



THE ASSOCIATION OF CONFESSIONAL LUTHERAN CHURCHES

Critique of the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America's Theses on Justification

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Abstract: The critique points out logical fallacies thesis by thesis. In general, the conclusions of the theses are built on three fallacies: Straw Man, Equivocation, and Exclusion. The critique is thorough, but not exhaustive due to the quantity of error and volume of material.

Preamble

The Association of Confessional Lutheran Churches, and the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America recognized fellowship with each other in 2010. At that time neither detected a substantive difference in teaching or practice that would have precluded such a recognition. In the beginning of 2013 the ACLC became aware that the ELDoNA was entertaining an application from Rev. Paul Rydecki for membership into their diocese. We also became aware that the ELDoNA was preparing a set of theses regarding the doctrine of Justification, specifically addressing its objective aspect. Rev. Rydecki had been very vocal about questioning the objective aspect of this chief article of the Christian faith, so we began to request open discussion of that doctrine with the ELDoNA. We were assured that the ELDoNA's process of colloquy and process for adoption of theses would result in adequate discussion of the matter between us.

The ELDoNA scheduled Rev. Rydecki as sole presenter on the topic of Justification at their 2013 Colloquium. Unfortunately, following his presentation of "The Forensic Appeal to the Throne of Grace" only about 15 minutes of the scheduled time remained for discussion. At the beginning of Rev. Rydecki's colloquy interview, the bishop of the ELDoNA, the Rt. Rev. James Heiser, stated that no questions on Objective Justification would be entertained. At the conclusion of the interview, Bishop Heiser informed Rev. Rydecki that the ELDoNA found no error in his theology at all, but nevertheless his application would be put on hold until the ELDoNA had adopted her theses on Justification. This, he said, was in order to be fair to Rev. Rydecki so that he would know for certain the ELDoNA's position on this doctrine before entering the diocese.

The theses were presented, adopted for review and comment, and both the ELDoNA the ACLC were granted 60 days to give input toward a final. The ACLC wrote and submitted a review of the theses by the deadline of July 2nd, and received no response from the ELDoNA. On August 29th 2013 the theses were adopted in their present form, and Rev. Rydecki was received into the diocese.

By receiving Rev. Rydecki, who has gone so far as to assert publicly that the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod condemns the Gospel^a, and by the publication of their "Theses on the Article of Justification," the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America has brought the discussion of the doctrine of Justification, especially with regard to its objective aspect, into the public sphere. Our September 27, 2013 response to the adoption of the ELDoNA's theses^b did not include a point-for-point analysis of their theses to the public. For this reason we now offer to the general public the following critique of their theses. Because the ELDoNA made their theses public, we understand this to be their best effort at this doctrine—thoroughly thought through and carefully formulated. We do not anticipate that the ACLC will make further formal comments should the theses be revised in response to the critique that follows.

By way of beginning, let it be clearly stated that the objective aspect^c of Justification is never to be taken in opposition to, or apart from, the subjective aspect of Justification. We also recognize that the teaching is stretched by some beyond what it encompasses. We urge all to be

^a On August 6, 2013 at 1030AM in a blog response on *Intrepid Lutherans* website he wrote (referring to the Wisconsin Synod): "The [Wisconsin] synod has officially and overwhelmingly condemned the Gospel, and not a single member of synod (i.e., pastors, male teachers and congregations) is even objecting to it."

^b See Appendix 1

^c By "objective aspect" we are referring to what is commonly called Objective Justification. We prefer to speak of the objective and subjective aspects of Justification, because it emphasizes that these two teachings are part of the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone and are never to be taken in opposition to, or apart from, each other.

very careful in the application of this teaching as with all doctrine. The doctrine of Justification is understood by us to be that an individual is subjectively (i.e. personally) declared righteous before God when he believes in the objective righteousness that is provided in Christ for the whole world. To be justified, simply put, is to be declared righteous in a judicial sense.^d We believe that this is the teaching of the orthodox Lutheran Fathers as that grouping of fathers is defined in the ELDoNA's theses. While this critique is not a definitive, all-encompassing statement of doctrine by the ACLC, it does express our teaching on this matter.

The Eldona's Theses are set off by arrows: ▼▼▼ and ▲▲▲. Their foot notes are within the set off sections, and are numbered. Our footnotes are noted with lowercase letters.



Preface

A pastor was recently removed from a church body's clergy roster, ostensibly for false doctrine concerning the Article of Justification. His statements concerning this article of doctrine were entirely compatible with the fathers of Lutheran orthodoxy,¹ but were considered "inadequate," because they did not fully express certain formulations demanded by said church body. The official position of the (defunct) Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America (and of the current bodies that were constituent of it) is clear from, e.g, the 1932 "Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod," to wit, the teaching of "Objective Justification." However, that teaching² has by no means been consistent throughout the publications or seminaries of said bodies since that time. The following theses examine both the terminology and the teaching of "Objective Justification" to see whether it was what was understood by the old Lutheran dogmaticians and exegetes, complementary to what they taught concerning the Article of Justification, or inimical to it.

1 By this phrase, we are restricting our present consideration to the period beginning with Martin Luther and ending with Johann Gerhard (c. AD 1515–1637).

2 Or even what is meant by that term.



ACLC Response Concerning the ELDoNA's Preface

The pastor in question is Rev. Paul Rydecki, who was removed from the clergy roster of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod for not teaching their official doctrine. Specifically, he refused to teach the objective aspect of the doctrine of Justification. Despite the claim that Rev. Rydecki's statements concerning the article of Justification "were entirely compatible with the fathers of Lutheran orthodoxy," they were not.

Furthermore, the preface is already the conclusion of the matter even before it has begun. It states that Rev. Rydecki's statements regarding the Article of Justification were entirely compatible with the fathers of Lutheran orthodoxy. Therefore the theses that follow are not in fact an examination to see if Objective Justification "was what was understood by the old

^d "Justification means the remission of sins, reconciliation, or the acceptance of a person unto eternal life. To the Hebrews 'to justify' is a forensic term, as if I were to say that the Roman people 'justified' Scipio when he was accused by the tribunes, that is, they absolved him or pronounced him to be a righteous man. Therefore Paul took the term 'justify' from the usage of the Hebrew word to indicate remission of sins, reconciliation, or acceptance. All educated people understand that this is the thrust of the Hebrew expression, and examples are encountered frequently." (Martin Chemnitz [Melancthon's text] *Loci Theologici* Vol. II [Concordia, St. Louis 1989], Pg. 461).

Lutheran dogmaticians and exegetes, complementary to what they taught concerning the Article of Justification, or inimical to it,” but an attempt to prove a foregone conclusion.

Regarding footnote 1: This is a very arbitrary narrowing of the so-called age of Lutheran Orthodoxy which is normally defined as ending with David Hollaz (d. 1713). We do not know if the ELDoNA narrows the field because she knows that following Gerhard the objective aspect of Justification is more pointedly emphasized, or if the amount of material one must deal with in order to make the claim that the Fathers of Lutheran orthodoxy did not teach Objective Justification is simply overwhelming, or if there is some other reason.



First, A Matter of Definition:

“Objective Justification” has been variously presented

- as merely a synonym for unlimited atonement,
- as properly referring to justification as the object of faith,
- and as the ‘proper’ understanding of the teaching.³

This last view states that it is a fact⁴ that Mankind has been not only atoned for by Christ, but actually declared free from sin by God prior to faith. In the resurrection, it is said, God actually absolved the world.⁵

Indeed, Pieper says⁶ that if this idea is not maintained Christianity is completely lost and the Gospel is necessarily turned into a set of rules by which to gain God’s favor. To be clear, then, in these theses, we will mean by the term “Objective Justification” precisely and solely what was taught by Pieper in his Dogmatics, which is what is the stated official position of the LCMS in its Brief Statement, to wit: “Objective Justification” is the dogmatic assertion that a forensic declaration was made by God in the resurrection (because of a change in His heart effected by the atoning death of the Christ) that Man is without sin. Such a teaching, it is stated, requires a ‘second part’ for justification to be enjoyed by any person: that he personally and individually receive what God has objectively declared of all together. While in practice we have often witnessed a minimizing of the Means of Grace in bodies that hold to this teaching, that is certainly not the intent of those who first promoted it, since such reception is done by means of faith that is created in the one receiving by the Holy Ghost’s use of the Gospel.⁷

3 I.e., as found in, e.g., Pieper’s Christian Dogmatics and the Missouri Synod’s Brief Statement.

4 Whether believed or not; thus, “objective.”

5 Note, that among LCMS theologians it is not generally stated as “all men,” but as “Mankind” or “the world,” so that the ‘class’ is absolved, but no persons in particular. Among the WELS theologians, this distinction doesn’t seem to be maintained. Cf. “This We Believe,” IV:1, <http://www.wels.net/what-we-believe/statements-beliefs/this-we-believe/justification>; Dr. Siegbert Becker’s 1982 essay, “Objective Justification,” p. 1,14, <http://www.wlssays.net/files/BeckerJustification.pdf>;

Forrest Bivens’s essay, “Getting The Right Message Out—And Getting It Out The Right Way,” in the section where he abuses Romans 3:23–24, <http://www.wlssays.net/files/BivensMessage.pdf>; John Schaller in his The Wauwatosa Theology, Volume 1, p. 459, 466–467; and David Kuske in his comments on 2 Corinthians 5:19 in “Making Use of Our Lutheran Heritage—‘Objective Justification’ in Our Mission Outreach Based on an Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:18–19,” p. 7,9,11, <http://www.wlssays.net/files/KuskeOutreach.pdf>.

6 Christian Dogmatics, II, 347–351.

7Thus, one sees C.F.W. Walther, for example, rightly promoting the use of the Gospel in all its forms (i.e., that which is read, preached upon, spoken directly in Holy Absolution, or tied to physical elements in Holy

Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the Means [or Channels] of Salvation, as they are properly called) to distribute and confer what God the Son has won by His passive and active obedience, for which purpose Christ instituted the Office of the Holy Ministry



ACLC Response Concerning First a Matter of Definition

We are grateful that the adopted theses clarify what is actually at issue. Previously we had difficulty determining what the issue was between the following four points.

1. This is a reaction to certain overstatements and abuses.
2. This is an argument over terms (logomachy).
3. This is an issue of properly distinguishing between Law and Gospel.
4. This is a rejection of the Objective aspect of Justification as being substantively incorrect.

The theses state clearly that this is not about the term (cf. thesis 26), nor merely about overstatements and abuses, but that it is in fact about a substantive difference in teaching. Yet the theses make much of the term. We do not hold the use or nonuse of particular terms to be divisive of fellowship, nor do we wish here to argue the wisdom of the particular choice of terms. We also do not address overstatements and abuses, since such do not determine the validity or invalidity of a doctrine. We do, however, maintain that a significant roadblock to unity in this doctrine is an inability on the part of the ELDoNA to properly distinguish between Law and Gospel, or at a minimum, a failure to recognize the proper distinction between Law and Gospel in various statements made by others including the Fathers of Lutheran Orthodoxy.

While this is not an issue over terms, terminology most certainly bears on the understanding of the doctrine of the Fathers of Lutheran orthodoxy. The *Loci Theologici* of the Rev. Dr. Martin Chemnitz equates remission of sins, reconciliation, Justification, acceptance, and other terms as synonyms.^e It is not possible to come to a meeting of minds in this matter unless one first understands that the fathers understood these terms to be interchangeable. This is foundational to all that follows here.

Finally, it is noted that the theses define Objective Justification not according to any church body's officially adopted statements, but "precisely and solely" according to what is written in Pieper's Dogmatics. We are unaware of anyone who has been held to Dr. Pieper's precise and sole formulation as a requisite for ordination or continued listing on a clergy roster. In this way we are asked at the outset to accept a questionable premise. Please see Appendix 2 for the wording of the *Brief Statement* on this teaching.

In regard to the diction of this particular thesis, the first definition offered for Objective Justification is incorrect. Justification includes acceptance of the payment or sacrifice. It is more than the atonement. Since no examples of such a use are offered, we offer no further comment. We have no particular issue with the remaining two definitions except to note that they are not really definitions, and are largely one and the same. The second definition, as the proper object of faith, was understood by Martin Chemnitz: "When 'faith' is concerned with external objects, it obviously signifies 'desire,' 'trust,' 'expectation,' and 'petition' for a mitigation or for aid or deliverance. The same will be the nature and meaning of 'faith' when it has to do with justification as its object."^f

^e For example in Volume II on page p.445 (Concordia, St. Louis 1989).

^f *Loci Theologici* Vol. II (Concordia, St. Louis 1989), p. 495.

The use of the term “absolve” in reference to the whole world is found for example in Johann Gerhard:

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.^g

The qualification in this quotation, namely, that the justification of Christ in 1 Timothy 3:16 includes an absolution of the sins of the whole world is a teaching that some bring in, is not evidence that Gerhard denied that this teaching is included in the proper interpretation of this verse. There is no unwillingness on Gerhard’s part to say that this is what the verse really means (or at least that it is included in what the verse really means). First of all, Gerhard calls the justification of Christ as the absolution of the sins of the whole world the “apostolic teaching.” Second, Gerhard is simply recognizing that the “apostolic teaching” contained in that verse is treated at different places in a theological system by different people. In effect, he is saying that some people introduce this apostolic teaching here, while other people introduce it elsewhere in a system of theology. It is true that Gerhard’s commentary on this verse in his *Annotations on St. Paul’s First Epistle to Timothy* makes no mention of this teaching. Regardless of what Gerhard may say there or elsewhere, however, in the quotation above he does not question the validity and nature of the apostolic teaching of Christ’s justification as an actual absolution of all for whom He died and for whom He was raised from the dead, as taught in 1 Timothy 3:16.

Certainly, 1 Timothy 3:16 was not seen by all the major theologians of the earlier Lutheran Church to be teaching a “justification” of Jesus in the sense that Gerhard explains it in the quotation above. Even Dr. Luther did not see it that way. This presents no problem, though, if we understand that, while all articles of faith are based on Scripture, there are exegetical differences among orthodox theologians as to exactly what passages teach certain articles of faith. On the topic of objective justification, or the forgiveness of the entire world in and through Christ and because of Christ, Dr. Luther saw this teaching in passages like John 1:29, Romans 4:25 and Galatians 3:13, etc., but not necessarily in some of the passages where later theologians also saw it taught. Where Dr. Luther saw this teaching, though, he clearly saw it! Please see Appendix 3 for a number of quotations where Luther expressed his understanding of the objective aspect of Justification.

While Rev. Rydecki and the ELDoNA’s theses try to argue it away, nothing can change what Gerhard clearly stated here. When he applies the teaching to individuals only through faith, it does not take away what he stated: “(Christ) was absolved of the sins of the whole world.” At

^g *Disputationes Theologicae* [Jena, 1656], p. 1450 [translated by Kurt E. Marquart] This quotation is from page 10 of the document with the following url: <http://www.angelfire.com/ny4/djw/OJQuotations.pdf>

this point it is already seen that the teaching of Objective Justification was the teaching of the Lutheran Fathers of the Age of Orthodoxy as defined in the ELDoNA's theses, and the matter is in fact, resolved. Moreover, in each generation the objective/subjective distinction was affirmed by the orthodox teachers. For example, Abraham Calov (d. 1686):

Christ's resurrection took place as an actual absolution from sin (*respect 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.^h



Thus, we are brought to assert the following:

Thesis 1

It is our unanimous understanding that the Christ paid for and made full satisfaction for every sin of every person ever to enter this world. The teaching of any sort of "limited atonement" is, therefore, condemned, as is any notion that would make Christ's atonement less than sufficient, such as an idea that an individual's salvation is in any way dependent upon himself (whether with regard to character, works, disposition, or any other thing that might be attributed to Man). In spite of the rhetoric of some, we contend that both those who hold to and those who reject a Synodical Conference understanding of "Objective Justification" are in agreement on this Thesis.



ACLC Response Concerning Thesis 1

When we first critiqued the rough draft of the "Thesis on Justification" in June, 2013, we thought we agreed with the content of the first two theses, and thus also with the concluding sentence of each thesis. In the meantime, however, further statements have caused us to read the theses more carefully and question this very first thesis. For example, in a blog response on Intrepid Lutherans, October 5, 2013 at 6:34 PM, Rev. Rydecki posted:

To follow Luther's analogyⁱ, no human being has a penny with which to satisfy his debt to God's Law. But Christ has provided a treasure of righteousness in His holy, precious blood, which is sufficient for the whole world to hold up to God's Law as the payment of its debt. "Faith" can be described as using Christ's righteousness alone to "pay" one's debt to God, the divine Creditor. Those who use Christ's righteousness to pay their debt to God's Law will never be put to shame. Those who fail to use Christ's righteousness to pay their debt have nothing of value to offer and will spend eternity in debtor's prison.

^h Abraham Calov, *Bibl. Illust.*, ad Rom. 4:25; quoted in Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951) p. 321

ⁱ These are Luther's actual words: "For example, a person who owes a debt and is unable to pay it, can be made free of his creditor in two ways: either the creditor himself can tear up the bill and demand no payment, or if a good man pays it for you and gives it to you or advances you the money by which you can satisfy the bill of the creditor. This second method Christ Himself used in freeing us from the Law" It is expected that Rev. Rydecki would grasp at the last part of the quote, "By which you can satisfy the bill," but that would neither correctly portray Luther's teaching, nor the truth of the Scriptures, both of which indicate that the payment to the father has been made by Christ on our behalf prior to our coming to faith, e.g. "When we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10), and, "When He had by Himself purged our sins" (Hebrews 1:3).

ACLCL Response Concerning Thesis 4

Again, the ELDoNA’s use of the theses against Huber is puzzling, because the ELDoNA’s theses portray the objective aspect of Justification as a manifestation of Huber’s teaching, which was rejected by the “Wittenberg Theologians.” The theses against Huber are called upon, albeit out of context, to show a rejection of the objective aspect of Justification. Because Huber’s definition of Objective Justification differs substantively from the definition being addressed in the ELDoNA’s “Theses on Justification,” every use of the theses against Huber in these theses is a fallacy of *equivocation*.

Furthermore, the ELDoNA seems to think that the objective/subjective justification terminology was developed by the Syndical Conference as a corollary to the election controversy. It was not. It was developed as a corollary to the earlier absolution controversy between the Norwegian Synod and the Augustana Synod, precisely as way to emphasize the efficacy and objective truthfulness of absolution. In other words, absolution is to be pronounced to the penitent sinner unconditionally, as an accomplished fact. Absolution is to be seen as a divine conferral of an already-completed forgiveness, conditioned on the death and resurrection of Christ, and not merely as an expression of a divine wish for a forgiveness that is conditioned on faith. It is difficult for us to see how, if ELDoNA does not understand the historical context of the Synodical Conference teaching, they can really grasp the Synodical Conference teaching.



Thesis 5

At the same time, our avoidance of such anachronism must not render what has been said in previous controversies inapplicable: that which has been resoundingly condemned or refuted in one controversy is no less condemned and refuted when a new controversy comes upon us. While new controversies continue to arise (i.e., Satan continues to refine his troubling of the Church), we must refine and extend what has been confirmed in the past, not contradict and destroy it.

As we read in the first Article of the Formula of Concord, “As regards terms and expressions, it is best and safest to use and retain the form of sound words employed concerning this [or any] article in the Holy Scriptures and the above-mentioned books,” (i.e., the other accepted confessional documents; Thorough Declaration I:50) we must not ‘refine’ any article of doctrine in any way that contradicts that “form of sound words.” One cannot correct a supposed insufficiency by contradiction; to do so, it must be admitted, is to set aside and reject the previous teaching.



ACLCL Response Concerning Thesis 5

We agree noting, however, the word “contradict.” To reject what subsequent generations have stated must be done so only upon demonstrating that their statements actually contradict previous statements. Does it contradict the form of sound words? Is it refining and extending, or contradicting? Consider also the false teachings that have arisen since the Formula of Concord was written, among which are: Pietism, Rationalism, the Election and Absolution Controversies, and the First and Second Awakenings. Rev. Martin Diers has set forth some of the background of

as they were called.^m Second, acceptance of the ELDoNA's assertion is tantamount to accepting the idea that the Lutheran Confessions are obscure writings that are difficult to understand. Third, the *Formula of Concord* was necessitated by a failure of the theologians of the day, and immediately following, to understand the doctrine of the *Augsburg Confession*.

The ELDoNA appears to have a blindly uncritical attitude toward the form of teaching of those they identify as the fathers of Lutheran orthodoxy, especially those of the Wittenberg faculty in the generation following the Formula of Concord. With all due respect toward the theology of the "Wittenberg Theologians," their theology is not problem-free. For instance, they returned to a much more rigid Aristotelian method. Whereas the Rev. Dr. Luther, of blessed memory, did not feel constrained to harmonize all the statements of Holy Scripture according to Aristotelian logic (even scoffing at such an idea), the Wittenberg theologians made great effort to follow Aristotelian methodology.

The defensive move in the second paragraph again obscures the matter. These theses do not treat Objective Justification as a clarification, or a better way to say something, but as error to be rejected. It carries the implication that those who teach the objective aspect of Justification set aside what the orthodox fathers taught, an implication not demonstrated by the theses.

The last paragraph of thesis 6 is the heart of this whole matter, making an assertion that the theses fail to substantiate. We of the *Association of Confessional Lutheran Churches* see clearly that the Lutheran Fathers of the Age of Orthodoxy most certainly and repeatedly taught the doctrine of Justification in both its objective and subjective aspects. Despite the ELDoNA's attempts to explain this away, we remain unanimously and unequivocally convinced that the distinction between objective and subjective within the doctrine of Justification is the teaching of the Lutheran Fathers of the Age of Orthodoxy. Moreover, the opening sentence of this thesis, as well as thesis 9 in general, appears to be a capitulation that the Fathers of Lutheran Orthodoxy did in fact know and observe the distinction between the objective and subjective aspects of Justification, even if only in their "private writings." Reading the fathers with careful attention to context, we find that they, in fact, never speak against the distinction, but rather always embrace it.



Thesis 7

While we may have had a 'received body of doctrine' beyond Scripture and the Confessions in a previous body of affiliation, the lack of ownership of the documents setting forth the same – and thus, our inability to modify such non-binding documents where they have misspoken – prevents us from adopting the same as our own in such a way as to make them settlers of disputes. That is, the only way to adopt a non-binding document over which we do not have ownership (and thus, cannot alter) is to adopt it as unalterable and binding; any other adoption is simultaneously both a burden and a waxen nose. Indeed, the Confessions are subscribed *in toto* and as is (that is, therefore, *quia*), since there is no other way truly to subscribe them.



^m For example in the Apology XII, 3 and 4

ACLC Response Concerning Thesis 7

What is the point of this thesis? Of course a church body may not adopt an official doctrinal statement “owned” by another church body and then subsequently change the parts it disagrees with, while still claiming it is subscribing the statement of the original “owner.”

As we moved toward recognition of fellowship with the ELDoNA, we did not realize that she was not grounded in what we all had been taught. We naively believed that Objective Justification, as taught in the synods of the old Synodical Conference (LCMS, WELS, and ELS), and confessed in documents such as the “*Brief Statement*,” is so fundamental, so pervasively taught, so clear, that it could not possibly be an issue with anyone coming out of any of those Lutheran bodies. We have known rejection of Objective Justification only among a very vocal fringe element of individuals that were numbered on one hand. Nor did we detect any issue in this matter at all in our dealings with the ELDoNA.

Thesis 8

It is helpful to understand how a new (or refined) formulation of an article came to be – or, absent that insight, to see how one might have seen justification for the new terminology in that which already existed. “Objective Justification” may charitably be seen as a development from what Lutheran orthodoxy confessed concerning the Throne of Grace (Gnadenthron; i.e., the Mercy Seat, i.e., Christ), the ‘new location’ at which the sinner may be judged due to Christ’s bearing of all sin, rather than being judged at the seat of justice by the Law.¹²

Yet, “Objective Justification” is a gross overstatement of this concept. The creation of such an alternate place of judgment in Christ has the same effect for the sinner (in terms of providing an already-established reality to which one can look and which can be given through the Means of Grace) as would the postulating of a forensic declaration of mankind’s righteousness, but without the unfortunate baggage¹³ of the latter and in accord with the clear ‘mercy seat’ language of both Testaments (Cf. Exodus 25:22; Hebrews 9:5 and Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2, etc.).¹⁴

12 Cf., e.g., Aegidius Hunnius: “Justification is the act of God by which He deigns to consider the man who is frightened by the awareness of sins and who flees to the Throne of Grace with pure mercy, through and for the sake of the merit of Christ, apprehended by faith; and, having forgiven him his sins, He reckons him as righteous, free from damnation, and also an heir of eternal life, without any human merit and without any view of God toward the virtues or the works of man” (as quoted in Rydecki, “The Forensic Appeal to the Throne of Grace,” p. 20). So, Chemnitz: “The meaning of the word ‘justify’ in this article is judicial, namely, that the sinner, accused by the Law of God, convicted, and subjected to the sentence of eternal damnation, fleeing in faith the throne of grace, is absolved for Christ’s sake, reckoned and declared righteous, received into grace, and accepted to eternal life. And although John does not employ the word ‘justify,’ yet he describes the doctrine in judicial terms: ‘He that believes is not judged; he does not come into judgment.’ ‘He sent His Son into the world, not that He should judge the world.’ And 1 John 3: ‘We have passed from death to life.’ In Acts 3 Peter says that ‘sins are blotted out.’ Paul explains this when he says, Col. 2, that the hand writing which was against us has been blotted out.” (Examination, Vol. I, 474).

13 “Baggage”; that is, the baggage of asserting a justification apart from faith, which the fathers expressly rejected:

Hence Paul, when he expressly discusses justification in Romans 3 and 4, does not know of a justification apart from faith, and especially as Galatians 2 plainly says, “Man is not justified except by faith in Jesus Christ.” (Hunnius, *Theses Opposed to Huberianism, Concerning Justification*, Thesis 6)

“But how did the righteousness of Christ overflow to all men for justification, since not all men are justified? We reply: The Apostle is not talking about the application of the benefit, but about the acquisition of the benefit. If we want to descend to the application, that universality must be restricted to those who are grafted in Christ by faith. For as the unrighteousness of Adam is communicated to all those who are descended from him by carnal generation, so the righteousness of Christ is communicated to all those who are grafted into Him through faith and spiritual regeneration.” (Gerhard, Adnotationes, on Rom. 5:18)

“3) If we wanted to go beyond the limits of the Apostolic comparison, someone could infer from the same that the righteousness of Christ is propagated to us through carnal generation, since the unrighteousness of Adam is communicated to us in that manner. Likewise, one could infer that the righteousness of Christ is propagated to all men together, without any regard for faith or unbelief, since the sin of Adam is propagated to all through carnal generation.

“4) But since that is absurd, a distinction must fully be made between the acquisition and the application of the merit of Christ; or between the benefit itself and participation in the benefit. The acquisition of the merit, or the benefit itself obtained by the death of Christ is general. For as Adam, by his disobedience, enveloped all of his posterity in the guilt of sin, so Christ, who suffered and died for the sins of all, also merited and acquired righteousness for all. But this benefit is only applied to those who are grafted into Christ by faith, and only they become participants in this benefit.” (Adnotationes, Rom. 5:19)

Note, then: when Hunnius and Gerhard say that St. Paul knew of no justification apart from faith and that the righteousness of Christ being propagated to all men (i.e., a general, universal, or objective justification) is “absurd,” this is no mere treatment of verses under consideration in a narrow use that allows for a broader use, but a declaration that a ‘broader use’ is not tenable.

14 We note that the Rev. Dr. Robert Preus also came to this conclusion late in his life, writing in his posthumously-published *Justification and Rome* (St. Louis, Concordia Academic Press, 1997):

Although Christ has acquired for us the remission of sins, justification, and sonship, God just the same does not justify us prior to our faith. Nor do we become God's children in Christ in such a way that justification in the mind of God takes place before we believe.” (*Justification and Rome*, p. 132, quoted approvingly from Calov, *Apodixis Articulorum Fidei*, Lueneburg, 1684)

Quenstedt says, It is not the same thing to say, “Christ's righteousness is imputed to us” and to say “Christ is our righteousness.” For the imputation did not take place when Christ became our righteousness. The righteousness of Christ is the effect of His office. The imputation is the application of the effect of His office. The one, however, does not do away with the other. Christ is our righteousness effectively when He justifies us. His righteousness is ours objectively because our faith rests in Him. His righteousness is ours formally in that His righteousness is imputed to us. (*Justification and Rome*, p. 132, where fn. 76 gives the source as *Systema*, Par. III, Cap. 8, S. 2, q. 5, *Observatio* 19 (II, 787))

When does the imputation of Christ's righteousness take place? It did not take place when Christ, by doing and suffering, finished the work of atonement and reconciled the world to God. Then and there, when the sins of the world were imputed to Him and He took them, Christ became our righteousness and procured for us remission of sin, justification, and eternal life. “By thus making satisfaction He procured and merited (*acquisivit et promeruit*) for each and every man remission of all sins, exemption from all punishments of sin, grace and peace with God, eternal righteousness and salvation.” (*Justification and Rome*, p. 131, where in fn. 74 Preus gives the source of the quote and this note: “*Systema*, Par. II, Cap.3, Memb. 2 S. 1, Th. 44 (II, 363). Cf. Abraham Calov, *Apodixis Articulorum Fidei* (Lueneburg, 1684), 249: ‘Although Christ has acquired for us the remission of sins, justification, and sonship, God just the same does not justify us prior to our faith. Nor do we become God's children in Christ in such a way that justification in the mind of God takes place before we believe.’”)

But the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the sinner takes place when the Holy Spirit brings him to faith through Baptism and the Word of the Gospel. Our sins were imputed to Christ at His suffering and death, imputed objectively after He, by His active and passive obedience, fulfilled and procured all righteousness for us. But the imputation of His righteousness to us takes place when we are brought to faith. (*Justification and Rome*, p. 72)



ACLCLC Response Concerning Thesis 8

This particular thesis again fails to identify a difference in teaching. In fact, it appears to assert that there is no substantive difference: “has the same effect...” Thesis 8 states, “‘Objective Justification’ may charitably be seen as a development from what Lutheran orthodoxy confessed concerning the Throne of Grace.” If the ELDoNA holds that it may from their point of view charitably be seen as a development, etc., we fail to see why they so unequivocally reject the teaching and term.

We disagree that it is a “gross overstatement of this concept.” Rather, the “Throne of Grace” model rests upon the Objective/Subjective distinction, whatever one chooses to call the distinction. Christ made payment to the Father for our sins, He has ransomed us, opened the prison, conquered death. All these images speak to what Christ has done so that we may be judged at the throne of mercy, rather than the throne of the Law. The Scriptures speak of all judgment being given to Christ, so the image of fleeing to Christ as the new place of judgment (He being the Throne of Grace) is easily pushed beyond what it can bear. While we recognize that the illustration of the “Throne of Grace,” or “Mercy Seat,” is the most prominent image used in the Lutheran confessions, it is not the only one used there or in the Scriptures (raised to new life, redeemed, adopted, recreated, washed, forgiven of debt, Passover, Scapegoat, etc.). The core understanding of any illustration of salvation is that it is God who works out our salvation from beginning to end, and that Christ made a sacrifice for us that has been accepted by the Father for the sins of all, including those who do not believe.

With regard to “unfortunate baggage,” all terms are subject to misuse, misunderstanding, and “baggage.” Regarding footnote 13, these quotes actually support the objective/subjective distinction within Justification by faith. The comment regarding justification apart from faith is a *straw man* argument. No sinner is justified apart from faith. That is made clear in the specific formulation of the Objective/Subjective distinction addressed in these theses (that of Pieper’s Dogmatics). The Hunnius quote from Thesis 6 is immediately preceded by his thesis 5 in which Hunnius states: “We most willingly grant that there is a righteousness that avails before God for the entire human race, a righteousness that has been gained and acquired through Christ, so that if the whole world were to believe in Christ, then the whole world would be justified...Nevertheless, no one is justified nor does anyone obtain remission of sins from this acquired universal righteousness without the imputation of this acquired righteousness of Christ.” Quoting from theses 6 rather than thesis 5 gives a false impression of the argument being made by Hunnius. Hunnius states both aspects of justification in his thesis 5. Universal righteousness has been gained and acquired through Christ. No individual benefits from it apart from faith. More importantly, the Huberian controversy doesn’t apply, since Pieper’s Dogmatics does not teach what Huber taught. This thesis again presents a fallacy of *equivocation*.

The excerpt of Gerhard in the footnote turns on the word, “propagated.” The first and last paragraphs cited from Gerhard make that even clearer: “The Apostle is not talking about the application of the benefit, but about the acquisition of the benefit,” and, “A distinction must fully be made between the acquisition and the application of the merit of Christ; or between the benefit itself and participation in the benefit.” Of course it is absurd to say that Justification is propagated to all men together without regard to faith or unbelief. The use of this passage sets up the false idea that the Objective/Subjective distinction teaches that Justification is propagated, applied, or imparted to all men without regard to faith or unbelief. That is clearly false, and to argue against it is a fallacy.

His proper condemnation for so doing (“I am against the prophets, says the Lord, “who use their own tongues but say, ‘He says,’” Jeremiah 23:31).¹⁵

15. “Scripture teaches” has a different impact, breeds a different expectation, and requires a different method of establishment from “God says.” Scripture *teaches* that God is Triune, but never says that He is.



ACLCL Response Concerning Thesis 10

This thesis seems altogether superfluous—a false dichotomy. Every doctrine finally comes down to: “Thus says the Lord.” If it is to be believed, it must be so, even if it is a compilation of statements such as the doctrine of the Trinity. We do not hold anyone to the term, but to the doctrine. The Jeremiah reference is an incorrect application here.



Thesis 11

For example, to say,¹⁶ “Christ was absolved in the resurrection,”¹⁷ is to employ an illustration that is not truly apt, as an ‘absolution’ declares one innocent in spite of one’s guilt and inability to pay for his transgressions, but the Christ’s ‘justification’ is, rather, the vindication of One who both is innocent by nature and by conduct and who has paid for the sins of all others. The fact that Christ was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21) does not require Him to be absolved, since, again, He was not forgiven for our sins (forgiveness requiring someone else to pay the debt).

16. As those who might be cited by both parties have done, e.g., both Gerhard and Walther, even though Gerhard (cf. the second footnote to Thesis 8, above) calls what has come to be known as “Objective Justification” an “absurd” idea.

17. And in Him so were, one party says, “all who trust in Him” and the other “all mankind.”



ACLCL Response Concerning Thesis 11

The intent of these theses is to affirm the teaching of the Fathers of Lutheran orthodoxy over against the teaching of some later theologians of the *Synodical Conference*. Therefore we understand this thesis to claim that the orthodox fathers did not speak of Christ being absolved in the resurrection, rather than understand it as a condemnation of anything they expressed. We therefore refer the reader back to Johann Gerhard who explicitly stated: “He (Christ) 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.”ⁿ

Moreover, we are asked to accept a specific definition of “absolve.” We are thereby presented with a false premise, from which a proper conclusion of this thesis does not follow. The definition of “absolve” encompasses the meaning: “To set free from guilt or obligation.” The fact that “God made Him to be sin for us,” did in fact require that He be forgiven of our sins. Christ took our sins upon Himself; He took responsibility for them, and was then absolved of them. Christ took our sins upon Himself so fully, that He says in Psalm 69, “My sins are not hidden from You.” In this thesis we are further presented with a *false dichotomy*: either Christ was forgiven, or He was vindicated. That is a false choice, because both are true.

ⁿ See our comments above under “First, Concerning a Matter of Definition.”

amassing of passages that ‘could possibly fit’ under either understanding being used as if they proved one’s point and, worse, using those that definitely do not fit as if they were intending to say something that they do not. Such is the case with, e.g., the ELS’s explanation of the Small Catechism, where Question 210 asks, “Why do we say, ‘I believe in the forgiveness of sins?’” and answers, “...because the Bible assures us that God the Father has by grace forgiven all sinners and declared them righteous in Christ,” and attempts to use Romans 3:24 (as presented, “[All] are justified freely by His grace...”) in a way that completely divorces it from its context.²¹

21. *Catechism & Explanation: An Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther’s Small Catechisms*, 2001, Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Mankato, MN. Question #210 is found on p. 143.



ACLC Response Concerning Thesis 15

We reject this thesis because it presents a false hermeneutical principle. With regard to dogma, there is nothing that a passage can conceivably mean, nor what it most probably means, but only what it must mean. Proper exegesis requires an exposition of what a passage must mean, even if that meaning is a double *entendre* or other linguistic device. This thesis reveals the heart of why the ELDoNA is unable to distinguish the legitimate difference between how passages may be applied, and how they must be applied. For example, when John said, “Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world,” the passage must mean that Christ takes away the sin of every individual collectively. It can thus be applied generally that Jesus is the Savior of all men, or narrowly that He is the Savior of those who believe, and especially that He is “my” Savior.

Quoting from the commentary of various fathers on sundry passages is not the same as determining what a passage must mean. It is quite possible to use a passage appropriately and faithfully in a narrower sense than the passage comprehends. For example, to say that 1 Timothy 4:10 teaches that Christ is the Savior of those who have faith does not preclude it from teaching that He is in a certain sense the Savior of every man. The broader sense is what the passage must mean, unless it can clearly be demonstrated that it cannot mean the broader sense. Another example is how Dr. Luther applies to believers the fact that Christ has taken away the sins of the world (quoted above). This is a debilitating hermeneutical weakness in these theses as well as in Rev. Rydecki’s paper and appendices.

The example given from the explanation of the ELS catechism only demonstrates that in that particular case a passage may have been inappropriately used, and that the catechism explanation fails to solidly demonstrate the teaching. It does nothing to establish truth or error in regard to the teaching of the objective aspect of Justification. It is a *red herring* fallacy.



Thesis 16

Again, the language of “Objective Justification” – not just the term itself, now, but the statement of the formula in its various aspects, is troubling in several ways, as shall be discussed in the next several theses, along with the terminology. The language with which we present an article of doctrine must accurately and carefully exhibit what is in God’s Word; the language must not (inasmuch as it lies within us in our speaking) mislead the hearer into thinking that he will find a direct statement in Scripture when one does not exist or that he will find an expression there that it does not, in fact, contain.



ACLC Response Concerning Thesis 16

This is an almost meaningless thesis. There are terms, most notably, “Trinity,” that various sects complain are not in Scripture. Whether one is “misled” into thinking that he will find a direct statement in Scripture when one does not exist, etc. is meaningless and irrelevant to the discussion at hand. The worst that can happen after being “misled” in this way, is that one discovers a term or expression is not found verbatim in Scripture and may thus come to doubt its veracity. That is rather unlikely with the term “Trinity,” and even more unlikely with regard to the objective aspect of Justification. Other such terms include, “real presence,” and, “in, with, and under.” Even though there is no specific passage of Scripture where these terms can be found, that does not invalidate them. There is also no statement in the Scriptures that says infants should be baptized, or one that specifically condemns killing the unborn. Are we now to find these things “troubling in several ways?”



Thesis 17

As much as possible, Biblical terms should be used only to express what they mean in the Bible (cf. the term ‘elder’). Further, we should use Biblical terms and illustrations to express and proclaim scriptural truth. (While “of one substance with the Father” was, finally, necessary and has been our common terminology for over 1,500 years, the reticence initially to use a non-biblical term was good and right. God gave His Word to tell us about Himself; as much as possible, we should use what He has given us there.) Even if a Biblical term has a long history of being misused (e.g., ‘deacon’), that misuse must not be allowed to continue in our own teaching, as so doing perpetuates the associated errors.



ACLC Response Concerning Thesis 17

In the context of these theses, this thesis suggests that the teaching of the objective aspect of Justification misuses a biblical term. That has not been demonstrated.



Thesis 18

Thus, asserting the existence of a forensic declaration by God that is not stated in Scripture is to say what God does not say and attribute it to Him; if there is no direct statement,²² it is an attempt to delve into God’s secret counsel (*Deus absconditus*). To proclaim an action as a forensic declaration, there must be actual evidence of such a declaration – preferably a direct quote – and not simply a matter of conjecture, no matter how well-founded we believe that conjecture to be. Especially is this so when such a concept is first put forth by those who live nearly two millennia after the event and when those who are ostensibly their fathers in the faith have never made such a declaration concerning the whole world of sinners. (Cf. the second footnote to Thesis 21.)

22. The fathers we have cited and will cite were wise enough to seek this and to pull back from overreaching, as we see with Luther’s correction on p. 286 of his 1535 Galatians (*AE*, vol. 26) to what he said on p. 280 that is wrongly used by some to accuse him of teaching what he did not teach regarding Justification. As St. Paul warns, “learn in us not to think beyond what is written.” (1 Corinthians 4:6, NKJV)



ACLC Response Concerning Thesis 18

This thesis begs the question. That is, it claims that those who hold to Objective Justification teach a doctrine not stated in Scripture, because the theses assert that there is no statement of it in Scripture. What these theses claim about our fathers not teaching this distinction is also clearly false. In fact, as we have shown, objective/subjective justification is not a distinction that first began to be used “nearly two millennia after the event.”^q Rejection of a doctrine that is in Scripture is as sinful as to assert what is not there.

Concerning footnote 22, we wish that the ELDoNA quoted the words in which Dr. Luther supposedly corrects himself.^r Such a bold statement warrants words to the effect, “I was wrong,” or, “To correct what I wrote.” No such words appear on the cited page. However, on page 285 we read these words: “Therefore where sins are noticed and felt, there they really are not present. For, according to the theology of Paul, there is no more sin, no more death, and no more curse in the world, but only in Christ, who is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, and who became a curse in order to set us free from the curse.” Does Dr. Luther continue on to talk about how those who do not have faith are still under a curse? Of course, since they are not in Christ. It must be so, as the Apostle says (John 3:18): “He who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” At that point Dr. Luther switches from the objective to the subjective aspect of Justification. But none of this denies what he states earlier:

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.

And:

Therefore the argument that Paul presents here is the most powerful and the highest of all against all the righteousness of the flesh; for it contains this invincible and irrefutable antithesis: 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.

Because the ELDoNA rejects the objective aspect of Justification, she must explain away Luther’s clear words in one way or another. But when one understands that Justification has two aspects that are complimentary and not contradictory to one another, then Luther’s words track without a hitch, and none of them need to be explained away.

^q In *Justification: Subjective and Objective* Dr. Walther himself wrote about the understanding of the teaching in the reformation era and use/nonuse of the term early on.

^r This is Dr. Luther’s second commentary on Galatians. To suggest that he found it necessary to correct himself in such an important published work that was carefully revised and edited prior to publication is simply beyond credible. Please see Appendix 3 for additional clear, irrefutable statements of Luther on the objective aspect of Justification.

demonstrates that those who would thus push the fathers into their service do so unfairly. The paper is available at <http://tinyurl.com/n28ndt6>



ACL C Response Concerning Thesis 20

What is stated here suggests that despite the clear statement of thesis 26, this is in fact nothing more than logomachy (argument over words), in which case there is no controversy, and these theses should be withdrawn. This thesis suggests that the ELDoNA is sectarian, and parochial. As stated under thesis 19, the supposed “change in God” is not part and parcel with the objective aspect of Justification. Nor does the objective aspect of Justification put words in God’s mouth, since Christ “was raised on account of our justification,” is in fact a declaration by God—the lack of verbiage to the ELDoNA’s satisfaction notwithstanding. Romans 1:4^u clearly indicates what the Scriptures understand to be a declaration: “Declared (ὁρίζω) to be the Son of God...by the resurrection from the dead.” Here the resurrection is specifically said to declare or indicate something—the resurrection is the very thing that the ELDoNA denies is a declaration when it comes to Justification. Also 1 Corinthians 3:13, “For the Day will declare (δηλώω) it,” and, “The heavens declare His righteousness,” etc. 1 Peter 3:21 states that Baptism is the pledge of a good conscience before God by the resurrection of Christ. Therefore, to say that the resurrection of Christ is a declaration of mankind’s justification when the Scriptures state that Christ was raised on account of our justification is not a stretch, but fully in keeping with the language and teaching of the Holy Scriptures. A preexisting forensic declaration is recorded in Scripture, and is the proper object of faith, along with all that Christ is and all the promises that are given in connection with Him.

Regarding footnote 26, Rev. Rydecki, in his paper, is as unable to recognize the presence of the words, “imputed,” and “propagated,” etc. as the rest of the pastors of the ELDoNA. Simply paying attention to those words reveals his mishandling of the writings of our fathers. When the obvious is pointed out, various fallacies are used to claim that the fathers did not mean what they wrote. A most egregious example of this is his handling of St. Ambrose’s statement in Apology IV:

Here and there among the Fathers similar testimonies are extant. For Ambrose says in his letter to a certain Irenaeus: “Moreover, the world was subject to Him by the Law for the reason that, according to the command of the Law, all are indicted, and yet, by the works of the Law, no one is justified, i.e., because, by the Law, sin is perceived, but guilt is not discharged. The Law, which made all sinners, seemed to have done injury, but when the Lord Jesus Christ came, He forgave to all sin which no one could avoid, and, by the shedding of His own blood, blotted out the handwriting which was against us. This is what he says in Rom. 5, 20: “The Law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Because after the whole world became subject, He took away the sin of the whole world, as he [John] testified, saying John 1, 29: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” And on this account let no one boast of works, because no one is justified by his deeds. But he who is righteous has it given him because he was justified after the laver [of Baptism]. Faith, therefore, is that which frees through the blood of Christ, because he is blessed “whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered,” Ps. 32, 1. These are the words of

^u Thesis 29 actually makes reference to this, but the ELDoNA can only understand that in the sense that Christ was vindicated.

28. See the second footnote to Thesis 24

29. If an appeal were made to Luther's comments in his lectures on Galatians (AE, Vol. 26, p. 280), that in Christ's death the world was set free from sin without reference to faith, one must also concede that there is no longer any death, as "death is conquered and abolished in the whole world so that now it is nothing but a picture of death," except that Luther makes his intent clear when he says (p. 285), "I believe in the holy church." This is plainly nothing else than if we were to say, 'I believe that there is no sin and no death in the church.'" So also, (p. 286) "Therefore, wherever there is faith in Christ, there sin has in face been abolished, put to death, and buried. But where there is no faith in Christ, there sin remains."



ALC Response Concerning Thesis 21

In this thesis we sense a subtle difference in definition, revealed by the false distinction between the acquisition of a declaration, and the declaration itself. These theses make use of neology.^v The ELDoNA speaks of the acquisition of an unmade pronouncement, but denies that they speak of a potential pronouncement;^w this is nothing but sophistry. The acquisition of an unmade pronouncement is, by its very nature, an *unding*.^x

It is not true that the objective aspect of Justification was unknown or untaught before 1850, as demonstrated by the quotations given above.^y To say that this was unknown is to set before oneself the responsibility of carefully searching all of the writings of the fathers in order to prove that they never made reference to such a teaching. On the contrary, it is necessary to cite only one example to disprove such an assertion. We believe that we have more than adequately shown the ELDoNA's assertion here to be false, and by fallacy of *exclusion* (statements excluding personal writings and the idea that Luther corrected himself) the ELDoNA affirms that the objective aspect of Justification was, in fact, known to the orthodox fathers.

It is also an overstatement to say that Rev. Dr. Pieper's statement regarding Objective Justification leads to devaluing the older writings, or even that the older writings are disparaged. The ELDoNA has failed to demonstrate an actual contradiction between the recent and older fathers. In fact, in large part, we have learned to value the old fathers because of the recent fathers' respect for them. We find it untenable to claim to respect and value the old fathers while disparaging the recent fathers. Perhaps the greatest legacy left to us by Dr. C. F. W. Walther is the record of his lectures on the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. In the little discussion we have had with the ELDoNA on this issue, including the statements and writings of Rev. Paul Rydecki, we witness a failure on their part to understand that those who uphold the objective/subjective distinction are not saying that the Gospel is to be preached to the unrepentant. To preach the Gospel to the unrepentant would be the grossest failure to rightly divide the word of truth.

Regarding footnote 29, which is in response to our response to the first draft of the theses, the Scriptures state that the last enemy to be destroyed is death. Moreover, because all rise, it is ironically true that death has been conquered for and among all.^z This is an embarrassingly obvious *straw man* fallacy, and *argumentum ad absurdum*. Regarding Luther on this matter, please see our comments above under Theses 18. God's forgiveness in Christ is not an inert "pile of stuff," waiting to be parceled out, or snatched by an act of human faith. God's forgiveness in Christ is, rather, an ever-active and dynamic "sending off" of sin by God. If God's forgiveness

^v Assigning a new definition to an established term.

^w Cf. Thesis 23

^x German for a non-existent thing, an absurdity.

^y Because of the overwhelming amount of material, we have cited only the very minimum to demonstrate this.

^z Dr. Luther himself made such an observation.

has been acquired, God’s forgiveness is active and is already sending off sin from someone (or from many someones). The ELDoNA’s formulations here are reminiscent of the medieval doctrine of grace as a substance, and not as an active attitude within God.



Thesis 22

Regarding the proper object of faith: ought it be a *pre-existing declaration/judicial pronouncement* of forgiveness (without any recording of God making such a pronouncement) or change in the heart of the immutable God without His saying that His heart has changed, or the *acquisition* of a judicial pronouncement of forgiveness and a new venue (Christ, the Mercy Seat) through which such a declaration may be received? In either case, there is an *already made* ‘thing’ to be communicated and trusted in; the difference is that the first two do not have specific testimony from Scripture to such an effect, while the later does.³⁰

30. Cf. Hebrews 9:5 and Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2, etc.



ACLC Response Concerning Thesis 22

This reiteration is superfluous and has been dealt with previously. The objective/subjective Justification distinction does not reject the *Throne of Grace* illustration. It is recognized that our fathers emphasized the illustration of Justification as pleading at the *Throne of Grace*. This thesis does not add to the ELDoNA’s argument. In fact, the objective aspect of Justification sees the object of faith as the acquisition (in the true sense) of the pronouncement for us, and the communicating to and trusting in it by us as the subjective aspect of Justification. The last sentence of this thesis is a fallacy of *begging the question*.



Thesis 23

Concerning the above, those trying to assert “Objective Justification” are often inconsistent, speaking of the acquisition of a pronouncement of righteousness at times and apparently not realizing that it is *not* the same as such a pronouncement itself.³¹ Yet, that is the beauty of the thing and a further demonstration that the acquisition of God’s declaration is not only the correct position, but that it provides that for which it is often asserted that “Objective Justification” is necessary.³²

31. “Pronouncement of righteousness” = “justification.” “Objective Justification” does not say that such a pronouncement has ‘merely’ been acquired, but that it has already been levied.

32. Note that “the acquisition of a pronouncement of righteousness” without the assertion that such a declaration has already been made does *not* reduce said acquisition to that of a “potential pronouncement” in any way other than one might say that the prophecies that a Serpent-crushing Seed of the Woman or One Born of a Virgin spoke (merely) to a ‘potential fulfillment’. *The prophecies and promises of God are just as certain when they are made as when they are fulfilled*. Rather, the acquisition itself gives the ‘substance’ that is given through the Means of Grace, creating faith so that justification is truly received.



ACLC Response Concerning Thesis 23

This is largely addressed under Thesis 22. Here again the ELDoNA reveals that she has a singular understanding of what an acquisition of a pronouncement is. The ELDoNA is confused over the imputation of justification, which is given through faith, which is worked by the Holy Spirit, who is given through the Means of Grace as AC V clearly states: “For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear.” Romans 10 indicates that faith is given through the Means of Grace.

Footnote 31 introduces a novel word, “levied,” and would have us believe that Objective Justification is the teaching that Justification has been declared upon individuals, that righteousness has been imputed apart from faith; such is not the case. This is a *straw man* fallacy.

Regarding Footnote 32, despite the statements to the contrary, the ELDoNA treats and speaks of the acquisition of the pronouncement as a potential pronouncement. The ELDoNA has gone to great lengths in these theses and elsewhere to emphasize this potentiality over that which has occurred. That this is true is evidenced here in the quip about not realizing that the acquisition of the pronouncement is not the same as the pronouncement itself. So, while the ELDoNA claims she does not teach a potential pronouncement, here she affirms that that is exactly what the diocese teaches.^{aa} Furthermore, the ELDoNA here (and consistently) confuses the subjective aspect of Justification with the objective aspect of Justification. Therefore the comparison to prophecy is not apropos.

Thesis 24

We ought not think that Walther³³ (and Schaller³⁴ and Hoenecke³⁵), Pieper, *et alii*, who formulated the current expressions of “Objective Justification” were unfamiliar with either Huber³⁶ or Aegidius Hunnius.^{37 38} The question is how dependent upon Huber they were, since they specifically distanced themselves from him. That is, did they see themselves as accidentally using the same terminology or did they intentionally adopt it while seeking to remove the parts of his teaching that they knew were offensive and keep the rest?³⁹ That such terminology would be adopted with a specific rejection of what were seen as Huber’s excesses, instead of simply rejecting the terminology merits further investigation. In any case, while they seek to distance themselves from Huber’s error, their insistence on a dogmatic assertion that is so foreign to those who came before as to necessitate such distancing is evidence of its novelty.

33. Cf. the first footnote of Thesis 2, above.

34. “The doctrine of universal, so-called objective justification sets forth that the Lord God by grace because of Christ’s redemption actually forgave sins to all men.” Cf., “Salvation is just as perfect and complete for those who are finally lost. This is the only reason, but a sufficient one, why he that believeth not is damned. Unbelief is the rejection of life and salvation achieved and personally intended for every unbeliever.” (Schaller, John. *Biblical Christology*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1982. Cited by Beckman, who begins the paragraph in which the first quote occurs, with the comment, “The term ‘objective justification’ is little more than 100 years old in our Lutheran circles.” “Universal and Objective Justification with Special Emphasis on a Recent Controversy,” David J. Beckman, delivered at the District Pastor-Teacher Conference of the South Atlantic District (WELS), January 27, 1983, p. 3. “So-called” – rather than “so-called” – is from Beckman’s text.)

^{aa} This harks back to Thesis 1

35. “The objective act of justification and the subjective possession of enjoyment thereof in blessed peace.” (*Dogmatik*, Cited by Beckman, *ibid.*)

36. See the footnote to Thesis 3

37. Aegidius Hunnius (1550-1603) was brought to Wittenberg as a professor in 1592. He was also superintendent and oversaw the visitation of the churches of Saxony, coauthoring the Saxon Visitation Articles.

38. In fact, Pieper quotes Hunnius seven times in volume two of *Christian Dogmatics* – always positively – but never cites him concerning this topic, and brushes him aside in volume three with regard to the Lutheran understanding of election.

39. Compare this with what modern ‘Lutherans’ do with the hymns of false teachers, church growth methodology, and the like. One might ask a similar question with regard to Walther’s aberrations regarding the Office of the Ministry and church polity, namely whether, e.g., Walther was simply overreacting against Stephan and, later, Grabau, or was trying to purify Vehse so that he would not have to live with practices that were openly confessing a false understanding of the Church and the Office. *In any case, Walther’s understanding of Church and Ministry contained error and that error grew in the century that followed him precisely because his work was the foundation and touchstone for those promoting subsequent error.* In a similar fashion, the overstatement that is (Waltherian) “Objective Justification” leads to errors that Walther himself would have in no way endorsed, but that should have been expected.



ACLC Response Concerning Thesis 24

Dr. C.F.W. Walther wrote clearly about his knowledge of Huber and the controversy he was involved in.^{bb} There is nothing conspiratorial or worthy of speculation here. Hunnius’ own Thesis 1 of *Theses Concerning the Huberian Universal Justification of Believers and Unbelievers* reads: “Huber professes such a justification, for the sake of which Christ has properly, actually and practically *conferred* redemption on the entire human race in such a way that sins have been *equally* remitted to all men, including the *Turks*, and that all men (including unbelievers) *have received* remission of sins, and that the whole human race has, *in actual fact*, been received into the grace and bosom of God” (emphasis original).^{cc} The emphasis in Hunnius’ first thesis conveniently highlights what the issue was with Huber. At the outset the ELDoNA misses the point that the objective aspect of Justification does not teach a conferral of redemption on, or reception of redemption by, any unbeliever. The theses against Huber simply do not speak to the issue at hand. The essence of Huber’s error is in that he understood justification to have been imparted to everyone apart from faith.

Footnotes 38 and 39 are so far beyond the pale and into the area of casting aspersions that they warrant no further comment.



Thesis 25

Defenses of “Objective Justification”⁴⁰ quite often contain a statement of how unfortunate it is that this term has come into use – which one would not expect with a truly useful and unencumbered term. Both because of the earlier use by Huber and because of the number of true and false definitions with which the term has been associated, it ought to be discarded, as its use brings no clarity.⁴¹

^{bb} *Justification: Subjective and Objective* e (translated by Kurt E. Marquart) (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1982)

^{cc} *Theses Opposed to Huberianism*, (Tr. Rev. Paul A. Rydecki) (Malone, TX Repristination Press, 2012)

40. At least by Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod writers; Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod writers do not seem to have any qualms about the terminology.

41. Thus: Kurt Marquardt in his paper concerning Larry Darby, p. 1 (available through various web sites, including <http://angelfire.com/ny4/lutherantheology.marquartjustification.html>), where he quotes Henry Hamaan’s similar sentiment in *Justification by Faith in Modern Theology*, Graduate Study 2 (St. Louis: School for Graduate Studies, Concordia Seminary, 1957), p. 60; John Buchholz in his essay at the 2005 WELS synodical convention, p. 3, fn. 4; the LCMS’s response to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in Confessional Lutheran Perspective*, p. 24-25, similarly; all of these speak of a preference for other terms to be used, and there are others that could be cited.



ACLCLC Response Concerning Thesis 25

Please see our comments on thesis 8. Again, we hold no one to the term, but we have yet to hear a better term, even when we have specifically asked those willing to engage in cordial discussion of this matter. Any attempts along those lines have been met with a rejection of the term “justification” in the formula of the terminology. We have yet to come across a better term, one that adequately describes the concept (including “Universal Justification”). That is, of course, a symptom of the fact that this controversy is not about the term, but about the doctrine itself. Everything said regarding the term in these theses is misleading and pointless. Only by addressing the underlying doctrinal aberration will the terminology problem be cleared up. In addition, most of the statements concerning how unfortunate the use of the term is, are not because of its association with Huber, a largely insignificant and forgotten figure in history, but in the realm of the fact that “Subjective Justification” is as certain as “Objective Justification.”



Thesis 26

Moreover, as we are admonished in the first Article of the Formula of Concord, “As regards terms and expressions, it is best and safest to use and retain the form of sound words employed concerning this [or any] article of Holy Scripture and the above-mentioned books,” (Thorough Declaration I:50) we ought not invent new terminology or restate any article of doctrine without specific need or in any way that contradicts that “form of sound words,” much less do so in a way the eisegetically deals with older writings to force them to ‘support’ the new formulation, or that requires regurgitation of a formula that is not proven to be in accord with what the Confessions were understood to teach by the theologians of Lutheran orthodoxy.

Nonetheless, the discussion is not about the term, but about the teaching – but the term is to be discarded as (at best) a parochial neologism of the (long-defunct) Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, claimed as much by those in the bodies that made up said conference who do not really teach “Objective Justification” as by those who do.



ACLCLC Response Concerning Thesis 26

This thesis does not speak to the objective aspect of Justification, because the objective aspect does not fit the criteria of the premise. This thesis is therefore superfluous in this discussion.

These theses are not a declaration of fellowship. Those inside our fellowship voluntarily agree with these theses and support them, but we also wish to have these theses function as a marker of agreement between Christians who are not yet necessarily in fellowship. Therefore, we invite all who agree with these theses to express their agreement without necessarily committing themselves to fellowship.

We hope and pray that these theses will be yet another building block in establishing a more healthy and orthodox Lutheran Church in our time, and in this country. With this hope, we, with joy and profound thanks to our triune God, accept and confess these theses.

Version 3.2 – Text as Unanimously Approved by the Diocese
The Beheading of John the Baptist, 29 August 2013

44. “Objective Justification” is, at best, an ambiguous term by virtue of the various ways it is represented by those claiming to adhere to it; thus, it is terminology that has no place in the Church. As with the Sacraments, in which we maintain the words and elements given us by Christ so that no element of doubt is introduced, language cannot be ambiguous lest the Church is given place to fall into “false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice.” Both such ambiguity in the use of the term “Objective Justification” and the false teaching advanced in the historical usage of this term (whether that of Huber or that of the theologians of the former Synodical Conference), has led even those among us who formerly made use of it to abandon the continued use of this term in the Church in connection with our desire to reject the false teaching associated with it.



ACLIC Response Concerning the Conclusion of the Theses

The *straw man* fallacy is carried through all the way to the conclusion. Since we had pointed out the *straw man* in our response to the initial draft of these theses, it is difficult to understand how its use in the adopted theses is anything other than a willful mischaracterization of the teaching of Objective Justification.

After careful consideration of the “Theses on Justification,” in the light of Holy Scripture, and on the basis of the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the writings of the revered fathers of the Lutheran Church, including Dr. Martin Luther, whom the Formula of Concord calls the chief teacher of the Augsburg Confession,^{dd} it is manifestly evident that what is claimed in the second paragraph of the Conclusion of the Theses is false. These theses do not correctly reflect the doctrine of the symbolical books, nor do they correctly summarize the writings of the earliest generations of orthodox teachers of the faith confessed in the Book of Concord. In short, these theses fail to conform to the pattern of sound words, that is, to the divinely inspired prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testament which are correctly expounded and explained in the confessional writings of the Book of Concord.

Furthermore, these theses fail to demonstrate that the objective aspect of the article on justification as it was confessed and taught in the writings and statements of the old Synodical Conference of the 19th and 20th century and currently in the synods that comprised the Conference was and is inimical to the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions and the writings of the orthodox Lutheran fathers. On the contrary, *Objective Justification* – that God received

^{dd} The Formula of Concord has numerous references to the writings of Dr. Luther as official representations of the Lutheran Faith: in the Introduction; Article II, 44; III, 67; IV, 28; V,22; VII, 33, 34, 41; and many more.

Christ's all-sufficient, atoning sacrifice upon the cross as the perfect payment for the sin of the world, and on that basis has declared the whole world righteous – is the biblical and confessional teaching. Indeed, it is the very heart of the pure Christian faith. It is the proper object of justifying faith: "People are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight" (AC IV). We, therefore, affirm what we declared in our official response to the "Theses on Justification" of September 27, 2013, namely, that these theses fail to confess the doctrine of justification in all its fullness and are, thus, rejected. We admonish the ELDoNA to withdraw these theses and embrace the pure doctrine of Augustana IV.^{ec}

The third paragraph of the conclusion of the ELDoNA's "Theses on Justification" has these words: "However, we do see them as defining the limits of our fellowship with regard to these issues until such time as we are convinced otherwise from Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, or until further clarification is needed," and, "We are also keenly aware of the clear lines of distinction they draw among those who call themselves Lutheran, and we intend to draw those lines." In the fourth paragraph, in spite of the assurance that "These theses are not a declaration of fellowship," the ELDoNA asserts: "Those inside our fellowship voluntarily agree with these theses and support them." By ELDoNA's own admission, one cannot reject these theses and be inside of their fellowship. Indeed, a clear line of distinction is made, with regard to fellowship, between ELDoNA and anyone who rejects these theses.

We recognize, therefore, that the ELDoNA has placed the ACLC outside of the lines of her fellowship. The consequences of this are that the ELDoNA and the ACLC are no longer able to exchange pulpits and celebrate Holy Communion together. We fully expect that at the next regularly scheduled annual conference of the ACLC it will be formally acknowledge that church fellowship no longer exists between the ACLC and the ELDoNA.

Unanimously approved by the pastors of the Association of Confessional Lutheran Churches
Kyrie eleison

^{ec} The Eldona has separated from the Lutheran faith in the Chief Article. See our comments on thesis 7 above.



The Association of Confessional Lutheran Churches

Friday in the Week of the Seventeenth Sunday After Trinity, September 27, 2013

To the Rt. Rev. James D. Heiser and the clergy of the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America:

Grace and Peace be with you in Christ Jesus our Lord.

With heavy hearts we, the pastors of the Association of Confessional Lutheran Churches, find it necessary to address you, our brothers in Christ, about the matter which is of the utmost importance to God’s Church, namely your Theses on the Article of Justification, unanimously adopted by the Diocese on August 29, 2013.

All of the pastors of the ACLC have had the opportunity to review this statement individually and discuss it in teleconference. We take this to now be ELDoNA’s official statement on the central article of the Christian faith. We certainly acknowledge the *quatenus* status which you have assigned to this statement, as written in its conclusion:

These theses, like those which our diocese has previously written and agreed to, are not seen by us as additions to our vows to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, which vows are unconditional. These theses may change as the issues are further clarified (p. 12).

At the same time, as your sister church, with whom you are in a declared state of altar and pulpit fellowship, we must also take seriously what you further write:

However, we do see them as defining the limits of our fellowship with regard to these issues until such time as we are convinced otherwise from the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions, or until further clarification is needed. We are keenly aware of the fluid nature of such statements. We are also keenly aware of the clear lines of distinction they draw among those who call themselves Lutherans, and we intend to draw such lines (p. 12).

Additionally, you write:

Those inside our fellowship voluntarily agree with these theses and support them, but we also wish to have these theses function as a marker of agreement between Christians who are not yet necessarily in fellowship (p. 12).

The ACLC is certainly affected by “the limits of [your] fellowship” which this statement seeks to define. We are, therefore, compelled to state for the record that we do not agree with this

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Appendix 1 Continued

statement. Even though there are a number of truthful assertions in it that we do agree with and assent to, there are also a number of statements which are confusing at best and erroneous at worst. Taken as a whole, we do not assent to this statement. Indeed, we emphatically reject its conclusion, namely:

That the foregoing theses correctly reflect the doctrine of the symbolical books as demonstrated by the writings of the earliest generations of orthodox teachers of the faith confessed in the Book of Concord. Thus, the doctrine of “Objective Justification” (both the teaching and its terminology) is hereby rejected (p. 12).

We do not here intend to set forth all of the reasons why we reject the statement, nor give a critique of each theses. For the purposes of this response it will be sufficient to say that this statement fails to confess the pure doctrine of justification in all of its fullness as it is revealed by God in the Holy Scriptures and rightly explained in the Book of Concord. On that basis, then, it must be rejected as not in conformity with the pattern of sound words.

Further commentary on the statement will be forthcoming. We submitted a critique of the first draft by the due date set by the Diocese, July 2, 2013, to which we never received a response. Since the official statement has not changed substantially from the original draft, our original critique still applies. We will, however, be editing our critique to reflect those minor changes that have been made and we will be submitting it for public viewing as soon as possible.

Your Brothers in Christ,

The Pastors of the Association of Confessional Lutheran Churches

Appendix 2—A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Of Justification

Holy Scripture sums up all its teachings regarding the love of God to the world of sinners, regarding the salvation wrought by Christ, and regarding faith in Christ as the only way to obtain salvation, in the article of justification. Scripture teaches that God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ, Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Rom. 4:25; that therefore not for the sake of their good works, but without the works of the Law, by grace, for Christ's sake, He justifies, accounts as righteous, all those who that is, believe, accept, and rely on, the fact that for Christ's sake their sins are forgiven. Thus the Holy Ghost testifies through St. Paul: "There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Rom. 3:23, 24. And again: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law," Rom. 3:28.

Through this doctrine alone Christ is given the honor due Him, namely, that through His holy life and innocent suffering and death He is our Savior. And through this doctrine alone can poor sinners have the abiding comfort that God is assuredly gracious to them. We reject as apostasy from the Christian religion all doctrines whereby man's own works and merit are mingled into the article of justification before God. For the Christian religion is the faith that we have forgiveness of sins and salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, Acts 10:43.

We reject as apostasy from the Christian religion not only the doctrine of the Unitarians, who promise the grace of God to men on the basis of their moral efforts; not only the gross work-doctrine of the papists, who expressly teach that good works are necessary to obtain justification; but also the doctrine of the synergists, who indeed use the terminology of the Christian Church and say that man is justified "by faith," "by faith alone," but again mix human works into the article of justification by ascribing to man a co-operation with God in the kindling of faith and thus stray into papistic territory.

Appendix 3—Quotations from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther

<http://www.angelfire.com/ny4/djw/OJQuotations.pdf> pages 3-9

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,” *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 40 [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958], 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)

Appendix 3 Continued

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)

Appendix 3 Continued

...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.

Appendix 3 Continued

...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, [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957] 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

Appendix 3 Continued

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)

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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 [I 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.

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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)

...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

Appendix 3 Continued

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)

Appendix 4—Statements from Rev. Dr. Robert Preus' Sons

Rev. Rolf Preus responded:

The Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America – comprised of pastors who received their theological instruction in either the LCMS or the WELS – has now formally rejected the pure gospel they received from their teachers in these synods, attacking the doctrine of objective justification. Living in the land of the sects, we are accustomed to witnessing the formation of heterodox church bodies devoted to their pet heterodoxies. ELDoNA's slide into formal heterodoxy might go unmentioned were it not for a specific calumny they are promoting in an effort to obtain credibility for their false doctrine. I am referring to their claim that my father, Robert Preus, changed his position on objective justification and rejected this teaching before he died. I do not boast when I say that no man alive is more familiar with my father's teaching on this topic than I. He was not only my father; he was my teacher. I studied under him both formally and informally. I have read everything he wrote on the topic of justification. I took his class on justification and have his class notes, which I have studied thoroughly. He and I discussed theology with each other every time we talked and we talked often. We spent many hours talking about objective justification. I hereby state categorically and without any reservation that my father did not change his position on objective justification. He affirmed and confessed objective justification until the day he died.

I have neither the time nor the inclination to respond to every error ELDoNA promotes in its formal statement on justification. Suffice it to say that they think they have discovered in the Lutheran dogmatic tradition a refutation of the doctrine of objective justification as taught by the Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Synod, and the Norwegian Synod. Since Robert Preus was an authority on Lutheran orthodoxy, ELDoNA seeks credibility by claiming him for their cause. Their "proof" that Robert Preus rejected objective justification before he died was his essay, "Justification and Rome," in which he faithfully and meticulously set forth the classical Lutheran doctrine according to the historic language of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Since the men of ELDoNA imagine a conflict between this language and that used by the Synodical Conference of nineteenth century America, they leap from this alleged conflict to the conclusion that Robert Preus had to reject the latter in order to affirm the former. This illustrates their own ignorance of Robert Preus's lifelong teaching on the subject. As a matter of fact, he had always relied more on the classical language of the orthodox Lutherans than he did on the terminology that arose out of the nineteenth century controversies in America. But he saw no conflict at all in the substance of what they taught.

ELDoNA insists that there is a difference between the acquisition of forgiveness and the pronouncement of forgiveness. Robert Preus was the chief author of the CTCR document of 1983 (approved by the 1986 convention of the LCMS) in which we read: "God has acquired the forgiveness of sins for all people by declaring that the world for Christ's sake has been forgiven. The acquiring of forgiveness is the pronouncement of forgiveness."

These words from my father's class notes on Justification help explain his position on this matter. The notes read: "Our Confessions are teaching universal justification whenever they say that remission of sins and justification are apprehended by faith." He quotes Martin Franzmann to make the point that objective justification and subjective justification go together: "Though we distinguish between objective and subjective justification, it does not occur to us to separate

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them . . . We do not speak of two justifications; objective and subjective justification refer to the same act of God . . .”

My father would frequently illustrate the importance of the doctrine of objective justification by asking the question: “Should I believe that if I believe my sins will be forgiven? Or should I believe that my sins are forgiven?” For him it was a vital, personal, and pastoral concern. Perhaps those who did not know my father might assume that he affirmed objective justification simply because it was the thing to do and that he hadn’t really given it sufficient thought until the end of his life and then rejected it when he examined the teaching of the sixteenth and seventeenth century dogmatists. No one familiar with my father and his theology could come to such a conclusion. Dad’s devotion to objective justification was never merely academic. It was deeply personal. It never wavered.

The notion that my father’s last written work on justification, “Justification and Rome,” differs in substance from his earlier writings is without foundation. Those who claim that my father changed his teaching on objective justification before he died simply display their own ignorance of what my father taught and how the Synodical Conference tradition is thoroughly grounded in the tradition of the orthodox Lutheran dogmatists, and, more importantly, in the clear Scriptures that teach that God, for the sake of the vicarious satisfaction of his dear Son Jesus, has declared the entire world of sinners to be justified. To deny this is to deny the universal redemption, atonement, propitiation, and reconciliation – indeed, the very idea of universal grace is lost if God did not justify all those whose sins Jesus bore on the cross. To deny objective justification is to turn faith into itself. Such a pietistic fideism is a necessary byproduct of a truncated atonement that doesn’t atone and a redemption that doesn’t redeem. My father was a lifelong enemy of pietistic fideism!

Those who claim that my father changed his teaching on objective justification before he died bear false witness against him. As his son and student who received his best instruction from him and who continues to teach the pure gospel he taught, I call on these men to cease with their deceptions and distortions of a faithful teacher’s teaching. Claim their error for themselves, if they must – and bear the consequences – but don’t pretend that my father shared it.

Rev. Rolf Preus, January 16, 2014

Rev. Daniel Preus Responded:

Friday January 17, 2014

Robert Preus never rejected the teaching of objective justification. Rolf's response is pretty thorough and I don't need to repeat all that he said. Suffice it to say that I agree with him completely. I will just make a few more comments. Robert Preus taught and affirmed the teaching of objective justification throughout his ministry and until he died. He even removed a professor at the Fort Wayne seminary from teaching a class on Romans because he denied objective justification. It is completely scurrilous for these men to say what they are saying, especially without evidence.

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To cite his book "Justification and Rome" as evidence of a change in his position is simply bizarre. I did final editing on the book before it was published and know its contents well.

Nowhere does it deny what Robert Preus taught his entire life. If my father had had second thoughts on this matter, I would certainly know about it. He frequently and with persuasive language affirmed his belief in objective justification in conversations with his children and with others. To attribute false teaching to him after his death when he cannot defend himself is slanderous, as my brother Rolf says.

Greg Jackson was spouting this nonsense years ago but he never demonstrated anything. He just claimed it. The ELDoNA men should have enough confidence in the truth of their theology to assert what they believe without dragging Robert Preus into it. I am very disappointed to hear about this.

In Christ,
Daniel