

7-1-1933

Objective Justification

Theo. Engelder

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Engelder, Theo. (1933) "Objective Justification," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 4 , Article 70.
Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol4/iss1/70>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

sagt: ‚Den sollt ihr hören‘, Matth. 17, 5, das ist, die Evangelisten und Apostel; denn dieselben soll man lesen und hören, desgleichen auch das Alte Testament, welches von diesem allem auch fleißig zeugt. Wo aber etwas weiter geoffenbart wird, so muß es dem Glauben ähnlich sein und muß eine Offenbarung sein nach dem Verstand der Schrift, sonst ist es eine teuflische Offenbarung. Es hat der Teufel mich oftmals versucht — wie den Augustinus auch, welcher es sich bei Gott verbittet, daß ihm kein Engel erscheinen soll —, daß ich sollte ein Zeichen begehren von Gott. Aber das sei ferne von mir, daß ich solcher Versuchung sollte Raum geben und folgen. Die heiligen Märtyrer sind ohne Erscheinung der Engel, allein durch das Wort, gestärkt worden, daß sie um des Namens Christi willen sind in den Tod gegangen; warum sollten wir uns nicht auch an dasselbige Wort halten und sind damit zufrieden? Wir haben klare und schöne, helle Erscheinungen genug, als nämlich die Taufe, das Abendmahl des Herrn, die Schlüssel, das Predigtamt, welches gleich ist, ja weit übertrifft alle Erscheinungen aller Engel, dagegen Abraham nur kleine Tröpflein und Brosamen gehabt hat. Deshalb achte ich der Engel nicht und pflege Gott täglich zu bitten, daß er ja der keinen zu mir senden wolle, es sei gleich in welcher Sache es wolle. Und wenn mir auch schon einer würde vorkommen, so wollte ich ihn doch nicht hören, sondern wollte mich von ihm wenden, es wäre denn, daß er mir etwas anzeigte von irgendeiner nötigen Sache im Weltregiment, wie uns alle lustigen und fröhlichen Träume in weltlichen Sachen pflegen zuweilen zu erfreuen; und wüßte ich dennoch nicht, ob ich ihm auch in solchem Fall gehorchen und glauben wollte. In geistlichen Sachen aber sollen wir nach den Engeln nichts fragen; denn die göttliche Verheißung ist nun in Christo reichlich genug erfüllt und offenbart; der hat mir sein Wort gelassen, damit ich mich untertweise und stärke, und darf ich mich des nicht besorgen, daß er so unbeständig und wankelmütig sei, daß er bald diese, bald eine andere Lehre daherbringe.“ (I, 1527.)

Q. Gü b f e.

Objective Justification.

The leading article in the May issue of *The Pastor's Monthly*, entitled *The Mediator of the New Testament*, which was originally delivered by Dr. R. Lenski in the form of an address on Seminary Day at Columbus, contains, besides much valuable material, these statements: "2 Cor. 5, 18—20 is badly bungled by many, notably the Missourians. Preconceived notions violate the highly significant tenses. Paul speaks of himself and his assistants: God, 'the One who did reconcile us (not only objectively, but also subjectively) to Himself through Christ and did give to us the ministration of this reconciliation (the service of preaching it)'—two aorists, past, historical. Then with *ὁς ὤν*: 'that God was in Christ, engaged in reconciling the

world, by not reckoning to them (individuals) their transgressions (two present, durative, iterative participles), and having deposited in our care the Word of this reconciliation.' This is again an aorist: He did give us the ministry of the reconciliation — He did place in our care the Word of this reconciliation, namely, for this our ministry. Thus as Christ's ambassador, Paul adds, we beg you, 'Be reconciled to God!' Paul writes, after bringing me and my assistants to personal reconciliation and giving us the ministry and means for bringing other men to personal reconciliation. God reaches out through us as His ambassadors thus to reconcile personally others in the world. He even explains that this personal reconciling = not reckoning their trespasses to them, which in other passages = forgiving the trespasses. The mediation of Christ is completed when those objectively reconciled on Calvary are subjectively, individually, reconciled by faith in the Word about this reconciliation. What has been made of this famous passage? This, that on Easter morning God forgave all sins to every individual sinner in the world, those then already damned in hell, those not yet born; and that this, an *actus simplex*, is the only justification there is!"

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

As to the doctrine in general, he repudiates and ridicules the teaching that on Easter morning God forgave, really forgave, all the world all its sins, really and truly justified the world. He protests against making objective reconciliation, general justification, mean that God on Easter morning did actually pronounce the world, all individuals making up the world, really innocent of all sin and guilt. He is harking back to, and reenacting, the days of 1888 to 1905. Those were the days when the Missourians, for saying that "the righteousness, the obedience, of One is imputed to many, all; all men are now adjudged, in the forum of God, as righteous, obedient, Rom. 5, 18, 19" (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 34, 163), were charged with "attempting the life of the Lutheran doctrine of justification," with a "fundamental error," with "teachings that imperil the salvation of men." (See, for instance, *Lehre u. Wehre*, 34, 161; 35, 73; 51, 385.) The Missourians did indeed teach that God, by pronouncing Christ, the world's Substitute, guilty of the sins of the world and condemning Him to death and then, in the resurrection, acquitting Him of all sin and guilt, thereby acquitted and absolved the world of its sin and guilt, John 1, 29; Rom. 4, 25; 5, 19; 2 Cor. 5, 14, 19, 21; 1 John 2, 2. And they teach it to this day. They would close their theological seminaries if they were no longer permitted to teach the objective justification. For then they could no longer teach the article of justification by faith. If the justification of the world, of every individual sinner, is not an

accomplished fact, we should have to go out and ask the sinner to accomplish it himself. We could not ask him to receive his pardon as already issued. We could not ask him to "believe," to accept the pardon already granted and issued. Then there would be no justification "by faith." We cannot give up the article that on Easter morning God forgave every single sinner his sin and guilt.

But why should the Missourians be specially referred to in this matter? We are certainly pleased to have it said that "notably the Missourians" teach thus. But why single out the Missourians? Luther said it long ago. "Here now cometh the Law and saith: I find Him a sinner and that such a one as hath taken upon Him the sins of all men, and I see no sins else than in Him; therefore let Him die upon the cross; and so He setteth upon Him and killeth Him. By this means the whole world is purged and cleansed from all sins and so delivered from death and all evils." (9, 373. *Commentary on Galatians*, transl. by Middleton, p. 245. See *Report of Syn. Conf.*, 1872, p. 33.) The Lutheran Confessions said the same long ago. "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 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.'" (Apology; *Trigl.*, p. 151.) "The righteousness which is imputed to faith or to the believer out of pure grace is the obedience, suffering, and resurrection of Christ, since He has made satisfaction for us to the Law and paid for [expiated] our sin. . . . On account of this complete obedience, which He rendered His heavenly Father for us, by doing and suffering, in living and dying, God forgives our sins, regards us as godly and righteous, and eternally saves us." (Form. of Concord; *Trigl.*, p. 919 f.) "It is a complete satisfaction and expiation for the human race, by which the eternal, immutable righteousness of God, revealed in the Law, has been satisfied and is thus our righteousness, which avails before God and is revealed in the Gospel and upon which faith relies before God." (Form. of Conc.; *Trigl.*, p. 935.) Again, if the Missourians are wrong, the fathers of the Ohio Synod are in the same condemnation. In an article which was translated and republished in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1871, p. 145 f., the *Lutheran Standard*, presumably of the same year, states: "Der Hauptsprecher auf seiten der Augustana-Pastoren ging so weit, zu sagen, dass in solchen Stellen wie 'Gott war in Christo und versoehte die Welt mit ihm selber' das Wort 'Welt' nicht meine alle Menschen, sondern nur die Glaebigen. Dies ist, wie wohl bekannt, die calvinische Theorie, nach welcher

Gott in Christo nur die Auserwaelhten und beharrlich Glaubenden erloest hat und alle Stellen der Schrift, welche die allgemeine Erloesung der Welt lehren, nur auf die Erloesung und Seligmachung der Auserwaelhten gedeutet werden. . . ." And then the *Lutheran Standard* quotes with approval such statements as these from the Norwegian *Maanedstidende*: "So wenig der Umstand, dass nicht alle Menschen wirklich verdammt werden, die Wahrheit umstoest, dass nichtsdestoweniger die Verdammnis ueber alle Menschen kommen ist, so wenig kann der Umstand, dass nicht alle Menschen die Gerechtigkeit Christi ergreifen und durch den Glauben an ihn persoendlich gerechtfertigt werden, die Wahrheit umstossen oder widerrufen, dass nichtsdestoweniger die Rechtfertigung des Lebens ueber alle Menschen kommen ist. . . . Und so wahr es ist, dass, 'so einer fuer alle gestorben ist, so sind sie alle gestorben,' 2 Kor. 5, 14, geradeso wahr muss auch dies sein, dass, so einer fuer alle gerechtfertigt wurde, so sind sie alle gerechtfertigt worden, 1 Tim. 3, 16; Roem. 5, 19." The quotations which are then given from "our orthodox old fathers" will serve to show that the Missourians do not speak a new language, but the ancient language of the Lutheran Church. For instance: "The words justification and reconciliation are used in a twofold sense: 1) with reference to the merit as gained [by Christ] and 2) with reference to the merit as appropriated [by the believer]. All are justified, and some are justified: all with reference to the merit gained, some with reference to the merit appropriated." (John Quistorp on 2 Cor. 5, 19.) "Since Christ, the second Adam, took the place of the entire human race before the forum of God, it follows that in Him the whole human race also was justified and absolved from sin and the curse." (J. J. Rambach.) It will not do to single out the Missourians. They are in the company of the fathers of the Ohio Synod. Prof. W. F. Lehmann, Prof. M. Loy, and twelve other delegates of the Ohio Synod were present at the first meeting of the Synodical Conference, in 1872, and agreed with the rest to such statements as these: "What does the resurrection of Christ mean? It was the act of God pronouncing Christ righteous. But Christ died, laden not with His own, but with the sins of the whole world and all its unrighteousness. . . . But since Christ was condemned, not for His personal guilt, but for the sins of mankind, which He bore, it was not Christ, in His own person, who was justified in the resurrection, but the human race, for which He died and rose again. . . . As sure as the Bible says: 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,' so surely there can be no longer any wrath in the heart of God, in so far as He views the world through Christ. . . . The world in itself is under the curse and damnation, but as redeemed by Christ, because of His satisfaction, God is reconciled with the world." (*Proceedings*, pp. 31—37.)

The Lutheran theologian finds it extremely difficult, in presenting the doctrine of the redemption, the reconciliation wrought by Christ, to keep himself from saying that the objective reconciliation takes in every single individual. And since in Rom. 5 Paul describes this reconciliation as justification, the theologian finds it extremely difficult to keep himself from saying that on Easter morning God absolved all men from their sin and guilt. Dr. F. W. Stellhorn cannot keep himself from saying it. His notes on Rom. 5, 18 read: "Thus, then, as the consequence of Adam's fall was the condemnation to death for all men, so the consequence of the righteousness acquired by Christ is justification unto life for all men."—"*Εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους*" in both cases to be understood objectively: for all men there is condemnation and justification; the former in Adam and his transgression, the latter in Christ and His fulfilment of the Law. The subjective and final condition and lot of every man depends upon his relation to Christ; if he does not by faith recognize Christ as his Representative and Substitute, his relation to Adam, by natural descent, determines his eternal fate, brings upon him everlasting damnation as the ultimate result of the inevitable reaction of a holy and just God against sin; if by faith he appropriates what Christ has procured for all men, God imparts it to him personally and individually, regards and treats him as holy and righteous. By raising Christ from death, God publicly declared His atonement for all the sins of the human race complete and perfect; in other words, He justified Christ, pronounced Him free from all the sins that as the Representative and Substitute of all men He had taken upon Himself. But the justification of man's Representative and Substitute is necessarily man's own justification, provided he recognizes and embraces the Representative and Substitute as his own. The justification of all men in Christ may be called objective, or universal, or potential; it becomes subjective and personal, or actual, by faith only." (*The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 89. 95.) Dr. Stellhorn cannot say other than this: "For all men there is justification." "By raising Christ from death, God publicly declared His atonement for all the sins of the human race complete and perfect. But the justification of man's Representative and Substitute is necessarily man's own justification." He does indeed add a restriction: "provided he recognizes and embraces the Representative and Substitute as his own"; but he cannot find this restriction in the text. The text does not say: By the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life, *provided they believe*. We have no quarrel with Dr. Stellhorn for mentioning in this connection that the subjective justification takes place by faith, for pointing out that the universal justification does not avail those who refuse to accept it. But we do say that his "provided" is a gloss, a perversion of the text. Nor has he a right to describe the objective justification

as a "potential," "not actual," justification. He himself says, as Paul indeed says: "For all men there is justification." "Is" expresses actuality, not potentiality. But our object in quoting Dr. Stelhorn is to show that, when one deals with such statements as Rom. 5, 18, such thoughts as these clamor for utterance: On Easter morning, when God justified the world's Representative, all men, πάντες ἄνθρωποι: every human being from Adam on to the last generation, were justified. Dr. Stelhorn has made use of the expression which is being castigated. He adds indeed a restriction which is not in the text. That shows that Paul has made use of the objectionable expression. How does Dr. M. Reu fare? "Die Rechtfertigung ist eine Tat Gottes, die immer da eintritt, wo die Predigt von der in Christo fuer alle Welt vorhandenen Vergebung im einzelnen den Glauben gewirkt hat. . . . Diese genueguende Suehne Christi, kraft welcher die Suende der ganzen Welt an Christus, ihrem Stellvertreter, gestraft (*satisfactio*) und vor Gottes Augen schon zugedeckt ist (*λαμπρός expiatio*) und die Welt in und durch Christus als in Friedens- und Freundschaftsverhaeltnis mit Gott stehend (*reconciliatio*) und von der Gewalt der Suende, des Todes und des Teufels losgekauft (*redemptio*) dasteht, ist der Realgrund fuer die Rechtfertigung des Suenders, die *causa impulsiva externa* oder *causa meritoria*. . . . Diese Gerechtigkeit Christi wird in der Rechtfertigung dem einzelnen Suender als auch fuer ihn vorhanden und ihm gueltig zugerechnet. Sie ist fuer die ganze Welt vorhanden, und nur im Blick auf sie kann Gott der Welt Suende als bedeckt ansehen; aber in der Rechtfertigung wird sie dem einzelnen zugerechnet." (*Die Heilsordnung*, pp. 18. 26 f.) Whatever else the statement "Aber nur dem glaeubig gewordenen Suender rechnet Gott die Gerechtigkeit Christi zu, nur ihn subsumiert er unter das allgemeine Rechtfertigungsurteil und spricht ihn frei" (p. 27) may mean, Dr. Reu's presentation of the matter shows that the Lutheran theologian cannot treat of it without giving expression to the thought that God, by raising Christ from the dead, forgave the sins of the world. "Gott sieht der Welt Suende als bedeckt an." "Christus hat alle unsere Suende getragen, gesucht, das ist, bedeckt und vor Gottes Angesicht hinweggetan." (P. 26.) And we choose to take these words at their full value. A sermon published in the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, May, 1933, contains these statements: "Jetzt ist die Schuld der Menschen bezahlt und die Gerechtigkeit der Menschen erworben, und Jesus jubelt darueber am Kreuz und spricht: 'Es ist vollbracht!' . . . Der allmaechtige Gottesarm ist in dem, der als Mensch unsere Schuld bezahlte und unsere Gerechtigkeit erwarb und unseren Sieg gewann, offenbar geworden. Amen." (Pp. 160. 192.) That can only mean that Christ gained a perfect righteousness for all mankind. And that cannot mean anything else than that God on Easter morning forgave all sins to every individual sinner in the world; if God did not do that, He adjudged the "righteousness gained

for mankind" as incomplete and insufficient. And how does Dr. Lenski himself fare? These words immediately precede the paragraphs under discussion: "Thus the objective reconciliation covers all men as enemies; and the subjective reconciliation, going a step farther, covers all believers. The one is *for us, outside of us, the other in us.*" The objective reconciliation covers all men as enemies! Does the objective reconciliation, covering all men, really mean anything as to them? Does it cover their sins? all of their sins? the sins of all men? If so, if reconciliation, as used 2 Cor. 5, means forgiving the trespasses,—and Dr. Lenski and we are agreed that it means that,—then God has forgiven the sins of all individuals.

But the Missourians go so far as to say that on Easter morning God, who forgave all men their sins, also forgave "those not yet born"! Well, Luther went just so far. "Not only my sins and thine, but also the sins of the whole world, *either past, present, or to come*, take hold upon Him, go about to condemn Him, and do indeed condemn Him.... Therefore, in this combat, sin must needs be vanquished and killed, and righteousness must overcome, live, and reign. So in Christ all sin is vanished, killed, and buried, and righteousness remaineth a conqueror and reigneth forever." (9, 373 f. Middleton, p. 246.) "Holy Scripture says that the sins of the world lie not on the world nor St. John's sin on St. John nor St. Peter's sin on St. Peter, for they cannot bear it, but on Christ, the Lamb of God, who steps up and becomes a common sinner, yea, sin itself (2 Cor. 5, 21), as though He had committed all the world's sin (*from the beginning of the world to the end*); that is the Lamb's office and character." (7, 1723 f.) The thought that God, in absolving the world on Easter morning, had in mind also the unborn generations does not strike us as ridiculous. If the death and resurrection of Christ had anything to do with the sins of the world, whatever it had to do therewith applies to all generations of the human race. When the risen Lord sent His disciples to "preach remission of sins among all nations," Luke 24, 47, to preach this "Gospel to every creature," Mark 16, 15, "unto the end of the world," Matt. 28, 20, He had also the unborn generations in mind. Remission of sins is to be preached unto them. They are to be told that 'on Easter morning their pardon was issued. The ambassadors for Christ are not instructed to inform the rebels that, if they believe, the Lord will write out their pardon. The ambassadors are instructed to call the rebels together and to read to them the pardon already issued and to pray them in Christ's stead to come in under this pardon, to believe it, to accept it. We cheerfully admit that on Easter morning "those not yet born" were absolutely unable to believe. We cheerfully admit that the unborn generations were not subjectively justified on Easter morning. But we do insist that "the objective reconciliation covers all men."

Nor do we draw the line at the damned. St. Peter does not. "Denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction," 2 Pet. 2, 1. Luther does not. "In the same manner he who does not believe that he is loosed and that his sins are forgiven will later on find that his sins had now certainly been forgiven; only he would not believe it." (19, 946.) What is the ultimate cause of the damnation of the individual? Just this: he refused the pardon offered him, the forgiveness of sins proclaimed on Easter morning as pertaining to all. The paragraph under discussion would stamp as a monstrosity the thought that God on Easter morning actually forgave "those then already damned in hell." (The *reductio ad absurdum* attempted here is a variation of the form formerly employed by the *Kirchenzeitung*, which summarized the Missourian teaching thus: "Alle Welt, alle Gottlosen, Glaeubige wie Unglaeubige, sind laengst gerechtfertigt in Christi Auferstehung" [*Lehre u. Wehre*, 51, p. 390].) The implication is, if we follow the line of argument, that the Missourians of necessity must represent God as preaching the Gospel in hell. Everybody, of course, knows that the Missourians have not been, nor are, inclined to embrace the Hades theory. Nor do they tell the unbeliever: Be of good cheer; whether you believe or not, all is well with you. But this they do say: Those who "were then already damned in hell" are there for no other reason than for rejecting the forgiveness of their sins, which, because of the universally effective, also retroactive, character of the work wrought on Good Friday and Easter morning, had been brought to them, too, for instance by Noah's preaching of the Gospel. We agree with Dr. Lenski that Christ on Easter morning did not descend to hell for the purpose of justifying, subjectively, the damned. But on this point we disagree: We say that at Christ's descent into hell the spirits in prison, "which sometime were disobedient," realized that they brought their doom upon themselves by rejecting the forgiveness of sins procured for them by Christ and offered to them in the Gospel, 1 Pet. 3, 19 f. In other words: "The objective reconciliation covers all men as enemies" and the subjective reconciliation only the believers.

Does Missouri teach "that this, an *actus simplex*, is the only justification there is"? Yes and no. We do not teach that the objective justification of Easter morning is the only justification there is. We have been charged with that prior to 1933. Away back in 1905 the *Theologische Zeitblaetter* accused Missouri of teaching that "the only justification there is exists prior to all faith." (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 51, 564.) Indeed, the charge was raised already in 1888. But most readers of the *Pastor's Monthly* know that Missouri teaches that there is a) an objective justification and b) a subjective justification. Some of them have read § 148 of A. L. Graebner's *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology*: "The chief benefit of Christ's vicarious obedience is the

perfect righteousness obtained by Christ for all mankind, the acquisition of which God accepted as a reconciliation of the world to Himself, imputing to mankind the merit of the Mediator — *general, or objective, justification* —; and inasmuch as faith is the actual acceptance of this imputation announced in the Gospel, or of the righteousness imputed and offered in the Gospel, it is justifying faith, and God in His judgment graciously and for Christ's sake holds and pronounces the believer actually and by personal application fully absolved from all guilt and punishment while in the state of faith — *individual, or subjective, justification.*” Some of them have read the section in F. Pieper's *Christliche Dogmatik*, II, 411, entitled “Objective and Subjective Reconciliation.” “According to Scripture there is an *objective* reconciliation, a reconciliation not waiting to be effected by man, but the reconciliation of all men with God effected by Christ 1900 years ago. . . . And thus it comes about that now men are, on their part, or subjectively, reconciled to God in no other way than through faith (*sola fide*).” And p. 611: “The necessary prerequisite of justification by faith, of the subjective justification, is what is known as the objective justification, the reconciliation of the whole world of men.” And this is not a recent “development” of our doctrine. Some of the readers of the *Pastor's Monthly* may have read the references submitted by *Maanedstidende*, *Lutheran Standard*, and *Lehre und Wehre*, such as: “All are justified, and some are justified.” The very article which occasioned the former controversy devoted much space to the subjective justification. The article did not close with the statement: “All men are now accounted before God as just, obedient.” It added: “By faith, when we believe the Gospel, we personally appropriate the reconciliation, the justification, the righteousness, which is already adjudged to all sinners.” (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 1888, Vol. 34, p. 163 f.) Some may have read what *Lehre und Wehre* replied to the charge that Missouri holds that “the only justification there is exists prior to all faith.” This was the answer: “We believe that God justifies, or offers and grants the forgiveness of sins, *as often* as the Gospel is preached, absolution is pronounced, and the Sacraments are administered, and that God, in every case where the Holy Ghost creates faith in the heart of a man, appropriates to that man, and puts him into possession of, the forgiveness, or the justification which was gained by Christ for all men and belongs to all men, so that he now holds and possesses it.” (51, 564.) *Lehre und Wehre* was ready to adduce “more than one thousand” statements from Missouriian publications to the effect that only through faith man comes into possession of the forgiveness of sins. (P. 387.) By this time we are ready to raise the figure. We keep the concept of subjective justification distinct from that of objective justification. All the world knows that.

Are there, then, two justifications? No. There is but one justification. If one wants to put it this way: "On Easter morning God forgave all sins to every individual sinner in the world, and this is the only justification there is," we will, after having submitted the foregoing paragraph, unhesitatingly say: That is correct. We want to bring out thereby that the forgiveness of sins which is offered in the Gospel to all men is that identical forgiveness which was declared, issued, proclaimed, and sealed on Easter morning; that the forgiveness of sins which the individual sinner accepts and appropriates by faith is the one and same forgiveness which God pronounced on Easter morning; that the forgiveness of sins which is in effect "prior to all faith" does not change its character by reason of faith; that God is not moved by the faith of the sinner to grant him a different kind of forgiveness; that faith does not achieve forgiveness or move God to forgive. In a word, we know of but one forgiveness, gained by Christ, deposited in the means of grace, and appropriated by faith. This is not new doctrine. At the first meeting of the Synodical Conference, attended by the fathers of the Ohio Synod, this statement was submitted and unanimately approved and is here again submitted for unanimous approval: "The justification of the human race took place indeed also with respect to its acquirement in a moment, in that moment when Christ rose and was thus justified; but with respect to the appropriation it goes on until the Last Day." (Quoted from J. J. Rambach, p. 45.) "It goes on"—the objective justification of Easter morning. It is not replaced or modified in the case of the individual believer by a new sort of justification. The faith of the sinner does not effect an additional change in the disposition of the reconciled God. Not a new pardon is made out. What takes place is that the sinner comes in under the old pardon of Easter morning. There is but one pardon, one sentence of justification.

Is there still need to spend time and words on the *actus simplex*? This expression is quoted from an article by G. Stoeckhardt in *Lehre und Wehre* (35, p. 218.) It will be sufficient to quote his words: "We speak and think of this great, important matter according to our human mode of conception, thus: God forgives the sin again and again" (there you have an *actus multiplex*) "which He has forgiven long ago. But in reality that which we can conceive only as a composite act is the continued repetition of the same act, an *actus simplex*. That is in God one *continuum*, one thought, one view, which is not cut up and separated by time, that He adjudges us as holy and just in Christ. When we view man as he lives in time and his relation to God, we must indeed distinguish. When God in Christ reconciled the world unto Himself, He absolved us with the world from sin, justified us, before we came into being. As ideal persons, as it were, existing solely in God's thoughts, we were justified. Then the single

individual, looking at it *in concreto*, conceived and born in sin, becomes *actu* a child of God in that hour when he believes the Gospel." Is this language objectionable? If one wants the *actus multiplex* in so many letters, he will find it in *Lehre und Wehre*, 51, 495: "We Missourians, too, believe that God richly and daily forgives us our sins (justifies) in the Gospel, in the Absolution, in Baptism, and the Lord's Supper and also *per mutuum colloquium et consolationem fratrum*. (Smalc. Art., P. III, Art. IV.) In this sense the forgiveness, or justification, is *multiplex*. But this oft-repeated forgiveness and justification, continuing throughout life, is simply the application and exercise of the one forgiveness and justification which Christ has gained for us, which through the reconciliation is in effect for all times, and is dispensed in the means of grace. There are not two or more kinds of forgiveness of sins, each based on different grounds."

(To be continued.)

TH. ENGELDER.

Kein Modus Agendi vor der Bekehrung.

1.

Die hohe, wichtige Schriftwahrheit, daß der Mensch vor seiner Bekehrung keinen modus agendi „oder eine Weise, nämlich etwas Gutes und Heilsames in göttlichen Sachen zu wirken“, hat, bringt die Konfessionsformel sehr klar und scharf zum Ausdruck.

Sie schreibt: „Derhalben kann auch nicht recht gesagt werden (non recto dicitur), daß der Mensch vor seiner Bekehrung einen modum agendi oder eine Weise, nämlich etwas Gutes und Heilsames in göttlichen Sachen zu wirken, habe. Denn weil der Mensch vor seiner Bekehrung ‚tot ist in Sünden‘, Eph. 2, so kann in ihm keine Kraft sein, etwas Gutes in göttlichen Sachen zu wirken, und hat also auch keinen modum agendi oder Weise, in göttlichen Sachen zu wirken. Wenn man aber davon redet, wie Gott in dem Menschen wirke, so hat gleichwohl Gott der Herr einen modum agendi oder Weise zu wirken in einem Menschen, als in einer vernünftigen Kreatur, und eine andere zu wirken in einer andern, unvernünftigen Kreatur oder in einem Stein und Blod. Jedoch kann nichtsdestoweniger dem Menschen vor seiner Bekehrung kein modus agendi oder einige Weise, in geistlichen Sachen etwas Gutes zu wirken, zugeschrieben werden. (Art. II, De Lib. Arb., Sol. Decl., § 61.)

Theologische Studenten stoßen sich manchmal an den „ewigen Wiederholungen“, die sie in unsern Bekenntnisschriften, und gerade auch in der Konfessionsformel, finden. Sie meinen, man hätte sich kürzer fassen können und hätte auch z. B. in diesem kurzen Paragraphen nicht dreimal hintereinander zu sagen brauchen: „Der Mensch hat vor seiner