Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? (Matthew 16:8)

Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. (Mark 16:14)

And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? (Matthew 14:31)

And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? (Mark 4:40)

And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him. (Luke 8:25)

For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. (Hebrews 5:13)

- Christians are continually exhorted to be strong and grow in faith:

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: (1 Peter 2:2)

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; (2 Thessalonians 1:3)

But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. (1 Cor. 16:13)

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (Ephesians 6:10)

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:1)

- The Bible exalts a strong, God-wrought faith, and so should we:

When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. (Matthew 8:10)

When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. (Luke 7:9)

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. (Matthew 15:28)

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; (Romans 4:20)

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (Romans 4:5)

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. (Galatians 3:6)

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. (Hebrews 11:1-7)

Herein lies one of the worst dangers of objective justification: if Johnny has a weak and faltering faith in God's spirit and life PROMISES found in Scripture, the solution is not to give Johnny something more comforting to believe. If Johnny has a weak and faltering faith in the fact that "Christ died for our sins," the solution is not to tell Johnny to "believe all sins are already forgiven and you too will be saved." If Johnny has a weak and faltering faith in the quick and powerful promises of Almighty God, then Johnny needs to spend much more time in those very words of promise, which alone are "quick and powerful." Let us act like we believe these words of Jesus Christ: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life."¹⁶⁵ The solution to a weak faith is a stronger faith by hearing the word of God, not an anesthetic to alleviate the symptoms. That is the great danger of objective justification: it encourages people to neglect the very words that could solve the underlying problem.

¹⁶⁵ John 6:63. See also Hebrews 4:12, John 8:31-32; Rom. 10:17; 1 Peter 2:2. Rom 1:16. Eph 5:18; Col. 3:16.

This tract is not setting forth a theological abstraction for the consumption of professors in their ivory towers. It is teaching laypeople how to apply objective justification to the very heart of the Christian life, telling them what to do when doubt's arise regarding the PROMISES of Almighty God. That is when the rubber hits the road in our spiritual life. Do we get back into the spirit and life words of Scripture? Do we look to Baptism and the Lord's Supper for additional proof that the *general* promises of the Gospel were intended for me individually?¹⁶⁶ Or do we run for comfort to the words of men such as these:

No, it must be nothing less than this: 'My faith is a weak and faltering thing. My personal feelings betray the weakness of my heart. But God has already declared the whole world righteous in Christ's death and resurrection. Sinner that I am, I know that I am included.' [emphasis added]

When spiritual doubts arise, getting back into the very words of Scripture will solve the underlying problem by strengthening or re-creating faith. The other course of action (objective justification) will not solve the underlying problem and will make matters worse by masking the symptoms. True Christians know that spiritual doubts are sometimes legitimate warnings that sin is getting dominion over us, that we are acting against our conscience, and have either lost saving faith or are in danger of doing so. Let us heed the words of Scripture: "for if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."¹⁶⁷ In times of spiritual doubt, would people need the comfort of "all sins are already forgiven, so that includes mine!" if they believed God's promise that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"?¹⁶⁸

A characteristic of error is that at first it simply requests toleration for its view. Second, it demands equal time. Third, it demands subordination of all other views to its own. The historical development of objective justification followed this pattern: Prof. F.A. Schmidt's teaching of universal justification in 1872, with its extensive disclaimers, can be seen as the first stage: "Just tolerate our terminology--we're not saying anything new and won't disturb the other way of teaching justification." The language used by *Popular Symbolics* in 1934, language which could be interpreted both ways, could be seen as the second

¹⁶⁶ "For this reason also Christ causes the promise of the Gospel not only to be offered in general, but He seals it through the Sacraments which He attaches as seals of the promise, and thereby confirms it [the certainty of the promise of the Gospel] to every believer in particular." Formula of Concord, TD, XI, Triglotta, p. 1075.

¹⁶⁷ Hebrews 10:26-27. See also Numbers 15:30-31, Deut. 17:12, 2 Peter 2:20-21.

¹⁶⁸ 1 John 1:9

stage: "Either way of teaching Justification is acceptable--choose the form that best fits your needs." This 1954 WELS tract and the Kokomo Four Statements (Chapter 10) are the third stage: "Our way of teaching Justification is the only one that will be tolerated."¹⁶⁹

This writer has experienced the doubts and anguish that arise when one falls into sin. I admit that at such times it would be nice to simply remind myself that "all sins are forgiven, so this one is also." But I could not find a single example in the Bible where Christians responded to sin in that manner. Instead I found words such as:

- "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."
- "God, be merciful to me a sinner."
- "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD."
- "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me."

And the 4 times that Christ is recorded telling someone "Your sins are forgiven," He never once said anything like: "Everyone's sins are forgiven, so of course your sins are included."¹⁷⁰

First John 1:9 does *not* say that, "If we confess our sins, God will remind us that He has already forgiven those sins and the sins of all other people." Likewise, the meaning of the Third Article reminds Lutherans: ". . . in which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers." This contradicts objective justification, which says God has forgiven all sins, and justified all people.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. John 3:36

"At the time of the resurrection of Christ, God looked down in hell and declared Judas, the people destroyed in the flood, and all the ungodly, innocent, not guilty, and forgiven of all sin and gave unto them the status of saints."

Kokomo Statement 4, WELS, 1979-1980.

¹⁶⁹ In Chapter 10 we will study the case of two families who were expelled from a WELS congregation for refusing to agree that "At the time of the resurrection of Christ, God looked down in hell and declared Judas, the people destroyed in the flood, and all the ungodly, innocent, not guilty, and forgiven of all sin and gave unto them the status of saints." The wife of this writer was excommunicated from an LCMS congregation, along with 3 other families, for refusing to give an unqualified 'yes' to the question "Do you believe that the sins of all the world were forgiven in 30 AD when Christ was raised from the grave?"

¹⁷⁰ Matt. 9:2-5; Mark 2:5-9; Luke 5:20-23; 7:47-48.

Chapter 10

The Kokomo Four Statements: 1979-1982

We have seen a gradual yet remarkable evolution in *objective justification*:

- In 1872, *universal justification* was accompanied by extensive disclaimers and qualifications. Prof. Schmidt asserted that only "mankind" was justified, not any individual person until he believed. God was said to have two manners in which He viewed mankind: one of grace "in Christ" and the other of wrath "outside of Christ." He said that the debt of sin remained on the unbeliever.
- In 1888, *general justification* was used to refute the synergism of certain pseudo-Lutherans. Against those who said that faith is something on man's part that causes justification, general justification said "all people are already justified before anyone comes to faith."
- The 1897 Brief Statement and the 1912 Missouri Catechism do not teach universal, general or objective justification. Justification was still taught as a single concept, by grace through faith. There was no suggestion that God had forgiven all sins or justified all people.
- By 1917, Franz Pieper explained *objective justification* as "an actual absolution of the whole world of sinners." At that time, Missouri understood that no absolution remits the sins of anyone who does not believe its words. Pieper also qualified his teaching by saying that "all sins are absolved in Christ," which can be understood to mean that all those who are "in Christ" are absolved. In another place, Pieper qualified objective justification by saying that "*In Christ* God now takes the attitude toward men as if they had never offended Him with their sins . . ." Pieper also tried to equate objective justification with the so-called objective reconciliation: God's reconciliation toward mankind = satisfaction of His holy justice = willingness to forgive.
- A half-sentence in the 1932 Brief Statement says that "God has already declared the whole world to be righteous *in Christ* . . ." That phrase *can* be understood to mean "God has declared everyone who is *in Christ* to be righteous" or it can be understood to mean "all people are declared righteous because of Christ."
- Those two words ("in Christ") were omitted from objective justification in *Popular Symbolics* (1934), in the 1950-1953 *Christian Dogmatics*, the 1954 WELS tract "Every Sinner Declared Righteous" and the 1991 Missouri Catechism. In subsequent teachings, *objective justification* became the unqualified assertion that all sins were forgiven, all people justified, and all people "freed" at the time of Christ's death and resurrection. "The God who justifies the ungodly is the God who has justified everyone."
- Along with objective justification, modern Lutheran theologians developed the concept known as *subjective justification*. People are not saved unless they are both objectively and subjectively justified. Subjective justification occurs when a person believes in objective justification; when he believes that all sins are forgiven and all people justified, then he receives the benefit

of the fact that his sins are forgiven and he is justified. If a person is not subjectively justified, God will still punish him eternally in hell for all his "forgiven" sins!

The WELS Kokomo fiasco of 1979-1982 demonstrates the fruits of *objective justification*.

Background

Faith Lutheran Church was a WELS congregation located in Kokomo, Indiana. The central figures in this episode were the pastor, Rev. Charles Papenfuss, and two member families: the David Hartmans and Joe Pohlmans. We will let the subjects of this drama tell the story in their own words:

"The matter really began back in July of 1978 at a Vacation Bible School meeting. We were preparing to teach the lesson of the Prodigal Son along with four other lessons for the upcoming week. Mr. [David] Hartman, who was at that time the Chairman of the Board of Education, was presenting the material. During the presentation of the Prodigal Son, David was emphasizing the following points: the Prodigal Son received his share of his Father's goods and left home wasting them unwisely through sinful living. After he lost everything he came to his senses (God led him to do so), the desire to repent was wrought within him and he was moved to return to his Father (not demanding son-ship but asking to be made a servant). At the same time the Father's desire was always that of love and concern for his lost child; he wanted ever so much to say "son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." As the son returned in contrition and repentance the loving Father pronounced him forgiven and welcomed him back into the fold. Pastor Papenfuss said that this wasn't quite correct, that really the Father forgave the son his sins prior to his return (before God moved the son to repent) and that the son represented the entire world of lost sinners and the Father in the story represented God the Father. Pastor Papenfuss believed this story taught that God the Father has pronounced the entire world of lost sinners forgiven of all sins and that at the time of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection gave unto all sinners the "status of saints." David [Hartman] thought the story taught the undeserved and loving compassion of God the Father toward lost sinners, that God desires to forgive the sins of all people and to give unto all people sonship and the gift of eternal life."

"Pastor Papenfuss told David [Hartman] that their teachings were not in agreement and that David would have to change his way of teaching the story. He agreed to meet with David to discuss the matter. When they met, David asked Pastor Papenfuss to explain what he meant by saying that all people have been forgiven and given the "status of saints." Very simply, he [Pastor Papenfuss] stated that at the time of the resurrection

God declared the entire world of lost sinners to be forgiven, innocent of all sin, righteous and holy in His sight and declared all people "guilt-free saints." David found that difficult to swallow but was hoping that he misunderstood exactly what was meant by such statements and that an understanding could be reached. David asked if the entire world of lost sinners included Judas and all who were with him in hell. Pastor Papenfuss said that even Judas and all people in hell were declared righteous, holy, innocent of all sin and given the "status of saints." He said that they too were declared to be guilt-free saints at the time of the resurrection of Christ."¹⁷¹

"David asked what Bible passages teach such a doctrine. Pastor Papenfuss listed the following passages as Scriptural proof: Is. 53:11, Luke 24:47, Ro. 3:23, 24, 28, Ro. 4:5-8, Ro. 4:25, Ro. 5:6-11; Ro. 5:18-19, Gal. 3:13, Eph. 1:7, 1 Jo. 2:2 and 2 Cor. 5:19."

Comment: Notice how the list of proof passages for the universal ("objective") aspect of justification keeps growing. At one time, they were confined to Romans 5:18-19 and 2 Corinthians 5:19. By 1978, many other Bible passages were re-interpreted to mean something that our forefathers never saw in them.

"David wasn't convinced these passages taught that all people (including those in hell and those living in sin¹⁷² were declared righteous, forgiven of all sins, pure, holy, and blameless in the eyes of God apart from faith in the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ. Pastor Papenfuss suggested that David read Ministers of Christ by Prof. John P. Meyer, a commentary on the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians which is used at the WELS seminary."

Comment: For those of you who have not read the previous chapter, I urge you to do so at this time. Prof. John P. Meyer was one of the most prominent men in WELS during the fifties and sixties, and the probable author of "Every Sinner Declared Righteous."¹⁷³

The debate within Faith Lutheran Church continued into 1979, until a special voters' meeting was convened on June 20 of that year. In the words of the dissidents: "a motion was made that a vote of confidence be given for the

¹⁷¹ Excerpt from an open letter written by Mr. and Mrs. David Hartman and Mr. and Mrs. Joe Pohlman dated March 6, 1982.

¹⁷² "Living in sin" here meant the willful, unrepentant sin which destroys saving faith. "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." (Hebrews 10:26-27)

¹⁷³ Meyer served at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary from 1920 - 1964. The writings in that tract correspond closely to his book *Ministers of Christ*. This writer also has correspondence in file in which a WELS official gave credit to Prof. Meyer for the 1954 tract.

acceptance of the teachings of WELS concerning the doctrine of justification" [emphasis added]. The following Four Statements were offered by the Pastor as a summary of that doctrine:

1. Objectively speaking, without any reference to an individual sinner's attitude toward Christ's sacrifice, purely on the basis of God's verdict, every sinner, whether he knows it or not, whether he believes it or not, has received the status of a saint.
2. After Christ's intervention and through Christ's intervention, God regards all sinners as guilt-free saints.
3. When God reconciled the world to Himself through Christ, He individually pronounced forgiveness on each individual sinner whether that sinner ever comes to faith or not.
4. At the time of the resurrection of Christ, God looked down in hell and declared Judas, the people destroyed in the flood, and all the ungodly, innocent, not guilty, and forgiven of all sin and gave unto them the status of saints.¹⁷⁴

The vote was 3 against accepting these Four Statements as the correct teaching of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, 10 in favor, and 1 not sure. The Circuit Counselor, Rev. Siggelkow was present at the vote.

The Teaching Behind the Kokomo Four Statements

On June 5, 1979 Pastor Papenfuss distributed a doctrinal summary of *objective justification* in preparation for this special voters' meeting. We present this verbatim:¹⁷⁵

Justification

1. The term itself

a courtroom term - means "to declare righteous," not to make righteous

equal to "forgiving sins" - cf. Rom. 4:6-8

¹⁷⁴ Lest anyone think these Statements are the aberration of a country pastor, Statement 1 is taken from page 103 of Prof. John P. Meyer's commentary: *Ministers of Christ*. Statement 2 is found on page 107 and Statement 3 is found on page 109. Statement 4 was developed in discussions between the dissenters and Rev. Papenfuss to flesh out the application of the other three Statements. *Ministers of Christ* was used for many years as a textbook at the WELS seminary. All four Statements were subsequently defended by WELS officials.

¹⁷⁵ A copy of this memo is available upon request.

Comments:

- Although a person is declared righteous (justified) as God forgives his sins, these are two different words in the Bible and we should not say they are “equal.” One deals with the person, the other with his sins.
- We wish Rev. Papenfuss had given a Biblical definition of “forgiveness” to show how God describes this important action. We call your attention especially to the boldface portions of these verses:

For as the heaven is high above the earth, [so] great is his mercy toward them that fear him. **As far as the east is from the west, [so] far hath he removed our transgressions from us.** (Psalm 103:11-12).

But thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob: but thou has been weary of me, O Israel . . . I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake and **will not remember thy sins.** (Is. 43:22, 25).

But this [shall be] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for *they shall all know me*, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: **for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.** (Jer. 31:33-34)

Who *is* a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth *in* mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou **wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.** (Micah 7:18-19 AV)

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will **I remember no more.** (Hebrews 10:14-17)

After hearing those words of the Holy God on the matter of forgiveness, who wants to contradict Him by saying that “God has forgiven all sins, but He will still punish them if the person doesn’t believe he is forgiven”? Please also note the underlined portions of the above verses: it is God’s people—believers—who are forgiven!

Let us continue with Pastor Papenfuss’ teaching on Justification:

2. The need for justification

all people are sinners; Rom. 5:12, Rom. 3:23

all people deserve eternal condemnation; Rom. 6:23a

Comment: We agree that all people need justification, for the Bible says they are *already* condemned unless they believe in Christ crucified: ". . . he that believeth not *is condemned already*, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" John 3:18; "Therefore as by the offence of one [*judgment came*] upon all men to condemnation . . ." Rom. 5:18; ". . . he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the *wrath of God abideth on him*" John 3:36; ". . . he that hath not the Son of God *hath* not life" 1 Jo 5:12; "For as many as are of the works of the law *are under the curse*: for it is written, Cursed [*is*] every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" Gal. 3:10; "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one [*point*], he *is* guilty of all" James 2:10.

Let us continue with Rev. Papenfuss' memo on Justification:

3. Christ has atoned for all sins

all sins of all people were charged to Christ; 2 Cor. 5:21

He's the Savior of the world; Jn. 3:16

His life and death paid the full price for the sins of the world;

1 Jn 2:2

The purpose of Christ's work was to reconcile (make peace) the world to God; 2 Cor. 5:19.

The proof that Christ accomplished it was His resurrection; Rom. 4:25

Comments:

1. It is true that all sins of all people were charged to Christ. "He died for all" and "gave himself a ransom for all."
2. John 3:16 does not say that "He's the Savior of the world." It says "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." The Bible does tell us that "the Father sent the Son [to be] the Saviour of the world" but it also tells us that most people are not saved.
3. It is true that Christ's "life and death paid the full price for the sins of the world" if that means what Scripture says better: "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."¹⁷⁶
4. 2 Cor. 5:19 does *not* say that "the purpose of Christ's work was to reconcile (make peace) the world to God." Also, the resurrection is *not* proof that He

¹⁷⁶ 1 Timothy 2:6

accomplished this work. Anyone who is not a true believer has no peace with God, and in fact is at enmity and not reconciled toward Him:

- [There is] **no peace**, saith the LORD, unto the wicked. (Isa. 48:22)
 - The way of peace they know not; and [there is] no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein **shall not know peace**. (Isa. 59:8)
 - **And the way of peace have they not known**. (Romans 3:17)
 - Because the carnal mind *is enmity against God*: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (Romans 8:7)
 - Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is **enmity with God**? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. (James 4:4)
 - The world cannot hate you; but **me it hateth**, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. (John 7:7)
 - And you, that were **sometime alienated and enemies** in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled (Colossians 1:21)
 - Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, **be ye reconciled to God**. (2 Corinthians 5:20)
5. Since no unbeliever has peace with God but in fact is at enmity toward Him, Romans 4:25 does not say that Christ's resurrection was proof that He accomplished such peace. Romans 4:25 does say:

Now it was not written for his [Abraham's] sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. (Romans 4:23-25)

The Bible says Christ was raised for **our** justification. The "our" referred to in this portion of Scripture is clearly those who "believe on him" (verse 24). And to say that Christ was raised **for** someone's justification does not say that their justification was simultaneous with that resurrection.

Let us continue with Pastor Papenfuss' teaching of Justification:

4. Because of Christ's work of redemption God has justified (forgiven) the sins of all people

Because of Christ's work God justifies the ungodly; Rom. 4:5

This declaration of "Not guilty" applies to all people; Rom. 5:18

To state it another way, God has forgiven the sins of the whole world; 2 Cor. 5:19

This is called objective or universal justification. (Objective means it's a fact, regardless of what people do with it; universal means it's world-wide)

Comment: We will only briefly point out the flaws in this teaching, since the same flaws were discussed at great length in earlier chapters:

- Romans 4:5 does not say that all ungodly people are justified:

"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Romans 4:3-5)

Rather than teaching all people are justified, this portion of Scripture makes it clear that the ones who are "counted righteous" are those who have faith which God counts as righteousness. Every time God creates faith in a human heart and justifies them, He "justifieth the ungodly." How can the Holy God do such a thing? "His faith is counted for righteousness." Romans 4:5 does not say "but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth all the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

- Romans 5:18 does not say that "*This declaration of "Not guilty" applies to all people.*" It does say:

"Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment* came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift* came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Romans 5:18-19)

To say that the "free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" does not say all people are 'not guilty.' To say that the free gift came upon all men does not mean it accomplishes its purpose in all, since other parts of Scripture tell us that most people reject it. We can understand this phrase

the same way we understand Titus 2:11: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." We noted earlier that the Book of Concord and Martin Luther interpret Romans 5:18 contrary to universal, objective justification.¹⁷⁷

- 2 Cor. 5:19 does not say "God has forgiven the sins of the whole world." We refer the reader to Chapters 5 and 9 where this verse was dealt with in great detail. If Pastor Papenfuss says that God has forgiven the sins of the whole world, then someday he will face the Judge who said just the opposite:

The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and **will not at all acquit the wicked**: Nahum 1:3a

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, **neither will your Father forgive your trespasses**. Matthew 6:14-15

Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart **may be forgiven thee**. Acts 8:22

We now skip ahead to the last part of Rev. Papenfuss' 6/5/79 memo where he emphasized the practical application of this teaching, and where he reveals why he insisted on the termination of two families who refused to accept the Four Statements:

"But objective justification is an immensely practical doctrine. For the time will come in our life--maybe it has already in your life several times--when we wonder what our standing before God is. When our sins plague us, when our conscience condemns us, when we lie on our deathbed and stare eternity in the face, what's our comfort then? Will it be no more than this: "God has paid for all my sins and made my forgiveness possible; I know I'll get to heaven because I have a personal and saving faith"? May our comfort at such a time be this: "My faith is weak and faltering. But God has already declared this whole world righteous because of Christ's death and resurrection. God does not lie. Sinner though I am, I know I am included."

This is remarkably similar to what we found in the 1954 WELS tract, "Every Sinner Declared Righteous" (Chapter 9). We have repeatedly pointed out the problems inherent with this "comforting" doctrine, but we repeat the main points:

¹⁷⁷ Chapter 2 and 3 contain the evidence of that assertion.

1. First, it gives the false impression that the only alternative to "all sins are forgiven, so I know mine are also" is to put your faith in your faith. True Christians certainly do not make their faith the object of their faith. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Nor do true Christians believe that their faith is something they contributed toward: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). But neither is the object of their faith the alleged forgiveness of all sins and justification of all people. Rather, they trust, with God-given faith, the spirit and life PROMISES of God, promises which include the *work* of Christ . . .

"But he [was] wounded for our transgressions, [he was] bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace [was] upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" Isaiah 53:5

. . . and the *benefits* of that work . . .

" . . . the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" Romans 6:23

2. Like the 1954 WELS tract, Rev. Papenfuss maligns God-wrought saving faith, calling it a "weak and faltering thing." We concede the possibility that Rev. Papenfuss and many other professing Christians have a weak and faltering faith. However, when someone has a weak and faltering faith in the quick and powerful PROMISES of God, the remedy is not to give him a different, more comforting object of faith to believe ("just believe that all sins are forgiven and that certainly includes yours!"). What it means is that the person is not spending enough time continuing in the spirit and life words of Scripture, desiring the sincere milk of the Word, letting the word of Christ dwell in him richly. When we are confronted with a person who has a weak and faltering faith, anything that distracts him from the words of Scripture is a great offense. Objective justification takes people away from the very words of Scripture, which could solve their weak faith, and gives them a different comfort.

Scripture says "the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life" and "the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."¹⁷⁸ It also says "faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" and "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."¹⁷⁹ Have Modern Lutherans lost their confidence in the very words of Scripture? Why don't they trust God's very promises to overcome

¹⁷⁸ John 6:63, Hebrews 4:12.

¹⁷⁹ Romans 10:17, Romans 1:16.

the occasional spiritual doubt? Why do modern Lutherans prefer doctrinal statements, words such as "all sins are forgiven and all people are justified"? What is inadequate about divine promises like "if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness"? Why do people need the comfort of objective justification: "God has already forgiven the whole world, and I am certainly included in that"?¹⁸⁰

The Kokomo story continued. . .

As mentioned earlier, the Four Statements were accepted by Faith Lutheran Church at the Special Voters' Meeting of June 20, 1979, as "the teachings of WELS concerning the doctrine of Justification." Shortly thereafter, on July 8, 1979, the Dave Hartman and Joe Pohlman families received a letter from Faith Lutheran Church *suspending* them from fellowship. No reason for their suspension was offered other than their refusal to accept the Four Statements.

Rev. Siggelkow, the Circuit Counselor who was present at the special voters' meeting, told the dissenters that they could appeal this action. They met with him on August 7, 1979. Rev. Siggelkow ruled in favor of the congregation, that the Four Statements were the correct WELS doctrine on justification. A transcript of that meeting is available. No other errors by the dissidents were alleged other than their refusal to accept these Four Statements, which are reprinted now for your re-consideration:

1. Objectively speaking, without any reference to an individual sinner's attitude toward Christ's sacrifice, purely on the basis of God's verdict, every sinner, whether he knows it or not, whether he believes it or not, has received the status of a saint.
2. After Christ's intervention and through Christ's intervention, God regards all sinners as guilt-free saints.
3. When God reconciled the world to Himself through Christ, He individually pronounced forgiveness on each individual sinner whether that sinner ever comes to faith or not.
4. At the time of the resurrection of Christ, God looked down in hell and declared Judas, the people destroyed in the flood, and all the ungodly, innocent, not guilty, and forgiven of all sin and gave unto them the status of saints.

¹⁸⁰ Interestingly enough, the Reformation was unleashed on this very subject: false comfort being given to professing Christians. The first of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses reads: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ says 'Repent ye,' etc., He intended that the whole life of His believers upon earth shall be a constant and perpetual repentance." Luther did not change on this issue: his explanation of the Third Article points out that "...in which Christian Church God richly and *daily* forgives all sins of *me* and all *believers*."

Shortly thereafter, in an 8/30/79 letter from the congregation to the suspended members, the Four Statements were again set forth as the official doctrine of WELS, and the reason for their suspension:

*" . . . it is our understanding that your "no" vote on June 20th against supporting the biblical doctrine of the WELS was based at least in part, on your failure to accept the following statements - included in your letter - all of which are in agreement with the teachings of the WELS . . . "*¹⁸¹

The next step was a June 9, 1980, meeting between Hartman/Pohlman and The Southeastern Wisconsin District Panel of Review for WELS, chaired by Professor Panning.¹⁸² Here is how the dissenters described that meeting in a 1982 public letter:

"We feel that nothing was really accomplished at that meeting, however, except from their point of view. We weren't given the opportunity to present our Biblical reasons for voting against the Four Statements, nor were we allowed to present any wrath of God passages which show that apart from faith in the atoning blood of Christ, God's wrath has not been stilled . . . they were only interested in our explanations of 2 Cor. 5:19 and Rom. 5:18. Beyond that, we spoke of very little. Unfortunately, no transcript of that meeting is available as the commission wouldn't allow it."

Then, on November 19, 1980, the two dissenting families received the following letter from Faith Lutheran Church:

"In accord with the recommendations of the Southeastern Wisconsin District Panel of Review the voters of the Faith Lutheran Church have approved a resolution terminating your membership in the congregation unless and until such time as you accept the doctrine of justification as practiced by the WELS."

The final step in this tragedy occurred at the District Convention of WELS in June of 1981, when the District President, George Boldt, announced that the case was closed. There was no further appeal available to these terminated members.

When this case was publicized through *Christian News*, and many people became troubled with the Four Statements, the hierarchy of WELS began circulating rumors that the Hartmans and Pohlman were *really* terminated for other reasons. We see that charge in a 1982 speech by Prof. Siegbert Becker, but no proof of this charge has ever been set forth. Nor were any such reasons given at the time of their suspension or termination. The rumors suggested that

¹⁸¹ The statements referred to are the Four Statements printed above.

¹⁸² The other members were Rev. Mueller, Rev. Scharf, Mr. Muenkel, and Mr. Zuberbier.

they were terminated for *other* errors that they held on the matter of justification, not just their rejection of the Four Statements. From all the written information available, that is not true. Most importantly, the Congregation gave *only* the Four Statements as the reason for suspending and terminating these families. No one at WELS ever presented any evidence of error (in a forum where they could respond) other than their rejection of the Four Statements.¹⁸³

The terminated families made this written confession of faith to counter the rumors circulated against them:

"Concerning our confession as Christians we believe and confess that Christ, with His perfect life and sacrificial death, has paid for the sins of all people. This payment has been accepted by the Father which is shown in the resurrection of His Son. We believe that God wants all to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth. God works repentance in the hearts of His children, washes their sins away in Holy Baptism, and justifies us through faith in Christ. Thus we have forgiveness of sins, eternal life, etc. This is the Justification known to our Lutheran fathers in the Confessions and to Christians all over the world. We cannot and will not stop teaching this in His name. Acts 4 & 5."¹⁸⁴

The Four Statements were presented as an accurate summary of the teaching of justification, both by the congregation and the appeal panel. The dissidents made several unsuccessful efforts to qualify these statements, but Faith Lutheran Church and the WELS hierarchy insisted that they accept the statements as they stood. No evidence was presented for terminating these families other than their rejection of these Four Statements, although rumors were circulated that they held to other errors. A great wrong was committed and persists to this day.

It is easy for any Christian to see what is wrong with these Four Statements. Why were they so strenuously defended? Why has WELS still not retracted them?

1. The doctrine of *objective justification* had evolved for some time, and the modern version had been taught without opposition at the seminary by prominent men such as John P. Meyer. To admit that there was anything wrong with the Four Statements would require WELS to admit that there was something wrong with the teaching of the previous 30 years, including the 1954 tract published by the Conference of Presidents and a key textbook: *Ministers of*

¹⁸³ The burden of proof, of course, is on the accusers to show that the Hartmans and Pohlmanns embrace error. If there were ambiguous statements they made while fighting against the Four Statements, they should have been confronted with these statements and given the chance to clarify them. This was never done.

¹⁸⁴ Open letter dated February 12, 1982.

Christ. This in turn would raise questions about the faithfulness of the men who had been charged with doctrinal oversight all that time. We all know from personal experience how hard it is to admit our faults.

2. To admit that there was anything wrong with the Four Statements would raise many embarrassing questions about the whole concept of objective justification:
 - What was insufficient about the old teaching of justification, found in the Book of Concord, the 1897 Brief Statement and 1912 Catechism?
 - What about the clear Bible passages which talk about the immutable wrath of God which abideth on unbelievers?
 - What about the many Bible verses which say all people are not justified and all sins are not forgiven?
 - What about the fact that we call God a liar when we say that He punishes sins after He Himself says "I forgive them"? God says "For I am the LORD, I change not." His word is not "yea" and "nay."
3. Finally, keep in mind that the modern version of *objective justification* is something that people *want to believe*. That, I think, is the best explanation of why this concept advanced with little opposition and is fanatically defended today. It is a very "comforting" doctrine to our carnal flesh. It is easy to tell people, and easy to hear, "all sins are forgiven—just believe that and you will be saved." When we do not trust the very promises of Scripture then we need something else to alleviate our doubts and quiet the voice of conscience.

Support from High Places

Professor Siegbert Becker, once of the Missouri Synod, was one of the most vocal defenders of the Four Statements. He taught at the WELS Seminary alongside John P. Meyer, who really deserves credit for these Statements since the first three are taken verbatim from his *Ministers of Christ*. In an essay delivered at the Chicago Pastoral Conference of WELS on November 9, 1982, Prof. Becker said this:

*"Every one of the statements can be understood correctly, even though one must swallow a little hard to accede to the fourth. However, because the statements were used to discredit the truth of universal justification and to cause other laymen to doubt this teaching it is especially necessary to point out that **the statements do not contain false doctrine.**"*
[emphasis added]

Professor Becker went on to make this remarkable public accusation:

*"But since the disciplined laymen [the Hartmans and Pohlmanns] used them [the Four Statements] to **advance their false doctrine**, it was understandable that the congregation should also use them [the Four Statements] in its rejection of the falsehood being advocated." [emphasis added].*

In case anyone missed the importance of that statement, Professor Becker publicly accused these laymen of false teaching without offering any proof other than their rejection of the Four Statements. That is a grievous sin. Prof. Becker admits that these Four Statements can be misinterpreted, although he is willing to overlook that because he says they *can* be interpreted correctly.¹⁸⁵ There was a time when Lutheran theologians discarded any form of words that were subject to mis-interpretation; they did not endorse teachings simply because they *could* be explained properly. Consider, for example, the strenuous efforts to refute Melancthon's mediating language, language which was designed to be interpreted different ways by different hearers. Would Prof. Becker accept Melancthon's teaching since it "can be understood correctly"?

The Four Statements Widely Accepted

Eighty-eight percent of WELS clergy responding to a 1982 survey said that they "accepted and supported the Kokomo Four Statements *without reservations* and acknowledged them to be the teaching of WELS." Although most WELS clergy would probably not teach objective justification as crudely as these Four Statements, they definitely supported what those Statements taught. On the other hand, only 27% of the WELS laymen responding to that survey supported the Kokomo Four Statements as the correct teaching of WELS. This suggests that the majority of WELS Pastors who agree with Kokomo have not yet taught what they believe to their parishioners!

People in Missouri may say "the WELS tract and Kokomo are not the way objective justification should be taught." Lest anyone in the Missouri Synod feel superior to WELS in this regard, we urge you to consider these facts:

- Chapter 1 of this Report contains many recent quotes from Missouri theologians which also assert that "all sins are forgiven" and "all people are justified."
- The 1991 Missouri Catechism, studied in Chapter 5, teaches the same objective justification as Kokomo—although it does not call the hell-dwellers "saints." It does say that God has forgiven all people.
- In an 1983 essay, Siegbert Becker of WELS wrote this commendation regarding Missouri: "In the recent past the Commission of Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod issued an excellent statement on the doctrine of justification which *our synod would be able to accept without changes.*" [emphasis added]!¹⁸⁶ Keep in mind that Siegbert Becker had recently (and strenuously!) defended the Kokomo Four

¹⁸⁵ Although he admits in his speech that this "best construction" requires that we use words (such as "saint") in a way that the Bible does not use them! "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." 1 Peter 4:11. ". . .but to this man will I look; even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word." Isaiah 66:2.

¹⁸⁶ "Universal Justification", reprinted in *Our Great Heritage*, Vol. III, General Editor Lyle Lange, NPH, p. 49.

Statements as the right teaching of justification, saying they "do not contain false doctrine." The same man who supported Kokomo says that he and WELS could accept the CTCR's Theses on Justification without change!

The Kokomo Four Statements speak for themselves. They take the seed planted by Prof. Schmidt in 1872 to its logical conclusion. We reprint them here for your final consideration:

Objectively speaking, without any reference to an individual sinner's attitude toward Christ's sacrifice, purely on the basis of God's verdict, every sinner, whether he knows it or not, whether he believes it or not, has received the status of a saint.

After Christ's intervention and through Christ's intervention, God regards all sinners as guilt-free saints.

When God reconciled the world to Himself through Christ, He individually pronounced forgiveness on each individual sinner whether that sinner ever comes to faith or not.

At the time of the resurrection of Christ, God looked down in hell and declared Judas, the people destroyed in the flood, and all the ungodly, innocent, not guilty, and forgiven of all sin and gave unto them the status of saints.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Chapter 11 Summary and Conclusion

We have traced the historical development of objective justification from 1872 to 1991. Here is a brief recap of that doctrinal development:

Chapter 2: Prof. F.A. Schmidt - 1872

- A Professor of the Norwegian Synod, Prof. F.A. Schmidt introduced universal justification to the first convention of the Synodical Conference. In a nutshell, his teaching was: Christ's redemptive work on the cross was for all people. His Resurrection was an act of God through which Christ was declared righteous. However, Christ was not condemned for His own Person, but rather for mankind. Therefore, His resurrection was not really for Him, "but rather mankind, for whom He died and rose, became righteous."
- This teaching was placed under a thesis that made no mention of those important assertions.
- Schmidt twisted a small portion of Article IV of the Apology to support his universal justification. He also paraphrased and interpreted Romans 5:18 differently than Martin Luther and the Book of Concord.
- Schmidt offered extensive disclaimers and qualifications to clarify his claim that mankind became righteous. For example, he said that "the debt remains on the unbelievers, as long as they continue in unbelief," "Righteousness is fulfilled in us; not indeed in every individual person, but in our humanity," and "Whoever therefore does not believe in Christ, yes rejects Christ, upon him the wrath of God remains." He emphasized the importance of the Law, the immutable wrath of God that abideth on people outside of Christ, and the necessity of God-wrought faith. The historical development of objective justification was essentially a process of dropping his extensive disclaimers and clarifications.
- Schmidt became virulently anti-Missourian eight years after introducing universal justification to the Synodical Conference. He accused Missouri of being "Crypto-Calvinist" because of its insistence on the doctrine of election as summarized by Article XI of the Formula of Concord. This suggests that universal, objective justification may arise, at least in part, by a misunderstanding or rejection of the fact that "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. . . Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" and "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Ephesians 1:4-5. Romans 8:30.

Chapter 3: Prof. Georg Stoeckhardt - 1888

- Some of the early opponents to *universal* or *general justification* were pseudo Lutherans who wanted to make *faith* something on our part that contributed toward our justification. Prof. Stoeckhardt used *general justification* to refute such synergism. We saw that the explicit words of Scripture do a better job against such errors.
- Prof. Stoeckhardt relied primarily on Romans 5 to support his concept of general justification, a portion of Scripture which begins with the statement "Therefore being justified by faith. . ." His proof texts for general justification contradict the interpretation of both Martin Luther and the Book of Concord.
- His 1888 essay begins with the unsubstantiated claim that "Genuine Lutheran theology counts the doctrine of general justification among the statements and treasures of its faith." This bold pattern has continued to the present time: a refusal to admit that this concept *is* new and *has* evolved. The fanatical support for objective justification is undaunted by the fact that it is not contained in the Book of Concord, the 1897 Brief Statement, or the 1912 Catechism.

Chapter 4: The Brief Statement of 1897

Chapter 5: The 1912 Missouri Catechism

- These public confessions make *no* mention of universal, general or objective justification. Nor do they use any language that suggests that God forgave all sins or justified all people, either at the time of Christ's death or at any other time. "Forgive" and "justify" have very specific meanings determined solely by Scripture.
- These writings taught that *Christ procured the forgiveness of sins for all people*, but said that sins are forgiven and people justified when God brings them to saving faith.

Chapter 5: The 1991 Missouri Catechism

- • The 1991 Catechism is a significant departure from the 1912 edition on the matter of justification. It says "I believe in the forgiveness of sins because through Christ God has declared pardon and forgiveness to all sinful humanity." This contradicts the 1912 Catechism and the Meaning of the Third Article: "In which Christian Church He richly and daily forgives all sins to me and all believers." The 1991 Catechism also suggests that the object of saving faith—the thing that must be believed in order to be saved—is God's alleged pardon of all sinful humanity. Unless you believe that, you cannot believe that *your* sins are forgiven.

Chapter 6: *Christliche Dogmatik* compared to *Christian Dogmatics*

- In *Christliche Dogmatik*, published between 1917 and 1924, Franz Pieper explained *objective justification* as "an actual absolution of the whole world of sinners." This is not the same as saying "all sins are forgiven" because old Missouri understood that absolution does not remit the sins of anyone who

does not believe its words. Pieper also explained objective justification as "a" justification *in Himself*, while conversion is when God "justifies" an individual person.

- Pieper qualified his teaching of objective justification by saying that "all sins are absolved *in Christ*," which can be understood to mean that all those who are in Christ have their sins absolved and remitted. In another place, Pieper qualified objective justification by saying that "*In Christ* God now takes the attitude toward men as if they had never offended Him with their sins . . ." The Bible always uses "in Christ" to refer to believers.
- In *Christliche Dogmatik*, Pieper also tried (not always with success) to equate objective justification with what theologians like to call *objective reconciliation*: God's reconciliation toward mankind = satisfaction of His justice = willingness to forgive.
- In *Christliche Dogmatik*, Pieper also set forth the other Scripture truths which reduce the danger that *objective justification* will be misunderstood: God's perfect foreknowledge, His immutable wrath which abideth on unbelievers, His election of some people to salvation before the foundation of the world, and the need for God-wrought contrition before offering the Gospel.
- Pieper never suggested that the object of saving faith—the thing that must be believed in order for a person to be saved—is the forgiveness of all sins and the justification of all people.

In all these ways, Pieper's teaching of objective justification differed from the modern teaching. His explanation of objective justification was repeatedly changed and expanded in the English *Christian Dogmatics* published between 1950 and 1953. The English translation puts words into Pieper's mouth that suggest that *at the time* of Christ's death and resurrection, there was a *change*: a divine judicial act forgiving all sins and justifying all individual people. It deleted words like "in Christ" and softened Pieper's teaching of God's immutable wrath.

Chapter 7: The Brief Statement of 1932

- In this important document, a half sentence was introduced into the teaching of justification that can support the modern version of objective justification. However, if the half sentence is interpreted in its broad and narrow context, and proper emphasis given to the words "in Christ," it does not support the notion that all sins are forgiven and all people justified. This ambiguous half-sentence was a significant change from the teaching of justification found in the 1897 Brief Statement.

Chapter 8: *Popular Symbolics* - 1934

- This book taught objective justification without any of the hesitation we saw in *Christliche Dogmatik*. It stated without qualification that "the sins of the world are forgiven."
- Unlike earlier versions of objective justification, *Popular Symbolics* did not say that this forgiveness was only "in Christ." It did not suggest that God has

a twofold manner of viewing the world: one of grace "in Christ" and the other of wrath "outside of Christ." Indeed, immutability is not even mentioned as one of the attributes of God.

- *Popular Symbolics* employed language that can mean that the object of saving faith—the thing that must be believed in order to be saved—is God's alleged universal pardon of all sins. This represents a major change from *Christliche Dogmatik* and the 1932 Brief Statement.

Chapter 9: WELS Tract "Every Sinner Declared Righteous" - 1954

Chapter 10: Kokomo Four Statements - 1979 to 1980

- These two chapters represent the fruit of universal or objective justification. Without qualification, it is claimed that God has forgiven all sins of all people and justified every individual. This alleged fact is "the article by which the church stands or falls" and "the entire hope of sinful man." If you believe it, you will receive the benefits of the fact that you are already forgiven. If you do not believe it, God will punish you eternally in hell for all your sins which He "forgave"! We showed how this calls God a liar.
- Although both of these teachings happened in WELS, Missouri has never protested either teaching, and the same man who defended the Kokomo Four Statements ("*it is especially necessary to point out that the statements do not contain false doctrine*") said he and WELS supported Missouri's 1983 CTCR Thesis on Justification without change. Missouri's 1991 Catechism teaches the same thing as "Kokomo" and "Every Sinner Declared Righteous," though it is not so bold as to call people in hell "saints." But it is hard to see how these people are not saints if God really did forgive all their sins and declare them righteous when Christ died and rose again.

But why?

It is a *fact* that the teaching of justification has changed. The Book of Concord does not teach that all sins are forgiven or all people justified. Yet modern Lutherans say that is true. This report revealed how objective justification changed from 1872 to 1991:

- We put the 1912 Catechism alongside the 1991 version, and showed how the same questions got entirely different answers.
- We showed how the 1932 Brief Statement introduced a mild form of objective justification that was nowhere in the Brief Statement of 1897.
- We showed numerous places where the English *Christian Dogmatics* changed the words of *Christliche Dogmatik* to promote the claim that all sins are forgiven and all people are justified.

But why has this doctrinal evolution gone unopposed, and why do modern Lutherans refuse to admit that it has occurred? Why have both Missouri and WELS congregations expelled people who refuse to agree that God has forgiven all sins and justified all people, even though that claim is not found in the

Lutheran Confessions, the Brief Statement of 1897 and the 1912 Catechism? Why do modern Lutherans ignore the many explicit Bible verses that say that all people are not justified, and all sins are not forgiven?

This report has suggested possible explanations for the introduction, evolution and fanatical support for "all sins are forgiven and all people are justified:.

1. Prof. F.A. Schmidt, who introduced universal justification to the first convention of the Synodical Conference. probably was motivated by his misunderstanding or rejection of the fact that "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. . .having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" and "moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Eph. 1:4, Romans 8:30). Objective justification obscures those clear truths, truths which remain offensive to unbelievers and many who call themselves Christians.
2. Some, and this may include Prof. Stoeckhardt, supported the concept of universal, objective justification because it seemed like an effective way to refute the pseudo Lutherans who suggested that faith is something on our part which contributes toward our justification.
3. Many orthodox Lutherans supported or tolerated *objective justification* because of the many disclaimers and qualifications which used to accompany it. We have identified these qualifications throughout this report, and shown how they gradually disappeared. Many still mistakenly think that objective justification simply means that all the causes of a person's justification are "objective," not something the subjects (being justified) contribute toward.
4. Another explanation for the popularity of modern-day objective justification is that it causes less offense to unbelievers and hypocrites in the church. It downplays the Law and Judgment. Anyone who has ever tried to speak the words of God to an impenitent sinner knows that "you're already forgiven" goes over a lot better than "God is angry with the wicked every day."¹⁸⁸
5. The final explanation for the popularity of objective justification has been mentioned throughout this report: it is something our carnal minds want to believe. When the sin in our life troubles our conscience, when spiritual doubts arise in our hearts because of "pet" sins, we want to tell ourselves that "all sins are already forgiven, even Judas', so this sin of mine is nothing to worry about. As long as I keep believing that all sins are forgiven, I will be saved."
6. Many modern Lutherans have lost confidence in the very words of Scripture. They do not believe that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," and "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life,"

¹⁸⁸ Psalm 7:11.

and “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Therefore, they need something else to deal with spiritual doubts and fears. Objective justification may have become the pain killer for people who no longer trust or use the medicine: God’s very words.

It is this writer’s opinion that the widespread acceptance of objective justification helps explain these important trends:

- Why Lutheran seminaries have abandoned the teaching of doctrine as the highest priority. *Doctrine is not essential when your mission is simply to get people to assent that “God has already forgiven all sins and justified all people!”*¹⁸⁹
- Why pastors and teachers feel so little need to preach the thunders of Law and judgment. *One does not need the Law to prepare a heart to assent that “all sins are forgiven and all people are justified, so that must include me.”*
- Why modern Lutherans treat sin so lightly and are so easily offended when they are exhorted with God’s Law. Since the object of saving faith—according to objective justification—is the alleged fact that all sins and all people are already forgiven, anything that undermines confidence in that message must be repressed. Hearing the Law applied to our specific sins undermines the comfort that objective justification builds.
- Why modern Lutherans are so willing to shorten the sermons, omit the confession and absolution, invite everyone to Communion, adopt easy paraphrases of the Bible and abandon Bible memorization. *After all, who really needs to keep the words of God as long as one is saved by assenting that God declared everyone righteous when Christ died and rose again.*

Objective justification helps answer the question: “What is wrong with Lutheranism today?” Telling people that all sins are forgiven and all people are justified, is the anesthetic which masks our great need for God’s medicine: the spirit and life words of Scripture. But objective justification may be only a symptom of a greater problem: many Lutherans no longer tremble at the very words of God, and no longer believe those very words are “spirit and life,” “quick and powerful.” I therefore take this opportunity to exhort every reader:

- “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2).
- “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col. 3:16).
- “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2).
- “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life” (John 6:63).

¹⁸⁹ We call this “assent” instead of “faith” because God-wrought faith is impossible in something which Scripture does not say.

- “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.

Romans 8:29-30

Appendix

The Biblical Use of *Justify* (DIKAIOO) and *Justification* (DIKAIOSIS, DIKAIOMA)

The Lutheran Confessions defined "to be justified" in the following fashion:

And because 'to be justified' means that out of unjust men just men are made, or born again, it means also that they are pronounced or accounted just. For Scripture speaks in both ways.¹⁹⁰

This report has sought to show how Lutherans got from that point to the point where they now claim:

"The God who justifies the ungodly is the God who has justified everyone." *Rev. Rolf Preus (LCMS), The Christian News, April 28, 1997, p. 11.*

"We note that the Bible speaks of this justifying act of God as applying to the whole world, as having taken place in the death and resurrection of Christ, and as an accomplished fact. **THIS IS OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION!**" *Tract entitled "Every Sinner Declared Righteous" issued by the WELS Conference of Presidents in 1954.*

"The doctrine of universal justification, which teaches that the sins of all men are forgiven, and the doctrine of objective justification, which teaches that a man's sins are forgiven whether he believes it or not, are extremely important." *Rev. William Bischoff (LCMS), October 1995 Newsletter, Trinity Lutheran Church, Bridgeton Missouri.*

"After Christ's intervention and through Christ's intervention, God regards all sinners as guilt-free saints." *Kokomo Statement 2, WELS, 1979-1980. Also found in Ministers of Christ, Prof. John P. Meyer (WELS), NPH, p. 107.*

This report has demonstrated many changes in the teaching of justification, comparing the 1897 Brief Statement to the 1932 version, comparing the 1912 Missouri Catechism to the 1991 version, and comparing the 1920 *Christliche Dogmatik* to the 1950 *Christian Dogmatics*. Doctrinal evolution is a fact; that alone should make every Lutheran leery of this concept.

However, to understand the real problem with *objective justification* one must study how the Bible uses the word "justify" and its derivatives ("justified," "justification," "justifier"). Scripture tells us "If any man speak, *let him speak as the oracles of God*" (1 Peter 4:11). *Objective justification* says that God justified

¹⁹⁰ Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article IV (Of Justification), Triglotta, p. 141.

all people: if the Bible never uses “justify” in regard to all people, then we need to discard this term. Let us never change the meaning which Scripture already gives to a particular word.

This is not a case of using a non-Scripture word (like Trinity, Sacrament, or vicarious satisfaction) to summarize certain Scripture truths. Those words, and many others used by theologians, are not found in Scripture. Therefore, as long as we define them carefully, and always use them in conformance with our definition, they can be useful. Keep in mind that *objective justification* uses a word (“justification,” “justify,” “justified”) that Scripture already uses. We will see that Scripture *never* uses “justify” in regard to all people.

The New Testament uses the Greek word which is translated “justify” in the following ways:

DIKAIOS (Strong's #1344) translated in the Authorized Version as follows:

- "justify," "justified," "justifieth": 37 times
- "justifier": 1 time (Rom. 3:26)
- "be freed": 1 time (Romans 6:7)
- "be righteous": 1 time (Rev. 22:11)

DIKAIOSIS (Strong's #1347) translated in the Authorized Version as follows:

- "justification": 2 times

DIKAIOMA (Strong's #1345) translated in the Authorized Version as follows:

- "justification": 1 time
- "righteousness": 4 times
- "ordinance": 3 times
- "judgment": 2 times

We now present these quick and powerful, spirit and life words of Almighty God, knowing that His words “are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge” and “he that is of God, heareth God’s words.”¹⁹¹ We will present every verse that uses this word and include a brief commentary to help the reader focus on these two points:

- “Whom does God justify?” Objective justification says that God has justified all people.
- “When does God justify?” Objective justification says that God justified all people at the time of Christ’s death and resurrection, around A.D. 30.

¹⁹¹ Proverbs 8:9; John 8:47.

DIKAIOS (Strong's #1344) - "justify," "justified," "justifieth," "justifier"

Matthew 11:19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is **justified** of her children.

Comment: Does not address whom God justifies or when He does it.

Matthew 12:37 For by thy words thou shalt be **justified**, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Comment: This verse contradicts objective justification: all people are not already justified.

Luke 7:29 And all the people that heard [him], and the publicans, **justified** God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

Comment: Does not address whom God justifies or when He does it.

Luke 7:35 But wisdom is **justified** of all her children.

Comment: Does not address whom God justifies or when He does it.

Luke 10:29 But he, willing to **justify** himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

Comment: Does not address whom God justifies or when He does it.

Luke 16:15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which **justify** yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Comment: Does not address whom God justifies or when He does it.

Luke 18:14 I tell you, this man went down to his house **justified** [rather] than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Comment: This verse contradicts objective justification: the Pharisee was not justified. The publican's justification did not occur when Christ died and rose from the grave.

Acts 13:39 And by him all that believe are **justified** from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Comment: This verse contradicts objective justification. DIKAIOS is *not* an act of God which applied to *all* people, but rather to "all that believe."

Romans 2:13 (For not the hearers of the law [are] just before God, but the doers of the law shall be **justified**).

Comment: This verse contradicts objective justification. DIKAIOS is *not* an act of God which applied to *all* people, but rather to "doers of the law." Also, the act of justification is presented as a future event, not as something that happened when Christ died and rose from the grave.

Romans 3:4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou [God] mightest be **justified** in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou [God] art judged.

Comment: Does not address whom God justifies or when He does it.

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be **justified** in his sight: for by the law [is] the knowledge of sin.

Comment: Does not address whom God justifies or when He does it.

Romans 3:21-28 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God [which is] by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being **justified** freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, [I say], at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the **justifier** of him which believeth in Jesus. 27 Where [is] boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is **justified** by faith without the deeds of the law.

Comment: DIKAIOS in verse 24 contradicts objective justification. Those who are justified freely by His grace are "all them that believe" (verse 22). DIKAIOS in verse 26 also contradicts objective justification, since it says God is the justifier of "him which believeth in Jesus." DIKAIOS in verse 28 also contradicts the notion that all people are justified, since it says "a man is justified by faith."

Romans 3:29-30 [Is he] the God of the Jews only? [is he] not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: 30 Seeing [it is] one God, which shall **justify** the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

Comment: The use of DIKAIOS in this verse contradicts objective justification's claim that all people were justified when Christ died and rose again: God *shall* justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.

Romans 4:2-7 For if Abraham were **justified** by works, he hath [whereof] to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that **justifieth** the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. 6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7 [Saying], *Blessed [are] they whose iniquities are forgiven,* and whose sins are covered.

Comment: The use of DIKAIOS in verse 2 contradicts objective justification: if all people are justified, there is no need to explain how one man was justified. And since Abraham "*believed* God and it was counted unto him for righteousness," those who do not believe God lack what God counts for righteousness. Verse 5 does not say that "God justified all people": it says that God "justifieth the ungodly." Every Christian was "ungodly" before God created the faith which "was counted unto him for righteousness." Every time God converts and justifies a person, He "justifieth the ungodly." Verses 6 and 7, which Paul brings in to illustrate his point, would not make sense if *all* people were justified: If God had justified *all* the ungodly people, then why did David specifically talk about *the man* who has been justified? If God has forgiven *all* sins, Paul would not quote David saying: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven."

Romans 4:23 - 5:2 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.¹⁹² 1 Therefore being **justified** by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Comment: DIKAIOS in verse 5:1 contradicts the notion that God has justified all people. They are justified "who believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." They are the only ones who "have peace

¹⁹² We will deal with this use of "justification" (DIKAIOSIS) separately.

with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And since they are "justified by faith," we contradict Scripture when we say God justified all people without faith.

Romans 5:9 Much more then, being now **justified** by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Comment: DIKAIOS in this verse contradicts objective justification. Those who are "now justified by his blood" "shall be saved from wrath." All people are not saved from His wrath. Also, Romans Chapter 5 expressly sets forth the blessings which flow to those who are "justified by faith" (see verse 1 and 2).

Romans 8:30-33 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also **justified**: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31 What shall we then say to these things? If God [be] for us, who [can be] against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? [It is] God that **justifieth**.

Comment: DIKAIOS in verses 30 and 33 contradicts the notion that all people are justified. God justified those whom "He did predestinate," and those "whom He called." Also, "whom He justified, them He also glorified," which is not all people.

1 Corinthians 4:3-4 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. 4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby **justified**: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

Comment: Does not address whom God justifies or when He does it.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Comment: DIKAIOS in this verse contradicts objective justification. Paul says that those who are "washed" and "sanctified" are those who "are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." All people are not washed and sanctified.

Galatians 2:16-17 Knowing that a man is not **justified** by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be **justified** by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be **justified**. 17 But if, while we seek to be **justified** by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, [is] therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

Comment: The four uses of DIKAIOS here do not refer to an act of God which applied to *all* people, but to believers in Christ. Three of the four uses ("might be justified," "shall no flesh be justified," "seek to be justified") also contradict the notion that justification happened at the time of Christ's death and resurrection.

Galatians 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would **justify** the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, [saying], In thee shall all nations be blessed.

Comment: This verse contradicts the notion that God justified all people.

Galatians 3:11 But that no man is **justified** by the law in the sight of God, [it is] evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Comment: DIKAIOS in this verse contradicts objective justification. If all people are justified (= just) then we cannot say "the just shall live by faith."

Galatians 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster [to bring us] unto Christ, that we might be **justified** by faith.

Comment: DIKAIOS here contradicts objective justification: all people were not justified.

Galatians 5:2-6 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. 3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are **justified** by the law; ye are fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Comment: Does not address whom God justifies or when He does it.

1 Timothy 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, **justified** in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Comment: Does not address whom God justifies or when He does it.

Titus 3:5-7 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 That being **justified** by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Comment: DIKAIOS here contradicts objective justification. Those who are "justified by His grace" are those whom "He saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" and those whom are "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." This is not all people.

James 2:21-25 Was not Abraham our father **justified** by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is **justified**, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot **justified** by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent [them] out another way?

Comment: DIKAIOS in this verse is not an act that applied to all people at the time of Christ's death and resurrection. Only Christians have the works by which "a man is justified."

DIKAIOS (Strong's #1344) - "be freed"

Romans 6:6-8 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with [him], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7 For he that is dead **is freed** from sin. 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

Comment: DIKAIOS in this verse ("is freed") contradicts objective justification. Only believers have their "old man crucified" and are "dead with Christ."

DIKAIOS (Strong's #1344) - "be righteous"

Revelation 22:11 He that is unjust let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him **be righteous** still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

Comment: DIKAIOS in this verse ("be righteous") contradicts the claim that all people are justified. Some people are "unjust and filthy" and some are "righteous."

DIKAIOSIS (Strong's # 1347) - "justification"

Romans 4:23 - 5:2 Now it was not written for his [Abraham's] sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our **justification**. 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Comment: DIKAIOSIS in this verse is not an act that applied to all mankind at the time of Christ's death and resurrection. The entire chapter has been talking about how Abraham was justified, which is a superfluous argument if *all* men were (are) justified. The "our" in verse 25 is the same as the "us" and "we" of verse 24 and 5:1: those "who believe on him" and "have peace with God." Also, to say that Christ was raised "for" someone's justification" does not say that his justification is simultaneous with His being raised. When I work hard "for" my kids' college education, that does not mean my hard work is their college education.

DIKAIOMA (Strong's #1345) - justification (verse 16)

DIKAIOSIS (Strong's # 1347) – justification (verse 18)

Romans 5:15-18 But not as the offence, so also [is] the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, [which is] by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 16 And not as [it was] by one that sinned, [so is] the gift: for the judgment [was] by one to condemnation, but the free gift [is] of many offences unto **justification**. 17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) 18 Therefore as by the offence of one [judgment came] upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [the free gift came] upon all men unto **justification** of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Comment: DIKAIOSIS in verse 16 does not say that all men have been justified, but that the "free gift is of many offences *unto* justification." Likewise, DIKAIOSIS in verse 18 does not say that all men have been justified, but that "by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men *unto* **justification** of life." Titus 2:11 conveys the same truth: "For

the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." So, although we can say that the grace of God came upon all men unto justification and salvation, we cannot say that this free gift effected justification and salvation in all people. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" and He "sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come." (Luke 13:34; Matthew 22:3).

Conclusion

Scripture does not contain a single verse where DIKAIOS ("justify") or its derivatives is applied to all people. Nor is the divine act of JUSTIFICATION ever presented as something that happened at the time of Christ's death and resurrection. Since the Bible never says all people are "justified," neither should Lutherans. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). We exhort those who teach that God has forgiven all sins and justified all people:

*"Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee,
and thou be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:6).*