The Significant History of the Doctrine of Objective or Universal Justification
Among the Churches of the former Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America

prepared for the California Pastoral Conference of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod

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by Rick Nicholas Curia
DEDICATED

to the memory

of those theologians of the past

who dedicated themselves to the defense and spread of

God's pure Gospel

and with appreciation and thanks to

the faculties of

NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE, WATERTOWN, WISCONSIN

and

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY, MEQUON, WISCONSIN,

with special appreciation and thanks to

Dr. Siegbert W. Becker,

who,

in a very special way,

instilled in his students the importance and centrality of

the doctrine of

OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION

for Christian life and witness

***

"The mighty God is bound that we
From every bondage might be free.
Widespread his arms the cross doth hold
That they may all mankind enfold.

The living God goes out to die
That dying men might live thereby.
The third day he will rise again
To justify all fallen men."

-----from "A King Goes Forth," by
Dr. Siegbert W. Becker
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Please note corrections on p. CB-16!

INTRODUCTION

On July 28, 1982, I was asked by Pastor Paul Huebner of our California Pastoral Conference Agenda Committee to prepare a paper on the suggested topic: "The 'All' of Universal Justification." He wrote:

In view of the controversy (sic) that arose in the midwestern congregation concerning objective justification, it would seem behooveable (atiam sic) for us to make a review of that doctrine, its basis, its implications and consequences.

I not not believe it should be a report on what happened in the other congregation, but at the same time it would be useful for us to review this most vital teaching.

In light of the above, I offer the California Pastoral Conference of the WELS my apologies. In looking back at this letter at this time, I realize I have gone a little astray from this requested path. I do not, however, offer any apologies for the paper in your hands.

As my research for this paper continued, it was originally planned to be a classic three part theological essay outlined as follows:

"Objective or Universal Justification"

I. Its Biblical Basis
II. Its Significance in the History of American Lutheranism
III. Its Necessity for My Comfort and the Comfort of Those I Serv

In mid-December, time was drawing short and I decided to concentrate my efforts in this present paper to Part II of the above, for a number of reasons.

First, I had to face the reality that the time element involved simply would not allow me the time to produce a paper which would adequately and exhaustively cover all three parts in the detail I desired, no matter what the size of this present paper may seem to indicate. Once you have read it, I am sure you will agree with me.

Second, even though it might appear that the logical choice would have been a concentrated effort on Part I, I chose Part II because I felt I had something to offer you, my brothers in the ministry, which might be new to some of you, at least in some areas. I felt confident that it was safe for me to assume we are already aware and agreed on the biblical basis for the doctrine of objective justification. I am confident that the same is true of our feelings regarding its necessity for our own comfort and the comfort of those we have been called to serve. At the same time, in treating the significance of this doctrine in the history of the stream of American Lutheranism that applies to us the most, I felt I would have ample opportunity to treat parts I and III without making them equal thirds of this paper.

Third, I might also add that my own interest in this third area had no small part to play in my decision. Starting with the references I had at hand, I proceeded to trace down every reference to this particular facet of the doctrine of justification I could. Citations by authors in their own articles or books were my chief source for new material. Even at this, my research is far from over as I'm still awaiting copies and materials from various Lutheran libraries. I'm also certain that if I could have done searching of my own through our seminary library I could have located more sources. The "Chronological Bibliography" at the conclusion of this paper will give you some idea of the references I was able to locate. As of now, I suppose I've found a "hobby" which should continue to keep me busy in my spare time for the next few years. I look forward to doing this without the dead-
line of this present paper looming on the horizon.

Finally, I will admit quite frankly that choosing Part II as the major emphasis of this paper allowed me the freedom to quote what others have written concerning the biblical basis for objective justification without trying to "couch" what they've said in words of my own; particularly when it's obvious to me that my own words could not express the biblical truths as clearly and concisely as their own.

This paper began as a research paper. It has ended as a "resource" paper. Considering the number of quotes and their extensive nature, it would be more appropriate, perhaps, to consider me the editor, rather than the author of what follows. I can only hope that you will find the quoted material as informative, enjoyable, and, above all else, as edifying and inspiring as I did. And so, without further ado, I am pleased to present my own small contribution at this time which, I sincerely hope, will at least assist in some way in the sacred preservation and joyful proclamation of God's Gospel.

Christmas Day, 1982

THE SIGNIFICANT HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE OF OBJECTIVE OR UNIVERSAL JUSTIFICATION AMONG THE CHURCHES OF THE FORMER EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNODICAL CONFERENCE OF NORTH AMERICA

I. Preliminary Remarks

The teaching of the Wisconsin Synod is this, that in and with the universal reconciliation, which has occurred in Christ for the whole world—even Judas; the whole world—even Judas—has been justified and has received the forgiveness of sin. Therefore, according to Luther’s clear words ("for where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation"), (even Judas) has become a child of God and an heir of heaven.

Is the above some new charge brought against our Synod in the latest "Christian News"? The "Wisconsin Synod" mentioned here is the old Norwegian Synod, the year is 1867, and the author of these remarks, Professor T. N. Hasselquist, president of the Augustana Synod.

How did the Norwegian Synod respond to this evaluation of its position? To quote one of their pastors:

Although other words are used here by Hasselquist than those we have used, and words are present which might appear strange to many who are not sufficiently well acquainted with the linguistic usage of the Bible, yet I will nevertheless say that I heartily approve of that which is cited here as the teaching of the Wisconsin Synod, excluding the words, "therefore has become a child of God and an heir of heaven."

To which another pastor commented several years later, in 1871:

This Norwegian pastor was entirely correct when he accepted Prof. Hasselquist’s presentation of the teaching of the "Norwegians" concerning this subject. However, he also should have admitted the validity of Prof. Hasselquist’s entirely necessary conclusion: Even Judas had become, objectively, in Christ, a child of God and an heir of heaven. However, since he did not accept in true faith that which Jesus had so dearly acquired for him, but scorned it, naturally he never received any benefit
In a sense one could say that the history of the doctrine of objective justification in American Lutheranism is in reality the history of American Lutheranism itself—"at least as far as revealing who has a true right to use the name "Lutheran" and who does not. One's right to use the name "Lutheran" is directly related to the strictness of one's adherence to this particular doctrine, as is evident in the fact that those today who call themselves "Lutherans" with no true right to the name are the same who have lost either the knowledge of objective justification or their zeal and concern for this scriptural truth. If the Gospel is the heart of the Christian faith, then this facet of the Gospel which we today designate "objective" or "universal" justification is the very heart and core of the Gospel.

Concern for this doctrine of objective justification has historically been found primarily, if not almost exclusively, in America among the churches which at one time or another were members of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, founded in 1827 and dissolved in 1967. Specifically, we refer to the Missouri, Wisconsin (including Minnesota and later Michigan), Ohio and old Norwegian Synods. But before we delve into the history of this doctrine among these church bodies, let's define a few terms, quickly review its biblical basis, and make a few general observations.

Definition of Terms

What is this distinctive doctrine, this facet of the general biblical doctrine of justification, which has been called the justification "which took place before all faith" and designated by such terms as die allgemeine Rechtfertigung, die objective Rechtfertigung, "general," "universal," or "objective" justification; to distinguish it from the facet of justification we associate with faith, designated "personal," "special" or "subjective" justification?

First we shall make it clear that this paper uses the terms "objective justification" and "universal justification" interchangeably, as is the case in the vast majority of the sources I found which use the terms at all. With this in mind, a concise two-part definition which will serve our purpose nicely is one found in the "Confessional Lutheran" of September, 1945.

1. Objective Justification is a summary declaration of the effect of world redemption.

2. God has in Christ justified the whole world, i.e., He has forgiven all sins to all men and declared them to be righteous in Christ.

As the author of this particular article correctly points out, "The latter of these two definitions is the one that is especially attacked," and, as we shall see, has been attacked for more than a hundred years.

With reference to the two terms, "universal justification" and "objective justification," Professor Siegbert Backer has correctly stated that "these two terms are not really synonymous. 'Universal justification' is a term denoting the doctrine that God has forgiven the sins of all men. Strictly speaking, the term 'objective justification' expresses the thought that the sins of a man are forgiven by God whether he believes it or not. Objective justification is not necessarily universal, but if justification is universal, it must of necessity be objective." I have to say that to the best of my knowledge this careful distinction Backer makes is not found in any of the sources I have found dealing with objective justification except...
his own paper on the subject.

Two other terms which are closely associated with the doctrine of objective justification are redemption and reconciliation. In particular, the terms "universal" and "objective" reconciliation (die allgemeine Versöhnung) have been used by some theologians as essentially synonymous with objective justification. Most notable among them is Franz Pieper in his Christliche Dogmatik. Concerning these three terms and their relationship to one another, E. W. A. Kegel wrote in 1945:

In our thinking we indeed differentiate between redemption, reconciliation, and justification, as Paul does in 2 Cor 5:19. But we may not separate them or change the order in which they are named, for they are as closely related to each other as cause and effect. By the work of redemption Christ achieved our reconciliation unto God, and the immediate effect of this reconciliation was the non-imputation of our sins, or our justification. (We will consider this relationship of reconciliation and justification in greater detail later in this paper.) Thus without the redemption by Christ there could be no reconciliation and no justification, and justification pre-supposes the reconciliation and the atonement by Christ. We may not think of one and forget the other two, for they are connected as three links in a chain. When Paul tells us that we are justified by the blood of Christ, Rom 5:19, he includes the reconciliation; and when he tells us that we are reconciled by His death, Rom 5:10, this includes our justification. Because Christ lived and died for us, that is why we are reconciled to God, and because we are reconciled to God, that is why He does not impute our trespasses to us.7

In effect, viewed simply with respect to their final result for sinful mankind, redemption, reconciliation, and justification can all be said to mean the same: the forgiveness of sins. This is seen not only in the classic equation between world-reconciliation and world justification (1 Cor 5:19; Rom 5:18,19 and Rom 4:5-8), where it can be clearly seen that reconciliation and justification both equal non-imputation of sins; but likewise with reference to redemption in Ephesians 1:7, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."

In connection with redemption, however, while reconciliation and justification have been used synonymously, it should be made clear that universal redemption as a theological term is not synonymous with universal justification. To do so would leave the room open for a definition of objective justification which states that the forgiveness of all sins for all people has been provided for, but that they have not actually been forgiven to all people with the result that all have also been declared righteous in God's sight. This was the mistaken equation of the American Lutheran Church—Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Common Confession of 1950 and the Lutheran Cyclopedia of 1954.

A Quick Review of the Biblical Basis for Objective Justification

The following passages, at one time or another and in varying degrees, have been used to support the doctrine of objective justification as a teaching of God's Word. They are presented here simply for review,7 with their positive position summarized. The arguments against them are not presented here but will be referred to later in the main body of this paper.

1. 2 Corinthians 5:19 "οὐκ ἔτι ἢ ἐν ἄνθρωπος κόσμου καταλλάσσων έκβαθε, ὡς λόγος τούτων αὐτῶν τά παραπόμπητα αὐτών, καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν ἑνὶ τὸν Κόσμον τῆς καταλλάσσων, that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's
I think we would rank this passage as the principal sedes doctrinae for objectively today. Historically, Romans 5:18 held this position, for the simple reason that in Romans 5:18, "justification" (δικαιώματος) is specifically referred to by name while here in 2 Cor 5 it is only referred to by the negative side of its definition: the non-imputation of sin.

Whether one takes the ἁμαρτία by itself (Meyer and Schaller, among others), or as a part of a paraphrastic construction with καταλλαγή (Becker, Kuske, and others), the meaning is the same. God in Christ has reconciled the world to himself. That is, the relationship between himself and the world is now different than it was before he intervened in Christ. Whether one describes this changed relationship anthropopathically, as a change that took place in God's heart (Walther, Stöckhardt, Pieper, Schaller and the Missouri Synod in general), which has biblical support because the Bible often speaks of God in much the same way; or, certainly more "logically" on the basis of God's immutability, as a change in the status of sinful mankind now as a result of Christ's work of redemption (Hönecke, Lenski.—even though he refuses to equate universal reconciliation with universal justification—Meyer, and most Wisconsin Synod pastors today), really doesn't make a great deal of difference. Both are helpful in explaining the change that took place in a way our human minds can begin to grasp it. God, who hated the sinful world has now reconciled the sinful world to himself.

We know that this reconciliation was the result of Christ's vicarious atonement. The world viewed by God in light of his Son's work is not the same as the world viewed by God outside of and apart from Christ's redemptive work. It is because of Christ's work that God no longer imputes the sins of the world to the world, and herein lies the true nature of the change involved. As Professor Becker succinctly states it:

Paul tells us what the change was that took place when he says that when God reconciled the world to himself He did not impute the sins of men to them. Instead He imputed them to Christ. "He made him who knew no sin to be sin for us." (v. 21)... and when Christ was made to sin for us, we were made "the righteousness of God in Him." This, in short, is the change that took place in the καταλλαγή. 8

2. Romans 5:18,19 "ἐξονομάζειν δι' ἐνός παραπτώματος εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς καταλλαγήν, σὺν σοὶ καὶ δι' ἐνός δικαιώματος εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς δικαιώσεος σωταρίας: ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θανάτου κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί, σὺν σοὶ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἔνός δικαιοῦ καταστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί.

"Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous" (NIV) (The NIV is used here for comparison with the Greek; not because it is the best translation in every case.)

Verse 18 is clear: "A verdict of condemnation was pronounced on all men because of the sin of Adam and a verdict of acquittal was pronounced on all men because of the righteous life of Christ." As to the πολλοί of v. 19, the context clearly indicates that "the many" are also the "all" of v. 18. Concerning the future "shall be justified," Koehler states: "Neither should the future tense in v. 19b disturb us, for this is not a temporal future, meaning at some future time many will be made righteous, but it is a logical (gnomic) future, meaning that if it is true that by the disobedience of Adam many were made sinners, then it will follow that by the obedience of Christ many shall be made righteous." Becker
summarizes the truth taught by this passage in this way: "If all are condemned because of the sin of one man (18a), and all are justified because of the right action of one man (18b), and if all are set down as sinners through one man's disobedience (19a), then we can certainly expect that all men will be set down as righteous through one man's obedience (19b)."

3. Romans 4:12-5 "δς παρεδόθη ο άις τα παραπτώματα άμων και ήγέρθη οι άις την δικαιώσεων άμων."

"He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." (NIV)

Concerning this passage, Becker makes the point that even though

"because of" (διά) is a phrase that can be understood either retrospectively or prospectively ... When Paul says that Christ was delivered because of our transgressions, the διά is without a doubt retrospective. He was put to death because our sins had been imputed to Him. And while it is true that 'our' in this context refers to believers and only believers can say what Paul says here, yet it is crystal clear that what Paul asserts here of believers is true of all men ... It is clear that παρεδόθη οι άις τα παραπτώματα άμων stands in exact parallelism to ήγέρθη οι άις την δικαιώσεων άμων. If the διά is retrospective in the first member of the parallelism it is very natural that we should understand the second διά as retrospective also. Δικαιωμαί is the act of pronouncing a verdict of not guilty over someone. The genitive pronoun άμων obviously must be an objective genitive, and the normal way to translate in this context would then be, "Christ was raised because we had been justified."(11a)

4. 1 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Corinthians 5:14

"... δς έφανενσθή εν σαρκί, έδικαιωθή εν πνεύματι ..."

"... He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit ... "(NIV)

"Α γάρ ἡμῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ σωζέται ήμᾶς, κρύπτρες τούτο, ὅτι είς ύπερ πάντων ὑπέδανεν· ὡς οί πάντες ὑπέδανεν"

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died."(NIV)

1 Timothy 3:16 is not one of the most frequently quoted passages to establish the doctrine of objective justification. When it is used, it is always viewed in the light of a passage that comes up often in the older discussions of objective justification, 2 Corinthians 5:14. To illustrate the logical connection that exists between them with reference to objective justification, Professor Becker's summary of 1 Timothy can be quoted:

There can be no doubt that these words refer to the Lord Jesus Christ. He appeared in a fleshly mode of existence and was justified in a spiritual mode of existence. According to 1 Peter 3:18, this spiritual mode of existence began when He was made alive. When the Savior came to be in this new mode of existence through His resurrection, He was justified, that is, He was declared free of the guilt of all the sins that were laid upon Him. By the resurrection the sins for which He was "numbered with the transgressors" were formally declared by the Father to be completely
paid for. Christ was no longer "guilty" but free from all liability to punishment. But the sins for which He had been condemned were the sins of the world, and because Christ is the substitute for all men we can say that if one was justified, the whole whose substitute He was were also justified in His resurrection, just as Paul can say, "If one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Cor 5:14).11b

5. 1 John 2:2 and John 1:29

"καὶ αὐτὸς ἀπόκρις ἐστὶν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου." "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." (NIV)

"... ἵνα ὁ ἅμως τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ ἁμως τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν τοῦ κόσμου." "... 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" (NIV)

These two passages are cited here as representative of all those passages which speak about the vicarious atonement. To quote Professor Becker once again:

We may also say that the passages that say that Christ died for all, that He took away the sins of the world, that He gave His life as a ransom for all, and all the other passages of a similar nature in reality teach universal and objective justification. How can we possibly say that Christ is the Lamb of God which took away the sins of the world without saying that the sins of the world are forgiven?12

What, then, is the truth Scripture teaches in these passages listed above, which we call objective or universal justification? The truth that in Christ, by reason of His active and passive obedience, God has reconciled the entire world to Himself—believer and unbeliever alike—not imputing their sins to them. As all, believer and unbeliever alike, were condemned to hell because of the sin of one man, Adam; so all, believer and unbeliever alike, have been justified because of the right action of one man, Jesus. Jesus served as the substitute for every person. When Jesus died, every sinner died. Jesus was delivered over to death because of every individual's sin, believer and unbeliever alike; and thus, when Jesus rose again, he also rose as every sinner's substitute. His resurrection is proof of the world's justification. Jesus is the Lamb who has taken away the sin of the world, and where sin is removed God's anger over sin is also removed. For this reason, on the basis of God's Word, we can proclaim the Gospel in its purest form, the only Good News a sinner can ever hear: God has declared the sins of the world forgiven! God has declared the world just in his sight, free from guilt! Rejoice! because what is true for the world must also be true for you!

Why Is There So Much Trouble With This Doctrine?

Why has there been so much controversy over the years among American Lutherans concerning this doctrine of an objective, universal facet of justification? In my own judgment, the answer lies in the same source as a great many other doctrinal problems: the improper distinction between Law and Gospel.

When one deals with the passages that present objective justification, one isn't dealing with the Law. One is dealing with the Gospel in its purest form. Here is the Gospel presented so purely that our human reason must forget it ever heard the voice of the Law, or at least realize the major distinctions between Law and Gospel.
subservient to the unquestioning acceptance of faith.

Naturally, this has never been easy for people to do; particular theologians bent on fitting all of God's truth into a neat system where every piece of the puzzle of divine revelation fits together in harmony with every other piece to the satisfaction of human logic. Unfortunately, outside of the "foolishness of the cross," there are only two ways man can harmonize Law and Gospel to fulfill the demands of human reason. He can either change the law by reducing it to exaggerated or empty threats and consequently teach Universalism: All will be saved and finally enjoy eternal life with Christ; or, he can "legalize" the Gospel by making it a message of conditional forgiveness, even if "faith" is the only condition left to make forgiveness a reality for the individual. The former either makes Christ's death into a spectacular show of love rather than an atoning sacrifice, or God's justice and legal threats a mockery. The latter renders Christ's redemptive work incomplete and without effect until the individual adds his part—even if God gets credit for this part as well!

For the theological liberals who have always had a distaste for God's law when it speaks of punishment, the doctrine of an objective, universal justification has never posed much of a problem. The problems have always arisen with those who want to maintain the Law in all its severity, the Gospel in all its comfort, and at the same time meet the inner demands of their human reason—to the necessary loss of the Gospel. Thus, in the name of the preservation of the Scriptural truth: A person is saved by grace alone through faith alone, but, in reality, for the sake of harmonizing Law and Gospel with human reason, the history of the major church bodies which made up the former Synodical Conference shows one attack after another leveled at the heart of the Gospel, the truth of objective justification.

II. Walther and the Missouri Synod Through 1860

Some Pre-History

I often wonder if we, as Lutherans today, members of the Wisconsin Synod and, by God's grace, still in full possession and enjoyment of a confessional position shared only by those in fellowship with us, truly realize and appreciate the miracle of "reformation" God worked in the first three-quarters of the last century. If God used Martin Luther and those men who shared his beliefs to reform the visible Christian Church and restore the glory of the Gospel in the 1500's, then God also used Carl Ferdinand Wilhema Walther (1811-1887) and those men who shared his beliefs to reform the visible Lutheran Church and once again restore the glory of the Gospel in the 1800's. With the Lutheran Church racked by Pietism on the one hand and Rationalism on the other, the old Concordia Cyclopedia is hardly exaggerating when it says that by the end of the 19th Century, "Lutheranism had become well-nigh extinct." But just as God used the best to be found in the Renaissance to set the stage for Luther's work, God also set the stage for Walther's work.

God in his mercy made use of the distress accompanying and following the Napoleonic Wars to turn many serious minds to the religion of the Bible and the confessions of the fathers. Claus Harms in Kiel sounded, at the Tercentenary celebration of the Reformation in 1817, a mighty blast against Rationalism and its fearful ravages in the Church. The period of awakening set in, at first more of a pietistic character, but turning, in certain parts at least, more decidedly to confessionalism. The old, hardened Rationalists cried out, "The Bible is coming back!" Luther's doctrine pure was again brought to light, his writings and the confessions of the Lutheran church were again read and studied, and
many found again, and joyfully professed to others, the truth of God as revealed in the Bible.\textsuperscript{13}

Unfortunately, 1817 also brought with it the Prussian Union of Lutheran and Reformed and as other German states followed suit the Union itself gave new strength to the indifferent unionistic tendencies of Pietism.

It was in this situation that one Lutheran pastor began to make his influence felt as a champion of the Gospel and the "Old-Lutheran" faith, Martin Stephan (1777-1846). Judging from Walther’s own testimony, it was Stephan who first brought him into the full peace of the Gospel out of the anguish of soul he was experiencing under the "enthusiasm" of pietism during his student days. It was Stephan who advised him to "lay hold of the full, free and unconditional promises of the Gospel." In doubt about his own worthiness to count himself a true believer, it was a letter from Stephan that set Walther at rest. Referring to himself in the third person, Walther said, "So the peace of God came to dwell with him. Then he had a real experience of the meaning of private absolution for the deeply terrified sinner."\textsuperscript{14}

Whatever other faults Martin Stephan may have had, he apparently can’t be faulted in his understanding of the doctrine of objective justification judging by Walther’s testimony. I have tried, in vain, to locate a copy of this "letter of absolution" Walther received and which meant so much to him, but I am almost certain it contained the comfort of the universal justification in Christ, the good news that God had declared the sins of the world forgiven in his sight. Whatever the true case may be, universal justification—or the world’s absolution, as Walther himself seemed to term it most often—was the heart of Walther’s theology until the day he died and the true secret of his greatness as a theologian, inseparable from an understanding of the proper distinction between Law and Gospel.

Associated with Stephan’s group of "Old-Lutherans" by 1833, and ordained in 1837, Walther resigned his pastorate and joined the Saxon immigrants under Stephan’s leadership when they came to America in 1839 seeking religious freedom and escape from German persecution. After Stephan was deposed and expelled from the Saxon settlement in the same year for misconduct and false doctrine, it was Walther with his Altenburg Theses on the Church who assumed prominence and set the stage for the future progress of this group of Lutherans.

In 1844 Walther began "Der Lutheraner" and his serious attempt to bring together all faithful Lutherans in America and lead those less-than-faithful back to God’s Word. At a time when very few Lutherans actually knew Luther anymore, it’s not surprising that Walther chose so often to let Luther speak for him. In 1847 the "German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States" was officially organized and Walther was elected its first president.

1850

In 1850 Walther began teaching as Missouri’s professor of theology, serving Concordia Seminary until his death 37 years later. It is also in 1850 that my research led me to the first clear reference I could locate from my office chair to the teaching which today we would place under the doctrine of objective justification. In light of Walther’s own experience, it is not surprising that we find objective justification proclaimed by Walther in the doctrine of absolution.

As said before, the Gospel was always the heart of Walther’s theology, and for Walther the purest form of the Gospel was to be found in absolution. In "Der Lutheraner" of March 19, 1850, Walther wrote the lead article, entitled: "How Great and
Deadly is the Error of Those Who Deny the Preaching of the Gospel the Power to Forgive Sins on Earth." In the course of this article Walther writes:

For what does it mean: "Christ has perfectly redeemed us"? It means: Christ has already, for us all, done and conducted to acquire salvation; for, as the Bible says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. One died for all, and therefore all died. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men." (2 Cor 5:21,14; Rom 5:18) As Christ, expiring on the cross, paid for the punishment of sin for all men, there of us have already actually paid for the same; and as Christ as a former debtor was openly and ceremoniously pardoned, absolved and justified by his Father from all debt through his resurrection from the dead, there all of us were already actually pardoned, absolved and justified; consequently, St. Paul wrote: Christ "was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Rom 4:25). 15

What, then, is the result of this? Walther writes:

From this it follows that this can also be announced to all people: Be happy, you sinners! Christ has already canceled your sins. Christ has already seized the forgiveness of your sins. Christ has already reconciled you with God and has already won you God's grace. Christ has already merited you a righteousness which is valid before God. Christ has already conquered death and hell for you. Christ has already acquired salvation for you through his fulfillment of the law. Christ has already obtained your entrance into heaven through his worthiness. In short, Christ has already completely accomplished the work of your redemption... Consequently, it is clear that since Christ has already completely redeemed all men the Gospel is nothing else than a preaching of the forgiveness of sins to all people on earth, to which God himself in heaven speaks his "Yes" and "Amen". It is, in a word, a universal absolution of the entire world, brought from heaven by men, sealed with Christ's blood and death, not only confirmed by God himself in the most glorious and festive manner by Christ's resurrection but, indeed, at the same time truly consummated. 16

What does this do with the question of whether the absolution pronounced by a minister is valid or not? As Walther says, "What I am to announce to the whole world, I can naturally also announce to every individual who belongs to the world!" 17 Anticipating the problem this would cause for our human reason, Walther writes:

What? Then are the impenitent to be absolved as well, and therefore also an absolution spoken to an impenitent be valid? To this we answer: the absolution remains valid and powerful, even if it is spoken to a Judas, for the Judas is already completely redeemed by Christ and is Christ already justified and absolved by God himself. Were it therefore possible (although it is impossible) that an impenitent person, as such, believed from his heart the absolution spoken to him, thus he would also, as such, grasp therein divine forgiveness. 18

But should an impenitent person be absolved? Walther answers this question as we would expect, with an emphatic, "No!" but with the stipulation added, "Not for the reason that absolution spoken to an impenitent would be invalid, but because the same would nevertheless despise it and push it away from himself and would thereby only fall into more sin and lay a greater damnation upon himself." 19
Walther's statement above makes it clear that the doctrine of objective justification was not unknown to him. In fact, it was the heart of the Gospel message he lived to proclaim and defend. But was this doctrine new with him, or perhaps an invention of Stephan and passed on to those who came in contact with him? In May of 1859 Walther presented his first Referat (Convention Essay) on the subject of justification, treating the following points:

1. That the Evangelical Lutheran Church alone holds in trust the pure doctrine of justification.
2. How has it happened that consciousness of this has disappeared in many cases, even within the Lutheran Church?
3. What measures are to be taken to again rouse this vanished consciousness?

Under Part 1, Walther cited evidence from Luther, the Confessions, and others in support of the following statements:

1) That the doctrine of justification is the most important doctrine of the whole divine revelation, is the common confession of our church, both in her Symbols and in the private writings of her pure, true teachers.
2) Those err greatly who allow themselves to imagine that it is an easy matter to correctly hold and present the doctrine of justification, or who truly suppose that they have long ago finished learning this doctrine.
3) It is due only to the fact that Luther came to a pure and clear confession of the article of justification that he has been born from above, anointed and equipped to be the Reformer.
4) Luther already mourned that in his own time only a few thoroughly understood and expressed the pure doctrine of justification, while many had already become tired of the same, and therefore this doctrine would be obscured again after his death and be lost.
5) The Roman Church not only falsifies the doctrine of justification; it also damns and curses the same.
6) Admittedly, the majority of so-called "Protestant" churches outside of the Evangelical Lutheran Church confess the statement: "A man is justified before God by grace alone through faith alone, for Christ's sake and not through the works of the law." But they overthrow this doctrine again by their doctrine about the means through which a man is justified before God. First of all, they teach falsely about the means of grace or about the "giving" means on God's side; namely, about the Word and the Holy Sacraments. And secondly, they teach falsely concerning the instrumental mean or "receiving" mean on man's side; namely, about faith. And these errors in turn lay the foundation for erring doctrines about Christ's work of redemption and his Person, as well as God's Will and the call of his grace.

It is in this last section that Walther quotes what has to be considered the classic proof that the facet of justification we label today "objective justification" was not unknown to Luther. In his "Treatise Concerning the Keys" of 1530, Luther wrote:

Remember that the keys or the forgiveness of sins are not based on our own repentance or worthiness, as they (the papists) wrongly teach. Such teachings are entirely Pelagian, Mohammedan, pagan, Jewish, like those of the Anabaptists, fanatic, and anti-Christian. On the contrary our repentance and work, our disposition and all we are, should be built on the keys. We are to depend on them with as daring confidence as on God's Word itself. You must never doubt what the keys say and give you, at the risk of losing both body and soul. It is as certain as if God himself were saying so.
which indeed he does. It is his own Word and command. But if you
doubt the same you make God a liar. You pervert his order and base his
keys on your own repentance and worthiness. You should, indeed, repent.
But to make repentance the basis of the forgiveness of your sins and of
corraborating the work of the keys, is to abandon faith and deny Christ.
By means of the key, he will forgive your sins, not for your own sake but
for his own name's sake, out of pure grace

... Christ says, "Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth
shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt 18:18). Notice that assuredly, yes assuredly, it shall
be bound and loosed what we bind and loose on earth. There is no sugges-
tion of any wrong key. He does not say: what I bind and loose in heaven,
you shall bind and loose on earth, as the teachers of the wrong key so
foolishly say. How could we find out what God binds and looses in hea-
ven? Never. And the keys would be without purpose and to no avail.
Neither does Christ say, you should know what I bind and loose in heaven.
Who would and could know that? But he speaks in this fashion: If you
bind and loose on earth, I will also bind and loose right along with you
in heaven. When you use the keys, I will also. Indeed, if you do it, it
shall be done, and it is not necessary that I do it after you. What you
bind and loose (I say) I will neither bind nor loose, but is shall be
bound and loosed without my doing so. It shall be one single action, mine
and yours, not a twofold one. It shall be one and the same key, mine and
yours, not a twofold one. While you do your work, mine is already done.
When you bind and loose, I have already bound and loosed.

He binds and joins himself to our work. Indeed, he himself commands us
to do his own work. Why then, should we make it uncertain or reverse it,
pretending he must first bind and loose in heaven? Just as if his binding
and loosing in heaven were different from our binding and loosing on earth.
Or, as if he had different keys in heaven above from those we have below on
earth. He distinctly and clearly states that they are heaven's keys and not
those of the earth . . .

But such ideas regarding two kinds of keys originate in the mistaken no-
tion that God's Word is not his Word, Because it is spoken through men

[...]

... Do not allow yourself to be led astray by this Pharisaic babbling
by which some deceive themselves, Saying, "How can a man forgive sins
when he can bestow neither grace nor the Holy Spirit?" Rely on the words
of Christ and be assured that God has no other way to forgive sins than
through the spoken Word, as he has commanded us. If you do not look for
forgiveness through the Word, you will gape toward heaven in vain for grace,
or (as they say), for a sense of inner forgiveness.

But if you speak as the factious spirits and sophists do: "After all,
many hear of the binding and loosing of the keys, yet it makes no impres-
sion on them and they remain unbound and without being loosed. Hence,
there must exist something else beside the Word and the keys. It is the
spirit, the spirit, yes, the spirit that does it!" Do you believe he is
not bound who does not believe in the key which binds? Indeed, he shall
learn, in due time, that his unbelief did not make the binding vain, nor
did it fail in its purpose. Even he who does not believe that he is free and his sins forgiven shall also learn, in due time, how assuredly his sins were forgiven, even though he did not believe it. St. Paul says in Rom 3 (13): "Their faithlessness will not nullify the faithfulness of God." We are not talking here either about people's belief or disbelief regarding the efficacy of the keys. We realize that few believe. We are speaking of what the keys accomplish and give. He who does not accept what the key gives receives, of course, nothing. But this is not the key's fault. Many do not believe the gospel, but this does not mean that the gospel is not true or effective. A king gives you a castle. If you do not accept it, then it is not the king's fault, nor is he guilty of a lie. But you have deceived yourself and the fault is yours. The king certainly gave it.

... For it is God's Word and command that the former speaks and the latter listens. Both are bound, on peril of losing their soul's salvation, to believe this article as truly and firmly as all the other articles of faith. (all emphasis, Walther's in his Referat)

Time and again this would be the quote used by the defenders of objective justification against those who called this a "new" doctrine, unknown to Luther. But is the doctrine of objective justification foreign to our Lutheran Confessions? The specific term may be, but our confessions also show that its writers had a concept and belief in the objective reality of forgiveness and justification, before and apart from faith, for all people as a result of Christ's work of redemption. This would be as good a time as any to cite some pertinent passages from the Confessions, all of which would be used at one time or another in the decades ahead to show that the doctrine of objective justification was a doctrine of the Lutheran Church. It must be admitted that when our Lutheran Confessions speak of justification they speak almost exclusively of that facet of justification we usually call "subjective justification," which has also been called "special" or "personal" justification. But the Confessions also show that the basis for this justification is the justification that precedes faith. The following references to objective justification in our Confessions are found cited in Professor Becker's paper previously mentioned.

"Here again there is great need to call upon God and pray, "Dear Father, forgive us our debts." Not that he does not forgive sin even without and before our prayer; and he gave us the Gospel, in which there is nothing but forgiveness, before we prayed or even thought of it. But the point here is for us to recognize and accept this forgiveness. (LC III:88)

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. (Apol. IV, 103)

If somebody doubts that his sins are forgiven, he insults Christ because he thinks that his sin is greater and stronger than the death and promise of Christ. (Apol. IV, 149)

What else is the refusal to believe absolution but the accusation that God is a liar? If the heart doubts, it maintains that God's promises are uncertain and inane. (Apol. XII, 62)

It is God's command and the Gospel itself that they should be sure that their sins are forgiven freely for Christ's sake, not doubting that they are forgiven them personally. If anyone doubts, he makes the divine promise a lie. (Apol. XII, 88
If anybody, therefore, is not sure that he is forgiven, he denies that God has sworn to the truth; a more horrible blasphemy than this cannot be imagined. (Apol. XII, 94)

In connection with the Confessions, Becker writes:

It is very evident that the Lutheran doctrine of absolution rests on the foundation of the universal forgiveness of the human race. It is also clear that any Lutheran pastor who denies universal justification has violated his confessional oath. Thus what at first appears to be a peripheral matter turns out to be a question of confessional honesty. 21

Returning to Walther's Referat of 1859, we again see how clearly the doctrine of objective justification is proclaimed in what Walther had to say about absolution. And why not? Objective justification is nothing else but the Gospel in its purest form, and our Lutheran Confessions themselves tell us that absolution is "the true voice of the Gospel" (Apol. XII:39).

In the discussion of the various points, Walther made the following comment: "There is all the difference in the world between the papacy's absolution and our own! We say: God in Christ has already absolved all sinners! The preacher, as also every other person who comforts a sinner with the Gospel, only brings him this absolution, and whoever trusts in it, has it!" 22

Walther also complained about the Reformed influence within the Lutheran Church.

But, dear God! how that Reformed error"(concerning the means of grace)" has nevertheless invaded our church in so many, many places, so that even there, where, by God's grace, the pure doctrine still sounds, it prevails. Why else are there those here and there in our congregations who put up a fierce resistance against the Sunday confession and absolution after the sermon"(the common custom among the Missourians at that time)," when, indeed, they ought to gladly run a thousand miles for the same, if they believed absolution to be the conferring of the forgiveness of our sins? (If this were not the case), why, also, the loathing for private absolution, if not because they don't believe that all are already redeemed—even those are redeemed who sweat in hell—and that the only thing necessary is that a man be informed of this and believe it; and (because they don't believe) that the treasure of redemption acquired by Christ is conferred to him, which is precisely what occurs through private absolution, where God calls out to each individual: It's meant for you! Our congregations often believe that everything is fine for them—"they are truly "Old-Lutheran,"—because they have a preacher of our Synod; and yet things look so sad when it comes to faith! Indeed, believing comes hard for every person, but the fact that one does not even adhere to the pure doctrine in this"(absolution)"is the woe of woes. And this is the situation which prevails in so many cases.

We ought to immerse ourselves more and more in the same than has happened up to now. We ought to make the chief doctrine our chief concern as well. For what does God finally have as the aim of all preaching? Nothing else than to give us the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins! 23a

In answer to a question, Walther made it clear that we are not to absolve those we know will refuse to believe the good news absolution proclaims, but only because this would be a misuse of the Gospel, "and not for some other reason, as if the Word would not be bringing forgiveness if it is spoken over an impenitent." 23b
1860

What Walther said about absolution in 1859—what, today, we can say he said about objective justification—really set the stage for the controversy concerning this doctrine which is still on the scene among those wishing to consider themselves alllutherische. The catalyst, however, was not to be Walther's Referat, but that of Walther's colleague, Theodor Julius Brohm (1808-1881), which was presented at the convention of the Missouri Synod in October, 1860.

The complete title of Brohm's Referat was "Paper Concerning the Intimate Connection of the Doctrine of Absolution with that of Justification." While stating his belief that the doctrine of absolution had "been repeatedly treated in our periodicals and by our conferences and Synod so that hardly any darkness about the doctrine itself existed," Brohm nevertheless felt that the relation of this doctrine to that of justification deserved and required a detailed discussion. Rather than do so by means of a "voluminous dissertation," which would leave little room for discussion (an example some of you might wish the present essayist had followed), he chose to do so by means of a series of theses. The theses were as follows:

I. 1. Absolution, or the forgiveness of sins, is, according to Luther's teachings, the Gospel, whether it is proclaimed to many or to few.
   2. Private absolution is consequently not a power outside, or by the side, of the Gospel to forgive sins; but it is nothing else than the preaching of the Gospel to the individual sinner.
   3. In the public ministry, it is the preachers of the Gospel who are the stewards and dispensers of Absolution; but otherwise it is all Christians, since the whole Church is originally the possessor of the keys; but the one who through the agency of the Church forgives sins is the Triune God.
   4. Absolution consists: (a) not in a judicial verdict of the confessor; (b) nor in an empty announcement of, or wish for, the forgiveness of sins; but (c) in a powerful impartation of it.
   5. The effect of Absolution (a) does not depend upon man's repentance, confession and atonement, (b) but Absolution demands faith, creates and strengthens faith; (c) without faith it profits a man nothing; (d) although it is not therefore a "failing key."
   6. By private absolution, no essentially different or better forgiveness is imparted than in the preaching of the Gospel. Neither is it in such a way necessary for receiving forgiveness that without it no forgiveness of sins would take place. Still it has its own peculiar value and usefulness, because by it the individual is made more certain that he also has the forgiveness of sins.
   7. In close connection with private absolution stands private confession, which latter is nothing else than a request for absolution. Moreover, it has also this value that it gives the confessor opportunity to examine the people, to teach the Word of God and the Catechism and to give all sorts of advice in difficult cases of conscience. Finally, it is a training in self-humiliation. In brief, it is an application of the Law and the Gospel.
   8. Confession is not commanded by God, but is, nevertheless, most useful. Consequently it should not be forced upon anyone as a necessary thing; but where it is practiced, it should be maintained; where it has fallen into disuse, it should be restored by recommending it and praising its usefulness.

II. The doctrine of Absolution and the doctrine of Justification stand in an intimate, reciprocal relationship to one another. This becomes clear:
   A. through this, that the doctrine of justification is the foundation on which the doctrine of Absolution is based, and the source from which it flows. Without Justification, Absolution would be an impossibility.
   B. through this, that through the pure Lutheran doctrine of Absolution, Justification is not only defined, elucidated, and exalted, as a free, com-
pletely acquired gift of God's grace which shall be received through faith alone, but the doctrine of justification is also especially made truly consoling and agreeable to the individual by private absolution because in absolution the justification by grace is not seen as a justification that stands far off in the distance, which can only be obtained by previous lengthy penitential battles and preparations. Rather, (in absolution this justification by grace) as an appropriated gift is brought near to each individual through the Word of the Gospel.²⁴ (Fromm also included a part C), in which, at length, he mentions how the intimate relationship between justification and absolution is shown more clearly by the errors connected with them in the Roman and Reformed churches, as well as in related errors among the Pietists and the Romanizing Lutherans.)

The proceedings inform us that the discussion never got beyond these 5 of part I before the convention time was exhausted. Many questions were raised and discussed. Concerning the first thesis, some wondered if the definition for absolution wasn't too broad. Wouldn't this definition make every preaching of the Gospel a true absolution? The answer was, "Yes." When the demand was made that in defining the preaching of the Gospel as "absolution" the necessity of faith must be stressed at the same time, the following reply was made:

In this matter it is necessary to recognize, before all else, that the great treasure of the Gospel, the redemption which has come to pass for all men through Christ and the forgiveness of sins acquired thereby, is also presented to all men, according to Christ's command: "Preach the Gospel to every creature." To all who hear it, whether they believe or don't believe, forgiveness of sins is announced and presented. When a preacher announces the gospel he always speaks an absolution, and truly also to those who do not believe, because absolution is a divine act and not dependent on the belief or unbelief of men. The unbeliever, therefore, quite certainly rejects the absolution which came to him also by the preaching of the Gospel, and precisely for this reason (his rejection), forfeits it.²⁵

Against this it was objected that God's Word says that no one is to forgive the sins of unbelieving sinners but, rather, hold them against them all the more. "Since, therefore, the unbeliever receives no share in the preaching of the forgiveness of sin, how can the preaching of the Gospel always be absolution?" The answer:

The fact of the redemption and reconciliation of the entire human race through Christ, and with it the forgiveness of all sins for all men on God's part—which, indeed, is precisely what the Gospel proclaims, presents and gives—can by no means become a lie through the unbelief of men... even when the unbelievers don't receive it, but reject it for themselves and for this reason—indeed, for this reason alone—are lost. Just as absolution or the pardon of sins can be nothing else than the preaching of the Gospel, whether it occurs publicly or otherwise; even preaching of the Gospel, whether it occurs through Word or Sacrament, is always an absolution of all sins.²⁵

A great deal of discussion proceeded in order to achieve the unity and clarity all those present desired. One pastor present suggested that part of the problem was that some of those present tended to separate the forgiveness presented from the means used to present it, as if the Word was present announcing God's gift of grace in Christ, but the gift of forgiveness itself was still to be found somewhere else. He emphasized that the Gospel message and its treasure couldn't be separated.

Along this line the following question also arose: "The tenet has always been declared and confessed by us that through Christ's resurrection from the dead God has
absolved the whole world, that is, pardoned its sins. If, according to this, the whole world has already been absolved and its sin pardoned long ago, what exactly is absolution or the preaching of the Gospel in the church? Is it also a pardon, or merely an announcement of the pardon which has already occurred?"27a

It was answered that in the sense that the redemption of the world already stood in God's sight as completed from eternity, one could even say that in God's heart the absolution of the world existed already from eternity. But that doesn't help us attain it. The good news of our absolution doesn't do us any good if we don't hear it. It was for this purpose that God ordained that the Gospel should be proclaimed; not a bare repetition or announcement of what has occurred long ago, but the absolution itself at the same time.

Where the preaching of the Gospel is announced, there the dear Lord himself speaks before the sinner and says, "I am reconciled and hereby announce to you that all your sins are forgiven you." Just as this would be a bare announcement but a powerful impartation of forgiveness if God so spoke to the sinner without means, thus the preaching and absolution of the pastor is also truly nothing else than an announcement of forgiveness, but such an announcement as actually brings and gives the forgiveness it announces.27b

During the discussion, one pastor posed the question that if the world has already been absolved through Christ's resurrection, will it be absolved again through the Gospel? If the world has already been absolved, isn't it necessary to maintain that the Gospel is merely an announcement of absolution? It was answered that we don't say that we're redeemed and reconciled once again, but, rather, that what has happened once is appropriated by us. "If by a mere announcement of forgiveness this is to be understood, that one is merely told about it, the question whether the preaching of the Gospel is only an announcement of absolution must be answered, 'No.' It is, rather, such an announcement which gives what it announces at the same time it announces it."28

Although the discussion of absolution and its direct relation to justification as set forth in Brohm's second part never occurred, it is clear from what was discussed that the full implications of the "unconditional" Gospel proclamation in absolution required some of the pastors present to sharpen their own unclear thoughts on the subject. The end result was complete agreement among them on the matter at hand—and the heart of the matter was none other than our own doctrine of objective justification.

III. The Norwegian Synod vs. the Augustana and Iowa Synods, 1861-1872

1861

Pastor Brohm's presentation was greatly appreciated by all those present. Particularly impressed were representatives from the Norwegian Synod (officially, the Norwegian Ev. Lutheran Church in America), founded in 1851 and reorganized along stricter confessional lines in 1853. It is reported that the two Norwegian pastors present, Herman Amberg Preus (1825-1894) and Nils Olsen Brandt (1824-1921), both commented to the effect (as this was, likewise, a universal observation among the Missourians themselves) that they had never heard this so plain and, yet, at the same time, so difficult cardinal point in all Christianity presented in such a clear and edifying way as it was at that time.29

They were so impressed, in fact, that not only did a translation of the Missouri Proceedings dealing with absolution appear in the Norwegian Synod's "Virkelig V感叹itende," but the essays on Absolution from part I were themselves presented to the Norwegian Synod convention of '61 by Professors Peter Laurentius Larsen (1833-1915), at that time the Norwegian Synod professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.
At that time the issue of slavery was casting a dark cloud over the Norwegian Synod and one pastor reports that many also asked the question, "Kan der komme noget godt fra Missouri?" (auf deutsch: "Kann auch von Missouri etwas Gutes kommen?") But this same pastor (in 1867) also states, "Indeed, this Report on Absolution was received with such joy and with such lively interest that those who have attended all our later synods since then will, without doubt, universally confess that the participants . . . have never yet found themselves, in spirit and heart, so enlightened and edified, so comforted and gratified, as through that Report on Absolution." 30

But this doesn't mean that many questions weren't voiced particularly with respect to the statement that absolution (or the Gospel) "is a powerful impartation" of the forgiveness of sins (Theses 4(c)). J. Magnus Rohne gives this account, taken almost word for word from the published Proceedings themselves:

Rev. B. J. Muus (Bernt Julius Ingebretnsen Muus, 1832-1900) had been appointed to lead the discussion of Prof. Larsen's paper. He found nothing in the first three theses to comment upon; in the fourth he had his doubts concerning the word impartation. This should be corrected to read: "God gives and presents the forgiveness of sins in the Gospel or Absolution to all who hear the Word, and while indeed all in that sense receive it, nevertheless only the believers retain it." By impartation is understood that a thing is given and received, consequently it is hereby implied that God gives the forgiveness of sins also to unbelievers, who, of course, cannot receive it. In reply, it was brought out that from God's side, Absolution and the forgiveness of sins were actually given to both believers and unbelievers, to penitent and impenitent, to Judas as well as to Peter and Paul, in short, unconditionally to all who hear it. But, of course, the impenitent reject and despise this gift, inasmuch as they will not believe God when He offers the forgiveness of sins. Still these are given the forgiveness, as the Word cannot fail nor can the keys fail (i.e., they are not claves errantes). A pardoned prisoner might despise the pardon, and remain in jail, not because he is not pardoned, but because he despises the pardon. So it is with the sinner who refuses to believe. The pardon is there whether he accepts or rejects it, though, of course, only he is benefited who accepts in faith. But faith is not a condition, else a person would have to have faith in his own faith; that is, he must believe he believes, and his belief creates the thing he believes. This is absurd. He must not center his faith on anything in himself but in the Word and promises of God.

Rev. B. J. Muus declared himself in full accord with all that had been said . . . 31

Unfortunately, during the course of the discussion Muus expressed himself in a way that put his disagreement with the term "imparts" in a bad light and, in the end, with two other pastors, "would not accept the Referat until the words "powerful impartation," "kraftig meddlelse" (in the German original, kräftigen Mitteilung), had been replaced with the word "given". The fact that Muus staunchly supported the Synod's doctrine of absolution and "world-justification" in the years ahead shows that for him it was simply a matter of semantics and not doctrine (and, perhaps, a touch of stubbornness when called to the carpet by his fellow pastors on the convention floor—something not unknown among theologians).

It can be added that Luther's comments concerning the keys in 1530 appear in the convention Proceedings. At this stage we find no real controversy; only spirited
discussion as men striving to preach the full Gospel come to grips with the full implications of the Gospel the Word of God proclaims—which, perhaps, many of us remember having to stop and take a second look at when the truth of objective justification really hit home in our own hearts for the first time. But now the stage was fully set for the storm of the true controversy to break, whose effects are still being felt today.

1864

It's natural to expect that the pastors of the Norwegian Synod would seek to unite with their fellow Scandinavians in what was then (1860-1870) the Scandinavian Ev. Lutheran Augusta Synod in North America—Swedish, Danish and Norwegian pastors united in one body under the leadership of the Swedish pastor, Tuve Nilson Hasselquist (1816-1891). The Augusta and Norwegian Synods meet at a free conference in Chicago in 1863, at which the doctrine of regeneration was discussed. At that time it is reported by the Norwegian Synod that "one of the Swedish pastors came up with the entirely papistic—"Gruntvigian" assertion—which, to our knowledge has never been withdrawn—that God's Word is not in and of itself a means of regeneration and, therefore, could not work faith." 32

This statement prompted the Norwegians to seek to delve deeper into the matter of just exactly what the true content and power of the Word of the Gospel was and how God always employed the same as the means on his part to pardon or absolve men of their sins. According to the Norwegians, they wanted to make sure that these two points were entirely and distinctly stressed: 1) that Christ's reconciliation (atonement) extended over all men; and 2) that the power of this reconciliation, namely, the forgiveness of sins for all men, is brought by means of the Gospel to all who hear it. They wanted to oppose 1) the Galvinist error, that the reconciliation (atonement) is only valid for a few men; namely, the elect; and 2) the general reformed-enthusiast view that God's Word is only a powerless announcement, which actually only first acquires a powerful content through faith or something else in those who hear it. 33

To this end, the Norwegians proposed that their own theses of 1861—none other than Brohm's theses on absolution of 1860—be adopted as the center of discussion at the next free conference the following year, which was acceptable to the Augustanans. The Norwegians naturally placed a great deal of importance, as well as hope for a true understanding of this most important doctrine, in the conference that met at Jefferson Prairie, Wisconsin, in 1864. But perhaps they had an inkling of what was to come when Professor Hasselquist at the very beginning of the first session took a copy of the printed 'Report on the Doctrine of Absolution' out of his pocket and said that due to a lack of time (1) he had only been able to become acquainted with its contents the previous afternoon (11) 33b (Emphasis in the original—and perhaps a lesson to learn here for ourselves as well!)

J. Magnus Rohne writes:

Just as Rev. B. J. Muus had formerly objected; so now the Scandinavian Augustanans objected strenuously to the doctrine that Absolution or the Gospel is a powerful impartation of the forgiveness of sins. The Augustanans maintained that the Gospel imparts the forgiveness of sins to believers, but not to unbelievers. The Synod pastors insisted that the Gospel is and remains the same, whether received or rejected by men, and that it is therefore a powerful impartation of the forgiveness of sins to all who hear it, whether they are believers or unbelievers. Here, then, the issue was drawn, and here, as Rev. V. Koren (Urie Wilhlem Koren. 1826-1910) remarked, the parties "stand to this day (1867)."
It was inevitable that the discussion should center itself about the Gospel, as Absolution, according to both sides, is the personal application of the Gospel to the individual, whereas preaching is a general application of the Gospel. Is the Gospel and Absolution one thing when applied to the believer and another when applied to the unbeliever, or is it the same regardless of to whom it is applied? . . . The Synod pastors stressed the objective validity of the Gospel; it had in it the forgiveness of sins, and actually offered this to man. The mere fact that some failed to accept this did not do away with its objective reality. . . . The Augustanans adopted the more subjective pietistic view and emphasized the fact that the Gospel did not have any saving or forgiving effect in the case of the unbeliever. If it did not have any saving or forgiving effect, they said, why speak of the Gospel as imparting the forgiveness of sins? How was the forgiveness of sins powerfully imparted to an unbeliever who, nevertheless, remained unabsolved? Out of this subjective reasoning, they, as the Synod men thought, really approached the idea that each one made his own Gospel—if he believed there was forgiveness in the Gospel; if he did not, there was no forgiveness in it. When in defense of their view the Augustanans quoted the passage: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine," the Synod pastors replied that the mere fact that what was holy was given to dogs, and that pearls were cast before swine, did not in the least affect the intrinsic quality of what was holy or of the pearls—they were holy and pearls regardless of their abuse. If the Gospel and Absolution contained nothing more than what man by faith put into them, then man really had to depend on his faith—he had to have faith in his own faith—and not in the Gospel.

At the end of the colloquy both parties formulated their views on this subject:

The Augustanans taught: The Gospel contains, holds forth, and offers the forgiveness of sins to all who hear it, but this forgiveness is given, imparted, and presented only to those who in faith receive it.

The Synod pastors taught: The preaching of the Gospel gives, presents, and imparts the forgiveness of sins to all whom it is proclaimed, whether they believe or not (although it is not accepted by all).

The chief difference between the contestants seems to have been in the essence rather than in the effect of Absolution. Both agreed that the Gospel offered the forgiveness of sins, but the one side held that it was given only to those who in faith received it, while the other side said that it was given also to unbelievers, though they did not accept it. Both agreed that unbelievers received no benefit from such an absolution.

Friedrich August Schmidt (1837-1928), of whom we will hear again in greater detail shortly, had this to report about the meeting (in "The Lutheran Standard," November 1, 1870):

During this discussion the Norwegians laid special stress on the fact that the forgiveness of all men's sins had actually been wrought and brought about in Christ, and that this treasure of Christ's atoning merit is brought to us in the means of grace, and thus also in the preaching of the Gospel and in Absolution. When Absolution is granted to any...
the grant is not an empty word or promise, but a grant actually contain-
ing and conveying in its intrinsic essence the things promised or spoken
of. As, therefore, Christ has actually brought about a reconciliation of
the whole world, unto God, implying that forgiveness of all men's sins and
perfect righteousness of all sinners is brought about in Christ, this trea-
sure of forgiveness is on the part of God donated or conveyed by means of
a grant or deed to every individual person that is baptized or receives the
Absolution.

The Augustana pastors, however, could not see the matter in this light,
and, when pressed by Scripture texts, their leading spokesman, Rev.
Carlsson (Erland Carlsson, 1822-1893) of Chicago, went so far as to say
that in such words as 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto
Himself,' the term 'the world' does not mean all men, but only all
believers. This is well known to be the Calvinistic theory, according
to which God in Christ only redeemed the elect or persevering believers,
and all passages of Scripture teaching the universal redemption of
the world are made to mean the redemption and salvation of the elect only.
The pastors of the Augustana Synod were particularly offended at hearing
a mode of expression used during the debate by some of the Norwegian
ministers, namely, that by the resurrection of Christ He had been ab-
solved from the sins of the whole world, and that in Him as Mediator
and representative surely the whole world had been justified, because
He was justified from the sins of the whole world."

It is reported that on the day of the conference those present treated the final
four theses, they did the best they could—the pastors of the Augustana Synod
were absent. As Schmidt reports: "Conference was ended pretty abruptly and sharp
things were said on both sides."

A short report of the conference appeared in the Scandinavian Press paper, "Emigrant-
en," in the summer of 1864, followed "a year and a day" later by a report in the
same paper by a Pastor Peters of the Augustana side entitled, "Old News" (Gammel
Nyt). This was quickly followed by an article from B. J. Muns, the Norwegian Syn-
od's secretary at the Jefferson Prairie Conference, entitled, Gammel Nyt II.

Now followed a series of articles, as each side did its best to defend its own posi-
tion and attack that of the other. From my own observations of the articles I've
been able to get my hands on, it seems very clear that the Augustana Synod men tried
to credit the Norwegian Synod with statements and conclusions they had never made
nor intended to make. Many of these articles appeared in the paper "Emigranten,"
"neutral" ground which served as a sounding board for both sides.

In 1866, Carl Johan Peter Petersen (1825-1897), pastor of Chicago's Norwegian Ev.
Lutheran Congregation (Den norske evangelisk lutherske menighet) brought a part, if
not the majority, of his congregation out of the Augustana Synod and eventually in-
to the Norwegian Synod in 1867. I haven't been able to get the full details of the
matter, but many charges were brought against the pastor by members of his congre-
gation and it appears that eventually the case went to the civil courts. Included
in the proceedings were charges against the Norwegian Synod that it was teaching
false doctrine about justification. Prominent men of both the Norwegian and Augus-
tana Synods were called to testify, as well as Joseph Augustus Seiss (1823-1904),
who later served several terms as president of the General Council (officially or-
ganized in 1867). Later Seiss wrote that at the time he had been informed that
at least some members of the Norwegian Synod "had testified on oath that the doc-
trline held and maintained as the true Lutheran faith by said Synod, as against the
Augustana Synod, is that all men are already justified in the death and resurrec-
tion of Jesus, and are in that justified and redeemed state until they put them-
selves out of it by positive unbelief of the Gospel absolution.\(^{36b}\)

Needless to say, no such testimony existed, but this doctrine was one which the Augustana Synod would insist was the teaching of the Norwegian Synod over and over again. Apparently the Swedish pastors had some valid reasons for concern for it's reported that in Sweden such false views of universal justification as they imputed to the Norwegian Synod did exist. But as F. A. Schmidt wrote (in 1873):

> For all we know, there may be people in Sweden or in the Swedish Augustana Synod who teach such a heretical doctrine, but we know of none in Norway or in our Norwegian Synod. We almost suspect, however, that just as we of the Norwegian Synod and Synodical Conference have been so awfully misrepresented in this matter by men who must know better, the same may have been the case in regard to people in other countries. But as we say, we are not posted on that matter. We only know that our doctrine was not imported from Sweden.\(^{37}\)

It is an interesting historical note that Pastor Petersen was the Augustana Synod's secretary at the Jefferson Prairie free conference in 1864.

**1867**

The year 1867 stands out as a watermark year in the Norwegian Synod's defense. In March of 1867 an article by V. Koren (previously referred to in the quote from Rohne above) appeared in "Emigranten", then reprinted in the Norwegian Synod's own "Kirkelig Manedstidende" in April. It was entitled, "A Friendly Word in an Important Controversy." In it Koren made it clear that the real question involved was not "whether the forgiveness of sins occurs before, or, in and with faith in the individual person." The real question was whether forgiveness of sins is also given before faith. To the charge that the Norwegians were teaching that a person comes into possession of the forgiveness of sins simply by hearing the Gospel, Koren stated that "the articles that have been written from our side must have long since informed any truth-loving reader that these allegations are entirely without basis, and that we still teach what we have always taught: Only he who believes the Gospel comes into possession of the same, that is, the forgiveness of sins."\(^{38}\)

As Koren makes clear, the real issue in not about the Gospel's effect but about its essence. As far as the issue over the words, "to give the forgiveness of sins" (Norwegians), as opposed to the words, "to offer the forgiveness of sins" (Augustana), Koren admits that the expression "to offer" was the one most commonly used before this time by orthodox theologians. But he also said, "One is not faithful to the truth because he uses correct expressions, when he means them to say something else." Koren states the Norwegian Synod's position over against the Augustana Synod in this way:

> We would be perfectly satisfied with the expression that "the Gospel offers the forgiveness of sins to all," if our opponents would understand this word according to genuine Lutheran usage; for then they would admit that this offer from God's side has the same content when it comes to an unbeliever as when it comes to a believer, and that just as the offer to the believer is a powerful offer, which effects and gives that which the words report; so also the offer from God's side has full value when it comes to the unbeliever. God gives him forgiveness, but he will not accept it, he will not believe it. It has not been our aim to negotiate an agreement on paper or in word alone, but in spirit and in truth. Therefore we have used such expressions as were not only in and of them-
selves correct, but, in addition, in the same way also set the matter at the point where we could be certain that no one but he who in his heart perceives the truth would agree with them. Therefore we have used the expression, that "the Gospel gives the forgiveness of sins to all who hear it, both believers and unbelievers." 39

Koren compares the Gospel in the Word of Absolution (which are really identical) to the Gospel in Baptism. As he says, "Baptism is and remains a washing of rebirth no matter how many baptized people there are who have despised their baptismal grace .... Among those who are baptized as adults there are many who do not receive baptism in faith. If God only gave believers forgiveness of sin in Baptism, then it would be necessary for these to be baptized again in order to receive baptismal grace." 40

Koren's article was followed in the same year by two other articles dealing with this doctrinal issue in the pages of the "Kirchliche Maanedstidende." One was a series of dialogues between two friends discussing the controversy; the next an article in two installments by the previously mentioned F. A. Schmidt. Finally, in November of 1867 the "Maanedstidende" offered its readers "A Historical Overview of the Controversy between the Augustana Synod and the Norwegian Synod over the Doctrine of Absolution."

Perhaps now is the time to introduce the theologian mentioned above who, from this time until he precipitated the Election Controversy in 1879, might be considered the chief visible defender of objective justification. Friedrich August Schmidt was born in Germany in 1837. He graduated from Concordia College in 1853 and from Concordia Seminary in 1857. He joined the Norwegian Synod to teach at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, in 1861. From 1872 until 1876 he was the Norwegian Synod professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. A brilliant theologian, he wrote German articles for the Missouri Synod's "Lehre und Wahrheit," Norwegian articles for the "Kirchliche Maanedstidende," and English articles for the Ohio Synod's "Lutheran Standard".

How such a man could later take the sympathetic stand he did can only be laid to the struggle of human reason to fit all of divine truth into its own limits. If one is going to hold firmly to the biblical doctrine that Jesus has already accomplished everything necessary for every person's salvation and that God truly wants every person to come to a knowledge of the truth, as well as the fact that the Gospel is the same for all who hear it in its essence, then the logical conclusion to the question, "Why some and not others?" has to be the error that Schmidt later adopted, splitting his own Synod and tearing both it and Ohio out of the Synodical Conference; the difference must lie in those who hear the Gospel. But this is another controversy and we have a ways to go before we get from 1867 to 1879.

Dealing with the matter of "the entire world's justification," Schmidt wrote:

We mean the same as, for example, the old theologian Johannes Quistorp, professor and Superintendent in Rostock (died 1649), as he clearly and concisely states in his notes on 2 Cor 5:19: "The word Justification, as well as the word Reconciliation, is employed in a two-fold manner: 1. in regard to the acquired merit; 2. in regard to the appropriated merit. Thus all are justified (in one sense) and some are justified (in another sense). All, namely, with respect to the acquired merit; and some, namely, with respect to the appropriated merit." 41

In connection with the expression, "the unconditional Gospel," Schmidt wrote:

In short, in the Gospel, according to its proper meaning, God does not say to us: I am gracious to you and forgive your sins, on the condi-
tion that you first believe, or when you have first begun to believe; but he says: Because Christ has also reconciled you to me and paid for all your sins, therefore I am already gracious to you for his sake, and in my reconciled heart I have already long ago in Christ forgiven you and all other poor sinners all your sins. This is now announced also for you, so that you can also believe on the crucified Savior and Mediator and by faith appropriate for yourself the grace, life and salvation previously acquired for you by him.42

In the same year another series of articles by a pastor Aaund Mikkelsen (1835-?) appeared in Emigranten which, together with the two previously cited articles by Koren and Schaldt, were translated into Swedish and distributed in booklet form as Three Testimonies on the Correct Presentation of the Doctrine of the Gospel. It seems to have appeared in either late 1868 or early 1869.

In 1868 the "K. Maanedstidende" carried a series of articles, "Testimony from Luther concerning Absolution." As for the Three Testimonies referred to above, this little booklet was apparently widespread enough to make it the target of at least one Stockholm paper, this fact mentioned by T. W. Hasselquist in an article about the same booklet in the Augustana's "Augustana" in 1869. This booklet doesn't seem to have helped matters any and by this time the controversy dealt more and more directly with the matter of "world justification," our objective justification, and less and less with the matter of absolution per se. The articles that appeared during this time make it clear that the term "objective" justification was in use even then, even if it wasn't used frequently.

Elsewhere

What was happening on the other "language" fronts at this time? It should be noted that in 1868 Friedrich Reinhold Eduard Preuss (1834-1904) published his classic treatise, Die Rechtfertigung der Sünden vor Gott. Although Preuss, for the most part, deals with the subjective facet of justification, he clearly lays the basis for this in its objective, universal facet. As Preuss writes:

So, then, we are reconciled; however, not only we, but also Hindus, and Hottentots and Kafirs, yes, the world. "Reconciled," says our translation; the Greek original says: "placed in the right relation to God". Because before the Fall we, together with the whole creation, were in the right relation to God, therefore Scripture teaches that Christ, through His death, restored all things to the former right relation to God.

We, then, are redeemed from the guilt of sin; the wrath of God is appeased; all creation is again under the bright rays of Mercy, as in the beginning; yea, in Christ we were justified before we were even born. For do not the Scriptures say: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them"? This is not the justification which we receive by faith, but the one which took place before all faith. - And Rom 5:18: "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". That is the great absolution which took place in the resurrection of Christ. For as the Father, for our sake, condemned His dear Son as the greatest of all sinners by causing Him to suffer the punishment of the transgressors, even so did He publicly absolve Him from the sins of the world when He raised Him up from the dead. And us in Him. Therefore Scripture says that Christ
Walther had only the highest praise for Preuss' book (Preuss was still a professor in Berlin at this time). He wrote in "Lehre und Wehre" in 1869 that this book "is without doubt the most excellent that has been written concerning justification in this century." And even though Preuss himself, in St. Louis in 1869 one step ahead of the German police and given a position at Concordia Seminary, repudiated the biblical truth he so beautifully expressed and joined the Roman Catholic Church in 1872 shortly after the second edition of his work was issued, his book remains a gem every pastor should have in his library. To quote "Lehre und Wehre" of 1870, "Brothers of Missouri, of Ohio, of Wisconsin; indeed, all Lutheran pastors! Buy this book! You won't regret the money, even if you have to spend your last cent to buy it!"

In 1870 Walther's first book of sermons appeared, his Amerikanische-Lutherische Evangelien Postille, and in it his Easter Sunday sermon proclaimed the truth of objective justification—the world's absolution. Speaking of the great comfort to be found in Christ's resurrection, Walther said:

Tell me, who was, therefore, justified in him? Who was declared to be pure and guiltless in him? None other than we men! None other than the whole world! . . . His life is our life; his pardon, our pardon; his justification, our justification . . .

What is the great comfort that lies in Christ's resurrection? Walther assured his hearers: "It is the absolution which God himself has spoken over all men, all sinners; in a word, all the world, and has sealed it in the most marvelous way." In part two of his sermon, Walther stressed the necessity of faith to truly enjoy the blessings of this comfort, but he makes it clear that the reality of the basis for this comfort is certain:

You have heard that the comfort of Christ's resurrection stands in this, that God thereby—namely, in Christ—has already pardoned the whole world, absolved and justified it; that is, already in Christ's person has awarded it the forgiveness of sins and has declared it righteous. . . . What must a man do if he wants to enjoy the great comfort of Christ's resurrection? The answer is this: He must accept the justification and pardon of God awarded by God himself to the whole world in Christ's resurrection, therefore, also awarded to him; or, in a word, he must believe it! There is nothing else he can or dare do.

Walther would come out with other popular sermon books, and you can expect to find the same theme in the Easter sections. In his Lutherische Brosamen ("Lutheran Crumbs") of 1876 we have the theme: "Christ's Glorious Resurrection from the Dead: The Actual Absolution of the Entire Sinful World." and in his Epistle-Postille of 1882, "How Christ Himself, through His Resurrection, has been Justified for the Whole World," joined by, "That the Resurrection of Christ is the Completely Valid Justification of All Men." Anyone who would deny Walther's adherence to the doctrine of objective justification would tear the heart out of his entire ministry.

Late 1870 also marked another stage of the absolution—now, fully, the justification—controversy, as other bodies began to take sides publicly. The Missouri and Ohio Synods did this chiefly by giving Schmidt room to speak in their publications. The Augustana Synod found its special friend and ally in Gottfried Leonhard Wilhelm Fritschel (1836-1889) of the Iowa Synod.

The November 1, 1870, "Lutheran Standard" of Ohio carried an article by Schmidt,
previously quoted, entitled, "A Controversy among Lutherans about Justification and Absolution." It would appear auf deutsch in "Lehre und Wehre" the following May. Bringing the English reader up to date, Schmidt reports the latest development among the Augustana Synod in this matter. Referring to a conference held between it and a Norwegian Synod pastor (Claus Lauritz Clausen, 1820-1892), who had withdrawn in 1868 over the issue of slavery, Schmidt provides an extended quote from the October 1, 1870, "Kirkelig Haandstidende:" I quote it here in full for three reasons: 1) It clearly shows the contemporary issue involved in the matter of objective justification; 2) It shows how the same passages were used then as were cited at the beginning of this paper; and 3) It cites some evidence of other theologians in the past on this matter.

Our readers will be aware that the remarks of Prof. Weemaes (August Weemaes, 1835-1924, then at Augsburg Seminary) and Past. Gjoldaker are directed against the pastors of our Synod, on whose part the term "justification of the world in Christ" has been used and defended as legitimate. But, on the other hand, we have never omitted to give an accurate and thorough explanation as to the meaning in which the term has been used, and the Scripture texts upon which we have based its legitimacy (namely, Rom 5,19, and 2 Cor 5,19.) A lengthy exposition of our standpoint we certainly need not give here, especially for the reason that our opponents have wisely avoided to touch our main arguments. Those who may wish for a more lengthy discussion of the matter we refer to former articles, especially that on page 354 &c. of our last year's volume. However, we cannot omit giving a brief statement of our position in regard to this question. We do not say that one must necessarily always use this very expression: "the world is justified in Christ," in order to give an accurate and legitimate explanation of the satisfaction of Christ for the sins of the whole world and the salvation and redemption of all men in Him; for we know very well that this article of faith can be fully and correctly explained and pronounced in other words also. Nor do we say that no one who uses the terms defended by us can understand them in a false and unscriptural sense; for it might certainly happen that in using them some one meant to say that all men also are in personal possession and enjoyment of righteousness merely by virtue of Christ's redemption, as Methodists for instance teach that infants are saved without faith merely through the redemption of Christ. But what we do assert is this, that the expression "the justification of the world in Christ" can be used in an orthodox sense, and that it must be permitted us to use it thus on account of the mode of expression found in Scripture itself.

One question is: How does a poor sinner become righteous in the sight of God? and a different question is: What is the import of Christ's vicarious suffering and satisfaction for the whole world? To the first question we reply, that the individual sinner is (personally) justified through faith alone, when he by faith in Christ appropriates to himself as his own the righteousness which Christ has purchased for him. In this sense, therefore, not the whole world is justified in the sight of God, but only believers, because these alone have embraced and appropriated the merit of Christ unto their personal justification in the judgment of God. To the second question we reply, that the Scriptures, besides other expressions of which it makes use in order to explain the import of Christ's satisfaction, also employs these: "As by one man's disobedience (the) many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall (the) many be made righteous." (Rom 5,19) The entire connection of this text from verse 15 shows that St. Paul intended to set forth
the extension of Christ's redemption over all men. Again and again he compares the restoration in Christ with the fall in Adam and asserts the sameness of their extension and universality. Adam and Christ are the two chief characters in whom something is come over all men, namely, in Adam judgment unto condemnation, in Christ the free gift unto justification of life. The work of both has an equally universal significance and validity.

But as not all men are personally condemned, because "condemnation is come upon all men," so neither do all become actually and personally justified, because justification through the work of Christ "iscome upon all" (as Luther and older Danish bibles translate). No one is condemned unto eternal death save he who is found in Adam, i.e., in his sins, without faith in Christ; for "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8,1). No one is justified unto life eternal save he who is found in Christ, i.e. "not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil 3,9.) And as little as the fact that not all men are actually condemned, annul the truth that condemnation is nevertheless come upon all men, so little can the fact that not all men embrace the righteousness of Christ and through faith in Him become personally justified, annul or repeal the truth that justification of life is nevertheless come upon all men. For as true as it is that Christ has borne the sins of the whole world as our surety and representative, just so true is it also that in His resurrection the righteousness of the whole world has been brought to light again. And as true as this is that "if one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Cor 5,14); just so true must this also be, that if one was justified for all, then were all justified. And was not Christ justified for all? (1 Tim 3,16).--But when our opponents say that church-language prohibits or is against the expression defended by us, we have not been able to find it so. We know very well that not only in the Scriptures themselves, but also in other books of instruction and edification, the term "justify", in by far the most instances, comes to be used in respect of personal justification, or that of the individual sinner, and the same thing is no doubt the case with our own sermons and other instruction. But we ask, has church-language ever prohibited or declared itself against this, that, when the import of Christ's death and resurrection is set forth, among other expressions also those in question are employed? By no means! As proof of the fact that these very expressions are really found thus used by our orthodox old teachers, we adduce the following evidence: Joh Quistorp . . . (quoted earlier from a previous article, p. 23) . . . --John Gerhard, since Luther and Chemnitz doubtless the greatest theologian our Church has had (died 1557 as Professor at Jena), says in his Commentary on Rom 4,25: "As God has punished our sins in Christ, because they were laid upon Him and imputed unto Him as our surety, thus He likewise has, by raising Him from the dead, by this very deed (ipso facto) absolved Him from our sins that were imputed unto Him, and hence He has also absolved us in Him. 1 Cor 15,17; 2 Cor 5,21; Eph 2,5; Col 2, 12-13; 1 Pet 1,3." --Godfrey Olearius (died 1715 as Professor at Leipsic) says in a treatise on Christ's Resurrection: "That Christ has paid for us what He had pledged Himself to pay, and that His payment was sufficient, His resurrection has demonstrated, since it shows that our surety has been absolved, the obligation which He had assumed having been annulled by His satisfaction, and hence we are together with Him justified in the judgment of God. From this results the voice of faith: Who is he that condemneth, It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again (Rom 8,34) --John Jac. Rambach, who is doubtless known to many of our readers as the author of an edifying exposition of the sufferings of
Christ (died 1735 as Professor at Giessen), says in a sermon on third Easter day: "Since Christ as the second Adam, has represented the entire human race in the judgment of God, it follows that in His person also the whole human race has been justified and absolved from sin and the curse. As that judgment unto condemnation which was rendered in regard to Adam has concerned us also together with Him, because Adam represented us all in the sight of God; so also that absolution or acquittal from the sentence of condemnation which took place in the resurrection of Christ, has concerned us all together with Him, because Christ likewise represented us all and acted our part before God. 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. If Paul can say: 'If one died for all, then were all dead,' or, then all are looked upon as such that have suffered their due, then we may and must also draw the same inference from the resurrection of Christ: If one, who represented all the rest, is raised again from the dead, then were all raised. For God has quickened us together with Christ and raised us up together. But if we are raised up together with Christ, then we are also justified together with Him and acquitted of the sentence of condemnation. In the judgment of God this matter is decided already and is all right. What is necessary now, is that the sinner by faith reaches his hard forth and includes himself also in this justification of the Mediator." — In the same strain Rambach explains this subject in his Commentary on Rom 4,25.— From these testimonies already our readers will be enabled to judge whether it be true that churchly language does not permit speaking of the justification of the world in Christ. Would it not be much better that our opponents, if they see fit to give us instructions in regard to what is church-language and what is not, would make the matter a subject of earnest study first, so that they may know something certain about the thing which they say or whereof they affirm.

Schmidt concluded his article by remarking that President Hasselquist of the Augustana Synod had moved that the General Council discuss the doctrine of Justification at its next convention. As the same topic would be the chief matter before the first convention of the Synodical Conference in 1872, Thesis IV, as discussed and adopted by the General Council, should be sufficient to present its position:

IV. We are justified through faith, when we believe that Christ hath suffered for us, and that for His sake we are received into God's favor, our sins forgiven, and righteousness and eternal life granted unto us. (Aug. Con. iv, 2.) (Note: the "when" is in the Augsburg Confession, and we certainly have no quarrel with it except when it is stressed, as it is here, in opposition to objective justification. The context here, of course, is subjective justification.)

DR. KRAUTH. The distinctive object of this thesis is to point out the time of justification. Most of the theses contain an italicized portion. This portion makes the distinctive point of the thesis.

The time is here stated over against two errors. One that we are, so to speak, in a justified condition, in advance of any act of faith on our part; that man in virtue of Christ's work is, ipso facto, a justified person; that everyone born is justified, until he casts himself from this condition. (This was naturally not the teaching of the Norwegian Synod, although some present maintained that they believed
... On the theory that the whole world was justified in the death of Christ, the whole pagan world has been justified, as well as all who are yet to be born. It is a wretched confusion of a provision with its application. It cuts our Confession short, stopping with "through faith," in the article: "We are justified, obtain forgiveness of sins, and become righteous before God, freely out of grace, for Christ's sake." It is indeed wonderful how completely our Confession has anticipated so many errors. This very error is fully met, though an error which had not yet arisen. The Confession reads, "We are justified"--not before we were born, not when we were born, not when we hear the Gospel, but, "when we believe that Christ hath suffered for us." 49

It is clear from the above that the General Council came in on the side of the Augustana Synod, which was only natural, considering the close connection the Norwegian Synod had with the Missouri Synod. Just as it was also natural that the Norwegian Synod should now, in 1871, come under the scathing judgment of the Iowa Synod via Gottfried Fritsche.

**Gottfried Fritsche**

The Iowa Synod was organized in 1854 by "Löhe" men, in some respects a "buffer" between the Buffalo and Missouri Synods. Chief among their theologians were Conrad Sigmuond Fritsche (1833-1900), one of the founders of the Synod, and his younger brother Gottfried. It was Gottfried who handled the attack on the Norwegian Synod—and through them, Missouri. His first open attack on the Norwegian Synod came in January of 1871, prompted by Schmidt's English article the previous November.

Among other things, Fritsche stresses the difference between reconciliation and justification, but perhaps the best summary of his understanding of the matter is found in his conclusion:

> When on the part of the Norwegian Synod a universal justification is taught—a justification of all men without distinction, of Judas and all unbelievers as well; when it is said that God, "in his heart," in the "objective justification," by his verdict, has declared all men, believers and unbelievers, righteous; when it is taught that then, when a man in repentance and faith turns to God, an objective act of God, an objective process, doesn't take place, a "declaration of righteousness", but merely a subjective process in men, an acceptance of a centuries-and-millenia-old, previously effected, unconditional "declaration of righteousness" on the part of God; when the divine action is struck out of the act of justification and only the human is left remaining; when herein no further action of God is acknowledged than this, that he kindles faith in the hearts of men; when justification, about which the Lutheran Church says that it takes place in the life of the individual person, is no longer taught as an occurrence extra hominem, where here "to be justified" no longer means "to be declared righteous," justum pronuntiari, but merely to appropriate something subjectively; and, when, in consequence extension of the doctrine of the universal justification of all men—even Judas and all unbelievers—it is further taught that God in his Gospel not only offers and holds out to all men the forgiveness of sins, but also "gives, presents and imparts that which is announced to all, whether they believe it or not."—then the Augustana Synod and the smaller Norwegian Synod (apparently the Conference of the Norwegian-Danish Ev. Luth. Church in America, which peacefully separated from the Swedes in the Augustana Synod 1870).
standing with them on the same doctrinal foundation, not only have a
right but also a sacred duty to register an earnest protest against
this apostasy from the Lutheran doctrine of justification. (They
have the sacred duty) to hold fast to the doctrine which they cite,
the doctrine clearly attested to by the Holy Scriptures and unani-
mously confessed by the Lutheran Church. That, indeed, in Christ the
whole world is reconciled with God and forgiveness of sins is acquired
for all men without exception; but that only those will be justified
who have faith in Jesus Christ, while those who do not believe in Je-
sus remain under God's wrath. And (likewise, our doctrine is) this,
that it is only then, and not until then, when a man grasps Christ's
merits in faith, that he will be declared righteous by God, which jus-
tification is not a subjective occurrence in the heart of men, but an
objective act of God (actus forensis extra hominem).\textsuperscript{30}

What can we say about Fritschel's summary? It shows that he was not fully aware
of the facts involved. It also shows a failure on his part to understand the con-
cept of objective justification because of a failure to properly divide Law and
Gospel—a falling still present among the opponents of this doctrine today. Other
criticism and answers to his remarks will be found in what follows.

In April Fritschel published "Another Word about the Doctrine of Justification,"
sumitted to the Iowa Synod's "Theologische Monatshefte" by someone who signed him-
self Interpres ("Mediator"). Interpres did his best to set Fritschel straight.
First, he defended the Norwegian (and, originally, Missouri) expression, "gives,
presents and imparts." While admitting that this language can be misunder-
stood, he emphasized that in the context of the controversy it is used simply to empha-
sically state that the essence and content of the Gospel is the same for all who
hear it.

As for Fritschel's charge that the teaching of objective justification robbed "sub-
jective" justification of its forensic nature on God's part, Interpres said that
this is either due to the fact that Fritschel didn't sit down and study the case
carefully, or he simply wanted to use this controversy as an opportunity to take
some shots at the Missouri Synod. Quoting a Norwegian article of 1869 in which it
is specifically said that both objective and subjective justification are judicial
acts of God, Interpres considers this sapienti sat to close the matter. It is this
writer (Schmidt?—I don't know but it sounds like him), Interpres, who allows that
Judas, too, objectively, "in Christ, has become a child of God and an heir of heaven.
However, since he did not receive what Jesus had so dearly acquired for him in true
faith, but despised it, he thus did not benefit from it."\textsuperscript{31}

Fritschel's reply to Interpres appeared in November. He simply makes the same charges
he made before—only with greater force. Does it make any difference to him that
the Norwegians clearly say that they understand both subjective and objective jus-
tification to be forensic acts of God? As far as Fritschel is concerned, if justifi-
cation, God's verdict of righteousness, has occurred before faith, then it can't
possible occur at the moment of faith. Therefore, the Norwegians must be wrong.
He writes:

In consequence of the fact that in Jesus Christ's work of redemption
forgiveness of sins, life and salvation have been acquired for all men,  
God allows forgiveness of sins and justification to be offered to all
men again and again in the Gospel; but justification is not effected,
the individual is not declared righteous in God's court, until faith
is worked in his heart.\textsuperscript{32}
Fritschel also wrote:

Overagainst the doctrine of the "unconditional Gospel," and of the unconditional impartation of the forgiveness of sins, we confess as our evangelical faith that God earnestly desires to forgive all men their sins; that he earnestly offers the same to all who hear the Gospel; but he only actually forgives those who accept it in repentance and faith. 53

Did Fritschel truly understand the Norwegian position? Yes--and no. Take the following an example.

What shall we say in view of what is said by the Missouri-Norwegian doctrine: "Each individual man, whether he believes or not, has been pardoned and justified by God in his court, and is viewed by God as just and holy"? To each godless man, who persistently and wilfully remains in his impenitence, to each hypocrite, one can cry out: "Oh impenitent one, your sins are forgiven! True, if you don't appropriate it, you have no benefit from it and you can't enjoy it; but God in his court views you as pardoned and just. You are, although you don't believe but serve the devil instead, nevertheless---objectively ---his child. He doesn't impute a smidgen of your sins to you. Therefore God in his court looks on you as if you truly had no sins and as if you have fulfilled the whole law, even though you do not believe in Christ." 54

Here we find the essence of objective justification reduced to a logical absurdity simply because God's Word also tells me I am never to bring the comfort of the Gospel to someone I know is wilfully and persistently impenitent. This person is to hear the law, and the law alone, and only the law, as if the Gospel did not exist. But in Fritschel's remarks above the real heart of the entire controversy about absolution and the Gospel does lie. What if such a godless person as he describes does hear the Gospel? Does his unbelief make that message mere empty words; in actuality, then, make God into a liar? His unbelief may deprive him of the benefits of Christ's life and death and resurrection, but their validity for the whole world---and so for him---remain! What the Gospel proclaims is true. If only he would believe it so he could rejoice in it and not condemn himself to hell by his own unbelief!

Doesn't Fritschel's case here clearly show that the real problem for those who won't accept the truth of objective justification lies in the conflict of human reason when it has to deal with both law and Gospel? If one is not willing to keep his human reason in humble submission to God's Word when he hears the Gospel in its purest form and the Law in its purest form, then either the Law or the Gospel will suffer. One must either become a true universalist (or strict Calvinist)--as the opponents of objective justification charge those who hold it; or one must become a synergist in a lesser or greater degree. And so we who strive to keep the Law the Law and the Gospel the Gospel and preach both with all their force must continue to carry the same cross today that our fathers in the faith carried before us, even if it brings down the wrath of those whose human reason insists on being satisfied by some logical system regardless of how it may contradict God's Word.

The following is Fritschel's summary of his conception of this "missourisch-norwegische Lehre", a summary he would reprint 17 years later, at that time directed at Missouri alone.

The Missouri-Norwegian Doctrine confuses reconciliation and justi-
fication and declares both identical. The Church's doctrine divides both as two wholly separate, diverse acts.

The Missouri-Norwegian doctrine rips justification into two acts, separated by hundreds and thousands of years: an objective act in God and a separate, subjective act in men; Church doctrine holds the objective act of God and the subjective reception of men together in one temporal, concurrent act.

The Missouri-Norwegian doctrine strikes the actus forensis, the pardoning verdict of God, from the events that occur when a man becomes a believer; Church doctrine is that this actus forensis, the absolving verdict of God, the declaration of righteousness on God's part, is the essential impetus and the chief matter on which everything depends.

The Missouri-Norwegian doctrine teaches a justification of all men without exception; Church doctrine only knows a justification of believers.

The Missouri-Norwegian doctrine teaches a justification without faith; Church doctrine a justification through faith.

The Missouri-Norwegian doctrine teaches a justification before faith; Church doctrine a justification in consequence of faith.

The Missouri-Norwegian doctrine teaches that each godless person is justified, has received the forgiveness of sins, and is (objectively) a child of God; Church doctrine teaches that we become God's children through faith and that only believers will be declared just in God's court.

The Missouri-Norwegian doctrine teaches that unbelievers are also unconditionally excluded from God's wrath over original and actual sins--this wrath actually doesn't exist any more! Church doctrine teaches that whoever is not implanted in Christ through faith is by nature a child of wrath and God's wrath remains over him.55

What can we say to all this? Again we see the confusion of Law and Gospel. In almost every case, the true missourisch-norwegische Lehre includes both propositions which Fritsche contrasts with each other. What can we learn from Fritzsche's summary for our own selves as we strive to expound and explain the doctrine of objective justification today?

First of all, we can be careful to preserve the definite forensic nature of subjective justification when we compare it with objective justification. Subjective justification is not merely the sinner's own justification of himself in his own mind, nor is it simply identical with a sinner's conversion although the two are inseparably joined together in much the same way that reconciliation and objective justification are. Here a statement made by Henry P. Hamann Jr., which appeared in Concordia Theological Monthly in 1958, is apropos. While he readily confesses that Paul teaches "that justification is complete before there is such a thing as faith," he also writes:

This fact of Paul's teaching has been known, particularly in the theological literature of "Missouri Lutherans," as objective justification. The term is not a good one, chiefly for the reason that the counterpart to it, subjective justification, if it means anything, should mean a justification that goes on in the believer, a thing no "Missourian" ever held. Subjective justification, the justification of the individual sinner who believes, is every whit as objective as objective justification, the pronouncement of forgiveness for all men.56

He goes on to say that whatever terms are used,

... the thing to be substantiated is this, that to St. Paul justi-
fication and reconciliation are, to all intents and purposes, the same, and that faith, although it is also more than this, is, first and foremost, the trusting acceptance of an accomplished fact. Faith does not bring it about in any way, it receives it. Or, to put it in as strong a way as possible, justification does not follow faith, it precedes it. A feeling for the truth that lies in Hamann's observation here, together with challenges like Fritscheil's, are no doubt part of the reason the terminology "universal" and "personal" justification has always been preferred by many to that of "objective" and "subjective." But, in any case, the definition of a given term is always the deciding factor in determining the truth of the matter presented; not the term itself.

Another thing to keep in mind which will help to ensure that we don't restrict God's forensic act simply to objective justification is the fact that we aren't really speaking about two, separate and distinct forensic acts here, but, in reality, one and the same, viewed from "different angles," as it were. It is obvious that finding terms to logically and clearly present what we mean to say is not an easy thing to do. Here we can jump ahead some 60 years to Missouri Synod's Theodore Edward William Engelder (1865-1949) and to what has to rank as one of the classic presentations of the doctrine of objective justification—which every pastor should read and have a copy of! Ohio's Richard Charles Henry Lenski (1864-1936) ridiculed the fact that Missouri taught, "This, that on Easter morning God forgave all sins to every individual sinner in the world, those then already damned in hell, those not yet born; and that this, an actus simplex, is the only justification there is!" Engelder replied in July of 1933 (his article continued into August and September as well):

... We cheerfully admit that the unborn generations were not subjectively justified on Easter morning. But we do insist that "the objective reconciliation covers all men."

Nor do we draw the line at the damned. St. Peter does not. "Denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction," 2 Pet 2:1, Luther does not. "In the same manner he who does not believe that he is loosed and that his sins are forgiven will later on find that his sins had now certainly been forgiven; only he would not believe it." (19,946.) What is the ultimate cause of the damnation of the individual? Just this: he refused the pardon offered him, the forgiveness of sins proclaimed on Easter morning as pertaining to all. The paragraph under discussion (Lenski's article) would stamp as a monstrosity the thought that God on Easter morning actually forgave "those then already damned in hell." ... The implication is, if we follow the line of argument, that the Missourians of necessity must represent God as preaching the Gospel in hell. Everybody, of course, knows that the Missourians have not, nor are, inclined to embrace the Hades theory. Nor do they tell the unbeliever: Be of good cheer; whether you believe or not, all is well with you. But this they say: Those who "were then already damned in hell" are there for no other reason than for rejecting the forgiveness of their sins, which, because of the universally effective, also retroactive, character of the work wrought on Good Friday and Easter morning, had been brought to them, too, for instance by Noah's preaching of the Gospel. We agree with Dr. Lenski that Christ on Easter morning did not descend to hell for the purpose of justifying, subjectively, the damned. But on this point we disagree: We say that at Christ's descent into hell the spirits in prison, "which sometime were disobedient," realized
that they brought their doom upon themselves by rejecting the forgiveness of sins procured for them by Christ and offered to them in the Gospel, 1 Pet 3,19f. In other words: "The objective reconciliation covers all men as enemies" and the subjective reconciliation only the believers.59

To the point under discussion in our paper here, Engelder goes on to write:

Does Missouri teach "that this, an actus simplex, is the only justification there is"? Yes and no. We do not teach that the objective justification of Easter morning is the only justification there is... Missouri teaches that there is a) an objective justification and b) a subjective justification... We keep the concept of subjective justification distinct from that of objective justification. All the world knows that.

Are there, then, two justifications? No. There is but one justification. If one wants to put it this way: "On Easter morning God forgave all sins to every individual sinner in the world, and this is the only justification there is," we will, after having submitted the foregoing paragraph, unhesitatingly say: That is correct. We want to bring out thereby that the forgiveness of sins which is offered in the Gospel to all men is that identical forgiveness which was declared, issued, proclaimed, and sealed on Easter morning; that the forgiveness of sins which the individual sinner accepts and appropriates by faith is the one and same forgiveness which God pronounced on Easter morning; that the forgiveness of sins which is in effect "prior to all faith" does not change its character by reason of faith; that God is not moved by the faith of the sinner to grant him a different kind of forgiveness; that faith does not achieve forgiveness or move God to forgive. In a word, we know of but one forgiveness, gained by Christ, deposited in the means of grace, and appropriated by faith... "It goes on"--the objective justification of Easter morning. It is not replaced or modified in the case of the individual believer by a new sort of justification. The faith of the sinner does not effect an additional change in the disposition of the reconciled God. Not a new pardon is made out. What takes place is that the sinner comes in under the old pardon of Easter morning. There is but one pardon, one sentence of justification.60

Finally, we must remember that we are dealing with a Gospel matter here that can't be placed in conjunction with the Law in a way completely satisfying to our human reason and logic (although for myself, in the light of Christ's cross, my faith has no problem at all with objective justification and the Law). Slipping back in time now from 1933 to 1888, Karl Georg Stöchhardt (1842-1913) concludes in his famous article in "Lehre und Wehre," (which we will return to again and which every pastor should read in its entirety and have in his possession):

With our small reason we cannot bring light and clarity into everything. Man, wherever he is born, finds himself in the guilt and condemnation of Adam. Nevertheless, in Christ the righteousness of life has already come for all men. Through the obedience of the one man we are already justified and in grace. And yet we rejoice when we are converted and come to faith: Once I was not in grace, but now I am in grace. This matter we cannot solve according to reason. We refrain therefore from systematising justification. What Scripture says concerning justification, that we accept, that we hold fast and allow not one word of it
to be apocoped or distorted. And we know that all, also what is said concerning general (universal) justification, was written for our comfort and serves our salvation. And when the last encounter comes, in that critical moment, when the soul hovers between death and life, between heaven and hell, when we feel the complete wretchedness of lost, condemned mankind, then we take refuge in this universal grace, then we take comfort in the justification of all men, of all sinners, and draw the conclusion that what was done for all men, must certainly be valid also for us and is intended for me personally. Thus we still our heart before God.51

You will have to forgive this apparent break in the close historical progression we have followed so far. If nothing else, it serves to demonstrate that what Solomon said about things "under the Sun" is also true for the controversies that have broken out concerning the doctrine of objective justification; controversies which will continue to break out as long as there are those who will not accept what God says in his Word until it has been bent to conform to their own logical systems of thought. The "hue and cry" raised against objective justification --in essence, if not in name--in 1888 and 1905 and 1933, at Kokomo, Indiana, in 1979 and at present in 1982, is the same raised in 1864 and 1871. We can only pray that God will see fit to bless the testimony we make concerning this Gospel truth in the 1980's with greater fruit among its opponents than has been the case in the past. Human reason is a very vain, stubborn and determined courtesan, jealous of her praise and honor and loathes to give up even one of her suitors.

IV. The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, 1872-1888

The First Convention of the Synodical Conference

We now leave the year 1871 and arrive at 1872. In this year the division of those who confess the truth of objective justification and those who deny it takes visible form as the Ev. Luth. Synodical Conference of North America. We are most interested in the main essay delivered at the Synodical Conference's first convention.

In June of 1872, "Lehre und Wehre" prepared its readers for the convention essay by printing auf deutsch the "Historical Overview" of the strife between the Norwegian and Augustana Synods that had appeared in the "Kirkelig Maanedstidende" in 1867. On July 10-16 the first convention of die evangelisch-lutherische Synod-Conferenz von Nord-Amerika was held in St. John's Lutheran Church on Vliet Street (Wisconsin Synod), Milwaukee. Walther delivered the opening sermon and the delegates spent the first part of their time discussing theses drawn up to answer the question: "What is Our Duty toward the English Population of Our Country?" Then, as "The Lutheran Standard" reports, "Seven of its sessions were occupied by an active discussion of a series of Theses concerning THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION, with particular reference to the controversy waged by the Norwegian and Augustana Synods."62

Fortunately for the resurrection of my college German, I didn't discover the "notice in"Der Lutheraner"'s report of the Convention's proceedings until I had plowed through the Theses and their discussion in German. "Der Lutheraner" announced that the proceedings would appear in English in the "Lutheran Standard". But rather than make you suffer through my translation, the following quotes are all from the "Standard"'s translation which appeared from November 1, 1872 through January 15, 1873. The following, then, are the twelve theses on justification which the delegates of the Synods present (Ohio, Missouri, Wisconsin, Norwegian, Illinois and
Minnesota) discussed and "had the joy to see that also in these matters complete unity existed among the Synods in their standing alliances." 63a (At last the Wisconsin Synod comes into the picture! Our men present as voting delegates were Synod president, Johann Bading (1824-1913); Professor August Friedrich Ernst, president of Northwestern College; pastor Gustav Adolf Theodor Felix Hensecke (1835-1908) of St. Matthew's, Milwaukee (he had closed our seminary in 1870 and would not reopen it until 1878); and laymen G. Geiger, D. Kusel and F. Nagel.) The man who wrote the theses and led the discussion was none other than the Norwegian Synod's F. A. Schmidt. 63b

Thesis 1. The doctrine of Justification is the prime article of the Christian faith, the true knowledge and pure proclamation of which is of incomparable importance and absolute necessity for individual salvation and the welfare of the whole Church.

Thesis 2. By the mercy of God, the Reformation of the Church through the instrumentality of Dr. Luther took its rise in a renewed knowledge of the pure doctrine of Justification, and in the consequent incorrupt proclamation of this article of faith.

Thesis 3. The pure doctrine of Justification, as again conspicuously set forth by our Lutheran Church from the Word of God, involves three leading points: 1. The doctrine of the universal and perfect redemption of the world by Christ; 2. The doctrine of the power and efficacy of the means of grace; and 3. The doctrine of faith.

Thesis 4. As in Adam all men have fallen and passed under the wrath of God and everlasting damnation as the punishment of sin, so also in Christ, as the second Adam, all men have been truly redeemed from sin, death, devil, and hell, and God is truly reconciled to them all.

Thesis 5. As by the vicarious death of Christ, the guilt of the whole world was cancelled, and the punishment thereof was borne; even so by the resurrection of Christ, righteousness, life, and salvation is restored for the whole world, and in Christ, as the Substitute of all mankind, has come upon all men.

Thesis 6. This grace, forgiveness, righteousness, life and salvation, again acquired for all men by Christ's redeeming work, God brings to man in the means of grace. For the evangelical promise, which is contained in the Word of the Gospel and in the Holy Sacraments, is not an empty sound or a promise devoid of contents, but a powerful proffering (Darreichung) and presentation (Schenkung) of all the gifts, promised by God in the same Word of grace.

Thesis 7. The Gospel is therefore not a mere historical narration of the accomplished work of redemption, but rather an effectual declaration of peace and Divine promise of grace to the world redeemed by Christ, and thus always an effectual means of grace, in which God on His part brings, proffers, distributes, gives and bestows the forgiveness of sins and righteousness acquired by Christ, although all, to whom God extends His sincere and gracious call, do not accept this invitation of the reconciled God, and thus do not become partakers of the accompanying gifts.

Thesis 8. Holy Absolution is a proclamation of the Gospel to one or more particular persons, who desire the comfort of the Gospel. The same is therefore always valid and effectual of itself; for God, through the mouth of His minister, therein declares Himself truly reconciled by the blood and death of Christ, and on His part communicates the gift of forgiveness and Justification to all who receive Absolution, though many do not become partakers of the gifts of grace extended in the Gospel on account of their unbelief.

Thesis 9. The only means by which man is put in possession of the
grace acquired by Christ and extended in the Word and Sacraments is FAITH, which believes the gracious promises of God, and thus appropriates the gifts of the merits and righteousness of Christ proposed in the promise of God, and seeks consolation in the benefits of Christ as its Saviour and Destroyer of sin.

Theor 10. Accordingly faith in Christ does not justify and save because, as an excellent work of man, it acquires a bountiful merit before God, and as a satisfaction for sin reconciles Him unto man; but because, on man’s part, it is the receiving hand which really embraces and accepts the treasure of the merits of Christ, forgiveness, righteousness and salvation, which are offered and presented in the promises of the Gospel. Neither does faith justify and save before God, because freely, of grace and love, He is willing to account it as a meritorious work of righteousness and obedience towards God’s Word; but because the treasure of the merits of Christ, which even the weakest faith embraces in the promises of the Gospel, really embraces the all-sufficient satisfaction for all the guilt and punishment of sin, as well as the perfect obedience towards all the demands of God’s law.

Theor 11. Neither by its power does the faith of the individual render the Evangelical promises which God pronounces in the Word of the Gospel or Absolution really valid, effectual and true; but faith simply adheres to the promise of grace and forgiveness as Divinely true and effectual, and inasmuch as it thus accepts the promises of God, it also embraces the gift of righteousness and salvation therein, and has what the words declare.

Theor 12. When an individual sinner embraces the promises of the Gospel in the Word or Sacraments by faith, and thus appropriates the treasure of the merits of Christ unto his justification and salvation; he is also regarded, accounted, and pronounced of God, in a forensic action before the bar of God, as one who, for his own person, is partaker of the merits and righteousness of Christ unto salvation, and thus, by personal possession of the benefits of Christ, is also personally righteous and an heir of everlasting life.64

We also quote the following from the discussion that occurred. Under Theor 4.

4. What was the resurrection of Christ? It was an act of God in which Christ was pronounced righteous, Christ entered into death laden not with His own, but with the sin and unrighteousness of the whole world. For the sake of these sins He was sentenced and consigned to death. When the Father raised Him again He declared that the debt is discharged, He is righteous. As therefore Christ was condemned not for His own sake, but for the sake of mankind whose sins He bore; so was He not justified for His own sake by the resurrection. Mankind however was justified, for whose sake He died and rose again.

The apparently contradictory statements of Scripture, that the world is absorbed, and that the guilt rests upon unbelievers as long as they do not repent, must be solved in this wise: We must distinguish two ways in which God views mankind. When He views the world in Christ, He looks upon it with infinite love; but when He beholds it out of Christ, He can no otherwise than behold it with fiery indignation. Accordingly the wrath of God abides upon him who does not believe in Christ, or even rejects Him, notwithstanding the fact that God beholds him with eyes of love when He beholds him in His Son and considers his atonement; even as Scripture says: "God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son." Hence God is angry at sinners, and yet loves them, and loves them in such wise as to give His Only-begotten Son to die for them! Beholding the world in the atonement of His Son, He looks upon it as a reconciled world.
fuses this reconciliation, his He can none otherwise behold but in
ingning indigation. According to the procuration of salvation, God
is no longer angry with any man; but according to the appropriation
thereof, He is angry at every one who is not in Christ. We may say
that in such wise as the individual is a part of redeemed mankind,
God is not angry with him; but in such wise as he is individually an
unbeliever, God is angry with him indeed. But here is a profound mys-
tery. God is without passions, unchangeable, for "Thou art the same."
Therefore we cannot clearly conceive how God can love the world col-
lectively, and yet be angry at the sinner individually; but Scripture
teaches both. Now it is the Lutheran fashion to accept with implicit
faith what we cannot reconcile. As incomprehensible however as it is, it
is still by no means self-contradictory. God loves the world and
hates unbelievers; we must supplement. In a different respect . . .
Christ has taken the place of the whole world, and atoned for it. God
in this wise regards the world with delight. But not so out of Christ.
In this respect His wrath, if it were possible, must be even greater
after that event. In regard to the question whether it is proper to say,
The totality of mankind is indeed acquitted, but not individually, it is
necessary to reply: Through Christ God is reconciled to each and every
one individually. Judgment must however be pronounced upon every per-
son individually, either for his acquittal or condemnation . . .

. . . As said before, man cannot get to heaven without conversion,
change of heart, &c., but he is not saved on account of his change of
heart, but must come as a poor sinner, appealing to the compassion of
God by the redemption of Christ. All conceivable stress must be laid
upon the fact that God's wrath is already turned from all mankind by
the passion of Christ, and that the Gospel invitation be extended to all,
Take and accept the proffered grace! It would indeed be terrifying if
[ a minister were obliged to think that the wrath of God was still abiding
upon his congregation; but such not being the case, he can cheerfully
exclaim, "Be ye reconciled to God!" . . . If no change in God's rela-
tion to man had taken place through the atonement of Christ, what sense
would the word "atonement" convey. We would be obliged to erase it from
the Bible. As certainly therefore as the Bible says, "God was in Christ,
reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto
them;" just as certainly no wrath can exist in His heart, when he con-
ceives the world as in Christ. But God also looks about the world and
 Beholds how some would rather be descendants of monkeys than embrace
the atonement of Christ; wherefore the fire of His indignation kindles
upon them unto the nethermost hell. This is no contradiction. But
it indeed is a contradiction to affirm that God must be reconciled by
our faith; for without the fact of God's previous reconciliation no-
body can obtain faith.

. . . In its own nature it (the world) "lieth in wickedness;" but re-
deemed by Christ, it is reconciled to God. In such wise it is true there
is no more sin in the world. Christ has taken it away; and in such
wise the whole world is also free from death, the devil, and damnation.
And this must be preached, and not obscured. The fear that people may
abuse this doctrine dare not restrain the truth. And this is just what
keeps back the fanatics from proclaiming it without restriction. They
imagine that it leads to carnal security.

Under Thesis 5 is found the following:
This Thesis is added to the former in order to show how the resurrection of Christ is the foundation and corner-stone of justification. Even many of the clergy do not properly understand the object of the resurrection. According to certain Scriptural passages they regard it as proof of Christ's Divinity and a demonstration of the fact and certainty of our own resurrection. But true as this is, it is not the chief object. To furnish a mere proof of the former, Christ would not have died and risen again; and the latter was sufficiently demonstrated by the resurrection of others before Christ. Now the world is free from guilt, therefore it can shout victory. This does not conflict with the fact that man is justified by faith; for when we speak of faith, we lay stress upon the personal appropriation on the part of man, of the righteousness acquired by Christ, and its imputation on the part of God. But this would be impossible, if the world had not first been justified by the death and resurrection of Christ, and if Christ's condemnation in death had not been followed by His absolution in the resurrection.

Also under Thesis 5:

In reference to an inquiry of the Norwegian Synod as to the judgment of the Synodical Conference in regard to the charges made by the Iowa Synod against the Norwegian Synod's defense of the doctrine of universal justification, Conference replied to this effect:

This doctrine is positively taught Rom. 5, 18, and it is therefore not only a Biblical doctrine, but also a Biblical expression, that the justification of life came upon all men. None but a Calvinistic exposition could explain this passage in such manner as to restrict this universal justification to the elect. Therefore older orthodox theologians of our Church also speak of the universal justification acquired and extended to all. (Here follows the quotes previously cited in this paper. It is interesting to note why Schmidt believes some theologians of the past did not use the terminology of a "universal justification." He says that, "Our older theologians would have employed the term more frequently, (since they believed and taught the thing), if Huber (Samuel Huber, 1547-1624) had not coupled universal justification with a universal election . . . Nevertheless no small number of undoubtedly sound theologians speak of general justification or absolution.")

... The Iowans are well aware that the people whom they defend over against the Norwegian Synod occupy a false position in regard to the doctrine of justification, absolution and the means of grace; and thus exhibit their spiritual affinity and show how much they care for purity of doctrine. Loesch's successor, Doctor Weber, plainly teaches that the Norwegians defend, but because he is one of their own, they have not a word to say. But when the Norwegians say the same thing, they attack them as the most abominable heretics. And what is the heresy, after all, which they are able to describe? That Christ bore the sin of the whole world, and that the Father raised Him from the dead, they are not able to deny; therefore they are obliged to fasten on one or two expressions which perhaps may not be fitly chosen. The whole strife looks as if it were only calculated to divert the attention of the Church from their own faults. For instance, it is utterly Pelagian, when they maintain that the final decision in conversion is to be sought in man. Thus also in this matter, when G. Fritschel maintains, "In the Gospel
God shows the sinner a way of escape, which can redeem him from death and damnation, and bring to pass the forgiving of his sins."--He denies that justification is already accomplished by Christ, and that righteousness already exists. But thus the Bible teaches, and thus the Church teaches in the Augsburg Confession: "Remission of sins and justification is apprehended by faith." "Grace, and forgiveness of sins, and justification, are received by faith." The Apology says: "Faith accepts the remission of sins and justification." "Justification is a thing freely promised for Christ's sake, wherefore it is always accepted before God by faith alone."

These passages plainly show that justification must previously exist before it can be accepted by faith, and that faith does not bring justification to pass, but embraces it as already existing. But if some one should affirm that the forgiveness of sins indeed exists, but not justification, he would show that he is a stranger to our Confessions, which expressly teach that justification and remission of sins is the same thing. "We believe, teach, and confess," says the Formula of Concord, "that according to the phraseology of the Holy Scriptures, the word 'to justify' in this article, signifies to absolve, that is, to pronounce a sentence of release from sin." Let no body therefore think this is a mere strife about words. No, it involves the maintenance of the most important of all matters against the attack of error. Especially in this land of sectarianism we must diligently preach the doctrine of universal justification, inasmuch as the sects only too plainly show that they regard faith as the efficient cause of justification, whereby they despoil Christ of His glory. For what else is he doing but setting aside the merits of Christ, who affirms that faith justifies for the reason that it imparts power to perform good works, to pray, wrestle with God, &c.?67

Under Thesis 7 the following was said:

. . . Whoever denies that the Gospel is an Absolution to the world, denies the very Gospel itself; for then it is not the "glad tidings" but a piece of instruction regarding the way in which we must reconcile God. The Lord says expressly that the Gospel should be preached among the nations "as a testimony against them;" or, as Saint Paul says, "a savor of life" unto some, and "a savor of death" to others. The contrary doctrine always requires faith before the presence of the gift; therefore it is a godless doctrine, from which men ought to flee with terror. For of what benefit then is all exhortation to faith? What are men expected to believe before the existence of the gift?68

Finally, we offer these remarks from under Thesis 8:

We are true Lutheran ministers only when we are positively assured that the moment we pronounce Absolution, we also loose those present from their sins; and they are true Lutherans who believe that they were verily acquitted by God in that very moment. Let none think, if the minister only knew what a character I am, he would have surely denied me Absolution, therefore the Absolution does not apply to me; but rather, all ought to leave the church perfectly assured that God has pardoned them of all guilt. This of course presupposes the belief that the world is redeemed, and that Absolution accord-
ingly is nothing else but a communication of the fact of that redemption accomplished 1800 years ago, with the adoration, believe it and you are saved. What wicked people we must be to believe it! Some might think we would thus be obliged to absolve the most wicked characters... but Christ's order provides that the holy thing shall not be cast before swine... we teach that it requires no extraordinary qualities to absolve men, inasmuch as every man, woman, and child can do the like, who only knows how to tell that Jesus died for us. For Absolution is not based upon the quality of the speaker, but upon the Word of the Gospel and redemption accomplished once for all...

... If some one should affirm that bread is nutritive only when eaten by the hungry, or that medicine possesses healing powers only when taken by the sick; the sectarians would perceive the ludicrousness of this assertion at once. It is the same with the Gospel, whether it be proclaimed to a person hungering and thirsting after righteousness, or to the ungodly. But it is true that bread does not nourish him who does not eat it; that medicine does not cure him who does not take it; and that the Gospel does not comfort him who does not believe it. But sectarians ought to see that the power of the Word no more resides in man than the nutritive power of bread. The denial of the efficacy of the Gospel and Absolution in the case of the impenitent involves fearful consequences. It leads to a denial of the perfect redemption of the world; since it requires faith as a supplementary work, whose presence is necessary to insure the existence of forgiveness in the Gospel. It leads to the conclusion that Christ's merit is not all-sufficient. But if so, He is not true God. Neither could we preach the Gospel or administer the Sacrament to any one with a good conscience, unless we were positively certain that he believed. We should not indeed admit any to the Sacrament without examination and a declaration of belief on their part. But whether they speak the truth we cannot tell; inasmuch as we have no ability to read people's hearts. Therefore we must do our office, and positively believe that we truly absorb all, though ignorant as to the persons by whom it is appropriated.69a

In view of the above, is it any wonder that this report received such a warm reception? I hope that someday this entire report will see circulation again. Even after 110 years it still reads fresh and powerful because of the Gospel message it proclaims.69b

What happened now? In the Iowa Synod's September 1 "Kirchen-Blatt," Gottfried Frönschel quoted Theses 4 and 5 and wrote:

Since representatives of the Norwegian Synod were also present at the Synodical Conference, we can hope that on the foundation of these Theses the controversy between both Scandinavian Synods will come to an end.70

But one wonders if he was aware of the discussion that accompanied the Theses (or, as suggested in "Lehre und Wehre," he was laying groundwork for an attack on the new Synodical Conference), because he says that this will take place only when the Norwegians adopt the stand of the Synodical Conference and allow their own errors to fall, their teaching

... of the unconditional justification of all men and of each individual; that each man is already justified before and apart from faith;
and that each individual man, even Judas, is viewed as righteous in
God's court and verdict, has received the forgiveness of sins, and has
become (objectively) a child of God and an heir of heaven.\textsuperscript{71}

Farewell to Schmidt and "auf wiedershen" to the Norwegian Synod

The Norwegian Synod quickly published the proceedings concerning Justification in
a 51 page pamphlet entitled, "Tract No. 4," and in November used the 12 Theses as
the basis for discussion with the Norwegian-Danish Conference (previously mentioned
as separating peacefully from the Augustana Synod in 1870) at a free conference at
Rock Prairie, Wisconsin.

... the participants once again foundered on the reef of "justification
of the world." Men from the Norwegian-Danish Conference maintained that
no man is justified before he has faith (implied in the teaching of "justi-
fication of the world"), while Synod pastors emphasized that the atone-
ment of Christ alone (without faith) is the basis for forgiveness. To
say that faith, as well as the atonement, is the basis of justification
would mean that man contributes to his salvation. The Conference men
believed that the doctrine of justification was the basic issue, whereas
the Synod men insisted that the doctrine of the atonement was at stake.\textsuperscript{72}

The conference ended with H. A. Preus hurling his "Banbulle" (bull of excommunication)
at the Norwegian-Danish Conference, on the basis of Galatians 1:6-8.

After the Synodical Conference Proceedings appeared in English in the "Lutheran Stan-
don," F. A. Schmidt, in the same journal of the Ohio Synod, countered charges
levelled against the Norwegian Synod by Dr. Joseph Seiss of the General Council in
his "Lutheran and Missionary" in January of 1873. "The Norwegian Synod Question"
of Seiss, in which he said that it appeared that the Synodical Conference was
being "Synodically catechized" by the Norwegian Synod, was answered by Schmidt's
"The Lutheran's Assault upon our Doctrine of Justification." Seiss countered with
"A Sorry Picture," which opens with the following words:

Rev. Prof. F. A. Schmidt, of St. Louis, in a recent number of The Stan-
dard, exhibits himself in a sputter of passion bordering on insanity
over the brief comments of the Lutheran on the Norwegian Synod ques-
tion in the Synodical Conference... we do not remember ever having
seen in print another such a specimen of harsh and unreasonable ma-
ediction. The man raves and squirms as if he were being roasted alive;
and yet banterers and vaunts like a very Goliath of Gath, clad in invis-
ible armor from head to foot. We see no reason for answering his gas-
conade... It is a common proverb that the emptiest barrels give out
the most noise. The grossness of the article and its manifest design
to insult and wound puts it quite outside the range of respectful at-
tention.\textsuperscript{73}

This article, in turn, prompted from Schmidt, "A Sorry Picture! Indeed!" Seiss
rejoindered with, "That Norwegian Business Again," his last reference to the matter
as far as I could discover. Schmidt's parting shot was, "That Norwegian Synod
Again!" - THE WHOLE SECRET OUT", which appeared after an intervening article en-
titled, "Universal Justification: Some More Testimonies of Lutheran Theologians."

As for Seiss himself and objective justification, I don't know if the following was
his belief in 1873, but in a series of lectures on the Epistles published in 1885
the following is found under his lecture on Romans 6:3-11. While it is evidence for a belief in objective justification, it also seems to indicate a confusion of justification and sanctification on Seiss' part. When it comes to the question, "Why are we saved?"

... although Christ has won for all men a free justification from the sentence of the law, and a status of innocence and freedom in that respect the same as if they had never sinned at all, they may still perish and the world rot down from inherent corruptions. The justification of a sinner is not everything unto his salvation. It is one thing, and a transcendently great thing—a thing that lies at the base of everything else—but it is only in order to our sanctification... .

... But justification itself needs to be individually appropriated to to be of individual avail, even forensically. Though humanity as a whole now stands justified in and through Christ, that justification does not avail for any one individual's personal standing in the eye of the law until it is applied to him and he personally receives and takes it... the free gift which has come upon all men to justification must be personally appropriated and made one's own, or it is all the same as if there had been no Christ, no provided salvation.

We now end the part the Norwegian Synod plays in this paper until we meet the Norwegian Synod of the American Lutheran Church (the present Evangelical Lutheran Synod) raising its voice in protest against Missouri in the 1940's. For the sake of information, the following statement concerning absolution was officially adopted by the Norwegian Synod, Hauge Synod and the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in 1912: "The Absolution itself is always a real and valid absolution of God, although it does not benefit without faith, and although an unrepentant and unbelieving hypocrite does not thus become a partaker of the gift of the forgiveness of sins which is declared unto him." By this time the most bitter opponents on this question had formed their own body, the Lutheran Free Church (1877).

As for F. A. Schmidt, the last contribution I found from him with regard to this matter was an article on absolution that appeared in "Lehre und Wehre" in May of 1874. In five short years the rest of his life would be wrapped up in his involvement with the Election Controversy he would precipitate. And so we move on to objective justification among Walther and his Synod again, with an absence of pointed controversy concerning objective justification until the fall of 1888.

Convention Essays

As we've already seen, the truth of objective justification, or the world's actual absolution proclaimed in Christ's resurrection, was the heart of Walther's theology, as it must be for every true theologian, Lutheran or otherwise. Walther's essays for the Western District conventions of 1874 and 1875, part of his series on the general topic: "The Doctrine of the Lutheran Church Alone Gives All Glory to God; An Irrefutable Proof That Its Doctrine Alone Is True," dealt with the subject of objective justification.

In 1874 Walther introduced his Fifth Point with these words:

In the fifth point we hear how the Lutheran Church gives God all glory also in its teaching on the reconciliation and redemption of the human race. This teaching is without doubt the crowning glory of all Christian doctrine, and the triumphant note in the Christian religion. All
religions show mankind a way of release from sin's despair, a way to salvation and eternal happiness. While all religions, with the exception of Christianity, show how man must by his own efforts accomplish his salvation, the Christian religion on the contrary teaches not only how people eventually shall be eternally saved, but that they are already saved. Man, according to the Christian faith, is already redeemed, already freed from sin and despair, and God is already reconciled with him. The Christian religion assures man: You need not redeem yourself and reconcile God to yourself. All this Christ has done for you. There is nothing left for you to do but to believe this, that is, accept it. 77

In 1875, Walther presented his Sixth Point, concerning, "The Justification of the Sinner by Grace Alone Through Faith in Jesus Christ Without Any Merits of Works." Under the fifth section, "God does not justify us conditionally," Walther states: "We are not reconciled to God when we believe, but we are already redeemed, are already reconciled to God, so that we believe. This is also true regarding justification. The whole world is already justified in Christ. Faith is not the condition under which we are justified but the way and means by which we become partakers of the justification which God has long ago given us." 78

At our own Wisconsin Synod Conventions of 1879 and 1880, an essay was delivered by Reinhold Pieper (1850-1920), oldest of the three Pieper brothers. His "Theses Concerning Justification" were the following:

I. The word to justify in the Bible always has the meaning, "to declare righteous," never, "to transform something sinful with respect to its essence into something just through the infusion of a foreign righteousness.

II. The reason why God justifies sinners lies in God alone: It is, namely, his grace and mercy for the fallen human race.

III. However, since God is not only gracious, but also just, the justification of sinners would be impossible if God's righteousness, eternally offended by sins, had not received a full satisfaction and their lost righteousness had not been acquired for men.

IV. Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, has done both through his life and death, and for this reason God is once again reconciled with mankind.

V. This reconciliation, or, justification, is offered, presented and imparted to men through the Word and the Sacraments.

VI. The means, by which a man appropriates for himself this righteousness of Christ, is faith--worked in him by grace through the Word and the Sacraments by the Holy Spirit--and faith alone!

VII. The penitent sinner who has now, in faith, seized the righteousness which has been prepared for him by God the Father, acquired for him by God the Son, and offered and imparted by God the Holy Spirit through the Word and Sacraments, is thus declared righteous by God for the sake of the same.

VIII. Justification has three characteristics in particular: It is, namely, 1) complete; 2) permanent, or, continuous; 3) certain.

From the exposition of these theses, the following statements are cited:

The universality of the justification sealed by the resurrection cannot be emphasized enough. It is not merely for believers, but for all—the godless as well. In Christ all men have a complete reconciliation; the entire world is covered with the forgiveness of sins. This is to preach Christ correctly. This makes the hearers anxious
to believe; (to hear) that they have already been saved (Eph 2:8).
The believers already enjoy it, because they believe. The unbelievers don't enjoy it, because they don't believe it. Let us therefore consider what a glorious ministry we preachers have, and let us deny no one this precious treasure! 79 (From the Proceedings of 1879)

From these verses (Rom 4:23-25) it is clear that redemption, reconciliation and justification are entirely the same thing. Before God we are reconciled with God and just through Christ's redemption. The only thing lacking is that justification has not been subjectively conferred on the individual...

To the point in the thesis (V), "Reconciliation and Justification," it was further remarked for elucidation that, while in many cases it is certainly true that reconciliation and justification are identical, nevertheless, the Bible does speak of a justification in a two-fold manner: 
1) that God was reconciled and his wrath was stilled by the presentation of the atonement offering. Here, reconciliation and justification are not one and the same. 
2) That we are reconciled, (that we) were brought into another relationship with God. In this sense reconciliation and justification are, by all means, one and the same. If one speaks of reconciliation in the first sense, then justification is the fruit of reconciliation.

Schmidt began his attacks against the Missouri Synod on the doctrine of election late in 1879. His attacks went unanswered for almost a whole year, but by the end of 1880 the controversy broke in full force. A number of Missouri pastors, among them Frederick William Stellhorn (1841-1919), and the Ohio Synod, sailed with Schmidt, as many within his own Norwegian Synod. No doubt a factor in Schmidt's "success" in gaining allies in this battle, beyond the "reasonableness" of his error, was his high reputation as a theologian and staunch defender of orthodoxy.

The Synodical Council discussed the issue in January of 1881 and Missouri adopted its "Thirteen Theses" in May of the same year. In September the Ohio Synod withdrew from the Synodical Conference. In 1882 the Synodical Conference refused to seat Schmidt, elected as a delegate of the Norwegian Synod, resulting in the withdrawal of the Norwegian Synod from the Synodical Conference in 1883, primarily due to the inner struggle going on within its own ranks between the true Lutherans and those who followed Schmidt. Due to Schmidt's influence, the final outcome of who would "win" was far from certain at that point. The Norwegians wouldn't be back in the Synodical Conference again until 1920, and then only the faithful remnant which formed the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1918.

In the same year of 1883, the 400th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther, two Missouri Synod districts discussed theses on justification. One of them was the Nebraska District. Under the direction of a Pastor Siedemann, it considered "Theses Concerning the Justification of Sinful Men Before God According to the Gospel," drawn up by Walther. The fact that Siedemann led the discussion no doubt accounts for a decidedly un-Waltherian lack of emphasis on the objective facet of justification.

The eight theses discussed were:

I. The doctrine of justification is that doctrine by which the Church stands or falls.
II. The word, "to justify," in the Bible, signifies a judicial action of God when the matter concerns the justification of a sinner before God, in virtue of which (action) the sinner is regarded as just by God and de-
clared (to be) the same.

III. The cause which moves God to regard sinners as just and to declare them just are 1) his universal grace, and 2) Christ's righteousness acquired for all men.

IV. The means through which God offers, confers and seals Christ's righteousness to the sinner are these alone: 1) God's Word, and 2) the Holy Sacraments.

V. The means through which a man appropriates and secures Christ's righteousness to himself is faith alone, which the Holy Spirit works in him through the Word of the Gospel.

VI. The consequences of Justification are: 1) the peace of God, 2) Christian freedom, 3) sanctification, and 4) the hope of eternal life.

VII. The characteristics of justification are: 1) that it doesn't occur again and again, but in an instant; 2) that it is complete; 3) that it is the same for all who are justified; 4) that it lasts; 5) that it can be lost again; 6) that it can be acquired again. (Note: it is obvious that this thesis deals with the subjective and personal aspects of justification.)

VIII. The ultimate goal of justification is: 1) man's salvation, and 2) God's glory.

In the same year, what has to be considered a classic treatment of justification was presented to the Southern District of the Missouri Synod by a man who would take Schmidt's place as the ardent "public defender" of objective justification in the years ahead. He was a product of Northwestern "University" in Watertown and a pastor in the Wisconsin Synod from 1875-1878, one of Walther's students at Concordia Seminary and the man who would become Walther's successor as the visible head of Lutheran orthodoxy, if I may be allowed this expression. At the time he presented his "Theses Concerning the Doctrine of Justification," Professor Franz August Otto Pieper (1852-1931) was one month short of his 31st birthday and had been teaching at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis for 5 years. His gifts as a theologian are evident to anyone who reads the discussion of the following theses. Here was a man God blessed with the gifts necessary to hold high the torch of his pure Gospel's light.

Pieper led the discussion concerning the following six theses:

I. All men are sinners by virtue of their natural condition and their own works and, for this reason, lie under God's wrath and the judgment of damnation. But God has completely reconciled all men to himself through Christ's vicarious work and has justified them de facto in Christ's resurrection from the dead.

II. God makes this known to men in the Word of the Gospel, that it will be believed by the same. Therefore, the Gospel is not an empty sound, but a proffering of the forgiveness of sins acquired by Christ to all who hear the Gospel.

III. Since forgiveness of sins through Christ has already been acquired for every person, and the same is proffered and promised in the Word of the Gospel, thus a person is justified before God through faith alone, apart from the works of the Law.

IV. In the article concerning justification through faith, faith stands in opposition to every human work. Whoever, therefore, holds faith itself to be either entirely or in part a work of man, teaches, in expositions which are in every other respect orthodox, no justification by grace for Christ's sake, just as he also teaches no more justification through faith.
V. For the Christian to be certain of God's grace or his justification—which is the same thing—every human work must be excluded from justification, and Law and Gospel must be carefully separated.

VI. Indeed, the farther we place works out of sight in the article of justification and separate faith from all works, the closer works will be found together with faith in a person's behavior.

For a taste of Pieper's style, we can look at some of the things he said under thesis II. Commenting on the words of the Apology, "Faith reconciles and justifies us before God when and at which time we seize the promise through faith," Pieper writes:

Here one could find a contradiction because now it is said that a man is first justified through faith, while for the past while, we have constantly stressed that God has already reconciled the whole world to himself and absolved, or justified, it in his heart, through Christ's work, and when he accepted the same. There is, however, no contradiction here. One must distinguish between the so-called subjective and objective justification. This is not a distinction we make, for that would be rash. We ought not to take it upon ourselves in spiritual, divine matters to give such human doctrinal definitions (Lehrbestimmungen). No, God's Word gives both definitions. Objective justification has occurred once for all time when God reconciled mankind to himself in Christ some 1900 years ago, and this justification extends over all men without exception because Christ vicariously made satisfaction for all men, and God has accepted this satisfaction for all men. Subjective justification occurs now when men hear the Word of the Gospel, understand that God is reconciled with them through Christ, and believe this—that is, rely on it in their heart and use it to comfort themselves against the accusations of conscience. That the Holy Bible teaches the so-called objective justification, we have, indeed, already demonstrated today. We will only refer briefly now to a few biblical passages. 2 Cor 5: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their sins against them." Here it is said that God at that time already, when he reconciled the world to himself in Christ—therefore, almost 1900 years ago—did not count the world's sins against it; that is, God at that time had already absolved, or justified, the world, because "not to impute sins," is, according to the terminology of the Holy Bible, nothing less than "to justify," as we see from Rom 4:8.

Further, Rom 5:18, "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men." Here it is said on the one hand that through Adam's sin all men have come under the judgment of damnation. And in exactly the same way it is also announced that through Christ's righteousness justification of life, that is, the judgment for life, is come upon all men. Here, in words that can't be misunderstood, the subject matter is a justification (pardon, δικαίωσις, absolution) of all men, which was accomplished through Christ's righteousness; that is, in this way, that Christ has vicariously achieved a righteousness for mankind and God counts this righteousness to men just as he also counts Adam's sin to all men.

Pieper then stresses the necessity of subjective justification through faith for salvation. "This is God's will and order. Thus, whoever is not justified through faith cannot be saved, although he was completely reconciled through Christ and although he was already pardoned of all sins in Christ." Pieper concludes this section with the following:
The Gospel is, indeed, not a mere instruction of how a person can become just before God. Rather, it is the pronouncement of the justifying verdict itself. The Gospel is also not a mere description of the persons God might pass as justified, but the proffering of the forgiveness of sins itself. Many have objected: The forgiveness of sins, indeed, occurs through the Gospel directly, but not justification! To this must be answered: In this case, forgiveness of sin and justification are the same. Absolution is justification, to count as righteous, as we see from Romans 4:6-8. Our Confession also refers to the same, "To obtain and have the forgiveness of sins means the same as to become just and pious before God, as Psalm 32 says, 'Blessed is he, whose transgressions are forgiven' (Apol. IV (II))." 

From the fall of 1884 to the fall of 1885, Walther delivered his famous series of evening lectures on Law and Gospel. Published later from notes taken during the series, it should hardly come as a surprise that in them we find Walther stressing the objective nature of the Gospel, as well as quoting Luther "On the Keys" again (Lecture 18).

The Death of C. F. W. Walther

Walther died on May 7, 1887. In the same year Georg Stöckhardt, until this time only a "guest lecturer and exegete" at Concordia Seminary while serving as pastor of Holy Cross in St. Louis, was elected a full-time professor. It is Stöckhardt, without a doubt the foremost exegetic scholar of his time, who was now responsible for a new peak in the controversy over the doctrine of objective justification, this time primarily between Missouri and her former ally, Ohio, who joined the attack on Missouri begun by Iowa. But before we move on, I feel it's only fitting to pay tribute to the memory of C. F. W. Walther.

Perhaps his name has not played as significant a part in this paper as men like Schmidt and Pieper, but these were men Walther taught, and Walther made his influence felt! As confessional Lutherans in America, I believe it is safe to say with an article that appeared in the "Lutheran Spokesman" in August, 1965: "We are all descendants of one man, C. F. W. Walther." To quote this article further:

Dr. Walther was an outstanding gift. His name must be mentioned with men since St. Paul like Augustine, Athanasius, Martin Luther and their like... 

Everything you and I have learned to treasure, all that was good in the Synodical Conference—its faithfulness to the Gospel, its emphasis on sound doctrine, its hatred for all error, its determination to establish Christian day schools, its thorough indoctrination of pastors, teachers, members—all this must be credited (humanly speaking) to that one man, Walther. Our confessional Lutheran church in America was born at Altenburg, Missouri in 1841, when Walther contended for the true teaching of the church and ministry.

His greatness is that he did not build a sect on that point of doctrine. Though forced by controversy to contend for the scriptural teaching on church and ministry, yet the salvation of the sinner by the justification of God in Christ remained central in Walther's teaching, preaching, and writing. He preached the full forgiveness of sins as no one had since the monk from Wittenberg. In his controversies with the Buffalo Prussians, and later with the Chican in the election controversy, he was able to see the heart of the errors and their relationship to the
good news, the peace of the sinner.87

... The graduates of the first 30 years or so were Waltherian, through and through. This created the unity in Missouri, the strong esprit de corps. There was consistency in doctrine and in every realm of practice. ... This Walther army was not only a well drilled army, but had great substance, because Walther gave these men more than himself. He stressed above all objective justification, that God had proclaimed an Easter pardon for every sinner in the world. Therein lay Walther's greatness, his meaning, his success. From St. Louis went forth a host of faithful Gospel preachers establishing congregations from shore to shore. ... And, as we shall see, when Missouri's love for this doctrine began to grow cold, the Missouri Synod of old disappeared. But now to 1888.

V. Missouri vs. Iowa and Ohio, 1888-1889

Missouri

From March 13, 1888 until May 22, Stockhardt presented the readers of "Der Lutheraner" with a popular series of six articles entitled, "Concerning Justification by (aus dem) Faith". While dealing primarily with subjective justification and making no reference to die allgemeine Rechtfertigung by name, the June number of "Lehre und Wehre" gave its readers an article by Stockhardt devoted exclusively to this subject. This article, whose conclusion we have already quoted, is short (6 pages to the point, and a doctrinal gem of clarity and expression. I would like to quote it in its entirety but instead I'll limit myself to a summary of its main points, interspersed with quotes from the translation by Otto F. Stahlke which appeared in the "Concordia Theological Quarterly," Vol. 42, No. 2 (1978).

First, Stockhardt's introduction:

Genuine Lutheran theology counts the doctrine of general (Stahlke's consistent translation of allgemeine) justification among the statements and treasures of its faith. 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. This doctrine of general justification is the guarantee and warranty that the central article of justification by faith is being kept pure. Whoever holds firmly that God was reconciled to the world in Christ, and that to sinners in general their sin was forgiven, to him the justification which comes from faith remains a pure act of the grace of God. Whoever denies general justification is justly under suspicion that he is mixing his own work and merit into the grace of God.89

Since pieces of the Bible's theological puzzle don't fit right when this doctrine is accepted, most modern theologians, "especially those who call themselves and are counted as Lutherans," lay down the following sequence of thought when they treat the doctrine of justification:

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.\textsuperscript{70}

Stockhardt makes the perceptive observation that for those who reject objective justification, "Christ Himself alone, Christ's redemption in contrast to the forgiveness of sins, is to them the object of faith."\textsuperscript{71} If I may express his thoughts in my own words, these people believe that Jesus lived and died for them and earned forgiveness for them. And because they believe this, God will therefore forgive their sins!

Thus faith is not only a means, not only a hand which accepts the gift of God, but this very accepting and grasping of the merit of Christ in an action of man which effects something, which brings into being something that was not there before, namely, the forgiveness of sins. It is, then, basically a successful performance. In accordance with the Biblical concept of merit, it is a meritorious work. And precisely thereby the comfort of this justification is built upon sand. When a sinful man wants to become certain of this—that God counts him as righteous, that He forgives him his sins—then it does not help him if he looks to Christ and to the Gospel. For in Christ, in the Gospel of Christ he finds only the possibility of forgiveness of sins or of justification. Man must then look into his heart to see whether there he finds that behavior which translates possibility into reality. And if he is then anguished and tortured by his sins under a feeling of the wrath of God and he does not find that critical point within his inner consciousness, when that faith escapes from his feeling and his awareness, then woe, then the lifeline escapes and is torn from his hands, then he despairs and goes to ruin in spite of all possibilities of salvation.\textsuperscript{72}

Again, we see that there is nothing new in the way of doctrinal controversies under the sun, is there?

As the locus classicus for this doctrine, Stockhardt cites Romans 5:12-21, with verses 18 and 19 the summary of the entire section. His exegesis is the same as Professor Becker's mentioned earlier. Stockhardt concludes:

The Scripture text before us is a clear passage, as clear as sunlight. Paul testifies clearly and plainly here that all men who were condemned through Adam's sin have been justified through Christ and that precisely because Christ fulfilled all righteousness and rendered obedience all men are actually justified, not only potentially. It is a wretched gloss when the more recent interpreters comment that the many, "all men," are only believers, because St. Paul otherwise ascribes justification to believers only. But this idea goes counter to the Scripture in both text and context.\textsuperscript{73}

Stockhardt also cites 1 John 2:2 along with Romans 5:18-19 to show how Paul uses the concepts "reconciliation" and "justification" interchangeably. He states that, "Justification is nothing other than the forgiveness of sins," quotes 2 Cor 5:19, and concludes:
When God through Christ, Christ's death, reconciled the world to Himself, He forgave the sins of the world, of all who belong to the world. Thus, it is true of all men that their sins are not imputed to them. All sins were actually forgiven to the world, the whole world, when Christ died for sinners. It is a wretched gloss of the interpreters, when they transform the forgiveness of sins, then transacted, into the potential of a later forgiveness of sins.94

Stöckhardt also shows how Paul harmonizes what he says concerning objective justification with what he says concerning justification by faith.

Romans 5:17 says: "For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Through the obedience of one all men are justified, have received the justification unto life. But it is not said that now all, although they all are justified, will actually inherit, enjoy, reign in eternal life. Only those who accept, receive, the fullness of grace, the gift of righteousness, will reign in eternal life through the one, Jesus Christ. This accepting, this receiving, of which the apostle has spoken before . . . is nothing other than faith. . . . Through our faith, then, we for our person step within this justifying judgment of God which God has already declared over all sinners in general, into this new relation of grace founded through Christ, and are thus accounted righteous before God and can declare with joy: Now we have become righteous through faith. Thus through faith the general justification becomes a special justification. We draw and guide the justifying judgment of God directly upon our head, upon our person. Those who do not believe reject Christ and the Gospel, though they also have been justified through Christ's obedience.

. . . He who believes does not first make reality of something that God had only made possible, but recognizest and confirms what, on the side of God, was long truth and reality. He who does not believe renders impotent and invalid what was already reality.95

Stöckhardt's conclusion has already been quoted.

Iowa

In September and again in November, Iowa's Gottfried Fritschel, Schmidt and the Norwegian Synod's fee of 1871, now attacked Stöckhardt in two articles that appeared in the "Theologische Monatshefte," "Justification by faith vs. Justification without Faith?" and "What Dr. Philippi (Dr. Friedrich Adolf Philippi, 1809-1882; one of the modern theologians Stöckhardt mentioned by name who, although he did uphold the scriptural doctrine of inspiration, didn't teach objective justification) Teaches About Justification." Fritschel's position was basically the same he maintained in 1871, although now he also brings the Election Controversy into the discussion. Like many before him, he doesn't make any attempt to argue on the basis of the loci Stöckhardt cited. His arguments are those of the law and human reason. His main argument is that if subjective justification is an act that occurs in man (with reference to personal faith here), then no forensic act on the part of God can be involved. Much of his first article is lifted verbatim from 1871. I offer here the conclusion to his September article, even though it is rather lengthy.

In later times, one will regard with fixed amazement, as an astounding event of the church history of our time, how, at that time, hundreds of
pastors, "with one charge," hurled themselves behind a single leader into the abyss of the false doctrine of an unconditional predestination. He will wear himself out trying to explain the wonder psychologically and make his comments, what a consolidation in the "pure doctrine" and what a degree of theological learning and self-reliance must have, indeed, existed among them, that "in a jiffy," in a single charge, they allowed themselves to fall into such an abyss of this doctrine, one so rejected by the entire Lutheran Church; may, and what is more, which has been allowed to fall, for the most part, in the Reformed Church.

And at that time one will also not be able to overcome his amazement how it could be possible that among those who always acted as if they had Lutheran orthodoxy caught and thoroughly impounded—who issued their wholesale judgment of damnation over all contemporary Lutheran theologians and in their paper auto-da-fe butchered all of Germany's Lutheran theologians wholesale—the doctrine of justification apart from faith could arise, this denial of all Lutheran thinking and all Lutheran beliefs... One will ask himself with astonishment, how one is to explain that the hundreds of these pastors, following as pilgrims, true to their leader, allowed themselves to remain mute and silent, when, for them, justification was moved out of the doctrine of justification; the doctrine of justification was thrown out of the third article; the heart of the doctrine of justification (the actus foresis) was taken out; the bare shell (the act of men, the reception, the personal comfort) alone was allowed to remain; and when, thus, the Lutheran concept of justification was abandoned—indeed, was damned as false doctrine!

One will ask himself whether this astonishing occurrence is to be explained as the result of an indescribable indifference for pure doctrine, since the abandonment of the Lutheran doctrine of justification was considered such a trifle that no one thought it worthwhile to even take notice of it; or if the reason lies in the fact that these "heroes of orthodoxy," always ready to anathematize, were so unfamiliar with the ABC's of Lutheran doctrine that they didn't so much as notice in the slightest how the Lutheran concept of justification was stolen away from them.

Well, at least we will raise our voice against this attempt to shove the Lutheran concept of justification aside. It shall not be able to be said that in the American Lutheran Church no witness was brought to bear against the attempted assassination of the Lutheran doctrine of justification...

An unconditional predestination; an unconditional justification! A predestination in which no room is left for faith; a justification where faith is absent!

God preserve Lutheran Christians in race from apostasy from the articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae.96a

Stöckhardt's response to Fritschen appeared in March, 1889, in a "Lehre und Wehre" article entitled, "An Attempted Assassination of the Lutheran Doctrine of Justification." Stöckhardt summarized the two Synod's positions in this way:

Missouri teaches that in Christ, with Christ's death and resurrection, the entire world is actually and truly absolved and justified; that the sins of the entire world are forgiven. And Iowa teaches that through Christ's death and resurrection now only the possibility of justification and the forgiveness of sins is established and given; a possibility
What about Fritschel's charge that Missouri's doctrine of objective justification denied that subjective justification was an actus forensis Dei extra hominem? Stöckhardt wrote:

The fact is, that when Missouri describes subjective or special justification (or, what one generally simply calls "justification"), the justification by faith, it lays stress on that judgment of God extra hominem; that Missouri knows full well how to distinguish justification and faith; that Missouri, with all energy, excludes the old well-known antithesis, which explains justification as an occurrence within men, as an act of men.

To the best of my knowledge, Stöckhardt never received a reply from Gottfried Fritschel in print or otherwise. Fritschel died on July 13 at the age of 52. But he didn't die before he had the chance to see Ohio join his attack on Missouri, in both its theological and popular publications.

Ohio

In May of 1889, Henry August Allwardt (1840-1910), who left the Missouri Synod in 1881 to join Ohio, authored an article in Ohio's "Theologische Zeitblatter" entitled, "Missouri's Further Apostasy from the Doctrine of the Lutheran Church," as well as an article, "Missouri's Advance into Error," which appeared in the May 15 and June 1 lavmen's "Lutherische Kirchenzeitung."

Two quotes from the first article give a good idea of Allwardt's position:

... Above all, a denial of the doctrine of justification through faith lies in Missouri's doctrine of election. According to the teaching of the Bible, neither the forgiveness of sins nor the righteousness which is valid before God can be spoken to a man until he believes in Christ... His transgression is truly removed through Christ's life and death --Christ is the reconciliation for the entire world's sin-- but an unbeliever has no part in Christ, is not in Christ, and is, therefore, already judged (John 3:18)...

The absolution obtained surreptitiously in this way (by the impenitent) is, in and of itself, certainly entirely the same as that spoken over believers. However, absolution is never, on that account, a declaration that a man is truly found in the state of grace. Rather, it is a ceremonial, always valid declaration of God through the mouth of the minister that he, then and there, will... cancel and truly cancels all guilt and punishment only so far as a man truly believes in Christ as he confesses (he does)."
It is also in this second installment that we finally find his challenge to Stöckhardt's use of Romans 5:18-19 (but not 2 Cor 5:19). Allwardt first states that, "even if we could give no answer to the dear professor, we could still revert to the rule which St. Paul has established for all Scripture interpretation in Romans 12: If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith ("analogous to faith"); that is, no individual passage of Scripture should be interpreted in such a way that it contradicts the foundation-article of faith and, in general, other completely clear passages of Scripture. 100 (And of course, the Law tells us that all unbelievers are under God's wrath and there are all the passages that tell us we are justified by faith.)

Allwardt deals with Romans 5:12-21 on the basis of his rule stated above. He asserts that these verses must not be read in a way that denies the appropriation of justification through faith (which, of course, Stöckhardt never did). He also writes:

Besides, in this comparison (the origin of sin together with the consequent damnation, through Adam, with the origin of righteousness together with the consequent pardon, or justification, through Christ) the new birth through faith is included. It's just not spoken of expressly. Damnation has not come upon all through one man simply due to the fact that because Adam sinned all other men would be damned with him, but also because we, by birth from Adam, have become partakers of his sin, as Paul says in v. 12. Therefore, if we now only take the comparison a little further, we will become partakers in the justification of life through the second Adam in no other way than through the new birth. 101

But is this what the plain words say? Of course not! And Allwardt leaves Romans 5:18,19 untouched. As for Stöckhardt's other evidence, Allwardt writes: "Prof. Stöckhardt also quotes Romans 5:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:19, as well as a few passages from Luther. We must, however, break off here and will wait and see whether he maintains his pernicious business further." 102

In June's "Lehre und Wehre," under the "Contemporary Church News" section (Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches), Franz Pieper had "something new to report." "The Ohioans are expressly attacking the doctrine of justification as heresy which they had confessed with the entire Synodical Conference at its first convention in 1872. . . . Will this serve to open the eyes of all of those under the enchantment of these lamentable, misguided minds (Irrgelstern)?" 103

In July and August, Stöckhardt appeared with, "Yet a Word Concerning Justification." He mentions opposition in Germany against Missouri as a result of Fritscheil's "indictment," but he specifically deals with the charges made by Allwardt. Stöckhardt spends time referring to the 1872 proceedings of the Synodical Conference, for obvious reasons. But he also deals with the main issue: Is Missouri's doctrine of justification (both objective and subjective) old or new, Scriptural truth? He makes the following points:

... where Scripture answers the question: "How is a man, a sinner, justified before God?" it testifies curtly that a man is justified through faith or from faith (προφητεύω, ὁποῖα προφητεύω, εἰς προφητεύω). . . . This is the customary, so to speak, "stereotyped" manner in which the Bible and the Church and the Confessions of the Church in accord with the Bible speak about justification. 104a

But now the question arises, "How is this speech to be understood? How is it that faith justifies us before God? What is the correct concept of justifying faith?" As true as it may be that faith is indeed a good work and a beautiful virtue, it doesn't justify for this reason
Faith is always held in opposition to works. We are never justified \( \text{διὰ θητοῦ!} \) The ground for our justification is always God's grace, God's love, Christ's grace, Christ's redemptive work, Christ's merit; in short, Christ himself.\(^{104}\)

So how does faith justify?

Faith seizes Christ in the Gospel, and at the same time the righteousness which counts before God, justification, forgiveness of sins— in this way it justifies men before God. The gift of God—righteousness, forgiveness—is already present before faith, finished and ready and presented in the Word. Faith takes this gift of righteousness. Thus faith justifies.\(^{105}\)

Stöckhardt says that Ohio, following Iowa's example and the theories of the newer theologians,

... identify Christ's merit exclusively as the content of the Word and the object of faith, and leave the "justification" or "forgiveness of sins" to be effected by faith in Christ, so that faith no longer appears here as a means but, truly and essentially, as a condition and cause of justification... This theory... fundamentally destroys the comfort of justification, so that now the poor sinner cannot take his stand out of the Word directly—out of the Gospel—just what he needs above all else: the certainty that his sins are forgiven! Indeed, (if this is true) then no one can say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," because "to believe" means to accept that which is already present.\(^{106}\)

Stöckhardt also gives a quick review of the passages in Scripture which teach objective (universal) justification, and says as well:

We speak and think about this great, important matter, according to our human capacity, in this way: God forgives over and over again the same sins which he already forgave long ago. And the Bible speaks with us men in a human manner. But the truth is this, an actus simplex, which we can only picture as a compound act, as a constant repetition of the same action. It is a continuum in God which is not cut into pieces and divided out throughout time, a thought, an Anschauung, that in Christ he regards us as godly and just.\(^{107}\)

When it comes to objective justification,

... a dilemma always remains here to our way of thinking. We say, according to the Bible, that God loved the world; that God reconciled the world and has absolved it from sin. And at the same time, the Bible testifies that the same world is in a sorry state and lies under (God's) wrath. A person, born and conceived in sin, is a child of wrath before he comes to faith. Yet, on the other hand, he is also a part of the reconciled world, which God loves, and therefore himself also reconciled to God and justified by God. This is not contradictory. It is a double approach to the same object. The one starting point is the world of sinful men viewed in Christ; the other, the same world viewed outside of Christ. In Christ, God loves sinners; outside of Christ, he's angry with them. One is the judgment of the Law upon sinful men; the other the judgment of the Gospel upon sinful men. In our minds, however, we cannot truly join these two approaches into one. We can not comprehend and explain how both exist together in God: that he views one world, and the sinner, in Christ and outside of Christ;
that he loves the world in Christ and is angry with the world outside of Christ; that outside of Christ he reckons sins to the world and in Christ has forgiven the world its sins. Here we stand before the incomprehensible, unfathomable essence of God. 108

In the "Lutherische Kirchenzeitung" of August 1, Frederick William Stellhorn (1841-1919), another Missouri "drop-out" of 1881 (and a professor of our own Northwestern in Watertown from 1869 to 1874), wrote:

... (Christ's) resurrection is the actual justification of Christ as all men's substitute, and, in this respect, it is the justification of all men. The Apostle can also say in Rom 5:18: as now through one man's sin the judgment of damnation has come upon all men, therefore also through one man's righteousness, the justification of life has come upon all men. In this respect one can speak, as, according to our interpretation, the Apostle does here, of a universal justification, a justification of all men, since that which Christ had undertaken to accomplish for all men has been actually and truly accomplished and, therefore, has also been acknowledged and declared by God. Just as now, according to God's own actual judgment, forgiveness of sins, life and salvation, for all men without exception, are truly present and ready in Christ. 109

Where does he differ from Stockhardt? Stockhardt would say that this doesn't mean that the individual sinner personally enjoys or possesses the blessings of this righteousness of Christ and the forgiveness of sins, but that--objectively--it could still be said that, according to God's judgment, the individual has been actually, not merely potentially, justified. But Stellhorn argues that he doesn't mean to say with his words here that every person, as he is by nature, 'is regarded by God as actually righteous.' Why? 'Because then it would necessarily follow that every man, without exception, would also be saved and enter heaven, and neither the preaching of Law and Gospel nor repentance and faith would be necessary.'

Then, as now, words like these must have been enough to make Stockhardt and those who shared his faith want to scream. It would be nice to dismiss it all as simply a quarrel over words, nothing more than a matter of semantics, but so much more is at stake!

The November "Theologische Zeitblätter" carried Allwardt's answer to Stockhardt, under the same title Stockhardt chose, "Noch ein Wort Über der Rechtfertigung." Allwardt didn't make good his promise to show how Stockhardt had interpreted 2 Cor 5:19 incorrectly. (In fact, to my knowledge the first true exegetical opposition to 2 Cor 5:19 to appear from Ohio wouldn't come until June 10, 1905, when Ohio once again found itself attacking objective justification.)

Allwardt did his best to quote the 1872 Synodical Conference proceedings in his defense, quoting what was said about subjective justification against what Stockhardt had to say about objective justification and simply confusing the issue. The same old accusations were made and Stockhardt's own explanations were ignored: "If objective justification is a forensic act and an actus simplex, then subjective justification must not be a forensic act on God's part." About the closest Allwardt comes to showing a difference between Stockhardt and the Synodical Conference in 1872 is in this quote from p. 68 of the Proceedings: "Before faith, the sinner is only righteous before God according to the procurement of righteousness and according to Divine intention; but he is actually and personally righteous only when he believes."
Is this a contradiction? The fact that this is found under Thesis 12, in connection with subjective justification, makes it clear that Allwardt is grasping for straws when this is viewed in connection with such statements as the following, cited earlier: "We may say that in such wise as the individual is a part of redeemed mankind, God is not angry with him... In regard to the question, whether it is proper to say the totality of mankind is indeed acquitted, but not individually, it is necessary to reply: Through Christ God is reconciled to each and every one individually." While Schmidt's terminology and mode of expression in 1872 is not identical with Stöckhardt's in 1888 and 1889, their doctrine is...

And so we come to the close of another peak in the controversy over objective justification until 1905. During this time, as one of its soon-to-be-named opponents would say in 1905, "it, so to speak, slumbered in the bosom of its inventors." The chronological bibliography at the end of this paper indicates that the subject of justification, and so also its objective side, wasn't absent in Missouri. But until April of 1905, Ohio appears to have remained silent on the matter, at least as far as my references are concerned; a silence concerning objective justification broken by one lone article in Ohio's "Theologische Zeitblätter" in September of 1897. Pastor A. A. Dapper's article comes fairly close to simply being a "re-hash" of the articles of 1889, although he does cover some new territory. His perception of the true issue, however, is no better than those before him and his conclusion is not to the point at all. It's a case of confusing Law and Gospel, objective and subjective justification, as well as setting up "straw men" statements which Missouri never made and even specifically denied and then knocking them down. Whatever the specific catalyst was which prompted Dapper to write this paper, he himself does not mention and I could not find one.

Besides the very short treatment of objective justification in English that appeared in 1898, when Augustus Lawrence Graebner (1849-1904, a professor at our own Synod's college and seminary from 1875-1887) published his Outlines of Doctrinal Theology, the only thorough treatment auf englisch I could find is by the same author and appeared at the beginning of the new century in Missouri's "Theological Quarterly" in October, 1901, part of a series of doctrinal studies.

VI. Missouri and Wisconsin vs. Ohio, 1905-1906

Carl Manthey-Zorn and "The Forgiveness of Sins"

At last we come to January 31, 1905, and the beginning of a series in "Der Lutheraner" by one of the most popular Lutheran writers of his day, Carl Manthey-Zorn (1846-1928), a missionary of the Leipzig Mission Society in India in 1871 and then a pastor in the Missouri Synod in 1876. His eight-part series was entitled, "The Forgiveness of Sins." Throughout, Zorn equated forgiveness of sins and justification. While the truth of objective justification underlies everything he said, the doctrine itself wasn't specifically discussed until his fourth installment on March 28. I gratefully acknowledge Pastor H. C. Duehlmeier as the translator of the following quotes from Zorn's articles. Pastor Duehlmeier translated the entire 8 articles, plus two supplementary articles answering Ohio's attack, in a booklet he entitled, "How Can I Be Certain of Being Saved?"

Under the heading, "The False Teaching Concerning Faith," Zorn wrote in March:

Thousands upon thousands of preachers who are regarded as believers teach as follows concerning faith, the justifying faith, through which one comes into possession of the forgiveness of sins:
1. We human beings, they say, are lost and condemned sinners. (That is correct.)

2. God has had mercy on us, they continue, and has let His only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, become man and has laid all our sins on Him. (That certainly is also correct.)

3. Christ suffered for us and died for us and has reconciled us unto God through His substitutionary, innocent, bitter suffering and death. (That, as it reads there, is correct.)

4. That, they continue, God has let Jesus do for us, in order that he might be able to forgive us our sins and to justify us. (Here the error has its quiet and unobserved beginning.)

5. God informs us of the reconciliation effected by Christ through the Gospel and at the same time tells us what conditions we must fulfill that He now may actually forgive and justify us; we must, namely, first believe. (Here the error makes further progress. Do you recognize it?)

6. The reconciliation effected by Christ, they say, is one thing; and the forgiveness of sins or justification is another thing. Through the reconciliation the holy and gracious God has indeed, made advances to us and on His part has removed the hindrances, so that He now can forgive our sins and justify us. But through faith we must now also make advances to God and on our part let there continue to be hindrances; then God actually forgives us our sins and justifies us. (That is false.)

7. So, they declare, there is a twofold cause that influences God to forgive us our sins and to justify us. The one cause is in God—that is His grace and the merit of Christ, likewise the reconciliation which took place by His grace through Christ. The other cause is to be found in man—that is faith. (That is utterly false.)

When these preachers speak in a scholarly manner they speak like this: Through the reconciliation of the world effected by Christ it has been made possible for the holiness of God to let grace prevail and to forgive our sins to us sinners and so to justify us. Through faith, however, which is a "moral act" of man and through which man shows himself receptive to grace, God is moved to let grace truly to prevail over him and to forgive him, the believer, his sins and to justify him.

When these preachers speak in simpler fashion, they do so in this way: God has shown us much grace; He has let His Son Himself bring the great sin and reconciliation offering, through which He reconciled the world unto God. And He proclaims this to us through the Gospel. But now in order to receive the forgiveness of sins and justification following this effected reconciliation, we on our part must also do something. We must believe, that is to say, we must recognize the grace of God, must dispose ourselves toward the same, be thankful to God, be sorry for our sins and hate and forsake them, cry to God for grace, begin a new life—then God forgives us our sins and justifies us; then He sees that we are also deserving of His grace and receptive toward the same.

Both ways of speaking, the learned and the simple, are thoroughly false even though they may sound ever so Christian to the ears of the inexperienced. For both these ways of speaking amount to the same thing, as though God were saying to us: "I have done so much for you; but now it is up to you to do something too; then I will forgive you your sins for Christ's sake and justify you."[13]

Under the heading, "The Correct Teaching Concerning Faith," Zorn wrote:
The correct teaching concerning faith, the saving faith, through which a person comes into possession of the forgiveness of sins, is the following:

1. We human beings are lost and condemned sinners.
2. God has had mercy on us and has let His only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, become man and has laid all our sins upon Him.
3. Christ suffered for us and died for us and has reconciled us unto God through that substitutionary, innocent and bitter suffering and death.
4. This reconciliation effected by Christ is the justification of the whole world. Yes, my dear friend, here you must pay close attention in order to understand well what I am saying. I say that the reconciliation of the whole world is the justification of the whole world... As soon as the reconciliation of the world had been effected through Christ, at that moment the forgiveness of sins and the justification of the whole world was an accomplished fact; at that moment justification unto life came upon all men; at that moment the forgiveness of sins had become the possession, gained through God's own blood, of the whole world of sinners. Therefore I say: This reconciliation of the whole world, effected through Christ is the justification of the whole world.\(^\text{114}\)

Zorn quoted 2 Cor 5:19 first to substantiate his claim, then Rom 5:18, 4:15 and 4:25. Zorn would continue his discussion in the next installment showing how one "must believe in order to come into possession and enjoyment of the forgiveness of sin and justification"\(^\text{115}\) but he concluded here:

It therefore is not true that God has let us be reconciled through Christ in order that He "might be able" to forgive us our sins and to justify us, but rather the reconciliation through Christ is our justification and the forgiveness of our sins, and of those of the whole world.

It is not true that through the reconciliation of the world effected by Christ it has only been made possible for the holiness of God to let grace hold sway and to forgive us our sins and to justify us; but rather through the reconciliation effected by Christ God has already let His grace well over us fully and completely and has already bestowed on us the forgiveness of sins and justification--has already bestowed it on us and the whole world. It is not true that the reconciliation effected by Christ is one thing, and that the forgiveness of sins or justification is another thing; but rather is reconciliation and forgiveness of sins or justification one and the same thing, which through and in Christ came upon the whole world.\(^\text{116}\)

Zorn's last installment appeared on July 4, 1905, but Ohio had already begun its attack in April and continued to the close of the year. Zorn himself replied to Ohio in "Der Lutheraner" in June while his series was still in progress.

**Ohio’s Attack and Missouri’s Counter-Attack**

The direct attack on Zorn came in Ohio’s "Lutherische Kirchenzeitung" on May 13. (An indirect attack--no names mentioned--had been made on April 29.) On this date, in an editorial entitled, "The Missourian Denial of Justification," we meet the who would become the "Gottfried Fritschel " of the first half of the 20th Century, at least as far as the doctrine of objective justification is concerned (but unlike Fritschel, a thorough-going exegete), Richard Charles Henry Lenski (1864-1936). If only he had been able to overcome his own prejudice toward this doctrine!
In his editorial, Lenski reviewed the case back in 1888 and '89, then quoted extensively from "Prof. Stoeckhardt's parrot." In conclusion he wrote:

We will now very briefly display the radical, soul-endangering errors which are hidden in these Missourian tenets and in the article from which these tenets are quoted . . .

1. Reconciliation and personal justification are lumped together as one, so that nothing is left of the justification of the individual through faith. According to Missouri's latest doctrine, the whole world is justified; indeed, was so long ago, when Christ had completed the reconciliation. Another justification, one which is now effected by God when a man comes to faith, doesn't exist according to this doctrine. Thus the fundamental and chief doctrine of the Bible and the Lutheran Church is annihilated. (By now the reader will, hopefully, have seen enough evidence to observe how Lenski misrepresents the true position of Missouri.)

2. According to this new doctrine, each and every person's sins are already forgiven, (indeed, were so) when Christ completed the redemption, "all the same, whether he believes or not." Justification is therefore finished apart from faith—finished long before;"before faith comes into the matter." Faith is only a "finishing touch:" it comes limping along in the background. One is simply to believe in the justification finished long ago. Thus Missouri annihilates the scriptural doctrine of justification through faith.

3. It is no longer to be true that God justifies first at the moment when the poor sinner believes in Christ. No more shall it be said—as the new doctrine will have it—"faith, then justification." Rather: A justification of the whole world centuries before—now believe it!

We tremble at this sacrilege in the Holy Place. May God have mercy on these deluded people, who make so much ado about the "clarity of Scripture" and condemn to the lowest depths everything that does not please them, but who now through their own self-delusion have fallen so deeply into the night of error! God have mercy on the poor people who shall no longer hear the heart and core of Scripture taught and preached, but instead a miserable, vain imagination, a wretched invention of the mind of man!

The first response to Ohio came in "Lehre und Wehre"'s May "Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliche and we meet a new name in the defense of our biblical doctrine of objective justification, Gerhard Friedrich Bente (1858-1930; he doesn't seem to have liked the "Gerhard"). To the best of my knowledge the present editor of "Lehre und Wehre" at this time, Bente would be the "public defender" of objective justification during this present controversy much more than Zorn or any other individual. In his May notice he makes two telling points:

1. The Ohioan "Kirchenzeitung" denies that "the whole world is justified" or absolved through Christ's death and resurrection. However, with this they punch the clear Scripture in the face which says, "For God was in Christ, etc". 2 Cor 5:19. The universal forgiveness of sins which Paul clearly attests here Missouri teaches and Ohio denies . . . 2. The Columbus "Kirchenzeitung" maintains that Missouri denies the justification of the individual through faith and thereby annihilates the fundamental and chief doctrine of the Bible and the Lutheran Church. This, however, only makes the Ohioan "Kirchenzeitung" guilty of a crass
libel. Missouri expressly teaches the justification of the individual through faith alone and has always taught it . . . we believe and confess, now as before and before as now, that only he who believes has justification and truly possesses the forgiveness of sins. For us, faith is the only means and instrument through which a man can appropriate for himself the forgiveness or justification offered in the Gospel. We teach with great stress justification through faith alone. . . No, not Missouri, but Ohio is the one who destroys the doctrine of justification through faith and, consequently, must deny it. Whoever teaches, as Ohio does, that election and salvation are partially dependent on the attitude of men must also teach that in justification the human attitude is a condition, in view of which God forgives men their sins. Ohio must not issue as its watchword, "justification through the act of faith," but, "justification and forgiveness on account of the act of faith, on account of the right attitude." Ohio has logically destroyed the Lutheran doctrine of justification through faith and joined the camp of the papists.\(^{118}\)

Zorn's response for the lay consumption of "Der Lutheraner" appeared in two parts, on June 6 and June 20. Under the title, "Faith Comes Limping Along in the Background," Zorn quotes Lenski and then offers his observation that either, "we who write and accept such articles appearing in the "Lutheraner" must be errorists, who have fallen completely from the faith . . . or else the writer of the "Airchenzeitung" is making a fool of himself and does not know what and wherever he speaks; for I simply cannot assume that he is wilfully raving against the truth."\(^{119}\)

Zorn makes it clear that objective justification is no "new" doctrine, invented by Stöckhardt. He refers to Walther's Evangellen-Postille of 1870, previously cited in this paper. In his second and final installment, Zorn refers to Lenski's expression, "Der Glaube . . . hinkt hintendrein," and writes:

... What they mean is: According to our Missouri teaching God has long ago already in Christ justified the whole world; and in order to have the benefit of and to enjoy this justification for his own person, the individual is now simply to believe this; and that as a result of this, faith comes limping along in the background. Now this, by means of which the Ohioans want to place us into an unfavorable light, I accept quietly and say: Yes, so it is. Even the expression: "Faith comes limping along in the background" I will accept.\(^{120}\)

... Faith believes God, who declares righteous the ungodly, the whole ungodly world; the believer hears and believes this amazing gracious verdict passed through Christ and in Christ on the whole world of sinners, the verdict that the ungodly have been made righteous, have been declared righteous; this verdict which God rendered long, long ago, the believer believes and accepts. And through this simple acceptance, this faith that follows and limps along behind this gracious verdict of God which was rendered long, long ago, the believer is righteous before God . . .

The Ohioans want to assign a different role to faith; they want to let faith march on ahead . . . According to Ohio this is the sequence: First believe; then you will receive forgiveness of sins. According to Missouri: Here is the forgiveness of sins; believe it and accept it. According to Ohio faith marches on ahead. According to Missouri faith comes limping along in the background. And faith does limp along in the background.
Our faith is a poor rickety thing, that in itself has no worth whatsoever before God. It is weak, afflicted, miserable; it limps. It is, indeed, a new birth out of God; it is, indeed, a spiritual creation; it is, indeed, a divine fire; but it is weakened through the flesh. O God, how my faith limps! But God preserves it, and it comes limping along behind God's grace, held up by God's hand. And just because God's grace has already done everything and wants only to be believed and accepted, our faith, limping along behind, is a thing that makes of sinners righteous ones, out of dead ones living ones, out of condemned ones saved ones. And faith is the victory which has overcome the world. All things we have through faith, through faith alone. Faith comes limping along in the background. And God, who created it, the good and loving Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, turns around and says to us: Only come; you will be accepted, even limping. And God assures the believer that all, all grace is his; for that is completely finished and fully wrought and presented unconditionally. And thus faith comes limping along in the background.

God grant that our faith may always continue to come limping along in the background. God grant that we may not imagine that our faith comes ahead of grace! For then it would turn its back upon grace. 121

From the above quotes, it's easy to see why Zorn was such a popular author.

The "Lutherische Kirchenzeitung" of June 10, which appeared between the installments of Zorn's response above to Lenski's editorial, certainly has to rate a special place in the history of the controversy over objective justification. At last we find someone willing to attempt an assault on 2 Corinthians 5:19! The man—John Klindworth (1833-1907), a pastor excluded from the Iowa Synod in 1876 who eventually made his way into the Ohio Synod via the Wisconsin Synod.

Treating "The New Missourian Doctrine of Justification," Klindworth quotes from Zorn's articles and tries to prove Missouri's Scriptural support to be false. He "throws down" 2 Cor 5:19 by quoting verses 20 and 21 and concluding, "Therefore it hasn't yet occurred that God had reconciled the world to himself, for now the ambassadors first come with the exhortation, 'Be reconciled to God!' For Paul doesn't say what the "Lutheraner" says: God has made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, and now we and the whole world are justified. Rather, he describes justification as a fruit and consequence of reconciliation; so that we might become the righteousness which avails before God." 122 Klindworth tried, but he still couldn't overcome the simple truth of 5:19.

Klindworth also addressed Romans 5:18 by pointing out the reference to subjective justification in v. 17 and thus believed that he had settled the matter. Having shown the "false support" of these two passages, and dismissing the rest, he then goes on to quote many passages from the Bible and the Confessions which speak of subjective justification. In his second installment he speaks about the "faith" of Zorn's article, calling it a "dead faith." He also offers this as Ohio's confession:

"We believe and confess that through the reconciliation accomplished through Christ, the holy and gracious God has come to meet us, so that he can now forgive our sins and justify us. Justification itself, however, doesn't occur any sooner than when the first spark of faith is kindled in a poor sinner's heart through God's grace. Then God forgives the sinner's sins. The "Lutheraner" doesn't believe this, but explicitly declares it to be false and teaches an unconditional justification. Who it is that has the truth is evident. 123"
In July and August, Bente presented the readers of "Lehre und Wehre" with "The Correlation of Justifying Faith." In August, Lenski asked the question, "Who was it?" Was it Stückhardt or Walther who robbed subjective justification of its forensic nature? He claimed that Walther was unclear. Sometimes he seemed to say yes, sometime, no. (We know that Walther says that both are forensic and there are really not two different justifications involved but merely different aspects of the same.)

In September, Lenski addresses, "The Doctrine of Justification in 1872," once again trying to show how it is Missouri and not Ohio who has changed their doctrine of justification. He followed in September with "The Doctrine of Justification in 1868," comparing Pruss in his book with Missouri's "present" position. Naturally, in both articles what is said about subjective justification is supposed to rule out what Missouri says about objective justification.

Lenski's first September article prompted a three-part article in "Lehre und Wehre" from Bente, "The New and Old Doctrine of the Ohio Synod Concerning Universal Justification." It is Schmidt's position of 1872, adopted by the Synodical Conference, which is cited as Ohio's "old" doctrine. From the September installment I offer the following quotes:

... Universal forgiveness of sins and justification (the gift and present of the Gospel) are not present before faith, according to Ohio. We separate the forgiveness of sins or justification and the possession and enjoyment of the same. The first are, for us, actually present as res promissa in the Gospel before faith; the second, however, only and alone through faith. The Ohiots deny the first and know only of a justification which follows faith. 124

... It goes without saying and follows from the context, that ... in articles concerning absolution and universal justification, by the terms, "to impart" (mittheilen), "to distribute," and the like, it is not meant to say in the least—as the Ohiots "Kirchenzeitung" now concludes from the same—that a man without faith also comes into the possession and enjoyment of the forgiveness which in universal justification has been spoken over the whole world and is offered to everyone in the Gospel who hears it, as well as in the sacraments and in absolution to everyone who might receive them. We believe from the heart along with the "Lutheran Standard" of 1871, "that the individual sinner is (personally) justified (comes into the possession of the forgiveness of sins) through faith alone, when he, by means of faith in Christ, appropriates to himself the righteousness (or forgiveness of sins) acquired for him by Christ as his own. In this sense, therefore, the whole world is not justified before God, but only the believers, because these alone seize Christ's merit and have appropriated it for their personal justification in God's court." ... and as far as the term, "to justify," is concerned, we also know very well ... "that not only in the Bible itself, but also in our doctrinal and devotional books the expression, 'to justify,' is used by far, in the greatest number of cases, of 'personal justification,' or the justification of the individual sinner." 125

In October, A. A. Dapper (first heard from in 1897) reappeared with an article, "(Something) From the Biblical Doctrine of Justification." Once again the Law is called upon to exclude the possibility of a justification apart from faith.

As far as my own references are concerned, the polemics on the side of Ohio ended along with the year 1905, although I did find an article in the "Lutheran Standard" of April 7, 1906, entitled, "The Relation Between Reconciliation and Justi-
fication." No mention of the controversy of the previous year is specifically made, but in it P. A. Peter writes:

Justification is a forensic or a legal term, implying a judicial act, by virtue of which an accused person is declared to be just. Hence in theology justification is that judicial act of God by virtue of which He forgives the penitent and believing sinner all his sins... on account of the perfect satisfaction rendered the divine law by Christ, the sinner's substitute.

Reconciliation implies that lost and condemned man, separated and alienated from God... has been placed in such an attitude toward God through the mediatorial work of Christ that he may be brought into agreement with God and become his dear child through faith in Christ...

The grace of God in the Gospel, unless wilfully and persistently rejected, works faith in the hearer... He is declared to be just or righteous before God...

In an objective sense, as something that belongs, pertains, or relates to the object, justification has come upon all men...

It is not sufficient that we consider justification merely in its objective sense as having been obtained for all men by the obedience of Christ... Faith is the confidence of the heart that the individual is a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and it is this faith that justifies the repentant and believing sinner.

In light of the above, is it any wonder that some 30 years hence the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods would object so strongly to the wording of the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church and later the Common Confession? And this brings us to the first voice of the Wisconsin Synod I have found speaking directly to a controversy over objective justification.

A Voice from Wisconsin

This voice is that of the Pieper brother who remained with the Wisconsin Synod, August Otto Wilhelm Pieper (1857-1946), six and a half years Franz' junior and, like Franz and Reinhold, a product of Northwestern in Watertown and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. His offering appeared in the April, 1906, number of the Wisconsin Synod's theological journal, then called the "Theologische Quartalschrift" and in the third year of its existence. Pieper brought his readers up to date on the controversy and emphasized the fact that the Wisconsin Synod was not entering the battle to "prolong the fight," but from the simple duty it had to speak the truth and testify in behalf of "the attacked doctrine which is also our doctrine." Pieper pointed out the errors in Ohio's charges. I offer the following from Pieper's concluding remarks:

The doctrine of justification stigmatized as heretical by Ohio and Iowa is the pure Gospel itself... No other doctrine stands so firmly in the heart of all the members of the Synodical Conference. No doctrine is dearer and more inalienable than this doctrine; that the personal justification of the individual occurs in this way, that he seizes through faith the universal justification which is present before all faith. Concerning this doctrine we say with Luther and the Confessions: Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised,
even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed. (S. A. 2:1)

It was by this doctrine that Walther and Hoenecke, Missouri and Wisconsin, recognized themselves to be of the same spiritual flesh and blood. It is this doctrine whose faithful attachment has preserved the unity between the present synods of the Synodical Conference despite many outward squabbles and dissensions, and allowed them to stand firmly together in the election controversy en bloc against all counterfeit Lutherans. And as long as this doctrine remains our common confession, our enemies will attempt to separate us in vain. . . . The new battle started by the Ohioans and Iowans won't be detrimental to us and our own. We will only draw new profit from it; we will only be urged to a deeper understanding of the Gospel and to a stronger solidarity. But for themselves it will bring unspeakable harm. One cannot do battle with impunity against any truth of the divine word. It breeds sin and guilt; it wounds the conscience and deludes the heart. . . . But whoever attacks the doctrine of justification cancels out the heart of the Gospel and is on the way to losing entirely all Christian doctrine and his personal faith and to fall into the arms of paganism, no matter how much he emphasizes justification through faith. 127

The July and August numbers of "Lehre und Wehre" carried Friedrich Bente's article, "How Does It Happen that Faith Justifies and Saves?" but by this time the controversy appears to have died down, "slumbering in the bosom" of the Ohioans and Iowans.

1907 and Iowa Again

In 1907 Stockhardt's Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans (Commentar über den Brief Pauli an die Römer) appeared, which would touch off a small revival of the controversy over objective justification in 1909. From this work of Stockhardt we offer the following quotes. After speaking about verses 18 and 19 of Romans 5 and the truth of the universal justification they contain, he writes concerning verse 17:

On the other hand, Paul points out and teaches in the same context, in v. 17, that the believers, ὁ τῆν περισσείαν τῆς ἡμέρας καὶ τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς ὀλοκληρουμένης λαμβάνοντες, shall someday actually reign in life; that, therefore, all those who accept the gift of righteousness in faith and so personally partake of the same, or, what is really the same thing, all those who apply to themselves the judgment of justification, which in Christ has been spoken over the entire sinful world and which is made known in the Gospel, and take advantage of it, shall finally, actually, be saved. And thus what Paul teaches in Romans 5:16-19 agrees quite well with the "other doctrines of Scripture." Besides, Paul also bears witness to the same truth which he distinctly declares here in other places in his letters, only with different words. We have demonstrated above that for him "justification" is identical with the forgiveness of sins. And thus he writes, as an example, in 2 Cor 5:19, "God was in Christ and reconciled the world to himself, in that (indeed) he did not impute their trespasses to them," ὑπὸ λογίσμονος αὐτῶν τὰ παραπτάματα αὐτῶν. In Christ God has therefore already forgiven the whole world all its sins. The entire Pauline doctrine of justification and, precisely so, all the comfort of justification, stands and falls by this special article of universal justification. In this way it becomes entirely clear and evident that justification is entirely independent of a person's attitude. And in this way alone the individual can become absolutely certain of his justification. Then it is
an imperative conclusion: If God in Christ has already justified all men and forgiven their sins, then in Christ I also have a gracious God and all my sins are forgiven."²²

Stöckhardt also repeats his charge of 1883 that, "as to the object of faith, later Lutheran dogmatists and, similarly, most of the more recent Lutherans, distinguish between the bonum justicum, or the merit of Christ, and the justificatio, resp. justitia coram Deo, and teach that only the former is presented in the Word and will be apprehended by faith, but not the latter. . "²²⁹ Is this true Lutheran doctrine, any more than its the pauline doctrine of justification?

"The Apology, in Article 4, and the Formula of Concord, in Article 3, coordinates throughout God's grace, Christ's merits, reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sins and the justification that avails before God, and allows these blessings to be comprehended in the Word and apprehended by faith."²³⁰

In February and March of 1909, George Fritsche (1867-1941), following in his father's footsteps, attacked what Stöckhardt had to say concerning objective justification. In his article, "The 'So-called' Universal Justification," Fritsche would not accept Stöckhardt's "logical future" in 5:19 (δύνατον ἡσυχάσθησον τοῦ πάντοτο). But he wouldn't accept a temporal future either. Why? "Because whoever takes it in a temporal sense must then give a new interpretation to 'the many' (over against the context of 'all men') so that it means, 'the many believers.' This would be possible linguistically, but the context is against it."³¹ What, then, is the answer, according to Fritsche? "Every difficulty of the interpretation of verses 18 and 19 vanishes when one takes the future in the sense of 'should' (sollen: 'should, ought to, be supposed to'), which the text allows with respect to context and the 'analogy of faith,' if it does not actually compel it."³²

Because he won't allow the possibility of a universal justification "before and apart from faith," but at the same time is honest enough to admit that "the many" in v. 19 equals the "all" in v. 18, Fritsche places the future in v. 18 as well and makes the whole matter of justification something God wants to happen for everybody--providing, of course, they let it happen by believing! And so Fritsche is willing to say:

"We won't quarrel over words. If someone wants to also use the expression concerning the reconciliation which occurred in Christ Jesus that, since now the debt of the whole world has been paid, God views the whole world as justified in Christ, we won't object to it; providing, of course--if he otherwise presents the doctrine of justification through faith in its purity—he's simply expressing the thought by this that saving grace—the grace of eternal life, the grace of justification—is now acquired for the whole world."³³

In short, Fritsche claims that Romans 5:18,19 teaches, "God wants to justify the entire world—nothing more, nothing less."³⁴ Again, it should be obvious why the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods were so concerned about the language of any "common confession" Missouri would later adopt as a means of professing doctrinal unity with the former Ohio and Iowa Synods.

Fritsche was answered in April by two articles in "Lehre und Gehre," "Universal Justification," by Stöckhardt, providing further defense of his claim for the logical, or, gnomic future and his exegesis of Romans 5:18,19 as a whole; and, "With Respect to the Doctrine of Universal Justification," by Bente, dealing chiefly with citations from Preuss' book. Fritsche had claimed Preuss in support of his own position.
The year 1910 is the big year for the Wisconsin Synod and objective justification in the first quarter of this century. The articles which appeared in the "Quartalschrift" were no doubt prompted by the controversy stirred up anew by Fritsche the previous year. In April, John (a.k.a. Johannes) Schaller (1859-1920; another graduate of Northwestern and Concordia Seminary) presented the theological world with what, as far as I know, is the first "in depth" exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. His article, "Redemption and Universal Justification According to Second Corinthians 5:18-21," appeared again, in our present "Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly" of October, 1975, translated by Professor Gerald Hoenecke.

Schaller specifically says that this article was not intended to be an "exhaustive exegetical study."

Our aim here is to learn what this section has to say about the inner connection between the doctrine of redemption and the doctrine of objective justification; this will self-evidently call for proof that according to the apostle's presentation the evangelical ministry basically has only one task, correctly to proclaim this doctrine, indeed, that without the doctrine of objective justification the gospel would cease to be gospel.135

Schaller deals with the verb μεταλλάσσω, for, as he says, "It not only controls the entire section, but also is the indispensable basis for the understanding of the doctrine of objective justification."136

μεταλλάσσω does not . . . point to the way in which the reconciliation was brought about, also not really wherein the reconciliation actually consists. It says rather that the relationship between two parties has been fundamentally changed. God changes His relationship to the world. It is essentially this with respect to reconciliation that here comes into consideration.137

Schaller stresses that God is the one reconciled, not the world. It is evident that he does this in an attempt to answer the question, "where does the change lie?" He writes:

The present form of the participle μεταλλάσσω does not alter the time element of the imperfect; rather does it take the place of an imperfect participle (cp. Mk 14:4 and other passages). . . Verse 18 indeed reads: God has reconciled us to Himself, and the persons designated by "us" are in every instance converted Christians, who now on their part as new men stand in the right relationship to God, irrespective of whether one restricts the ηπίσκοποι to the apostles or takes it as said of the congregation. But what Paul here says of the converted, verse 19 says of the world, the Χριστός, of whom it has never been true and never will be true, that it on its part is entirely reconciled with God. The world as such is according to Biblical usage, as far as redemption is concerned, the mass of unconverted sinners, inimical to God, so that Jesus (Jn 17:14,16) distinguishes it from the believers and in John 15:18 states that He chose His disciples out of the world. The world will remain the same to the last day; it will never change its character. The Judge of the world will at His appearance catch by surprise the great mass of men in their enmity toward God. Thus the world on its part is factually not reconciled to God.138
Since a change on the part of the world for a reconciliation with God is excluded, the dative εἰρεθέντος no doubt contains the thought that as far as God is concerned He has already made the reconciliation a reality; He has reconciled Himself with the world. It also needs to be pointed out that in κατατάλλασσαν the subject is always the offended party. We must not forget that the concept of atonement (συμβολή) really does not lie in the word itself, but that it designates a change in relationship through which what we call reconciliation comes about. It is not within the capability of the world to alter the relationship existing between it and God, anymore than this is the case with a person who has offended another. The world cannot even supply the atonement that would move God to change His attitude toward it and even if it could, it would under no circumstances be the party which initiates the reconciliation. In no case can the offending party itself make the reconciliation a reality; this belongs to the offended one. He is therefore also in every case the reconciled one, the one whom the reconciliation must become a reality. So then also here not the world, but God is the reconciled party.

Through what Christ did in man's stead God is now so reconciled that factually there is peace on earth, the peace of God, that God's wrath toward men is stilled when He sees them in Christ.

God was not only the one who did the reconciling, but also, in the judicial transaction He was the party to be reconciled. (We simply note at this time that Schaller's way of looking at the reconciliation is that of traditional Missouri. The view of Hoenecke and Meyer will be discussed later.)

For Schaller, "the sequence of the participial clauses in this verse (19) is to present the actual, at least logical sequence of the actions of God: first reconciliation, then non-imputation, then transmission of the word of reconciliation. As for the term "world," Schaller emphasizes that this is the sinful world, and that, "Paul is not saying that God did not impute sin to the concept world, but rather shows with the plural of the pronoun that in this act God had in mind and thought of the individual people, all without exception." Non-imputation of sin, of course, is the same as justification. On the basis of Romans 4:6-8, Schaller states:

This profusion of expressions obviously is to serve the purpose of describing the justifying act of God from various points of view: when God justifies, He is forgiving iniquity, He is covering sin, He is not imputing sin. These three expressions fuse for Paul into one concept, justification, so that he can in a given instance describe the entire act of justification by means of any one of these expressions. In each of these expressions the others are implied; one can substitute one for the other without altering the intended meaning. If then Paul in our Corinthians passage uses only the negative statement, he intends thus to present the forgiveness of sins or justification. God did not impute their sins to men; for Paul this means God forgave their sins.

Schaller summarizes the first part of his presentation in this way:

God on His part made the reconciliation of the whole world a reality, is reconciled to the whole world, has made peace with it; as the reconciled One, because He was reconciled, He then of necessity forgave
the sins to this same world, justified it. What is more, He did not justify the concept world, nor the world as a whole of which some small parts could possibly be missing, without invalidating the statement. On the contrary, He consciously declared righteous every individual who belonged to the world or will belong to the world to the end of days, every individual sinful person. But this is universal justification."

Because of this, Paul's exhortation, "Be reconciled to God" accordingly means nothing else than 'Believe in the gospel' or 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.'

In his conclusion to the entire article, Schaller makes these very pertinent comments:

(When true Christians) speak of these great acts of God: redemption, reconciliation, justification are for us such a great, closely knit whole, that we, when we choose not to speak precisely, simply substitute one term for the other and so to speak treat them as synonyms.

... Only one inference I would not like to leave unstated, that the doctrine of justification really belongs to the Second Article. Through our Catechism expositions we have been spoiled, to the point that we do not really find this doctrine expressed until the Third Article as a work of the Holy Ghost, and thus consider it as belonging not so much to Soteriology, as rather to Pneumatology. According to our passage, to which for the sake of brevity we are here confining ourselves, this is a mistake in understanding and arranging the thoughts expressed in the gospel. Justification and forgiveness of sins were not only made possible after the reconciliation of God through Christ's vicarious atonement had been accomplished, but actually became a reality in Christ whose resurrection as far as we are concerned was equally substitutionary as His passion. The forgiveness of sins as such does not depend on the subsequent activity of the Holy Spirit; the appropriation of the accomplished salvation on the part of the individual is rather ascribed to Him.

From this standpoint alone Luther's explanation of the two Articles becomes perspicuous and is safeguarded against the charge of repetition. He has the Christian confess in the Second Article: Christ is my Lord, ... from all sins ... when? When I came to faith? None of this, but as lost and condemned sinner He redeemed me from my sins. Luther obviously wants to say that faith in Christ embraces the existing finished forgiveness of sins intended for the individual and thus acknowledges Christ as his Lord. In the Third Article he again comes to speak of the forgiveness of sins. Here, however, he does not, as in the Second Article, emphasize the purchasing and winning but the imparting: In this Christian Church (note with emphasis: and nowhere else) the Holy Ghost forgives (through the gospel, thus through the ministry of reconciliation) me and all believers daily and richly all sins. Here then the believer is to confess that through the power of the Holy Spirit in the gospel justification is merely made his own certain, conscious possession. Whoever teaches otherwise immediately comes close to the synergistic doctrinal presentation that our faith is the condition of our personal justification.

What Schaller says here about the dogmatical presentation of justification is so true! In the older (and not so old) dogmaticians, don't necessarily expect to find the concept of objective justification under "justification." Generally the only facet of justification you'll find there is our subjective or personal justification. If they treat the concept of objective justification at all, look for it where the resurrection of Christ is treated, or his office of High Priest.
In October, the "Quartalschrift" offered Pastor Herman Gieschen's "The Relation of Universal to Personal Justification." He spoke about the necessity of accepting what the Bible says—even if it couldn't be "rhymed" to suit human reason. He also spoke about some of the errors that occur when one tries to reconcile universal and personal justification. He gives a simple, straightforward presentation of what the two justifications say to us, with special emphasis on the true nature of faith.

And with this article, this particular episode in the continuing controversy over objective justification among the churches of the former Synodical Conference comes to a close.

The Move Toward Union Among America's Lutherans

The next major public controversy in which the doctrine of objective justification would play a major part wouldn't occur for almost 30 years now, although 1933 would see Missouri respond to Lenski's slurs in Theodore Engelder's excellent article. From now until then America's Lutherans would become more and more involved in steps towards unity, both organic as well as the area of church fellowship. Because of this trend, it seems that most of the Lutheran bodies made a concerted effort to let their big polemical guns remain silent.

In 1913 the churches of the General Council, General Synod and United Synod of the South set aside many old differences (as well as many serious doctrinal concerns) to form the United Lutheran Church in America. The year before saw the birth of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, a merger of the Norwegian Synod (with the exception of those churches which are the present Evangelical Lutheran Synod), Hauge's Synod, and the United Norwegian Church (itself a merger in 1890 of the Anti-Missouri-Brotherhood, the Norwegian-Danish Conference and the Norwegian-Danish Augustana Synod). 1917 also saw the Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan Synods make the move from the federation established in 1892 to merger in the form of our present Synod.

Talks toward outward fellowship and possible union continued between the synods of the Synodical Conference and the Ohio, Iowa and Buffalo Synods, which had been officially inaugurated with the Intersynodical conferences of 1903-1906. On the co-operative level between Synods, the National Lutheran Council—constituted in 1918 (composed of the ULCA, Ohio, Iowa, Augustana, Norwegian, Lutheran Free Church, Danish Lutheran Church, Buffalo, and the United Danish Lutheran Church; Iowa withdrew in 1920, Buffalo and the Danish Ev. Lutheran Church in 1925). It was joined by the American Lutheran Conference in 1930, the same year the American Lutheran Church came into existence through a merger of the Ohio, Iowa and Buffalo Synods. The members of the American Lutheran Conference were the ALC, ELC (Norwegian Union of 1917), Augustana Synod, Lutheran Free Church and the United Ev. Luth. Church (Danish).

A Change in the Sinner's Status vs. A Change in the Attitude of God

What can be said with regard to the doctrine of objective justification in general from 1910 to May, 1933? The Ev. Luth. Dogmatik of Adolf (which he apparently preferred over Gustav) began to appear after his death (he died in 1908), the third volume in 1912. With Volume II of Franz Pieper's Christliche Dogmatik appearing in 1917 (Volume III would follow in 1920, Volume I in 1924), it seems that Hoenecke's works didn't have the wide audience they deserved to enjoy. And, because of this, I hope you will excuse me as I pause now to include a "want Ad" at this point:
I W A N T E D !

A 4-volume set of Hoenecke's Ev. Luth. Dogmatik. I haven't been able to acquire a copy and sincerely desire to do so! Name your price. I'll do my best to meet it! Now--back to the matter at hand.

What was Hoenecke's particular contribution to the doctrine of objective justification? In this connection we are also speaking of objective reconciliation, and while it was probably not original with him (Lenski, while denying the truth of objective justification, speaks of reconciliation in much the same way as Hoenecke). I suspect they either got their insight from the same sources, or Lenski from Hoenecke), Hoenecke challenged the common Missouri conception of reconciliation as a "change of heart" or attitude on God's part. Concerning objective justification in general, Hoenecke writes:

Justification is an act of God, which particularly occurs in time and with respect to each individual sinner. However, there is also a universal justification which has taken place in time and which, in Christ's suffering and resurrection, extends over all men. (Rom 5:18; 2 Cor 5:19; Rom 4:25). Our dogmatists don't particularly treat of universal justification, although they do so occasionally... Insistence upon universal justification is necessary in order to protect the true content of the Gospel. 

Under his section, "Christ's Office of High Priest," Hoenecke writes:

Now the question is whether the reconciliation, in which God reconciles the world to himself, consists of a change in God's disposition over against the world. The answer is: No! For there is no indication for this in the subordinate clauses included in the passages of Scripture cited above (Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:18;19), which say nothing about a change of mind regarding God's disposition, but only of certain arrangements, judicial facts and activities, such as, "not imputing sins," and, "to make Christ to be sin." However, Romans 5:8-10 speaks decisively. Here the starting point is love! (v.8) Therefore, it can't be just the result of the κατάλλαλη... Accordingly, it is certain that θεος κύριος κατάλλαλησε ευτυχώς (2 Cor 5:19), as a reconciling activity of God, does not mean "to bring the world into a friendly relationship of love with him," nor to present a changed posture of his heart to the world, but (rather) to alter the relationship between God and the world in such a way that the world must no longer appear as the one which is damnable and separated from him according to righteousness through its sins. The κατάλλαλης on God's part is the cancellation of sin and the imputation of guilt which occurred in Christ with respect to the world, as the explanatory μη λογιζόμενος in v. 19 says, and v. 21, which asserts that the imputation, which absolutely could not have been left undone, has occurred with respect to Christ. Compare Rom 3:25: δι' ἐνσέκασθεν λόγιζός των. God changed the relation between himself and the world in that he becomes, as Budaus says, another person with regard to a sinner. The κατάλλαλης as an act of the reconciliation of God is, in truth, essentially the objective universal pardon or justification of the whole world from sin and guilt in Christ, which will and must become a subjective, special (pardon or justification) through faith...
καταλλάσσειν as an activity of God in the sense of a change of God's attitude toward the world from anger to love, we therefore do not for a moment deny the doctrine of God's anger, and for this sake we thus hold καταλλάσσειν as we do . . . 148

In speaking about a change of "status" in this way, which allows the world to be in a reconciled relationship with God and yet still its essentially sinful self, while at the same time doesn't speak about a "change" in the changeless God who, as Hoenecke points out, loved sinners even before Christ lived and died for them, one is saved some of the logical problems that arise when one speaks about reconciliation as Franz Pieper does, conceiving it as a change in God's heart from hate to love the moment Jesus said, "It is finished," on the cross.

It is clear that Pieper himself apparently didn't care for Hoenecke's mode of expression. (He probably didn't care for his criticism either!) At any rate, he certainly made no effort to change his own mode of expression at any time. In his typical manner of expression in speaking about reconciliation, Pieper said in an essay presented to the Southern-Illinois District of the Missouri Synod in 1916:

... the reconciliation of the world consists in this, that God "in Christ," or for Christ's sake, changed His own sentiment toward men. St. Paul writes: "Not imputing their trespasses unto them." Sin rendered man guilty and thus subject to God's displeasure, and despite all his own efforts he could never have placated the divine wrath. However, for Christ's sake God does not impute man's trespasses unto him; that is to say, He forgives him his sin and regards him as sinless. Indeed, God has erased the record of man's sins from His book; in His divine heart grace has taken the place of wrath.

... Reconciliation is complete as far as God's disposition is concerned; in God's heart the forgiveness of sins has been substituted for the imputation of sins...

... Man's reconciliation with God is an accomplished fact; it is finished. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." These words refer to the time when the Son of God sojourned here upon earth. Nearly nineteen centuries ago, when Christ suffered and died, God reconciled the world unto Himself. When God raised Christ from the dead, He absolved the world from its guilt and sin and declared that He was no longer at odds with the sinful race of man... 149

Elsewhere Pieper makes it clear that he is not saying by this that God no longer hates sin, or even sinners, viewed outside of Christ's work of redemption. Nor is he saying that God didn't love sinners before Jesus died on the cross. In the same essay quoted above, Pieper writes: "... it was His great love that moved Him to satisfy His righteousness through the death of His Son, which was impossible for us to accomplish."150 But now, on the basis of Christ's work of redemption, God can look at the old sinful world in a "new light," so to speak, "in Christ," and because of what he sees he can declare it just, and because it is just, he loves it!

Who is correct—Hoenecke or Pieper? I say, take your pick; and this seems to have been the consistent attitude of the members of the Synodical Conference (although I am also certain that there were strong preferences on either side!) Hoenecke may appeal more to us for logical reasons, but Pieper's position is also defensible on both Scriptural and logical grounds. Let's face it. We're dealing with the difference between Law and Gospel here. Psalm 5:5 tells me that John 3:16 must be false. John 3:16 tells me that Psalm 5:5 must be false. The cross of Christ and 2 Corinthians 5:21 tell me that both are true.
In defense of Pieper and the expression, "God's change of attitude due to the reconciliation work of Christ," John Theodore Mueller (1835-1967) wrote in 1934, three years after Pieper's death:

Even if one construes reconciliation as essentially the establishment of a relationship of peace between God and man, one must nevertheless still proceed from God's change of attitude due to the reconciliation work of Christ. For where a relationship of peace has been created, anger must have been previously present, and in this way the establishment of a relationship of peace between God and man itself embraces God's change of attitude due to the work of our redeeming Savior. Again, if one construes the reconciliation in such a way that it consists essentially in this, that God in Christ or for Christ's sake has altered his judgment against men, the altered judgment itself presupposes an altered attitude of God just as much. The judgment of damnation was done in anger. The judgment of justification flows from the grace and love gained through Christ's blood and death. God is reconciled precisely because his demanding and vengeful justice has been satisfied, so that his grace and love reign and rule freely and he forgives all sins for the sake of Christ's vicarious satisfaction; indeed, has forgiven them already long ago... God's change in attitude due to the reconciling work of Christ is truly biblical truth. 150b

On the other hand, Professor Becker writes in his paper on "Objective Justification," previously cited:

When Franz Pieper says that when God reconciled the world to Himself a change took place in God he uses language that can be justified by biblical usage. The Bible in many ways says the God put away His wrath and turns from the fierceness of His anger. But we recognize that this is an anthropomorphism, that speaks of God in human terms. We can only think of what happened as a change in God. But the change that takes place does not consist in this that His anger changes to love. Rather, if we abide by the actual words of Scripture, the change as we conceive of it took place in this way that God, who apart from Christ sees us as guilty sinners, in and through Christ now considers us to be not guilty because of the atoning work of the Savior. We can only conceive of that as a change in God's attitude toward us. What has really changed is our standing before God. God is always angry with sinners. As Luther says, it is impossible for God not to be angry with sinners or not to hate sinners. However, since in Christ He no longer sees us as sinners, He is no longer angry with us. Only in that sense can we say that there is a change in God's attitude toward us.

Yet many of Pieper's followers have insisted that the change in God's attitude consists in this that God's anger was changed into love. This sort of language can only result from a failure to understand the distinction between Law and Gospel. God has always been and will always be the God who forgives and the God who punishes. He has always been and will always be the God who loves sinners in spite of their sin. He has always been and always will be the God who hates sinners because of their sin. He cannot become angry or stop loving any more than water can become or stop being wet. 151

Part of the problem is the sequence of thought one follows when looking at 2 Cor 5:19. Most theologians who follow Pieper (including Wisconsin's John Schaller) would say that logically justification follows reconciliation. Thus, in 2 Cor 5:19,
God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, at the same time not counting men’s sins against them due to Christ’s work of reconciliation. Christ said, “It is finished,” and God the Father, his justice satisfied, could look at a just world in Christ, love it (be reconciled with it), and declare, “The world is just. The world’s sins are forgiven.”

Hoeckeke and those who follow his view of the act of reconciliation see it as nothing else than the non-imputation of sins to the world, the justification itself. The change that took place was the verdict of "not guilty" which replaced the old verdict of "guilty" because of Christ’s substitutionary work which now places the world into a new "status" before God. God is the same. The world is the same, but because of Christ’s work of redemption a new verdict has been pronounced.

Thus in Ministers of Christ: A Commentary on the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, published in 1963, we find what Johannes Peter Carl Meyer (1873-1964), a product of Northwestern in Watertown and a student of Hoeenecke, not Franz Pieper, taught his seminary classes from 1929 to 1964.

... Paul ... himself gives us a definition of καταλαλάσσειν in the following verse. He announces his explanatory remarks as such by ἕνοικον τοῦτο: the whole matter took place in this way that. For the present we disregard other remarks and concentrate on the one which describes the nature of καταλαλάσσειν. Paul uses a participle to do so. God performed His καταλαλάσσειν of the world μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, not imputing their trespasses unto them. The καταλαλάσσειν is basically an act of accounting, of imputing, of charging. The world had trespassed. Every individual found in that group of beings which are summarily called the world transgressed the commandments of God, and thereby burdened himself with a heavy load of guilt, if his trespasses were to be charged against his account. But God in His mercy decided not to do that. He did not impute their trespasses to the sinners. To whom God imputed them, Paul does not state at once in express words. He does not leave us in doubt, however, saying that God performed this καταλαλάσσειν through Christ and in Christ, in vgs. 21 he will tell us directly that God made Christ to be sin for us.152

... Paul defines καταλαλάσσειν as an imputative act: μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν ... 153

Meyer also writes:

... (God) took us out of our former state of being guilty and condemned sinners and placed us into a position before Himself where He regards us as having been purified from our sins, as spotless, unrebukable saints. All of this ἀπὸ ἁπάντων. If God finds us outside of Christ, He sees us as people who are not only covered over and over with sin, but who are permeated through and through with this poison. But as soon as Christ intervenes, and God looks at us through Christ, then all our sins are screened and blocked out. His all-searching eye finds none, and He pronounces us righteous.154

Outside of Christ, doesn’t God hate us—because he hates all sinners? Of course! But looking at us in Christ, doesn’t God love us—because in Christ he now sees all sinners as “spotless, unrebukable saints” (to use Meyer’s own words)? Of course! With this in mind, it should be conceded with Becker that here is a better distinction between Law and Gospel than found in the terminology of Pieper and those who follow him. The Law never changes, therefore God always hates the world—outside of Christ. But in the same way the Gospel never changes, therefore God always loves the world—inside of Christ.
But how are we to express this relationship from our point of view? In Christ, objectively, the world is a "new creation," one which God hated but now he loves! And this is biblical language, as Becker concedes. And in the same way, in Christ, through faith, I am a new creation. God hated me outside of Christ but he loves me now in Christ. I am one whom God hated but now loves! So—is there actually any real difference between Hoenecke and Pieper when it comes to the final truth they present?

For all practical purposes, God's love for the world in view of Christ's work of redemption can't be separated from his justification of the world in view of this same work of redemption, whether God views this work as past (today), present (Good Friday), or future (the Garden of Eden). Even the love of God which prompted our election to faith was only love in view of Christ's work of redemption for us (although election itself, of course, unlike justification as a result of Christ's work, is only "special" and not "universal."). The only thing one could really do here is fault Pieper and company their definition of χαράλλωσις, but then both sides also admit that all the word really means is "to change"; and if both "changes" can be supported by Scripture (God's "change" of heart, from man's viewpoint; and the world's "change" of status, from God's viewpoint) and the teaching that results from these definitions are identical: the sinful world, hated by God, is now also the redeemed and justified world, loved by God—what's the real difference?

What's more, it also seems clear to me that for all practical purposes Missouri's true definition is: reconciliation = a change of heart in God (from man's point of view) = non-imitation of sins = justification—you can't have one without the others. This is seen perhaps best of all in Pieper's Christian Dogmatics, where he uses the terms "objective reconciliation" and "objective justification" interchangeably. So, for example, the following from Volume II:

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... 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.

Personally, I prefer Hoenecke and Meyer (and, so, the present day Wisconsin Synod in general). Their position doesn't need as many "hedges" to protect it from misunderstandings and it definitely brings out the proper distinction between Law and Gospel with less possibility of confusion. But since Pieper and his true followers always presented God's "change of heart" with the proper "hedges" and explanations—-it was never used to try and prove that God wasn't immutable or that our justification was based on anything else but Christ's redemptive work for us—we can live with it, just as long as the truth of objective justification is never denied or its scriptural basis. These two positions regarding the proper
definition of ἀνθρωποπαθεία were never considered divisive before and shouldn't be now, providing the proper checks and balances are applied to that of Pieper (and Walther and Luther and most of our hymns as well!). More could no doubt be said to this point, but hopefully this will suffice. (Note: Some of the problems generated by an exaggeration of the "anthropopathic" view of objective justification is seen in the equally "exaggerated" defense necessary to set #4 of the now-famous "Kokomo Statements" in an acceptable light. But we are getting ahead of ourselves!)

Now back to the "present" of our paper and the year 1917.

1917

This is the year that Volume II of Franz Pieper's monumental Christliche Dogmatik was published (as previously said, Volumes III and I would be published in 1920 and 1924, respectively). To say that the doctrine of objective justification plays an important role in his work would be an understatement. With regard to 2 Cor 5:19 and the objective justification it teaches, Theodore Engelder would write in his previously cited article of 1933: "We do make much of 2 Cor 5:19. It bulks large, for instance, in Dr. F. Pieper's Christliche Dogmatik. The objective justification bulks large in this as in every other truly Christian dogmatic, and Dr. Pieper liked to quote and enlarge on 2 Cor 5:19 in this connection. He quotes it, if we are not mistaken in our count, thirty-three times."156

I can't pass on without at least one quote here from Pieper's classic. Under the subheading, "Objective and Subjective Reconciliation," he writes:

The doctrine of the objective reconciliation is of vital importance to the entire Christian doctrine. Only by keeping this doctrine intact will the Christian doctrine remain intact. It will be irretrievably lost if this doctrine be abandoned. Maintain the teaching that mankind had been fully reconciled with God through Christ's obedience and suffering, and there will be no room left for the multiform error that man must himself effect his reconciliation with God in whole or in part. The religion or works, as taught by the rationalists, the Romanists, the Arminians, and the Modernists, will have no ground left to stand on. Discard this doctrine, and you will have to teach that men must supply the deficiency in Christ's work. You will then only have to determine the quantity and the external pattern of the works-righteousness you may deem necessary. Only on the basis of the objective, Christ-wrought reconciliation will Gospel and faith retain their Scriptural meaning, the Gospel being nothing else than the proclamation and offer of the forgiveness of sins purchased by Christ, and saving faith nothing else than the simple acceptance of this forgiveness... Deny objective reconciliation and you support the age-old heresy that faith is a meritorious work.

Dogmatics, whose province is to present the Christian doctrine in its Scriptural setting, must never fail to set forth the supreme importance of the objective, Christ-wrought, perfect reconciliation. It must guard this reconciliation against those who would in any way pervert it or tone it down. The doctrine loses its Christian character and becomes pagan work-righteousness as soon as the full reconciliation of all men by Christ's vicarious satisfaction is given up. And the practical result is that the entire doctrine becomes useless; no conscience, truly smitten by the Law of God, will find peace unless in faith it puts its sole reliance on the reconciliation which has been accomplished by Christ and is proclaimed in the Gospel.
Moving on ahead, we come to the year 1919 and the publication of a work just as monumental in terms of content, if not in size, in the realm of Christian dogmatics as Volume II of Pieper. And—wonder of wonders—in English as well! John Schaller’s Biblical Christology should not only be in every pastor’s study—it should find itself in his hands quite frequently as well. For clear, concise statements on the doctrine of objective justification you can’t do any better than Schaller. From his treasure house we offer the following gems:

Christ did not die for the world or mankind in the abstract... The sinner does not make a general salvation applicable to himself by faith; if that were true, salvation would not be complete before man performs the act of faith. On the contrary, by faith, the individual accepts the salvation, propitiation, reconciliation and redemption procured for him personally by Christ. Hence this salvation is just as perfect and complete for those who are finally lost. This is the only reason, but a sufficient one, why he that believeth not is damned. Unbelief is the rejection of life and salvation achieved and personally intended for every unbeliever. 159

(Christ) is actually and truly the only Saviour... because his achievement need not, and cannot be, supplemented in any manner or to any degree by a sinner or any other creature... Hence it is false to call... even faith, a condition which man must comply with before salvation pertains to him. 159

(Since Jesus) in his life, sufferings, and death, took the place of each individual human being, his resurrection, which was his own justification, was at the same time the justification of every human being, since for them he had died. Sinners are not justified now if they believe, but if they have true faith they believe that they have been justified in Christ (objective justification). There is no gospel (good word!) for the sinner but this...

Christ was made sin for us by imputation; so we are made the righteousness of God in him also by imputation. With this message Christ sends his believers into the world, and by virtue of it, they can indeed forgive sins; for it is true in every case that each sin is already forgiven in Christ Jesus. Hence unbelief is the one condemning sin, because it denies and rejects this truth; hence, also we are saved by way of faith, because through faith alone can we appropriate salvation as the fact which it is. 160

It is the normal condition of the believer, intended by God, that he feels certain of his salvation... This state of mind is called subjective justification. This term must not be used as implying that God does not justify until the sinner believes. It is properly used, however, to express the thought that by faith the sinner becomes personally (subjectively) assured of his justification. 161

At this time we will also move ahead to April, 1920, and quote from the article which appeared in the "Theologische Quartalschrift" entitled: "The Nature, Origen, and Effects of Saving Faith"—left unfinished at the time of Schaller’s death on February 7 of the same year. (This article is found in the 1981 edition of Schaller’s Christology.)
The merit of Christ, i.e., the entire fruit of his redemptive work, is offered to the sinner as a fact in the unconditional forgiveness of sins. The fact that Christ achieved salvation, being presented to the sinner as a statement of divine truth, can be responded to properly in no other way than by confident acceptance. 162

Christ's redemption and the forgiveness of sins based upon it, being in God, are facts whether we believe them or not. Hence the final and enduring comfort of the sinner lies not in the fact that he is conscious of believing, but in the fact that God's Word assures him of his redemption. . . (For those who try and examine themselves for proof that they possess faith and in this way weaken their saving trust) the only definite and certain help . . . lies in a direct contemplation of the gospel declarations of God, which are true whether the sinner believes or not. 163

The function of faith is that of an organ, or instrument, whereby the gifts of grace are apprehended . . . it is altogether misleading to call faith a cause of salvation or justification. This would immediately be understood to imply that salvation becomes salvation by reason of faith, or that faith is a necessary factor of our justification. This cannot be true because salvation and justification are divine acts in every respect. The real function of faith is rather to make the sinner a conscious possessor of salvation and justification which are facts before, and independently of, the sinner's conversion to faith. After beginning to believe the sinner is not more, nor more surely, saved and justified than before, but he personally enjoys the gift freely bestowed upon him. 164

To say that man believes in order to be justified, is equivalent to saying that he has faith in justification in order to be justified. . . . justification is not a result of faith since faith finds it ready to its hand in the redemption of Christ, as a free gift to be accepted. Hence the connection between faith and justification is this that God not only offers justification but also created that faith in the offer which makes the gift the believer's personal and conscious possession. 165

. . . the relation of faith to justification can be . . . demonstrated sufficiently by a reference to the few passages quoted above. The God of righteousness is the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus: Jew and Gentile alike are justified by faith—that is the sum of Paul's teaching on this point (Rom 3, 26.30). God approaches every sinner who hears the Gospel with the announcement of the justification earned by Christ. The unbeliever hears, but rejects the justifying word of the Gospel; his unbelief denies that God is a justifier indeed. At the moment when faith is kindled in the heart, God is immediately recognized and acknowledged as the justifier in fact. Since justification is the proclamation of salvation fully accomplished in Christ, its acceptance by faith insures possession of salvation, complete in every respect (Acts 16:31). 166

Since the Gospel proclaims that we are actually in the good graces of God through Jesus Christ, our Savior, the state of grace, established for us by the redemption of Christ is a fact to be believed because God declares it. Faith accepts the state of grace, but does not make or establish it. How can we make sure of our calling and election (2 Pt 1:10), except by hearing and following the call, believing what God tells us of our election? 167
As we move ahead again, there is one item we might mention. In 1922, the Jubilee year of the Missouri Synod, it issued a statement, "on the position of the Synod with reference to doctrines which have been, and are (1927), more or less in controversy,"168 entitled "What the Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States during the Seventy-five Years of Its Existence has Taught and Still Teaches." Its author was Franz Pieper. How does objective justification fare? See if you can find it!

... This divine miracle of the incarnation of the Son of God took place to the end that He should become the Mediator between God and man, namely, that in place of mankind He should fulfill the law, suffer and die, and thus reconcile all mankind unto God. Gal. 4, 4,5; 3,13; 2 Cor. 5:19. -- Of Justification. All its teachings regarding the love of God to a sinner-world, regarding the salvation wrought by Christ, and regarding faith in Christ as the only way to obtain salvation, the Scripture sums up in the doctrine of justification. Holy Scripture teaches that God does not receive men on a basis of their own works, but that without the deeds of the Law, by grace alone, on account of the perfect merit of Christ, He justifies them, i.e., He regards as righteous all those who believe that for Christ's sake their sins are forgiven them. ... 169

There is no specific clear reference to objective justification here—as at least not clear considering the past controversies in 1889 and 1905. We can read objective justification in because we know what Pieper and Missouri taught elsewhere, but this statement certainly leaves much to be desired!

In 1927 the Concordia Cyclopedia was released by Concordia Publishing House. Under "Justification" the following is found:

When God made Him sin for us, 2 Cor. 5:21, it was by imputation. And this imputation of our sins was so real, so earnest, that it led to the condemnation of Him to whom it was imputed and to the execution of the judgment of condemnation, the infliction of the penalty of sin according to Law. Rom. 6,23. But by the same judicial act by which He pronounced Him guilty who was the world's Substitute, God acquitted and absolved the world, whose sins and guilt He laid to the charge of the Mediator. 2 Cor. 5,19. By the resurrection of Christ, God from His judgment throne pronounced His Son's obedience unto death a perfect atonement and propitiation for all the sins which were imputed to Him, the sins of the world. Rom. 4,25. -- From all this it appears that this objective justification of the world is by no means identical with the work of redemption. "The redemption of the world was a sacrificial work; the justification of the world is a judicial act. By His vicarious atonement, His propitiatory sacrifice, Christ is our Righteousness, Jer. 23,6. God's judicial imputation of this righteousness to the sinner is our justification, Rom. 5,25. ... 170

While I, personally, believe even this definition lacks some of the desired clarity, when the successor to this work would appear in 1954, the following definition would replace the one cited above:

... Through Christ God reconciled the world unto Himself. This act of God in which He through Christ provided forgiveness of sins for the world is called objective justification (Rom 5:18ff.) Note that objective justification is not identical with the redemption, justification being a judicial act and redemption a sacrificial work). 171
And if this definition doesn't seem satisfactory, try the latest edition of the Lutheran Cyclopedia (the name taken by the 1954 edition), which appeared in 1975: "Through Christ God reconciled the world unto Himself, 2 Cor 5:19. This act of God is called objective justification; it is not the same as redemption, justification being judicial, redemption sacrificial."172

Franz Pieper was called home on June 3, 1931. In 1932 the Missouri Synod in convention adopted its Brief Statement, which was completed in 1931 by a committee created in 1929, "to formulate theses, which, beginning with the status controversiae, are to present the doctrine of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions in the shortest and simplest manner."173a Thus we find Pieper's statement of 1922 (together with a previous one from 1897) expanded to include a direct reference to the doctrine of objective justification in the following:

Holy Scripture sums up all its teachings 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. 5:21; 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.173b

Comparing this statement with that of 1922, it's obvious that the men of the committee involved (Franz Pieper, Frederick Samuel Wenger (1878-1963), E. A. Mayer, L. A. Hearboth, and Theodore Engelder) had nothing else but objective justification in mind when they made the changes and additions here that they did.

And now we come to 1933 and a "small" public outbreak over objective justification—the first hint of the larger storm that will break with the ALC's Declaration of 1938 and not end officially until 1963, when the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods finally withdrew from the Synodical Conference and any further discussion with Missouri became a moot point up to the present time.

VII. Missouri vs. Lenski, 1933


Romans is very clear: "we were reconciled (made completely other) by Christ's death while being enemies",--while still active enemies and part of the world, the death of Christ made us and all the world totally other: in the instant He died all men were put into a new relation to God by God Himself; they were now men for whom Christ had paid, and God had accepted the full and complete ransom.

Next Paul says: "We, having been reconciled, shall be saved", and now means having been brought into a personal completely other relation to God by God, namely faith, and no longer enemies. Thus the objective reconciliation covers all men as enemies; and the subjective reconciliation, going a step farther, covers all believers. The one is for us, outside us, the other in us.

II Cor. 5:18-20 is badly bungled by many, notably the Missourians.

(Emphasis mine here!) Preconceived notions violate the highly signi-
ficant tenses. Paul speaks of himself and his assistants: God "the One who did reconcile us (not only objectively but also subjectively) to Himself through Christ, and did give to us the ministration of this reconciliation (the service of preaching it)"—two aorists, past, historical. Then with ὑπὸ ὅτι: "that God was in Christ, engaged in reconciling the world, by not reckoning to them (individuals) their transgressions (two present, durative, iterative participles), and having deposited in our care the Word of this reconciliation." This is again an aorist: He did give us the ministry of this reconciliation—He did place in our care the Word of this reconciliation, namely for this our ministry. Thus as Christ's ambassadors, Paul adds, we beg you: "Be reconciled to God!"

Paul writes, after bringing me and my assistants to personal reconciliation and giving us the ministry and means for bringing other men to personal reconciliation, God reaches out through us as His ambassadors thus to reconcile personally others in the world. He even explains that this personal reconciling—not reckoning their trespasses to them, which in other passages forgiving the trespasses. The mediation of Christ is completed when those objectively reconciled on Calvary are subjectively individually reconciled by faith in the Word about this reconciliation.

What has been made of this famous passage? This, that on Easter morning God forgave all sins to every individual sinner in the world, those then already damned in hell, those not yet born, and that this, an actual simplex, is the only justification there is! 174

Theodore Engelder's rejoinder, "Objective Justification," graced the pages of the "Concordia Theological Monthly" in July, August and September. We've already seen what Engelder had to say about Lenski's concluding remark. He did this in his first installment. Engelder began by quoting Lenski and then wrote:

Dr. Lenski is here protesting, first, against the Missourian teaching, on the objective justification in general, and, secondly, against the Missourian interpretation of 2 Cor. 5, 18-20.

As to the doctrine in general, he repudiates and ridicules, the teaching that on Easter morning God forgave, really forgave, all the world all its sins, really truly justified the world. He protests against making objective reconciliation, general justification, mean that God on Easter morning did actually pronounce the world, all individuals making up the world, really innocent of all sin and guilt. He is harkening back to, and reenacting, the days of 1888 to 1905. . . The Missourians did indeed teach that God, by pronouncing Christ, the world's Substitute, guilty of the sins of the world and condemning Him to death and then, in the resurrection, acquitting Him of all sin and guilt, thereby acquitted and absolved the world of its sin and guilt, John 1, 29; Rom. 4, 25; 5, 19; 2 Cor. 5, 14, 19, 21; 1 John 2, 2. And they teach it to this day. They would close their theological seminaries if they were no longer permitted to teach the objective justification. For then they could no longer teach the article of justification by faith. If the justification of the world, of every individual sinner, is not an accomplished fact, we should have to go out and ask the sinner to accomplish it himself. We could not ask him to receive his pardon as already issued. We could not ask him to "believe," to accept the pardon already granted and issued. Then there would be no justification
"by faith." We cannot give up the article that on Easter morning God forgive every sinner his sin and guilt. 175

Engelder then shows how this is not just a "Missourian" teaching. He quotes sources from Luther to Ohio's own Stellhorn. Then he tackles the matter of "only one" justification which is an "actus simplex", which we quoted earlier in this paper.

In his last two installments, Engelder gets down to "the real business at hand;"

Doxa 2 Cor. 19a and b deal with the objective, universal justification (reconciliation) or with the subjective, personal justification (reconciliation)? We take our stand on -- and shall unfold--these two propositions: 1) There is that in the text which absolutely excludes the reference to the subjective justification. 2) There is nothing in the text that forbids the reference to the objective justification.

Our first proposition is that the word θάκομως and the relation of the word αὐτοῖς to its antecedent vetoes the conception that the apostle is here describing the subjective justification. Since there is nothing in the text to indicate that the apostle wants to restrict, in some way or other, the meaning of θάκομως, the world of sinners, the statement that God reconciled the world cannot mean anything else than that all men, "the world, the whole human race" ... has been reconciled, justified in the forum of God. 176

... This word θάκομως is of rather an obstinate nature. It refuses to do service for the subjective justification--except in that wonderful manner that it forms the basis and the heart of it, which belongs in another chapter or verse.

In an equally obstinate manner 19b refuses to be taken as a description of the subjective justification. Here it is the word αὐτοῖς that protests with a loud voice against such a procedure. The antecedent of αὐτοῖς is θάκομος. "In 2 Cor. 5, 19 αὐτοῖς refers to θάκομος," (Robertson's Grammar, p. 683) ... So, then, you will have to put θάκομος also into 19b: "not imputing the world's trespasses unto the world." 177

The attempt to put the subjective justification into the μὴ ἀνθλίωςθάκομος clause breaks down by force of the αὐτοῖς ... θάκομος. To put it there requires a process of muddled thought in the mind of the interpreter and of course in the mind of the apostle ...

Take the case of Dr. Lenski. "ὁ σῶ, ... 'that God was in Christ, engaged in reconciling the world, by not reckoning to them (individuals) their transgressions ...' Paul writes, after bringing me and my assistants to personal reconciliation and giving us the ministry and means for bringing other men to personal reconciliation, God reaches out through us as His ambassadors thus to reconcile personally others in the world." God engaged in reconciling the world, by reconciling some! The apostle certainly was not able to think such a thought. 178

... The words θάκομος and αὐτοῖς (equivalent to θάκομος) absolutely preclude the reference to the subjective justification. That was our first proposition. We now come to our second proposition: There is nothing in the text that forbids the reference to the objective justification, that calls for the subjective justification. In discussing this second proposition, we are in a manner taking on an opus
supererogationis. Our first proposition has settled the case once for all. The νόμος-αριστοκρατεία leaves no room here for the subjective justification. We are frank to say that we approach the second proposition with our mind made up, with a preconceived notion of the right sort. We know a priori that there is something wrong with the arguments presented by the proponents of the subjective-justification interpretation... In arguing their case, they must needs accuse the apostle of having used the term νόμος as the object of justification when he actually did not mean the world...

... They will have to show us something in the text which forces the conclusion: The apostle could not have had the objective justification in mind, though he did unfortunately use the misleading term world... 179

According to Engelder, the opposition's argument is "based on the fact that the present participle is employed in 2 Cor. 5,19a and b, while vv. 18 and 19c the aorist participle is used."180 With this in mind, the argument thus rests on one of two considerations, either on the alleged fact that the apostle is using the present participles of v.19 as equivalent to verbs in the present tense or on the use of the Greek present participle as expressing linear, durative, iterative action.

The argument in the first form would run thus: The fact that in 19a and b the present tense is used precludes the concept of the objective justification, which deals with a fact finished and completed in the past. In other words: If the apostle had the objective justification in mind, he would have had to use the aorist participle, the past tense, not the present participle, the present tense... 181

Engelder dismisses the participle καταλλάσσω from consideration here.

It cannot possibly indicate the present tense. The phrase ἔν καθαροτ... λόγον is either the periphrastic imperfect (most exegetes taking it thus), and then it describes a past action, in no way pointing to the present time, as little as ἔν διάλογον (Mark 1,22) or ἔν προσευχή-μενον (Luke 1,10) permits the notion of subsequent, present action. Or ἔν διάλογον καθαρ. may be taken as a sentence by itself (thus Luther and others), the καταλλάσσω serving as a simple participle. But in that case also it cannot be made to indicate present time. For what would be the sense of the statement: God was in Christ, reconciling at the present time, the world? We do not know whether any man has ever offered such an interpretation. So we need now waste time in showing its impossibility... 182

As for the position that λογιζόμενον has the force of a verb in the present tense,

Our answer to this is, first of all: It must be shown that the present participle here must be taken as a verb in the present tense. It is not sufficient to show that it can be so taken. The assertion is made that it is a blundering of the text to make the statement "not imputing their trespasses unto them" refer to an act of the past. It must therefore be shown that the text forbids us to "make the ἔν λογιζόμενον an imperfect by the ἔν." The rules of the Greek grammar do not forbid it. The grammarians tell us that "as the aorist participle is timeless and dura-
tive" and "that the time comes from the principal verb." (A.T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament, pp. 115, 891.) According to this rule the ἀναγόμενος is determined as to time by the ἔχει. In speaking of God's not-imputing of trespasses, the apostle has an act of the past in mind. That is the common Greek usage. If in 2 Cor. 5:19b the participle "is not made an imperfect by the ἔχει," we have a most remarkable exception to the rule. So we are going to keep on taking the ἀναγόμενος as applying to an act of the past because of the ἔχει. Whoever objects to that must point out some good reason why Paul here departed from the common rule. And let us remember that the rule is so well established that only reasons of the very strongest kind could justify the exception. (We shall, of course, always bear in mind that all attempts to change the objective justification into the subjective justification are predestined to come to grief on the rock ἀπώλος.)

So much for the first part of our answer: No reason can be assigned why Paul should have given, contrary to the established usage, the present participle the force of a verb in the present tense. But we have another answer to give. This: Even if it could be shown that ἀναγόμενος has the force of a verb in the present tense, that would not militate against the objective justification. Meyer (Heinrich August Wilhelm, 1800-1873, German exegete and grammarian) takes it as referring to the present and still finds it descriptive of the objective justification: "Since he does not reckon (present) to them their sins and has deposited (aorist) in us the Word of Reconciliation. The former is the altered judicial relation into which God has entered and in which he stands to the sins of men; the latter is the measure adopted by God by means of which the former is made known to men."

We have no objection to this interpretation on dogmatical grounds. The objective justification is in force to-day. That means, exactly as Meyer puts it, that the sins of the world were forgiven on Easter Day, objectively, and are forgiven today, objectively. The judgment pronounced then is the judgment of to-day.

Engelder then turned to

... the argument of the second form, which is built on the fact that the Greek present participle denotes durative, linear action and the aorist participle punctilliar action. The argument is, as far as we can see: Since the ἀναγόμενος clause uses a present participle, while the ἔχεινος clause and the other clauses use the aorist participle, the ἀναγόμενος clause cannot, like the other clauses, refer to a past, accomplished act; the apostle would have had to change the ἀναγόμενος into the aorist if he had had an accomplished act in mind. "Two aorists, past, historical.—God was in Christ, engaged in reconciling the world, by not reckoning to them (individuals) their transgressions (two present, durative, iterative participles) and having deposited in our care the Word of this reconciliation. This is again an aorist."

First of all, we move to strike out the "iterative," Simply for this reason: While the present participle expresses durative action, it does not always express iterative action... since the argument is that the present participle compels the subjective-justification sense, it would have to be shown that the present participle invariably denotes iteration. That cannot be shown. (Engelder refers to Mk 14:54, "ἀναγόμενος," and Heb. 10:7; 4, "τοὺς ἀναγόμενους"... let us drop the "iterative" and confine ourselves to the "durative."
... The apostle might have used the aorist participle. But does his use of the present participle inject a strange, monstrous, unscriptural notion into the matter? "God was in Christ, reconciling the world." God reconciled the world through the vicarious birth, circumcision, life, suffering, and death of Jesus. The reconciliation was effected by the life and death, and sealed and proclaimed by the resurrection, of Christ—and all of this made up the objective reconciliation, the universal justification. Every act in the life of Christ had to do with it. When Christ was circumcised, and when He was crucified, God was viewing all human beings as paying the penalty of their sins. When Christ was crucified, God said: The sins of the world are no longer imputed to them. When He raised Christ, He declared: All men may know that their sins are no longer imputed to them... We shall not be dogmatic about this. Some may know of a better interpretation. But we do say that the interpretation given violates no law of Greek grammar and no teaching of Scripture. It agrees with grammar and Scripture. It is a possible interpretation, and that is all we need in order to establish our present case. We are combating the argument that the use of the present participle cannot possibly yield a good sense if the objective justification is meant.186

To sum up: The use of the present participle does not require the subjective-justification interpretation; and the use of the ὑποκατάστασις forbids it. And say what you will on the matter of the use of the present participle in connection with the aorist participle, confess your inability to account for it if need be—but say not one word in favor of having the non-imputation of their trespasses cover only the believers. Der Text—ὑποκατάστασις ἡμῶν—steht zu gewaltig da!187

As a part of his concluding remarks, Engelder quotes from what Lenski had to say about 2 Cor. 5:14-21 in his Eisenach Epistle Selections, demonstrating how confusing he could be to deal with.

(Lenski writes) "The ὑποκατάστασις, unto them, points to the individual sinners which make up the sum total called 'world' and in ἡμῶν likewise their guilt is viewed as a multitude of trespasses, not as one single mass of sin. So we may say, every single sin of every single sinner was laid on Christ, and so is now charged against the sinner by a reconciled God; if one single sin were so charged against you or me, our hope of salvation would be shut out from the start. The universal non-imputation here spoken of as the direct result of God's reconciling act and as embracing every sinner as included already in the 'world' must be clearly distinguished from the personal non-imputation of sin which takes place only for those sinners who personally accept Christ and the reconciliation effected in him. The latter is based on the former and is always connected with faith; and it is the latter which is called 'justification,' or 'justification by faith,' in the constant language of Scripture, of our Confessions, and of our preaching and teaching generally (Rom. 3, 28; 4, 7, 8; etc.)." We here find ourselves in substantial agreement with Dr. Lenski... We do not accept his statement that "justification" denotes only the subjective justification in the constant language of Scripture (see Rom. 5, 18-19; 4, 25) and of our Confessions...; but on the main point we are in hearty agreement. We agree with him that 2 Cor. 5, 19 speaks of the universal non-imputation of trespasses as embracing every sinner as included already in the "world," and he cannot but agree with
with us that on Easter morning God non-imputed, forgave, all sins to
every individual sinner in the world.

It will do no harm to give the rest of Dr. Lenski's statement. He
proceeds: "If we use 'justification' also for the former act, we
must guard carefully against confusing the two, the more as some have
failed grievously in this respect." A footnote here states: "The
mistake here referred to consists of making the justification of the
world, which took place at the death of Christ, the only justifying
act of God, thus leaving no room for the act by which God pronounces
each individual sinner free from guilt the moment he comes to faith.
This error is aided by the faulty terminology: 'objective justifica-
tion' and 'subjective justification.' Usually the former is taken to
mean God's justifying sentence regarding the whole world. The best
name for this, if one wishes to speak of it as a justification, is
universal justification. By the second they who use the term gener-
ally mean the appropriation of 'objective justification' through faith.
It is apparent at a glance that 'subjective justification' in this
sense is no act of God at all, but merely a change that takes place
in us. Here the faultiness of these terms appears. When God pro-
nounces a poor sinner who believes in Christ free from guilt, t.is is
altogether an objective act of God, one that takes place outside of
us, in heaven above. The name for this is personal justification
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. The "mistake" here referred to deals with a myth, which has
been sufficiently dealt with in the July number of this magazine. As
to the "faulty terminology," we need not discuss the matter now. The
author himself, in the Pastor's Monthly, uses similar terms: "objec-
tive reconciliation," "subjective reconciliation." We have not the
least aversion to the terms universal justification, personal justi-
fication. We shall not quarrel about terms, seeing that we are ac-
greed on the main matter involved.188

Lenski would continue to be "frustrating" for orthodox Lutherans, long after his
death on August 14, 1936. How could he speak as he did and yet oppose objec-
tive justification? He certainly must have been astute enough to recognize what
his opponents really meant by the term! But Lenski's final judgment would always
remain, "Nowhere in the Bible is any man constituted or declared righteous without
faith, before faith; all assurances and arguments to the contrary notwith-
standing."189

In the same year as his death, Lenski's commentary on Romans was published. In
1940 J. P. Meyer would quote, among others, the following:

The great theme of Romans is the Sinner's Personal Justification by
Faith. That the basis of this personal justification is Christ's blood
and righteousness, effective for the whole world on the day that he died
and rose again, Paul brings out in many places, beginning with 3:22 etc.
Especially notable is 5:10-11, where we have Paul's own term for what
Christ has done: καταλαμβάνει (καταλάμβανειν), "reconciliation" ("to reon-
cilege"). This reconciliation embraced the whole world of sinners and
was thus "without faith, prior to and apart from faith." When Christ
died on the cross he cried: θεάνεσθαι, "It has been finished!" (i.e.,
and stands so forever). Then and there the whole world of men was re-
cconciled to God by Christ. The resurrection of Christ only corrobor-
ated the tremendous fact of the world's reconciliation. The Scripture
term for this is καταλαμβάνει, "reconciliation," the whole world of sin-
ers was made completely other (οικείος; οικείος is perfective). Christ's
resurrection shows that God accepted Christ's sacrifice for the world, that Christ's blood had, indeed, reconciled the whole world to God.

One may call God's raising up of Christ God's declaration to this effect, and, because it is such a declaration, one may call it "the universal justification of the whole world." Yet to use the word "justification" in this way is not a gain, for it is liable to confuse the ordinary man; we are fully satisfied with the Scriptural word "reconciliation." Based on ἀπολύτρωσις ("ransoming") or καταλλαγή ("reconciliation"), 3:24; 5:11, is the individual's Personal Justification in the instant the power of the gospel brings a sinner to faith.

When it is thus correctly used, we may speak of allgemeine Rechtfertigung and of personliche Rechtfertigung. Since both are equally objective, both judicial declarations made by God in heaven, it should be seen that it is confusing to call the one "objective justification" and the other "subjective justification." This terminology is inexact, to say no more. In these high and holy matters inexactness in terminology is certainly to be avoided.

The danger is that by use of the term "subjective justification" we may lose the objective divine act of God by which he declares the individual sinner righteous ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν in the instant faith (embracing Christ) is wrought in him, leaving only the one divine declaration regarding the whole world of sinners, calling this an actus simplex, the only forensic act of God, and expanding this to mean that God declared every sinner free from guilt when Christ was raised from the dead, so many millions even before they were born, irrespective of faith, apart from and without faith. This surely wipes out "justification by faith alone," of which the Scriptures speak page after page. No sinner is declared righteous by God save by faith alone. Only his faith is reckoned to him for righteousness. This righteousness is the theme of Romans which so mightily emphasizes ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν and ὑπὸ πίστεως. Any confusion on this supreme matter is bound to entail serious consequences.

Didn't Lenski listen to what Missouri had said to him about objective justification in 1905 and again in 1933? Because of the way Lenski strives to protect what he sees as a denial of an "objective" subjective justification, Meyer can write, "In the closing words of the quotation, Dr. Lenksi comes dangerously close to denying the doctrine itself"—despite what Lenski said about the reconciliation just sentences before! Meyer also writes:

What is reconciliation? No better answer can be given than the one given by Dr. Lenski. He explains the verb etymologically: "In καταλαλλάσσειν the κατά is perfective, and the root of the verb is αἰλός: "to make thoroughly other". . . About the matter itself he says: "Reconciliation . . . signifies that through Christ's death God changed our status. By our enmity, our sin, our ungodliness (all synonymous) we had gotten ourselves into the desperate status that deserved nothing from God but wrath, penalty, damnation, and unless God did something to change this our status, it would compel him to treat us thus. By means of Christ's death (διὰ) God changed this into an utterly different status, one that despite our enmity, etc., enabled him to go on commending to us his love, this very love that changed our status, this love, that impelled Christ to die for us hostile enemies of God . . . A change had to take place on our case, and we could not make it ourselves, God had to make it. It took the sacrificial death of his Son
to do it. . . . Being enemies we were reconciled to God. This is the objective act. It wrought a change with or upon these enemies, not within them. It as yet did not turn their enmity into friendship, did not make the world the kingdom. It changed the unredeemed into the redeemed world. The instant Christ died the whole world of sinners was changed completely. It was now a world for whose sin atonement had been made, no longer a world with sins unatoned" . . .

Dr. Lenski is right in stressing the objectiveness of reconciliation, which stands entirely independent of our personal, subjective appropriation of this blessing by faith. But if we bear in mind that Paul uses this term to illumine what he had said about justification, the conclusion becomes inescapable that just as reconciliation is objective so must justification be, otherwise the explanation would be misleading.

. . . That reconciliation is essentially the same as justification Paul shows also by defining both in the same terms. Justification he defines by quoting from the 32nd Psalm: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin (Rom. 4:8). Justification is the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, or the non-imputation of sin. Reconciliation he defines in this way: God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them (2 Cor. 5:19). Reconciliation, like justification, is the non-imputation of sin. 102

I suppose all we can say now is that it's a shame Lenski couldn't conceive of both an objective and subjective justification where the subjective justification was just as "objective" as the objective when it came to God's verdict. How much better his excellent commentaries would have been and how less labored some of his exegetical mechanics when it comes to the loci for objective justification. (At this time I might also say that I can't help but wonder if Lenski didn't have a particularly wry sense of humor—he dedicated his commentary on Romans (seat of 5:18,19 and 4:25) to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; his commentary of 2 Corinthians (seat of 5:19) to our own Seminary in Thiensville (Mequon).)

One last comment before we leave 1933, Lenski and Engelder. For the past 30 years efforts had been continuing, in varying degrees, to unite in church fellowship the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods—now, in 1933, the American Lutheran Church—and the members of the Synodical Conference—in 1933, the Missouri, Wisconsin, Slovak and Norwegian Synods. It is in view of the progress that had been made that Engelder wrote:

It would be a sad thing if the readers of the Pastor's Monthly should get the impression that the Missourians teach a strange doctrine with regard to the objective justification, a doctrine jeopardizing the article of justification by faith. There was a time when there was disagreement on this matter. Later there seemed to be general agreement. When the Intersynodical Theses were drawn up (1928—a revision of the Chicago Theses of 1925), the weighty differences between the synods were thoroughly discussed, but the representatives of the Ohio and Iowa synods did not find that the Missourians were in error on the subject of the objective (universal) justification in its relation to the subjective (personal) justification. In the light of statements like the one quoted from The Eisenach Epistle Selections there was no need of it. So the Intersynodical Theses did not take up the matter. Why
should it be brought up now? Do not drive the synods farther apart than they are! One of the purposes of the present articles is to forestall the spread of any misconception of the position of the Missourians in this matter.

My problem, and the one many others would shortly come to share and raise their voices in protest, is with Engelder's question, "So the Intersynodal Theses did not take up the matter. Why should it be brought up now? Do not drive the synods farther apart than they are now!" Indeed, it had to be brought up for the very reason that Lenski could talk as he did!

This whole matter of what to say and not to say in the interest of Lutheran unity would soon come to center on the ALC's Declaration, adopted by both the ALC and Missouri in 1938, and later the Common Confession of 1949, adopted by both bodies in 1950, and Common Confession, Part II of 1953, adopted by the ALC but never by Missouri as a "functioning basic document" toward establishing fellowship. Here we hearken back to the words of V. Koren in 1867:

Nor is the unity of the Spirit preserved in the bond of peace when men let things slide and run lightly over all difficulties and over the doctrines in which they are not agreed. Perhaps in this way the unity of the flesh is preserved, but not that of the Spirit. The unity of the Spirit is preserved only by obedience to the Spirit's testimony; and only this testimony, the Word, can establish it where it is missing.

Any attempts to do less than what the Norwegian Synod did in the 1860's would draw the loud and earnest protests of their spiritual brethren in the 1930's, 1940's, and is still the case today. As Koren also said:

It has not been our aim to negotiate an agreement on paper or in word alone, but in spirit and in truth. Therefore we have used such expressions as were not only in and of themselves correct, but, in addition, in the same way also set the matter at the point where we could be certain that no one but he who in his heart perceives the truth would agree with them.

And now, onward!

VIII. The Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods vs. Missouri, 1938-1953

The ALC Declaration and a General Overview of the Period Under Discussion

In 1934 the ALC resumed the negotiations toward doctrinal unity with Missouri which its constituent synods had carried on previously. In 1935 Missouri established a Committee on Lutheran Church Union. In 1938 the Missouri Synod resolved, "to declare the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod, together with the Declaration of the Representatives of the American Lutheran Church and the entire report of Committee No. 16 now being read and with the Synod’s actions thereupon, be regarded as the doctrinal basis for future Church fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the ALC." The ALC adopted the Brief Statement and the Declaration. And the protests were quick to arrive on a number of points—the doctrine of objective justification one of them.

Pages could be written about the history of this period, from now until 1963. I will do my best to confine myself purely to the issue of objective justification. The following facts are merely provided as a quick, historical overview.
In 1939 "The Confessional Lutheran" began publication, issued by concerned Missourians.

The 1940 conventions of the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods informed Missouri of their grave concern and misgivings in connection with the Declaration.

The 1941 convention of the Missouri Synod instructed its Union Committee to formulate one document in which "we do not mean to dispense with any doctrinal statements of our Brief Statement."

In 1946 the Doctrinal Affirmation, prepared by Missouri and basically a combination of the Brief Statement and Declaration, was presented to the ALC and declared unsatisfactory.

In 1947 Missouri reaffirmed the Brief Statement but declared that the Declaration of 1938 should no longer be considered as a basis for establishing fellowship. It instructed its Committee on Doctrinal Unity "to make every effort to arrive ultimately at one document which is scriptural, clear, concise, and unequivocal." This committee met with the synods of the Synodical Conference, then with the Fellowship Committee of the ALC (May 7, 1948). In December of 1949 the Common Confession was unanimously approved by both committees.

The Common Confession was accepted by the Missouri Synod in June of 1950; by the American Lutheran Church in October.

In 1951 the Orthodox Lutheran Conference was formed by protesting Missourians, led by Dr. Paul Edward Kretzmann (1883-1965), a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, from 1926 to 1946.

The protest of the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods continued, declaring themselves members of the Synodical Conference "in statu confessionis" in 1952. In February, 1953, Part II of the Common Confession was adopted by the official committees of the ALC and Missouri Synod. The purpose of Part II was to supplement and clarify what now became "Part I".

The ALC adopted Common Confession, Part II, in 1954.

In 1955 the Norwegian Synod broke fellowship with Missouri.

In 1956 the LC-MS convention resolved that "the Common Confession (Parts I and II) be not regarded or employed as a functioning basic document toward the establishment of altar and pulpit fellowship with other church bodies" and "that the Common Confession, one document composed of Parts I and II, be recognized as a statement in harmony with the Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions."

In 1957, when the Wisconsin Synod did not break fellowship with Missouri, the first group of pastors and congregations left, calling themselves the "Interim Conference," becoming the Church of the Lutheran Confession in 1960.

In 1961 the Wisconsin Synod broke fellowship with Missouri.

In 1963 both the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods withdrew from the Synodical Conference, in part as a result of controversy concerning the very doctrine that helped bring it into existence.

Just to complete the picture, Missouri finally declared fellowship with the ALC and
broke it again in 1981 after a period of "fellowship in protest." And now back to 1938 and what the ALC's Declaration didn't have to say about objective justification:

The Declaration of the Representatives of the American Lutheran Church

Under "II. Universal Plan of Salvation, Predestination and Conversion," the Declaration states:

a. We confess that there is an eternal divine plan of salvation according to which God before the beginning of time resolved to prepare salvation for all through Christ (Acts 2:23; 4:28; 1 Pet. 1:20; cf. 2 Cor. 5:18), and to appropriate the salvation prepared for all mankind to all men through Word and Sacrament (Luke 14:16-24; Matt. 11:28; John 12:32; 1 Tim. 2:4-7). To this end it is his purpose by His Word to work in all men true repentance and creatively to produce saving faith in them (2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:23), not irresistibly but in all cases with the same seriousness and the same power (Luke 14:23; Is. 55:10, 11). To this end He also purports to justify those who have come to faith, to preserve them in faith, and finally to glorify them (1 Cor. 2:7; 1 Pet. 1:5); which, however, does not exclude, but rather includes, that those who have come to faith must at all times work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12; Heb. 3:14; Col. 1:23). To this universal plan of salvation, revealed in Christ and proclaimed in the Scriptures, all Christians must adhere.

The problem is clear already, isn't it? Does this confession make it perfectly clear that the ALC believes and teaches that in Christ God has actually already declared the whole world righteous in his sight and forgiven all men all their sins? Ah--but doesn't the Brief Statement, which the ALC accepted at the same time it accepted this Declaration, ensure that this is the case when it says, "Scripture teaches that God has already declared the whole world righteous in Christ"? There are some in Missouri today who claim that this only teaches a potential righteousness for the whole world! And, besides, the ALC convention which accepted the Brief Statement also said that it had to be "viewed in the light of our Declaration."197

In his essay that appeared in the January, 1940, "Quartalschrift," but which he had prepared earlier, J. P. Meyer writes of his concern: "Since Dr. Lenski's Interpretation of Romans appeared in 1936, it was my intention to write a brief article on the Scripture basis for the doctrine of so-called objective justification. Since the publication of the Declaration of the Representatives of the American Lutheran Church a restudy of this doctrine has become imperative."198 Meyer wrote of the concern which was shared by all those who raised their voices in protest when many in Missouri were willing to accept the ALC's position.

What does the A.L.C. Declaration state when thus viewed as a proper interpretation, emendation, supplement to the Brief Statement? It presents justification as an act which God performs regarding such as "have come to faith." The deviation from the Brief Statement is two-fold: justification is performed on individuals only, while the Brief Statement speaks of a justification of "the whole world"; and again, faith is in some way a prerequisite for justification, while the Brief Statement holds it to be merely the receiving organ which "accepts" forgiveness as an accomplished "fact".199

Meyer's conclusion:
Since the A. L. C. Declaration deemed it necessary to speak of justification at all, but in terms differing from those used in the Brief Statement, their somewhat vague reference demands of us a close scrutiny: Do they assign to faith its proper function in justification; and do they perhaps altogether eliminate objective justification? We are not ready to have it eliminated or ignored . . . the A. L. C. Declaration, purporting to be an explanatory and supplementary confession of doctrine, is guilty of indefinite and misleading expressions, whereby the whole subject matter is made doubtful. 200

In the second part of his essay, which appeared in April, Meyer dealt with Lenski and Rom 5:19 and then the part faith plays in justification. He also wrote:

In passing we call attention to the far-reaching consequences a denial of objective justification will have on the doctrine of the means of grace. By announcing the full grace of God in every conceivable form they encourage the despairing sinner to take new hope, then incite faith in the blessings they announce. They draw the attention of the sinner entirely away from his own misery and teach him to fix it firmly on the promise of God, and on the promise of God alone.

Now assume that the Gospel promise were made in this way: The moment you believe, God will forgive your sins. Where shall the poor sinner turn for assurance? To the means of grace? These means, by their very announcement, direct his attention to himself. What, if he cannot believe? What, if in spite of his most strenuous efforts he cannot detect the slightest traces of faith in his heart? Any Christian who has any experience in the battles of life will agree that our greatest difficulty is to believe that we believe. The Gospel announcement together with the double seal of the sacraments is at times barely sufficient to overcome our doubts, our hesitation, and to give us such assurance. If instead of fixing our attention solely on the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation we are led to gaze into our own heart, that deceitful and desperately wicked thing, we are doomed.

The danger lurking in the clause: "God purposes to justify those who have come to faith", even in its modified form: "In the moment in which man comes to faith", is a very real one . . . 201

Meyer's final, personal conclusion: "From the foregoing it should be clear that the church does well to guard vigilantly the article of objective justification. If the church loses its sensitiveness, if it in the least becomes callous on this score, it stands in danger of losing the Gospel." 202

What was Missouri's fault? Not that she denied the truth of objective justification. Many fine testimonies can be found listed in the chronological bibliography at the conclusion of this paper, treasures of human expression concerning this scriptural doctrine. Missouri's error lay in the fact that she wasn't willing to require those who wished to fellowship with her to speak as unequivocally with respect to objective justification as she had in the past and did at this time. Unfortunately, as time went on more and more in Missouri began to mimic the speech of her would-be partners in church fellowship.

Both Wisconsin and the Norwegian Synods tried their hardest to point out Missouri's wandering from the straight path she had previously followed, as did the writers of "The Confessional Lutheran." In a special edition of the "Lutheran Sentinel," enti-
tled, "In the Interest of Truth," which appeared on August 27, 1943, Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker (1884-1959), then president of Bethany Lutheran College and editor of the "Sentinel," reminded his readers of how discussion concerning this doctrine went back to 1860 and how "the point of disagreement is one on account of which also our Norwegian Synod has suffered much abuse." Ylvisaker wrote:

In presenting the doctrine of Justification (i.e., of the Forgiveness of Sins), it has been found convenient and necessary to distinguish between an objective and a subjective justification. . . . Through this full presentation in the Gospel doctrine of justification, the sinner receives the full comfort of the Gospel; for then the pastor may say to the sinner: Christ died for all sins and sinners, also for you; God has already in Christ forgiven your sins and has forgiven you, and there is nothing you can add or need to add to this work of Christ or this grace of God; take this, receive this, believe this, trust in this, make this forgiveness yours by a living faith, so that you may enjoy the full pardon which has already been granted you.203

He explained that the teaching of the opponents on this point

. . . is the familiar: "first a man must believe, then he is justified, then he receives the forgiveness of sins." The pure grace of the Gospel says: In Christ you are forgiven through no merit or worthiness of yours, without condition, without words. But a conditioned Gospel says: God will forgive you, if you believe. The pure Gospel says: Believe it when the Gospel tells you that your sins have been blotted out by Christ and that God looks upon you in Christ as one who has not sinned. The conditioned Gospel says: Believe, and then God will for Christ's sake wash your sins away, forgive you and make you His Own.204

Due to the fact that, as of yet, there was "no clear proof that the American Lutheran Church has dropped its former error on this point," Ylvisaker wrote:

On this background he would be a careless watchman on the walls of Zion who did not mark the fact that the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church has only this to say on the doctrine of Justification: "To this end He also purposed to justify those who have come to faith" --not all men, then, as is clearly taught in II Cor. 5,19, quoted above. These words are plainly a restatement of the old error: "First a man must believe, then he is justified." This presentation of the doctrine of Justification is a serious mis-statement, the more so when it is included in a paragraph which sets out to explain the Universal Plan of Salvation. The Scriptures say: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing (therefore, forgiving) their (referring again to the world) trespasses unto them." The Declaration limits this justifying act of God to "those who have come to faith."

The resolution adopted by our Synod in June calls this by the plain term "false doctrine." An official committee of our Synod, soon after the 1938 resolutions were published, met with a committee of the Missouri Synod, and there presented the same view, and were assured that these words must be changed. In later committee meetings the point has been urged repeatedly. To this day no change has been made in this wording. As fellow-members of the Synodical Conference we dare not let our testimony in this matter be dulled so that we, too, must share the responsibility for this wrong confession. Thus our Synod
had only one course left, namely, officially as a synod to appeal to our brethren to revoke the resolution of 1938 by which the Declaration was accepted.205

Undoubtedly it was easier for the Norwegian Synod to move faster and more decisively in its dealings with Missouri than it was for Wisconsin, due to its size and the fact that it didn’t have as many ties with Missouri as Wisconsin had. Many fault Wisconsin for waiting until 1961 to break fellowship with Missouri when the Norwegian Synod did it six years earlier. But a different timetable and different needs according to judgments made on the basis of Christian love and concern do not necessarily mean less love for Christian truth.

In November of 1943, in the "Concordia Theological Monthly" under "Miscellanea," William Frederick Arndt (1880-1957), a member of Missouri’s Union Committee, tried to calm the fears of those opposed to the statement, "God purposes to justify those that have come to faith." His main comfort for them: "One must not forget that they speak of subjective justification." With this in mind, then the unprejudiced judge will have to admit, "that when logical sequence is considered, the creation of faith precedes justification, although in point of time there is no interval between them." Pointing to Lutheran theologians as well as to Bible passages that proceed in this logical sequence, Arndt concludes,

The above, I hold, has shown conclusively that the sentence under discussion is acceptable and satisfactory. Certainly, if the Bible itself uses such terminology, we cannot say that the doctrine of pure grace is jeopardized by this mode of speaking; and that the Lutheran teachers of the past were not averse to using expressions identical with or similar to, the one before us the quotations have demonstrated.

What Arndt said may well be true, but it offered little comfort for the concerned Christian who wanted to make sure those who sought union with him held the doctrine now which they had previously denied for 45 years and more! "The Confessional Lutheran" had this to say to Arndt:

We can not agree with Dr. Arndt that the contested phrase in the A. L.C. merely sets forth what the Scriptures and the fathers have taught on this point. For, let it be said that there can be no true teaching of subjective justification where it is not first clearly and definitely taught that God has already in Christ (before and apart from faith) absolved the whole world of its sins. Without a real objective justification there is nothing for faith to grasp and cling to. There is then no real Gospel to preach.209

E. W. A. Koehler and Objective Justification

In April of 1945, E. W. A. Koehler’s article, "Objective Justification," appeared in "OTM". In speaking of reconciliation, the real weakness of Pieper’s "change of attitude on God’s part" shows through in the way Koehler expresses it.

. . . While the wrath of God against sin itself continues as before, Ps. 5:4, there was by this reconciliation effected a change of mind and attitude of God towards sinners. His righteous wrath was appeased by the blood of His Son, 1 John 2:2 . . . Because of the redemption by Christ there is now in God "good will toward men."210

At face value, Koehler seems to be saying the God hates sin (the Law), but loves sinners (the Gospel). But he could have cited Ps 5:5 as well. The Law tells us that God also hates sinners!
In the positive vein, Koehler's article is excellent over all. He rightly says,

... when God accepted the redemptive work of His Son, He did not impute to men on earth their trespasses. The nonimputation is an accomplished fact. Furthermore, this nonimputation did not pertain to certain individuals only, e.g., only to those who would believe; for the pronoun "them" refers to the world, to all people in the world. This nonimputation therefore is universal in its scope; it includes Jews and Gentiles, Christians and infidels, Peter and Judas, you and me. 211

He also said,

... the real and original gracious judgment of God by which sinners are absolved and accounted righteous is not limited to the believers, but covers all men. For this reason it is called universal justification. But it is also called objective justification. For though thereby all men are freely justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, still not one sinner is, so far, personally benefited thereby in the sense that he has and enjoys what this justification implies ... Because this act of God is here considered by itself, irrespective of how man would react to it, whether he would accept it and have and enjoy its blessings or whether he would reject it in unbelief, it is called objective justification. 212

Concerning the proclamation of the Gospel, Koehler correctly says,

... As far as the sins of men are concerned, the Gospel does not tell us that God is ready and willing to forgive them if and when a man believes; it does not offer a potential forgiveness of sins; it does not tell us that the actual forgiving on the part of God takes place not before the believing takes place on the part of men; but the Gospel tells us that when God in Christ reconciled the world unto Himself, He then did not impute the trespasses unto men, He then forgave all their sins to all of them. The act of forgiving is not held in abeyance, but it is finished, it is accomplished, the sins are forgiven to all men. Therefore we do not preach of and about forgiveness of sins, but we preach forgiveness itself; we offer to men a finished product, not a future possibility.

It is quite incomprehensible how any man can say that the Gospel indeed proclaims and offers forgiveness of sins to all the world and yet deny that the sins of all men are already forgiven. ... If the sins of men have not yet been actually and really forgiven, the forgiveness of sins is not yet ready to be offered as a free gift; then we cannot speak of forgiveness as of an accomplished fact, but only as of an eventuality contingent on something else besides the grace of God in Christ. 213

If the real forgiving and justifying act of God does not take place until the moment a person comes to faith, then we shall have to change our entire mode of preaching. Then we cannot assure our people that their sins are forgiven, not even in absolution; all we could say is that God is very anxious to forgive their sins, but that they must first believe, and then He will surely do so. And if a person were in doubt as to whether he believes --and this is sometimes the case--we should have no way of comforting him, since the fact of his believing would first have to be established before the act of forgiving could take place. If this theory is correct, it will also affect the merits of
Christ's redemption; for then Christ did not actually justify us by His blood, Rom. 5:19, but only made our justification possible, pending our faith; then He achieved for us not an actual forgiveness but only a potential one, which becomes actual only if and when we believe. This theory will also change the object of our faith. For if God has not yet forgiven the sins of man, the penitent sinner can at first only believe that God will forgive; believing this, God does forgive; and thereafter the sinner believes that his sins are forgiven. 214

I wish that Koehler would have stressed the fact that subjective justification is just as much a forensic act of God that occurs outside of man as objective justification is, as Engelender did. Koehler says it, but not as clearly as Engelender did, and in a way that could lead to some criticism, if not misunderstanding. I offer the following here, which, of course, must be taken in light of what Koehler said previously.

... what is the relation between universal and personal justification?

The all-embracing justifying act of God, by which He forgave all sins to all men, accounting them righteous, and justified them intuitu Christi, took place, humanly speaking, the moment He accepted the redemptive work of His Son for the reconciliation of the world, 2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 3:24; 5:10,18. It was then that in the court of heaven He freely by grace for Christ's sake absolved all sinners and declared them just. And this act of God need not be repeated and is not repeated, even as the redemption by Christ, on which it is based, is never repeated.

What happens in the case of the believer, who trusts in, and apprehends, this gracious judgment of God, is that as he applies this justification to himself, God also applies it to him and confirms it upon him. With the believer the objective justification becomes effective, God declares him a recipient of the forgiveness offered to all. 215

The Common Confession

We skip ahead over various articles to the year 1950, the year the Common Confession was adopted by both the ALC and the Missouri Synod, and Missouri resolved to place it before the Synodical Conference to receive the opinion and consent of the constituent synods. In this new union document, a joint venture of Missouri and the ALC, we find the following under Section VI, "Justification."

We believe and teach:

By His redemptive work Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world; hence, forgiveness of sins has been secured and provided for all men. (This is often spoken of as objective justification.) "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation," II Cor. 5:19. 216

Is this the clear confession Missouri's critics, within and without, were looking for? While it could be read correctly, it also left the door open for those who wanted to interpret it according to their own false views.
In the same year it was adopted by the two church bodies, Professor Edmund C. Reim, then of our seminary, wrote: "The 'provided' of the new confession falls far short of the vigor of the Brief Statement's, 'declared.' And yet it is just this last which expresses the central idea of justification."217

In the following year, the Norwegian and Wisconsin Synods registered their official complaints through their conventions. The Norwegian Synod adopted the following resolution:

... Be it Resolved, That we cannot give our consent to the Common Confession as a settlement of doctrinal differences between the Synodical Conference and the American Lutheran Church, for the following reasons:

... Secondly, although the justification of all mankind in Christ (objective justification, Rom. 4:5; Rom. 5:18) has been openly denied within the American Lutheran Church, yet the Common Confession does not definitely state that God has declared all mankind to be righteous in Christ.218

At our own convention, Ernst H. Wendland (then Reverend, now Reverend Professor),

... examined the Confession's statement on justification. His conclusions are summarized as follows: "The Brief Statement holds that God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ. Since the American Lutheran Church has up to the present day never taught an objective justification of God which applies to the whole world and which has been completed already through the death and resurrection of Christ, and since this church has therefore spoken only of a subjective justification which takes place when faith enters the heart, we must insist upon a confession which leaves room for no equivocation on this point."219

In "Document No. 4: Review of the Common Confession," accepted by the Synod in convention, the following is found concerning, "Art. VI. Justification":

Any clear and correct presentation of this article requires not merely the inclusion of the term "objective justification," but a clear statement that in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ God has already declared every sinner righteous in His sight. For the non-imputation of the trespasses of the world (2 Cor. 5:19) is to be indentified with the establishing of a public verdict of acquittal (δικαιοσύνη δικαιώματος - Ro. 5:19) upon those whose justification was revealed and proclaimed by the Resurrection of Christ (Ro. 4:25).

This truth is impaired when the article states that forgiveness "has been secured and provided for all men." For this still leaves room for the thought that the justification of the sinner is not complete until the missing factor of personal (subjective) faith is supplied, a thought which is even suggested in the Article by its description of justification taking place on the basis of "Christ's righteousness, which He imputes to the sinner through the Gospel and which the sinner accepts by faith."
Since this formulation admits of false answers to the question concerning the function of faith in justification, the article must be rejected.220

As previously mentioned, the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods declared themselves members of the Synodical Conference "in statu confessionis" in 1952. In 1953 the Common Confession, Part II, appeared, and in "A Fraternal Word on the questions in controversy between the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod," issued by Missouri on August 31, 1953, Wisconsin was presented with the additional statements which were to set all Wisconsin's complaints aside: "The blessings of this ministry are meant for all races and conditions of men. From these blessings no one may be excluded, since no one is excluded from the forgiveness SPOKEN by God to the world in the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ."221

In "A Fraternal Word Examined," Wisconsin really didn't address the provided addition. It addressed what Missouri claimed Wisconsin's objections were and made the point that the word to be stressed was not declared but already! Thus, the "SPOKEN" of Part II didn't make a great deal of difference one way or the other. At this time Wisconsin's tract series, "Continuing in His Word," began to appear, and Tract No. 3 was issued—one that bears reprinting and wide distribution with a minimum of editing to bring it up to date, with not so much emphasis on the then-present situation. This true jewel among expositions of the doctrine of justification, entitled "Every Sinner Declared Righteous," and all of seven pages, states:

... 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)...

It is true, of course, and necessary for the completion of our picture to remind ourselves that this astonishing verdict of God's justifying grace is received by faith alone. Not all, unfortunately, accept God's verdict of acquittal. Whether man accepts or rejects it, however, does not change the truth of justification itself, just as little as the prisoner can change any judge's verdict of acquittal by refusing to accept it. The declaration of the judge still stands. That is also the point to be emphasized whenever we speak of justification. By his faith man does not add to the power of God's justifying act. ... Faith, which God's Holy Spirit alone can work in man, is simply the hand which receives or accepts a declaration which God has made to the entire world. ...222

The tract asks, "Does The Common Confession Give a Clear Picture?" and says,

... The Noble Benefactor has stepped in and "secured and provided" freedom for them (the convicted prisoners before the Judge). But where is the declaration of the Judge? Is it supposed to be covered by the statement appearing in parentheses? (i.e., This is often spoken of as objective justification.)223

As for the quotation of 2 Cor 5:19 in the Common Confession, the tract says,
That this is a fine passage on justification is not to be questioned. We cannot feel certain, however, that the quotation of this passage settles anything. Our misgivings are based on the fact that we have seen leading scholars of the Bible take some of the chief passages on objective justification and flatly deny that there is such a thing, "all assertions and argumentations to the contrary not withstanding."224

As for the rest of what the Common Confession says, the question is still, "When?" "When does God's justifying act really take place? Not until faith has been kindled in the heart? Or already in Christ's death and resurrection?"225a I will save the beautiful concluding remarks of this tract for the conclusion of this paper.

The next few years were really the peak years as far as this controversy was concerned. An indication of how things were going in Missouri can be seen from the following incident. "The Confessional Lutheran" reported in February, 1954, that Pastor J. H. Gockel of the Missouri Synod circulated a mimeographed statement which concluded as follows:

In a pamphlet, "This Church of Ours," issued by our President before the Chicago convention, 1947, is this statement under "The Doctrine of Justification": "For all sinners God has provided forgiveness in Christ the Savior (Objective Justification)." . . . So a clear break has not yet been made with Objective Justification. But it must be made. WITHIN THE LAST DECADE A PASTOR WAS SUSPENDED AS A HERETIC FOR SAYING WHAT THE PRESIDENT'S PAMPHLET SAID ONLY TWO YEARS LATER AND WHAT THE COMMON CONFESSION I SAY TODAY. Such a thing must not happen again. But it can happen as long as we do not frankly disavow Objective Justification, as Sola Scriptura requires of us. (Capitals those of "The Confessional Lutheran").225b

This pastor was Gockel himself, who had later "recanted" his error. At that time, June 24, 1944, Gockel had contended that, "It cannot be said that Objective Justification is taught 'expressis verbis' in Rom. 5:19 or in the other two passages cited by the Brief Statement . . ."226 In his later retraction, Gockel expressed his regret that he had "called the doctrine of Objective Justification, namely, 'dasz Gott den Suendern insgemein die Suenden vergeben hat'(that God has forgiven sins to all men), 'a Stoeckhardt theory' and also a 'vulnerable theory,' and that I have stated that not everybody could agree with Dr. Pieper 'dasz Gott die ganze Welt rechtfertigte' (that God justified the whole world)."227

Gockel was then, in 1944, in the Northern Illinois District. He was now, 1954, in the English District, and the dilemma for Missouri, as Theodore Dierks, the author of this article, saw it, was this:

... Will the Missouri Synod continue to uphold the Common Confession and confess that "by His redemptive work Christ is the Propitiation for the sins of the whole world; hence forgiveness of sin has been secured and provided for all men. (This is often spoken of as objective justification.)" and thus repudiate the doctrinal position of the Northern Illinois District? Or, will the Missouri Synod with the Northern Illinois District convention of 1945 confess: "(1) That Christ by His holy life and innocent suffering and death has earned and procured for all men complete forgiveness of sins. I John 2:2 (2) That on the basis of this redemption in Christ, God has forgiven all sins to all men, and declared the whole world just. This truth is known as universal or objective justification, and the seat of this doctrine is found in Romans.
5:18-19; 4:25, and 2 Corinthians 5:18-21" and repudiate the statement of the Common Confession which as a statement of objective justification is not in harmony with Scripture?

The Missouri Synod is now face to face with this dilemma. If the Missouri Synod and its officials straddle the issue and with weasel words attempt to harmonize these two conflicting positions, they will prove to all the world that their subscription to the Brief Statement is a hollow mockery and that they in fact do not really confess with the Brief Statement that "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" any and all assertions to the contrary notwithstanding. 228

I can't tell you what happened in this particular case. I only know that J. P. Meyer states in his treatment of 2 Corinthians 5:11-17 for the Milwaukee City Pastoral Conference of the Wisconsin Synod, which appeared in the "Quartalschrift" in October of this year,

Can a decided return of Missouri to the clear statement of the B. S. be expected if in its midst a man can publicly dare to ridicule the distinction between objective and subjective justification (without being reprimanded, as far as the disturbed public is concerned) and can deplore that as far as the CC and the Houston convention are concerned a clean break has not yet been made with Objective Justification. But it must be made, and then declare that a dangerous situation prevails "as long as we do not frankly disavow Objective Justification, as Sola Scriptura requires us." 229

In July of 1954 Missouri issued "A Fraternal Reply" to Wisconsin, dealing also with what it considered the "Inaccuracies in Wisconsin Synod's Tract No. 3." According to this "Reply," the "declaration of the Judge" isn't missing because the phrase "the forgiveness of sins" is forensic. And since the forgiveness of sins can be considered another name for the "whole act of justification," according to this logic (?) the Common Confession really says, "hence forgiveness of sins (or, the whole act of justification) has been secured and provided for all men," and the conclusion of Tract No. 3 concerning the Common Confession "that justification occurs only when faith is already present . . . is fallacious because it rests on a failure to recognize the fact that the phrase 'forgiveness of sins' is forensic and that it expresses in itself the entire act of justification." 230

In "Another Fraternal Reply" that came out of Missouri late in '54, we find much the same line of thought.

. . . . Hence, to say as the Common Confession does, that "forgiveness of sins has been secured and provided for all men" is exactly the same as saying, "A verdict of the non-imputation of their sins has been secured for all men," or "a decision of acquittal from their sin" or "A declaration whereby the ungodly have been declared godly" has been secured and provided for all men.

And because the Common Confession bases this "forgiveness of sins" or "this verdict whereby the sinner has been declared righteous in God's sight" on Christ's redemptive work, which has been completed once for all in His death and resurrection (See Common Confession, Art. III, Redemption "God by raising . . . complete"), it follows that this verdict of the "non-imputation of sins" is a finished product, "ein fertiges Gut" (Wis. Synod Proc. 1951, p. 128, par. 2.). . . . 231
The author, Theodore Nickel, concluded:

To summarize: The Common Confession teaches that there has been secured and provided for all men "forgiveness of sins," i.e., a verdict whereby they have been declared righteous in God's sight. And the Brief Statement says, "God has already declared the whole world righteous in His sight." Hence, while the terminology is different, both teach exactly the same doctrine of objective justification, except that the Common Confession uses the terminology more common in the Confessional writings, namely, "the forgiveness of sins."

The additional statement in Common Confession Part II, Art. 3 is, therefore, merely a reaffirmation of what already has been confessed. It reads, "No one is excluded from the forgiveness spoken by God to the world in the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ." (We remind the reader, that 'forgiveness' must again be understood as a synonym of "The verdict by which the sinner has been declared righteous"). Surely, this should satisfy the most exacting student of this article and convince him that the heritage of our faith is here clearly confessed and adequately preserved.22

If we jump ahead now to 1956 for a moment, the April 29 "Northwestern Lutheran" carried a reply to Nickel by E. Arnold Sitz, one of the "voices" of the Standing Committee in Matters of Church Union, at his best!

Let us weigh the argument of Pastor Nickel on the article treating of "Objective Justification." He declares that when the CC says, "Forgiveness of sins has been secured and provided for all men" it is exactly the same as "God has declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ." Does he draw his support for this assertion from theologians in the American Lutheran Church? Not at all! He appeals to Pieper's Dogmatik and to the Apology. We have no quarrel with either. But we do call for definition by the ALC of the forgiveness of sins as being God's declaration that all men have been declared righteous by God. All the writer's profuse underlining avails nothing until he finds support on this point in the theology of American Lutheran writers...

The author of "Another Fraternal Endeavor" has command over a stupendous stockpile of synonyms. Mark this burst from his machine gun: "'Atonement,' or 'propitiation,' or 'reconciliation,' or 'justification,' or 'verdict of acquittal.'" Dropping out the middle three we have the assertion that the general salvo "atonement" hits the same target as the specific and particular shot, "verdict of acquittal." In other words, if a man hears the word "atonement" he thinks of "verdict of acquittal." Can Pastor Nickel prove to us that in the ALC arsenal "atonement" is of the exact caliber of "verdict of acquittal"? If not, all his bursts are but noise and smoke.

Pastor Nickel asserts the "forgiveness of sins" is identical with "the verdict of objective justification" or "the verdict by which the sinner has been declared righteous." Synodical Conference Lutherans believe that the righteousness of God is ours concomitant with the forgiveness of sins, for Scripture states it in places like Rom. 5:18,19. But we question again, "Do the assertions of Pastor Nickel reflect those of the ALC as well?" He avers, "These terms ('God's verdict of acquittal,'
'Christ's merit,' or 'the forgiveness of sins' are used interchangeably in Holy Scripture, in the Confessional Writings, and in this article of the Common Confession.' Who says so? Pastor Nickel. But we call for the affidavit of the ALC on it that such is the ALC's position. In all his numerous citations not a single one is taken from ALC sources. Why not?"33

So much for "Another Fraternal Endeavor."

In November of '54, the Synodical Conference adopted the following resolution presented by the Norwegian Synod:

That the Synodical Conference does hereby reaffirm its adherence to the Doctrine as defined in the Synodical Conference Proceedings of the Convention held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in the month of July, 1872, page 43, to wit: "This doctrine (of universal justification) is expressly stated in Rom. 5:18; and it is, therefore, not only a Biblical doctrine but also a Biblical expression that 'justification of life has come upon all men' (Luther's translation). Only a Calvinistic interpretation could explain this passage so as to make out that only the elect have been justified. . . . Those who say that God has made the whole world righteous, but deny that He has declared the world righteous, deny thereby in reality the whole of justification; for this that the Father has declared the world righteous must not be separated from this that the Son made the world righteous when the Father raised Christ from the dead."34

Unfortunately, "The Northwestern Lutheran" account of this meeting also reports, "Although it is a fact that the delegates voted to adopt the definition of Objective Justification and Unionism proposed by the Norwegian Synod as Scripturally correct, yet it was not done wholeheartedly, it was not done unanimously."35

J. P. Meyer and Three of the Now-Famous "Kokomo Four Statements"

In January of 1955, the "Quartalschrift" carried a continuation of Meyer's essays on 2 Corinthians. Here his now-famous (infamous?) statements can be found which became the basis for three of the "Kokomo Four Statements", of 1979 origin and more recent notoriety. We quote:

In v. 14 Paul stated the basic fact of the Gospel message in the following words: If one died for all, then all have died. The idea that underlies this fact is that of substitution. The One Holy Son of God volunteered to take the place of sinners. He suffered death and experienced its agony. By virtue of the substitution His death with all its excruciating pain and terror is credited to all sinners. God considers them all such as have now paid the penalty for their sins in full --not, indeed, in their own person, but by proxy.

Paul then, in v. 17, turns to the individual sinners, saying: If any one is in Christ he is a new creation. 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 about it or not, whether he believes it or not, has received the status of a saint. What will be his reaction when he is informed about this turn of events? Will he accept, or will he decline? Paul for the
present disregards the possibility of rejection, he takes up the case of one who accepted the good news. He describes him as one "in Christ," and sums up the situation by calling him a "new creation."236 (Kokomo Statement No. 1; last emphasis mine.)

We thus see that ἐπεκαινίσθη does not denote a change in the nature of the sinner, in the attitude of his heart. That change will take place when he is led by the Spirit to accept in faith the offered ἐπεκαινίσθη. The change occurred in the standing of the sinner before his Judge. Before Christ's intervention took place God regarded him as a guilt-laden, condemned culprit. After Christ's intervention and through Christ's intervention He regards him as a guilt-free saint. The nature of the sinner has not been changed. God did not undergo a change, did not experience a change of heart. The status of the sinner was changed.237 (the basis for Kokomo Statement No. 2--major emphasis mine.)

... "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." We note first of all that Paul extends God's act of ἐπεκαινίσθη to cover the whole world. No sinner is excepted. The sins of every one were laid on Jesus, were imputed to Him. Forgiveness of sins was not only secured and provided for the sinners, it was pronounced over them. Their sins were non-imputed to them, they were imputed to Christ. This applies to the whole world, to every individual sinner, whether he was living in the days of Christ, or had died centuries before His coming, or had not yet been born, perhaps has not been born to this day. It applies to the world as such, regardless of whether a particular sinner ever comes to faith, or not.238 (basis for Kokomo Statement No. 3--emphasis mine)

Those who read Meyer in context should have no problem with what he says here, even if they don't care for his terminology. Of course, if someone stubbornly refuses to consider another person's words in any other way but the way he chooses to define them and rejects the author's own clear meaning in his own context, no understanding can ever be reached.

Onward

The Norwegian Synod officially broke fellowship with Missouri in June of 1955. The same year saw Professor Edmund Reim's article, "A History of the Term 'Objective Justification'" appear in the April "Quartalschrift," originally prepared for the Milwaukee City Pastoral Conference. (Reim was chairman of the Wisconsin Synod's Committee on Church Union. When the convention of '55 didn't vote to break fellowship with Missouri, Reim was ready to resign both his chairmanship and his seat on the Seminary faculty, of which he was also the president. He was persuaded to continue, but he finally left in 1957 to help form the Interim Conference, mentioned previously, when Wisconsin once again failed to break with Missouri.)

Reim's paper was prompted by criticism that the term "objective justification" was "more or less of an innovation, a mere local use, and without standing in good theological literature. The implication was that differences on such a point of terminology should not be permitted to become a major issue."239 Reim concluded:

What are our findings? We have seen that the terminology of an objective and a subjective justification is common property within our Synodical Conference. There is no reason why we should not use it in our discussions with each other. Nevertheless we still have a preference for the simpler terminology of a general or universal, and of a personal justifi-
cation. To use these simpler terms will show that we are concerned about the substance of the doctrine rather than one single mode of expressing it. . . .

But no apologies need be offered for the use that has been made of the term. It is certainly not a local idiom, indicating a self-willed, separatistic trend. It is a term that serves well for the uncovering and rejection of the trends of subjectivism, against which our age is by no means immune. Therefore neither the term nor the fact of an objective justification of all mankind should be permitted to fall into oblivion. 240


IX. An Interlude, 1963-1975

Things remained quiet on the objective justification front, at least as far as the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods were concerned. For those who chose to remain in Missouri and fight the struggle continued—and still continues! It should be noted before moving ahead that on December 15, 1962, Herman Otten began publishing "Lutheran News", which would become "Christian News" as of January 1, 1968.

In 1963, Dr. Siegbert W. Becker of Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Illinois, accepted a call into the Wisconsin Synod, and in the same year William Frederick Henry Beck (1904-1966) of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, saw his translation of the New Testament published by Concordia Publishing House. His complete translation of the Bible, An American Translation (AAT), would be published in 1976, thanks to the efforts of Herman Otten. Beck's New Testament touches the doctrine of justification (and, particularly, objective justification) with respect to his translation (and, elsewhere, his explanation) of the verb ἸΣΧΙΩ. And this really takes us into the whole matter of the present controversy concerning objective justification. We will deal with this matter in detail shortly. Hopefully the following quote will suffice to indicate the problem involved for now.

. . . ("to make righteous") is Beck's rather consistent way of translating ἸΣΧΙΩ, with the exception of those passages where the Bible says that God is justified or where men are said to justify themselves. Because of some fraternal pressure brought on Beck by fellow-conservatives in the LC-MS he added a footnote to this passage (Romans 3:20) which reads, '

J. P. Meyer's Ministers of Christ: A Commentary on the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians also appeared in 1963, most of which had appeared almost verbatim in the "Quartalschrift" during the '50s (chapters 3-13). Now his statements about objective justification would receive a wider audience, but for 25 years, going back to their first appearance in public print, no one ever accused him of false doctrine, as far as I know. No doubt, Fritschel and Lenski would have, but no one in Missouri or the Norwegian Synod or his own Wisconsin Synod uttered a word against him, in print or otherwise, to the best of my knowledge.

In July of 1965 the "Second Lutheran Free Conference" was held at Cedar Rapids,
Iowa, a forum for doctrinal discussion outside the formal framework of church fellowship among conservative Lutherans in various bodies. Six excellent essays were delivered on the doctrine of justification. Wisconsin Synod's Norman Berg was the conference "Moderator." Essayists were Armin W. Schuetze (WELS), Herman Otten (independent, but serving a LC-MS congregation), Paul H. Burgdorf (LC-MS), Torald N. Teigen (ELS), Norbert Rein (CLC), and Donald G. Rechkopf (ALC). Here we offer only the following, from Rein's essay, "The Appropriation of Justification: Justifying Faith."

The best assurance for preserving the sola gratia in the doctrine of justification is a firm grip on the heart of the Gospel that forgiveness of all sin is an accomplished fact, a ready blessing; that God has in Christ once and for all forgiven all men all their sins. The job is done. It is finished. As soon as this is lost, the Gospel is made to say nothing more than: God is now willing to forgive you your sins, if you first do this and that. Immediately the gates are then opened to synergism, and men rush in with their own notions of what they must still contribute to bring about their justification. The worst synergists say: God is willing to forgive your sins if you as a believer produce works of love which will be worthy of salvation. Others say: God is willing to forgive you if you are sorry for your sins. Thus they make of the contrition that preceded faith a cause and a condition of forgiveness.242

At the hands of Lutherans who have been well trained in the doctrine of justification by faith alone, perhaps the greatest danger of taking something away from the sola gratia comes from looking upon faith itself as a condition of forgiveness, as that contribution which man must still make to render his justification complete. This again results from failure to remember that in Christ God already has forgiven all men their sins. Forgiveness is not something that awaits man's faith before becoming a reality. Rather, it is an accomplished fact. It provides the comforting assurance that gives faith.243

"Lutheran News" informs us that, "Lutherans from nine different Lutheran bodies expressed agreement "in substance" here today (July 15) with a statement which reaffirmed the historic Christian and Lutheran doctrine of Justification." Our synod's (and no longer the Missouri Synod's) Dr. Becker was on the special committee of four which drew up this summary statement. We quote it here in full.

1. To a world fearful of a holocaust to come and hastening blindly toward the final judgment, God still speaks His saving Word that we are justified by grace for Christ's sake.

2. Justification is a courtroom term and is God's declaration that the sinner is "not guilty." This act of acquittal is relevant to contemporary man because, though the manifestations of his sinfulness vary from era to era, all these sins are in essence an arrogant rebellion against the inflexible law of the holy God, for which he stands in desperate need of divine forgiveness (Rom. 3:23). Man hates God, and God's wrath rests upon man, the sinner, universally and without distinction. Man stands condemned as guilty before his God for the guilt of Adam, the depravity he has inherited, and his own personal transgressions.

3. But because of the perfect substitutionary work of Christ, to whom our sins were imputed and whose perfect fulfillment of all the requirements of God's law is credited to us, God's verdict of "not guilty"
has been pronounced over the whole world of sinners and is valid and true whether men believe it or not (Rom. 5:12-19).

4. This verdict, which God has pronounced through the resurrection of His Son (Rom. 4:25), is revealed in the Gospel, the "word of reconciliation", which has been committed to the church and which the church is commanded to proclaim to all men, by announcing to all sinners that for Jesus' sake all their sins have been forgiven (2 Cor. 5:15-21).

5. The verdict is accepted by faith, by which man appropriates to himself the benefits of Christ's atoning work (Rom. 3:28; Eph. 2:8,9). Justifying faith relies solely upon Christ and confidently embraces the declaration of the Gospel revealed to us in the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures (Rom. 16:26). Neither contrition nor faith, however, are conditions upon which justification depends. The sinner is declared righteous solely for Christ's sake by the grace and mercy of God. Man's acceptance of God's declarative act is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit and is not meritorious. Faith does not trust faith; it trusts Christ.

6. From the acceptance of God's forgiveness flows a life of consecrated service. While all men are God's property, a man is willing to acknowledge this and act accordingly only when he has been justified by faith and renewed by the Holy Ghost. God expects fruit of His children. Only those who abide in Christ are able to produce fruit. The bearing of fruit (sanctification) is a continuous process which remains imperfect and incomplete in this life. Because of the joy which the penitent and believing sinner finds in his "forgiven-ness" before God, he seeks day by day to bring forth the fruit of a holy life.

In light of the present controversy, we wonder if the editor of "Christian News" would be willing to subscribe to points 3 and 4 without reservation, as apparently was the case in 1965. In this same year Herman Otten published his book, Baal or God. His position is that expressed by the above statement. Here Otten wrote:

Because of the redemption through Christ God no longer imputes sins to men (2 Corinthians 5:19); He does not charge their transgressions against them, but credits them with the merits of Christ. . . . For the sake of Christ's complete satisfaction God "justifies the ungodly" (Romans 4:5), i.e., they who by nature and by their own works were altogether ungodly, were because of the work of Christ declared and pronounced just and righteous.

. . . the reconciliation of the whole world is an accomplished fact, which, in itself, is not brought about by the attitude of men (Romans 3:3). This fact is proclaimed in the Gospel to every slave of sin; and the very moment that he applies this fact to himself, he has the forgiveness of all his sins, is free from the guilt and punishment of sin, and is personally justified before God. . . . he by such faith becomes personally righteous, because the righteousness of Christ, which his faith apprehends, is by God imputed to him personally. Thus by faith one is put into personal possession of that justification, which the Gospel offers to all without distinction.245

When it was specifically suggested by the present writer in June of 1982 that
Otten reproduce these statements from Real or God in "Christian News" to "help your readers see your position in this matter"(objective justification)" unless you have changed your position," they never appeared. Otten simply replied via "The Forum, "We have always stressed that salvation is totally a free gift and that there is nothing man does which even in part gains his salvation. We wholeheartedly subscribe to everything the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions teach about justification,"246 and quoted Article IV of the Augsburg Confession. What he said in July of '82 was fine, but it didn't answer the matter at hand any more than the Common Confession nailed down objective justification. But already I'm jumping ahead to the present!

In 1966 the Wisconsin Synod published its excellent, short, popular tract, "JUSTIFICATION: A clear, simple explanation of the Bible's doctrine of JUSTIFICATION, the basic teaching of the Christian faith." We quote the passages particularly pertinent to our discussion here:

Not Just a Possibility

It is a blasphemous twisting of the plain and simple truth to say that Christ's sacrifice has made our freedom a possibility, so that if we now fulfill certain conditions we may procure that freedom. The plain and simple truth is rather that Christ took away the sins of the whole world; He bore our sins in His own body; He loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood; He made us free, and free we are, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (II Cor. 5:19).

Redemption Was Complete

No amount of trickery, unbelief, scoffing can change these simple words into meaning something other than that Christ took on Himself all the world's sin and all the consequences of sin. When God raised Christ from the dead, He proclaimed to all the world that payment in full had been made, that redemption was complete, that guilt had been wiped out, and in Isaiah's words, that the iniquity of God's people had been pardoned. Because Christ died in your stead and bore your sin in His own body, you are free, you are not guilty, your iniquity is pardoned. That is justification.

Justification a Fact, No Matter What Man Does With It

God's declaration that all of the world's sin had been laid upon His only Son and that all men are therefore free, stands as true regardless of how that declaration is received by those for whom it is meant. Men may and do doubt that God means what He says. That does not make God and His Word untrustworthy. Men may scoff at this declaration of freedom and reject it as mere superstition, but that does not affect God's truth. On the other hand, when we believe that God meant what He says and accept His pardon as meant for us, it is not our faith that makes it true. Our faith does not make God trustworthy, nor does unbelief in any way impair His truthfulness. "What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the truth of God without effect?" (Rom. 3:3.) 247
The Beginning and the Source of the Christian Life

Justification is an act of God. It is not something that we do or have done. It is a verdict pronounced upon us by our Heavenly Judge. It is not a reward for a Christian life, but is rather the beginning of a Christian life. It is what makes a Christian life possible. First comes the pardon and the freedom; the Christian life follows. ...

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In 1967, "We Believe: A Statement of Belief of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod" was issued. With regard to our present topic it declares:

We believe that God has justified, that is, declared all sinners righteous in his eyes for the sake of Christ. This is the central message of Scripture upon which the very existence of the church depends. It is a message relevant to people of all times and places, of all races and social strata, for "the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men" (Rom. 5:18). All need justification before God, and Scripture proclaims that all are justified, for "the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men." (Rom. 5:18).

We believe that the individual receives this free gift of forgiveness through Christ, not by works, but only by faith (Eph. 2:8,9). Justifying faith is trust in Christ and his redemptive work. This faith justifies, not because of any inherent virtue, but only because of the salvation prepared by God in Christ, which it embraces (Rom. 3:28; 4:5). On the other hand, although Jesus died for all, Scripture tells us that "whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). The unbeliever loses the forgiveness won for him by Christ.249

We reject every teaching that man in any way contributes to his salvation. We reject all efforts to present faith as a condition man must fulfill to complete his justification. 250

Other statements from the WELS could be brought forward. What we've said already should suffice to make its position on objective justification more than clear. I now offer comments from one more paper of a general nature on the subject of objective justification and then we will move into the first of what I consider the three impetus or catalysts for the present controversy regarding objective justification--actually nothing more than the same old controversy that has existed since 1864.

Dr. Siegbert W. Becker is certainly one of the great spokesmen and defenders of the doctrine of objective justification, sharing the company and stature of men like Walther, Pieper, Stöckhardt and J. P. Meyer. In August of 1971 he wrote the following in an essay entitled, "Observing the Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel in the Preaching and Teaching Ministry." After emphasizing the fact that the Law must be proclaimed in all its fullness ("We shall observe the proper distinction between law and Gospel only if we remember that our primary purpose in preaching the Law is to make men afraid and sad"), Becker writes:

And when we comfort the afflicted and begin to preach the Gospel we must again take care to observe the proper distinction between it and the law,
and keep the law as far away as heaven is from hell...

Here, too, we stand in constant danger of falling short. Perhaps the greatest danger lies in a tendency that lurks in the heart of every one of us to be afraid to divorce from our preaching of the Gospel every trace of a conditioned forgiveness and salvation.

Such a conditional salvation is not preached only when we say that God will love us if we are good or that He will forgive us if we are sorry or if we believe. It may lie hidden even in the way we offer forgiveness to men. When the Common Confession said, for example, that forgiveness has been provided for all men, it was not proclaiming a false doctrine. When it said that this is sometimes called universal justification, this may well have been true, because things are often called by a wrong name in this world. But those who knew that this was the best that the Missouri Synod could obtain from the ALC, which refused to say that God has forgiven the sins of all men, also knew how wrong that statement was, because it did not offer men a completed and sure forgiveness but really only spoke of a possible forgiveness that was easily made conditional.

The law promises salvation to those who are good and do all the right things. The Gospel just promises forgiveness and salvation, period. It is significant that when Jesus sent out His disciples to convert the world after His resurrection, He told them, according to Luke's Gospel, not to preach about forgiveness, but just to preach forgiveness. It is significant also that the word for preach in that passage (Luke 24:47) is the word that describes the activity of a herald. As heralds of the King of kings, our great high priest, they were to go out into all the world and announce to all men that their sins are forgiven.

In this doctrine of universal justification our Lutheran Church has one of its greatest bulwarks against a mixing of law and Gospel, for if it is really true that God has forgiven the sins of all men, then it is obvious that forgiveness in itself cannot be dependent on or conditioned by anything that we do, and in proclaiming it to our congregations from the pulpit or in teaching it to our children in the classroom we will simply tell them that their sins are forgiven.

They really are!...

Because of the righteousness of one, the free gift has come upon all men unto justification, and the whole human race, which is declared guilty and damned by the law, is likewise declared not guilty and saved by the Gospel. As we have seen, such a message cannot be proclaimed apart from the cross of Christ and the doctrine of the vicarious atonement, but against that background it should be proclaimed in just that way. I can go to any man on earth and tell him that his sins are forgiven, no matter who he is or what he has done. Whether I will tell him this or not depends on many things, for the same Savior who told us to preach forgiveness also said, "Whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

If I were still a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, I would feel inclined to belabor this point at great length, because I always felt that the doctrine of universal or objective justification was grad-
ually fading away in that church. More than a dozen years ago, when I was still teaching dogmatics at River Forest, a pastor who had been a classmate of mine in St. Louis, wrote to complain that the new teacher, who had graduated from Concordia the year before, was teaching the children in school that the sins of all of them were forgiven. He asked, "What shall I do with him?" to which I answered, "Why don't you thank God for him?" But it seems to me that Wisconsin Synod college students are not nearly as likely to be surprised as though they were hearing for the first time that God has really already forgiven the sins of all men.

As pastors and teachers who are fully committed to the doctrine of universal justification, we should find it relatively easy to avoid the mistake of mixing law and Gospel which make forgiveness dependent on either our contrition or on faith. In other words, when we proclaim the Gospel, it should be pure Gospel.

We ought not, for example, to say that God will forgive us if we are sorry, as though our contrition were the price we pay for God's forgiveness. The opinio legis, which is native to the human heart, makes it all too easy to view contrition as a feeling we produce in ourselves. But true contrition is produced by God in us through the preaching of the law. Luther's remark that contrition is believing the law should also be helpful here.

Instead of viewing contrition as a cause of forgiveness that moves God to pity us when He sees our tears, we ought to bear in mind always that contrition is important to make us see our need of help. Until we believe that we are damned sinners in the sight of God we cannot possibly see any need of forgiveness nor believe that our sins are forgiven nor accept Christ as our Savior from sin. Healthy people don't need a doctor, as Jesus said.

In the same way, we must guard constantly against viewing faith as a cause of forgiveness. God does not forgive us because we believe or when we believe. He simply forgives us and tells us in the Gospel that He has done so. This message we accept by believing it. It was true long before we came to faith and even long before we were born, but we find hope and comfort and eternal joy in the message only if we believe it. This, too, Luther understood with keen insight. In his explanation of the Fifth Petition in the Large Catechism he writes, "He has given us the Gospel, which is pure forgiveness before we prayed or ever thought of it." (L.C., III,88). It may help to remind ourselves that forgiveness comes first and then comes faith. We must preach the Gospel as a full and free message of forgiveness which is intended to arouse faith, and not demand faith first as a condition on the basis of which we are willing to announce God's forgiveness.

It seems to me that many of our young people draw a wrong conclusion from both our baptismal form and from our communion liturgy. We need to call the attention of our people to the phrase in the order of baptism, "to signify what God in and through baptism works in him." All that they seem to remember is that we asked the child whether it believed before we baptized it, and they conclude from this that faith must be confessed before forgiveness is offered.

A similar conclusion is drawn from our communion liturgy. Because we
ask people whether they are sorry and believe and intend to amend their sinful lives before we announce forgiveness, people seem to have a tendency to view contrition and faith and a desire to amend as conditions to be fulfilled before forgiveness is offered. That they were sinners deserving of hell was true long before they confessed it. That their sins were forgiven by God was true long before the pastor told them about it. But the Gospel message is intended for afflicted people, not for secure sinners. If a man tells me he is not a sinner, I will retain his sins by telling him again what God's judgment on him is. If a man tells me that he is afraid of going to hell because he is a sinner, I will tell him that the Lord Jesus has taken all his sins away and that they are forgiven. The message of the Gospel is meant for penitent sinners because they have become worthy of forgiveness by their penitence, but because penitent people are the kind of people who can be benefited by the message of the Gospel, whereas impenitent people still need the law.

Because all of us are still prone to self-righteousness and lacking in humility, forgetful of what we would be without Christ, we need to hear the law in all its severity again and again. Because we are lacking in faith and confidence, because we are inclined to fear and despair, we need the daily message of forgiveness. And how important both law and Gospel are might become a little clearer to us if we would remember Luther's dictum that despair is the closest step to faith. Roland Bainton would probably call that another of Luther's stupefying irrationalities, but for those who understand the distinction between law and Gospel, this seeming nonsense is part of the foolishness of God that is wiser than men. May God give us the wisdom necessary to proclaim them both in such a way that we rightly divide the Word of truth for Jesus' sake. Amen.251

X. The Present Controversy, 1975-

The Three Catalysts--An Introduction

Personally, I would love to have been able to close with the above. But what of our present situation? I see the convergence of three impetus or catalysts, as I am choosing to call them, in our present controversy--actually three controversies that have merged together as one followed the other. I also still consider the present controversy to be a problem within the Missouri Synod since, as far as I know, all Wisconsin Synod pastors and professors are agreed on the doctrine and the biblical passages which teach it, if not all happy with some of the terminology and expressions that have been used to try and convey the truth of this doctrine of objective justification.

The first catalyst, then, is Beck's translation of ὅριον and statements printed about this translation after his death coupled with Herman Otten's willingness to defend Beck. (In much the same way, perhaps, as we are willing to defend the terms "saint" and "status of saint" as used by Meyer--although I believe our defense rests on solid ground which, for my part, I find lacking with respect to Beck and his stand on "make righteous".) I will date this December 1, 1975, because this is the earliest reference I have to the appearance of Beck's article, "What Does Dikaion Mean?", in "Christian News."

The second catalyst is the controversy regarding Professor Walter A. Haier, Jr., of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana (formerly of Springfield, Illi-
nois), and his position on the doctrine of objective justification as traditionally taught and confessed by the Missouri, Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods. I will date this October 24, 1980, the date of then-President J. A. O. Preus' letter to the congregations of the LC-MS telling them about Maier's "difficulties" with objective justification. I could perhaps set this date at February 2, 1979, when Maier's name was first publicly and specifically linked to a problem with objective justificat-

The third catalyst I will date February 12, 1982, the date of the letter Mr. and Mrs. David Hartman and Mr. and Mrs. Joe Pohlman of Kokomo, Indiana, sent to many (if not the majority) of the pastors of the WELS, along with assorted other individuals. Here, too, a number of other dates could have been chosen: June 20, 1979, the date of the special voters' meeting of Faith Ev. Lutheran Church (WELS), at which Dave Hartman and Joe Pohlman presented their now-famous "Four Statements," demanding that they be accepted or rejected; or, November 19, 1981, the date of the letter informing the Hartmans and Pohlmans that their membership in Faith congregation (and, thus, also the WELS) had been terminated; or, perhaps, March 12, 1982, when their letters were first publicly printed in "Christian News."

At this time we might also make mention of the most vocal champion of the opposition, at least up to this time, Mr. Chester A. Swanson. The name of this Missouri Synod layman is familiar to all who read "Christian News," and his theological activity until this present controversy, to my knowledge, has always been squarely in line with the orthodox position of the former Synodical Conference.

If we had to mention any pastors who have spoken for the opposition, the name of Vernon Harley would have to stand out. But his defense in "Christian News" was limited to Professor Maier and not the Kokomo couples.

At this time I would like to make it clear that my chief source of knowledge for the following information has been the pages of "Christian News." In fact, the scrapbook I started back in 1981 was entitled, "The 'Objective Justification' Controversy within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as compiled from the pages of Christian News together with several selections of related materials." (Thanks to the catalyst of the assignment to write this present paper, my "scrapbook" now consists primarily of "related materials" and I'm into Volume XXI, with no intention of stopping my collection of primary sources just because this paper has been written. With the exception of the very few references noted (as well as a few additional items not listed because they aren't accessible to the public), my "scrapbook" includes everything listed in the chronological bibliography at the end of this paper. When the Lord takes me home, maybe I'll leave it to the Sem Library, if they'll have it!) I am privy to no special sources of knowledge. I have had some letters from Swanson and the Hartmans and Pohlmans which indicated they were for public consumption but which "Christian News" did not see fit to print. I also answered their letters with some of my own, copied to, but not printed in, "Christian News." Which is just fine as far as I'm concerned. What the readers of "Christian News," really need is a reprint of the 1965 Free Conference's "Statement on Justification." I hope someday soon Herman Otten will see fit to defend the doctrine of objective justification clearly for his readers' edification—if he, in truth, still holds it as his own.
The First Catalyst: William F. Beck and ὑπαξιόω

"Christian News" published William F. Beck's "What Does Dikaioo Mean?" on December 1, 1975. Its appearance was no doubt a reflection of Herman Otten's support of the AAT, soon to be published in complete form, and the objections that had been raised for over ten years to Beck's translation of ὑπαξιόω. To the subject in general, Theodore Mueller has commented in the first number of the 1982 "Concordia Theological Quarterly,"

One problem has arisen when the verb "to justify" is translated into formal English. Beck, in particular, uses the expression "make righteous" in Romans 4:5 as an analogy to Luther's translation "der die Gottlosen gerecht macht." For English-speakers the question arises: Does God's verdict of being righteous transform the very nature of the individual, change his sinful human nature? No doubt, in conversion, with the first flicker of faith, a new life is created, a new beginning is made and the preaching of God's justification brings about this intrinsic change, since by preaching man is brought to faith. Yet justification and conversion and subsequent sanctification are not the same and must be treated as different topics (Apology IV:252). For our justification occurred two thousand years ago, when Christ was raised from the dead (Rom. 4:25), and we were justified while we were His enemies (Rom. 5:10). The problem resides in the assumption that the German and the English expressions convey the identical meaning. There is an essential difference in the two languages. In German, for instance, one can say, "Er hat den Teufel ganz schwarz gemacht," which must be translated into English as "He made the devil appear all black." In English the verb "to make" expresses an intrinsic change, a feature which is not necessarily expressed by the German equivalent. Beck's translation was influenced by the German language, and he failed to realize that the feature of intrinsic change is always present in the English verb.252

This may be Mueller's defense of Beck, or, at least a possible explanation for his translation, but in light of Beck's article on ὑπαξιόω, it seems very hard for me to believe that Beck was simply influenced by his knowledge of German and that he didn't translate ὑπαξιόω "to make righteous" for the express reason that he wanted to show an 'intrinsic change' was involved as far as he was concerned! Not when he can ask the question, "If justification has no effect within a person and doesn't really take away sin, isn't God's grace deprived of its power?"—and expect a "Yes" answer.

Beck wants an "effective" verdict, not just a declarative verdict. And by effective, he means within a person, not just over a person, outside a person. Thus he writes: "By assuming God's justification is ineffective, dogmaticians can claim justification is outside us and can exclude the effect of making us righteous."253

Some may argue that Beck isn't talking about "objective" justification here, but "subjective." But what we're really talking about is the verb ὑπαξιόω, about what the act of justification defined by the verb essentially is, and if God's justification has to be "effective"—that is, work an inner change in those whom he declares righteous so that they are also inwardly righteous—is there any room left for the objective justification of a world just as essentially sinful with God's verdict pronounced over it as without it?

In this light, consider this quote:
... But if God only calls me righteous without making me righteous, then I'm not even apparently righteous; my righteousness is unreal. Is justification then only a pious fiction? Isn't God telling the truth when He says I am righteous? In heaven God is saying I am righteous but on earth I'm as sinful as ever. Is God a liar?

Beck correctly states: "Never does 'justify' mean a declaration of righteousness without a real righteousness. If an unrighteous person is declared righteous, that is not justification but perjury." I don't know if he missed it or not—I'll never be able to ask him in this life—but he certainly doesn't also make the point that the righteousness which allows God to declare me and every other believer and every unbeliever righteous is Christ's righteousness, which is not in me but which counts for me and all people whether Jesus lives in our hearts or not.

When Beck makes the statement, "When God says, 'You are righteous,' no one in heaven, on earth, or in hell should say, 'But you are really not righteous,'" he confuses law and Gospel in his context because if I look outside of me, I see Christ and his righteousness which count as my own. But if I look inside of me, underneath the robes of Christ's righteousness, I still see a person who is old man as well as new man! True, according to the new man of faith I am righteous now "inside" as a believer, but what is my faith? Nothing less than the fact that God justified me, declared me righteous, when I was still only old man!

At best we can give Beck the benefit of the doubt and say we just don't understand what he really meant to say. But it is hard to do this, when he makes statements like, "Justification and regeneration may well be one thing," and, "Forensic justification excludes any change in us when we are justified." But óxaiwó is a causative verb that by the gift of righteousness changes an ungodly person into a righteous one. 2 Cor 5:21: 'God made Him who did not know sin to be sin for us to make us God's righteousness in Him.' óxaiwó is a change to righteousness. The same óxaiwó is used in John 2:9 of the water 'made' wine. It's a real change.

At worst, this excludes any thought of an "objective" justification. Only believers could be justified and justification would have to coincide with regeneration because its basis would not be the righteousness of Christ apart from us, but in us. I'm not going to say that this is exactly what Beck meant, even if I may lean toward this as the true meaning of the words he wrote. But this certainly shows the dangers of translating óxaiwó "to make righteous" rather than "to declare righteous."

In his paper comparing the AAT and the NIV, Dr. Becker refers to the footnote Beck added because of that "fraternal pressure" and writes,

Because of that footnote the AAT should not be charged with Osian-ianism. Whether or not that charge can be made against Beck personally is not so easy to decide. I must say that some of the articles that have been published in Christian News in defense of the translation "make righteous" have made me a little uneasy. When Verdict magazine classifies Beck with Osianian theologians I suspect that it may be right. But that does not necessarily mean that "make righteous" must be declared Osianian.

Nevertheless, even if we put the best construction on everything, it cannot be denied that the translation "make righteous" for óxaiwó is most likely to implant false concepts concerning justification in the mind of the unwary reader. If there were no other objections
to the AAT this translation makes it unacceptable for use in Lutheran literature.

In fairness to the AAT it should be said that that the committee invited by Herman Otten and the Beck family to offer suggestions for revision has recommended that all the passages in which δικαιώω is translated with "make righteous" should be revised, and unless there is a change of plans of which I do not know these revisions will appear in a new edition that will be issued when the OT revision committee has finished its work. But until that edition appears I do not see how any confessional Lutheran can recommend the AAT without reservations.259

Before we get back to δικαιώω and "make righteous" in the pages of "Christian News", I would like to add one more piece of evidence here that Beck may have rejected or, at best, had difficulties with an objective justification. My evidence is his translation of 2 Cor 5:19. This is not the translation which appears in the AAT--at least that of the "slightly revised" edition of 1964, the copy of the New Testament I have. I'm referring to that of his catechism booklet, Bible Truth, published by CPH in 1961. Under the section, "God Forgives Sin," Beck answers the question, "How did God make us sinners righteous?" with these two passages from 2 Corinthians--his own translation:

1. "God made Him who did not know sin to be sin for us that in Him we should be made the righteousness of God." 2 Cor 5:21

2. "In Christ, God has been getting rid of the enmity between Himself and the people of the world by not counting their sins against them." 2 Cor 5:19 260 (emphasis mine)

The AAT of 1964 reads, "In Christ, God was getting rid of the enmity between Himself and the people of the world by not counting their sins against them." Whatever one might say about the AAT's translation here, the implications of Beck's first translation are obvious and they certainly leave no room for the doctrine of objective justification. I only wonder if some "fraternal pressure" was the reason for the AAT's version.

Beck was attacked in the "Forum" of "Christian News" as a "Romanist", and the debate waged on; a futile one since Beck was no longer on earth to defend himself or answer any questions. I don't plan to get into this particular controversy except to say with Professor Becker above that statements were made by Beck's defenders which seemed to exclude the doctrine of objective justification, at least at their face value.

The fact that Beck's entire translation of the Bible came out in 1976 was due to the efforts of Herman Otten and "Christian News". I don't think it would be unfair at all to call it the "Christian News' Bible." It was "Christian News"'s publication of the AAT Bible coupled with Beck's article of December 1, 1975, reprinted in "Christian News" a number of times, and the controversy it produced (in particular, the defense it received in the pages of "Christian News"), that finally led to the January 17, 1979, letter of President J. A. O. Preus of the Missouri Synod to Herman Otten (who serves the Missouri Synod congregation in New Haven, Missouri, but has never been certified by Concordia Seminary, St. Louis). This letter contains the first inking that there was a problem with some in the Missouri Synod on the Seminary level (at least since the founding of "Seminex") who did not share the historical Missouri position concerning objective justification,
to the best of my knowledge, but Preus doesn't mention any names.

As Otten's heading above Preus' letter in the February 5, 1979 "Christian News" declares, Preus wanted an answer to the question, "Where Does Christian News Stand?" In a letter sent to Otten written December 15, 1978, Preus had asked, "Does Beck's article represent the official position of Christian News?" Stating that his question has not been answered, Preus now wrote on January 17, 1979, "Without judging Doctor Beck's heart or his personal doctrinal position, I am simply stating that to me, for you to say, 'I'm convinced that Beck had no intention of denying objective justification' is a totally inadequate response. Likewise, for you to admit that 'Perhaps it would have been best not to publish the Beck article' is totally inadequate."261

Preus said that he was happy about the changes planned for the 4th edition of Beck's Bible, "but what I'm interested in is the correction in the December 1, 1975, issue of Christian News. This the public is still waiting for."262

In the course of this letter, Preus also let the following slip:

Incidentally, Doctor Becker also raises the question about "repeated rumors that some of the professors at Fort Wayne deny objective justification." (asked in a letter to Preus dated December 18, 1978, quoted earlier by Preus) My best answer to that is to say that Doctor Becker should communicate directly with the administration of the faculty at Fort Wayne. I am acquainted with the matter sufficiently to say that every effort from official circles is being made to deal with this question. But I agree with Doctor Becker that if we correct the Beck Bible and do not correct any departure from the doctrine of justification in our midst, we are facing a far more serious charge than that directed against the Beck Bible. So I hope that the officials at Fort Wayne can reassure Doctor Becker.263

Of a problem

Here the news is leaked. The fact that this alleged denial concerned Professor Walter A. Maier Jr. is made public in the same issue of "Christian News", by Otten in his letter to Preus, dated January 22, 1979. The following are the pertinent paragraphs, which appeared under the sub-heading, "Getting at Walter Maier."

Your two public letters have now made the discussions which are going on at Concordia, Ft. Wayne, on justification quite public. We are not entirely familiar with these discussions but it is rather widely known that one of the professors involved is Dr. Walter Maier. Dr. Maier has not changed his position on justification since you were president of this seminary and Dr. Maier was teaching there. Why didn't you raise your concerns at that time? Certainly, since Dr. Maier is one of the members of your praesidium, you must have had many opportunities to be together with him in recent years. Have you ever shared your concerns with him? We understand that there are good orthodox LCMS theologians who maintain Maier has not said or written anything on justification which is contrary to Holy Scripture or the Lutheran Confessions. So far it appears to us that both sides in this discussion are really saying the same thing and only use different terms. We may be accused of liberalism, but we have always said that Lutheran theologians can be orthodox and yet disagree with the terms used by some orthodox fathers.

Why did you wait all these years to press this case of doctrine against Dr. Maier?264
Incidentally, Otten headlined his letter, "Christian News and Justification," and he did answer Preus' basic question. He wrote: "The Beck article, 'What Does Dikaloom Mean?' does not represent the official position of Christian News. However, we don't believe he can be accused of false doctrine because of this article." We could only hope that Otten would be as charitable with the "Kokomo Four Statements"; that is, of course, if he still believes in the objective justification they attempt to display. At least it can be said that in this letter of January 22, 1979, Otten was still willing to stand by and reprint what he had written in Baal or God. At the same time, however, we should also say that Otten does not mention "objective justification," per se, but repeatedly speaks of "the doctrine of justification by faith alone."

I would now like to give space to a letter which appeared in the "Christian News" of February 19, 1979. It was written by Dr. Becker and I only wish that Otten had followed his advice!

Dear Herman,

The continued controversy over the translation of "justify" in Christian News troubles me.

On the one hand, those who accuse Jr. Beck of being a false teacher because he translated "make righteous" ought to read the Lutheran confessions. In the Apology it is definitely stated that the word can mean to "make righteous." See Apology IV,72. It should, however, be remembered that this definition was sharpened up in the Formula of Concord. Nevertheless, the translation "make righteous" is not enough evidence to enable us to brand anyone a false teacher.

You know that I was just as unhappy as anyone over this translation. "Make righteous" is not a good translation of the word because it lends itself so easily to misinterpretation. And some of the articles that you have published in defense of this translation have not improved the situation.

There is, however, a very simple test that can be applied to those who use this translation or who defend it. The one question that you ought to ask anyone who writes for Christian News on this subject is this: Do you believe that God has really justified all men? Or: Do you believe that the sins of all men have indeed been forgiven by God? Are you convinced that the Lutheran Confessions are right when they say that a man who does not believe that his sins are forgiven is accusing God of lying? That sentence clearly teaches that God has forgiven the sins also of the unbelievers. It teaches that there is a forgiveness of sins and a justification of the sinner that precedes faith. You really owe it to the truth of the Gospel not to publish any defense of "make righteous" unless the author clearly states that he accepts universal or objective justification. We are here dealing with the very heart of the Gospel, and you ought not to let Christian News become a trumpet that gives an uncertain sound.

You know that I am grateful for what you have done for my old church, the Missouri Synod, for which I still have a soft spot in my heart. Without Christian News the LC-MS would be even farther down the road to doctrinal decay than it is. But please do not publish any more articles defending "make righteous" unless the author defends universal justification also.

Sincerely yours,

(Rev.) Siegbert W. Becker

Even though Maier's name was mentioned at this time, it would be Preus' letter to
the congregations of the Missouri Synod on October 24, 1980, that would precipitate the next stage in the controversy over objective justification. As we move ahead to this point, we also pass a few other important dates relative to our present controversy.

On June 20, 1979, Faith Evangelical Lutheran congregation of Kokomo, Indiana—Charles W. Papenfuss, pastor—held a special voters' meeting to consider "Four Statements" presented by Mr. and Mrs. David Hartman and Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pohlman. They had become disturbed at what they considered their pastor's "new" teachings concerning justification (Pastor Papenfuss arrived from the Wisconsin Synod's seminary in July of 1978). The couples themselves had drawn up these statements from two sources. Now they wanted to know if they were in agreement with the teaching of the WELS. The congregation voted yes. Hartman and Pohlman voted no. We'll take up the contents of these statements later.

On July 8, 1979, these two couples received letters suspending them from the fellowship of Faith congregation. Appealing their case, the couples met with Circuit Pastor Alan H. Siegelkow on August 7, 1979. On January 23, 1980, Southeastern Wisconsin District President George W. Boldt informed the couples that he had appointed a commission of review to study the matter. The couples met with this committee on June 9, 1980. This committee (Avne J. Mueller; Ralph D. Muenkel; Armin J. Fanning, chairman; Ralph E. Scharf, secretary; and Theodore H. Lubberbier), on the basis of its discussion of the Scripture passages which teach objective justification with the Hartmans and Pohlmans, recommended that their membership be terminated because they refused to accept the doctrine of justification as practiced by the WELS.

To quote a portion of the Review Committee's report:

... the panel feels itself compelled to distinguish between form and content. While the form of the Four Statements is inadequate, the doctrine of objective justification that it grapples with is Scriptural. The Four Statements have served to show that there is a doctrinal difference between Faith Congregation and the appellants. A full afternoon's discussion of many Bible passages has convinced the panel that the same doctrinal difference exists also between the appellants and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod—a difference which the appellants themselves recognized and admitted in the closing portion of the meeting. An open, honest assessment of the situation would seem to leave no alternative but to recognize that the break in fellowship which Faith Congregation has declared applies also to the appellants' fellowship with the WELS. The real difference in understanding is on key passages of Scripture, e.g., Romans 5:17-19 and 2 Cor. 5:18-20, not just on the Four Statements taken by themselves.

... (Due to procedural irregularities) The suspension process could, of course, be done over and the procedures corrected, but the outcome would still be the same so long as the doctrinal difference dividing the two groups exist. The panel sees no advantage in opening the case once more at this stage unless there is a meeting of minds on the doctrinal issue involved. ...

Now back to Preus and Walter.

The Second Catalyst: "TO THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD,"
October 24, 1980

The elections for the next president of the Missouri Synod would be held at the convention of July, 1981. Preus had already announced that he would not run again.
Maier appeared as the choice of conservative Missouri, their hope for a strong, orthodox theologian to replace "Preus the Politician." When Preus' letter came, it was a shock to many, myself included when I saw it reported in the November 3, 1965, "Christian News." This was no minor charge about some minor doctrine! This dealt with the heart of the Gospel message.

Preus felt it was his duty as the president of the Synod to inform its members of the question mark concerning candidate Maier's orthodoxy. Here is the most pertinent section from Preus' October 24th letter:

I am sharing with you only a series of questions posed by myself and answered by the president of the seminary. Doctor Robert Preus is probably the greatest expert in our church on the subject of Justification, and I do not say this only because he is my brother, but it is a fact which is widely recognized. The questions I raised, all of which have been shared with the Board of Control, dealt only with the subject of Objective Justification, as do the answers. The pertinent questions and answers are:

"1. Do you believe that the matter of objective justification is a doctrine, clearly taught in holy Scripture and by our Synod?" "Yes."

"2. Or do you believe that it is merely an exegetical opinion?" "No."

"3. Do you subscribe to the teachings of the Brief Statement, Stoeckhardt's exegesis of this matter, The Abiding Word, and Pieper's Dogmatics, II, pp. 321, 347-351, 508, 552, relative to what these documents refer to as the doctrine of objective justification?" "Yes."

"4. On the basis of Maier's paper and your discussions with him, and the discussions that have taken place in the faculty meetings, can you say categorically that Maier accepts the doctrine of objective justification as set forth in these documents?" "No."

"5. Does he accept Pieper's exegesis for this doctrine?" "No."

"6. Does he accept the doctrine while rejecting the exegesis?" "Yes."

"10. Do you yourself subscribe to Maier's paper as being a correct exposition of biblical teaching?" "No."

"11. Is it a correct doctrinal statement of objective justification?" "No."

"12. Did the action on your part of appointing him head of the exegetical department indicate that you believe Maier is entirely orthodox in his teaching on the matter of objective justification? Or that the matter is an open question?" "No."

"18. Maier, Harley, and others have stated both to me and to others that they believe this is entirely a matter of semantics. Is this your belief?" "No."

While the entire literature on this subject raises many other questions, please note the peculiar matter that is raised in question 6; namely, that Doctor Maier seems to accept the doctrine of Objective Justification but
rejects the exegesis upon which this doctrine is based. As I stated to
the Board of Control in my letter of December, 1979:

"This seems to me to be the nub of the question. It seems to me that a
man who holds a position such as Robert (Preus) describes has an error
regarding the doctrine of sola scriptura. How do we arrive at doctrine
if not by exegesis: . . . I do not believe we can allow a situation to
continue in which it can be said that a man accepts orthodox doctrine
but does not accept the sedes doctrinae (scriptural basis) for the
doctrine . . . ."

I do not believe that the Missouri Synod can give its approval to a
theological stance in which we accept a doctrine but do not accept the
Biblical basis for it. 269

Preus also mentions the fact that concern about Maier's position was first reported
to him on December 9, 1976. Preus says he remained silent on this issue the previ-
ous time Maier had been a candidate for president of the LCMS in 1977 because his
brother, Robert Preus, had assured him that

. . . he would deal with the matter, and later informed me that he
had been aware of it and had been dealing with it even prior to
December, 1976 (emphasis mine). He also informed me that other mem-
bers of the faculty had been concerned about this matter. I now must
report to you that nearly four years later, in the fall of 1980, the
matter has still not as yet been satisfactorily settled. 270

Preus turned the matter over to the Board of Control of Concordia Theological Semi-
nary, Fort Wayne, on December 9, 1979.

Preus wrote, "I am making no charges." 271 Be that as it may, the fact that Maier
had a problem with objective justification was now out in the open. The exact na-
ture of this problem was, and still is, hard to say, at least in a very definite
way. As far as I can tell from what I've read in "Christian News," Maier seems to
agree to the classic doctrine of objective justification in substance at some times
but at other times speaks in ways that make this extremely doubtful. I suppose all
I can say is that I, too, will do my best to refrain from "making charges." I will
simply try and give the evidence as I see it and make a few comments of my own.

Before we move ahead, we can go back to April 30, 1979, and a statement on "General
('Objective') Justification" adopted unanimously by the Ft. Wayne Faculty on that
date. Now that we know what prompted it, what does it say? Or, perhaps more im-
portant, what doesn't it say?!

It says: "On the basis of Rom. 4:25; 5:18; 2 Cor 5:19 and parallels, classical
Lutheran theology speaks of a general (generalis, allgemeine) justification . . .
This justification (declaration of acquittal, righteousness, forgiveness) has
been acquired or merited for all men by Christ, is effectively offered to all in
the Gospel (Word and Sacraments), and is individually received or applied in and
by faith alone." 272

What doesn't it say? Nowhere in the entire statement, including the sections elabor-
ating on the above, does it say simply and distinctly that all men have actually
been declared righteous by God and that all sins of all people have actually been
forgiven by God. To simply say that justification (or forgiveness) has been acquired
or merited or offered doesn't say the same. And to say that this is individually
received or applied (put double emphasis on applied, one's heirs, the other mine!)
leaves the matter open that this general justification is only potential, not actual. Compared to the old voices in Missouri on objective justification, this doesn't really sound any better than the old Common Confession. Especially when we consider that these are theologians who should know how to say things clearly, simply, and directly—unless they want to leave certain matters “open.”

With Preus’ letter of October 24 and its publication in “Christian News” on November 3, the flood gates were opened. The issue was no longer simply Beck’s ἀδιάκτωρ. Now it was Maier, the conservative choice for president. But far more important, it was also the doctrine of objective justification, the heart of the Gospel, as confessed by Missouri since her birth. And the voices in defense of Maier—even if his true position might have been unclear—gave plenty of evidence for others to wonder what had happened among the “orthodox” in Missouri.

Maier responded to the congregations of the LC-MS in a letter of his own, October 29, 1982. In it he states that, “I joyfully, wholeheartedly, and unreservedly believe, teach, and confess the central doctrine of the Holy Scripture, the Lutheran Reformation, and the Lutheran Confessions, justification by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ our Savior.”

He said that he didn’t prefer the terminology “objective justification” and “subjective justification,” that he preferred the “simple Biblical wording applied to justification.” But he never used the simple biblical terminology of 2 Cor 5:19 to say in his letter that he believed God had forgiven all sins to all people—actually, not potentially. He never used the simple biblical terminology of Rom 5:18 and 4:25 to say that all people have been justified. He does appeal to the “Summary and Conclusion” of a committee paper received and approved by the Board of Control of the Ft. Wayne Seminary on September 30, 1980. Herein it states:

5. When Christ finished the work of redemption, it was complete and all-sufficient in every respect. Nothing further needed to be done to provide a way of salvation for the entire human race. The law had been fulfilled; the world was redeemed from its curse; Christ had faced God’s wrath in its fullness and God’s justice was satisfied; the punishment for sin had been borne for all mankind; the ransom for sin had been paid; the redemption of the world was an accomplished fact; God has accepted the sacrifice of Christ for the redemption of the world; “God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ.” (Brief Statement on Justification paragraph 17). These treasures of the Gospel were not mere abstract ideas, nor were they promises to be fulfilled at some future date; they were instead objective realities which had been won for the entire world by the all-sufficient work of Christ, to be appropriated by faith.

This sounds great. Unfortunately, reading the paper (which appeared in “Christian News”) makes it obvious that one can even use the term “objective realities” to speak about justification and the forgiveness of sins and still not be saying that in Christ God has declared every individual person just objectively and forgiven every person all his sins objectively. Section 8 of the paper says that the term “objective justification” was used by Lutheran theologians to emphasize a) the all-sufficiency and completeness of the atoning work of Christ; and b) the objectivity of the Gospel.

The promises of the Gospel were not only possibilities but they were objective realities. The redemption of the world was an accomplished fact; the ransom for sin had been paid and accepted by God; the sacri-
fice for sin had been made; Christ had faced God’s wrath for the sin-
ful world; the punishment had been borne for us; God’s justice had been
satisfied; the law had been fulfilled; the world had been redeemed from
its curse; divine grace was a fact. The message of the Gospel offered
objective treasures, true realities. All was ready for man to accept
these treasures by faith. 276

Note that it never says above that all men are forgiven; that all men are now just
in God’s sight. That’s reserved for faith! Section 9 of this paper takes what Ed-
ward Preus said about subjective justification and tries to pit it against what he
said about objective justification.

Here are “objective realities” all right! They just aren’t mine yet until the Gospel
brings them to me and I accept them by faith. I hope that by now the reader of this
paper can see what I’m driving at. I may sound overly critical. I’m not saying
that the statements quoted here can’t be taken in a correct way. But I believe
they also allow for one to weasel out of a clear confession of objective justifi-
cation as clearly confessed and taught by Missouri prior to 1938. There are those
who would call the forgiveness of all sins for all people an “objective reality” in
Christ, but not admit that God has actually forgiven all sins to all people.

For a quick jump back to the released Kokomo couples: On November 19 they received
the official letters from Faith Lutheran informing them that the vote by "ap-
proved a resolution terminating your membership in the congregation unless and un-
til such time as you accept the doctrine of justification as practiced by the
WELS." 277

Back to Maier, it’s easy to see how a rash of articles would appear in many dif-
f erent publication, both pro and con. In the December 1, 1980, edition of "Chris-
tian News", Rev. Vernon Harley, one of the LC-MS pastors in Fairmont, Minnesota, came to
bat for Maier (also known to the readers of “Christian News” as WAM). In his article,
headlined “Orthodoxy Question—Doctrine or Terminology?”, Harley said that

The reasons for which Dr. Maier seems to be uncomfortable with the terms,
it seems, are: 1) Improper connotations are quite generally carried
along with the terms; 2) The exegesis employed by Drs. Pieper, Stoeck-
hardt and others of the passages called sedes doctrinae for “objective
appears to him to be faulty. Dr. Maier does not consider these exe-
getical differences necessarily as being a reflection on a theologian’s
orthodoxy as long as the same doctrine is taught based on other clear
Scripture texts, nor that his orthodoxy should be questioned if he prefers
not to use the term nor to exegete its legitimate meaning from the
same sedes doctrinae. 278

Harley also writes:

Dr. Maier objects that such expressions (used by Pieper to speak of
an end to God’s wrath over mankind) imply a change in God, a cessa-
tion of God’s wrath upon sin and upon sinners even where their is no
faith, and hence an unscriptural universalism which is in turn the
cause of a great lack of sanctification among many Lutherans. 279
(This is an objection which disappears when Law and Gospel are pro-
perly divided.)

Regarding Maier’s approach to the various sedes passages, Harley says, “To
use the Scriptural terms "justify" and "justification" apart from faith, or the imputation of righteousness in the sense of objective justification, does not fit the context nor the basic statement of scripture, particularly in the Romans 4:25 text. His understanding here, then, is that Jesus was raised again on account of our justification by faith! So— Jesus was raised in the past for our justification in the future; purpose rather than result.

The same purpose and future interpretation is used for Romans 5:18-19. Harley writes:

In neither of the above cases, it seems to this writer, should Dr. Maier's orthodoxy be questioned because he insists upon observing the future and purpose concepts expressed in the literal statements of Scripture. Obviously, however, if all became or were constituted sinners through one (Adam) and God's purpose is to constitute all righteous through One (Christ), Christ's redemptive benefits (forgiveness of sins) have been objectively acquired for all, accepted by God as all-sufficient, and offered as such to all through the Gospel. Dr. Maier believes and teaches this. 281

But this is not objective justification! No one had ever questioned whether Maier believed the Scriptures taught that Jesus died for all. The question is over the results of this redemptive work—are they actual or potential? And, as we've already seen, even to call these results "objective realities" doesn't necessarily mean that all people have been forgiven and all people have been declared righteous.

Harley also writes:

Concerning a third passage (2 Cor. 5:18-19), also considered a chief doctrine of objective justification, I personally find it difficult to accept Dr. Maier's exegesis as either a natural understanding of the text or in agreement with the various Bible translations I have. Dr. Maier correctly points out the subjective nature of v. 17 (If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature) and reminds us that the whole context is addressed to believers; but when he reads future purpose into "reconciling" and "not imputing" of v. 19, this may be allowable and so used in certain Greek structures as he demonstrates, but this seems to be contrary to the usual understanding of such language. 282

What does Harley believe makes Maier interpret these verses as he does?

Faulty concepts regarding "God being reconciled," "God laying His wrath aside," etc. seem to raise a red flag causing Dr. Maier to interpret the verb forms in the way that gives rise to complaints that he denies the essence of objective justification. It also seems such expressions are indeed taken so literally that the universalism and lack of sanctification Dr. Maier fears becomes a real danger... To this writer, it appears, the problem with the traditional exegesis has been failing to do justice to the Scriptural statement that it was the whole that God reconciled to Himself, that He personally needed no reconciling or change of attitude. When such terms are used by us of God as "stilling God's wrath," "expiating" and "propitiating" God's wrath, the anthropomorphic nature of such terms needs to be borne in mind. They describe the new condition brought about through the sacrifice of Christ between the world and God rather than an actual change in the heart and mind of God. 283
We can certainly sympathize with Maier's questions about terminology. We cannot accept his exegesis as presented by Harley, especially that of 2 Cor 5:19.

The December 15, 1980, "Christian News" carried the headline, "Conservative Leader Says Maier Is True to Bible and Confessions," and here we meet one of Maier's (and, today, the Kokomo couples') chief defenders, Chester Swanson (more commonly, Chet A. Swanson) of Cincinnati, Ohio, and a chairman of the Doctrinal Concerns Program (a conservative action group) within the LC-MS. In a letter to Doctor Harold Bults of Ft. Wayne, Swanson informs the readers of "Christian News," as well as Prof. Bults, that "Dr. Maier had been using his exegesis and 'preferred terminology' on justification since at least the 60's." 284

In other letters that appeared in "Christian News" as the weeks went by, Swanson pointed out the "danger of universalism" in preaching an objective justification that declares all people justified before faith and points out how Maier believed that "Jesus died for all." But there never was any question on Maier's stand concerning universal redemption. More and more the matter seems to become a confusion of Law and Gospel, especially when the fear of universalism is brought in. Proper preaching of the Law as well as the Gospel will rule out universalism completely, and as soon as we stop teaching Scriptural truth because of the possibility that someone might misinterpret what we say—we might as well give the whole Bible up.

On January 5, 1981, Maier met with President J. A. O. Preus; on January 6 with Preus and the five District Presidents who constitute the LC-MS Praesidium. Also present were Dr. Theodore F. Nickel (author of "Another Fraternal Endeavor" back in '54) and Dr. Howard Tepker. The Praesidium's opinion, on the basis of their discussion, was that Maier held a position different from that of the official doctrinal position of the Synod. The LC-MS "Reporter" of January 12 stated:

The presidium noted that in a paper delivered to the Fort Wayne faculty in January 1979, Maier maintains that on the basis of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, justification can only be spoken of in connection with faith. The position of the Synod is that there is an aspect of justification called objective or world justification which took place prior to a sinner's coming to faith.

... Similarly, the presidium noted that Dr. Maier states that objective reconciliation does "not bear Scriptural warrant." He also contends that those passages in the Bible which speak of God reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19; Rom 5:10ff; Col. 1:19ff) do not mean that God's wrath against all sinners has been laid aside because of the work of Christ, but should be understood to mean that Christ's work has made it possible for God to change the hearts of men so that they become reconciled to God through faith. 285

Maier issued his own statement in reply. In it he said:

... Specifically speaking, Christ kept the Law perfectly in men's stead and suffered all the penalties for their transgressions, thus bringing into being what Paul calls "the righteousness of God" in Romans 1:17.

It is the sum total of Christ's merit, the whole of His substitutionary obedience, as referred to in the New Testament. This righteousness God graciously offers all men in the Gospel and He imputes to believers when, by the Holy Spirit's power, they come to faith (and as they remain in faith).
Thus, apart from any good works they may perform, men are "justified," or declared (or accounted) righteous by faith (Rom. 3:28); their sins are forgiven. With this blessing God's condemning wrath is removed from them and they obtain the gifts of life and salvation.

It should be obvious that our doctrine of objective justification is not clearly stated here. And it is "in the light of the above" that Maier said:

I'm in full accord with these words written by Dr. Theodore Engelder in Popular Symbolics, paragraph 89, page 63: "Justification is a judicial act of God. The sins of the whole world being forgiven because of the vicarious atonement of Christ (Objective Justification), God pronounces the sinner righteous who by faith accepts this universal pardon offered in the Gospel, imputing to him the righteousness of Christ (Subjective Justification)."

On January 30, 1981, the Board of Control of Concordia, Ft. Wayne, met with Maier and representatives of the LC-MS Praesidium. On the basis of this meeting, the Board announced that it had arrived at a basic understanding with Maier and had not found him guilty of any false doctrine. In the Statement the Board released, it is reported:

At the January 30 meeting ... Dr. Maier emphatically affirmed his belief that on the basis of Christ's vicarious atonement God has put His wrath away against the world and has declared the whole world to be righteous; that the benefits of this objective forgiveness are appropriated only by faith; that even though the entire human race has been redeemed, the Law in all its severity, including the wrath of God against sinners as well as the Gospel of forgiveness must be preached to all, including Christians. According to the Gospel, God is indeed reconciled; according to the Law, the wrath of God abides on all who reject Christ and His Work of reconciliation, refuse to repent and live in their sins.

Maier is quoted as saying, "Doctrinally I stand with our Synod's historic position." All this sounds fine. Unfortunately, the Board's report also said:

More than semantic differences surfaced early in the January 30 meeting. At the close, however, basic agreement emerged on such topics as the wrath of God, Law and Gospel, and "objective justification"--a term used in the Lutheran Church to summarize a concept in the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions that forgiveness and justification because of Christ are objectively available for all mankind through the ages whether or not individuals appropriate it through faith (emphasis mine!)

How could anyone who truly understood objective justification as the synods of the old Synodical Conference professed it define it in this way?!

Add to this the fact that Maier told a reporter of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. he agreed to withdraw his paper delivered to the Ft. Wayne faculty in January, 1979, "though he said in a telephone interview doing that is "not a retraction" and new doubts arose within the LC-MS Praesidium whether Maier really was in agreement with the historic doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod. In February it was announced that Maier would not teach Romans at Ft. Wayne the following academic year ('81-'82).
Various letters, pro and con, appeared in "Christian News." In his statement to the Board of Control at the January 30 meeting, Maier had quoted from the 1872 Synodical Conference essay on Justification. In a letter that in the April 27 "Christian News," the late Martin Scharlemann called this "the Hoax of the Year," and cited further evidence from the conference proceedings to show it actually spoke against Maier's apparent use of it.

On June 8, "Christian News" presented Vernon Harley in a major article with a page one headline, "Problems With 'Objective' Justification." Once again it seems that the center of the controversy centered around a failure to let the Gospel be Gospel and the Law, Law, and leave it at that. Harley wrote that Maier had raised questions and expressed disagreement with various expressions used by Pieper, "primarily," according to Harley,

with the implication that at the resurrection of Christ "God laid His anger by." He and others (including myself) do not find the terms "reconciliation" and "justification" necessarily to be synonymous, nor the cessation of God's wrath upon the entire world to be embodied in the cited Scripture passages. or even to be in harmony with the rest of Scripture, if such terminology is pressed to its literal meaning. The terms "objective" and "subjective" properly understood need not be contrary to Scripture, but when pressed to conflict with other Scripture that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18), or to mean that "the status of saints" was at that time given even to the damned in hell, "to sinners whether they believe it or not," is in our opinion confusing, to go beyond Scripture, apt to promote universalism, and appears to make faith unnecessary. Such terminology, of rather recent vintage, is not part of the Lutheran Confessions. It was perhaps introduced by conservative theologians in the interest of warding off synergism, but it goes beyond what Scripture and Lutheranism had previously taught...

It's easy to see how this controversy is already laying the stage for our present one--actually part and parcel of the same. It's also clear that what is said here is opposed to the doctrine of objective justification taught by the Bible and still uniformly confessed and taught by the ELCA.

What did Harley mean when he spoke about "objective justification"?

No conservative Lutheran, to my knowledge, has a problem with the proper concept termed "objective" justification if by that is meant the universal vicarious satisfaction rendered by Christ and accepted as such by the Father. This atoning and redeeming work was complete and sufficient for all, also declared to be so by the Father by the resurrection of Christ (Rom. 1:4; 2 Tim. 3:16). In as much as the justification of Christ was for the sake of the sinful world and in the place of sinners, this aspect of justification is universal. So also is reconciliation if by that term the full payment of all sins is meant and God's acceptance of it as such.

Here, "objective justification" appears to be nothing more than the universal redemption of mankind.

In his article, Harley also seemed to share the old assumption that a forensic objective justification other than the kind he described would necessarily rule out
a forensic subjective justification. He also recounts the old arguments against the doctrine of objective justification in Romans 4:25; 5:10-18; and 2 Cor 5:19. We note that in reference to 2 Cor 5:14 ("If one (Christ) died for all, then were all dead"), Harley wrote, "It is in this verse that Dr. W. A. Meier finds "objective" justification, if by that term the universal vicarious satisfaction of Christ is meant." (emphasis mine)\(^{292}\)

Harley's article prompted, among others, a letter from his associate pastor "dissociating" himself from Harley's position in this matter.

The ensuing issues of "Christian News" made it clear that its pages were no healthy "Forum" for reaching some accord on this matter or for finding a clear editorial stand upholding biblical truth. Not when a layman's paper such as the following was printed which could only confuse matters worse. Respect is one thing, but what possible good could come from almost a full page devoted to a paper which first says, "Thus God, through a SHOCKING ACT of love and extreme desire to pardon us, forgiveness of all our sins became an actual accomplished fact regardless of our personal attitude, emotion or mental state whether we believe it or not. (sic),"\(^{293}\) and then says:

... Forgiveness of sin is conditional, and is based on the acceptance of FAITH, otherwise it would be just a soundless vibration! To be made righteous in the sight of God is not just conformity with the generally accepted standards of goodness and moral conduct in character, a virtue taking place in the heart of the sinner; but IS IN FACT the administration of justice (as in a Court of Law) when God, in PERSON, for Christ's sake, pronounces and declares us free from all guilt of sin and unlawful acts, based on our trust in the merits gained for us by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This then becomes PERFECT JUSTIFICATION, complete in every detail without any reservation or qualification whatsoever. ALL our sins are buried deep in the sea, never to wash ashore again; for this reason we can raise our arms toward heaven in joy all the days of our life.\(^{294}\) (underlining mine)

This is very confused doctrine at best, false doctrine at worst, and certainly nothing to help clear the already muddied waters at this stage of the controversy. If Herman Otten still held (and does hold today) a position on objective justification in complete agreement with the Statement issued by the 1965 Free Conference, he certainly was not (and has not been) faithful in helping defend it in the pages of "Christian News".

On September 7, 1981, "A Reply to Several Responses" came from Harley. I offer the following (with a minimum of comment at the end):

Obviously Preus (Rev. Rolf Preus, son of Robert Preus of Concordia, Ft. Wayne, whose letter with reference to Harley's "Objections" appeared in "Christian News" June 29, 1981) is again trying to foist on me his own problem with faith which he must reduce to pure passivity and keep from becoming the effective, powerful result of God's gracious activity in Christ. As long as we take justification by faith as the decree, as God's verdict pronouncing the sinner righteous, there is no problem as to whether the vicarious atonement was actually or potentially effective. It's only when we omit the "in Christ" and make justification all-inclusive that no actual justification is effected among the many who proceed on to damnation who allegedly were
justified.

I can't possibly take time to swat every fly which Preus releases to sting me. But I must respond yet to his charge of mine being an "iffy", conditional Gospel. Preus bemoans the fact that my "error" is widely held in the LCMS and attributes it to a Calvinistic "carrot-stick" approach to preaching the gospel. Preus's problem, however, is that he doesn't seem to realize that he's speaking out of both sides of his mouth at the same time. The simple fact is that God Himself has attached the condition of faith for justification and salvation. There are also the conditions of the Gospel and Sacraments through which as means God offers, conveys and seals His grace in Christ to the sinner. But none of these are conditions man can meet; God supplies them. Our Confessions make it absolutely clear that "God does not call without means but through the Word, as indeed He has commanded the preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sin. St. Paul testified to the same effect when he wrote, "We are ambassadors in Christ's stead, and God is admonishing you through us! 'Be reconciled to God!'" (II Cor. 5:20). Tappert 620:27. In other words, IF the gospel isn't preached, IF we fail to preach, "BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ," "Be ye reconciled to God," and think we can still have an effective gospel by avoiding these "gospel imperatives" through which "God in Christ" calls the spiritually dead to spiritual life, we have only ourselves to blame if men remain in their sins and comfort themselves with having been "justified prior to faith and without faith." The Gospel only becomes an "iffy" gospel when it is presented as though man were able to supply faith by his own reason and strength and so meet those conditions which are necessary for salvation, whereas in reality God in Christ supplies it all.

When R. Preus quotes Luther from a sermon on the Office of the Keys he surely realizes that the giving of forgiveness of sins is taking place through the promise in the Gospel, through the words of absolution. That's what the Office of the Keys is all about. To understand this giving or conferring of God's grace which takes place in the exercise of the Office of the Keys as being universal or "objective" justification is totally confusing.

But both Scripture and the history we have covered so far say they are identical. Both are identical. Both are the pure Gospel message true for every sinner, whether he believes it or not: "You are forgiven!" Since this date, Harley has remained silent with respect to this issue, to the best of my knowledge. Appended to his "Reply" were various quotations from the Confessions and "Luther's Comments on Texts We Use For 'Objective Justification'."

As for Dr. Walter A. Maier Jr., he lost the election for president of the Missouri Synod in July, his name dropped after the third ballot. Maier was, however, elected Fifth Vice President. Now, in September, Maier was released of his responsibilties as chairman of the Exegetical Department of Concordia Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, and I have no idea where matters stand with him and objective justification at this time.

The Third Catalyst: The Kokomo Couples and Their "Four Statements"

It is from now on that Gert A. Swanson becomes the voice against objective justification in the pages of "Christian News". That Swanson also had contact with the
Kokomo issue is seen from this quote which appeared in the November 9, 1981, "Christian News":

Some of the terminology currently being used to explain this most central of Lutheran doctrines (Justification) is wondrous to behold. It seems evident that esteemed words of men are being used to alter, modify and/or replace inspired words in Scripture. Imagine insisting that "the doctrine of objective justification" is to be interpreted that all--INCLUDING JUDAS AND ALL IN HELL--have been given the "status of saints". If you (Dr. Samuel H. Nafzger, of the LC-MS Commission on Theology & Church Relations) are not aware of such terminology being taught and enforced, in Lutheran circles, I can supply hard evidence that lay couples have been terminated from church membership when they refused to accept and teach such terminology.296

The December 7, 1981, "Christian News" offered a small statement by a Pastor Milton F. Weishahn of Brewster, Nebraska, entitled, "Justification Before Faith." Chet A. Swanson offered almost a full page of answer on February 22, 1982. And ten days before, Mr. and Mrs. David Hartman and Mr. and Mrs. Joe Pohlman had sent out their open letter to the pastors of the WELS and others. Herman Otten published their letter and the letters to them from Faith Lutheran Church dated August 30, 1979 and November 19, 1980, mentioned earlier. It should come as no surprise that they were forwarded to "Christian News" by Chet A. Swanson and appeared in print there on March 15, 1982. Otten writes:

Swanson asks: "How would you 'feel' if you were dropped from a congregation for not confessing and teaching that all individuals are forgiven independent of faith and those in Hell have received the status of saints?" According to the DCP co-chairman, "We have some in our church who insist that Judas was forgiven and is forgiven even as he resides in Hell. Such persons are, of course, anti-Walter A. Maier (and anti-Chester Swanson) because we prefer to say that forgiveness is OFFERED to all but received by faith".

Swanson sent Christian News the following letter with this attached note: "Your readers will surely be interested in the 'Kokomo Case.' This 'strange' terminology on Justification by Faith is also creeping into the LCMS."297

Hence Otten's headline for this article, "Swanson Says 'Strange' Terminology on Justification Creeping Into LCMS."

And so our present situation and controversy was born.

I was one of those who wrote the couples after receiving their letters. I had been clipping the articles from "Christian News" dealing with maier and objective justification ever since Preus' letter appeared back in the November 3, 1980, issue. In 1981 I had started my first 58 "1\frac{1}{2} x 17 inch" page scrapbook with the previously mentioned title: "The 'Objective Justification' Controversy within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod &c." I had no idea, as I moved into the second volume of January 5, 1982, that our own Synod would find itself brought into this controversy. (Just as I had no idea I'd begin Volume XXI on December 17, 1982; and how many more volumes will be completed before I leave the controversies of this life for the perfect unity of the next the Lord alone knows.)

The issue, of course, is really a simple one. The Hartmans and Pohlmans do not
agree that God has actually forgiven all sins to all people. They do not believe
that God has already actually declared all people righteous in his sight. They
believe in a gospel different from our own, if we truly stand on the unconditional
forgiveness and justification proclaimed in Romans 4:25; 5:12,19; and 2 Cor 5:19.
They believe that Jesus died and paid for the sins of the world. They also believe
that his death earned for mankind the merits to justify and forgive all people.
They believe that, "by grace, God works faith in the hearts of His chosen," and
that, "through this God-worked faith sinful man is justified and forgiven or to
say it another way, by faith, the merits of Christ are applied to the sinner and
he is declared righteous and given the gift of eternal life." 299

In my first letter to them, I expressed my view that their problem was one of con-
fusing Law and Gospel. This appeared to be the case because they constantly quoted
the law against the Gospel. I received their follow-up letter plus a personal let-
ter, and answered once again that my estimation of their problem was the same.

As pastors, I'm sure we can understand their problem with objective justification
when it is viewed in light of the clear message of God's law. But while we might
be able to understand their problem, we cannot overlook or excuse their error
when it leads them to openly attack a scriptural truth and claim that their error
must be accepted. The fact that this matter involves an area where our human
minds must wrestle with the apparent contradictions of law and Gospel makes it
more difficult for us as well as for the fellow sheep of God's flock we have been
called to serve. But the fact that we must finally acquiesce in humble submission
to God's Word is doubly important in this doctrine which is the very heart of the
Gospel.

The "Christian News" of April 12, 1982, carried a letter by Swanson to Dr. Ralph
Bohmman, the man who won the position for which Meier was also nominated. He
spoke with respect to Bohmman's Easter article that had appeared in the "Lutheran
Witness." Swanson's postscript will give an idea of his general concern.

P.S. Now that some of the strange justification language has been
published in CW, my incoming mail, telephone calls and person to per-
son contacts have shown broad spread and spreading shock and dismay
over some of the nomenclature and interpretations that have been used
in WELS to proclaim and teach this central doctrine. How can such an
orthodox church body permit, let alone proclaim, such language to be
supported and even enforced? Read MINISTERS IN CHRIST by John Meyer
and you'll find some of the answers. But, could this happen in LC-MS?
Yes, indeed it can! Some will find the same strain within the confines
of your fourth paragraph. Such as:

... the Father has accepted the sacrifice of His Son for
the reconciliation of the world and on His account has gra-
ciously declared the whole world righteous in His sight.
Redemption is complete."

True you have stressed that "through faith and faith alone, all this
comes our very own." And you have insisted that the two aspects
should never be separated. This is good. But, even tonight one who
calls himself one of "the other side" used the ideas within the above
indented excerpt to state "JUSTIFICATION IS RECEIVED BY FAITH. Not
grace by Christ's merits IS RECEIVED BY FAITH. But, JUSTIFICATION
(of the whole world) is received. And since righteousness is equated
with forgiveness, it is easy, so very easy for some to take the indented
words above and proclaim that Judas, too, and all who never came to
faith are forgiven. Yes, then those in Hell possess forgiveness. Yes, some of the so called orthodox have extended this to "status of saints in hell." Can we not see—will we continue to ignore—what has been so carefully documented? Can we not use language that "limits" "the world" as receiving the payment of sins and the offer of forgiveness? Must we take some contested passages which are "open" to several possible interpretations rather than give way to passages (such as John 3:16; 18,36 and Matthew 12:30-32) which are clear that the entire world of humans do not receive forgiveness but only those in faith.300

The April 26, 1982, "Christian News", under the title, "WELS Clarifies Position: Do Judas and Hellmates Have the 'Status of Saints'?", reprints the open letter of the Kokomo couples, plus the report of the Review Committee which investigated their appeal. Anyone who can read this committee's report and still try to defend the Kokomo couples can not believe in objective justification; for it clearly shows that their termination was much more than a disagreement with certain terminology about "Judas" and the "status of saints."

In an open letter to Professor Panning of our seminary included as part of this same article, Sanson predicts "stormy weather" for the WELS. The fact that we, unlike the LC-MS, are united in the doctrine of objective justification should make it relatively simple to settle any disputes over some of the terminology that has been used, if such disputes should arise.

The first direct letter to "Christian News" from the Hartmans and Pohnlams, dated May 16, 1982, appeared in June. In it they offered "to send in to Christian News for publication a detailed explanation of why we have felt it necessary to take exception to the Four Statements, why we disagree with them, why we believe they go beyond the clear Word of God, as well as why they conflict with the Lutheran Confessions."301 Apparently their offer was never accepted. At least their detailed explanation hasn't appeared in "Christian News" to the best of my knowledge. If it did, you could be sure that their arguments would be based on the Law and passages dealing with subjective justification.

Our synod president officially responded to the Kokomo case in his Newsletter of June of 1982. Here, once again for most of you, is President Mischke's conclusion:

These four statements were assembled as a caricature of objective justification and were advanced as an example of the universalism that is supposedly held in WELS and taught in Faith Congregation, Kokomo. It is, therefore, evident that they are not official WELS statements. Nor have they ever been "adopted" by the WELS, as some have alleged, in the course of disciplinary procedures against the two Kokomo couples who advanced them. The four statements have rather served to show that the parties involved do not accept objective justification.

While no insistence is to be made on the use of the term "objective" (This We Believe, a statement of belief of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod, presents the doctrine of justification without using the term), yet the doctrine which is thereby expressed, namely, that in the "non-imputation of trespasses" of which 2 Corinthians 5:19 speaks there is indeed a justification" for the whole world—this is a clear scriptural teaching which we cannot relinquish.

A word of caution may, however, be in place. It may be well to remind
ourselves not to divide "objective" and "subjective" justification 
as if they were two totally different things which can be treated 
in isolation from one another. They are rather the two sides of the 
same coin, and there can be no "saints" or salvation without faith. 
To teach otherwise would indeed be universalism.\textsuperscript{302}

Here, of course, it's obvious Mischke is not using "saints" the exact same way Heyer 
did in his context. He is certainly not accusing Heyer of universalism.

It was about this time that I wrote my letter to Herman Utten which was published 
in "Christian News" on July 5, 1982, suggesting that he clarify his own position 
with respect to objective justification and reprint pages 82 and 83 of his \textit{A Manual of 
God}—neither of which he did. Instead, he asked me the question, "Do you accept 
the now famous 'Kokomo Statements' which some in the WELO have been defending? 
Do Judas and his cohorts in Hell have the status of saints?"

If anyone is interested in my response, it can be found in the issue of July 26. 
My first letter also prompted some further correspondence from the Hartmans and 
Pohlmanns and initiated some correspondence with Chet A. Swanson. Since these 
letters were "open," but have never seen the light of day in "Christian News," I 
won't mention their contents here. They would not add anything to the present 
discussion which has not already been said.

And so we are finally ready to end the historical section of this paper. We can 
do so by looking briefly at the "now famous" Kokomo Statements.

\textbf{The Four Kokomo Statements, Prepared for the Voters of Faith Lutheran, Kokomo, Indiana, by the Hartmans and the Pohlmanns}

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 pro-
nounced forgiveness to 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.

Regardless of how we may rate them, individually and as a whole, I think we would 
all concur with the evaluation of the Review Committee of our Synod: "The panel 
feels that these Four Statements without explanation or context are an inadequate 
presentation of the doctrine of objective justification."\textsuperscript{303} But then what about 
their use in this case? Our panel of review also wrote:

\ldots as the panel sees it, the appellants' appeal of Faith's decision 
amounts to the basic question: Can the Four Statements serve as a cri-
teron or measure to determine whether the appellants are still members 
of their congregation and in fellowship with the Wisconsin Evangelical
Lutheran Synod?

Here the panel feels itself compelled to distinguish between form and content. While the form of the Four Statements is inadequate, the doctrine of objective justification it grappling with is scriptural. The Four Statements have served to show there is a doctrinal difference between Faith Congregation and the appellants. A full afternoon's discussion of many biblical passages has convinced the panel that the same doctrinal difference exists also between the appellants and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod - a difference which the appellants themselves recognized and admitted in the closing portion of the meeting. . . . 304

To finish the discussion of these Four Statements, I offer the following extended quote from Doctor Becker's summary, one I'm sure will be of as much interest and value to all of you as it was to me.

These statements were not drawn up by anyone in WELS in order to present our position on universal and objective justification. They were quotations selected by lay members of a WELS congregation who did not agree with our doctrine. They held that Jesus by His vicarious satisfaction had made it possible for God to forgive sins but that God forgives men only when and if they believe, so that man's act of believing always precedes God's verdict of innocence.

The first three statements are taken verbatim from WELS sources. It should be said that they are found in contexts which throw considerable light on what the writers intended to convey by the words used. The last statement is quoted from LC-MS sources. They reflect the efforts of an LC-MS professor to present the significance of objective justification. It should probably be said that this professor does not accept our exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:19 and Romans 5:19, which, by the way, is also the traditional standard LC-MS interpretation of those passages.

The laymen who drew up this list of statements evidently intended to persuade their congregation that universal justification could not possibly be true, because that would mean that God forgives also unbelievers. We can sympathize with their difficulties. It is hard for human reason to believe that if God has forgiven He can still condemn. Even for Christians the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness insofar as they are still natural men, or insofar as the Old Adam still clings to them. It is difficult to take every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Walther was right when he said that the highest art of the Christian theologian is the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. But we need to remember that the main issue always was: "Has God forgiven the sins of all men?"

Because the passages are torn out of context, they are likely to cause some difficulties. When the LC-MS layman who felt called to come to the defense of the WELS Kokomo laymen circulated a questionnaire calling for an expression of opinion of the four statements (Chat A. Swanson sent his "Survey of Justification" to LC-MS pastors in April of 1981; a revised version to WELS pastors in August of the same year.), I also received a copy. I refused to participate in the survey on the ground that the statements are not clear and the results of the survey would
therefore also be confused. Every one of the statements can be understood correctly, even though one must swallow a little hard to accept 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.

Anyone who reads the statements carefully will recognize that they do not say that there are saints in hell. The charge that our Synod teaches such foolishness is a base canard that has been widely circulated on the basis of the four statements.

The third statement is a basically good summary of our position, although on the part of those who believe that we do not consider faith to be important enough, it probably needs the wider context of our stress on sola fide. Because the terms "general justification" and "individual justification" have sometimes been used as synonyms for objective justification and subjective justification, respectively, I would have preferred it if the words "individually" and "individual" had not been used. But the meaning of the statement is nevertheless clear and correct.

The first statement can easily be misunderstood and has caused confusion. The Bible never uses the word saint, when applied to human beings, in any other sense than a converted Christian. Those who read those words in the context of John Meyer's Ministers of Christ know what Prof. Meyer wanted to say in that sentence. The key words are "objectively speaking" and "status." Meyer simply wanted to say that the sins of all men are forgiven. "Status of a saint" to him meant "the legal state of a forgiven sinner." While we may disagree with his use of English, we cannot as biblical theologians surrender what he wanted to say. Nevertheless it would have been better if he had not used the word saint in that connection, especially since the word "received" is also a word which is often used in describing the function of faith in justification. We receive the status of saint for ourselves or accept forgiveness through faith.

The same criticism can be directed against the second statement. One really becomes a guilt-free saint only through faith, if we limit ourselves to the biblical usage of the word. However, since our holiness, as Augustine says, consists in sin's remission rather than in life's perfection, we could say that when God forgave the sins of the whole world He regarded all sinners as guilt-free, but if they are guilt-free we might also say that they are considered sinless in the sight of God. But a sinless person is a holy person, a saint. The fact that unbelievers do not consider themselves to be forgiven for Christ's sake does not change the truth of God's Word that tells us that God does not impute the sins of all men to them, or that through one man justification has come upon all men.

Even the fourth statement can be defended even though it leaves much to be desired. As we have said, the statement is not drawn from a WELS source. If it is true that God has forgiven the sins of the world then it is also true that He forgave the sin of Judas. When Jesus called Judas "friend" in the garden He was in effect treating him as
a forgiven sinner. If Jesus took away the sins of the world He also
took away the sins of the people who died in the flood. It is surely
no more difficult to believe that God forgave sins that were already
being punished than to believe that at the time of the resurrection
He forgave sins that had not yet been committed. How that is possible
I do not know. It very likely finds its explanation in the divine
attribute of eternity.

But while the statement can be defended as expressing a biblical rea-
ality, yet it would be best not to speak in such terms. In Scandi-
navia it is customary on the part of some to ridicule universal jus-
tification with the remark, "The damned lie in hell with their for-
given sins." So this fourth statement is a caricature which has a
tendency to make universal justification look ridiculous.

There is little point in talking about forgiveness for the damned.
They have made their bed by not believing the Gospel and all that
is left to believe then is the condemnation of the law which they
hear in their own conscience.

If I know for sure that a man with whom I am dealing is a wicked im-
penitent unbeliever I will not tell him his sin is forgiven. That
message is for those who are troubled by their sin. To the impeni-
tent we preach the Law and the Lord Jesus promises to stand behind
our message with His words, "Whosoever sins ye retain, they are re-
tained." Only when men confess that they are sinners who need for-
giveness are they ready to hear the message, "Your sins are forgiven," not "Your sins will be forgiven if you believe, or if you pray, or if
anything," but just "Your sins are forgiven." And the Lord Jesus
also promises to stand behind the word of those who speak for Him,
"Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." "They are re-
mitt'd" is a perfect tense, and we can really say "They have been for-
given long ago," as Luther says, "before we prayed or before we ever
thought of it."

What shall we say of the four statements? It would have been better if
the Kokomo laymen had simply been told, "Since you refuse to accept
the clear teaching of the Bible that God has for Christ's sake already
forgiven the sins of the world, and since you are not willing to be
treated as weak Christians but persist in 'doubtful disputations'
(Rm 14:1), we can no longer tolerate your propaganda against the doc-
trine of our church or consider you to be in fellowship with us."

Three of the four statements, because of their lack of clarity, tend
to confuse the issue. But since the disciplined laymen used them to
advance their false doctrine, it was understandable that the congre-
gation should also use them in its rejection of the falsehood being ad-
vocated. I do not consider any of the four statements to be false
document, but I would rather not use the language used in the first,
second, and fourth.

XI. A General Conclusion

How can it be that self-proclaimed conservative and orthodox Lutherans in our for-
mer sister synod—and among them the most "orthodox" of the orthodox—now reject the doctrine of objective justification? It is certainly safe to say (I hope!) that twenty years ago the Hartmans and Fohlmans would have found very little, if any, sympathy from the same men who are defending them today, and especially not support in the form of a rejection of the doctrine of objective justification as historically held by the Synodical Conference. Why is the case different today? Certainly almost two generations of liberalism in the Missouri Synod must be a significant part of it. Perhaps also the fight for God’s Word caused some to lose sight of the true heart of the message God’s Word proclaims, as they sought to present a united front against a common enemy.

It seems that the decision of Herman Otten and "Christian News" to promote William F. Beck's AAT certainly played a major part, in light of Beck's translation of ἀμαρτία. But an even greater factor than this must have been the hopes when of various "orthodox" persuasions placed in Walter A. Maier as the orthodox theologian who would finally be able to lead the LC-MS back to its former position. But could he? How could he when the clear testimony of history is that this position was based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ—the truth we label "objective justification." What would a man like Theodore Engelder say about the "orthodoxy" of those who deny objective justification today, when he wrote in 1933, as quoted earlier,

The Missourians did indeed teach that God, by pronouncing Christ, the world's Substitute, guilty of the sins of the world and condemning Him to death and then, in the resurrection, acquitting Him of all sin and guilt, thereby acquitted and absolved the world of its sin and guilt... And they teach it to this day. They would close their theological seminaries if they were no longer permitted to teach the objective justification. For then they could no longer teach the article of justification by faith. If the justification of the world, of every individual sinner, is not an accomplished fact, we should have to go out and ask the sinner to accomplish it himself. We could not ask him to "believe," to accept the pardon already granted and issued. Then there would be no justification "by faith." We cannot give up the article that on Easter morning God forgave every sinner his sin and guilt.\(^{105}\)

What was true of Missouri in 1933 was true of Wisconsin also, and by God's grace alone it is still true for Wisconsin today!

My research for this paper has shown me that there is still a need for an exhaustive presentation of the doctrine of objective justification, or the doctrine of objective justification and universal justification, if you wish to distinguish them. If this present controversy will prove the "catalyst" for this, then it will have served its good purpose. Certainly the review it has engendered on the part concerning this "heart" of the Gospel has been a part of its good purpose also. Perhaps a good summary statement on justification in general is in order from our Synod, one similar to, if not identical with, that produced by the Free Conference of 1965.

In conclusion, Why is the doctrine of objective justification of such vital importance? This is the answer given to this same question back in 1954 in 100 Questions and Answers for Lutherans of the Synodical Conference:

A) It is the heart of Christianity, the central doctrine of the Chris-
Christian religion.

B) This doctrine gives poor sinners the comfort that their justification is an accomplished fact. No conditions remain to be fulfilled.

C) It excludes the idea that man must do something toward his salvation, for it proclaims that God forgave all sins already when He raised Jesus from the dead.

D) This doctrine gives all glory to God for our salvation.

E) It is the message of all Christian mission work: "God has pardoned you. Do not reject your pardon, but accept it by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ." 307

Certainly much could be said about all five points above, particularly point (B). But as a poor sinner I will confine these last remarks to point (B). On my death bed, when Satan brings back all my past sins to haunt me and does his best to make me doubt God's love and my own faith, I pray that the Christian brother or sister who may be there to comfort me won't point me to my faith or my works. On my death bed I won't want to hear about Jesus and what he has done for all people, because then I can be sure he's also done it for me.

On my death bed I won't want to hear a balanced presentation of Law and Gospel, and, above all, not a confusion of the two! If you're there--bring me the Gospel, pure and simple. Bring me the good news of the world's justification in Christ! Tell me that in Christ God has forgiven all sins to all people! Then I'll be able to close my eyes and breathe my last in the peace that transcends all understanding, and with the joy that overcomes the sorrows of life. I said earlier that I would return to our Synod's "Tract No. 3" of 1954 at the conclusion of this paper. I do so now:

Our church has stood upon this objective truth of salvation for many years. It has always stressed with scripture what God has done as a basis for our hope, rather than what man can do. We may sometimes wonder, perhaps, if this is always so practical. Wouldn't it be better at times to wake up some of our "dead Christians" by giving them a little more responsibility? Take this matter of justification. Why quibble about words and expressions? Maybe we would be better off if we would stress the personal side more than we do. Why not tell man that his faith is more important to think about than a justifying act of God? What good will God's verdict of acquittal do us if we don't stress personal faith? Where does the proof of our salvation finally lie?

A time will come in our life, however, when the picture of the Bible will become more practical and more personal to us than ever before. That is when we are face to face with death, and when we realize that we are but one short step from appearing before the final judgment seat of Christ. Whether we like to put off thoughts of that moment or not, we realize that our whole life points to that moment. The faith by which we live will be the faith in which we die. 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." 308

SOLI DEO GLORIA, DEO SALUTIS NOSTRAE! AMEN.

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END NOTES
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I offer my apologies for the form of these endnotes, but in the interest of time and space this was my only solution. The first number refers to the entry in the Chronological Biography which follows, the second to the page or pages referred to. The numbers in ( ) refer to the page references for the English translations listed.

1. 31:7
2. 31:7
3. 33:103
4. 19:14
5. 188:105
6. 31:7
7. 187:219
8. 31:7
9. 187:223
10. 31:7
11a. 31:7
11b. 31:7
12. 31:7
13. 162:426-427
14. 236:600
15. 31:15
16. 31:15
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20a. 5:passim
20b. 5:35-37(1:364-368)
21. 31:7
22. 5:56
23a. 5:58
23b. 5:59
24. 8(Part I-10:157)
25. 8:41
26. 8:41
27a. 8:41
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33a. 23:359
33b. 18:339/6:167
34. 9:231-232
35. 29:163
36a. 29:163
36b. 53
37. 57:122
38. 15:113
39. 15:115,116
40. 15:119
41. 17:298
42. 17:299
43. 19:13-15
44. 21
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46. 24:161
47. 24:161
48a. 24:162
48b. 29:163-164
49. 35
50. 31:23
51. 33:103
52. 34:340
53. 34:348
54. 34:340-341
55. 34:351-352
56. 230:261
57. 230:261
58. 165:266
59. 166:513-514
60. 166:516
61. 77:166(144)
62. 42:163
63a. 43:162
63b. Pieper, in reference #90, refers to Walther as the author of these theses, but Der Lutheraner of 1872 (#43), among others, says it was Schmidt.
64. 42:passim
65. 42:31-32;36-37(177-178)
66. 42:41-42(179)
67. 42:42-46(185)
68. 42:57(2)
69a. 42:57-58;60-61(2)
69b. After writing (but not typing) this paper, I discovered the translation by Kurt Marquardt of Ft. Wayne, mentioned at the very end of the Chr. Bib. He himself admits that it is a little wooden, I prefer the one in the Standard, probably by Schmidt himself.
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71. 47:34
72. 71:246-247
73. 51
74. 74:191
75. 74:192-193
76. 10:160
77. 61:43(75)
78. 63:32(105)
79. 68:43
80. 69:20-21
81. nihil
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144. 139:91-92(317)
145. 139:92(318)
146. 139:96(321)
147. 140:354
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149. 146:322-323(62-63)
150a. 146:330-331(76)
150b. 167:906
151. 171:8
152. 238:106
153. 238:109
154. 238:108
155. 147:47-475(398-399)
156. 166:365
157. 147:414-415(349-351)
158. 150:135/174
159. 150:136-137/175-176
160. 150:141/181
161. 151:141-142/181-182
162. 153:263
163. 153:265
164. 153:268-269
165. 153:278
166. 153:278-279
167. 153:285
168. 157:488
169. 157:490
170. 159:381
171. 209:542
172. 260:434
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173b. 164:9
174. 165:265-266
175. 166:508-509
176. 166:573
177. 166:574
178. 166:575
179. 166:664
180. 166:665
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182. 166:665
183. 166:666-667
184. 166:668
185. 166:668
186. 166:669-670
187. 166:671
188. 166:672
189. 175:108(These words apparently left out of later editions.
190. 175:33
191. 175:34
192. 175:39-40
193. 166:673
194. 15:120
195. 15:117
196. 171
197. 175:32
198. 175:31
199. 175:32
200. 175:41
201. 175:118-119
202. 175:122
203. 181:258-259
204. 181:259
205. 181:260
206. 181:787
207. 182:798
208. 182:790
209. 184
210. 187:218
211. 187:219
212. 187:224(Koehler comes the closest here of anyone to making the distinction between objective and universal justification that Becker observes, but he still doesn't set it off as distinctly as Becker)
213. 187:226
214. 187:226-227
215. 187:232
216. 197:28
217. 195
218. 198:681
219. 201:856
220. 200:129
221. 204:44
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223. 208:15
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227. 212:43
228. 212:45
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233. 227:136
234. 219:381
235. 219:390
236. 222:42-43
238. 222:49-50
239. 224:81-82
240. 224:94
241. 279:15
242. 244:100
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247. 248:11-13
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251. 257:60-61
252. 307:25-26
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256. 262:12-13
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281. 284:15
282. 284:15
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286. 266
287. 266
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290. 293:11,12
291. 293:12
292. 293:13
293. 266(2/22/81,p.6)
294. ibidem
295. 299:17
296. 266
297. 305
298. A letter to me from the Hartmans & Pohlman's, 3/10/82
299. ibidem
300. 266
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302. 313
303. 281
304. 281
305. 317:15-17
306. 166:506-509
307. 207:13
308. 208:17

Typing completed January 12, 1983
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My apologies for whatever errors you will have undoubtedly found in my typing. If I hadn't been pressed for time . . . While the above Bibliography may be exhausting, it is by no means exhaustive! I hope to add to my own references, even as I look forward to some requests that are already "outstanding" from our Sem library and others. Anything you can send my way that you would think appropriate to my topic, I will happy to add to my collection.

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400 W. Clinton, Ft. Wayne, Indiana.


323. Hasselquist, T. N., "Hovedspropensmalet paanyt fremskillet," E, No. 52 (December 24, 1866) (This article on pages missing on the microfilm I received).


332. Krogsnaess, S. M., "Kampen er staende," E, April 18, 1867, p. 2; (II) August 19, 1867, p. 2; (III) September 9, 1867, p. 2.


335. Schollert, C., "Atter Hovedspropensmalet," E, April 22, 1867, pp. 2-3; (II) May 27, 1867, p. 3.


337. "Vedkomne Striden mellem de to Syndere," E, April 22, 1867, p. 2.


350. "Stridet die Lehre, dass die 'ahl nicht intiuukt fidei geschenen sie, mit der Lehre von der Rechtfertigung allein durch den Glauben?"Luth., Vol. 26, 1880, pp. 351- (I don't have the last page(s) of this).

351. Pieper, F., "Das Evangelium oder die reine Lehre von der Rechtfertigung, die Quelle der Rechten Begleisterung fuer alle Arbeit im Reiche Gottes," Der Lutheraner, July 29, 1890 (This is part I--I don't have the concluding part(s) yet.).

352. Pieper, F., Vortraeger uber die Lutherische Lehre von der Rechtfertigung, Concordia Seminary Printing Co., 1891-1892. (Lectures delivered by Pieper, September 21, 1891-Sept 20, 1892.)


371. Preus, Robert, "God's Justification," The Lutheran Witness, January 8, 1963, pp. 6-7(6-7); January 5, 1963, pp. 6-7(30-31); February 5, 1963, pp. 6-7(54-55); February 19, 1963, pp. 8-9(30-31).

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CORRIGENDA
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My special thanks to Pastor Joel Gerlach, California Mission Counselor, whose "preview" of one of the first copies of this paper prior to the Conference prompted the following corrections and comments:

1. Table of Contents, Part III: "Sattleried Fritschel"
2. Page 1, line 9 from the top: change "I not not ..." to "I do not ...
3. Page 1, line 11 from the bottom: change "...in this third area..." to "...in the historical area...
4. Page 2, line 26 from the bottom: change "...salvation”), (even Judas) ..." to "...salvation”), the whole world (i.e., every person who is a part of the world—even Judas) ...
5. Page 9, line 5 from the top: add "...and the other German... suit the ...
6. Page 11, line 18 from the top: delete comma; should read "... revelation is ...
7. Page 54, line 28 from the top: add "...5:18,19 untouched in his treatment of this section from Romans, which is really the heart of the matter."
8. Page 72, line 6 from the bottom: change "... side! Hoenecke may ..." to "...side!). In addition to its scriptural warrant, Hoenecke's position may ...
9. Page 90, lines 13-17 from the bottom: "In 1956... Confessions." At this time the AIC was negotiating to form the present AIC, cooling Missouri's ardor to establish fellowship and so prompting Missouri's resolution setting the Common Confession aside as a "working document".
10. Page 94, lines 5-11 from the top: "Undoubtedly... truth." I have been informed that the ties of the Norwegian Synod to Missouri were probably every bit as close as our own, if not more so. Many Missouri men were trained in Missouri schools. A major factor of the quick action on the part of the Norwegian Synod was no doubt its annual, rather than biennial, conventions.
11. Page 99, line 15 from the bottom: change "dilemma" to "dilemma"
12. Page 115, line 2 from the top: change "liturgy" to "liturgy"
13. Page 124, line 6 from the top: change "chief" to "chief" (Note: Pastor Gerlach assured me that I have many more "typo's" than the notes noted here.)
14. Page 124, 23 from the top: change "...and the five district Presidents who constitute the LC-10..." to "... and the four synodical Vice Presidents—Donald Weber, Guido Merkens, Robert Bauer, and George Jelliff (Haier himself was Third Vice President at the time)—who, together with Haier, constituted the LC-10..."
15. Page 08-13, last typed line: add "... I will be happy to..."


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