

THE PROPER DISTINCTION BETWEEN HUBER AND THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE DOCTRINES OF ELECTION AND JUSTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

Many, if not all, Wisconsin Synod pastors are aware of those internet blogs offering their “gracious and loving” critiques of the WELS doctrine of justification. Many, if not all, Wisconsin Synod pastors are aware of a few pastors who have left our fellowship in recent years due to the WELS teaching of universal and objective justification. These controversies have not escaped the notice of WELS pastors. However, not all pastors may be familiar with Samuel Huber and Aegidius Hunnius, two theologians who are often cited by American objective justification deniers to refute the doctrine of justification as taught in WELS, ELS, LC-MS, and by extension, the members of the former Synodical Conference. It is the goal of this thesis to examine the writings of Huber and Hunnius and to compare their teachings on justification to what was taught in the early days of the Synodical Conference. Finally, this thesis will demonstrate the faulty use of church history by those who deny universal and objective justification.

INTRODUCTION

Justificatio est articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae. The teaching that “[Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Rom 4:15 NIV 1984) is the teaching which separates Christianity from all other religions. Since believers “have been justified through faith, we have peace with God.” (Rom 5:1) All Christians have moved from hatred towards God to friendship with God. Furthermore, all believers have received God’s justification and all of justification’s blessings “by faith apart from the works of the law,” (Rom 3:28) which comforts many consciences by assuring that justification is an act of God through and through.

The doctrine of justification by faith, as the Reformers were often quick to point out, is truly the article upon which the church stands or falls. It is no surprise then that the devil has attacked the precious truth of forgiveness of sins in Jesus throughout the church’s existence. Already in the Garden of Eden, Satan deceived God’s people into creating their own salvation. Throughout Israel’s wilderness wanderings, the period of the judges, and the Israelite monarchies, the devil introduced novel “grace and favor” to be received through Baal and idol worship. When Christ graced the earth with his physical presence, the devil raised up his servants, the Pharisees, to turn the hearts of many away from Jesus. During the time of the Apostles, proto-Gnosticism and Judaizing opinions were the devil’s tools to trick God’s people into abandoning Jesus.

Through Arius, Nestorius, and the like, Satan taught a “forgiveness of sins” accomplished by a phony savior that God had never known nor revealed in his word. Later, Pelagius would become the devil’s instrument to mislead God’s people with his moral neutrality of man. Shortly after these deceptions were snuffed out of the church, the devil fooled God’s people with saintly relics and ascetic living, which eventually gave way to the treasury of merits and monasticism. Under the Papacy, the devil had led the church into a marketplace-style forgiveness where God’s grace could be purchased with a few coins or the recitation of the proper number of prayers. Even during the Protestant Reformation, many were led to look inwards rather than to Jesus for salvation. Some assumed a forgiveness that was owed in part to man’s will or decision while others taught the only way for one to be truly assured of election, forgiveness, and salvation was through fruits of faith.

Shortly after the Reformation, and under the devil’s influence, Pietism emerged among God’s people, which disregarded the objective means of forgiveness, instead favoring the sinner’s subjective experience. University-level rationalism trickled its way into the church, claiming that a virgin birth and a resurrection from the dead were a sham and thereby destroying any foundation for forgiveness. Even among confessional Lutherans seeking refuge in America from the devil’s pietistic and rationalistic lies, justification soon came under attack by those with synergistic tendencies who taught election *intuitu fidei* and a justification rooted not in God’s objective action, but rather in man’s faith.

It’s all the same; only the names have changed. Since the foundation of the earth, Satan has been dealing his best hand in turning eyes and hearts away from the forgiveness of sins won by Jesus to other means of finding God’s grace and favor. It has become a rule: Satan will do whatever he can to convince people to find forgiveness anywhere that isn’t the name of Jesus

Christ. The Christian church, Lutheranism included, is certainly no exception to this rule. Within American Lutheranism, especially from the twentieth century and up to the present day, that name of Christ has been obscured by those who deny universal and objective justification. Whether those deniers be R.C.H. Lenski and his Ohio companions, the dissidents at Kokomo, Indiana, or the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America.¹

In recent memory, there has been no shortage of blog posts and books which decry universal and objective justification as unbiblical and anti-Lutheran. Some have charged the doctrine with being a byproduct of Pietism. Others have claimed objective justification is a Waltherian novelty. Still yet, others have intimated that universal and objective justification as taught by C.F.W. Walther, Francis Pieper, Adolf Hoenecke, and others who came out of the Synodical Conference was a revival of the teaching of sixteenth-century errorist Samuel Huber. Samuel Huber's error was eventually driven out of Saxony, expelled from Germany, and refuted on several occasions in writing by Aegidius Hunnius. In some ways, Hunnius has become the champion and hero of American universal and objective justification deniers,² who so often

1. Consider Lenski's comments on κατασταθήσονται in Rom 5:19: "This logical future is stressed especially by those who take Paul's words to mean that all men were justified, pardoned, forgiven more than 1,900 years ago so that no act of God's justifying the individual believer in the instant of faith follows. We have shown the untenableness of this opinion." R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1961), 382. Lenski and his Ohio Synod were staunchly opposed to justification as taught by Walther and Pieper in Missouri. Similar rejection of objective justification was seen with the crisis over the so-called "Kokomo Theses" in what became "national news" thanks to the reporting of *Lutheran News*. Between 1978–1979, two families of Faith Lutheran Church in Kokomo, Indiana were involved in controversy over objective justification with their pastor and the district presidium. Those families were ultimately suspended from fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod over their denial of objective justification. More contemporary denial of objective justification is seen in the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America, which is largely comprised of LC-MS and WELS dissenters. One of the main theological distinctives of ELDoNA is their rejection of universal and objective justification.

2. In that last decade or so, several of Hunnius' writings have been translated and published by ELDoNA. Avid readers of church history or early Lutheran doctrine can appreciate these efforts, but it begs that question, at least in my mind, why are we seeing so much put out from this rather obscure theologian?

invoke his name when either objective justification or the Synodical Conference and her heirs are under discussion.

This paper will examine the doctrinal and polemical writings of both Samuel Huber and Aegidius Hunnius. It will also explore exegetical and doctrinal writings of Georg Stöckhardt, John Schaller, C.F.W. Walther, Francis Pieper, and Adolf Hoenecke, all of whom were pastors and professors in the Synodical Conference. One purpose in surveying these theologians³ is to demonstrate that Huber and the Synodical Conference theologians, though using similar terminology, did not hold identical teachings on justification. Another purpose in these surveys is to show that Hunnius and the Synodical Conference were not as far apart on justification as has been claimed. Finally, this paper will examine several arguments put forth by contemporary universal and objective justification deniers. This examination will demonstrate that those who charge the Synodical Conference with Huberianism misuse history through false analogies and hasty generalizations.

3. For brief biographies of these theologians, see the Appendix.

EXAMINATION OF HUBER AND HUNNIUS

Historical Background to the Controversy

The decades following Martin Luther's death would border on disastrous for Luther's reformation cause. Kurt Aland suggests, "Protestantism was afflicted with so many controversies that we can almost say that theological and ecclesiastical controversies were the hallmark of the age of Orthodoxy."⁴ Between Luther's death in 1546 and the publication of the Book of Concord in 1580, numerous controversies threatened doctrine and practices that had become earmarks of the evangelical movement. Robert Preus offers the following explanation for the growing number of theological disputes:

They [The immediate heirs of Luther's theology in the 16th century] were no longer directly in contact with the deep religious experience and original theological insight of the Reformation. Although the issues underlying the Reformation still obtained, the climate of thought had changed in the late 16th and 17th centuries, and scores of new issues had risen to challenge evangelical theology.⁵

In other words, with Luther no longer around to settle controversies and clear the air, chaos ensued in the lands of the Lutheran Reformation, and it wasn't always abundantly clear which theological camp rightly captured the evangelical spirit of the Reformer.

4. Kurt Aland, *A History of Christianity*, Vol. 2, trans. by James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 223.

5. Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, Vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970), 27-8.

Bitter rivalries formed, and theological clashes ensued⁶ over controverted topics such as adiaphora, good works, free will, election, God’s law, and Christology, among others. Several attempts at concord had been made, each as unsuccessful as the last. It wasn’t until the drafting of the Formula of Concord in 1577 and the subsequent publishing of the Book of Concord in 1580 that general unity had been reached amongst Germany’s Lutherans.

While the Book of Concord furnished a means by which teaching could be judged in accord with Scripture, it wouldn’t prove to be a definite end to controversy as Aland astutely alerts: “This Book of Concord was the close of an age, or, said more cautiously, the close of an age in which controversies about the faith affected not only theologians but congregations as well.”⁷ Aland asserts that the Book of Concord, by and large cleared the air amongst the pastors and congregations of the Lutheran Reformation, but it in no way halted dispute amongst the academics at the university level.

Aland’s observation is evidenced by the topic under discussion in this section of the paper—the contention between the Wittenberg faculty at the close of the sixteenth century. Crypto-Calvinism⁸ had been condemned, most notably, in articles seven and eight of the Formula of Concord.⁹ However, the influence of Crypto-Calvinism had not been fully expelled

6. Most notably between the more irenic and compromise minded Phillipist Party and the Gnesio-Lutherans who were more outspoken in their condemnation of error and adherence to “genuine” doctrine. Further divides were also seen in the civic realm between Ernestine and Albertine Saxony.

7. Aland, *A History*, 223.

8. A pejorative term used to describe those within Lutheran circles who held to a more “spiritualizing” view of the Lord’s Supper. Perhaps the best characterization of Crypto-Calvinist thought is captured in Kolb, Arand, and Nestingens’ *The Lutheran Confessions*: “The person of Christ is present, but only in the divine nature as Son of God, and that presence was implicitly understood to be spiritual. Furthermore, it testified to, but did not directly convey, the benefits of Christ to his people.” Charles P. Arand, Robert Kolb, and James A. Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions: History and Theology of The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 243.

9. Articles seven and eight respectively deal with the Lord’s Supper and the person of Christ.

from Saxony. Suspect teaching on the Lord's Supper had pervaded the Wittenberg faculty and Saxony as a whole for years.¹⁰ It was hoped that the calling of two new faculty members—Aegidius Hunnius and Samuel Huber—to professorships at Wittenberg would curb Crypto-Calvinistic sway in the territory. The effectiveness of these appointments will be left to the judgment of others. What will be considered later, the *status controversiae*, is the conflict between the aforementioned Wittenberg contemporaries on the articles of justification and election.

With controversy after controversy plaguing the Lutheran Churches of Germany, it's no surprise that the time between Luther's death and the close of the century saw large surges of theological and polemical writings from the fathers of the Lutheran church. A few words are in order here on the nature and spirit of the age of Orthodoxy's most influential authors. Preus observes five characteristics, which categorize the writings of the age: a general doctrinal unity between theologians, a prevailing polemical tone, commitment to the teachings of the historic church, commitment to Luther, and a focus on exegesis.¹¹ Perhaps the most significant point to ponder as one considers the controversy between Huber and Hunnius is Preus' second observation—the polemical tone.

Preus notes,

Today we have difficulty comprehending and abiding the polemics of the 16th and 17th centuries, which was so often carried on with bad purpose and unnecessary rancor... Theologians sometimes purposely misunderstood the position of their adversaries. Particularly annoying to us today was the general practice of pressing the arguments of their adversaries to their logical but absurd conclusions.¹²

10. Melancthon's later view of The Supper had been expanded and further advanced by several notable members of the Wittenberg faculty—Paul Eber, Christoph Pezel, and Caspar Peucer.

11. Preus, *The Theology*, 31–44.

12. Preus, *The Theology*, 33.

At times, it seems as if dishonesty and purposeful misrepresentation were considered virtuous if they served the interest of having one's theological stance win the day. However, it should be borne in mind that such polemical practices were commonplace in the sixteenth century, even though they may be cause for offense today. This polemical spirit and methodology are best not forgotten by the reader who finds himself immersed in the writings of the Lutheran Age of Orthodoxy.

Examination of Huber's Doctrines of Election and Justification

Only a few years into their ministries at the University of Wittenberg, two colleagues would butt heads over the doctrines of election and justification. Professors Samuel Huber and Aegidius Hunnius found themselves in a bitter battle over the extent of God's election unto eternal life and the nature of justification. It was a battle that would result in the former's expulsion from Germany. This section of the thesis examines Dr. Samuel Huber's thoughts on these important doctrines of comfort.

In the introductory remarks to his translation of Aegidius Hunnius' *Theses Opposed to Huberianism*, Reverend Paul A. Rydecki notes Samuel Huber's (a former Calvinist) opposition to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination: "In his vehement opposition to Calvinism, Huber began to introduce novel terminology and teachings that put him at odds with the Formula of Concord and with his colleagues on the Wittenberg faculty."¹³ Huber's "vehement opposition" to Calvinist predestination is most clearly seen in his *Compendium of Theses* written in 1590:

This also follows: that the boundless and holy God of hosts is rightly accused of cruelty, caprice, malice (ἐπιχαρκακία), unrighteousness and, in short, the worst evil deeds

13. Paul A. Rydecki, introduction to *Theses Opposed to Huberianism* (Malone: Repristination Press, 2012), 5.

(especially if the Calvinists impose on this doctrine of theirs the culmination of their teaching on predestination, which they fabricated not long ago). Thus the result is that it would be preferable to be engulfed up by the raging waters of the Manicheans than by the Calvinists, since the latter assign to God, whom they call good, the origin and propagation of evil, but the former only assigned good to good and evil to evil. It would even be preferable to follow any religion at all, rather than that of the Calvinists. No age and no cesspool of apostates has ever thought up a more horrible doctrine, which crushes and suffocates consciences more rapidly and miserably and cuts off every taste of divine grace, than this Calvinistic plague.¹⁴

Polemical to the core, Huber's remarks here are an undeniable rejection of predestination as is taught in the Reformed tradition of faith.¹⁵ Huber spares no sharp word as he accuses Calvin and his followers of charging God with the worst of crimes. Also noteworthy is Huber's equating of Calvin's double predestination to the worst heresies of old. For Huber, the verdict is clear: double predestination is a damnable heresy of the first rank.

It is no surprise then that Huber offers a doctrine of election that is at complete odds with John Calvin's own teaching, a position he expounds in no uncertain terms in his *Steadfast Confession*:

He [God] chose and elected through this his Son not only some, not only a few, not only a select part. But just as Christ is a universal Savior and came into the world to save sinners and came to give life to the world, that we might live holy, blessed, and eternal lives, so also God elected and ordained through his Son all sinners, that is, all people to life, salvation and blessedness.¹⁶

14. Samuel Huber, "Compendium of Theses by Samuel Huber on the Universal Redemption of the Human Race Accomplished by Jesus Christ," in *Samuel Huber on Election and Justification: Translations from his Writings*, trans. and ed. by Andrew Hussman, 2013, 9–10.
http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/2282/Huber%20Translations_0.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

15. Consider Calvin's comments on the *locus* of eternal election: "By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or the other of these ends, we say that he has been predestined to life or death." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 3, trans. by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 206.

16. Samuel Huber, "Dr. Samuel Huber's Steadfast Confession," in *Samuel Huber on Election and Justification: Translations from his Writings*, trans. and ed. by Andrew Hussman, 2013, 12.

Like Calvin, Huber sees election as unconditional; the key difference, however, between the two views lies in the decree God conferred upon all men. In Huber's estimation, God ordained all people for eternal life—a thought often repeated in the *Steadfast Confession*. It seems that Huber's insistence on a universal election to life is at least partially in response to Calvinistic thought on both God's will and decree. Huber further elaborates, "Reconciliation was for the sin of the whole world, 1 John 2. The one whom he [Jesus Christ] reconciled with God is certainly also ordained to life through him and never was passed over in God's secret counsel."¹⁷ The "secret counsel" to which Huber refers is the *voluntas beneplaciti*¹⁸ ascribed to God in Reformed thought. However, such a mention of a secret will in God is, for Huber, an absurd notion as God, in eternity, appointed all men to salvation—an idea which Huber consistently defends in his writings and which bears witness to his vehement opposition to Calvinistic double predestination.

When considering Huberian thought on election, two questions come to mind. The first, was Huber a universalist? Second, how did Huber arrive at this conclusion? Surprisingly, the answer to the former question is no. Striking and impossible as it may seem considering his universal election to life, Huber denied universal salvation. Consider again the *Steadfast Confession* where Huber refutes the charges of universalism his opponents had leveled against him:

With this the false addition and slander is also clearly, distinctly, and sufficiently opposed, as if I hold a teaching and confession that all people, whether they

17. Huber, "Steadfast Confession," 14.

18. *Voluntas beneplaciti* as it used in Reformed thought is here defined by Richard A. Muller: "The *voluntas decreti vel beneplaciti*, the will of the decree or of (the divine) good pleasure, is the ultimate, effective, and absolutely unsearchable will of God which underlies the revealed will of God." Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 331. In other words, there is a secret will in God which overrides his revealed will to save all men (1 Tim 2:4). This secret will includes both God's eternal decree to choose some for eternal salvation and others for eternal death.

believe or do not believe, that is, whether they follow their election and appointment to life through Christ or not—that nevertheless they still come altogether into heaven and are saved. Such an atrocious, gross, terrible teaching never, by God’s grace, came to me in my thoughts, my words and teaching all my life long. And whoever holds such a teaching, that all people can or may come into heaven whether they believe in Christ or do not believe—he is the Devil’s apostle.¹⁹

With strong words, Huber denies the accusations of universalism, and without stuttering or stumbling, professes universal salvation to be a doctrine of the Devil. Additionally, Huber maintains the necessity of faith in acquiring salvation: “The other part in this confession of mine is that no one reaches and obtains the salvation, that is, the purpose for which he was elected, unless he afterwards receives with faith Christ, in whom he was elected.”²⁰ It seems that, in Huber’s opinion, there is an objective and subjective sense to election—faith subjectively receiving an objective reality. And though he may not acknowledge the universalistic undertone of his teaching on election, Huber nonetheless emphatically denies the possibility of a universal salvation for all men.

To answer the second question Huber’s writings provoke (How did Huber arrive at his conclusions?), more extensive comment is in order. Of no small significance is Huber’s equating of God’s antecedent will²¹ with election. Consider Dr. Huber’s summary statement of his teaching on election:

I, Dr. Samuel Huber, have always believed, taught and confessed, and I still always believe, teach and confess steadfastly that God sent his Son as a Savior for the entire human race. By his bitter suffering and death he also redeemed all people from sin and death so that they all might live and all might be saved. Therefore, I confess that he

19. Huber, “Steadfast Confession,” 15–16.

20. Huber, “Steadfast Confession,” 15. Huber’s text reads: *Das ander Stück in dieser meiner Bekantnus ist, das niemandt die Seligkeit, das ist, das Ende, zu welchem er erwehlet ist, erreich und erlange, er neme dann Christum, inn welchem er erwehlet ist.* In the second to last clause, *dann* is perhaps best understood in a telic sense—“at the end” or “finally”—as opposed to the temporal sense reflected in Hussman’s translation.

21. God’s earnest desire for the salvation of all men as expressed in 1 Tim 2:3–4, 2 Pet 3:9, Ezek 33:11, etc.

secretly abandoned and passed over no one in his counsel, just as he also gave all people to his Son and through him sought and desired the salvation and blessedness of all people. Therefore, by this I confess also, just as Paul says in Ephesians 1, “God chose us before the beginning of the world through Christ, that we should be holy and blameless,” that for such a purpose he chose and elected through this his Son not only some, not only a few, not only a select part. But just as Christ is a universal Savior and came into the world to save sinners and came to give life to the world, that we might live holy, blessed, and eternal lives, so also God elected and ordained through his Son all sinners, that is, all people to life, salvation and blessedness.²²

For Huber, the universal nature of the atonement and redemption through Jesus Christ offers proof of God’s desire to have all men saved. It logically follows, for Huber then, that since God wants all men saved, he actively chose all men for salvation.

Of further note is how Huber appeals to the Apostle Paul in support of his conclusion: “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Eph 1:5). The way in which Huber further expounds upon Paul’s thought indicates his broad understanding of the objects of God’s choosing—us. Christ is universal Savior; thus, it follows that since God’s choosing is in Christ (the universal Savior), God’s choosing is also universal. So then, according to Huber, the objects of God’s electing to holiness and blamelessness are not merely the recipients of Paul’s letter (The Ephesians in particular and Christians in general), but the entire human race.

In offering his summary on the doctrine of election, Huber doesn’t always differentiate between God’s antecedent will and election, and at times, clearly conflates the two. This mingling, in part, explains how Huber came to his conclusions on election. Further explanation is found in how Huber connects justification and election. Already in the title page to his *Steadfast Confession* does Huber tie election to justification: “Whether God in his counsel and will, through his dear Son Jesus Christ, has completely redeemed from death, *and thus* [emphasis

22. Huber, “Steadfast Confession,” 12.

mine] also completely elected to life, salvation, and blessedness only a few people, or especially all people without the exception of any person.”²³ According to Huber, election goes hand in hand with justification, a thought which is made more explicit upon further examination of Huber’s teachings on the latter.

What becomes clear upon a detailed study of Huber’s writings is that the universality of the gospel plays a key role in his theology. In addition to universal election, Huber puts forth a universal reconciliation,²⁴ as well as a universal atonement and redemption: “Christ, who atoned for the sins of all people, is being pointed out. He made satisfaction for all, he cleansed all, he freed all, he redeemed all.”²⁵

It does not surprise the reader, then, that Huber also speaks of justification in a universal way: “But I called universal justification that by which God, considering the satisfaction of Christ, became favorably disposed toward the entire human race because of that satisfaction, and thus he accepted it just as if everyone had made satisfaction for himself, with the law having been entirely fulfilled.”²⁶ For Huber, the foundation of a universal acquittal in the heavenly courtroom has its foundation in Jesus Christ, who offered himself in the stead of all people. Owing to the satisfaction and merit of Christ, God is “favorably disposed” towards humanity, which can be explained as follows: “God does not count humanity’s sins against them.”

23. Huber, “Steadfast Confession,” 11.

24. Cf. footnote 16.

25. Samuel Huber, “The Invincible Truth concerning the Election and Predestination of the Human Race to Eternal Life, Accomplished by Christ Jesus,” in *Samuel Huber on Election and Justification: Translations from his Writings*, trans. and ed. by Andrew Hussman, 2013, 20.

26. Samuel Huber, “Brief Confutation of a Book Published under a Pseudonym, on the Controversy among the Wittenberg Theologians and Samuel Huber concerning Election,” in *Samuel Huber on Election and Justification: Translations from his Writings*, trans. and ed. by Andrew Hussman, 2013, 17.

Just as Huber explained how the believer, in faith, receives his election to salvation, so too does he speak in a similar way about faith and justification: “However, people still do not possess justification by their own act unless they apprehend by faith that which was approved and ratified by God on behalf of all.”²⁷ To the reader who accepts as biblical both objective and subjective justification, Huber’s statement isn’t objectionable as he seems to be advocating for a believer receiving in faith that which Christ won for him. However, Huber elsewhere makes statements that shed further light on his understanding of universal justification. Johannes Meisner, professor at the University of Wittenberg from 1650–1681, writes of this conversation between Samuel Huber and his opponents at the University of Wittenberg:²⁸

And with that, to make his opinion easy enough for us to understand, he [Huber] asked us [Hunnius and Leyser] the following: “If we should come to a place, where nothing about Christ had previously been taught, how we might deal with those people.” Then we answered him, “We would begin with the law—reproach them! They are poor sinners and under the wrath of God, which they should recognize with penitent hearts. If they now were troubled by their sin, God offers, through his gospel, grace and forgiveness in Christ, wanting to make them righteous and blessed, so long as they accept it in true faith.” To this, Dr. Huber said, “No. This would not be the correct way to preach to the unbelievers.” Rather, he would begin by saying, “You have the grace of God, you have the righteousness of Christ, you have salvation.”²⁹

Of special note in this conversation is the way Huber talks about the unregenerate—they are *already* under God’s grace, they *already* possess Christ’s righteousness as their own, they are *already* among the saved. In Huber’s opinion, grace, righteousness, and salvation have all been applied to all people equally. Huber continues this thought in *The Invincible Truth concerning*

27. Huber, “Brief Confutation,” 17.

28. Most notably Aegidius Hunnius, Polycarp Leyser, and Solomon Gesner.

29. Johannes Meisner, *Consilia Theologica Witebergensia* (Frankfort am Main: Johann Andreas Endters, 1664), 554. (Translation mine). <https://digitale.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/vd17/content/pageview/7963856>. Huber’s response (which shifts from German to Latin for the final sentence) reads: *Vos habetis gratiam dei, habetis justificatum christum, habetis salutem.*

the Election and Predestination of the Human Race to Eternal Life. Commenting there on his opponent's "faulty" responses to his teachings, Huber writes, "Here now also fit those alleged things from their writings, that wrath has not been removed from us, that not all have been received into grace, that the sins of all have not been imputed to Christ, that God has not had mercy on all."³⁰ From these two thoughts, Huber's true opinion on universal justification is made clearer: In Christ, God has not only declared all people to be not guilty, but he also has received all people into his grace and has essentially granted them eternal life. In summary, it can be said that Huber taught not a universal objective justification of the world, but rather, a universal subjective justification of the world,³¹ a justification that is equally applied to all and with the blessings of subjective justification applied to and possessed by all people without exception.

Since Huber taught a universal subjective justification, in what light are his statements on faith and justification to be received?³² Huber's statements in his *Theses that Christ Jesus Died for all Men* prove helpful: "The general remission of sins, which has become ours through the blood of Christ, includes many, who are ungrateful towards God, and who dare to annihilate their heritage through impure lives. Therefore, although that they have received the remission of sins, nevertheless they are again condemned because of their negligence."³³ Many "ungrateful" people, owing to a lack of faith, reject what they unknowingly possessed. These same individuals

30. Huber, "The Invincible Truth," 24.

31. David Jay Webber, "Our Righteousness before God...Is Revealed in the Gospel. On this Righteousness Faith Relies," (paper presented at The Emmaus Conference, Tacoma, WA, April 22–23, 2015), 33. <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/4141/WebberJustification.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

32. Cf. footnote 26.

33. Samuel Huber, *Theses, Christum Jesum Esse Mortuum pro Peccatis Omnium Hominum* (Tübingen: Georg Gruppenbach, 1592), 75, quoted in "Justification and Easter. A study in Subjective and Objective Justification in Lutheran Theology," by Tom G.A. Hardt in *A Lively Legacy: Essays in Honor of Robert Preus*, ed. by Kurt E. Marquart, *et al* (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary, 1985), 59.

forfeit the salvation that was unwittingly applied to them and sit in God's judgment. In short, it can be said that Huber's position was as follows: faith simply acknowledges that which was already applied to it, unbelief throws away that which was already credited to its account.

In conclusion, we return to the question that was posed earlier: "how did Huber arrive at his teachings on election?" The answer is most fully revealed in Huber's thoughts on justification. For Huber, election and justification are intimately connected—Justification, with its universal subjective application, is offered as evidence of an election to salvation that was likewise universally applied. In Huberian theology, both universal justification and election are doled out in the same way to the witting and unwitting alike. Both universal justification and election are either recognized or rejected by the one who hears the gospel.

Examination of Hunnius' Anti-Huber Polemics

"In 1592 he [Samuel Huber] accepted a call to the University of Wittenberg, where Aegidius Hunnius, Polycarp Leyser and Solomon Gesner eagerly received him in the hope that he would help them in their struggle against Calvinism and Crypto-Calvinism."³⁴ Samuel Huber's stark opposition to Calvinism was shown in the previous section. It was his anti-Calvinist fervor, which as Rydecki noted, made Huber a welcome addition to the faculty at the University of Wittenberg. However, in the course of time, it became clear to Huber's colleagues that his teachings on election and justification didn't align with those of Scripture, the Lutheran confessions, and their own. Aegidius Hunnius rose to the forefront of those at Wittenberg who

34. Paul A. Rydecki, introduction to "*Theses Opposed to Huberianism*," 5.

stood opposed to Huber. This section of the thesis will focus on Aegidius Hunnius' responses to Samuel Huber's doctrines of election and justification.

In the first place, a note on Hunnius' opposition to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and God's will are in order. In the introductory notes to his *Clear Explanation*, Hunnius lays out three points that he considered to be outside of the controversy between himself and Huber. These three points are as follows: God sincerely desires the salvation of all men, God sent his Son to make propitiation for the whole world, and God offers, in earnest, the merits of Christ to all people.³⁵ On these three points, Huber and Hunnius agreed and stood united in their rejection of Calvinism. However, with these points, the agreement between Hunnius and Huber ends. Hunnius goes on at length to defend his teachings and to refute Dr. Huber.

In opposition to the Huberian teaching on the universal election of all people to salvation, Hunnius and his supporters at Wittenberg define election in this way: "We have testified many times that our election was made in eternity, and that, before the foundations of the world were laid, all those were elected whom God foreknew according to his foreknowledge (as Peter and Paul affirm) that they would be constantly incorporated in Christ Jesus, and would be saved through faith in Christ Jesus."³⁶ More will be said on Hunnius' teaching on election. For now, suffice it to say that Hunnius taught a particular election of only believers which took place in eternity. With clarity, Hunnius states his position and elsewhere makes the case that any departure from his position (Huber's departure in particular) is not to be tolerated: "[Huber's] mixed election of believers as well as unbelievers is not to be taught."³⁷ In no uncertain terms,

35. Aegidius Hunnius, *A Clear Explanation of the Controversy among the Wittenberg Theologians concerning Regeneration and Election*, trans. by Paul A. Rydecki (Malone: Repristination Press, 2013), 7–8.

36. Hunnius, *A Clear Explanation*, 55.

37. Hunnius, *Theses Opposed*, 18.

Hunnius supports these views in his *Theses Opposed to Huberianism* and *A Clear Explanation of the Controversy among the Wittenberg Theologians*.

From the outset of his *Clear Explanation*, Hunnius offers proof of Huber’s inaccuracy on election with two non-biblical arguments. In the first place, Hunnius explains how the word “election” shows that predestination doesn’t pertain to unbelievers: “Certainly the very word ‘election’ demonstrates this clearly, meaning to select and separate something out of a number, a multitude, a crowd or a mass.”³⁸ To elect means that the one who elects has chosen one or many (but not all) out of a group. In Hunnius’ opinion, it would be an offense against the meaning of the word elect to suggest, as Huber does, that God chose all people out of the group of all people. Hunnius follows up this bit of evidence with an argument from the church historical: “Also testifying to this are the titles with which the orthodox writers, both ancient and modern, discuss the article concerning election, calling it not the election of all men, but the election or predestination of the saved, of the saints, of believers.”³⁹ Hunnius maintains that neither the historic writers in the church nor the more recent—which would certainly include Luther and the other reformers—ever speak about an election by God of the entire human race to salvation. Hunnius considers Huber’s theology of election to be a novel idea that betrays the clear meaning of the word election.

In addition, Hunnius appeals to the Savior’s voice to decry Huberian universal election: “Indeed, Christ Himself, not just once, but twice affirms that many are called, but few are chosen.”⁴⁰ Hunnius contends that Jesus himself teaches a particular election. The gospel call is

38. Hunnius, *A Clear Explanation*, 18.

39. Hunnius, *A Clear Explanation*, 18.

40. Hunnius, *A Clear Explanation*, 18. Jesus makes this statement in his parable of the Wedding Banquet (Matt 22:14). However, it is not clear to which story Hunnius makes reference when he suggests that Jesus made this

universal; however, God's choosing is not. Furthermore, Hunnius attacks Huber's theology as unbiblical, questioning the legitimacy of Huber's conflating of God's antecedent will with election: "This is truly the status and turning point of the whole Huberian controversy in this same article: First, whether that merciful antecedent will of God towards all men, which was spoken about above, is and should be referred to as election and predestination to salvation. Is it proper to speak in that way?"⁴¹ Further study of Hunnius' polemics indicates that he believed Huber's manner of discussing election and God's will to be improper.

What is evident in Hunnius' writings is that he accepts as both Lutheran and biblical the notion that God sincerely desires the salvation of all people. Hunnius taught God's antecedent will, but maintained a distinction between that will and predestination, citing John 6: "He [Jesus] proclaims the decree of predestination to life with these words: 'This is the will of my Father who sent me: that everyone who believes in him should not perish, but have life eternal.'"⁴² Hunnius would say that it is God's will to save all men, but he would also maintain that in Jesus' remarks in John 6, it is implicitly taught that not all will be saved in the end, therefore, not all are elect. For Hunnius, salvation is only realized by believers, those whom God elected. Further support is offered by Hunnius from the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "It pleased God through foolish preaching to save believers."⁴³ Hunnius sees additional proof of a particular election here—only those who are saved have been elected.

statement twice. It is possible that Hunnius had in mind Jesus' remarks in the parable of the Great Banquet: "I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet" (Luke 14:16).

41. Hunnius, *Theses Opposed*, 19.

42. Hunnius, *Theses Opposed*, 31.

43. Hunnius, *Theses Opposed*, 32.

To answer the question Hunnius posed about election and God’s antecedent will (are they synonymous?), Hunnius answers, “no,” and suggests that both be left to stand side by side: “Let us hold that the will of God by which He wants all men to be saved is certainly universal; but that election is not universal to all men, but of all believers, and thus particular with respect to the world.”⁴⁴ In other words, two things can be true at the same time. God can will the salvation of all people and he can elect only believers. To be sure, Hunnius made a distinction between God’s antecedent will and his decree to predestination. Yet he wouldn’t shy away from citing God’s antecedent will as (at least in part) a cause of election:

But now, since that general love and mercy of God is not the entire cause, but other things are required in addition for the establishment of divine predestination, namely Christ, in whom election was made (Eph.1)—and indeed, Christ, not as He is considered apart from faith and disengaged from saving us, but as apprehended by faith—the result is that it is not permissible to state the same thing regarding election that one may state in the matter concerning the merciful will of God.⁴⁵

Just as the formulators had taught, so too did Hunnius teach two causes of election.⁴⁶ The general love and mercy of God—which Hunnius here uses to speak of God’s antecedent will—is one cause, the merit of Christ being the other. However, it seems that, in order to separate himself from Huber, Hunnius adds this caveat to the latter cause: Christ’s merit as it is apprehended in faith. Hunnius would contend that the universal natures of redemption, atonement, etc. ought not to be seen as proof of a Huberian universal election. Rather, Hunnius sees God’s eternal election in view of Christ’s merit as received by faith, thus limiting election to believers.⁴⁷

44. Hunnius, *A Clear Explanation*, 13.

45. Hunnius, *A Clear Explanation*, 14–5.

46. FC: SD: XI: 75: “Our election to eternal life does not rest upon our righteousness or virtues but solely on Christ’s merit and the gracious will of the Father.” *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. by Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 652.

47. Preus makes the helpful observation about Hunnius’ expressions on the matter: “His being less systematic than the later theologians makes it possible for him to utter statements which they could not possibly

Further clarity on Hunnius' teaching on Christ's merit and election can be found in his *Theses Opposed to Huberianism*: "[Huber] dreams that, in the act of God's electing, people have been elected to salvation in a bare way, without any view toward faith in Christ."⁴⁸ Hunnius' response to Huber's "bare" election is that God has not elected all men to salvation simply because Christ atoned for and redeemed all men. Instead, God elected those who would receive Christ's merit in faith. Said another way, God elected believers on account of Christ's merit. For this reason, Hunnius suggests that "It is not permissible to state the same thing regarding election that one may state in the matter concerning the merciful will of God."⁴⁹ In opposition to Huber's doctrine of election, Hunnius taught that God's antecedent will and election are not equivalents, and the former is not the lone cause of the latter.

Of no small insignificance in the controversy between Huber and Hunnius was Hunnius' rejection of Huber's teaching of universal justification, which, briefly stated, made the claim that justification was both universally applied to and apprehended by all people, regardless of faith. As Hunnius moves the focus of his *Theses Opposed to Huberianism* from election to justification, he immediately starts with his understanding of Huber's teaching on justification:

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

have made." Robert Preus, "The Doctrine of Election as Taught by the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians." *Quartalschrift: Theological Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (1958), 251. Hunnius, though covering nearly every *locus* of doctrine in assorted writings, never composed a systematics text. In view of this fact, some of Hunnius' writings are not nearly as precise as other theologians, and in some cases, his explanations are a bit unclear.

48. Hunnius, *Theses Opposed to Huberianism*, 23.

49. Hunnius, *A Clear Explanation*, 15. Of interest to heirs of the Synodical Conference is the Latin phraseology Hunnius employs in the final clause of the quote: *sine omni intuitu fidei in Christum*. The phrase and idea of *intuitu fidei*, now infamous within Lutheran circles, evidently originated with Hunnius, per C.F.W Walther: "During the seventeenth century, from Aegidius Hunnius on, how differently in our church was the relationship between faith and the election of grace talked about by our best theologians." C.F.W Walther, "Dogmengeschichtliches über die Lehre von Verhältniß des Glaubens zur Gnadenwahl," *Lehre und Wehre* 26, no. 2 (1880): 49 (Translation mine).

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.⁵⁰

By employing terms and phrases such as conferred, equally remitted, in actual fact, and received, Hunnius demonstrates his assessment of Huber's theology (an assessment which seems to capture well what Huber taught)—all people, whether they know it or not, possess forgiveness and rest in God's favor. Hunnius heightens this assessment in the thesis that immediately follows: "Hence he says that all those to whom the gospel is proclaimed are to be called 'elect, justified by God, sanctified, redeemed,' and some of these are said to be 'believing and converted.'"⁵¹ Consider the final thought there: "some of these are said to be believing..." Implicit here, then, is that others are not believing. But, as Hunnius interprets Huber, the unbelief of those who hear the gospel is of little significance. Even the unbeliever is to be considered and interacted with as if he were a believer, one who has received the gifts of Christ's merit.

In Hunnius' opinion, to speak as Huber does about justification is utter nonsense, and such manner of speech ought not be employed.⁵² Elsewhere, Hunnius further explains why he perceives Huber's methodology and way of speaking to be improper by stating his position on justification: "Our churches have always taught and still teach the justification that is by faith and that pertains to believers, but that by no means extends to the whole world."⁵³ Hunnius emphasizes justification through faith alone, a point that is even more expressly stated in his

Theses Opposed to Huberianism:

This notwithstanding, 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

50. Hunnius, *Theses Opposed*, 57.

51. Hunnius, *Theses Opposed*, 57.

52. Cf. footnote 49.

53. Hunnius, *A Clear Explanation*, 57.

through Christ, so that if the whole world were to believe in Christ, then the whole world would be justified. With respect to this, Paul writes in Romans 5 that ‘through one man’s justification (δικαίωμα), the gift has spread toward all men for justification (δικαίωσις) of life.’ 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. But imputation of righteousness does not take place except through faith.⁵⁴

Hunnius again states his objection to Huber’s universal justification and can’t seem to comprehend the thought that justification might occur apart from faith. Interestingly, Hunnius maintains “most willingly” that Christ’s merits are universal, a thought with which Huber would agree. However, as Hunnius notes above, it is nonsense to speak, as Huber does, about the unbelieving being received into God’s grace and even being justified. Does this mean, then, that Hunnius rejects the modern parlance of objective and subjective justification?

On first glance, Hunnius’ thought above seems to indicate so, as does the following: “Through the obedience of Christ, righteousness was acquired and obtained, which is more than sufficient for all men to be justified and made alive, if the whole world were to embrace it in faith.”⁵⁵ It seems that Hunnius advocates for a justification that has not been declared to all people, but that is available to all people yet only imputed through faith. To be sure, Hunnius is an ardent supporter of justification through faith alone. Hunnius also, at times, employs language that sounds similar to the objective justification language used in modern times.

Consider Hunnius’ comments in his *Judaizing Calvin*. Writing on Is 43:25,⁵⁶ Hunnius explains: “Here, first of all, I would like you to observe that the one speaking is introduced as He for whose sake our sins are blotted out. But only for Christ’s sake are the sins of the world

54. Hunnius, *Theses Opposed*, 58.

55. Hunnius, *A Clear Explanation*, 62–3.

56. “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more (Is 43:25).

blotted out.”⁵⁷ There Hunnius writes that not only are our sins—the sins of believers—blotted out; the sins of the world are blotted out. Hunnius, two paragraphs later, demonstrates what he means by “blotted out:” Therefore, the simplest conclusion is that Christ, by the servitude of His humiliation and obedience, and by the labor of His sufferings, cross and death, succeeded on that account in blotting out our sins to eternal oblivion.”⁵⁸ In “blotting out” sins, God throws sinful people’s sins out forever, completely removing them from the picture. It may be said that sins are non-imputed to the world.

Consider also Hunnius’ 152nd anti-Huberian thesis: “We respond from the start that we steadfastly teach that Christ, by the decree, counsel, ordination, good pleasure and command of the eternal Father, has freed *each and every* mortal, without any exception at any time or in any place, from sin, death and eternal damnation.”⁵⁹ The reader finds strong non-imputation or objective justification language in the words “freed,” “each and every,” and “from sin.” All people, regardless of location or time, have had their sins removed from them in Christ’s act of righteousness—A thought from which Hunnius would not shy away.

Additionally, Hunnius’ comments on Rom 5:18⁶⁰ prove helpful. Hunnius writes: “Although on account of a lack of faith, all men at once are by no means justified, nor were they ever justified, nevertheless the apostolic antithesis remains unshaken.”⁶¹ Is Hunnius simply

57. Aegidius Hunnius, *The Judaizing Calvin*, trans. by Paul A. Rydecki (Malone: Repristination Press, 2012), 86–7.

58. Hunnius, *Judaizing Calvin*, 87.

59. Hunnius, *Theses Opposed*, 51.

60. “Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men” (Rom 5:18).

61. Hunnius, *A Clear Explanation*, 63.

inconsistent—"Even though no one is justified apart from faith, Paul nonetheless calls all people justified?" By no means! The apostolic antithesis remains unshaken. As was shown above, Hunnius taught a universal remission of sins; what he here says in his comments on Rom 5:18 is best understood to mean "Christ has forgiven the world all her sins; however, not all in the world personally receive Christ's forgiveness in faith." We return to the question posed a moment ago: "Would Hunnius reject the modern parlance of objective and subjective justification?" An appropriate response: this doesn't appear to be the case.

Why, then, does Hunnius speak in such strong terms that, at times, seem to denounce universal justification? In the first place, it may simply be that Hunnius rejects the term as that was the term his opponent used. Hunnius was also keenly aware of passages like John 3:36⁶² and writes: "Regarding those who never believe in the Son of God, from them also the wrath of God was never withdrawn (not even for a moment)."⁶³ Hunnius, unlike Huber, desired to retain the proper distinction between law and gospel. In applying justification in a subjective sense to the entire human race, as Huber had done, that proper distinction between law and gospel was not observed. In speaking as he did, Hunnius was also able to clearly articulate faith's role in receiving justification over against Huber who was not so able to ascribe the proper role to faith. By way of reminder, Huber couldn't properly describe faith's role in justification as he taught that in faith a sinner merely acknowledged his forgiveness and that he was already among the saved (two facts which, as Huber also taught, were thrown into the trash by rejection of the gospel).

62. "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them" (John 3:36).

63. Hunnius, *A Clear Explanation*, 61.

Finally, we turn to Robert Preus, who offers a helpful insight into the methods of the dogmaticians who belonged to the Lutheran Age of Orthodoxy: “Sometimes they fail to discuss important Biblical motifs at length. This failing is due also to the fact that the theologians of that day were often preoccupied with disputed points of doctrine.”⁶⁴ It cannot be denied that Hunnius was responding to an error, which he thought posed a grave threat to the church and wrote in a way that addressed that Huberian error head on. Since Huber taught a justification that was not by faith, it should come as no surprise that Hunnius emphasizes—and in some cases over emphasized to the neglect of objective justification—justification by faith. That said, even though it is only treated incidentally in his writings, Hunnius taught universal and objective justification.

64. Preus, *The Theology*, 43.

EXAMINATION OF SYNODICAL CONFERENCE THEOLOGIANS

Historical Background to the Synodical Conference

“By the 19th century, the United States especially provided an environment favorable to the formation of the Synodical Conference.”⁶⁵ So is Armin Schuetze’s assessment of the American religious scene in the nineteenth century. To be sure, the American harvest field was ripe for the establishing of ecumenical organizations in the 1800s. Unlike her Latin American counterparts (who primarily claimed ties to the Roman Church and thus her ecclesiastical baggage), the North American citizenry was predominantly Protestant, following the traditions of the Anglican, Reformed, and Lutheran churches, respectively. In the case of those immigrants from Germany, the new world offered freedom from the restrictive bonds of the Prussian Union. No, religious tolerance wasn’t always a given in the fledgling colonies, but the first amendment to the United States Constitution⁶⁶ of 1791 had, to a large extent, freed American Christendom of denominational intolerance. Free from state and federal restrictions, clergy now arranged ministeriums, and churches could walk the road of fellowship together in organized synods.

65. Armin Schuetze, *The Synodical Conference: Ecumenical Endeavor* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2000), 1.

66. Congress shall *make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof* (emphasis mine); or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Owing to freedoms afforded by the US Constitution, the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first twenty years of the nineteenth saw an explosion of Lutheran unity in the American scene. By 1820 Lutheran synods had been established in New York, Ohio, Tennessee, and elsewhere, each with the desire to conduct the church's mission at home and in the frontier. Such lofty goals had instilled in many the need for larger associations of America's Lutherans. H. George Anderson observes, "The multiplication of synods around 1820 revived interest in the need for some way by which Lutherans could move forward on a common basis."⁶⁷ The first attempt at larger Lutheran unity in North America was achieved with the formation of the General Synod.

In 1820 four Lutheran organizations—the Pennsylvania Ministerium, the North Carolina Synod, the New York Ministerium, and the Synod of Maryland and Virginia—formally organized as the General Synod⁶⁸ at Hagerstown, Maryland. It is duly noted that the General Synod had less than confessional tendencies and a unionistic bent. A quick perusal of the General Synod's constitution reveals no requirements for confessional subscription, and it wasn't uncommon for Reformed clergy to give addresses at official Synod conventions and even preside over the Supper. Additionally, the General Synod's most respected leaders couldn't be coined "orthodox Lutheran" by any confessional Lutheran standard. Anderson notes, "The man who would become the guiding genius of the General Synod sat through its constituting convention as an observer. He would be present at every subsequent meeting for the next 50 years. His name was Samuel Simon Schmucker."⁶⁹ Under the influencing hand of Schmucker, an entire

67. H. George Anderson, "Synodical Growth and the General Synod, 1817-1840," in *The Lutherans in North America*, ed. by E. Clifford Nelson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 116.

68. Officially The Evangelical Lutheran General Synod in the United States of North America.

69. Anderson, "Synodical Growth," in *The Lutherans*, 120. Samuel Simon Schmucker was a German American Lutheran pastor and theologian. Schmucker is perhaps best remembered in history for his integral role in

generation of General Synod theologians, pastors, and leaders would carry out ministry in America with little commitment to classic Lutheran orthodoxy.

For those American Lutherans who desired an institution that better captured the Reformation spirit of Luther and the Confessions, respite was found in the General Council.⁷⁰ In 1866 the Pennsylvania Ministerium withdrew from the General Synod. In the same document expressing her split from the General Synod, the Pennsylvania Ministerium offered the following invitation to like-minded Lutheran bodies in America:

Resolved, that a committee be now appointed, and be charged with the following duties: To prepare and issue a fraternal address to all Evangelical Lutheran Synods, ministers, and congregations in the United States and Canadas, which confess the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, inviting them to unite with us in a Convention, for the purpose of forming a Union of Lutheran Synods.⁷¹

Under the leadership of Charles Porterfield Krauth,⁷² the General Council would officially incorporate in 1867. The General Council emphasized subscription to the Lutheran Confessions

the founding of America's oldest continually operating seminary at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where he also served as professor from 1826–1864. During his tenure, Schmucker published his *magnum opus* in 1834—*Elements of Popular Theology*, a doctrinal textbook presenting the core of theology that follows the outline of the Augsburg Confession. Ironically, Schmucker was influential in drafting the “Definite Platform” of 1855, which introduced the infamous “American Recension of the Augsburg Confession,” which omitted “errors” contained in the 1530 edition in efforts to bolster relations with the Reformed. Among those omissions in the American Recension were the articles on baptismal regeneration and the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament. The “Definite Platform” reveals the confessional stance and unionistic spirit of one of the General Synod's most influential leaders.

70. Officially The General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

71. “Ministerium Invitation to Convention” in *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America*, ed. R. C. Wolf (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 141.

72. Charles Porterfield Krauth was an American Lutheran pastor who served congregations in Maryland and Virginia from 1841–1852. Krauth, a student of Schmucker (and one-time heir of his theology) for a period in 1853, even served a Dutch-Reformed congregation in the Virgin Islands. However, with the publication of the “Definite Platform” in 1855, Krauth abandoned his theological father in favor of a more conservative interpretation of the Augsburg Confession. In 1861 Krauth became the full-time editor of *The Lutheran*, a theological journal aimed at normalizing the use of the Book of Concord in the American Lutheran church. In 1864, Krauth became the leader of Gettysburg's rival seminary in Philadelphia—the Lutheran Theological Seminary, where he taught systematics. In 1867, Krauth and a schoolmate, William Passavant, founded the General Council.

and had largely disavowed unionism⁷³ unlike the General Synod. However, the General Council was slow to answer various doctrinal and practical questions posed by several prospective synods on chiasm, altar and pulpit fellowship amongst disagreeing Lutheran bodies, and secret societies. These “four points” proved to be unscalable barriers to membership for the Missouri, Ohio, Norwegian, and Iowa Synods, respectively.⁷⁴

Concord amongst America’s Lutherans had not been fully realized in the nineteenth century despite the wishes and intentions of many. Furthermore, contributing to political, social, and even doctrinal hurdles to unity was the American Civil War. The General Synod had largely avoided taking a public stance on the issue, much to the dismay of several southern synods—The Tennessee Synod, the Mississippi Synod, and the Holston Synod— who would eventually separate and form the General Synod South.⁷⁵ After four years of intense struggle, the Civil War had torn apart families, devastated the South, caused the federal debt to skyrocket, and further divided American Lutheranism.

Thus was the situation in America when the Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Norwegian, Ohio, and Wisconsin Synods formally organized the Synodical Conference⁷⁶ at St. John’s in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in July of 1872. Perhaps the best characterization of the state of

73. Consider the somewhat controversial statement Krauth made in the “Akron Rule” of 1872: “Lutheran pulpits are for Lutheran ministers only. Lutheran altars are for Lutheran communicants only.” Charles Porterfield Krauth, “Krauth’s ‘Rule’ as Written at Akron, 1872,” in *Documents in Lutheran Unity*, 78.

74. Additionally, between 1869–1871, the Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois Synods would leave the General Council over non-decisive action on the “four points.”

75. The General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Confederate States of America was founded in 1863 in Concord, North Carolina.

76. Officially The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America.

American Lutheranism can be found in the document “Justification for the Synodical Conference,” which was crafted at Fort Wayne, Indiana in November of 1871:

It is well known that for many years our American Lutheran church as a whole—in as far as everything can be included under this name which still calls itself Lutheran and thus still claims to be the Lutheran Church—has presented a very sad picture of external disruption and internal dissension...there existed between various synods a deplorable disunity of spirit not only in relation to particular essential parts of our Lutheran teaching and practice but even in such matters of principal as... the authoritative value of our symbols or the requirements of Lutheran church membership, of the scriptural authority of our distinctive Lutheran teachings, and of the fundamental character of the difference between our Lutheran doctrine and church and the various groups of the so-called reformed church. Consequently there raged in many directions an open and serious battle.⁷⁷

The proceedings of the colloquy at Fort Wayne in 1871 portray a sad state of affairs in which confessional Lutheran bulwarks such as C.F.W. Walther, U.V. Koren, Matthias Loy, and Adolf Hoenecke reluctantly found themselves. The American situation, as unfortunate as it was, led to the formation of the Synodical Conference in 1872. As an organization, the Synodical Conference boldly acknowledged “The canonical writings of the Old and New Testaments as God’s Word, and the confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of 1580, called the “Concordia,” as her own,”⁷⁸ even if some Lutherans in her midst were unwilling to follow suit.

Synodical Conference Theologians on the Doctrine of Election

Modern polemics regarding Aegidius Hunnius’ rejection of the Huberian error and their relationships to the Synodical Conference revolve largely around the doctrine of justification.

77. “Justification for the Synodical Conference,” in *Documents of Lutheran Unity*, 188.

78. “Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America,” in *Documents in Lutheran Unity*, 196. This quote is from article II of the Synodical Conference constitution.

Those within ELDoNA would readily concede that the Synodical Conference did not revive Huber's teaching on election:

So is the Huberian thought [rejected] that God has actually elected all to salvation but some, somehow, fall away by failing to grasp the "Objective Justification" made at the cross and pronounced in the resurrection...Rather, we contend, both those who teach the Waltherian "Objective Justification" and those who teach that Walther's position is contrary to the Reformers' understanding of the Article of Justification confess, instead (with the Book of Concord), that God has elected only in connection with Christ.⁷⁹

Even opponents of the Synodical Conference and her doctrinal heritage admit, as is shown above, that the chief point of doctrinal divergence lies not in election but rather in justification. Furthermore, a cursory reading of a few key Synodical Conference theologians demonstrates that they and Huber were miles apart on predestination. In view of these issues, this portion of the paper, dealing with Synodical Conference thought on election will be brief.

C.F.W Walther, though not mentioning him by name, is quick to rebuke the error to which Huber clung:

Here [Matt 22:14] the Lord Himself states at the conclusion of the parable of the wedding feast prepared by a king for his son: 'For many are called, but few are chosen.' He does not say a small number, rather 'few,' to indicate that truly select certain persons are chosen; as also indicated by the words *chosen* and *selected*, they are set apart from among others. The elect are set apart from among all humanity, yes, from the ranks of nominal Christians. How foolish to speak of the elect as referring to all humankind.⁸⁰

Walther is explicit in his explanation; election is particular and certainly does not pertain to all men as Huber would've taught. The very word Jesus uses (chosen) indicates that certain ones have been set apart from the larger group. Thus, according to Walther, not all are elected.

Walther's colleague at Concordia Seminary, Francis Pieper, says just as much, even citing

79. The Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America and Paul A. Rydecki, *Theses on the Article of Justification and The Forensic Appeal to the Throne of Grace in the Theology of the Lutheran Age of Orthodoxy* (Malone: Repristination Press, 2014), 9.

80. C.F.W Walther. *Walther's Works: All Glory to God*, trans. by August R. Suelflow, Herbert Richter, and Everette Meier (St. Louis: Concordia, 2016), 164-5.

Samuel Huber by name as one who opposes the scriptural doctrine of election. Pieper writes, “The *obiectum electionis*, or the elect, are not all men, as Huber taught...The elect are only those actually saved.”⁸¹ These two Missouri Synod theologians are quick to reject any such Huberian notion that God elects the human race in its entirety; instead, favoring a simple election of believers.

Additionally, the Wisconsin Synod’s Adolf Hoenecke refutes the conflation of God’s antecedent will with election—an error Huber made: “If someone wanted to declare God’s universal, gracious will to be one and the same and not to distinguish them from each other, then he would plainly take his stand against Scripture.”⁸² Hoenecke arrives at this conclusion by a simple examination of key passages which talk about each respectively. Those passages of Scripture which deal with God’s universal will to save speak in terms of the world, all men, etc., while those passages which speak about election are of necessity limited in scope by both immediate context and vocabulary choices.^{83 84}

So far the Synodical Conference’s implicit and explicit rejection of Huber’s doctrine of election. For a positive declaration on election, perhaps the clearest definition is found in Pieper’s *Christian Dogmatics*. Commenting on the causes and time of election, Pieper writes: “The election of grace may therefore be defined as the eternal act of God by which from eternity out of pure grace for Christ’s sake He has decreed to bestow these blessings on the Christians

81. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, trans. by Walter W.F. Albrecht (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 478–9.

82. Adolf Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, trans. by James Langebartels (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2003), 14.

83. Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran*, 13.

84. On God’s antecedent will, Hoenecke cites John 3:16 and Rom 11:32. For election, Hoenecke cites Matt 20:16 and Eph. 1:4.

which through His call they now enjoy—conversion, justification, sanctification, and preservation in faith.”⁸⁵ According to Pieper, election happens in eternity and is caused by nothing other than God’s grace and Christ’s merit. The results of such election are the conversion, justification (note that Pieper’s definition does not allow for any sort of Huberian election resulting from justification), sanctification, and preservation of the chosen individual in time.⁸⁶

Synodical Conference Theologians on the Doctrine of Justification

Justification in Exegetical Writings

This section of the thesis will look at two exegetical writings that came out of the Synodical Conference and treat justification. There are two key sections of Scripture which were used by Synodical Conference theologians to teach universal and objective justification. One of the *loci classici* that was used by Synodical Conference exegetes and theologians as a basis for their teaching on objective justification is 2 Cor 5:18–19. The following portion will examine John Schaller’s exegesis of 2 Cor 5:19 as it was originally prepared for publication in a 1910 edition of the Wisconsin Synod’s *Theologische Quartalschrift*.

The Greek text of 2 Cor 5:19 is as follows:⁸⁷

85. Pieper, *Dogmatics*, 3: 473–474.

86. Following his peers in the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods, Pieper rejected any form of election *intuitu fidei*, including the position espoused by Aegidius Hunnius. See *Christian Dogmatics* vol. 3, pages 486–487 and *Conversion and Election: A Plea for a United Lutheranism in America*, especially the section entitled “Position of the Old Dogmaticians.”

87. It could not be determined with absolute certainty which Greek text served as the basis for Schaller’s exegesis. At that time, there were three widely used Greek texts: Westcott and Hort’s *The New Testament in Greek*,

ὡς ὅτι θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσων ἑαυτῷ, μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, καὶ θέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς.

The first exegetical issue Schaller takes up in his essay is the meaning of καταλλάσσω: “[This] word καταλλάσσειν, which by way of the verb ἀλλάσσειν can be traced to ἄλλος, another. In all the verbs derived from this word the idea of change is more or less emphasized.”⁸⁸ Here, as Schaller notes, the change is between God and mankind, a change which he further describes: “The relationship between two parties has been fundamentally changed. God changes his relationship to the world. It is essentially this with respect to reconciliation that here comes into consideration”⁸⁹ According to Schaller, the reconciliation between God and humanity is a changed view towards humanity. Furthermore, Schaller comments on the nature of God’s reconciliation with the world over against those who claim an ongoing reconciliation by stating: “The ἦν (God *was* in Christ) designates this praiseworthy act of God as completed in the past.”⁹⁰ For Schaller, the tense Paul employs for ἦν (εἰμί—imperfect) is significant. Paul uses a past time form, which then means that God’s act of reconciling is a past time, and in this case completed, event.

Schaller explains who the reconciled party is (God) and goes on to note who God reconciles to himself. Schaller is quick to point out that in verse 18 those God reconciles to

Constantine von Tischendorf’s *Novum Testamentum Graece*, or an edition of the Textus Receptus. The Greek text cited above is taken from The United Bible Society’s *Greek New Testament*, which does not differ on any point in 2 Cor 5:19 from editions put out by Westcott and Hort and Tischendorf. Only one difference could be located between UBS’ text and the various editions of the Textus Receptus—Elzevir’s 1624 edition replaces θέμενος with θημενος. Elzevir’s text can be ruled out as a basis; however, as Schaller cites θέμενος in his exegesis.

88. John Schaller, “Redemption and Universal Justification according to Second Corinthians 5:18–21,” in *The Wauwatosa Theology*, vol. 1, trans. by Gerald Hoenecke, ed. by Curtis A. Jahn (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1997), 462.

89. Schaller, “Redemption and Universal,” 462.

90. Schaller, “Redemption and Universal,” 463.

himself are believers: “God has reconciled *us* to himself, and the persons designated by ‘us’ are in every instance converted Christians...irrespective of whether one restricts the ἡμᾶς to the apostles or takes it as said of the congregation.”⁹¹ In verse 18 those whom God reconciles to himself are clearly limited, be it Paul and his companions or the congregation in Corinth as a whole. However, verse 19 adds another element to God’s reconciling act, extending said act to the κόσμος, as Schaller explains: “What Paul here says [in verse 18] of the converted, verse 19 says of the world, the κόσμος.”⁹² Here, for the first time in his essay, Schaller lays out his exegetical grounds for seeing universal or objective justification in 2 Cor 5:19.

Adding further comment on κόσμος, Schaller writes: “God did not impute sins to the world as such. Nor is it useless to note that for the noun *world*, which is in the singular, he [Paul] subsequently simply uses the plural of the personal pronoun [αὐτοῖς and αὐτῶν].”⁹³ Commenting on the *constructio ad sensum*⁹⁴ which Paul uses here, Schaller notes: “The sense is still not only this, that in the concept *world* individual people are thought of as a totality, but that what is said of the concept (world) applies in like manner to every individual thing that makes up that concept.”⁹⁵ As Schaller’s understands it, the plural pronouns (αὐτοῖς and αὐτῶν) demonstrate that God had in mind individual people, not just the concept conveyed by κόσμος. Schaller adds the following illustration to further explain what he means: “When I read, ‘The herd rushed past,

91. Schaller, “Redemption and Universal,” 463.

92. Schaller, “Redemption and Universal,” 463.

93. Schaller, “Redemption and Universal,” 466–7.

94. *Constructio ad sensum* is a construction by which the inflection of a word is based on the semantics of the antecedent word rather than the inflection required by grammatical norm. Here, κόσμος is singular but is understood collectively, thus the plural pronouns (αὐτοῖς and αὐτῶν).

95. Schaller, “Redemption and Universal,” 467.

they were felled by the bullets of the hunter,’ I certainly don’t understand this as the hunters had killed the concept *herd*... This I will accept, that the individual gazelles or hartebeests fell prey to the hunters, in that every individual animal was hit.”⁹⁶ To apply this illustration to God’s reconciling of the world to himself, it might be said that God reconciles individuals, not merely the mass of people. No doubt, these “individuals,” in Schaller’s mind, includes all people without exception: “[God] consciously declared righteous every individual who belonged to the world or who will belong to the world to the end of days.”⁹⁷

Upon closing his discussion of God’s reconciling act, Schaller takes up the second divine act mentioned in verse 19—*μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν*. With this clause, Schaller first asks, “What does it mean to not impute their sins against them?” To find the answer, Schaller turns to Rom 4, especially Paul’s usage of Ps 32.⁹⁸ Schaller notes that in that context, Paul demonstrates how righteousness is imputed to the sinner through faith without any works or merits, at which point he cites David.⁹⁹ Schaller, then, offers a lengthy, yet clear explanation for *μὴ λογιζόμενος* based on David’s poem:

Paul here [Rom 4:6–8] appropriates David’s terminology as altogether equivalent to his, since David expressed the same thought that he, Paul, had just carried out, namely, that God justifies a man by imputing Christ’s righteousness to him without works. Yet how does David express this thought? With three parallel statements: iniquity forgiven, sin covered, sin not imputed. This profusion of expressions obviously is to serve the purpose of describing the justifying act of God from various points of view: when God justifies, he is forgiving iniquity, he is covering sin, he is not imputing sin. These three expressions fuse for Paul into one concept, justification, so that he can in a given instance describe the entire act of justification by means of any one of these expressions.¹⁰⁰

96. Schaller, “Redemption and Universal,” 467.

97. Schaller, “Redemption and Universal,” 468.

98. Paul cites verses 1–2: “Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit” (Ps 32:1–2).

99. Schaller, “Redemption and Universal,” 467.

100. Schaller, “Redemption and Universal,” 468.

According to Schaller, Paul’s exegesis of Ps 32 indicates three sides to the coin that is justification. Thus, for Schaller, justification can be spoken of in different ways: either God’s acts of forgiving sins, God’s act of covering over sins, or God not imputing sins. On these grounds, Schaller is comfortable saying about verse 19: “Thus he [Paul] is saying that the persons of whom he is speaking were justified by God, were declared righteous.”¹⁰¹ As a reminder, those “persons” of whom Schaller writes are the κόσμος—all individuals who have ever called the world home.

One final thought that is worth considering is how Schaller follows up his exegesis of 2 Cor 5:19 and his subsequent exposition of universal or objective justification. Schaller notes: “Thus he [Paul] is saying that the persons of whom he is speaking were justified by God, were declared righteous. These persons, however, are the world, the sinful, cursed, ungodly, world, which to the last day will continue to be such and, in all eternity, will not change its character.”¹⁰² Implicit in this comment is that God’s universal not guilty verdict is not universally received and personally apprehended. Additionally, Schaller maintains the integrity of the Scriptural teaching of God’s wrath over sin¹⁰³ and offers a reply to any potential charge of universalism which might be leveled against him. Likewise, Schaller would maintain the necessity of faith to personally receive the universal justification which God declared upon the

101. Schaller, “Redemption and Universal,” 468.

102. Schaller, “Redemption and Universal,” 468.

103. Consider John 3: “Whoever believes the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see eternal life, for God’s wrath remains on him” (John 3:36)

world as he elsewhere states: “The purpose for which God grants saving faith to sinners is their conscious apprehension of justification through the virtues of Christ’s redemption.”¹⁰⁴

With the comments above, Schaller demonstrates the exegetical basis upon which he taught universal or objective justification. A doctrine he described thus: “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, to the whole world, altogether apart from man’s receiving or not receiving this justification in faith.”¹⁰⁵

The other *locus classicus* on universal and objective justification is Rom 5:18–19. Georg Stöckhardt’s comments on those verses in his *Römerbrief* will be the focus of this portion of the thesis.

The text of Rom 5:18–19 is as follows:¹⁰⁶

Ἄρα οὖν ὡς δι’ ἐνὸς παραπτώματος εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς κατάκριμα, οὕτως καὶ δι’ ἐνὸς δικαιοσύνης εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς δικαιοσύνην ζωῆς ὥσπερ γὰρ διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἁμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί, οὕτως καὶ διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἐνὸς δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί.

Stöckhardt is confident that little comment on verse 18 is in order to make his point:

“Verse 18 needs about as little comment as the similar thought in verse 12—one actual grammatical point will do.... The Apostle intentionally denotes, to spare himself and the reader any unneeded or longwinded expression, in both clauses only a single ‘through which,’ and a double ‘for what.’ The ‘for what’ refers to the result and to the people involved.”¹⁰⁷ The “through

104. John Schaller, “The Nature, Origin, and Effects of Saving Faith,” in *Biblical Christology* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1981), 277. This final section on faith, which the editors felt inclined to include in Schaller’s *Biblical Christology*, was intended to be the second volume of his English Dogmatics series. These notes on faith originally appeared in the April, 1920 edition of *Theologische Quartalschrift*.

105. Schaller, “Redemption and Universal,” 459.

106. See footnote 87.

107. Georg Stöckhardt, *Römerbrief* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1907), 259. (Translation mine).

which” Stöckhardt refers to are the actions mentioned in verse 18, namely, Adam’s disobedience and Christ’s obedience. One action (Stöckhardt’s “through which”), be it Christ’s or Adam’s, results in, as Stöckhardt describes it, a “double for what.” The first “for what” is, depending on the antecedent thought, either condemnation or justification. The second “for what” is all people.

At first glance, Stöckhardt’s comments are a bit hard to comprehend; however, his follow up thoughts clear the air: “Through one person’s fall or moral lapse (that is, Adam’s fall), κατὰκριμα has come for all people...it happened that all people would be condemned to death. It follows, then, on the other hand, that through one person (that is, Christ) justification for life has come.”¹⁰⁸ For Stöckhardt, the parallelism Paul employs in verse 18 is enough to merit the teaching of objective justification in the classroom and the pulpit. Paul’s thought, according to Stöckhardt, is as follows: Death and condemnation have come to all people as a result of Adam’s fall. Likewise, through Christ’s righteous actions justification has come to all people.

Although he feels that few grammatical notes are needed on verse 18, Stöckhardt does offer comment on δικαίωματος, and its cognate δικαίωσιν. Commenting on Christ’s δικαίωματος, Stöckhardt writes, “δικαίωμα stands in opposition to the παράπτωμα of Adam and is synonymous with ὑπακοή in verse 19.”¹⁰⁹ The δικαίωματος, as Stöckhardt explains, is equivalent to Christ’s obedience, both active and passive. Through the righteousness of Christ, his δικαίωματος, “Righteousness now comes to all people for the δικαίωσιν ζωῆς.”¹¹⁰ On δικαίωσιν ζωῆς, Stöckhardt notes, “In many places, Paul uses the expression δικαιοῦν quite strictly for God’s formal judgment (a declaration or pronouncement of ‘just’). In this strict

108. Stöckhardt, *Römerbrief*, 259.

109. Stöckhardt, *Römerbrief*, 259.

110. Stöckhardt, *Römerbrief*, 259.

meaning, the substantive δικαίωσις is used in 4:5, 4:25, and in our verse.”¹¹¹ So then, Stöckhardt explains that, on account of Christ’s perfect obedience, the Father has pronounced the world to be just, that is, not guilty of her sins.

Stöckhardt offers further comment on God’s declarative act in verse 19, providing lexical aid for καθιστάνω and commenting on both usages of the verb in the verse. In the first place, Stöckhardt observes: “Through the disobedience of the one man (Adam), the many (that is, all people) were *marked* or *declared* to be sinners. That is what κατεστάθησαν means (it can mean nothing else): not that they became sinners, but that they came to stand before God as sinners.”¹¹² In other words, Stöckhardt asserts that Paul means to say that God declared people to be sinful through Adam’s disobedience even before any in that mass had committed an actual sin. Similarly, καθιστάνω retains that meaning, to mark or declare, in the second clause about Christ’s righteousness—through Christ’s act, God declared the many to be righteous.

Concerning the usage of καθιστάνω in the second clause, Stöckhardt further elaborates that, “The future tense κατασταθήσονται does not refer to a future event. With κατασταθήσονται Paul does not indicate that something may be set off in the future, say, on Judgment Day, as Meyer, Godet, and Luthardt suppose, or that the declaration will continue to be made again and again in this age, as Weiß and Philippi claim.”¹¹³ According to Stöckhardt, the future tense κατασταθήσονται, in the second clause, doesn’t really speak to time or aspect. It’s not as if God *will* make his declaration on a fixed date or that God *continually* declares the many to be just. Rather, Stöckhardt states: “We understand the future in this passage, with Hoffman and others, to

111. Stöckhardt, *Römerbrief*, 259.

112. Stöckhardt, *Römerbrief*, 260.

113. Stöckhardt, *Römerbrief*, 261.

be logical, or as it has elsewhere been called, the future tense of logical certainty, which here indicates that what was true about Adam and his sin is certainly also true about Christ and his righteousness.”¹¹⁴ Since, according to Stöckhardt, Adam’s guilt has been imputed to all mankind following him, it is both logical and correct to say that the righteousness of Christ mentioned in the parallel thought is equally imputed to mankind. In other words, Christ’s righteousness is imputed to all in the same way that Adam’s guilt is imputed to all.

Seemingly aware of objections to his exegesis, Stöckhardt comments, “The majority of the more recent commentators, and even some of the older, apply this apostolic principle to believers, that is, to all who belong to Christ through faith. However, such assertions are purely fanciful. Whenever one allows himself any such thoughts on this text, he strikes out any certainty of exegesis.”¹¹⁵ Stöckhardt suggests that to apply *δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί* only to believers is an exegetical fallacy and he offers further comment on the interpretation of *πᾶς*, “Of course, *πάντας* doesn’t always indicate every member of the human race. But it can as well. We’ll interpret *πᾶς* according to the context.”¹¹⁶ On the context here, Stöckhardt points out, “In these three clauses, faith is not mentioned.”¹¹⁷ In the three clauses under consideration, faith (though mentioned in verse 17) isn’t even in view. So, to limit *οἱ πολλοί* or *πάντας* (especially to the faithful) is eisegesis and imposes other biblical (even Pauline) thoughts into verses 18 and 19.

Stöckhardt sees no legitimate reasons to limit the meaning of *πάντας* in the final clause of verse 18 nor *πολλοί* in verse 19. Additionally, Stöckhardt observes, “Paul used not only the

114. Stöckhardt, *Römerbrief*, 261.

115. Stöckhardt, *Römerbrief*, 262.

116. Stöckhardt, *Römerbrief*, 262.

117. Stöckhardt, *Römerbrief*, 262.

expression πάντες; rather, he deliberately writes πάντες ἄνθρωποι, which cannot mean anything other than all people without exception or all people without distinction.”¹¹⁸ For Stöckhardt, when Paul writes “all people,” he means “all people,” a phrase which doesn’t need any qualification, a phrase which context doesn’t allow to be qualified in any way. Stöckhardt would say with absolute certainty that Paul, in these verses, teaches universal and objective justification.

Stöckhardt follows up his exegetical notes on Rom 5:18–19 with a short excursus on universal and objective justification. There can be no denying that Stöckhardt taught universal justification. Equally, there can be no denying that Stöckhardt also taught subjective justification, or that God’s universal not guilty decree and the blessing that follow are only received in faith. Stöckhardt writes:

Of course, if Paul had written εἰς πάντες ἀνθρώπους εἰς ζωὴν, then he would teach that all people ultimately will be blessed. However, Paul simply has not said this. Rather, Paul precisely testifies εἰς δικαίως ζωῆς, that the righteousness of life has come for all people through the righteousness and obedience of Christ. In other words, a not guilty verdict has come to all people through which life is granted to them, through which they have the right and claim of salvation. On the other hand, Paul teaches and shows in the same context (verse 17) that believers—οἱ τὴν περισσείαν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης λαμβάνοντες—in actual fact one day will prevail in life. Therefore, those who receive the gift of righteousness in faith and thus personally participate in it...will, in the end, actually be blessed.¹¹⁹

With this excursus, Stöckhardt is careful to distinguish between objective and subjective justification, and he is more than comfortable with allowing the two teachings to stand side by side. He would say, “Yes, God has declared the world to be absolved from sin. However, the many who reject God do not appropriate life and forgiveness for themselves.” Such people will be excluded from the blessed life which Christ won for them in his life, death, and resurrection.

118. Stöckhardt, *Römerbrief*, 263.

119. Stöckhardt, *Römerbrief*, 263.

Stöckhardt, unlike Samuel Huber, is careful not to speak about the unregenerate in a manner that would include them among the elect or that would imply that they possess God's not guilty decree as their own. These people will be eternally lost, not because of a forfeiture of something they unwittingly possessed, as Huber taught. Rather, as Stöckhardt demonstrates, unbelievers do not personally participate in God's not guilty verdict and will be lost due to their rejection of Christ.

Justification in Doctrinal and Sermonic Writings

The exegetical basis for universal and objective justification within the Synodical Conference has been set. The following pages will build off the exegetical offerings of Schaller and Stöckhardt by examining the doctrinal position of a few key Synodical Conference theologians on justification. Admittedly, this section will be a bit repetitive as it is really a survey of early Synodical Conference thought on the *locus* of justification. However, such repetition was deemed necessary so that the position of the Synodical Conference dogmaticians might be understood most clearly. In this section, the doctrinal and sermonic writings of Adolf Hoenecke, C.F.W. Walther, and Francis Pieper on justification will be considered.

Under the doctrine of justification, Hoenecke doesn't treat universal and objective justification in great detail. He simply asserts that the doctrine is biblical: "Justification is an action of God that occurs in time and especially to each individual sinner. But there is also an objective justification, which happened to all people in time, specifically in Christ's suffering and resurrection (Ro 5:18; 2 Co 5:19; Ro 4:25)."¹²⁰ Hoenecke bases his teaching on objective

120. Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran*, 337–8.

justification on Rom 5:18–19 and 2 Cor 5:18–19, as Stöckhardt and Schaller had done, but adds another element—Christ’s resurrection. Hoenecke sees the vindication of the Christ in the resurrection as playing a vital role in God’s universal not guilty declaration.¹²¹ Though he treats objective justification in passing, Hoenecke is not reluctant to state the doctrine’s significance: “Emphasizing objective justification is necessary in order to preserve the real content of the gospel.”¹²² For Hoenecke, to neglect objective justification is to cheapen God’s grace and Christ’s merit and is essentially a denial of the gospel.

Like Hoenecke, Pieper recognizes objective justification as scriptural: “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,”¹²³ but he offers additional comment on the doctrine’s import which is lacking in Hoenecke. Pieper writes:

An essential prerequisite of justification by faith, or of subjective justification, is the objective justification (the reconciliation) of all mankind. If God had not in His heart of hearts justified the whole world because of Christ’s vicarious satisfaction, and if this justification were not offered in the gospel, there could be no justification by faith. All those who deny the objective justification (the objective reconciliation) will, if they would be consistent, also deny that subjective justification is brought about by faith; they will have to regard faith as a complement to Christ’s merit—a human achievement.¹²⁴

According to Pieper, there is an intimate connection between Christ’s vicarious atonement and the world’s justification. This connection serves as the basis for justification by faith, or

121. Consider 1 Tim 3: “Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by the angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory” (1 Tim 3:16). C.F.W. Walther expands on the significance of Christ’s vindication in his famous Easter sermon “Christ’s Resurrection—the World’s Absolution.”

122. Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran*, 338.

123. *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1932), para. 17.

124. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 2, trans. by W.F. Albrecht (St. Louis: Concordia, 1951), 508.

subjective justification as Pieper writes. Pieper asserts further that a denial of objective justification naturally turns one into a synergist. The individual who rejects objective justification puts their trust and assurance, not in an accomplished fact. Rather, that individual places their assurance in faith itself and for Pieper, this indicates that “a human achievement” has made justification complete.

C.F.W. Walther also taught objective justification: “We are not reconciled to God when we believe, but we are already reconciled to God so that we believe. This is also true regarding justification. The whole world is already justified in Christ.”¹²⁵ Walther expands on how this justification of the world came to be in his Easter sermon “Christ’s Resurrection—the World’s Absolution.” In this sermon, Walther gives, perhaps, the most detailed exposition of objective justification to come out of the Synodical Conference. Walther preaches:

[The resurrection] means that the debt which Christ had pledged to pay had actually been paid by him to the last farthing, and that the punishment which God had put upon the sins of men had now been thoroughly removed by Christ to the very last stripe. It means that Christ is now free and forever declared loosed from all the debt and punishment which he had assumed. In one word, it means that He is *absolved*. Since it was all mankind in whose place and for whom Christ suffered, died and made payment, who was it, then, that was absolved in and through Christ’s Person when the eternal judge set Him at liberty? It was—oh, marvelous and endlessly comforting truth!—it was *all mankind*.¹²⁶

Two things are demonstrated in the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday, according to Walther. They are that the divine demands of the law are fully satisfied, and Christ is vindicated of the sins of the world which he bore on the cross. The result of Christ’s vindication is the vindication of the human race. Jesus’ perfect obedience, from start to finish, was completed in

125. Walther, *All Glory*, 90.

126. Walther, *The Word of his Grace: Sermon Selections by Dr. C.F.W. Walther*, trans. and ed. by The Evangelical Lutheran Synod Translation Committee (Lake Mills, IA: Graphic Publishing, 1978), 232.

the stead of man, and therefore, the victory Christ won is a victory for humanity. This resulting objective justification, as Walter exclaims, is an endlessly and marvelously comforting doctrine.

These early and significant Synodical Conference dogmaticians all taught universal and objective justification. Additionally, these theologians also taught a so-called subjective justification. Hoenecke writes: “After all, all of Scripture shows that always the one who believes is justified, thus always the individual, as soon as faith is kindled in him.”¹²⁷ Hoenecke later suggests:

It is clear that faith does not justify in and of itself, but for the sake of the object it grasps, i.e., for the sake of Christ and his merit. Thus that faith is counted for righteousness means that Christ grasped by faith is counted for righteousness, as particularly Galatians 3:22 clearly shows. Thus in justification faith comes into consideration not as a praiseworthy virtue, not as a meritorious quality, not on a genuine basis, but only as the receiving and appropriating means.¹²⁸

Hoenecke is comfortable saying that justification is universal, yet at the same time, justification is individual or personal. Faith’s role in justification, as Hoenecke suggests, is merely a receiving role. Faith grasps the merits of Christ. Therefore, faith, which clings to Christ is credited as righteousness. Faith’s role in justification, for Hoenecke, is personally appropriating Christ’s vindication for the individual. Faith does not, as Pieper had earlier alluded to, finish justification in the individual. Faith merely obtains the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice and resurrection.

Pieper similarly observes, “Faith is all that is needed to accomplish subjective justification.”¹²⁹ As Pieper explains in his dogmatics, justification is already complete as an objective reality. Faith, therefore, “accomplishes subjective justification.” Pieper later explains

127. Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran*, 338.

128. Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran*, 362.

129. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2: 504.

what it means that faith accomplishes subjective justification when he comments on Scripture's presentation of justification.¹³⁰ Pieper writes, "He who refuses to accept the external means of grace as the *media* δοτικά of justification will certainly not accept faith as the *medium* ληπτικόν (means of receiving) of justification."¹³¹ God's word and sacraments are the means God uses to offer his forgiveness (objective justification) to the sinner. Faith is the means by which the sinner receives justification (subjective justification).

Walther, in his Easter sermon, also states about subjective justification: "God has already forgiven you your sins 1800 years ago when He in Christ absolved all men by raising Him after He first had gone into bitter death for them. Only one thing remains on your part so that you also possess the gift. This one thing is—*faith*."¹³² Walther speaks about faith as the way one comes to possess justification. However, in his sermon, Walther doesn't make as clear as Pieper or Hoenecke that faith is merely a receiving organ. Walther does, however, demonstrate this in his essay on justification which was presented to the Western District of the Missouri Synod in 1875: "Since God gives everything through promises, it is not possible to accept everything in any way other than through faith. There is no other way. Consequently, faith is the instrument, or, as it were, the hand with which we grasp what God offers in His promise."¹³³ In a similar fashion to his brethren in the Synodical Conference, Walther indeed taught that faith receives God's promises and blessings.

130. Pieper reminds how Scripture speaks of God's justification of the sinner as "by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith." Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2: 522.

131. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2: 523.

132. Walther, *The Word*, 233.

133. Walther, *All Glory*, 92.

These three Synodical Conference giants all explain what they mean when they speak and write about objective and subjective justification and a fair paraphrase of their thought would be: God has declared the world not guilty in Christ. But the benefits of this declaration are received only through faith. Herein lies the distinction between Huber and the common consensus teaching of Synodical Conference theologians on universal justification. Huber taught that all people, whether they know it or not, are the beneficiaries of God's grace, stand in salvation, and possess forgiveness. The Synodical Conference simply did not speak this way, especially with regards to the unbeliever, which will be further demonstrated below.

In his Easter sermon, Walther is quick to respond to the charge that universal salvation is a necessary consequence of universal and objective justification: "What does it benefit a poor man if he rejects the gift of a rich man, whether it be out of modesty or false humility? What personal benefit does a rebel derive if an entire rebellious city has been pardoned but he himself does not accept that pardon, whether it be out of pride or obstinacy?"¹³⁴ Through rejection of God's gift, Walther is clear, there is no benefit, and indeed, no salvation. Elsewhere, Walther describes the horrifying reality of unbelief in sharper words: "Most people indeed retain God's wrath. But this is not because God is still really angry with them for their sin, but rather because they refuse to believe."¹³⁵ With this thought, Walther maintains that, even with objective justification, wrath still remains on the unbeliever. This wrath remains, according to Walther, not because God hasn't forgiven sins, but rather, wrath remains because of unbelief.

And Pieper as well: "Holy Writ expressly declares that since Christ by His vicarious satisfaction is the Propitiation for the sins of the whole world, only faith can save and only

134. Walther, *The Word*, 234.

135. Walther, *All Glory*, 70.

unbelief can actually condemn sinners.... Where unbelief reigns, all other sins again assume their condemnatory character.”¹³⁶ Like Walther, Pieper suggests that Christ has indeed made propitiation for the world’s sins. Nevertheless, the wrath of God hangs over the sinner, and the sinner stands in condemnation for his sin.

Hoenecke makes similar remarks about the unbeliever in a sermon preached in 1886 on John 12:27–30. Speaking of Judas Iscariot, Hoenecke writes, “At an earlier hour the Lord had washed the feet of the disciples and had bestowed a beatitude on them. But, He then said, this beatitude did not apply to all. ‘I speak not of you all,’ the Lord said. There is one among you to whom I cannot speak my ‘Blessed are you.’”¹³⁷ Hoenecke is quick to point out that, for the unbelieving Judas, there can be no benediction, no word of grace from the Savior. Later, Hoenecke remarks, “[Judas] had lost the little spark of faith and confidence. But when a man has lost that, then for him there can be no coming to Jesus anymore. For this reason, Judas found no forgiveness.”¹³⁸ Owing to his lack of faith, as Hoenecke explains, Judas had lost his forgiveness as there was nothing left within Judas to receive Christ’s benefits. Hoenecke made expressly clear in this sermon that condemnation and even wrath remain on the unbeliever. That truth does not change despite God’s universal not guilty decree.

Upon careful examination of significant exegetes and dogmaticians within the Synodical Conference as they write on justification, it becomes obvious that the Synodical Conference, in general, did not share in the doctrinal position of Samuel Huber. While it is true that Huber taught universal justification, it cannot be said that his version of universal justification equaled

136. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3: 548.

137. Adolf Hoenecke, *Glorified in His Passion*, trans. by Werner H. Franzmann (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1957), 16–7.

138. Hoenecke, *Glorified in*, 28.

that of Walther, Pieper, Hoenecke, Schaller, and Stöckhardt. The former taught what might be called a universal subjective justification while the latter preached and proclaimed a justification that is universal and objective, but that is also subjective. Among the Synodical Conference's most noted theologians, Huber's universal removal of wrath and universal grace language simply are not found.

USAGE OF HUBER AND HUNNIUS

So far, the doctrinal writings of Samuel Huber, the polemical writings of Aegidius Hunnius, and the exegetical and doctrinal writings of significant Synodical Conference theologians have been examined in some detail. The remainder of this paper will explore modern polemical writings which treat the subject of the Huberian controversy and its relationship to the doctrinal position of the Synodical Conference on the *locus* of justification.

No little amount of ink has been spilled that equates Samuel Huber's version of universal justification with that of the Synodical Conference (and her heirs). A blog post on *Extra Nos* appeared in 2012 claiming, "The Hunnius quote I provided proves that the Steadfast Waltherians are Huberites or at least shares the conviction of Huber on this point."¹³⁹ The quote spoken of is thesis six against Huberian justification in Aegidius Hunnius' *Theses Opposed to Huberianism* (see footnote 139). There, Hunnius demonstrates from Rom three and four and Gal two that justification is by faith alone as opposed to Huber's universal justification apprehended by all apart from faith. The author of *Extra Nos* is of the opinion that all who teach universal and objective justification, as it was taught in the Synodical Conference, are guilty of teaching Huber's error, which is stated in his blog in no uncertain terms.

139. "Hunnius Proves Steadfast Waltherians are Huberites," *Extra Nos* (blog), October 16, 2012, <https://extranos.blogspot.com/2012/10/hunnius-proves-steafast-waltherians-are.html>. The Hunnius quote mentioned is as follows: "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*, 58.

Others have been a bit subtler in associating Huber's universal justification with Synodical Conference thought on the matter. In their *Theses on the Article of Justification*, which all member pastors in ELDoNA voluntarily adopted in 2013,¹⁴⁰ it is suggested,

Regarding the proper object of faith: ought it be a *pre-existing declaration/judicial pronouncement* of forgiveness (without words) or the *acquisition* of a judicial pronouncement of forgiveness? The latter has much testimony among our theologians prior to 1850, while the former is asserted with such vehemence, e.g., Pieper, that it is said that the Gospel is gone altogether is such an assertion is not made. Such an assertion about this formulation that seems unknown (other than as something to be condemned as a part of Huber's error) prior to the mid-19th century, is not only ridiculous on its face, but injurious to the Church, as it disparages the orthodox Lutheran fathers and leads to parochialism and disrespect for older Lutheran writings that is so prevalent today.¹⁴¹

It is clear that a significant difference exists between ELDoNA and the Synodical Conference on justification, at least as far as the object of saving faith goes. Fair enough, but then the claim is made, albeit rather subtly, that the Synodical Conference revived Huber's teaching.

Francis Pieper's assertion,¹⁴² according to ELDoNA, was altogether unknown by the fathers of the Lutheran Church, the exception being *something condemned* by Hunnius and his colleagues at Wittenberg. With this thought from *Theses on the Article of Justification*, it appears to be conceded that Huber and the Synodical Conference didn't share completely equivalent teachings. However, it is suggested in this thesis that there is enough overlap between Huber and the Synodical Conference (especially in Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*) to consider universal and objective justification, as taught by Pieper, to be condemned as, at the least, semi-Huberian. Such assertions from Pieper are even considered to be extrabiblical, faith destroying, and disrespectful

140. See ELDoNA's *Theses on the Article of Justification*, page 28.

141. ELDoNA, *Theses on the Article*, 21.

142. *Theses on the Article of Justification* cites pages 349–51 in volume two of Pieper's dogmatics.

to the Lutheran fathers who, as it is alleged, knew no such concept of universal and objective justification.

Those who deny universal and objective justification are quick to make connections between justification as taught by both Samuel Huber and the Synodical Conference.¹⁴³ Do these connections hold any water though? Admittedly, similar terminology was used by Huber and the Synodical Conference. However, the meanings attached to that terminology by both parties indicate a distinction in teaching. A brief summary of Huber's universal justification can be found in the conversation between Huber and his Wittenberg opponents, Polycarp Leyser and Aegidius Hunnius. When speaking to an unbeliever, Huber would've proclaimed: "You have the grace of God, you have the righteousness of Christ, you have salvation."¹⁴⁴ What Huber means by "universal justification" is that all people (included here are the unbelievers) have appropriated in some way forgiveness and salvation and stand in God's grace, regardless of the presence of faith in the heart. As David Jay Webber, I believe correctly, points out, "What Huber was understood to be teaching was not a universal *objective* justification of the world, but a universal *subjective* justification of the world."¹⁴⁵ In other words, Huber taught a subjective justification that isn't received by faith but rather has simply been applied to all people by God.

The Synodical Conference, on the other hand, taught no such thing. A fair summary of those theologians in the early Synodical Conference on justification can be found in Missouri's *Brief Statement*: "Scripture teaches that God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ...The Christian religion is the faith that we have forgiveness of sins and

143. Presumably, any modern synods such as the WELS, ELS, and LC-MS, each former member synods of the Synodical Conference, would be included here by polemicists like *Extra Nos* and ELDoNA.

144. Meisner, *Consilia Theologica Witebergensia*, 554. For more context, see FN 28.

145. Webber, *Our Righteousness before God*, 33.

salvation through faith in Christ.”¹⁴⁶ The Synodical Conference taught universal justification, or a not guilty declaration, of the whole world. However, they do not speak in a Huberian way. Yes, there is an objective sense to justification. But there is also, as Pieper demonstrates, a subjective sense as well. Namely, that through faith alone, does the sinner receive forgiveness and salvation. The Synodical Conference never taught, as Huber had, that the blessings of justification are possessed even by the unbeliever.

It has wrongly been asserted that the Synodical Conference taught Huberian justification, and it has even been further questioned whether her theologians knew that they were borrowing from Huber. Thesis 24 of *Theses on the Article of Justification* states,

We ought not think that Walther (and Schaller and Hoenecke), and Pieper, *et alii*, who formulated the current expressions of ‘Objective Justification’ were unfamiliar with either Huber or Aegidius Hunnius. 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.¹⁴⁷

ELDoNA is correct in saying that the fathers of the Synodical Conference were familiar with Huber and Hunnius; both names appear at times in the writings of Walther, Pieper, and Hoenecke.¹⁴⁸ The question then, for ELDoNA’s theologians is, “Did the Synodical Conference just so happen to use terminology similar to Huber’s, or did they knowingly adopt similar terminology and make modifications?” The latter appears to be the case. Commenting on the term “universal justification,” the essay on justification read at the first Synodical Conference convention in 1872 reads:

146. *Brief Statement*, para. 17-8.

147. ELDoNA, *Theses on the Article*, 23.

148. Consider *The Walther–Baier Compendium* pages 286–7, Pieper’s dogmatics volume three page 478, and Hoenecke’s dogmatics volume three pages 53–4.

Our old dogmaticians too would themselves have used the expression [universal justification] more—since they believed and taught the substance—had not Huber shortly before Gerhard’s time taught that God had not only justified all men already but had also elected them to eternal life. In order to avoid the appearance of agreement with this erroneous doctrine, they used the expression only rarely.¹⁴⁹

The fathers of the Synodical Conference were not ignorant of Samuel Huber’s universal justification. They understood what Huber taught and were quick to condemn him as an errorist. So, to answer ELDoNA, “No, the Synodical Conference did not accidentally employ Huberian sounding terminology.” The theologians who formed the backbone of the Synodical Conference were aware that their terminology for teaching justification was similar to Huber’s. However, the definitions attached to “universal justification” were not equal for both Huber and the Synodical Conference, as has been demonstrated above. Rather, it seems that those in the Synodical Conference reclaimed a term that describes what the orthodox Lutheran fathers also taught, as was asserted at the 1872 convention.

Considering the phraseology of ELDoNA’s question regarding the Synodical Conference’s teaching on universal and objective justification, one may get the impression that Hoenecke, Pieper, Walther, and the like either acted in ignorance when employing the term “universal justification,” or they had more sinister intentions. Neither is the case. The Synodical Conference exegetes and dogmaticians were familiar with Huber’s teaching and the controversy that enveloped him. Furthermore, those men were in no way dependent on Huber when expressing their thought on justification. The Synodical Conference, though using similar sounding terminology, did distance themselves from Huber because they did not teach the same universal justification.

149. *Justification—Objective and Subjective: A Translation of the Doctrinal Essay Read at the First Convention of the Synodical Conference in 1872*, trans. by Kurt E. Marquart (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1982), 20. It is interesting to note that the presenter of this essay was F.A. Schmidt, who became virulently anti-Missouri as the election controversy raged.

In addition to falsely equating Huber with the Synodical Conference and questioning her motives in teaching justification as they did, polemicists also use Hunnius to condemn the Synodical Conference for teaching universal and objective justification. Paul A. Rydecki comments, “Hunnius takes apart Huber’s (and the official WELS) doctrine piece by piece.”¹⁵⁰ Rydecki mentions the Wisconsin Synod by name in his blog post, but there is no doubt that Walther, Pieper, Hoenecke, and other influential Synodical Conference theologians, who still play a role in WELS classrooms and pulpits today, are also in view. That said, Rydecki invokes Hunnius’ anti-Huber writings to condemn universal and objective justification. Dr. Gregory L. Jackson also makes similar remarks, “Hunnius condemns the UOJ [universal and objective justification] Enthusiasts.”¹⁵¹ Again, it is fair to assume that when Dr. Jackson uses Hunnius to condemn universal and objective justification teachers as “enthusiasts,” he intends to include those within the Synodical Conference who also taught universal and objective justification.

After seeing Hunnius used in this way, the logical question would be, “Is this a fair use of Hunnius?” In short, no. In the first place, as has been demonstrated numerous times throughout, Huber and the Synodical Conference did not hold the same opinions on universal justification. To suggest that Hunnius would disapprove of universal and objective justification as taught by the Synodical Conference because he condemned Huber’s universal justification is intellectually dishonest. Hunnius simply was not responding to the idea espoused within the Synodical

150. Paul A. Rydecki, “A. Hunnius on the Truly Confessional Lutheran Teaching of Romans 5:18,” *Bethany Lutheran Worship* (blog), March 19, 2013, <http://bethanylutheranworship.blogspot.com/2013/03/pastor-paul-rydecki-exposes-wels-error.html>.

151. Gregory L. Jackson, Ph.D., “Book Review of Theses Opposed to Huberianism (UOJ),” *Ichabod the Glory Has Departed* (blog), September 2, 2012, <http://ichabodthegloryhasdeparted.blogspot.com/2012/09/book-review-of-theses-opposed-to.html>.

Conference, and to condemn those theologians based on Hunnius' polemics is fair to neither Hunnius nor the Synodical Conference and her heirs.

Furthermore, it is a difficult case to make that Hunnius himself denied the concept behind universal and objective justification, even if he didn't like the terms. To be sure, Hunnius was an ardent justification by faith supporter. To remind the reader, Hunnius said, "Nor is anyone justified from his sins except the one who believes in Christ."¹⁵² Many such statements can be found in Hunnius' writings, especially those refuting Huber. However, to say that any such remarks are an outright denial of universal justification becomes difficult when one considers statements Hunnius makes elsewhere: "Only for Christ's sake are the sins of the world blotted out, as the Scriptures testify."¹⁵³ With this comment, Hunnius does not appear to be speaking in a hyperbolic way. Taken at face value, Hunnius taught that the world's sins are not counted against her—language eerily similar to the Synodical Conference, language that sounds like universal and objective justification. So, we ask again, "Is it fair for universal and objective justification deniers to use Hunnius to bolster their arguments?" No, and though it may not be a large focus in his polemics against Huber or even his other writings, universal and objective justification appears to be a teaching with which Hunnius would agree, at least as the Synodical Conference taught it.

A final thought that bears consideration regarding modern usage of Aegidius Hunnius is found in Dr. Jacksons' review of *Theses Opposed to Huberianism*: "WELS Pastor Paul Rydecki has provided a clear, readable translation. Readers will be astonished beyond measure about the

152. Hunnius, *Theses Opposed*, 59.

153. Hunnius, *Judaizing Calvin*, 87.

way Hunnius seems to be dealing with the UOJ advocates of today.”¹⁵⁴ One word from that comment deserves special attention: seems. Upon first read of *Theses Opposed to Huberianism*, it may *seem* that Hunnius does reject modern and earlier teachers of universal and objective justification. However, it must be borne in mind that Hunnius was not responding to the same universal justification that came out of the Synodical Conference. When those writers are examined alongside Huber and Hunnius, it *seems* less and less that Hunnius is “dealing with UOJ advocates of today” and yesterday.

It is not my intent to falsely accuse anyone or to employ an “argument from silence.” But I believe it is still worth asking, “How much comparing of Huber, Hunnius, and the Synodical Conference writers has been carried out by contemporary universal and objective justification deniers?” This writer has struggled to find any interaction with Huber’s writings other than those cited by Hunnius from the anti-objective justification camps. This writer is also yet to discover any writing that honestly deals with the “relationship” between Huber and the Synodical Conference by comparing original writings from either. A demonstration that the Synodical Conference and Huber saw eye to eye on justification would perhaps lend a bit more credence to the arguments for some, but so far, any such attempts have not been made. Rather, all too often, the argument seems to be, “Look! Huber was rejected, and he used similar words!”

To conclude, Samuel Huber did not teach the same kind of universal justification taught by the Synodical Conference’s most noteworthy theologians. Neither can it be said with any real certainty that Hunnius would reject Synodical Conference universal and objective justification. Additionally, whenever Hunnius is used to condemn the Synodical Conference, a disservice has been done to both Aegidius Hunnius and the history of the Lutheran Church, especially the

154. Jackson, *Book Review*.

history of the Synodical Conference in North America. To disagree with doctrine is one thing. To demonstrate your differing opinion based on your own exegesis is one thing and is even commendable. But to apply the lessons and outcomes from specific people and scenarios to situations that are dissimilar is both dishonest and an abusive and dangerous way to use history.

CONCLUSION

We have examined Samuel Huber and Aegidius Hunnius, both of whom have been cited to refute the doctrine of universal and objective justification. The writings of chief theologians in the Synodical Conference, however, demonstrate that they did not share the same view on universal justification with Samuel Huber. The Synodical Conference maintained a proper distinction between the law and gospel by teaching objective and subjective justification as they did. Huber, on the other hand, taught only a universal subjective justification, which obscured that proper distinction.

Furthermore, Aegidius Hunnius, who is often cited as proof that the doctrine of universal and objective justification was rejected by the Orthodox Lutheran fathers, does not appear to be a denier of objective justification himself. It is a difficult case to make as Hunnius certainly uses language which was similar to language used by Synodical Conference theologians. After examining decent portions of the writings of Huber, Hunnius, and the Synodical Conference, alleged similarities between Huber and the Synodical Conference, as well as alleged differences between Hunnius and the Synodical Conference on justification do not seem to exist.

To use Hunnius in refuting the Synodical Conference and any who teach universal and objective justification is a misuse of history and a historical and hermeneutical method that ought not to be employed. Samuel Huber and the Synodical Conference did not teach universal justification in identical ways. So then, invoking Hunnius to suggest that the Synodical

Conference was wrong on the doctrine is dishonest and abusive. It is also a fallacy to connect church bodies to previously condemned errors without making any honest efforts to analyze and compare known errorists to the body in question. The doctrine of justification has always been attacked. In many times and in many ways, the comforting doctrine of objective justification has been thrown under the bus as a novel and impious idea. Those who hold such opinions on universal and objective justification are free to do so, but to use Huber and Hunnius in those efforts to discredit universal and objective justification is patently wrong. As for me, I won't reject the doctrine. I'll join hand in hand with the centuries worth of believers who proclaimed God's universal forgiveness to all people.

soli deo gloria

APPENDIX: BIOGRAPHIES OF THEOLOGIANS EXAMINED

Aegidius Hunnius

Aegidius Hunnius was born December 21, 1550, in Winenden (Ducal Saxony) to a family of well-off craftsmen. At the age of 14, Hunnius enrolled at the University of Tübingen where he would be graduated with a Master of Theology. Hunnius served a pastorate in Tübingen for a period, when in 1576, he was recommended for a professorship at the Marburg University by Jacob Heerbrand. At Marburg, Hunnius was involved in lengthy debate with the Hessian electorate and theologians on Christology and the Lord's Supper. Hunnius contended for the Orthodox Lutheran position on the issue but was largely unsuccessful in persuading his Hessian opponents. In 1591, Hunnius accepted the call to serve as a professor at the University of Wittenberg and as the provost at the Castle Church. It was during his professorship at Wittenberg that Hunnius became embroiled in debate with his colleague, Samuel Huber, on predestination and justification. With his prolific career spanning over 25 years, Hunnius garnered the respect of his peers and his theological heirs. Though he never published a doctrinal textbook, his exegetical, doctrinal, and polemical essays cover nearly every *locus* of Christian doctrine. On April 4, 1603, Hunnius entered into eternal glory.

Samuel Huber

Samuel Huber was born in 1547 at Burgdorf, Switzerland. Between 1570 and 1588 Huber served Reformed parishes in Switzerland. Removed from office and deposed from Switzerland in 1588

for his public opposition to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, Huber moved to Tübingen and subscribed to the Formula of Concord. From 1588–1592, Huber served as pastor of the Lutheran church in Deredingen. Holding high hopes that Huber's presence would stymie Crypto-Calvinist influence in Saxony, he was called to be professor of theology at Wittenberg. Shortly upon arrival, Huber became involved in controversy with his contemporaries— most notably Aegidius Hunnius and Polycarp Leyser— over predestination and justification. Unable to convince his colleagues, Huber was dismissed from his professorship and expelled from Germany in 1595. Though he struggled to find permanent residence after his exile from Germany, Huber continued to make his voice heard, writing intermittently against Leyser and Hunnius. In 1624 Huber passed from this life to be with his Savior.

Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther

C.F.W. Walther was born in Langenchursdorf, Saxony on October 25, 1811. Seeking to become a fourth-generation minister, Walther began his theological training in 1829 at Leipzig. Though he was under the influence of rationalistic professors, Walther remained a faithful follower of Christ. Upon graduating in 1833, Walther entered upon a private tutorship. Ordained in 1837, Walther became pastor at Braeunsdorf, though he resigned from his pastorate there less than a year later as his confessional stance was met with opposition by the rationalist authorities in the territory. Early in 1839 Walther, along with other confessionally minded Saxons, departed from Germany and arrived at Perry County, Missouri. From 1839 until his death, Walther served congregations in Dresden, Johannesburg, and St. Louis, Missouri. During this time, Walther also served Concordia Seminary as professor of practical and systematic theology. Walther's

influence as a theologian extended far beyond his parishes in Missouri. During his stay in the Americas, Walther twice served as the Missouri Synod's president as well as the president of her seminary in St. Louis. Additionally, Walther served as the first president of the Synodical Conference and had his voice heard by many of America's Lutherans as he frequently authored pieces for the two periodicals he founded and edited—*der Lutheraner* and *Lehre und Wehre*. Owing to his firm biblical and confessional convictions, and to his numerous contributions to Lutheranism in America, Walther became known as “The American Luther.” Walther entered into eternal life on May 7, 1887.

August Pieper

August Pieper was born at Carwitz, Pomerania on September 27, 1857. Upon the death of his father in 1869, Pieper (along with his mother and brothers) emigrated to the United States, settling in Watertown, Wisconsin. A graduate of both Northwestern College in Watertown and Concordia Seminary St. Louis, Pieper served congregations in Kewaunee and Menomonee, Wisconsin. After a brief leave of absence due to poor health, Pieper re-entered the ministry, serving St. Marks in Milwaukee from 1891–1901. In 1902, Pieper accepted the call to serve as a professor at the Wisconsin Synod seminary in Wauwatosa where he taught Isagogics and Old Testament Exegesis. Pieper's exegetical and doctrinal prowess are best seen in his monumental commentary on Isaiah 40–66 (*Jesias II*) and his numerous contributions to the Wisconsin Synod's *Theologische Quartalschrift*. Pieper was called to his heavenly home on December 23, 1946.

Francis Pieper

Francis Pieper was born on June 27, 1852 in Carwitz, Pomerania. Pieper was graduated from Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin and from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis in 1875. Between 1875 and 1878, Pieper served Congregations in Centerville and Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Pieper accepted the call to serve as professor of systematic theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis in 1878, even serving as the Seminary president from 1887–1931. During this time, Pieper also served a lengthy stint as the president of the Missouri Synod (1899–1911). Pieper’s influence in the Synodical Conference was wide indeed. After Walther, Pieper served as the editor of *Lehre und Wehre*, authored the standard Missouri Synod systematics textbook which is still used today—*Christliche Dogmatik*. Pieper also made an impassioned plea for Lutheran unity in the wake of the Election Controversy with *Conversion and Election: A Plea for a United Lutheranism in America*, and was instrumental in drafting the Missouri Synod’s “Brief Statement,” which was formally adopted after his death in 1932. Pieper went to Heaven on June 3, 1931.

Adolf Hoenecke

Adolf Hoenecke was born in Brandenburg, Germany on February 25, 1835. A student of the union minded Friedrich A.G. Tholuck, Hoenecke graduated from the University of Halle in 1859. After a brief period in Switzerland, Hoenecke accepted the call from the Berlin Mission Society to serve as a missionary in Wisconsin. Landing in Farmington, Wisconsin in 1863, Hoenecke served as the pastor of the congregation there. Under the influence of Johannes Bading (pastor of St. Marks in Watertown, Wisconsin), Hoenecke grew in his confessional stance and soon renounced the unionism of his former university teacher, Tholuck. From 1866–1870, Hoenecke served as professor of the fledgling Wisconsin Synod seminary in Watertown.

Between 1870 and 1891, Hoenecke served as pastor of St. Marks in Milwaukee, until he assumed the role of director at the synod's seminary in Wauwatosa. During his career, Hoenecke proved to be a prolific writer, authoring pieces which helped shape the Wisconsin Synod's confessional position. Hoenecke served as the editor of Wisconsin Synod periodicals such as *das Gemeindeblatt* and *Theologische Quartalschrift*. Hoenecke joined the saints triumphant in 1908.

John Schaller

John Schaller was born on February 7, 1859, at St. Louis, Missouri and attended Northwestern College and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Schaller served congregations in Virginia, Arkansas, and Missouri from 1881–1889. Schaller accepted the call to serve Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota in 1889 where he served as professor and director. Upon the death of Adolf Hoenecke in 1908, Schaller accepted the call to the directorship of the Wisconsin Synod's seminary in Wauwatosa where he taught systematic and practical theology until he entered into glory in 1920.

Georg Stöckhardt

Georg Stöckhardt was born in Chemnitz, Bavaria on February 17, 1842. A student of Erlangen and Leipzig, Stöckhardt graduated with a degree in theology in 1866. From 1866–1876, Stöckhardt served congregations in Paris, France, and Planitz, Saxony. Following the protest of unscriptural practices in the German state church, Stöckhardt was dismissed from his office in 1876. After this time, Stöckhardt was instrumental in forming the German Free Church and served in its parishes from 1876–1878. In 1878, Stöckhardt emigrated to the States and served

Holy Cross Church in St. Louis, Missouri. Beginning in 1879, Stöckhardt offered lectures at Concordia Seminary and was elected to a professorship there in 1887. Stöckhardt is most remembered for his notable contributions to American Lutheranism in the areas of both Old and New Testament Exegesis, authoring commentaries on biblical books and presenting several lectures on the same. Stöckhardt passed on to life eternal on January 9, 1913.

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