

Objective Justification Quotations

All human nature was taken in the foulest evils. "All have sinned," says Paul [Romans 3:23]. They were locked, as it were, in a prison by the curse of their transgression of the Law. The sentence of the judge was going to be passed against them. A letter from the King came down from heaven. Rather, the King himself came. Without examination, without exacting an account, he set all men free from the chains of their sins. All, then, who run to Christ are saved by his grace and profit from his gift. But those who wish to find justification from the Law will also fall from grace. They will not be able to enjoy the King's loving-kindness because they are striving to gain salvation by their own efforts; they will draw down on themselves the curse of the Law because by the works of the Law no flesh will find justification. (St. John Chrysostom, "Discourses against Judaizing Christians," II, I:7-II:1, *The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 68 [Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1979], pp. 38-39)

The Law of Moses...entered...into the place of the natural law. ...since deception had banished that [natural] law and nearly blotted it out of the human breast, pride reigned and disobedience was rampant. Therefore, that other [Law of Moses] took its place so that by its written expression it might challenge us and shut our mouth, in order to make the whole world subject to God. The world, however, became subject to him through the Law, because all are brought to trial by the prescript of the Law, and no one is justified by the works of the Law; in other words, because the knowledge of sin comes from the Law, but guilt is not remitted, the Law, therefore, which has made all men sinners, seems to have caused harm. But, when the Lord Jesus came he forgave all men the sin they could not escape, and canceled the decree against us by shedding his blood [*Sed veniens Dominus Jesus, peccatum omnibus, quod nemo poterat evadere, donavit, et chirographum nostrum sui sanguinis effusione delevit*] [Colossians 2:14]. This is what he says: "By the Law sin abounded, but grace abounded by Jesus" [Romans 5:20], since after the whole world became subject he took away the sins of the whole world, as John bears witness, saying: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" [John 1:29] Let no one glory, then, in his own works, since no one is justified by his deeds, but one who is just has received a gift, being justified by Baptism. It is faith, therefore, which sets us free by the blood of Christ, for he is blessed whose sin is forgiven and to whom pardon is granted [Psalm 32:1]. (Ambrose of Milan, "Epistle 73" [to Irenaeus], *The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 26 [Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1954], pp. 467-68; and as quoted [in part] in Apology of the Augsburg Confession IV:103, *The Book of Concord*, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000], pp. 137-38. The above text is conflated from both sources.)

...it is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that *Christ has suffered for us* and that *for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us*. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight, as St. Paul says in Romans 3[:21-26] and 4[:5]. (Augsburg Confession IV:1-3 [Latin], Kolb/Wengert pp. 39,41. Emphases added.)

Likewise, [the churches among us] teach that this faith is bound to yield good fruits and that it ought to do good works commanded by God on account of God's will and not so that we may trust in these works to merit justification before God. For forgiveness of sins and justification are *taken hold of by faith*, as the saying of Christ also testifies [Luke 17:10]: "When you have done all [things]... say, 'We are worthless slaves.'" The authors of the ancient church teach the same. For Ambrose says: "It is established by God that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved

without work, by faith alone, *receiving* the forgiveness of sins as a gift.” (Augsburg Confession VI:1-3 [Latin], Kolb/Wengert p. 41. Emphases added.)

...since justification takes place through a free promise, it follows that we cannot justify ourselves. Otherwise, why would a promise be needed? And since the promise cannot be grasped in any other way than by faith, the gospel (which is, strictly speaking, the promise of the forgiveness of sins and justification on account of Christ) proclaims the righteousness of faith in Christ, which the law does not teach. Nor is this a righteousness of the law. For the law requires of us our own works and our own perfection. But the promise freely offers to us, who are oppressed by sin and death, reconciliation on account of Christ, which is received not by works, but by faith alone. This faith does not bring to God trust in our own merits, but only trust in the promise or the mercy promised in Christ. Therefore it follows that *personal faith* – by which an individual believes that *his or her sins are remitted on account of Christ* and that *God is reconciled and gracious on account of Christ* – *receives the forgiveness of sins* and justifies us. (Apology of the Augsburg Confession IV:43-45, Kolb/Wengert p. 127. Emphasis added.)

In the last chapter of Luke [24:47], Christ commands the preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins in his name. The gospel accuses all people of being under sin and subject to eternal wrath and death and for Christ’s sake offers the forgiveness of sins and justification, which are received by faith. The proclamation of repentance, which accuses us, terrifies consciences with genuine and serious terrors. In the midst of these, hearts must once again receive consolation. This happens when they believe the promise of Christ, namely, that on his account we have the forgiveness of sins. This faith, which arises and consoles in the midst of those fears, receives the forgiveness of sins, justifies us, and makes alive. (Apology of the Augsburg Confession IV:62, Kolb/Wengert p. 130)

So Paul says [Gal. 2:19]: “For through the law I died to the law.” The law only accuses and terrifies consciences. In these terrors our opponents say nothing about faith. ... They say that by sorrows and terrors people merit grace, as long as they love God. But how will anyone love God in the midst of such real terrors when they experience the horrible and indescribable wrath of God? What else do they teach than despair, when in the midst of such terrors they present only the law? We therefore add faith in Christ as the second part of repentance, namely, that in the midst of these terrors, *the gospel about Christ (which freely promises the forgiveness of sins through Christ)* ought to be set forth to consciences. They should therefore believe that *on account of Christ their sins are freely forgiven*. This faith uplifts, sustains, and gives life to the contrite, according to the passage [Rom. 5:1]: “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God.” This faith receives *the forgiveness of sins*. This faith justifies before God, as the same passage testifies, “since we are justified by faith.” This faith shows the difference between the contrition of Judas and Saul on the one hand, and Peter and David on the other. The contrition of Judas or Saul was useless for the reason that it lacked the faith that grasps *the forgiveness of sins granted on account of Christ*. Accordingly, the contrition of David and Peter was beneficial because faith was added, which apprehends *the forgiveness of sins given on account of Christ*. (Apology of the Augsburg Confession XII:33-36, Kolb/Wengert pp. 192-93. Emphases added.)

...that which receives the forgiveness of sins should properly be included among the parts of repentance. For it is most certain, even if all the gates of hell oppose it [Matt. 16:28], that *the forgiveness of sins can be received in no other way than by faith alone, which believes that sins have been forgiven on account of Christ*, according to Romans 3[:25], “whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood.” Again, Romans 5[:2], “through whom we have obtained access by faith to this grace. ...” For a terrified conscience cannot set our works or our love against God’s wrath, but it finds peace only when it takes hold of Christ the mediator and believes the promises given on account of him. But those who imagine that our hearts find

peace without faith in Christ do not understand what the forgiveness of sins is nor how it comes to us. Peter [1 Peter 2:6] quotes from Isaiah [49:23; 28:16], "Whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." Therefore, it must be that hypocrites, who are confident that they receive forgiveness of sins on account of their works and not on account of Christ, are put to shame. Moreover, Peter says in Acts 10[:43], "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." Now it cannot be said more clearly than what Peter says, "through his name," and he adds, "everyone who believes in him." Therefore the only way that we receive the forgiveness of sins is through the name of Christ, that is, because of Christ, and not because of any of our merits or works. This happens when we believe that sins are remitted to us on account of Christ. (Apology XII:63-65, Kolb/Wengert p. 198. Emphasis added.)

For Tertullian speaks excellently about faith, dwelling especially on the oath in the prophet [Ezek. 33:11], "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live." For since God swears that *he does not desire the death of a sinner*, God shows that he requires faith in that we believe him when he swears and are sure that *he forgives us*. The authority of the divine promises ought by themselves to be sufficient for us. But this promise has also been confirmed with an oath. Therefore, if any are not certain that they are forgiven, they deny that God has sworn to the truth. A more horrible blasphemy cannot be imagined. For this is what Tertullian says, "He invites us to salvation with an offer and even an oath. When God says, 'As I live,' he wants to be believed. Oh, blessed are we for whose sake God swears an oath! Oh, most miserable are we if we do not believe the Lord even when he swears an oath!" Thus, it is necessary to know that this faith ought to hold that *God freely forgives us on account of Christ and on account of his promise*, and not on account of our works, contrition, confession, or satisfactions, or love. (Apology of the Augsburg Confession XII:94-95, Kolb/Wengert p. 203. Emphases added.)

Here is the first and chief article: That Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, "was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification" (Rom. 4[:25]); and he alone is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1[:29]); and "the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53[:6]); furthermore, "All have sinned," and "they are now justified without merit by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...by his blood" (Rom. 3[:23-25]). Now because *this must be believed* and may not be obtained or grasped otherwise with any work, law, or merit, it is clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us, as St. Paul says in Romans 3[:28,26]: "For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law"; and also, "that God alone is righteous and justifies the one who has faith in Jesus." Nothing in this article can be conceded or given up, even if heaven and earth or whatever is transitory passed away. As St. Peter says in Acts 4[:12]: "There is no other name...given among mortals by which we must be saved." "And by his bruises we are healed" (Isa. 53[:5]). (Smalcald Articles II, I:1-5, Kolb/Wengert p. 301. Emphasis added.)

Although we have God's Word and believe, although we obey and submit to his will and are nourished by God's gift and blessing, nevertheless we are not without sin. We still stumble daily and transgress because we live in the world among people who sorely vex us and give us occasion for impatience, anger, vengeance, etc. Besides, the devil is after us, besieging us on every side and, as we have heard, directing his attacks against all the previous petitions, so that it is not possible always to stand firm in this ceaseless conflict. Here again there is great need to call upon God and pray: "Dear Father, forgive us our debts." *Not that he does not forgive sins even apart from and before our praying; for before we prayed for it or even thought about it, he gave us the gospel, in which there is nothing but forgiveness.* But the point here is for us to recognize and accept this forgiveness. (Large Catechism III:86-88, Kolb/Wengert p. 452. Emphasis added.)

Against both [erring] parties other [orthodox] teachers of the Augsburg Confession have preached unanimously that Christ is our righteousness not only according to his divine nature and also not only according to his human nature, but according to both natures. As God and as human being he has redeemed us from all sin, made us righteous, and saved us through his perfect obedience [*alternate translation*: he has redeemed, justified, and saved us from our sins through his complete obedience]. Therefore, they have taught that the righteousness of faith is the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and that we are accepted as children of God for the sake of Christ's obedience alone, which is reckoned as righteousness through faith alone, out of sheer grace, to all who truly believe. Because of this they are absolved from all their unrighteousness. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration III:4, Kolb/Wengert pp. 562-63)

Accordingly, we believe, teach, and confess that the entire obedience of the entire person of Christ, which he rendered to the Father on our behalf unto the most shameful death of the cross [Phil. 2:8], is reckoned to us as righteousness. For the human nature alone, apart from the divine nature, could not satisfy the eternal, almighty God neither through its obedience nor through its suffering for the sins of the whole world. On the other hand, the deity alone, without the humanity, could not mediate between God and us. However, because, as has been stated above, the obedience is that of the entire person, *it is a perfect satisfaction and reconciliation of the human race, which satisfied God's eternal, unchangeable righteousness, revealed in the law. Thus, it is our righteousness before God and is revealed in the gospel. On this righteousness faith relies before God*, and God reckons it to faith, as is written in Romans 5[19; Luther's translation]: "For just as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience will the many be made righteous," in 1 John 1[7]: "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin," and in Habakkuk 2[4]: "The righteous will live by faith." For this reason, neither the divine nor the human nature of Christ in itself is reckoned to us as righteousness, but only the obedience of the person, who is at the same time God and a human being. Therefore, faith looks to the person of Christ, as this person submitted to the law for us, bore our sin, and in going to his Father performed complete and perfect obedience for us poor sinners, from his holy birth to his death. Thereby he covered all our disobedience, which is embedded in our nature and in its thoughts, words, and deeds, so that this disobedience is not reckoned to us as condemnation but is pardoned and forgiven by sheer grace, because of Christ alone. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration III:56-58, Kolb/Wengert pp. 572-73. Emphasis added.)

...in his intention and counsel God had preordained the following: 1. That the human race has been truly redeemed and reconciled with God through Christ, who has merited with his innocent obedience, suffering, and death both the righteousness that avails before God [Rom. 1:17; 3:21-26; 2 Cor. 5:21] and eternal life. 2. That this merit and the benefits of Christ are to be offered, given, and distributed to us through his Word and sacraments. 3. That God wills to be effective and active in us with his Holy Spirit through the Word, when it is preached, heard, and meditated on, to convert our hearts to true repentance, and to enlighten them in true faith. 4. That he wills to make righteous all those who in true repentance accept Christ by faith, and he wills to receive them into grace as children and heirs of eternal life. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration XI:14-18, Kolb/ Wengert pp. 643-44)

...we must always firmly and rigidly insist that, like the proclamation of repentance, so the promise of the gospel is *universalis*, that is, it pertains to all people (Luke 24[47]). Therefore, Christ commanded preaching "repentance and the forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations." "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" for it (John 3[16]). Christ has taken away the sins of the world (John 1[29]); his flesh was given "for the life of the world" (John 6[51]); his blood is "the atoning sacrifice for...the whole world" (1 John 1[7; 2:2]). Christ said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11[28]). "God has imprisoned all in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all" (Rom.

11[:32]). “The Lord does not want any to perish but all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3[:9]). He is “Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him” (Rom. 10[:12]). “Righteousness” comes “through faith in Christ” to all and “for all who believe” (Rom. 3[:22]). “This is the will of the Father, that all who...believe in Christ shall have eternal life” (John 6[:39, 40]). Therefore, Christ commanded that the promise of the gospel must be proclaimed to all those to whom repentance is preached (Luke 24[:47]; Mark 16[:15]). (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration XI:28, Kolb/Wengert p. 645)

1. [To say] that the Son of David is sitting at the right hand of God [Ps. 110:1; Matt. 22:42-45] means that the Son of God is risen from the dead. 2. His resurrection from the dead is our justification [Rom. 4:25], through faith alone. 3. [To say] that we are justified by faith alone means that all the righteousnesses of the Law and of human beings are condemned. (Martin Luther, “Disputation on Justifying Faith and Miracle-working Faith and That We Are Justified by Faith Alone” [April 24, 1543], *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 73 [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2020], p. 378)

...Christ’s keys help in the attainment of heaven and eternal life, for he himself calls them keys to the kingdom of heaven, because they close heaven to the hardened sinner and open it to the repentant one. Consequently, there must lie hidden in the keys of Christ his blood, death, and resurrection, by which he has opened to us heaven, and thus imparts through the keys to poor sinners what he has wrought through his blood. The office of the keys is a high and divine office, aiding our souls to pass from sin and death to grace and life; it grants them righteousness without any merit of works, solely through forgiveness of sins. (Martin Luther, “The Keys,” *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 40 [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958], p. 328)

Here we have the true significance of the keys. They are an office, a power or command given by God through Christ to all of Christendom for the retaining and remitting of the sins of men. ... 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. ... 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[:3]: “Their faithlessness [does 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 keys give 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. (Martin Luther, “The Keys,” pp. 366-67)

...we should preach also forgiveness of sins in his name. This signifies nothing else than that the Gospel should be preached, which declares unto all the world that in Christ the sins of all the world are swallowed up, and that he suffered death to put away sin from us, and arose to devour it, and blot it out. All this he did, that whoever believeth, should have the comfort and assurance that it is reckoned unto him, even as if he himself had done it; that his work is mine and thine and all men’s; yea that he gives himself to us with all his gifts to be our own personal property. Hence, as he is without sin and never dies by virtue of his resurrection even so I also am if I believe in him... (Martin Luther, “Sermon for Easter Tuesday,” *Complete Sermons of Martin Luther* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000], Vol. 1.2, p. 316)

The preaching of the holy gospel itself is principally and actually an absolution in which forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in general and in public to many persons, or publicly or

privately to one person alone. Therefore absolution may be used in public and in general, and in special cases also in private, just as the sermon may take place publicly or privately, and as one might comfort many people in public or someone individually in private. Even if not all believe [the word of absolution], that is no reason to reject [public] absolution, for each absolution, whether administered publicly or privately, has to be understood as demanding faith and as being an aid to those who believe in it, just as the gospel itself also proclaims forgiveness to all men in the whole world and exempts no one from this universal context. Nevertheless the gospel certainly demands our faith and does not aid those who do not believe it; and yet the universal context of the gospel has to remain [valid]. (Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon, "Letter to the Council of the City of Nürnberg" [April 18, 1533], *Luther's Works*, Vol. 50 [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975], pp. 76-77)

When He made purification for sins, [He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high] [Hebrews 1:3c]. With this brief word he makes useless absolutely all the righteousnesses and deeds of penitence of men. But he praises the exceedingly great mercy of God, namely, that "He made purification for sins," not through us but through Himself, not for the sins of others but for our sins. Therefore we should despair of our penitence, of our purification from sins; for before we repent, our sins have already been forgiven. Indeed, first His very purification, on the contrary, also produces penitence in us, just as His righteousness produces our righteousness. This is what Is. 53:6 says: "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Martin Luther, "Lectures on Hebrews," *Luther's Works*, Vol. 29 [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968], pp. 112-13)

"Behold, the Lamb of God!" [John 1:29]. ...

This is an extraordinarily free and comforting sermon on Christ, our Savior. Neither our thoughts nor our words can do the subject full justice, but in the life beyond it will redound to our eternal joy and bliss that the Son of God abased Himself so and burdened Himself with my sins. Yes, He assumes not only my sins but also those of the whole world, from Adam down to the very last mortal. These sins He takes upon Himself; for these He is willing to suffer and die that our sins may be expunged and we may attain eternal life and blessedness. But who can ever give adequate thought or expression to this theme? The entire world with all its holiness, rectitude, power, and glory is under the dominion of sin and completely discredited before God. Anyone who wishes to be saved must know that all his sins have been placed on the back of this Lamb! Therefore John points this Lamb out to his disciples, saying: "Do you want to know where the sins of the world are placed for forgiveness? Then don't resort to the Law of Moses or betake yourselves to the devil; there, to be sure, you will find sins, but sins to terrify you and damn you. But if you really want to find a place where the sins of the world are exterminated and deleted, then cast your gaze upon the cross. The Lord placed all our sins on the back of this Lamb. As the prophet Isaiah declares (53:6): 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way,' the one hither, the other yon. One sought God in this manner, another in a different way; there were countless modes of looking for God." ...which is the right way, the way that guards against going astray? ... Isaiah says that the right way is this: "God placed all our sins upon Him and smote Him for the sins of the people; when we all went astray, God put all our sins on the back of His Lamb, and upon no other. He ordained the Lamb to bear the sins of the entire world."

Therefore a Christian must cling simply to this verse and let no one rob him of it. For there is no other comfort either in heaven or on earth to fortify us against all attacks and temptations, especially in the agony of death. And whoever believes that this Lamb bears the sins of all the world must regard pope and Turk as the Antichrist. For the pope has taught that the Christian must be concerned with bearing his own sin, atoning for it with alms and the like. This is his shameless lie even to the present day. But if what he teaches is true, then I, not Christ, am yoked and burdened with my sin. And then I would necessarily be lost and damned.

But Christ does bear the sin – not only mine and yours or that of any other individual, or only of one kingdom or country, but the sin of the entire world. And you, too, are a part of the world. (Martin Luther, “Sermons on the Gospel of St. John,” *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 22 [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957], pp. 161-64)

...we heard the Lord proclaim to Nicodemus and to the whole world that God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world but to save it [cf. John 3:17]. We also heard that such salvation comes from faith, for whoever believes in Christ does not enter into judgment [cf. John 3:18]. Such a message should really dissolve all discord and unite us in thanks to God night and day. The whole world should jump and dance for joy. But, as it happens, the world cannot endure this message. If a man will not bear the proclamation of good news, how could he endure the announcement of misfortune, that is, of the fact that he is damned and lost?

Now the joyful message follows that the judgment is over; this means that the wrath of God, hell, and damnation are no more. For the Son of God came that we might be saved and delivered from death and hell. Then what is still lacking? Faith. People refuse to believe this. God gives His Son to save the world; but the world says: “It is not true that the world is steeped in sin and is damned.” This is a pity. Therefore the text continues:

[John 3:]19. *And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.* As though Christ wished to say: “Whoever believes, does not go to hell; whoever does not believe, already has the sentence of death pronounced on him.” Why? Well, because he does not believe in Christ. This is the judgment: that such an ineffably comforting doctrine of God’s grace, procured for the world through Christ, is proclaimed, but that the world still wants to believe the devil rather than God and His beloved Son. And this despite the fact that God assures us: “Sin, hell, judgment, and God’s wrath have all been terminated by the Son.” We wretched people might well bewail the sin into which we fell through Adam, the death which resulted, and all the attendant misery, also the judgment of God which we must bear. All this often makes it appear that God is angry with us, that God is too harsh and stern, like an unfair judge. But God wants to inform us in this text: “Good and well. Through My Son I shall cancel My charge against you so that you need lament no more. To be sure, you have sinned, and with this sin you have deserved the judgment of God. But your sin shall be pardoned, death shall be abolished; I shall no longer remember man’s sin, in which he is born and in which he lived. The accounts are to be considered settled. God will not again call a single sin to mind. Just believe in My Son.”

Now what is still lacking? Why the judgment if all sin has been removed by the Son? The answer is that the judgment is incurred by man’s refusal to accept Christ, the Son of God. Of course, man’s sin, both that inherited from Adam and that committed by man himself, is deserving of death. But this judgment results from man’s unwillingness to hear, to tolerate, and to accept the Savior, who removed sin, bore it on His shoulders, and locked up the portals of hell. ...

It is expressly stated here that Christ came and removed the sin of the world so completely that it is entirely deleted, entirely forgiven [*alternate translation*: Christ has come and has taken away the world’s sin, that it should be completely removed and wiped out, entirely forgotten]. But to refuse the Helper, to refuse to hear the Man who abolishes sin, and, more than this, to want to kill Him and to persevere in sin – that is vile and base. It is terrible to hear this proclamation, which brings remission of sin and release from death, maligned as heresy and to see this Helper persecuted. We preach this every day, and that is what goes on. ... Should our God not become angry? Should He not dispatch pestilence, famine, pope, Turk, Tartars, Sacramentarians, Anabaptists, and all sorts of sectaries to plague us? Our refusal to accept the Son surely deserves such punishment.

...this is not a harmful message; it is one that helps and saves. Still it is despised by nearly all... And the preachers also wrangle with one another over it, whereas they should do nothing but praise and thank God, rejoice in Christ, and say: “God be praised in eternity that judgment has been abolished! We shall rejoice for evermore.” But this does not happen. To be

sure, the judgment has been removed, and hell and God's wrath have been removed. Security and peace between God and us have also been established through the Son, who did not come to condemn the world – the world was already condemned before His coming – but to save the world. All that is still lacking is the acceptance of the Son. ...

This is what Christ means when He asserts here: "This is the judgment, that the light has come into the world." As if He were to say: "It is a grand and blessed light which shines into your hearts and says: 'Fear not the wrath of God, for God is gracious to you.' Even if your sin and your conscience plague and oppress you and you stand in awe of God's judgment, you must realize that all has been changed and that judgment has been abolished. Instead of harboring fear of the Final Judgment you must yearn and long for it, since it does not denote your judgment at all but your redemption." At that time we shall be delivered from the last enemy, death (1 Cor. 15:26); our bodies will rise again from the grave. Devil, death, and worms will cease; and God's disfavor will end. This judgment will draw you from the grave and deliver you from all evil. Therefore the Day of Judgment will be a time of rejoicing for you, far more so than the wedding day is for the bride; for this terrible Day has been converted into a happy and desirable Day for you. Thus all is well if you believe. But those who love darkness more than light will experience the reverse. They must live in dread of the Last Day. For the believer, the thought of this Day is comforting, since condemnation and the terrible judgment are gone. (Martin Luther, "Sermons on the Gospel of St. John," *Luther's Works*, Vol. 22, pp. 381-85)

[Gal. 3:]13. *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us – for it is written: Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree. ...*

Paul guarded his words carefully and spoke precisely. And here again a distinction must be made; Paul's words clearly show this. For he does not say that Christ became a curse on His own account, but that He became a curse "for us." Thus the whole emphasis is on the phrase "for us." For Christ is innocent so far as His own Person is concerned; therefore He should not have been hanged from the tree. But because, according to the Law, every thief should have been hanged, therefore, according to the Law of Moses, Christ Himself should have been hanged; for He bore the person of a sinner and a thief – and not of one but of all sinners and thieves. For we are sinners and thieves, and therefore we are worthy of death and eternal damnation. But Christ took all our sins upon Himself, and for them He died on the cross. Therefore it was appropriate for Him to become a thief and, as Isaiah says (53:12), to be "numbered among the thieves." ...

And this is our highest comfort, to clothe and wrap Christ this way in my sins, your sins, and the sins of the entire world, and in this way to behold Him bearing all our sins. When He is beheld this way, He easily removes all the fanatical opinions of our opponents about justification by works. For the papists dream about a kind of faith "formed by love." Through this they want to remove sins and be justified. This is clearly to unwrap Christ and to uncliothe Him from our sins, to make Him innocent, to burden and overwhelm ourselves with our own sins, and to behold them, not in Christ but in ourselves. This is to abolish Christ and make Him useless. For if it is true that we abolish sins by the works of the Law and by love, then Christ does not take them away, but we do. But if He is truly the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, who became a curse for us, and who was wrapped in our sins, it necessarily follows that we cannot be justified and take away sins through love. For God has laid our sins, not upon us but upon Christ, His Son. If they are taken away by Him, then they cannot be taken away by us. All Scripture says this, and we confess and pray the same thing in the Creed when we say: "I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who suffered, was crucified, and died for us."

This is the most joyous of all doctrines and the one that contains the most comfort. It teaches that we have the indescribable and inestimable mercy and love of God. When the merciful Father saw that we were being oppressed through the Law, that we were being held under a curse, and that we could not be liberated from it by anything, He sent His Son into the world, heaped all the sins of all men upon Him, and said to Him: "Be Peter the denier; Paul the persecutor, blasphemer, and assaulter; David the adulterer; the sinner who ate the apple in

Paradise; the thief on the cross. In short, be the person of all men, the one who has committed the sins of all men. And see to it that You pay and make satisfaction for them." Now the Law comes and says: "I find Him a sinner, who takes upon Himself the sins of all men. I do not see any other sins than those in Him. Therefore let Him die on the cross!" And so it attacks Him and kills Him. By this deed the whole world is purged and expiated from all sins, and thus it is set free from death and from every evil. But when sin and death have been abolished by this one man, God does not want to see anything else in the whole world, especially if it were to believe, except sheer cleansing and righteousness. And if any remnants of sin were to remain, still for the sake of Christ, the shining Sun, God would not notice them. ...

If the sins of the entire world are on that one man, Jesus Christ, then they are not on the world. But if they are not on Him, then they are still on the world. Again, if Christ Himself is made guilty of all the sins that we have all committed, then we are absolved from all sins, not through ourselves or through our own works or merits but through Him. But if He is innocent and does not carry our sins, then we carry them and shall die and be damned in them. "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen." (1 Cor. 15:57.)

Now let us see how two such extremely contrary things come together in this Person. Not only my sins and yours, but the sins of the entire world, past, present, and future, attack Him, try to damn Him, and do in fact damn Him. But because in the same Person, who is the highest, the greatest, and the only sinner, there is also eternal and invincible righteousness, therefore these two converge: the highest, the greatest, and the only sin; and the highest, the greatest, and the only righteousness. Here one of them must yield and be conquered, since they come together and collide with such a powerful impact. Thus the sin of the entire world attacks righteousness with the greatest possible impact and fury. What happens? Righteousness is eternal, immortal, and invincible. Sin, too, is a very powerful and cruel tyrant, dominating and ruling over the whole world, capturing and enslaving all men. In short, sin is a great and powerful god who devours the whole human race, all the learned, holy, powerful, wise, and unlearned men. He, I say, attacks Christ and wants to devour Him as he has devoured all the rest. But he does not see that He is a Person of invincible and eternal righteousness. In this duel, therefore, it is necessary for sin to be conquered and killed, and for righteousness to prevail and live. Thus in Christ all sin is conquered, killed, and buried; and righteousness remains the victor and the ruler eternally. (Martin Luther, "Lectures on Galatians" [1535], *Luther's Works*, Vol. 26 [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963], pp. 276-77, 279-81)

For "gospel" [*Euangelium*] is a Greek word and means in Greek a good message, good tidings, good news, a good report, which one sings and tells with gladness. For example, when David overcame the great Goliath, there came among the Jewish people the good report and encouraging news that their terrible enemy had been struck down and that they had been rescued and given joy and peace; and they sang and danced and were glad for it [1 Sam. 18:6]. Thus this gospel of God or New Testament is a good story and report, sounded forth into all the world by the apostles, telling of a true David who strove with sin, death, and the devil, and overcame them, and thereby rescued all those who were captive in sin, afflicted with death, and overpowered by the devil. Without any merit of their own he made them righteous, gave them life, and saved them, so that they were given peace and brought back to God. For this they sing, and thank and praise God, and are glad forever, if only they believe firmly and remain steadfast in faith. This report and encouraging tidings, or evangelical and divine news, is also called a New Testament. For it is a testament when a dying man bequeaths his property, after his death, to his legally defined heirs. And Christ, before his death, commanded and ordained that his gospel be preached after his death in all the world [Luke 24:44-47]. Thereby he gave to all who believe, as their possession, everything that he had. This included: his life, in which he swallowed up death; his righteousness, by which he blotted out sin; and his salvation, with which he overcame everlasting damnation. A poor man, dead in sin and consigned to hell, can

hear nothing more comforting than this precious and tender message about Christ; from the bottom of his heart he must laugh and be glad over it, if he believes it true. (Martin Luther, Prefaces to the New Testament, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 35 [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960], pp. 358-59)

If we desire to comprehend the benefits of the resurrection of Christ, we must keep in view two distinct pictures. The one is sombre, full of distress, misery, and woes; it is the scene of blood presented to us on Good Friday – Christ crucified between murderers and dying with excruciating pain. This scene we must contemplate with much earnestness, ...to realize that it all happened on account of our sins, yea, that Christ as the true High Priest sacrificed Himself for us and paid with His death our debts. ... Therefore, as often as we remember or view this doleful, bloody scene, we ought to bear in mind that we have before us our sins and the terrible wrath of God against them, a wrath so dire that no creature could endure it, that all atonement became impossible except the one made by the sacrifice and death of the Son of God. ...

But this picture of sorrow is changed... Yea, ere three days had gone by, our Lord and Saviour presents to us another picture, beautiful, full of life, lovely and cheerful, in order that we might have the sure consolation that not only our sins were annihilated in the death of Christ, but that by His resurrection a new eternal righteousness and life was obtained, as St. Paul says, Rom. 4: "Christ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." And 1 Co. 15: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." As in the former scene we saw the burden of our sin upon Him and bringing Him to the cross, so in this other scene of the resurrection we witness no longer sin, pain and sorrow, but only righteousness, joy and happiness. It is the victory of life over death – a life everlasting, with which this temporal existence on earth cannot be compared. Of this we have reason to rejoice. Merely to view the former scene would be terrible, but when we view it in connection with the glad event of the resurrection, and when we bear in mind why our Lord suffered thus, we will derive from such a contemplation much benefit and consolation. It will become apparent to us how inexpressibly great the love of God toward us poor sinners was, as He had compassion on our misery, even to such an amazing extent that He did not spare His beloved and only Child, but gave Him up for us, to bear upon the cross and in death the burden of our transgressions, which were too heavy for us and would have crushed us to the earth. This load was taken from us and placed by God Himself upon His Son, who, as God from eternity, could alone bear the heavy weight of sin. Upon Him we now find our burden. Let us leave it there, for there is no one else to be found who could better relieve us of it.

The other scene presents to us Christ no longer in woe and misery, weighed down with the ponderous mass of our sins, which God has laid upon Him, but beautiful, glorious and rejoicing; for all the sins have disappeared from Him. From this we have a right to conclude: If our sins, on account of the sufferings of Christ, lie no longer upon us, but are taken from our shoulders by God Himself and placed upon His Son, and if on Easter, after the resurrection, they are no more to be seen, where then are they? Micah truly says: They are sunk into the depth of the sea, and no devil nor any body else shall find them again (Mic. 7:18-19).

This article of our faith is glorious and blessed; whoever holds it not is no Christian... If we desire to be true Christians it is necessary for us firmly to establish in our hearts through faith this article, that Christ, who bore our sins upon the cross and died in payment for them, arose again from the dead for our justification. The more firmly we believe this, the more will our hearts rejoice and be comforted. For it is impossible not to be glad when we see Christ alive, a pure and beautiful being, who before, on account of our sins, was wretched and pitiable in death and in the grave. We are now convinced that our transgressions are removed and forever put away. (Martin Luther, "First Easter-Sermon," *Dr. Martin Luther's House-Postil* [second edition] [Columbus, Ohio: J. A. Schulze, Publisher, 1884], Vol. II, pp. 268-71)

In the former scene of suffering and death we witnessed our sin, our sentence of condemnation and death resting heavily upon Christ, making Him a distressed, pitiable Man; now, on Easter, we have the other scene unalloyed with sin; no curse, no frown, no death is visible; it is all life, mercy, happiness and righteousness in Christ. This picture can and should cheer our hearts. We should regard it with no other feeling but that today God brings us also to life with Christ. We should firmly believe that as we see no sin nor death nor condemnation in Christ, so God will also, for Christ's sake, consider us free from these if we faithfully rely upon His Son and depend upon His resurrection. Such a blessing we derive from faith. (Martin Luther, "First Easter-Sermon," p. 276)

...our Lord Jesus Christ by his triumph overwhelmed and felled death and the devil; the devil he strangled in his own body; death he drowned in his own blood; sin he erased with his martyrdom and suffering. All this he personally accomplished, but not for himself. For as true, eternal God and Lord over all things, he did not require such a victory for himself; even less did he have need to become man, and still less to suffer under Pontius Pilate. However, because so great and eminent a personage accomplished this, you, I, and everyone else, all of us are benefited. That is the power and the fruit of Christ's suffering and resurrection.

From these events we must understand what a majestic, eminent person Christ is, true God and man. His suffering and death were of tremendous import and his resurrection from the dead, glorious and triumphant. Now the power and the fruit of all this is that we believe and know that his victory and triumph were intended for and bequeathed to all, as a gift to all who believe in him. Therefore, we must not only believe that Christ died and rose from the dead in his own person, but also that we partake of this suffering and resurrection as a treasured gift and derive genuine comfort from the same... ...the victory and the glorious resurrection of this most noble person is a gift to all believers, for each one to have against his own death; I against mine, you against yours, for Christ's resurrection is greater than heaven and earth. By it the sins and death of all mankind have been swallowed up. My righteousness cannot redeem me from a single sin, let alone the entire burden of sin and death. But because this person is true God and man, he accomplishes it, gaining an eternal, glorious victory over sin, death, and the devil. The same victory is mine, if only I believe in him and confess him to be the person who has accomplished all this for me and all believers. If a person does not wish to believe this, let him be. We preach to those who gladly hear and who have need of this message. (Martin Luther, Sermon for "Holy Easter," in *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, Vol. 6, pp. 13-14)

...Paul says in Rom. 8[:2], "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death." Why does he not say that, "It has set me free from sin and death"? Has not Christ set us free from sin and death once and for all? Paul, however, is speaking of the proper operation of the law of the Spirit, which does what Christ has merited. Indeed, Christ once and for all absolved and freed everyone from sin and death when He merited for us the law of the Spirit of the Life. But what did that Spirit of Life do? He has not yet freed us from death and sin, for we still must die, we still must labor under sin; but in the end He will free us. Yet He has already liberated us from the law of sin and death, that is, from the kingdom and tyranny of sin and death. Sin is indeed present, but having lost its tyrannic power, it can do nothing; death indeed impends, but having lost its sting, it can neither harm nor terrify. (Martin Luther, "Against Latomus," *Luther's Works*, Vol. 32 [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958], p. 207)

Isaiah here [53:11] uses the word "many" for the word "all," after the manner of Paul in Rom. 5:15. The thought there is: *One* has sinned (Adam), *One* is righteous (Christ), and *many* are made righteous. There is no difference between "many" and "all." The righteousness of Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, our Lord and Savior, is so great that it could justify innumerable worlds. "He shall justify many," says he, that is to say, *all*. It should, therefore, be understood of all, because He offers his righteousness to all, and all who believe in Christ obtain it. (Martin

Luther, Explanation of Isaiah 53; quoted in *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, edited by Ewald M. Plass [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959], p. 608. Emphases in original.)

As John is preaching...and baptizing, ... Jesus comes to him at the Jordan from Galilee and desires to be baptized [Matt. 3:13]. ...

But why does He come to be baptized, seeing that He is without any sin or impurity for Baptism to take away? ... Here John gets a sinner who has no sin so far as His own person is concerned, and yet He is the greatest sinner, who has and bears the sin of the world. That is why He, too, undergoes Baptism and confesses by that deed that He is a sinner – not with respect to Himself, but with respect to us. For here He steps into my person and yours and stands in the place of all of us who are sinners. And since no one admits to being a sinner, especially not the proud saints, it is necessary that He become a sinner for all. He assumes the form of sinful flesh, and in His suffering on the cross, as many psalms testify, He laments the burden of the sins that He bears. ... He comes to be a sinner as Isaiah 53[:6] says: “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” For since we (the prophet says) “all like sheep have gone astray” [Isa. 53:6], God found this remedy: He took the sins of all human beings and hung them all around the neck of Him who alone was without sin. He thus becomes a great sinner – indeed, the greatest sinner of all and the only sinner on earth – so that there is no other. For the text says that the Lord has laid on Him the sins of us all.

Because He has become the Sinner who has all of our sin placed upon Him, He truly does need Baptism and must be baptized for the forgiveness of sins – not with respect to His own person, which is innocent and spotless, but for the sake of us, whose sins He bears. He plunges them into His Baptism and washes them away from Himself (that is, He washes them from us, since He has stepped into our person) so that they must be drowned and die in His Baptism. ... For if Christ had not been baptized with us, indeed, for our sakes, then we are lost. But now because the Lord God has laid the sins of all men upon Him, so that He must bear them and make satisfaction for them, He comes to John and has Himself baptized by him for the benefit of you, of me, and of all the world, in order to cleanse us from sins and to make us righteous and blessed.

Thus He also sacrifices Himself on the cross, becoming a sinner and a curse [Gal. 3:13]. And yet He alone is the blessed Seed [Gen. 3:15] through whom the whole world is blessed [Gen. 22:18], that is, through whom it must be redeemed from sin and death. But He hangs on the cross between two evildoers, is reckoned as their equal, and there dies a shameful death. He does that for the benefit of the whole human race, to redeem it from the eternal curse. Therefore, He is both the greatest and only sinner on earth, for He bears the sins of the whole world, and also the only righteous and holy One, since no one is made righteous and holy before God except through Him.

John himself testifies concerning Him: “Behold, the Lamb of God” [John 1:29] – who must be holy, pure, and innocent indeed. But what else does he say about Him? “Who bears the sin of the world” [John 1:29]. If He bears the world’s sin, He must of course be a sinner, indeed, a sinner alone, because the Holy Spirit is not joking when He says through the prophet: “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” [Isa. 53:6], and through John: “Behold, the Lamb of God who bears the sins of the world” [John 1:29]. Now, whoever believes that his own sins and the sins of all the world are laid on our dear Lord and that it was on account of this that He was baptized, was nailed to the cross, and there poured out His precious blood for us so that He, as the sole bearer of sins and the propitiator, might cleanse us from our sins and justify and save us – [whoever believes that] has the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, and Christ’s Baptism, cross, and blood become his own. For inasmuch as He is pure and innocent in Himself He could have easily been spared it and been neither baptized nor crucified. But He did so to serve the whole human race. Whoever believes this possesses it. (Martin Luther, “[First] Sermon at the Baptism of Bernard of Anhalt,” *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 58 [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010], pp. 44-46)

Scripture makes the grace of God the efficient cause of our justification... ..Scripture...in many and various ways sets this efficient cause of our justification before us for consideration in our justification, referring to *redemption* and referring to *distribution or application*. ...

Regarding our redemption. – God, before the worlds were made and before the foundations of the earth were laid [1 Peter 1:20], when He foresaw the misery which would befall the human race, out of pure grace, mercy, and love made the decree concerning the sending of His Son as the Mediator, that He might be the Victim and the Propitiation, 2 Tim. 1:9 and Titus 1:2. And in Him He chose and predestined us, Eph. 1:4-5. He demonstrated His love toward us, whereby in the fulness of time He sent forth His only-begotten Son and delivered Him up for all, Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:9. Luke 1:78 and 54: “through the bowels of His mercy...in remembrance of His mercy.” John 3:16: God accepted the sacrifice of His Son as satisfaction and propitiation for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 4:10 and 1 Cor. 1:30: He was made for us by God our redemption, righteousness, etc. 2 Cor. 5:19: “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.”

Regarding the distribution or application of this to the believer. – The grace of God is commended in many ways as the efficient cause of our justification. “He set forth His Son as the Propitiation...,” Rom. 3:25; “...in the presence of all the people,” Luke 2:31; “...establishing and preserving to us the ministry of reconciliation,” 2 Cor. 5:18; “The God of all grace...calls us to His glory...,” 1 Peter 5:10; cf. Gal. 1:15; Rom. 8:28; 2 Tim. 1:9; Col. 1:12; Acts 5:31; 1 Tim. 1:14; 2 Thess. 2:16.

Concerning the actual acceptance unto eternal life, Paul says in Eph. 2:4, 5, and 8: “God, who is rich in mercy, for the sake of His great love with which He loved us, when we were dead in sins, has made us to live with Christ...for by grace you have been saved...” Eph. 1:7: “We have the remission of our sins through the blood of Christ according to the riches of His grace.” 1 John 3:1: “You see what love the Father has for us, that we should be called the children of God”; cf. Col. 1:13; Acts 5:31. (Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989], Vol. II, pp. 548-49. Emphases added.)

...John 3:16]: God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone who believes in him may not perish but rather have eternal life. ... In these words of Christ, what is undoubtedly and certainly understood by the term “*the world*,” in the judgment and unanimous consensus of all writers and interpreters of the holy Scripture, the old ones and the new ones, is the universal human race. But Christ himself is the best interpreter of his own words, and he confirms this in the same passage in very plain words when he says, This is the judgment: that light has come into the world, and the world loved darkness more than the light (John 3:19). Here the term *the world* cannot be interpreted about the elect only, but rather it is especially about those who are rejected and damned. For they love the darkness more than the light. And they are damned who, even though God so loved them that he gave his Son for them, nevertheless themselves despise and scorn this gift and are judged and damned on this account. John the Baptist confirms the same thing, who when he pointed out Christ, said, Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). *Of the world*, he says, not of the elect. Thus it is written in Romans 5:10]: For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more will we, having been reconciled, be saved in his life. And 2 Corinthians 5:19-20]: God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting their transgressions against them. And he placed in us the word of reconciliation. We function therefore as embassy for Christ, as God exhorting through us. We beg on Christ’s behalf: be reconciled to God. (Jakob Andreae, in Andreae and Theodore Beza, *Lutheranism vs. Calvinism: The Classic Debate at the Colloquy of Montbéliard 1586* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017], pp. 618-19. Emphases in original.)

By raising Christ from the dead God absolved him for our sins which had been imputed to him, and consequently he also absolved us in him. In the resurrection of Christ we are absolved from our sins, so that they are not able to condemn us any more before God. (*Excitando Christum a*

mortuis absolvit eum Deus a peccatis nostris ipsi imputatis, ac proinde etiam nos in ipso absolvit. - In Christi resurrectione a peccatis nostris sumus absoluti, ut non amplius coram Dei iudicio nos condemnare possint.) (Johann Gerhard, quoted in *Our Great Heritage* [Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991], Vol. 3, p. 42)

...whatever is beyond human in Christ is called “spirit.” Therefore, it says, “The Son of God was manifested in the flesh, justified by means of the spirit” [1 Tim. 3:16], that is, His Deity, by the strength of which He performed miracles and raised Himself from the dead. Therefore, by means of His miracles, performed by the power of a holy spirit, but especially by means of the resurrection, He demonstrated Himself to be the Son of God against the calumnies of His enemies (Rom. 1:4, 1 Pet. 3:18). By means of the spirit He was declared to be righteous and true [*declaratus est justus et verax*] in works and doctrine, and He was also absolved [*absolutus*] of all the calumnies of the Jews. This type of justification for God agrees with Ps. 51:6, Matt. 11:18, Luke 7:29. “He was justified,” that is, He was declared to be righteous [*justus declaratus*], since in and by means of the resurrection Christ was absolved [*absolutus*] of the sins of men that He took upon Himself as Guarantor in order to make satisfaction for them to the Father. (Johann Gerhard, *Adnotationes ad Priorem D. Pauli ad Timotheum Epistolam* [Annotations on St. Paul’s First Epistle to Timothy] [translated by Paul A. Rydecki; translation slightly revised])

Just as the heavenly Father, by delivering Christ into death for the sake of our sins, condemned sin in His flesh through sin (Rom. 8:3) – that is, condemned it because it had sinned against Christ by causing death for Him, even though He was innocent, and so He withdrew from sin its legal right against believers so that it cannot condemn them any longer; or He also condemned it, that is, punished our sins in Christ, which were imposed on Him and imputed to Him as to a bondsman – so also, by raising Him from the dead, by that very deed He absolved Him from our sins that were imputed to Him, and consequently has also absolved us in Him, so that, in this way, the resurrection of Christ may be both the cause and the pledge and the complement of our justification. The following passages pertain to this: 1 Cor. 15:17, 2 Cor. 5:21, Eph. 2:5, Col. 2:12-13, Phil. 3:8-10, 1 Pet. 1:3. (Johann Gerhard, *Adnotationes ad priora capita Epistolae D. Pauli ad Romanos*; quoted in Paul A. Rydecki, “The Forensic Appeal to the Throne of Grace in the Theology of the Lutheran Age of Orthodoxy: A Reflection on Atonement and Its Relationship to Justification” [2013]) (*Alternate translation*: By raising [Christ] from the dead, [God] absolved him from our sins which had been imputed to him, and therefore he also absolved us in him that Christ’s resurrection might thus be the cause and the proof and the completion of our justification. [*Annotationes in Epist. ad Rom.* (Jena, 1666), p. 156; quoted in *Our Great Heritage*, p. 56])

Because Christ arose, we are therefore no longer in sins, since most assuredly full and perfect satisfaction has been made for them, and because in the resurrection of Christ we are absolved of our sins, so that they no longer can condemn us before the judgment bar of God. ... This power of the resurrection of Christ includes not only the application of the righteousness that avails before God, but also the actual absolution from sins, and even the blessed resurrection to life, since by virtue of the resurrection of Christ we are freed from the corporal and spiritual death of sins. Some bring in here the apostolic teaching in 1 Timothy 3:16, God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit (namely through the resurrection by God the Father), that is, he was absolved of the sins of the whole world, which he as Sponsor took upon himself, so that he might make perfect satisfaction for them to God the Father. Moreover in rising from the dead he showed by this very fact that satisfaction has been made by him for these sins, and all of the same have been expiated by the sacrifice of his death. (*Quia Christus resurrexit, ideo non amplius sumus in peccatis, quia scilicet praestita est pro illis plena et perfecta satisfactio, et quia in Christi resurrectione a peccatis nostris sumus absoluti, ut non amplius coram Dei iudicio nos condemnare possint. ... Haec vis resurrectionis Christi complectitur non solum iustitiae*

coram Deo valentis applicationem, sed etiam actualem a peccatis absolutionem, ac tandem beatam ad vitam resurrectionem, quia virtute resurrectionis Christi a morte spirituali peccatorum et corporali liberamur. Quidam huc accommodant locum Apostolicum 1 Tim. 3. v 16. Deus manifestatus est in carne, justificatus Spiritu, videl. per resurrectionem a Deo Patre, hoc est, absolutus a peccatis totius mundi, quae ipse ut Sponsor in se receperat, ut pro illis perfectam satisfactionem Deo Patri praestaret, resurgendo enim ex morte ipso facto demonstravit, pro peccatis illis a se esse satisfactum, eaque omnia sacrificio mortis suae fuisse expiata.) (Johann Gerhard, *Disputationes Theologicae* [Jena, 1655], XX, p. 1450 [translated by Kurt E. Marquart])

Christ's resurrection took place as an actual absolution from sin (*respectu actualis a peccato absolutionis*). As God punished our sins in Christ, upon whom He laid them and to whom He imputed them, as our Bondsman, so He also, by the very act of raising Him from the dead, absolved Him from our sins imputed to Him, and so He absolved also us in Him. (Abraham Calov, *Bibl. Illust.*, ad Rom. 4:25; quoted in Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951], p. 321)

[Justification] is the *object* of faith in that it is offered by God in the Gospel; it is the *effect* [of faith], to put it thus, insofar as grace having been apprehended by faith, the forgiveness of sins happens to us by that very act. (Abraham Calov, *Exegema Augustanae Confessionis* (Wittenberg: 1665), p. 4; quoted in Kurt E. Marquart, "The Reformation Roots of 'Objective Justification'," in *A Lively Legacy: Essays in Honor of Robert Preus* [Fort Wayne, Indiana: Concordia Theological Seminary, 1985], p. 119)

The manner in which our justification is proceeded with, is as follows. The righteousness is: 1. offered by God unto man; and 2. received and accepted by man. Thus God offers his righteousness unto man by means of His Gospel, and by the holy Sacraments... From the last mentioned springs the faith by which the justification is accepted... If man has the justification offered unto him, then he accepts of it by faith, which is, as it were, the spiritual hand, by which the grace of God, the merits of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, life and salvation are accepted and laid hold of. (Nicolaus Hunnius, *Epitome Credendorum* [1625] [translated by Paul Edward Gottheil] [Nuremberg: U. E. Sebald, 1847], p. 144. [translation slightly revised])

The word *justification* and *reconciliation* is used in a twofold manner: 1) in respect of the acquired merit, 2) in respect of the appropriated merit. Thus all are justified and some are justified. All, in respect of the acquired merit; some, in respect of the appropriated merit. (John Quistorp the Elder [1584-1648]; quoted in Friedrich A. Schmidt, *Justification: Subjective and Objective* [translated by Kurt E. Marquart] [Fort Wayne, Indiana: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1982], p. 21)

The forgiveness of sins is considered in a *twofold manner*. *First*, as it has been *acquired* by Christ and is *offered* as a benefit *promised* and intended by God for sinners, to be sought and had in the Word and Sacraments. *Afterwards* [forgiveness is considered] as it has already been *accepted* by faith. has been applied, and is possessed. ... In the *first* manner the forgiveness of sins is the *object* of faith *insofar as it justifies*. (John Benedict Carpzov, *Isagoge in Libros Ecclesiarum Lutheranarum Symbolicos* (Leipzig, 1675), pp. 208 ff.; quoted in Walther-Baier, *Compendium Theologiae Positivae* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1879), Vol. III, p. 285; quoted in turn in Kurt E. Marquart, "The Reformation Roots of 'Objective Justification'," p. 119)

Had God not raised our Mediator, He would thereby have let it be known that He was not yet satisfied with us. But now that Jesus is risen, God has thereby declared that He has been satisfied, wherefore also Jesus was in His resurrection justified as Mediator in place of the sinners. And insofar as the whole human race, when it is considered in general and as one

person, was justified at the same time together with Him, it too was received, as a fruit of this justification, into God's covenant of peace, and thus the peace which had been lost in Adam was restored again between God and men. (Andreas Norborg [+1767], *Ordnung der Seligmachung des gefallenen Menschen*, p. 103; quoted in Friedrich A. Schmidt, *Justification: Subjective and Objective*, p. 23)

It remains in this contemplation to make an application to ourselves, whereby the question at once arises whether all men were justified with Christ, since He was justified in their place. To deny this outright and *a priori* would be the same as to rob us men of a great consolation, and it would at the same time militate against God's Word, which expressly teaches thus. But if one were on the other hand to affirm this question in such a way that the conclusion should be drawn that now man needs no further justification, after he has been justified once in and with Christ, then this likewise militates against God's Word, and lays the foundation for a carnal security. Thus there is caution required here, to hold the proper middle way, so that the truth may not suffer loss on either side.

The Apostle Paul gives us light in this matter, when he sets up a comparison between Adam and Christ, the two Heads of the human race. As regards Adam, he stood, in his testing, not only for himself; but in his one person he represented the entire human race, whose cause lay upon him, either to preserve it or to ruin it, so that what he did and what came upon him as a result, were later to be imputed to the whole (human) race and to come upon it, Rom. 5:18,19. Now, that which this first Adam had ruined, our Saviour, Christ, Who is called the second Adam and the other Man (I Cor. 15:45-47), took over, in order to restore it again, and the Apostle shows that the same applies to Him, only the other way round. Thus Jesus also represented in His one Person our entire race, which was regarded under Him as one Body, one Person, one Crowd, whose Head He was. And since the whole debt of sin of the world was laid on Jesus, this debt could no longer remain lying on the world, for it could not be in two places at the same time. Thus the world was seen through Christ's sufferings and death as free and released of all debt. When Jesus, on Whom the whole mass of sins lay, had fought His way through so that God according to his strictest justice found it just to take the debt away from Him and to justify Him, then it was clear that the debt (*Schuld* – guilt) with all its condemnation was taken away not only from Jesus, but also from the world; for the debt could then not fall back again upon the world, insofar as its authorized Representative, on Whom all its debt lay, had wiped it out. Thus we see that in the same hour as Jesus was justified there occurred also, together with Him, a justification upon the world, Rom. 5:18. (Andreas Norborg, *Ordnung der Seligmachung des gefallenen Menschen*, p. 116; quoted in Friedrich A. Schmidt, *Justification: Subjective and Objective*, p. 23)

Those who say that God has made the whole world righteous, but has not declared it righteous, actually deny thereby again the whole of justification, for the declaring righteous by the Father is not to be severed from the making righteous of the Son, when He raised Christ from the dead. Of course none of this helps anyone as yet towards the possession of righteousness and salvation, if he does not also accept justification. When a king pardons a group of criminals, then they all are from the king's side acquitted of guilt and punishment, but whoever among them does not accept the pardon, must continue to suffer for his guilt; it is the same with sinners in the justification which has happened through Christ's death and resurrection. Yes, if God had not written and sealed the letter of pardon, then we pastors would be liars and seducers of the people if we said to them: Only believe, then you are righteous. But now that God has through the raising of His Son signed the letter of pardon for the sinners, and sealed it with His divine seal, we can confidently preach: the world is justified, the world is reconciled with God, which latter expression too would be impermissible if the former were not true.

Our old dogmaticians too would themselves have used the expression more – since they believed and taught the substance – had not *Huber* shortly before Gerhard's time taught

that God had not only justified all men already, but had also elected them to eternal life. In order to avoid the appearance of agreement with this erroneous doctrine, they used the expression only rarely. Already in the year 1593 the Wuerttemberg theologians (Heerbrand, Gerlach, Hafenreffer, Osiander, Bidembach, and others) conceded to Huber with reference to the doctrine of justification that he seemed to deviate from them in it "*in phrasi tamen magis ac loquendi modo, quam reipsa*," that is, "more however in the expression and in the manner of speaking than in the substance itself" (Loescher's *Unschuldige Nachrichten*, 1730, p. 567). The Wittenberg theologians (Gesner, Leyser, Hunnius, and others) did not want to tolerate Huber's expression: "*Christus contulit proprie redemptionem toti generi humano*," that is, "Christ imparted the redemption to the entire human race *in the proper sense*," because the *actual imparting*, "as it is taken in the theological schools," refers to the *appropriation* (See Wittenberg *Consilia* I, 642ff.). Nevertheless we find not a few unimpeachable theologians who speak of a universal justification or absolution. (Friedrich A. Schmidt, *Justification: Subjective and Objective*, pp. 20-21)

[Christ's] anguish of soul when He struggled hard with the death in Gethsemane, His shameful arrest and bonds, His scourging, the mockery, the spittle, the crowning with thorns, His crucifixion and the shedding of His blood – all of this was nothing else than the punishment which God the Father meted out to Him on account of the sins of the entire world. These had been imputed to Him, and these Christ now bore. Therefore also the condemnation of Christ by Caiaphas and Pilate was at the same time His condemnation to death by God the Father, as the wages appointed for the ancient sin in paradise. And the death that Jesus endured following the sentence was nothing else than the carrying out of the divine judgment which required this final and most terrible punishment. ... Since now... God the Father, the Judge Himself who had *condemned* Christ to death, *raised* Him again from the dead, what meaning must His resurrection therefore have? What does it mean when in a process of law the imprisoned guarantor is finally set free by the judge himself? It means that the account is settled. Christ's resurrection, therefore, was nothing else than the actual testimony which God the Father gave before heaven and earth, before angels and men, that all the demands of the eternal divine righteousness had now been fully met by Him. It means that the debt which Christ had pledged to pay had now actually been paid by Him to the last farthing, and that the punishment which God had put upon the sins of men had now been thoroughly removed by Christ to the very last stripe. It means that Christ is now free and forever declared loosed from all the debt and punishment which He had assumed. In one word, it means that He is *absolved*.

Since it was all mankind in whose place and for whom Christ suffered, died and made payment, who was it, then, that was absolved in and through Christ's Person when the eternal Judge set Him at liberty? It was – oh, marvelous and endlessly comforting truth! – it was *all mankind*. Just as all Israel had triumphed when David returned victorious from the duel with the giant, against whom he had fought *for all Israel*, so the entire human race was victorious when Christ triumphed in the battle against sin, death, and hell. Just as the receipt, obtained by one who makes payment for another, frees and looses the debtor, so the receipt which God presented to Christ in His resurrection frees and looses all mankind from its debt of sin. That we are not making a mistake when we draw this conclusion is evident from the fact that God's very Word draws this conclusion. In the 5th chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians Paul writes: "We thus judge that if One died for all, then were all dead." And in the 5th chapter of his letter to the Romans the same apostle adds: "Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Here we see that just as Christ's condemnation was the condemnation of all men, Christ's death and imprisonment the death and imprisonment of all men, Christ's payment the payment of all men, so also Christ's life is the life of all men. Christ's acquittal the acquittal of all men, Christ's justification the justification of all men, *Christ's absolution the absolution of all men*. ...

For it is solely the resurrection of Christ from the dead that first of all makes the Gospel

that which it is, namely true tidings of joy... It is solely the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that makes Baptism and the Lord's Supper the Means of Grace that they really are, namely, heavenly vessels in which the absolution spoken by God in Christ is contained, and through which it is offered, presented and given. And finally, it is solely the resurrection of Christ from the dead which makes the absolution which one person pronounces upon another a real absolution...

Many think that if the doctrine were true that God has already absolved the whole world by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, then it would follow that the whole world accordingly already has the forgiveness of sins, and that as a result the whole world would also have to be saved, – for where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation. But as true as it is, that with forgiveness we have salvation, so false is the conclusion that everyone has forgiveness. In every case of real giving there are two parties that come into consideration, the donor and the recipient. What does it benefit a poor man if he rejects the gift of a rich man...? What personal benefit does a rebel derive if an entire rebellious city has been pardoned but he for himself does not accept the pardon...? What does it help an imprisoned criminal that freedom is proclaimed to him if, in spite of the open prison doors, he will not leave his prison...? What does it benefit the person who has offended someone if he will not accept the fact that the offended person is reconciled to him, that, holding to his hatred and resentment, he refuses the pardoning hand? What does it help the world that Christ is really its Savior if it will not hear of a Savior? What does it profit the world that Christ really has redeemed it and reconciled it to God if in self-righteous delusion it insists on being its own redeemer and reconciler? The same is the case also regarding the general absolution which God has pronounced upon the whole world through the resurrection of Christ, the Surety and Substitute for all mankind. ... Please understand that...the poor world has no benefit from the fact that God through Christ's resurrection has already absolved the world entirely from all its sins as long as it continues in its unbelief. ... Every one of us must learn to say from the heart: *I*, too, am absolved. The forgiveness of sins is *mine*. God has declared also *me* free from all *my* guilt. The little words, "I," "me," and "mine" are the words upon which everything depends here. ... And, dear friends, let me add this: The general absolution which God has already pronounced upon all men must not only be accepted in faith by every individual person if he would be saved, but this can take place in no other way than by faith *alone*. (C. F. W. Walther, "Christ's Resurrection – The World's Absolution," *The Word of His Grace: Occasional and Festival Sermons* [Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic Publishing Company, Inc., 1978], pp. 231-35. Emphases in original.)

...“the justification of the world” or as it is more often called, objective, universal justification. By this we understand that by raising Christ from the dead God declares him righteous, and at the same time acknowledges and declares all people, the whole world – whose Representative and Substitute Jesus Christ was, in his resurrection and victory as well as in his suffering and tribulation (“He was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification”) – as free from guilt and punishment, and righteous in Christ Jesus. At the same time, we maintain and teach, in agreement with the Scriptures, that the individual sinner must accept and appropriate by faith this righteousness earned for everyone by the death of Christ, proclaimed by his resurrection, and announced and bestowed through the Gospel, to himself, for his comfort and salvation; and that for the sake of Christ whose righteousness the troubled sinner grasps and makes his own in faith, God justifies the believer and counts his faith to him for righteousness. We teach therefore that the expressions “justification” and “to justify” are used in Scripture and in the Lutheran Church in a twofold way: 1) that justification has come to *everyone*, namely when we mean that justification *is earned* for everyone by Christ, and 2) that only the *believer* is justified, when a person is talking about the righteousness being *received*. ...

...that our doctrine of justification in the first sense, as a justification of everyone through the resurrection of Christ from the dead, is biblical, we prove: 1) From this, that it is *expressly* taught in Romans 5:18.19, where it says, “Therefore, as by the offense of *one* judgment came

upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of *one* the free gift came upon *all* men unto *justification* of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." ...

2) We prove the correctness of this teaching from the biblical teaching about redemption. Scripture teaches that Christ "is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the *whole world*" (1 Jo. 2:2), that he is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of *the world*" (Jo. 1:29), and that in Christ God reconciled *himself with the world*, because he did not impute their trespasses unto them (2 Co. 5:19). If Christ has borne the sin of the world and atoned for it, then in the sight of him who gave the ransom for it, the world is loosed and free from sin and its punishment, although it remains in bondage and under the wrath of God if it remains in unbelief. As it says in the *Book of Concord*: "For after the whole world was subjected to sin he took away the sin of the whole world, as John testified when he said (John 1:29), 'Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the whole world!'" (Apology, IV, paragraph 103). If God is reconciled with the whole world since he does not impute its transgressions to it but to Christ, then the world must be righteous and guiltless in his eyes. God has solemnly testified to this by raising Christ from the dead, as Paul says: "He was delivered for our offenses and was raised for our justification." As "the Lamb of God," Jesus was loaded with the sin of all the world, was cursed for it and its unrighteousness, and suffered death. When God awakened him from the dead he declared the guilt erased, and Christ free and righteous. However, since Christ did not bear *his* sins but *the world's*, was condemned not for *his* sins but for the whole human race, so neither is Christ declared righteous for his person by the resurrection, but the whole *human race* for which he died and rose was thereby declared righteous by God. Just as "Christ was raised for our justification" (Ro. 4:25), thus his resurrection is the foundation on which our justification rests. Therefore Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 15:17: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins." Then the work of redemption were declared invalid, but now through his resurrection it is declared completed and valid, so that "all things are ready." But it was everyone whom he redeemed, therefore also for the justification of *everyone* that he rose. The sinner is to appropriate this to himself in faith for his comfort and salvation. (Herman Amberg Preus, "The Justification of the World," *Evangelisk Luthersk Kirketidende* [February 13, 1874] [translated by Herbert Larson]. Emphases in original. Punctuation slightly revised.)

ADDENDA

The passages which ascribe the resurrection of Christ from the dead to God the Father refer to our Savior as the Mediator between God and man, on whom God had laid the "iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:6; John 1:29) and whom the Father therefore had delivered into death for the sins of all men (Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:3).

Now, then, if the Father raised Christ from the dead, He, by this glorious resurrection act, declared that the sins of the whole world are fully expiated, or atoned for, and that all mankind is now regarded as righteous before His divine tribunal. This gracious reconciliation and justification is clearly taught in Rom. 4:25: "Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." The term δικαίωσις here means the act of divine justification executed through God's act of raising Christ from the dead, and it is for this reason called the *objective justification* of all mankind. This truth Dr. Walther stressed anew in America. He taught that the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the *actual absolution pronounced upon all sinners* [Cp. *Evangelienpostille*, p. 160 ff.]. To refer the words: "Who was raised again for our justification," to the so-called subjective justification, which takes place by faith, not only weakens the force of the words, but also violates the context. Calov, following Gerhard, rightly points out the relation of Christ's resurrection to our justification as follows: "Christ's resurrection took place as an actual absolution from sin (*respectu actualis a peccato absolutionis*). As God punished our sins in Christ, upon whom He laid them and to whom He imputed them, as our Bondsman, so He also, by the very act of raising Him from the dead, absolved Him from our sins imputed to Him, and so He absolved also us in Him" [*Bibl. Illust.*, ad Rom. 4:25].

For this reason Scripture also says that justifying and saving faith has that God for its object who raised Christ from the dead. Rom. 4:24: "... if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the

dead.” The same truth is asserted in Rom. 10:9: “If thou shalt ... believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” (Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 2 [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951], pp. 321-22. Emphases in original.)

The term *vicarious satisfaction* reproduces the teaching of Scripture that through Christ’s substitutional obedience and death God’s wrath against men was appeased, in other words, His judgment of condemnation was set aside. Rom. 5:18: “By the righteousness [v. 19: obedience] of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” And Rom. 5:10: “When we were enemies [ἐχθροί, passive: *Deo invis*], we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” Luthardt: “A change of attitude on the part of God is meant.” 2 Cor. 5:19 furnishes additional proof that by the objective reconciliation which Christ has effected a change of heart took place, not in men, but in God. “Reconciling the world unto Himself” is defined as “not imputing their trespasses unto them.” God reconciled man with Himself by not imputing their sins, by forgiving them their sins in His heart (*in foro divino*), that is, causing His wrath over the sins of man to come to an end. And this reconciliation took place not by a fiat of His power, but through the intervention of Christ as Mediator (“Mediator between God and man”), through the interposition of His obedience and suffering (“by the righteousness of One,” “by the obedience of One,” “by the death of His Son,” “One died for all”). (Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 2, p. 346)

Scripture teaches the *objective reconciliation*. Nineteen hundred years ago Christ effected the reconciliation of all men with God. God does not wait for men to reconcile Him with themselves by means of any efforts of their own. He is already reconciled. The reconciliation is an accomplished fact, just like the creation of the world. Rom. 5:10: “We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” When Christ died, God became reconciled. As Christ’s death lies in the past, so also our reconciliation is an accomplished fact. 2 Cor. 5:19: “God was in Christ, reconciling” (namely, when Christ lived and died on earth) “the world unto Himself.” The καταλλάσσειν of Rom. 5:10 and 2 Cor. 5:19 does not refer – let this fact be noted – to any change that occurs in men, but describes an occurrence in the heart of God. It was God who laid His anger by on account of the ransom brought by Christ. It was God who at that time already had in His heart forgiven the sins of the whole world, for the statement: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” means – and that is not our, but the Apostle’s own interpretation – that God did “not impute their trespasses unto them.” And “not imputing trespasses” is, according to Scripture (Rom. 4:6-8), synonymous with “forgiving sins,” “justifying” the sinner. The resurrection of Christ is, as Holy Writ teaches, the actual absolution of the whole world of sinners. Rom. 4:25: “Who was raised again for our justification.” At that time we were objectively declared free from sin. ... [Meyer on 2 Cor. 5:18-19: Mankind was on account of its uncanceled sins under God’s holy wrath, ἐχθροὶ θεοῦ, Rom. 5:10, *Deo invis*, the object of God’s hatred; but with the cancellation of their sins, effected by the death of Christ, God’s wrath came to an end. The reconciliation of all mankind took place objectively through the death of Christ.” *Proceedings of the Southern District*, 1883, p. 20 ff.: “As God, prompted by His grace, made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us men (2 Cor. 5:21), that is, imputed the sins of mankind to Christ as His own, so He also regarded the satisfaction rendered by Christ as though it had been rendered by men (2 Cor. 5:14). By Christ’s suffering and death the sins of all men have been atoned for so completely as though all the thousand millions of men had themselves endured the torments of hell. The result is: God is perfectly reconciled to all men and with every individual among them. No man need henceforth do or suffer anything to reconcile God to obtain righteousness and salvation. 2 Cor. 5:19: Nineteen hundred years ago God reconciled the world unto Himself. We know what it means to be reconciled to someone. A person is reconciled to someone when he has dismissed from his heart all wrath against him. Now, just so God has for Christ’s sake dismissed from His heart all wrath against men, with whom He was angry because of their sins. God now feels toward men as though they had never offended Him by sinning, as though never a disagreement between God and men had occurred. Here, then, the so-called objective justification is clearly taught: If God is reconciled with men, if He no longer has anything against them, then He has evidently in His heart absolved them of their sins, then He regards them as righteous for Christ’s sake. Hence, according to Scripture, the reconciliation between God and men, their justification, took place before they came to faith. This fact is indicated also by the circumstances of Christ’s death: by His cry: ‘It is finished’ ... and by the rending of the veil (for God has actually declared by that miraculous occurrence that every sinner now has free access to Him).”]

The message of this finished reconciliation is brought to us by the Gospel (“the Word of Reconciliation,” 2 Cor. 5:19), and thus the *subjective* reconciliation takes place only by faith (*sola fide*). In other words: only for this reason does faith reconcile us with God (subjectively) that reconciliation has already been effected through Christ’s satisfaction and is proclaimed and proffered to us in the Gospel. “Be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20) – believe and accept the objective reconciliation procured by

Christ and now offered to you. “We have now” in coming to faith, in being justified, “received the at-one-ment (reconciliation),” Rom. 5:11. [Philippi on Rom. 5:11: “The reconciliation has been achieved, and we receive it by faith, so that καταλλαγὴν λαμβάνειν means to be justified; cp. 2 Cor. 5:20: ‘Be ye reconciled to God.’”] This Scriptural truth that there is but one way of obtaining the subjective reconciliation, namely, by believing that Christ has already procured reconciliation and the forgiveness of sins, is the teaching of our Confessions. The Apology declares: “Faith, however, reconciles and justifies before God the moment we apprehend the promise by faith” (*Trigl.* 213, Art. III). “Thus, therefore, we are reconciled to the Father and receive remission of sins when we are comforted with confidence in the mercy promised for Christ’s sake.” (*Trigl.* 143, Art. IV [II], 81.) “Faith reconciles us to God ... because it receives the remission of sins” (*Trigl.* 155, *ibid.*, 114; 171, Art. III, 61). (Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 2, pp. 347-49. Emphases in original.)

If there is one doctrine on which the Lutheran Church may be said to be a unit and on which it presents a united front, it is the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone, a doctrine which was the material principle of the Reformation. And yet many writers ignore or overlook a feature which constitutes the foundation of this doctrine and which is necessary for its right understanding, viz., Objective Justification.

Objective Justification may be defined as God’s declaration of amnesty to the whole world of sinners on the basis of the vicarious obedience of Christ, by which He secured a perfect righteousness for all mankind, which God accepted as a reconciliation of the world to Himself, imputing to mankind the merit of the Redeemer.

While this form of Justification is not what is usually understood by the term, it has abundant testimony from Scripture, as the following quotations will show: “Therefore as by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men unto condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom. 5:18-19). “Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19). “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). “And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

Subjective, or Personal or Individual Justification, or the act of God by which, out of pure mercy and grace for Christ’s sake, He pronounces the believer free from guilt and punishment and actually clothed with the imputed righteousness of Christ while he is in a state of faith, is the actual acceptance by faith of the Objective Justification. In the Gospel God announces to all men His grace and mercy in Christ, offers to all who hear it the forgiveness of sins and the merit of Christ, and actually operates these affects wherever they are not rendered void by obstinate resistance. (Cf. 2 Thess. 2:10,13; Rom. 1:16; Matt. 23:37; Luke 19:41-42.)

If personal or subjective Justification is the acceptance by faith of objective Justification it is manifest that it does not take place “in view of faith.” Thus a synergistic view of Justification is avoided. This is the chief advantage in treating the subject under these two forms. (C. H. Little, *Disputed Doctrines* [Burlington, Iowa: Lutheran Literary Board, 1933], pp. 60-61)

When the Lord Jesus was “justified” (I Timothy 3:16) in His resurrection and exaltation, God acquitted Him not of sins of His own, but of all the sins of mankind, which as the Lamb of God He had been bearing (John 1:29), and by the imputation of which He had been “made...to be sin for us” (II Corinthians 5:21), indeed, “made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). In this sense, the justification of Jesus was the justification of those whose sins He bore. The treasure of justification or forgiveness gained by Christ for all mankind is truly offered, given, and distributed in and through the Gospel and sacraments of Christ. Faith alone can receive this treasure offered in the Gospel, and this faith itself is entirely a gracious gift and creation of God through the means of grace. Faith adds nothing to God’s forgiveness in Christ offered in the Gospel, but only receives it. Thus, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on Him” (John 3:30). (Walter A. Maier, statement made to the Board of Control of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, January 30, 1981; quoted in Robert D. Preus, “Objective Justification,” *Concordia Theological Seminary Newsletter* [Spring 1981])