

# The reality of the Personal Union and Forensic Language

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1- The Age of Lutheran Orthodoxy and Confessional Lutheranism are not necessarily synonymous. The former most of the time built its Dogmatic Theologies making use of philosophical categories, especially Aristotelian categories, that is, for those scholars Aristotelian categories or philosophical categories were essential to the articulation of ideas and the construction of theological works. Robert Preus says: “*After the Formula of Concord [...] [there was] the loyalty among orthodox lutherans to Melanchthon’s theological contributions [...] German theology, too, recognized its debt to Melanchthon, followed his theology, particularly his method [...] Chemnitz pattern his Loci Theologici after Melanchthon’s Loci Communes. So do Hafenrenffer and others; Hutter, whose undeniable adherence to Formula of Concord [...] writes his massive Loci Communes Theologici in conscious imitation of Melanchthon’s work and with acknowledgements of his debt to ‘our Melanchthon’ and ‘our blessed author’ on almost every page. The Works of Chemnitz and Hutter in turn become archetypes for the later dogmaticians [...] [The] Confessions are rarely cited in most of works in systematic theology [...] In other words, there is a deliberate attempt, while never departing from the spirit or theology of the Lutheran Symbols, to work independently of them in producing dogmatics [...] Sometimes this tends to clear the air and give sharper definition, although when they become involved as specially Quenstedt and Hollaz do in causal nexus it is very hard to follow them[...] We now find philosophy influencing the presentation of theology to a rather market degree and Aristotelian terminology making its way into Lutheran dogmatics*”. When Confessional Lutheranism, as shown in the Book of Concord, uses philosophy [e.g. Confessional Lutherans can use philosophical terms to show the incorrect use of philosophical categories by the opponent, as in the case of realism and nominalism. This will be considered later in this paper], it doesn’t see philosophy as essential to the elaboration of the theology.

2- Confessional Lutheran bodies were created in this tradition, that is a tradition such as is in the Book of Concord, which interprets the Bible and Christian Theology in the simplest way possible. Even an orthodox dogmatician as Chemnitz gives this example: “*Since philosophy and dialectic words ‘essence’ and ‘accident’ are unknown to the unlearned, common people not familiar with arts, and they cannot be instructed regarding the proper meaning of theses words [...] it most prudent that simple and common hearers be not disturbed by those words and schools* (Chemnitz, Enchiridion, page 62)”.

3- Confessional Lutherans don’t see terms or categories like “material cause”, “formal cause” etc. as a reason to break fellowship. Fellowship is about christian doctrine, not about the correct use of philosophical or logical categories. None of the Orthodox Lutheran fathers wanted to create dogmas by forcing theology into such categories. Robert Preus says: “[Gerhard] is substantially the argument for *intuitu fidei*”. And: *None of the dogmaticians either before or after Gerhard really goes beyond him.*

4- Regarding justification, when for example some refuse to accept another type of language which doesn’t make the distinction between the blood of Jesus as the “material cause of our justification” and the resurrection as the “formal cause of our justification” they are giving philosophical or logical categories the status of dogma, and thereby denying the simplicity of the Bible and of the Confessional Lutheranism found in the Book of Concord, which teaches: “*Thus the following statements [...] are to be considered and taken as synonymous: ‘We are justified by faith’ (Rom. 3:28), or ‘faith is reckoned to us as righteousness’ (Rom. 4:5), or when he says that we are justified by the obedience of*

*Christ, our only mediator, or that 'one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men' (Rom. 5:18)".*

5- Regarding faith, those who want to prove that there is no justification of “me” or “you” prior to faith by use of the conjunctions “when”, “if”, “which” and the preposition “through”, they don’t understand that the Book of Concord and the Bible are not books of logic or philosophy, for both of these have statements which might be considered contradictory to those who do not give them a good and complete reading.

6- For instance, in one place the Book of Concord seems to say that John 6, such as in Luther’s exposition, is not about Lord’s Supper: *“There is therefore a twofold eating of the flesh of Christ. The one is spiritual, of which Christ speaks chiefly in John 6:48–58”*. In another place, it seems to say the contrary: *“Hear his own words (John 6:35), ‘I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.’ **This proves that the sacrament offers the forgiveness of sins and that it ought to be received by faith.**”* Again, in one place, it seems to teach that prayer for the dead can help those who depart: *“Our opponents quote the Fathers on offerings for the dead. We know that the ancients spoke of prayer for the dead. We do not forbid this”*. In another place, it seems to teach that any contact with soul of the those who depart is not required: *“Cyprian asked Cornelius, while he was still alive, to pray for his brothers after his departure. They [our opponents] cite this example to prove the invocation of the dead”*. In one place the Book of Concord seems to avoid the association of the word “regeneration” with “justification”: *“Frequently the word ‘regeneration’ means the sanctification or renewal which follows the righteousness of faith”*. In another place the Book of Concord says that justification is regeneration: *“it is frequently used in the Apology, where the statement is made, ‘Justification is regeneration’, that is, justification before God is regeneration”*.

7- Also in the Bible such these are recorded. In one place the Bible says that God loves the world (John 3:16), In another place the Bible says that he who is a friend of God must be an enemy of the world (James 4:4)”. In one place Bible says that faith is a gift from God: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9). In another place the Bible says *“your faith has saved you”* (Luke 7:50). In one place the Bible teaches subjective justification by faith alone, *“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law”* (Romans 3:28). In another place the Bible seems to teach a second type of subjective justification, that is, subjective justification by faith and works *“a man is justified by works, and not by faith only”* (James 2:24).

6- We need to interpret the teaching of these passages by the whole teaching of the Book of Concord and the Bible. We also need to teach the doctrine of Justification by the whole teaching of the Bible and the Book of Concord.

7- When Jesus said *“your faith has saved you”* he was not denying that faith *“is the gift of God.”* Also when James said *“a man is justified by works, and not by faith only”* he was not denying the teaching of the apostle Paul regarding justification, neither was John denying, when he said that God loves the world, the teaching of James that we must not love the world. Also when the Book of Concord said that Justification is regeneration, it was not saying that we shall mix justification and internal renewing or sanctification. Also when it says, *“We know that the ancients spoke of prayer for the dead. We do not forbid this”* it was not denying that any attempts to try to contact the souls of the dead by praying is a bad thing, or saying that the dead need our prayer. Also when it comes to John 6 in regards to the

Lord's Supper, The Book of Concord was not saying that Luther's interpretation of this biblical chapter was not correct. Therefore, when Book of Concord connects the *when, if, through, and which* to justification it is not necessarily denying the doctrine that applies to the Objective Justification of "me" and "you".

8- In fact, The Churches of Reformation defend a forensic view of justification against the infused grace doctrine of Rome. But the Lutheran Church has always pointed out that there is a substantial difference among Lutherans, Calvinists, Arminians, or Evangelicals regarding justification.

9- Calvinists, Arminians and a good part of Evangelicals claim to teach Forensic Justification. They also claim to teach the Forensic Justification in a proper sense.

10- But only the Lutheran Church teaches Forensic Justification without denying the power of the Personal Union in our Salvation.

11- Therefore, the Lutheran Church doesn't teach Forensic Justification in the proper sense in the same way as the Calvinists, Arminians and a good part of Evangelicals do. For example there is a Lutheran pastor who asks on his website, "*How do I know I'm saved? How can I tell? [...]. Here is the problem: neither the Calvinist nor the Armenian can simply see the cross and their Savior's safety. Why not? For the work of Christ on the cross, for the Calvinist, only succeeds if you are an elect [...]. Likewise, [for the Arminian] Christ's work on the cross is useful only if he appropriately decides for Jesus and chooses to follow him [...]. [They] seek proof of their election (Calvinist) or the sincerity of their decision by Jesus (Arminian) in their own lives. [If you ask the same question, 'How do I know that I am saved?', the Lutheran responds]: 'I am saved because Christ died on the cross for my sins and rose again for my justification' [by the outward work of Christ]" <http://www.stpaulslutheranchurch.net/>. This pastor is right when he calls this teaching the *Theology of the Cross*.*

12- The Lutheran Church has its own language in teaching Forensic Justification. Lutheran terminology for Forensic Justification is not separate from the language regarding the Personal Union, as the Book of Concord says: "*Accordingly, the word justify here means to declare righteous and free from sins, and to absolve one from eternal punishment for the sake of Christ's righteousness, which is imputed by God to faith. Also: "'To be justified' means that out of unjust men just men are made, or born again*". This is what we mean by justification in the proper sense.

13- Maybe the improper sense language to Lutheran Forensic Justification doctrine happens when Luther seems to teach like Origen: "*The wicked are ruled by the devil and are his captives; they are not ruled by the Spirit of Christ [...]. Such a faith is not an easy thing, as our opponents imagine; nor is it a human power, but a divine power that makes us alive and enables us to overcome death and the devil*". But even this language is right.

14 – The Bible, the Book of Concord, and Luther, teach that Christ descended into hell with his exalted body. Also, the Book of Concord allows us to teach that before the *resurrection* Jesus was exalted.

Bible:

*"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of*

Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him” ( 1 Peter 3:18-22).

Book of Concord:

“we simply believe that after the burial the **entire person, God and man**, descended into hell, conquered the devil, **destroyed hell’s power**, and took from the devil all his might ”

Luther:

“Unto such a life Christ died, so that it has now ceased for Him, and He is now translated into another life. Hence Peter says that He is quickened according to spirit, that is, He has entered into a spiritual and supernatural life, which comprehends the whole life that Christ now has in the soul and **body**, and indeed in such a way that He no longer has a fleshly [natural] body, but only a spiritual body... Similar we, to, shall be, for He is the First Fruits of this spiritual life. Accordingly, Christ now lives according to the spirit, that is, though He is truly man, yet His body is spiritual”.

15- Even an Orthodox Lutheran Father, such as John Quistorp and some good old Lutheran scholars, like Rambach, clearly used the language of the Objective Justification of “me” and “you” prior to faith:

“The word justification and reconciliation is used in a twofold manner: 1) in respect of acquired merit, 2) in respect of appropriated merit. Thus **ALL ARE JUSTIFIED** and some are justified.

[Explaining this:

Quistorp is not using the logical opposition between the universal and the particular when he says “all are justified and some are justified,” rather showing the difference between **all and many** in which by faith only some are justified, but even who has not faith was justified in Christ. In this sense, “**me**” and “**you**”, in opposition to many, can be included in “all”.]

Rambach:

In Him [Jesus] ALL debtors WERE CO-JUSTIFIED [if “you” and “me” have debts we are co-justified by Jesus work].

16- Luther taught the same doctrine:

“A king **gives** you a castle; if **you** do no **accept** it, your refusal does not make the king a liar nor his gift void. You have cheated yourself; it is entirely your own fault: **the king has certainly given** you the castle” (St. L. IX:972).

17 – The Book of Concord taught many times the same doctrine:

“That through Christ **the human race has truly been redeemed and reconciled with God** and that by his innocent obedience, suffering, and **death Christ has earned for us ‘the righteousness which avails before God’ and eternal life**”.

**“Faith justifies solely for this reason and on this account, that as a means and instrument it embraces God’s grace and the merit of Christ in the promise of the Gospel.”**

*“That faith’s sole office and property is to serve as the only and exclusive means and instrument with and through which we receive, grasp, accept, apply to ourselves, and appropriate the grace and the merit of Christ in the promise of the Gospel”.*

*“The only essential and necessary elements of justification are the grace of God, the merit of Christ, and faith which accepts these in the promise of the Gospel”.*

18- Synodical Conference taught the same doctrine: *“Is contradictory to say that God is reconciled only through our faith.*

19- Walther taught the same regarding the faith:

“Thesis XIV.

*In the tenth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when faith is required as a condition of justification and salvation, as if a person were righteous in the sight of God and saved, not only by faith, but also on account of his faith, for the sake of his faith, and in view of his faith”.*

20- Synodical Conference and Walther taught particular absolution as application of universal absolution:

C. F. W. Walther:

*“[Its true that] Christ has actually redeemed the whole world and that therefore the glad tidings of the Gospel are essentially the **absolution of the entire world**, and which absolution is based upon **this redemption already accomplished** and which absolution, in order to serve its purpose, needs simply to be believed and **accepted...**” (Pastorale, page 157).*

Synodical Conference:

*“Yet a judgment must be pronounced [not "made", that is, we must pronounce a thing that already exists before our speech] **over every individual person**, either of **absolution** or condemnation”.*

*“Thus of course one can only believe if one believes that the world is redeemed; for if I believe that, **then the Absolution is only the imparting of the fact to the penitents that they were redeemed 1800 years ago**, plus the request: Believe this now, then you are all saved. What wicked people you must be if you do not believe this!”*

21- When we call the scholastic categories that, deny that Universal Justification, can be applied to “you” and “me” nominalism, we are only showing the bad use of the philosophical categories by those who affirm this, because when we say that the church was saved universally at a particular time by Christ, this church is a real thing out of the individual person of Christ. To deny this is to deny the teaching even of the Orthodox Luther fathers such as Johann Gerhard.

Gerhard teaches:

*“Scripture ascribes to Christ a twofold body, a personal, which was assumed into the Person of the Logos, and a spiritual, or mystical, one, which is united with Him by the bond of His Spirit...” (Loci ‘De iud. Extremo’, Paragraph 112).*

[We can explain this: Luther taught that everyone can be assured of his election by the means of Grace. One baptized person is an elected person. But even this baptized/elected person can go to hell in the future. Lutherans reject the Calvinist doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints. Even a regenerated/born again person can go to hell in the future. Lutherans reject the Calvinist doctrine of limited atonement. Even the people that do not have faith sufficient to go to heaven (in the future) were atoned for by Christ. Lutherans reject the Calvinist doctrine of irresistible grace. The means of grace do not force one to believe. Lutherans teach that even a Christian is a citizen of two worlds. We can read these things in any Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics. All of these things show clearly that there is not a Holy Church without individuals. Individuals are mutable, the Church is immutable. We can see the Church at least by two sides: wide sense and narrow sense. In the wide sense some people believe now but will go to hell in the future. Also the wide sense makes no distinction between the universal world and those who are loved and justified in Christ. The narrow sense sees the Church as those who have the eternal faith of the believers in the future heaven. This happens not because of the Church, but because of the nature of the individuals. It's a fact that some believers who are now a part of the church will go to hell in the future. Therefore, the concept of the church includes faith, but does not depend on faith. By faith we remain in the church, but the church itself exists by free gift of God, not because of the faith.

Because of this, inasmuch as we were born in original sin and we are unbelievers and sinners we were not “justified” at the time of Jesus' death and resurrection. But inasmuch as the Church precedes us, “me” and “you” can find justification in Jesus prior to our personal faith.

In other words and in another train of thought, it is possible to say that this is the same teaching as when the Book of Concord says we are justified when we believe, or that we are justified through faith, or that if we believe we will be justified, or that faith is that thing by which we are justified. It is also possible to say that this was the same teaching that Robert Preus meant in the book ‘Justification and Rome’, and what the CTCR theses on justification from 1983 meant, and what Quenstedt also meant. We have no reason to think that they taught a different doctrine.]

22- In the proper sense Lord's Supper is about justification in Christ's atonement, not in Jesus' resurrection.

Hermann Sasse: *“All confessions are agreed that the Supper is a memorial of the death of Christ” (Lonely Way, Vol. I, page 385).*

23- Neither the Bible, Luther, the Synodical Conference, or the Book of Concord, or the Confessional Lutheran scholars, including Walther and Robert Preus, or even the Orthodox Lutheran Father Quenstedt made a false dichotomy between the Forensic Justification and the Personal Union.

Bible teaches:

*“Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification ” (Romans 4:25).*

[δι̃α doesn't mean that Jesus will grant justification to mankind only in the resurrection, but makes reference to the mission, or purpose of Jesus: our justification. This mission is present in the resurrection and prior to the resurrection too. δι̃α, therefore, is not "in order to be justified now". In the resurrection (causative, retrospective or prospective) Jesus wants (not only now, but always) to accomplish His mission, i.e. our justification.

Easily you will find many biblical commentaries explaining the same thing: The second δια — dia is quite clearly prospective with a view to our justification. **Paul does not mean to separate the resurrection from the death of Christ in the work of atonement, but simply to show that the resurrection is at one with the death on the Cross in proof of Christ's claims.** <https://www.studylight.org/commentary/romans/4-25.html>

**Romans 4:25: The death of Christ is the proper cause of justification, or means of atonement, according to St. Paul; the resurrection of Christ is only the mediate or secondary cause of it.** <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/romans/4-25.htm>

*"God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith" (Romans 3:25).*

*"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (CL 1:14).*

Book of Concord teaches:

*"John is saying in this passage that **in the work or matter of our JUSTIFICATION** not only the divine nature in Christ, but also **His blood actually cleanses us from all sins**".*

*"According to the **Council of Ephesus decreed that the flesh of Christ has the power to give life.** Many other noble testimonies of the **ancient orthodox church** concerning this article are recorded elsewhere".*

*"[Jesus] **redeemed us with his blood**".*

*"He **alone** [Jesus] is **"the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."***

*"it is important to consider carefully in what way Christ is called our righteousness in this matter of justification: **Our righteousness rests neither upon His divine nature nor upon His human nature but upon the entire person of Christ,** who as God and man in his sole, total, and perfect obedience is our righteousness."*

Francis Pieper teaches:

*"**sins have been taken away by the sacrifice of Christ**" (Christian Dogmatic – Vol. II, page 378)".*

*"[We must refute] the declaration theory -which claims that there is no wrath in God on account of sin, but that God declares His love for man through Christ" (Ibid., page 362).*

*"Scripture teaches objective reconciliation. **Nineteen hundred years ago** Christ effected the reconciliation of all men with God [...] **He is already reconciled**" (Christian Dogmatic – Vol. II, page 347).*

“God has thus graciously prepared the way for men to exult that they are now **‘justified by his blood’**”  
Ibid. page 351).

*‘[The heterodox position of Andreas] Osiander asserts that the suffering and death of Christ could not have justified us because it ‘occurred 1.500 years and longer ago’(Dogmatics, Vol II, pages 528-529).*

Hermann Sasse teaches:

*“[Christian faith has the] characteristic ability to remember **a salvation history that took place many centuries ago**” (Lonely Way, Vol. I, page 381).*

*[My explanation: Paul calls the incarnation of Jesus, including His life, death, and resurrection the fulness time (GL 4:4), and Revelation says that Jesus died before the foundation of the world (13:8). Therefore, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ are much more the historical facts].*

Synodical Conference:

“Redemption of Jesus Christ **moves** dear God to declare poor accursed sinners righteous.”

“**God is reconciled** through of Christ with all and with **EVERY INDIVIDUAL**”.

*This grace, forgiveness, **righteousness**, life, **salvation**, acquired again for **ALL MEN by Christ’s redemption works**, God brings to me by means of Grace.*

Rohrberg:

*Had God not raised our Mediator, He would thereby have let it be known that He was not yet satisfied with us. But now that Jesus is risen, God has thereby declared that He has been satisfied, wherefore also Jesus was in His resurrection justified as Mediator in place of the sinners. And in so far as the whole human race, when it is considered in general and **as one person, was justified at the same time** together with Him, it too was received, as a fruit of this justification, into God’s covenant of peace, and thus the peace which had been lost in Adam was restored again between God and men. (p. 23)*

C. H. Little:

“Objective justification is God’s declaration of amnesty to the world of sinners **on the basis of the VICARIOUS OBEDIENCE of Christ**, by which He secured a perfect righteousness for all mankind, which God accepted as a reconciliation of the world to Himself, imputing to mankind the merits of the Redeemer.

Koehler:

“[Objective Justification is an] act of God, by which He, **on the basis of the perfect vicarious atonement wrought by Christ**, declared the whole world to be justified in His sight (objective justification), and transmits and imputes the effect of this declaration to all whom He brings to faith by the work of the Holy Ghost through the means of grace (subjective justification).”

Quenstedt:

*Christ reconciled us through his **DEATH**, so reconciles us with God by virtue of his **DEATH**, converting us **through** the Word of the **CROSS**.*

Luther:

*[God] **punishes** all sinners unrighteous ones, which righteousness is called the essential (formale) or **actual righteousness**.*

[Also Luther taught that for the very sick person, looking at the crucifix (atonement) was sufficient to get salvation/justification before his death].

C. F. W. Walther:

*Christ did this mainly by His **BLOODY DEATH OF ATONEMENT ON THE CROSS** [GOOD FRIDAY] for all the sins of the world. **By this, the head of the snake was totally crushed and ALL PEOPLE WERE COMPLETELY REDEEMED.**"*

Robert Preus:

*"Objective justification is not a mere metaphor, a figurative way of expressing the fact that Christ died for all and paid for the sins of all. Objective justification has happened, it is the actual acquittal of the entire world of sinners for Christ's sake. Neither does the doctrine of objective justification refer to the mere possibility of the individual's justification through faith, to a mere potentiality which faith completes when one believes in Christ. Justification is no more a mere potentiality or possibility than Christ's atonement. The doctrine of objective justification points to the **REAL JUSTIFICATION OF ALL SINNERS FOR SAKE OF CHRIST'S ATONING WORK "BEFORE" WE COME TO FAITH IN CHRIST**".*

*[Kurt Marquart: **Grace equals forgiveness equals justification equals redemption equals reconciliation equals propitiation**. These are theological not philological equivalents. Of course the words "**propitiation**," "**redemption**," and the rest, mean different things--but **they refer to the same theological reality**, though from different angles or aspects of it.*

[This the official position of LCMS, ELS and WELS:

there was special joy to understand that we all [LCMS, WELS and ELS] hold to objective justification. file:///C:/Users/izabeledaniel/Downloads/ELS-LCMS-WELS- Report-December-2-2015.pdf]

23- Therefore, neither the Bible, Luther, the Book of Concord, nor Confessional Lutheranism teaches two justifications in the sense that the second justification is completely new, but two justifications in taught only in the sense that the second is the actual application of the first. It is also proper to say that both are in essence one justification.