

UOJ – a third way

Response to pastor Rydecki and restatement of my position (April 2025)

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Introduction

Pastor Rydecki has written a response¹ to my 2017 paper.² I appreciate the response, as I do the discussions, we in the COELC have had with the CLM concerning this and other matters. Theological contradiction and discussion are, in my opinion, the best way to sharpen one's thinking on a subject. Hopefully, we can also come closer to agreement by sharpening each other's understanding of the subject in the light of God's word.

My paper is over seven years old, and numerous discussions have helped me clarify my position. The paper led to a breaking of fellowship between me and my church on the one side and the Orthodox Lutheran Confessional Conference on the other side and was also part of why the Confessional Orthodox Evangelical Lutheran Communion was formed.

I will not address all of Pastor Rydecki's objections in this paper. Part of the reason is that discussions since my 2017 paper have led me to clarify my position. Another part of the reason is that I think Pastor Rydecki has put too much weight on my aligning my position with Walther in my paper. Therefore, he has addressed Walther's and Pieper's positions in many places rather than reading my paper on its terms.

I can see that my earlier appeal to Walther might lead one to then interpret my position through that of Walther rather than dealing directly with my position as formulated by me. The confusion caused by appealing to a Waltherian position is on me.

I find it problematic that Rydecki doesn't seem to deal with either my theses at the end of my paper or with the doctrinal formulations of the COELC. Rather, he seems from the outset to identify the COELC position and the Waltherian position and then attack what he perceives to be the Waltherian position. At a few places, he addresses my position.

¹ Rydecki, Paul, The Waltherian Error of UOJ: A Response to Magnus Sorenson's "The Justification of Christ as the Efficient Cause of Our Justification -The Narrow Lutheran Middle in the Controversy on Universal Objective Justification (2017)."

https://www.academia.edu/114613208/The_Waltherian_Error_of_UOJ_A_Response_to_Magnus_Sorensens_The_Justification_of_Christ_as_the_Efficient_Cause_of_Our_Justification_The_Narrow_Lutheran_Middle_in_the_Co ntroversy_on_Universal_Objective_Justification_2017_

² Sørensen, Magnus Nørgaard, The Justification of Christ as the Efficient Cause of Our Justification -The Narrow Lutheran Middle in the Controversy on Universal Objective Justification (2017)

https://www.academia.edu/34121363/The_Justification_of_Christ_as_the_Efficient_Cause_of_Our_Justification_The_Narrow_Lutheran_Middle_in_the_Co ntroversy_on_Universal_Objective_Justification_2017_

Even if I still believed that Walthers and my position were the same, this would be a matter of historical judgment, and one could not just assume that whatever pastor Rydecki or others believed to be Walthers position, would also be my position. A lot of Rydecki's criticism of the Waltherian UOJ is criticism of positions I do not agree with and did not agree with in 2017 either.

I have since my 2017-paper both reached a deeper understanding of some things and revised my historical judgment on what Walther taught. I do, however, hold to the substance of my paper as expressed in the final assertions and rejections.

After I wrote my paper, I was convinced that Walther either didn't hold that position or changed it later, since he, in a discussion with Stellhorn during the election controversy, rejected the position. Stellhorn, however, held the position that there were two forensic verdicts, as did the 1872 essay of the Synodical Conference.³

It seems to me today that the position I have defended was held by Stellhorn, Henry Eyster Jacobs, Lenski, and others. Even though the Synodical Conference Essay of 1872 also seems to indicate a double forensic verdict, this seems to have been abandoned by Walther.

As I pointed out in my 2017 paper, Tom Hardt and Rune Söderlund - two Swedish theologians - disagreed on whether to use the terminology of UOJ but were nevertheless in substantial doctrinal agreement despite their disagreement on the terminology of UOJ.

This illustrates very well what we in the COELC have said, namely that we do not make the terminology of UOJ mandatory, but we do not condemn it either. And it was also one of the goals of my 2017 paper to show that one can disagree on the terminology of UOJ while being in substantial agreement, because some of those who teach UOJ agree more with some who don't than they agree with some others who do.

Like nailing jelly to a wall

Pastor Rydecki is right that UOJ is confusing and like nailing jelly to a wall. This is exactly why I don't think it can be simply condemned nor simply affirmed as an article of faith. One needs to clarify what is meant before one either condemns or affirms a doctrinal assertion.

Rather than arguing over words, we should argue over the substance of the matter. The problem, in my view, is that by affirming UOJ, one risks affirming too much, and by condemning UOJ, one risks condemning too much.

Let me be clear from the beginning: Scripture does not teach that all men are already justified independently of faith. Neither do the Lutheran confessions nor the Lutheran fathers. I don't teach that either. And I also reject and condemn any idea of UOJ which teaches that man needs no further justification but only needs to accept or receive a prior justifying verdict.

³ See Stellhorns and Walthers interaction here:

<https://archive.org/details/1880ChicagoGeneralPastoralConf/page/n45/mode/2up?view=theater>

But why not just outright reject UOJ then? Because there is a truth in UOJ that needs to be emphasized, and those who condemn UOJ risk condemning this truth too. This truth has to do with the relationship between Christ's exaltation, union with Christ, and our justification through faith.

If the terminology of UOJ is used to affirm this truth and is not claimed as a doctrine and one does not draw consequences of it that undermine the true doctrine, I don't see how the terminology can be condemned. And if something called UOJ is formulated in a way that does not reject what Scripture clearly teaches regarding justification by faith or anything else, I don't think we should condemn it as an attempt to explain the connection between Christ's resurrection and our justification.

I do not believe that every utterance in systematic theology is an article of faith that must either be condemned or affirmed as an article of faith that must be believed. Somewhere on the same level as open questions and exegetical questions, there are theological attempts to connect the dots of what Scripture clearly teaches. The lines connecting the dots can be drawn with some differences, and we do not need to bind each other to specific lines as long as we are connecting the same dots and agree on which of them are dots and which of them are theological attempts at connecting the dots.

I believe the terminology of UOJ can be an attempt to connect what Scripture reveals, and our confessions confess about the relationship between the exaltation of Christ and our justification. Likewise, John Gerhard's metaphor of the bondsman can be seen as such an attempt. We do not turn such a metaphor into an article of faith. But it is an attempt to connect some dots that we do need to agree on.

Isolating the dots from the attempts to connect them can be hard, though, and is best done in dialogue and discussion regarding these issues. I therefore appreciate Pastor Rydecki's paper, which has also helped me clarify some issues, even if disagreements seem to remain.

While I do mention union with Christ in my earlier paper, I think my position has developed a bit further on the connection between union with Christ, Christ's resurrection and our justification before God. So, this will partly be a response and partly clarification of my present position on the matter.

The COELC-position

The COELC has presented the CLM with a quick guide to our position which includes the following theses on UOJ that summarize our position:

- 21. The terminology of Universal Objective Justification is ambiguous and can refer to different doctrines*
- 22. We therefore cannot affirm Universal Objective Justification as doctrine*

23. However, because the terminology can sometimes refer to a position that is consistent with Scripture and the book of Concord, we can't simply condemn it as false doctrine either.

24. We reject any formulation of Universal Objective Justification that turns justification by faith into the mere reception of a prior verdict of justification.

25. We reject that individual human persons are justified before and apart from faith.

26. We affirm that Christ was justified from the assumed sins of the world in his resurrection.

27. We affirm that Christ by his vicarious satisfaction has earned a universal righteousness for the world which was confirmed in his resurrection.

28. This universal righteousness of Christ is given in the means of grace and received by faith, which apprehends Christ and his righteousness in the gospel.

29. This righteousness of Christ is imputed to the individual when he receives this righteousness through faith.⁴

It would have been helpful if the CLM had addressed these theses rather than focusing mainly on Walter's historical position.

Since Pastor Rydecki complains that defining UOJ is like nailing jelly to a wall, it would also have been more helpful if he had focused on our position, as presented in the quick guide, rather than on other people's positions. In the quick guide, we neither affirm the language of UOJ as doctrine, nor condemn it – for the same reason, namely that the terminology is unclear. Instead, we do define our position in a way that is not like nailing jelly on a wall.

Ambiguous terms are not true or false, though, except if all the possible uses are false, and therefore, we cannot simply condemn terminology because it is ambiguous. We can advise against it or try to define it more clearly, as we have done in the quick guide.

A reactionary doctrine

Pastor Rydecki complains that UOJ is a reactionary doctrine. While I might not completely agree with Rydecki's description of the historical background of this reactionary doctrine, I agree that the development of the concept of universal justification was mostly reactionary.

I do think one has to dig deeper to figure out what it was reacting to. I believe the development of universal justification mainly has to do with two historical developments:

The first is the uncertainty of the presence of faith which came into Lutheranism from the Puritans and was one of the causes of pietism. The Moravians reacted to the pietists and found the doctrine of Huber, which they used against the pietists to get around the lack of assurance that one had

⁴ Not published, but can be sent on request.

saving faith. They did not, however, solve the problem, because in the end one would still need to know whether one had the faith which receives this UOJ, if one was to be saved.

The second issue is a problem with explaining substitutionary atonement when classical metaphysics were lost and thereby concepts of participation and union with Christ.

If Christ simply took the penalty for the sins of all, why are not all saved, and why is faith necessary?

I think the solution to all these issues is to go back to how the reformers and early Lutherans spoke about justification.

I do, however, think that in the tradition of Anders Nohrborg in Sweden and later the Synodical Conference in the US, UOJ was combined with an old Lutheran idea of the resurrection as that through which Jesus obtained the righteousness and eternal life we receive in justification.

And I believe one runs the risk of overreacting to UOJ by rejecting more than should be rejected regarding the connection between our justification and the resurrection of Christ.

And I think pastor Rydecki and the CLM run the risk of committing the same mistake of being reactionary, when they seem to reject not only the idea that all men were justified in Christ, but also every idea that Jesus in His resurrection was justified from the sins of the world, and that this justification of Christ is a cause of our justification.

Addressing pastor Rydecki's specific objections

Middle way or third way?

Pastor Rydecki has issues with calling my position a middle way. My position as presented in my 2017 paper was, however, a middle way between a position that affirmed only a forensic verdict at the time of Christ's death and resurrection and a position that only affirms a forensic verdict when a sinner comes to faith. The position is also called a middle way in the quote from Nohrborg's postil in the Synodical Conference essay of 1872.

Perhaps it is better to call my position a third way, since I believe that most affirmations as well as most rejections of UOJ today are based on false premises that need to be dealt with. Before doing that, however, I will address some of the points Rydecki does make that are directed towards my position.

Imputation and union with Christ

While Rydecki in my opinion, mostly deals with Walther and others from the Synodical Conference tradition in his response to me, there are places where he deals directly with my position. One of them is on p. 6, where he quotes from p. 32 of my paper and seems to recognize the difference between my position and his view of the Waltherian position:

*"Pr. Sorenson thinks he has avoided the absurdity of Huberian UOJ by claiming that
"this forgiveness and righteousness that God has declared in Jesus, was not conferred*

or imputed to anyone except Jesus at the time of the resurrection” (p. 32). Whose righteousness was “imputed” to Jesus? Why, His own true righteousness, of course! But this is nonsense. The concept of imputation means that God graciously counts something that isn’t there as if it were there, just as non-imputation means graciously not counting something there that is there—all in order that the one who needed saving might be saved, so that the one who needed forgiveness in the first place might receive it.”

I disagree with this understanding of imputation which I think turns the concept into the legal fiction Lutherans were wrongly accused of. It is correct that Lutherans teach that the righteousness of someone else is imputed to sinners who do not have their own righteousness. It is however not correct that this is what imputation means. When Paul discusses imputation in Romans, he compares those whose (own) works are imputed to them and those whose faith is imputed for righteousness (Ro 4:3-4).

The terminology of imputation itself is not what describes the idea that righteousness/sin is imputed to someone else or that something which isn’t there is counted as if it is. Rather this is a special use of imputation in the justification of sinners that is not inherent in the term of imputation itself.

In fact, Martin Chemnitz in his *Loci* uses quite some space to defend the idea that the imputation of righteousness in justification is a special kind of imputation because the basis is not in the one to whom this righteousness is imputed. This would be redundant if Chemnitz simply saw this as the meaning of imputation. Chemnitz writes with reference to Romans 4:3-4:

That is, there is a certain imputation which has and looks to a basis in the person who works, to whom the imputation is made, and this does not take place in terms of grace but as a debt. But there is another kind of imputation, which does not have or look to a basis in the person to whom it is made; its basis is in the grace and mercy of God, who justifies the ungodly. Therefore, when he says that the ungodly person is justified by this imputation, he is showing that in the believer to whom this free imputation is given the basis is the very opposite, that is, to this ungodly person righteousness must not be imputed, but guilt, if God should will to enter into judgment with him.⁵

The same distinction is made in Chemnitz’ *Examination of the Council of Trent*⁶.

The idea that sins are not imputed to sinners in justification would be redundant if pastor Rydecki’s understanding of the term was correct.

⁵ Chemnitz, M. (1989). *Loci Theologici* (J. A. O. Preus, Trans.). Concordia Pub. House. Vol 2. P. 529

⁶ Chemnitz, M. (1971). *Examination of the Council of Trent. 1* (F. Kramer, Trans.). Concordia Publ. House. , Part I p. 532

It is therefore not meaningless to claim that the righteousness of Christ was imputed to him just as it is not meaningless to say that the crimes of a criminal is imputed to Him by a court, and just as it is correct to say that sinners are justified because their sins are (surprisingly) not imputed to them.

I will also take issue with Paul Rydecki's idea that what happens in the imputation of Christ's righteousness is "*that God graciously counts something that isn't there as if it were there*". It is correct that the righteousness which is imputed to sinners is not an inherent righteousness or a righteousness originating in man. But it is incorrect to say that it isn't "there". It is precisely because Christ is present and united to sinners, that we can be justified.

Pastor Rydecki continues his criticism of my idea of Christ's righteousness being imputed to himself:

*"Christ never abandoned His perfect record of obedience to His Father. He didn't need to have His righteousness imputed back to Him. He never lost it!"*⁷

It is correct that Christ never abandoned His perfect record of obedience to His Father. But he did carry the sins of the world, and he did become sin for us. And His righteousness which is imputed to sinners is not simply his active obedience to the law, nor is it simply the eternal righteousness of His divine nature, but rather his perfect satisfaction of the law through both his active and passive obedience.

This work of satisfying the law was imputed to Him for righteousness so that He who took responsibility for the sins of the world on account of His work was released from the wages of sin, namely death.

Absolution and paying the penalty

Rydecki also sees it as meaningless to speak about Christ being absolved from our sins.

The original classical meaning of absolve is to acquit from charges and not to remit debt or guilt. So, it does not necessarily imply forgiveness. However, it is also not wrong to speak about Christ being remitted from our debts that he had taken responsibility for.

One might object that debt is not remitted, if the full penalty is paid as is the case here. Following this logic, one could say the same about our forgiveness. We are forgiven because of the merits of Christ. Since we receive Christ's righteousness and sacrifice for our sin would it also not be wrong with this logic to say that we are absolved from our sins?

I think one needs to distinguish between fulfillment of the law and paying the penalty for breaking it, just like fulfilling an obligation *in natura* and compensating for not having done it are different. If you have stolen a car, there is a difference between giving the car back and paying enough. Determining the amount is even harder if you need to compensate for another kind of harm than stealing something.

⁷ Rydecki p. 6

Paying the penalty or compensation might be equivalent to, but it is not identical to actually fulfilling the law and not having broken it. Paying the penalty for something still results in the removal of guilt, which is absolution or forgiveness, even though the penalty is paid. Guilt doesn't simply disappear, it is removed, even if it is on account of a penalty or compensation offered to the one removing it. Whether the paying of a certain penalty removes guilt is dependent on either whether the one harmed is satisfied by it or a judge saying that it is enough.

The second distinction that needs to be made is a distinction between Christ suffering an equivalent penalty and all men suffering individually their penalties. Christ suffered enough without suffering for eternity and only dying once for all men. His singular suffering and death were enough because he is God. So even Christ's paying of our penalty is strictly speaking not the suffering of our penalty, but the suffering of a morally equivalent penalty.

If one is to be freed from one's obligation to pay a penalty for having wronged someone, being freed from the obligation depends on whether either the recipient or a judge accepts the payment as sufficient for the damage given. Accepting the payment is the same as absolving one from further repercussions.

If I owe you a million dollars and give you, for example, a diamond or an antiquity that I think is worth enough to pay the debt, the debt doesn't simply disappear because I think it is enough. You will have to check whether the diamond is in fact worth more than what I owe you and then you will cancel the debt by accepting the payment. This is similar to Christ's death.

Now we might call it something else than absolving Christ. There is no substantial difference between saying that God accepted the satisfaction in the resurrection as Chemnitz does⁸ and that he absolved Christ from the sin he had imputed to Christ. Those are just different ways of explaining the same thing. I am interested to know how Christ's resurrection could show that God accepted the sacrifice of Christ without at the same time absolving Christ from the charges of the law.

Substitute or high priest

One of the issues I think needs to be thought through is how substitution is understood.

Pastor Rydecki writes regarding this:

Throughout the entire pattern of substitutionary sacrifice, well-established in the Old Testament and applied to Christ in the New, nowhere, anywhere, is the substitute forgiven in the sinner's place. Nowhere is the substitute subsequently absolved in the sinner's place so that the sinner can then be absolved by virtue of the absolution of his substitute. The whole notion of substitution is turned on its head if the substitute receives both the punishment for sins as well as the forgiveness for those same sins. You can either receive the punishment or the forgiveness, not both.⁹

⁸ Chemnitz, M. (1971). *Examination of the Council of Trent. 1* (F. Kramer, Trans.). Concordia Publ. House, Part I, p. 530

⁹ Rydecki p. 6

It is unfortunate that Pastor Rydecki here chooses to deal with the less precise terminology of the early synodical conference without dealing with the corrections to it I made in my paper. It is a good example of how Pastor Rydecki's confusing others view with my view make it even more like nailing jelly to a wall.

A little later I commented explicitly on the confusion in the early Synodical Conference:

*Everyone will admit that Jesus did not arise in our place so that no one else will rise from the dead. The distinction between substitute and representative may not have been made so clear by the old Synodical Conference, but I think the meaning is clear. God did not raise and justify Christ instead of raising and justifying us. Christ was justified on our behalf as our bondsman and this is the efficient cause of our justification and our resurrection.*¹⁰

Thus, I distinguish between substitution and representation, and the bondsman-metaphor Gerhard uses had more to do with being a representative than a substitute.

The High priest and sacrificial lamb in the OT are two different things. The high priest was the one who brought the sacrifice as a representative of the people. The High priest was admitted into the Holy of Holies after having sacrificed both for himself and for the people.

He stands as representative and symbolical new Adam a corporate representative of Israel, and He is in a way justified or accepted by God on account of His sacrifice. So, while the sacrificial animals are not absolved, the high priest is in a way absolved from the sins of the people and accepted as representative of the people into the presence of God without being killed on account of the sacrifices on the day of atonement.

There is a deeper connection between the priestly office and the sacrificial lamb though, that is between the roles of representative and substitute.

The connection goes through the role of the first-born in the Old Testament, the one who opens the mother's womb. The Levites were to serve in the temple in the place of the first-born, who had been redeemed by the sacrificial paschal lambs in Egypt. Going further back Isach, the first-born of Sarah and the son of the promise was almost sacrificed on mt. Moriah, and a sacrificial animal was sacrificed instead. This was seen as a symbolical resurrection by the author of Hebrews (Heb 11:19).

The sacrificial animals were sacrificed instead of the first born, who were absolved as representatives of their families. The high priest as representative of the people was thus in a sense the symbolical first-born of Israel, which itself was called the first-born of God and thus in a sense a representative of the nations.

¹⁰ Sørensen 2017 p. 29

Until Christ came the representative, and the substitute were separated, but the representatives, whether Isach, the first-born in Egypt, the later first-born or the high priest were symbolically absolved on account of the sacrifices by which they were redeemed.

In Jesus the substitute and the representative are united, and the resurrection of the representative first-born of many brethren (Ro 8:29) and his entering into the heavenly holy of holies as high priest in His ascension is an absolution from the sins he carried on account of his substitutional sacrifice and an acceptance of Him and those who are in Him (compare Heb 8:1; 9:24; 10:19).

The Father's acceptance of Him is thus an acceptance of His people, the church. It is therefore permissible to speak about a corporate justification of the church as the body of Christ, because the members share in everything the head has received.

While alle men are not justified as such the church corporately as the body and bride of Christ is justified with Christ in His resurrection. Individuals from the whole world however are only justified when they become members of Christ by being grafted into Him by baptism and faith.

The role of the resurrection

Regarding the role of the resurrection, pastor Rydecki writes:

In summary, Christ's role as Substitute ended when He said, "It is finished!" and died. But His role as High Priest continues for all eternity. This, in fact, is the true power of the resurrection, not in that the Substitute received forgiveness in our place when He was raised from the dead, or in that all mankind was justified in His "justification," but in that the Mediator between God and men, having offered Himself as the vicarious sacrifice for the world's sins, now continues in His role as Priest and Mediator, in which He applies His finished sacrifice to those who believe in Him and intercedes for them continually before God the Father. This is what St. Paul means when he says in Romans 4:25, "...He was raised for our justification."¹¹

It is unclear what pastor Rydecki means by saying that Christ's role as substitute has ended. I agree that the substitutional work of Christ ended with Christ's death. But as already mentioned, I believe He was justified or absolved as our high priest in the resurrection.

My question is, what pastor Rydecki means by saying that Christ's role as High priest continues by Him applying his finished sacrifice.

It seems to me from pastor Rydecki's description of imputation and substitution that this application must be something outside Christ, and that the resurrection of Christ was only necessary because he could not do this while being death. Perhaps I misunderstand pastor Rydecki.

I believe the Lutheran fathers said more about the resurrection than pastor Rydecki seems to be willing to say. I do not think this is limited to John Gerhard, nor can it be reduced to the bondsman-

¹¹ Rydecki p. 8

analogy. But I will deal with pastor Rydecki's dismissal of John Gerhard before my constructive argument.

Rydecki's dismissal of John Gerhard

Pastor Rydecki admits that Gerhard teaches that Christ was absolved from our sins, but he seems to dismiss this teaching nevertheless.¹² I am not convinced that Gerhard spoke about absolution in the ecclesiastical sense as forgiveness rather than the classical sense as simply acquittal from charges.¹³

While I do not think we can or should elevate Gerhards metaphor of the bondsman to an article of faith, what he is trying to explain with this metaphor is a truth that we see in both Scripture and the Lutheran confessions, namely that the exaltation of Christ plays a crucial role in our justification before God.

Pastor Rydecki points out that the bondsman-metaphor is not mentioned in Gerhards Loci. Gerhards Locus on Justification which Pastor Rydecki points to was published in 1613. Gerhards annotations on Romans were published posthumously in 1645 as Paul Rydecki also points out and was the last work, Gerhard worked on.

It is not correct however that this idea doesn't show up anywhere else in Gerhards writings.

In another posthumously published work, his commentary on 1 Timothy 3:16, he writes.

"He was justified"— that is, "declared to be righteous"— because in and through His resurrection Christ was released from the sins of men which He had taken up into Himself as Substitute to make satisfaction for them to the Father.¹⁴

While the bondsman-analogy is not explicitly used here, the point is the same, except that he doesn't speak about the connection to our absolution.

In his Disputationes Theologicae he makes much the same points as in the Romans commentary:

Because Christ arose, we are therefore no longer in sins, since most assuredly full and perfect satisfaction has been made for them, and because in the resurrection of Christ we are absolved of our sins, so that they no longer can condemn us before the judgment bar of God . . .

This power of the resurrection of Christ includes not only the application of the righteousness that avails before God, but also the actual absolution from sins, and even the blessed resurrection to life, since by virtue of the resurrection of Christ we are freed from the corporal and spiritual death of sins. Some bring in here the apostolic teaching in 1 Timothy 3:16, God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit (namely through the resurrection by God the Father) that is, he was absolved of the sins of the whole world, which he as Sponsor took upon himself, so that he might

¹² Rydecki p. 10-12

¹³ See Lewis and Short on absolve, <https://alatius.com/ls/index.php?met=up&ord=absolvo>

¹⁴ Gerhard, Johann. *Gerhard's Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy* (p. 78). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.

*make perfect satisfaction for them to God the Father. Moreover in rising from the dead he showed by this very fact that satisfaction has been made by him for these sins, and all of the same have been expiated by the sacrifice of his death.*¹⁵

While Gerhard does not use the bondsman metaphor in his Loci, even there he speaks in a way that is not far from it in C7 § 81 (p. 436):

*Therefore, the resurrection of Christ is a clear testimony that full and perfect satisfaction for our sins has been offered to God and that perfect righteousness has been brought forth; otherwise, the Father would not have brought forth this surety from the prison of the tomb."*¹⁶

Gerhard here speaks about a perfect righteousness having been brought forth and the resurrection of Christ being a testimony of it, and Gerhard connects this to Christ being a surety, which is a bondsman or guarantor.

Returning to the Romans commentary, it is correct that it does not speak about the world being absolved in Christ. But it does say that God *absolves us in Christ, so that, in this way, the resurrection of Christ may be both the cause and the pledge and the complement of our justification.*¹⁷

The question is whether the role of the resurrection merely is that Christ needed to be alive to be able to apply his merits. Jesus however says to the thief on the cross that he would be with Jesus in paradise today. Why would Jesus need the bodily resurrection to apply his merits if he were alive as God?

I think that the "in Christ" here is best understood in light of union with Christ. This is also the main reason it is not about universal justification. But it is about the connection between Christ's justification and ours. Christ's justification is a cause of our justification, which according to Gerhard happens through being grafted into Christ, that is being united to Christ through faith.

¹⁵ Translation from Buchholz, p.10

<http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/950/BuchholzJustification.pdf> Gerhard, Johann. Disputationes Theologicae (Jena, 1656) p. 1450. *Quia Christus resurrexit, ideo non amplius sumus in peccatis, quia scilicet praestita est pro illis plena et perfecta satisfactio, et quia in Christi resurrectione a peccatis nostris sumus absoluti, ut non amplius coram Dei iudicio nos condemnare possint . . . Haec vis resurrectionis Christi complectitur non solum iustitiae coram Deo valentis applicationem, sed etiam actualem a peccatis absolutionem, ac tandem beatam ad vitam resurrectionem, quia virtute resurrectionis Christi a morte spirituali peccatorum et corporali liberamur. Quidam huc accommodant locum Apostolicum 1 Tim. 3. v 16. Deus manifestatus est in carne, justificatus Spiritu, videl. per resurrectionem a Deo Patre, hoc est, absolutus a peccatis totius mundi, quae ipse ut Sponsor in se receperat, ut pro illis perfectam satisfactionem Deo Patri praestaret, resurgendo enim ex morte ipso facto demonstravit, pro peccatis illis a se esse satisfactum, eaque omnia sacrificio mortis suae fuisse expiata*

¹⁶ Gerhard, J. (2018). *On justification through faith Johann Gerhard ; translated by Richard J. Dinda ; edited by Joshua J. Hayes and Heath R. Curtis ; general editor Benjamin T.G. Mayes* (R. J. Dinda, Trans., B. T. G. Mayes, J. J. Hayes, & H. R. Curtis, Eds.). Concordia Publishing House. P. 436

¹⁷ Gerhard, J. (2014). *Annotations on the first six chapters of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans* (P. A. Rydecki, Trans., R. Melvin, Ed.). Repristination Press. p. 214

I think one of the reasons UOJ has become a problem is that the function of union with Christ in our justification has been ignored in modern confessional Lutheranism.

Gerhard on Romans 5:18 when he rejects the idea that all men are justified:

If we want to descend to the application, that universality must be restricted to those who are grafted into Christ by faith. For as the unrighteousness of Adam is communicated to all those who are descended from him by carnal generation, so the righteousness of Christ is communicated to all those who are grafted into Him through faith and spiritual regeneration.¹⁸

Gerhard himself speaks about the application of the merits of Christ in connection with being grafted into Christ when dealing with Romans 5:19, when he writes:

For as Adam, by his disobedience enveloped all of his posterity in the guilt of sin, so Christ, who suffered and died for the sins of all, also merited and acquired liberation of this guilt and righteousness for all. But this benefit is only applied to those who are grafted into Christ by faith, and only they become participants in this benefit.¹⁹

Christ thus did not apply his merits somehow outside himself. No, he did it through being grafted into Him. And therefore, what happened to Himself matters. When Gerhard both says that Christ merited and acquired liberation of guilt and righteousness for all, we should not understand this acquiring as a metaphor. He did it by receiving the benefit, which is afterward applied to us through being grafted into Him.

Christ thus in His exaltation as the firstborn of many brethren received everything that he merited and everything that we are given through Him.

Conclusion on Rydecki's position

While I appreciate some of the criticism pastor Rydecki has given of the teaching of UOJ as it is presented by the synods in the Synodical Conference tradition, it seems to me that Rydecki's position is reactionary too and rejects more than should be rejected.

I will show in the following that while Gerhards analogy of the bondsman is Gerhards own and should not be turned into an article of faith, what he is trying to illustrate with that analogy is both Scriptural, confessional and in accordance with the Lutheran fathers in general.

It seems to me that pastor Rydecki is unable to affirm what Scripture, the Lutheran confessions and fathers affirm regarding the relationship between the resurrection of Christ and our justification.

One does not have to affirm that all men have been justified in order to affirm that Christ was justified from the sins he bore as our substitute.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 242

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 245

Restating and defending my position

Problems behind the discussion about UOJ

Introspection and uncertainty about faith

The problems behind the doctrine of universal justification. Uncertainty about the presence of faith. The doctrine of universal justification arose first as a reaction to Calvinism in Huber and then in the Moravians (Herrnhuttern), who reacted against Pietism's uncertainty about faith. Pietism arose after inspiration from the English Calvinist Puritanism.

English Puritan writings had begun to be translated. Puritanism was based on the Calvinist doctrine of double predestination and that one could not fall away from the faith. This led, among other things, to the idea of false faith and an uncertainty about the presence of faith. You had to make sure of this through self-analysis before you could know if you were a true believer and thus among the elect. Pietism adopted this tendency, even though the Calvinist doctrine of election was not adopted.²⁰

A crucial problem for adherents of the doctrine of universal justification is that they are afraid that faith will become the object of faith – that is, that one must believe that one believes before one can believe.

Loss of classical metaphysics and participation

The loss of classical metaphysics and a concept of participation has to do with many of the issues around UOJ. Even Pietism's self-analysis, adopted from Puritanism, has to do with this.²¹

But also, the problems with explaining substitution and imputation. These become legal fictions, and one has a hard time explaining their logic and why faith is needed if faith is not a work.

If Jesus died instead of all, why isn't everyone saved? Why isn't Christ's obedience not just imputed to everyone, and if it is, why isn't everyone saved? And why is faith needed? And what does faith receive if it is to be seen as a mere means of reception?

I will argue that most of this can be solved if we go back to a more participatory view of salvation and get over the false dichotomy of participation vs. imputation, making imputation a legal fiction. And I believe this is both Biblical, confessional, and consistent with the Lutheran fathers.

I also think the concern regarding what faith is receiving and what it is to believe can be solved by this. What is offered in the gospel is neither an abstract forgiveness one needs to believe that one already has, nor is it an abstract promise of forgiveness if one believes.

²⁰ See Gawthrop, Richard L. *Pietism and the making of eighteenth-century Prussia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Rather, it is Christ himself who is present in the gospel and received by faith with all that he has merited by His substitutionary death and acquired/obtained through His exaltation.

Clarifying and restating my position

Identification and participation

A way to explain the connection between legal concepts like substitution/representation/imputation and participation is by the idea of identification. Substitution and representation both have to do with some sort of identification. The substitute is in a way identified with those it substitutes for, but in a way that the substitute does, those substituted for do not have to do.

Those who are represented by someone are identified with their representative so that what can be said about the representative can be said about those represented by the representative.

I think all might agree that while Christ substituted for the whole world as sacrificial lamb, not everyone is justified by this substitution. The terminology of substitution while not wrong might give the impression that either Christ did not die for all, or all should benefit from the substitutionary death of Christ. This is part of the problem that leads to UOJ, and pastor Rydecki doesn't solve this problem although his description of substitution leads to this very problem.

If we speak about an identification based on union with Christ, I think we can better explain Christ's substitution without ending up either limiting the atonement of Christ or teaching that all men are justified.

In His incarnation and humiliation, Christ was identified with us in our sins, but we were not identified with Him. When we are united to Him through baptism and faith, we are identified with the resurrected Christ.

It seems to me that such combination of identification and union is consistent with texts like 2 Cor 5:21, which speaks about Christ becoming a sinner and us becoming the righteousness of God "in Him", that is by union with Him.

In Christ's union with sinful men, he was identified with the sinful world. But as such He was justified through his active and passive obedience. To be justified, we need to be identified with Him. This happens through union with Christ through baptism and faith.

I believe this model can be supported by both Scripture, our Lutheran confessions and Lutheran fathers.

Let us look at a certain text by Chemnitz which binds some of these concepts together.

Chemnitz' Christological model

In Martin Chemnitz, Lords Supper, when dealing with the benefits of the Lord's Supper, he relates it to our salvation in a way that summarizes many of the necessary components of justification:

In the third place, there is a salutary change of which the fathers often reminded us with a special joy of the Spirit. Our nature, at the beginning created in God's image, had been

adorned with all heavenly and divine gifts, blessings which had been bestowed upon Adam as the founder of our race. But through his fall not only were these blessings lost, but our nature became corrupted by sin and doomed to death. The Son of God, therefore, in order that He might become the second Adam, assumed our nature, but without sin, and in that nature condemned sin, destroyed death, and restored that nature to life. Thus first of all in His own person He sanctified, restored, and blessed human nature. And now, in order that we might be made certain that these blessings apply also to us and our wretched nature, and have truly been communicated to us, Christ in His Supper again offers us that very nature which He has assumed from us and in Himself first restored, so that when we receive it with our poor flesh we are no longer in doubt concerning the salvation also of our nature through Christ. For in this way He, as it were, grafts our miserable and corrupt nature into the holy and life-giving mass of His human nature, as Cyril says, so that our depravity and misery are cured and renewed through the remedy of this most intimate union.²²

Martin Chemnitz discusses the themes of incarnation, redemption, and restoration of human nature. Christ assumed our condemned human nature, condemned sin in it, restored it and now makes us partakers of this through being grafted into this restored human nature of His. This is how He becomes a new and lifegiving Adam.

One might object that Chemnitz here speaks only about sanctification and glorification. He mentions salvation from condemnation explicitly though, which is what justification is about.

If one compares with Chemnitz's Two Natures p. 60 Chemnitz there explicitly distinguishes between the salvation from condemnation and renewal of human nature and makes the same claim about both:

""But we should give careful attention to the force of this argument, for it is certain that the Son of God assumed a human nature chiefly for two reasons: (1) that He might redeem and free it from the wrath of God, from condemnation, and from eternal death; and (2) that, corrupted and depraved by sin as it is, He might refashion and restore it first in Himself, and that then from Himself as the Head there might come to us who are His members cleansing, sanctification, and renewal. This is the excellent way in which Cyril describes it.""²³

If Christ has redeemed his assumed human nature from the wrath of God and condemnation, this means that he has justified it in himself. Thus, Chemnitz does talk here about something that we might call a justification or absolution of Christ. When he combines it with the idea that the assumed human nature has been restored to life after saying that sin has been condemned and death destroyed in it, the connection to the resurrection is clear.

²² Chemnitz, M. (1979). *The lord's supper - de coena domini* (J. A. O. Preus, Trans.). Concordia Pub. House. , p. 188-189

²³ Chemnitz, M. (1971b). *The Two Natures in Christ; a monograph concerning the two natures in christ, their hypostatic union, the communication of their attributes, and related questions, recently prepared and revised on the basis of scripture and the witnesses of the Ancient Church* (J. A. O. Preus, Trans.). Concordia Pub. House. p. 60

Comparing this to his Enchiridion Q 136 (see below) also shows that the life to which this nature was restored, as talked about here, is the life that follows from justification. We will get back to this passage below.

Chemnitz thus speaks in a way like Gerhard, although he makes the connection to the incarnation and to our union with Christ more explicit.

This integration of participation and redemption in my view, is the key to solving the problems behind the controversy about Universal Justification.

Christ was identified with us by assuming a condemned human nature, which he brought through condemnation to life and blessing, and we are justified through participation in and identification with Him.

This – I believe – is also what in 2 Cor 5:21, where it says that Christ became sin so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He was identified with us, so that we in Him – that is, through union with Him – might become God's righteousness.

Christ thus was identified with us when he assumed our condemned human nature as we are identified with Him, when we are grafted into His exalted and thus justified human nature.

The incarnation and humiliation of Christ as his identification with us

Christ was identified with sinners in his humiliation, where he assumed our condemned flesh. He did so without sin. Luther writes:

But just as Christ is wrapped up in our flesh and blood, so we must wrap Him and know Him to be wrapped up in our sins, our curse, our death, and everything evil.

“But it is highly absurd and insulting to call the Son of God a sinner and a curse!” If you want to deny that He is a sinner and a curse, then deny also that He suffered, was crucified, and died. For it is no less absurd to say, as our Creed confesses and prays, that the Son of God was crucified and underwent the torments of sin and death than it is to say that He is a sinner or a curse. But if it is not absurd to confess and believe that Christ was crucified among thieves, then it is not absurd to say as well that He was a curse and a sinner of sinners. Surely these words of Paul are not without purpose: “Christ became a curse for us” and “For our sake God made Christ to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).

In the same way John the Baptist called Christ “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29). He is, of course, innocent, because He is the Lamb of God without spot or blemish. But because He bears the sins of the world, His innocence is pressed down with the sins and the guilt of the entire world. Whatever sins I, you, and all of us have committed or may

*commit in the future, they are as much Christ's own as if He Himself had committed them. In short, our sin must be Christ's own sin, or we shall perish eternally.*²⁴

Our sins became Christ's own sins. Not in the sense that he had committed them, but in the sense that he took full responsibility for them. This happened through his assumption of our condemned human nature and his identification with all sinners.

In His humiliation Christ suffered the consequences of sin, including the consequences in human nature that are not themselves sin.

Chemnitz writes:

Second, Paul intends in Rom. 8:3 through the word $\acute{\omicron}\upsilon\acute{\omicron}\iota\upsilon\alpha$ to explain the fact that in our nature as we derive it from Adam, corrupted and vitiated by sin, those infirmities which accompany it are the necessary penalty of sin and are present because of sin. But because Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost, He assumed a human nature without sin and incorrupt.

Therefore, those infirmities which are the consequent penalties of sin were not to be in the flesh of Christ by the necessity of His condition, but His body could be free from these weaknesses and need not be subject to them. For it was not the flesh of sin, and yet He was a true man, just as Adam before the Fall was a true man, although without these penalizing infirmities (so to speak). But for us and for our salvation the incarnate Christ willingly assumed the infirmities by which our nature was burdened as a necessary condition because of sin, in order that He might commend to us His love, that He thereby might take away from us the penalty which fell upon Himself and free us from it, and thus be made the victim for our sins.

*For Paul, as he does with other words, clearly adopts this expression in Rom. 8:3 from the Septuagint (Leviticus 5 and 6). Christ was sent in the likeness of the flesh of sin in this way, and, as the ancients said, Christ assumed our infirmities because of a feeling of sympathy, not because of the necessity of His condition.*²⁵

So, the humiliation and imputation of sins was not just something imposed from the outside through a legal fiction, but something that had to do with his assumption of our human nature with the weaknesses inherent in human nature that are consequences of the fall, but not in and of themselves sin.

²⁴ Martin Luther, [Luther's Works, Vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 26 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 278.

²⁵ Chemnitz, M. (1971b). *The Two Natures in Christ; a monograph concerning the two natures in christ, their hypostatic union, the communication of their attributes, and related questions, recently prepared and revised on the basis of scripture and the witnesses of the Ancient Church* (J. A. O. Preus, Trans.). Concordia Pub. House. p. 54

Christ did not assume concupiscence, but Christ suffered the fear of death in Gethsemane was a result also of His having assumed a condemned human nature.²⁶

Since Christ willingly took the penalties of sin when he assumed our condemned nature and was identified with us, when these penalties were removed, this meant that the curse and condemnation of Him who took our sins was removed. This is nothing else than an absolution or acquittal.

The exaltation of Christ and our justification in Scripture and the Lutheran fathers

Scripture

I will continue with Scripture passages that speak of the resurrection of Christ in relation to our justification that is similar to how Gerhard describes it.

Jesus was justified and vindicated in his resurrection

One of the texts often discussed is 1 Ti 3:16: ¹⁶*It must be admitted: Great is the mystery of our faith! He appeared in the flesh, was declared righteous in spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.* ²⁷

One can argue about whether this is speaking about vindication or justification. In the case of Jesus those are two sides of the same coin though. Also, we should read this passage in light of other passages that speak about the role of the resurrection on Christ.

Christ was not just vindicated before the world, but as the one falsely accused and attacked by Satan. Jesus himself speaks about the prince of the world coming and having no claim on him (Jn 14:29-30), and then about the prince of this world being judged himself (Jn 12:31 and Jn 16:11).

Satan is the accuser – he accused Job and the high priest Joshua (Zec 3:1), but he fell from heaven as accuser of God's people (Re 12:10). I will argue that this has to do with the death and resurrection of Christ. Satan lost his right to accuse those who are in Christ, when he falsely accused and had Jesus killed, whom he had failed to lead into sin. This follows Old Testament law, where the one accusing falsely was to be judged himself.

This is also why a legal theory of atonement does not contradict the Christ victor theme. They are rather two sides of the same coin. The victory of Christ was a legal victory, because His righteousness overcame the Devil's accusation. Christ's justification before God was his vindication before the accusations of the devil and thus the judgment on the devil, whereby he lost the right and power to accuse Christ and those who are in him.

²⁶ See the discussion in Chemnitz regarding this issue p. 61ff in Chemnitz, M. (1971b). *The Two Natures in Christ; a monograph concerning the two natures in christ, their hypostatic union, the communication of their attributes, and related questions, recently prepared and revised on the basis of scripture and the witnesses of the Ancient Church* (J. A. O. Preus, Trans.). Concordia Pub. House.

²⁷ William F. Beck, trans., [An American Translation](#), Fourth Edition (Osage Beach, MO: Lake Printing Company, 2021), 1 Ti 3:16.

Thus, vindication of Christ against the accusations of Satan is deeply connected to His justification as the one carrying our sins. As we will see below, this is also the angle from which Luther sees the question in his Galatians commentary,

Jesus' resurrection is a reason or cause of our justification

Not only is the resurrection of Christ both a justification and vindication of Christ. It is also seen as a cause of our justification. And it is the resurrection itself, which is seen this way, not merely Christ being alive in itself.

Ac 13:37–39: “³⁷...but the body of Him Whom God raised did not decay. ³⁸ “And so you should know, my friends and brothers—we are announcing to you that this Jesus forgives your sins ³⁹ and declares everyone who believes righteous and free from everything from which Moses' Law couldn't free you.” ²⁸

Here, the resurrection is the reason why Paul could announce both forgiveness and justification.

A similar connection is seen in Ro 4:24–25: ²⁴ *but also for us. He had in mind already then to count us righteous on the basis of our believing in Him Who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead. ²⁵ It was He Who was handed over to death for our failures and then was raised for our justification. ²⁹*

I am not arguing that Paul here teaches that all men were justified when Christ rose from the dead. Rather the reason it is not, is that the final cause or purpose of Christ's resurrection is the justification of believers. But it follows from this that the resurrection causes justification. This is the normal connection between final and efficient causes.

Another place in Romans, Paul makes a similar connection: Ro 8:33–34: ³³ *Who will accuse those whom God has chosen? It is God Who declares us righteous. ³⁴ Who will condemn? Christ died, more than that, He rose, He is at the right hand of God, and He prays for us. ³⁰*

Here both the death and resurrection of Christ is a reason why the Christian should trust that he is justified and therefore not condemned.

Also, in 1 Co 15:16–19 Paul makes a similar point: ¹⁶ *You see, if the dead don't rise, Christ didn't rise. ¹⁷ But if Christ didn't rise, your faith can't help you, and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then also*

²⁸ William F. Beck, trans., [An American Translation](#), Fourth Edition (Osage Beach, MO: Lake Printing Company, 2021), Ac 13:37–39.

²⁹ William F. Beck, trans., [An American Translation](#), Fourth Edition (Osage Beach, MO: Lake Printing Company, 2021), Ro 4:24–25.

³⁰ William F. Beck, trans., [An American Translation](#), Fourth Edition (Osage Beach, MO: Lake Printing Company, 2021), Ro 8:33–34.

those who have gone to their rest in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If Christ is our hope only for this life, we should be pitied more than any other people. ³¹

Paul's argument here only makes sense, if Christ's resurrection is a necessary condition for our sins being forgiven, and this is connected also to our hope of eternal life, which leads me to the next line of evidence.

Christ's resurrection is a cause of regeneration, adoption, or inheritance of eternal life

Regeneration, adoption, and inheritance of eternal life are rightly seen as part of justification in the Formula of Concord. While the meaning of the term justification itself is about not being punished, the actual act of justification includes being made a child of God and an heir of eternal life.

Therefore, if the resurrection of Christ causes these concomitants of justification, it by necessity also causes justification. And according to Scripture, the resurrection of Christ does do that.

In 1 Pe 1:3–4 Peter writes: ³ *Let us praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who by raising Jesus Christ from the dead has in His great mercy given us a new birth so that we have a living hope ⁴ for an inheritance that isn't destroyed or defiled and never fades away, as it is kept for you in heaven.*³²

Here the resurrection of Christ is both a cause of our regeneration and our hope of the heavenly inheritance.

In 1 Co 15:45 Paul writes: ⁴⁵ *That is what the Bible says: "Adam, the first man, was made a natural living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.*³³

This is shortly after Paul has made the connection between Christ's resurrection and our not being in our sins (v 17), and it is in the chapter where he defends the resurrection.

It is most likely that Paul is speaking about the resurrection here. By His resurrection Christ became a life-giving second Adam through whom we receive the life, that we lost through the first Adam. We do that because it was restored in Christ's assumed human nature in such a way that it could be given to others through union with Him, just as we died through our natural union with the first Adam.

³¹ William F. Beck, trans., [An American Translation](#), Fourth Edition (Osage Beach, MO: Lake Printing Company, 2021), 1 Co 15:16–19.

³² William F. Beck, trans., [An American Translation](#), Fourth Edition (Osage Beach, MO: Lake Printing Company, 2021), 1 Pe 1:3–4.

³³ William F. Beck, trans., [An American Translation](#), Fourth Edition (Osage Beach, MO: Lake Printing Company, 2021), 1 Co 15:45.

Christ' resurrection is something we come to share in when we are saved

Looking at this from the angle of the salvation of the individual, one can see the same thing. The individual is saved through being raised with Christ, that is participating in Christ's resurrection and ascension. John Gerhard refers to some of the same passages in his commentary on Romans 4:25.

Paul thus writes in Ephesians 2:4-7: ⁴ *But God, Who is rich in mercy, loved us with such a great love. ⁵ He made us who were dead in sins alive with Christ. (You have been saved by grace.) ⁶ And since we are in Christ Jesus, He raised us with Him and had us sit with Him in heaven ⁷ to show in the coming ages the immeasurable riches of His grace by being kind to us in Christ Jesus.*³⁴

This is easily turned into some kind of metaphor for conversion and put into an ordo salutis system of later Lutheranism. But this is neither the simple meaning of the text nor the interpretation of the early Lutheran fathers or the Book of Concord (see FC SD III, 20, which will be discussed later).

In Colossians 2: 13-14, Paul explicitly connects our being raised with Christ to our being forgiven our sins: ¹³ *Yes, you who were dead in sins and in your uncircumcised bodies He has made alive with Him when He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ wiped out the Law's demands that were against us and took them out of the way by nailing them to the cross.*³⁵

In Php 3:8–11 Paul connects our righteousness in Christ to His power of the resurrection and being joined to Him in His death and resurrection:

⁸ *Yes, I think it is all a loss because it is so much better to know Christ Jesus, my Lord. For Him I have lost everything and consider it garbage in order to win Christ ⁹ and to be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which comes from keeping the Law but having the righteousness which is through faith in Christ and which comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Him and the power of His resurrection, to share His sufferings and be like Him in His death ¹¹ if somehow I may join those who rise from the dead.*³⁶

Thus, while the bondsman-analogy of Gerhard cannot be derived directly from any Scripture passage the idea that the righteousness by which we are justified is caused also by the resurrection of Christ, is Scriptural and can be deduced from quite a few Scripture passages (not all mentioned here).

As we shall see, this idea is also present in the Lutheran confessions and early fathers.

³⁴ William F. Beck, trans., [An American Translation](#), Fourth Edition (Osage Beach, MO: Lake Printing Company, 2021), Eph 2:4–7.

³⁵ William F. Beck, trans., [An American Translation](#), Fourth Edition (Osage Beach, MO: Lake Printing Company, 2021), Col 2:13–14.

³⁶ William F. Beck, trans., [An American Translation](#), Fourth Edition (Osage Beach, MO: Lake Printing Company, 2021), Php 3:8–11.

Book of Concord

The Formula of Concord explicitly includes the resurrection of Christ in our righteousness before God two times in the Solido Declaratio. In FC SD III 9, it is included this way:

⁹ Concerning the righteousness of faith before God we believe, teach, and confess unanimously, in accordance with the comprehensive summary of our faith and confession presented above, that poor sinful man is justified before God, that is, absolved and declared free and exempt from all his sins, and from the sentence of well-deserved condemnation, and adopted into sonship and heirship of eternal life, without any merit or worth of our own, also without any preceding, present, or any subsequent works, out of pure grace, because of the sole merit, complete obedience, bitter suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us for righteousness.³⁷

If the only meaning of the resurrection for our justification is that Christ needed to be alive if he was to apply His merits, this seems odd. I cannot see how Rydecki's explanation of the role of the resurrection can explain the inclusion of the resurrection here.

Again, in FC SD III 14 it is included in a threefold list of what is identified as the righteousness imputed to faith:

¹⁴ Therefore the righteousness which is imputed to faith or to the believer out of pure grace is the obedience, suffering, and resurrection of Christ, since He has made satisfaction for us to the Law, and paid for [expiated] our sins.³⁸

Thus, the righteousness which avails before God is both the obedience and suffering of Christ which can be explained as meritorious, and then the resurrection of Christ which is not in itself meritorious. This is best explained by the resurrection being where Christ as man obtained the universal righteousness he had earned by his obedience, suffering and death.

Pastor Rydecki and others owe to give an explanation for the inclusion of the resurrection in the righteousness imputed to faith in the confession they subscribe to.

The Formula of Concord itself gives a hint about the connection between Christ's resurrection when it deals with regeneration and vivification as synonyms for justification in FC SD III, 20:

²⁰ As also the word vivificatio, that is, making alive, has sometimes been used in a like sense. For when man is justified through faith (which the Holy Ghost alone works), this is truly a regeneration, because from a child of wrath he becomes a child of God, and thus is transferred from death to life, as it is written: When we were dead in sins, He hath quickened us together with Christ, Eph. 2:5. Likewise: The just shall live by

³⁷ Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church: German-Latin-English. (Source: <https://bookofconcord.org>)

³⁸ Ibid.

*faith, Rom. 1:17; Hab. 2:4. In this sense the word is much and often used in the Apology.*³⁹

Thus, justification is to be made alive with Christ according to the FC. While later Lutheranism, perhaps under influence from reformed theology reinterpreted vivification and regeneration as being about conversion, the FC clearly teaches that both concepts are about justification itself, where we receive righteousness, sonship and eternal life through Christ.

The Formula of Concord refers to Luther's Galatians Commentary for further explanation (FC SD III, 67).

Luther's Galatians commentary on Christ's resurrection and our justification

Luther in his Galatians commentary repeatedly connects the resurrection of Christ to the righteousness which is received by and imputed to faith. While Luther often emphasizes Christ's victory in these places, it is a victory over God's law and wrath too. It is therefore not a dualistic cosmic battle, but a legal victory over the accuser.

If Jesus' conquering of death and the devil in His exaltation is seen as something distinct and separate from His obtaining righteousness before God, we end up with a dualistic cosmic battle, where death and the devil have power over man in and by themselves and not on account of sin.

As we shall see, Luther consistently includes righteousness when he speaks about Christ's victory.

I will not comment on all the passages quoted below, but highlight where the connection is made.

*...even at the very beginning of his epistle, the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8) and to preach the righteousness of God, which is called the resurrection of the dead.*⁴⁰

*Thus at the very outset Paul explodes with the entire issue he intends to set forth in this epistle. He refers to the resurrection of Christ, who rose again for our justification (Rom. 4:25). His victory is a victory over the Law, sin, our flesh, the world, the devil, death, hell, and all evils; and this victory of His He has given to us. Even though these tyrants, our enemies, accuse us and terrify us, they cannot drive us into despair or condemn us. For Christ, whom God the Father raised from the dead, is the Victor over them, and He is our righteousness. Therefore "thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).*⁴¹

Now the Law—not to mention far lesser things—with all its works and righteousness is only a pittance in comparison with Christ, by whose death and resurrection my

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Martin Luther, [Luther's Works, Vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 26 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 21.

⁴¹ Martin Luther, [Luther's Works, Vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 26 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 21-22.

death has been conquered, and righteousness and eternal life have been granted to me.⁴²

In His wounds and death I see my sin; and in His resurrection I see victory over sin, death, and the devil, and my righteousness and life.⁴³

*In short, sin is a great and powerful god who devours the whole human race, all the learned, holy, powerful, wise, and unlearned men. He, I say, attacks Christ and wants to devour Him as he has devoured all the rest. But he does not see that He is a Person of invincible and eternal righteousness. In this duel, therefore, it is necessary for sin to be conquered and killed, and for righteousness to prevail and live. Thus in Christ all sin is conquered, killed, and buried; and righteousness remains the victor and the ruler eternally.*⁴⁴

*This circumstance, “in Himself,” makes the duel more amazing and outstanding; for it shows that such great things were to be achieved in the one and only Person of Christ—namely, that the curse, sin, and death were to be destroyed, and that the blessing, righteousness, and life were to replace them—and that through Him the whole creation was to be renewed. If you look at this Person, therefore, you see sin, death, the wrath of God, hell, the devil, and all evils conquered and put to death. To the extent that Christ rules by His grace in the hearts of the faithful, there is no sin or death or curse. But where Christ is not known, there these things remain.*⁴⁵

Therefore when, inside our mask, He was carrying the sin of the whole world, He was captured, He suffered, He was crucified, He died; and for us He became a curse. But because He was a divine and eternal Person, it was impossible for death to hold Him. Therefore He arose from death on the third day, and now He lives eternally; nor can

⁴² Martin Luther, [Luther's Works, Vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 26 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 183.

⁴³ Martin Luther, [Luther's Works, Vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 26 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 357.

⁴⁴ Martin Luther, [Luther's Works, Vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 26 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 281.

⁴⁵ Martin Luther, [Luther's Works, Vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 26 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 282.

sin, death, and our mask be found in Him any longer; but there is sheer righteousness, life, and eternal blessing.⁴⁶

We must look at this image and take hold of it with a firm faith. He who does this has the innocence and the victory of Christ, no matter how great a sinner he is. But this cannot be grasped by loving will; it can be grasped only by reason illumined by faith. Therefore we are justified by faith alone, because faith alone grasps this victory of Christ. To the extent that you believe this, to that extent you have it. If you believe that sin, death, and the curse have been abolished, they have been abolished, because Christ conquered and overcame them in Himself; and He wants us to believe that just as in His Person there is no longer the mask of the sinner or any vestige of death, so this is no longer in our person, since He has done everything for us.⁴⁷

These quotes show that Luther thought that Luther especially connects the righteousness which is imputed to faith to the resurrection of Christ.

One could look into other passages in Luther's writings. His postils for easter day have similar thoughts.

But instead I will point out how other early Lutherans had similar thoughts about how Christ in His exaltation obtained the righteousness which is imputed to faith.

Johannes Brenz on the resurrection of Christ and our justification

One of those who speak this way is Johannes Brenz.

Brenz writes the following on Romans 4:25 and Ephesians 2:

Just as He by His suffering and death has reconciled us with God and acquired the forgiveness of sins, so He has also through His glorious resurrection from the death acquired that God our Father for his sake will judge us as righteous and confer eternal life. Paul also talks about this in epistle to the Ephesians in the 2th chapter: When we were dead He made us alive together with Christ and raised us up, and together with him placed us in the heavenly [substance] in Christ Jesus.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Martin Luther, [Luther's Works, Vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 26 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 284.

⁴⁷ Martin Luther, [Luther's Works, Vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 26 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 284.

⁴⁸ Brenz, Johannes, Erklarung der Epistel S. Pauls an die Römer, erstmals in Latein außgangen, vnd jetzunder in die deutsche Sprach gebracht durch Jacobum Grettern p. 277: *Dann gleich wie er mit seinem leiden vnd fterben vns mit Gott dem HERRN verfonet / vnd die verges bung unserer sânden erworben / also hat er auch uns durch seine Herrliche Prstend von den todten / erlanget / daßvns Gottder Herr omb seinet willen auch für gerecht vrtheilen / vnd das ewis ge Leben wil mittheilen . Dauon redet Paulus auch in seiner Epistel an die Epheser*

Brenz in His large catechism writes:

*For in the first place, just as he atoned our sins before God his Father by his passion and death, so also through his resurrection he obtained for us the righteousness that all of us who believe in him may be counted righteous and holy before God for his sake.*⁴⁹

And in his gospel-sermons Brenz writes:

*"But it will be said: What does it profit us that Jesus Christ has become a mighty Lord in heaven and on earth through his resurrection? Much in every respect. For just as Christ took his suffering upon himself for us, so he accomplished the resurrection for our sakes. And as the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of all men, even so has he laid on him the salvation of all men: for there is none other name given among men, whereby we must be saved. Therefore, since Christ has been raised to the glory of his Father, it is evident to those who believe in him that, just as Christ was raised by God, his Father, is recognized as the all-innocent and all-righteous, so also those who believe in him are considered righteous and all-innocent for Christ's sake.*⁵⁰

Thus, Brenz several times speak about the resurrection of Christ as guaranteeing our justification and also as being where Christ obtained the righteousness by which we are justified.

Chemnitz on the resurrection and our justification

I have already dealt a bit with Chemnitz above but will return to him here to point out what he says explicitly about the resurrection and our righteousness and justification.

As one of the chief authors of the Formula of Concord, Chemnitz' writings are important for our interpretation of the Formula of Concord.

am2.capitel / Da wir todt waren / hat er vns sampt Christo lebendig gemacht / von hat uns sampt im auff erwecket / ond sampt im in das himlisch wesen gefekt / in Chrifto Jefu AI-assisted translation

<https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=rzFbAAAACAAJ&pg=GBS.PA276&hl=da>

⁴⁹ Brenz, Johannes, Katechismus, jan. 1852 · Friedrich Fleischer *Denn erstlich , wie er durch sein Leiden und Sterben vor Gott , seinem Vater , unsere Sünden versöhnt hat , also hat er auch durch seine Auferstehung uns die Gerechtigkeit erworben , daß wir Alle , die an ihn glauben , um seinetwillen vor Gott gerecht und heilig geachtet werden .* AI-assisted translation

<https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=noErAAAAYAAJ&pg=GBS.PA150>

⁵⁰ Brenz, Johannes, Evangelien-Predigten: Die festliche Hälfte des Kirchen-Jahres, Bind 1 *"Allein man wird sagen : was nützt das uns , daß Jefus Chriftus durch feine Auferftehung ein gewaltiger Herr im Himmel und auf Erden geworden ift? Viel in jeder Beziehung . Denn wie Chriftus für uns sein Leiden auf sich genommen hat , fo hat er die Auferftehung zu unferem Nußen vollbracht . Und wie der Herr Aller Sünden auf ihn gelegt hat , so hat er auch das Heil aller Menfchen auf ihn gelegt ; denn es ift kein anderer Name den Menfchen gegeben , darin wir follten felig wer den . Weil denn nun Chriftus zur Herrlichkeit feines Vaters auferftanden ift , bringt das denen , welche an ihn glauben , erftlich den Nußen , daß , wie Chriftus von Gott , feinem Vater , als der Allerunfchuldigfte und Aller gerechteste anerkannt wird , alfo auch die , welche an ihn glauben , um Chrifti willen als gerecht und unfchuldig gelten ."* AI-assisted translation

https://books.google.dk/books?id=6hg_K-ECB5gC&hl=da&pg=PA194&fbclid=IwAR1TaJF-f7zzeRcvePxfPByNW1-WFcq5z-WOhLtvvXbMdqvVrcNjMOFX0JU#v=onepage&q&f=false

Chemnitz summarizes this in question 136 in his Enchiridion in his summary of the gospel:

*Likewise that the Son of God, according to the promise, was made man in the fulness of time and most perfectly completed the work of redemption and reconciliation by His obedience, passion, and death, and thus gained righteousness and life eternal, by His resurrection and ascension, for those who believe in Him.*⁵¹

The Enchiridion/Handbüchlein was used for examination of pastors and thus was a doctrinal standard for the churches and pastors Chemnitz' supervised in Braunschweig and Lüneburg.

Chemnitz connects the resurrection to our justification also in the Examination:

For that Christ might be our justification, it was necessary that He should not only bear the punishment of our sins, but that he should also fulfill the Law with so perfect an obedience that it might suffice for the righteousness of the whole world. And this whole action of the Mediator turns on this, whether the Father would accept that satisfaction and obedience of the Son for the whole world. But this the Father showed especially in this, that he did not leave in death, the Son, whom He had smitten for the sins of the people, but raised Him from the dead and set Him at the right hand of His majesty. And this is what Paul says, 1 Cor 15:17: "If Christ has not been raised...you are still in your sins," that is, if death had overcome Christ and the Father had not accepted His satisfaction for us but had left Him in death, then we would not have remission of sins for Christ's sake.

*When, therefore, Paul wanted to explain, Rom 4:24-25, what that righteousness is which is imputed to the believers without their own works, or what faith must apprehend that it may be imputed for righteousness, he says: To those who believe in Him who raised Jesus from the dead, who was delivered to death for our transgressions and was raised again for our justification. For that is our righteousness: (1) that the Son of God became Mediator for us, being obedient to the Father to death; (2) that the Father accepted that satisfaction and obedience of the Son for our reconciliation and propitiation, which he showed by his resurrection.*⁵²

Thus, the resurrection of Christ is where God showed his acceptance of the satisfaction and obedience of Christ. This fits well with the rest of the picture I have given of the connection.

Jacob Andreae on the resurrection and our justification

Since Andreae was also a co-author of the Formula of Concord, His views on the relationship between Christ's resurrection and our justification is also important. His Six Christian Sermons from 1573 was a step toward the Formula of Concord and therefore an important background of the Formula. In the first sermon, which is on justification, Andreae writes:

⁵¹ Chemnitz, Martin. Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion. Translated by Luther Poellot. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1981, p. 69.

⁵² Chemnitz, Martin. *Examination of the Council of Trent, Volume I*. Translated by Fred Kramer. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1971 p. 530

Here Paul clearly explains the righteousness of faith and what it consists of: that God looks at His Son and for His sake permits us not to suffer for our sins; instead, He regards us as righteous, as if we were neither sinners nor corrupted by nature. He looks at the power of Christ's resurrection and our sharing of His suffering, for Christ's suffering and death are our death, and we become like Him through faith; we enjoy the power of His resurrection. Similarly he writes in Romans 4 (25): "He was put to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification. " That means: As soon as Christ rose from the dead, the power of His resurrection was so great that whoever believed on Him was no longer considered a sinner but was considered righteous in God's sight—for he had put on the obedience of Christ, which He rendered the Father even unto death. It is written (Gal. 3:27): "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Again (Col. 2:12–14): "You were buried with Him in Baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith, which God effects, God, who raised Him from the dead. And You, who were dead in sin, God made alive with Him, having forgiven us all our sins, having canceled the bond which stood against us."⁵³

Thus, according to Andreae the power of the resurrection is forgiveness of sins. This means that the resurrection of Christ is a cause of forgiveness. Andreae also connects this both to the concept of putting on Christ and being made alive with Christ.

Andreae goes more into this a little later in the same sermon:

He was given to us, born for us, died for us, and rose again for our justification. That is, He has given us a witness with His resurrection and has decisively proved that through His obedience, suffering, and death He atoned completely for our sins and that we are justified by this, that is, we are made utterly free of these sins. I believe that and do not doubt it."⁵⁴

Thus, the resurrection of Christ is a testimony to the fact that His death has completely atoned for our sins and that we are justified by this.

Andreae can however also speak about righteousness as something obtained by Christ in His resurrection. He does that in an earlier published sermon from 1569 on John 20 and justification:

Whoever, therefore, by faith, beholds this face of the righteousness of Christ our Lord Jesus Christ, which he has acquired for us by his glorious resurrection from the dead, has his old, fierce, hostile, wrinkled, shame covered, and is so adorned and clothed with the righteousness of Christ our Lord, which he brought with him by his

⁵³ Kolb, Robert. Andreae and the Formula of Concord . Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition. Location 1215-1224

⁵⁴ Kolb, Robert. Andreae and the Formula of Concord . Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition. Location 1281

*resurrection, that he may walk boldly and fearlessly before the face of God the Heavenly Father.*⁵⁵

Here righteousness is something Christ has brought with Him from the grave or acquired in His resurrection. Thus, the resurrection doesn't just reveal something. It also in a sense brings forth that which was merited by Christ's death.

Chytraeus on Christ's resurrection and our justification

Chytraeus' views are also important to our understanding of what the Formula of Concord says about the resurrection of Christ and our justification. In a sermon for easter day, Chytraeus writes:

The benefits of Christ's resurrection [include] ...glorious deliverance from the tyranny of the devil, sin, and death: and retirements [restoration] of righteousness and everlasting life, which Paul sestet forth with excellent lightsomeness of words and figures. Colossians 2. Ye are risen again in Christ through faith in God's power, who hath raised him from death, and with him also quickened us who were dead in our sins, forqiving us all our trespasses, and putting out the handwriting that was against us in the law written, which he hath taken away and fastened to his cross, and hath spoiled rule and power, and made a show of them openly, and hath triumphed over them in his person. ...

*Of this most high benefit of Christ's resurrection speaketh Paul, the greatness whereof no tonque of man is able to utter. All goods, all lordships, all kingdoms are nothing in comparison of this benefit. For whereas all men must needs die: yet shall those that flee unto Christ's death and resurrection with faith, be delivered from death, and shall be crowned with righteousness, life, and glory everlasting.*⁵⁶

Thus, also according to Chytraeus righteousness and deliverance from sin is a result of the resurrection of Christ.

Thus, the main authors of the Formula of Concord all in some way see the resurrection of Christ as connected to forgiveness, justification or the righteousness imputed to sin. None of them seems to see this connection only being in the fact that Christ needed to be alive in order to apply His merits.

⁵⁵ Ein christliche Predig, wie der Mensch vor Gott gerecht werde. Jacob Andrea jan. 1559 · Morhar. <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=cJxOwLnu2doC&pg=GBS.PP26&hl=da>
Wer nun durch den Glauben dises Angesicht der Gerechtigkeit Christi unnsers Herren Jesu Christi anzeucht / die er uns mit seiner herrlichen Aufferstehung von den Todten erworbe hat / dem ift sein alte / heflliche / feindselige / rungelete / Schiemen zügedeckt / vnd ist mit der Gerechtigkeit Christi unsers Herren / die er durch sein Aufferstehung mit sich gebracht / dermassen gezieret vnd angezogen / das er frölich und unerschrocken / für das Angesicht Gottes des Himmelischen Vatters treten darff . AI-assisted translation

⁵⁶ David Chytraeus, "Uppon Easter day," A Postill or orderly disposing of certeyne Epistles usually read in the Church of God, uppon the Sundayes and Holydayes throughout the whole yeere [translated by Arthur Goldyng] [London: Lucas Harryson and George Bishop, 1577], fol. 61. Spelling and capitalization modernized by David J. Webber.

Hunnius on Christ's resurrection and our justification

Later Lutherans saw similar connections. I have already mentioned Gerhard. Hunnius who rejected Hubers universal justification, says something very similar to what I am saying here:

Every Christian can therefore conclude that this article belongs with good reason to the highly important matter of our justification before God and salvation, because through Christ's resurrection righteousness and salvation have been restored. Paul writes about this, Rom 4. Christ was given over because of our sin and raised up because of our righteousness. If Christ had not risen from the dead, sin would not yet have been blotted out, because death, which alone has power on account of sin, would have overcome Him So we still remained in sin and were stuck in our righteousness.⁵⁷

Thus, according to Hunnius, righteousness and salvation has been restored in Christ's resurrection. This is perhaps one of the clearest passages teaching this, and it comes from the one who most clearly rejected Hubers doctrine.

The righteousness which Hunnius talks about here is, of course, a universal righteousness, which He himself teaches when he opposes Huber in thesis 5 of Theses Opposing Huberianism:

Thesis 5

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 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, the gift has spread toward all men for justification 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 the imputation of righteousness does not take place except through faith.⁵⁸

This righteousness is one "acquired and gained" by Christ. It is therefore not His own essential righteousness, but a result of His work. And reading what Hunnius says here in light of the catechism sermon above, we shouldn't understand this "acquired and gained" as just a metaphor of having earned it. No, Christ acquired and gained this universal righteousness and life Himself in the resurrection. This is the simplest explanation.

Quenstedt on Christ's resurrection and our justification

We have already treated Gerhard to some extent. Another important figure in the age of orthodoxy is Quenstedt, who in His dogmatics text writes concerning Romans 4:25:

⁵⁷ p. 388 Hunnius, Aegidius, Catechismus oder Kinderlehre von den Hauptpunkten christlicher Religion, als da sind: Die H. zehen Gebott, Artickel deß apostolischen Glaubens, das Gebett Christi, Tauff und Abendmahl

⁵⁸ Hunnius, Aegidius. *Theses Opposed to Huberianism: A Defense of the Lutheran Doctrine of Justification*. Translated by Paul A. Rydecki. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012 p. 58

In Romans 4:25 the apostle joins the payment of punishment rendered for us through the death of Christ, as cause, with the justification i.e. the remission of sins acquired in Christ's resurrection, as effect, Paul is not dealing with renewal here — something he discusses at length in chapter 6 — but he is discussing the imputation of righteousness, as the whole sequence of the chapter shows.⁵⁹

Here again justification and remission of sins is viewed as something acquired in the resurrection of Christ as a result of His death, which is his vicarious satisfaction.

Conclusion on the Lutheran fathers and the resurrection

What we see in all these quotes is that the righteousness by which we are justified is obtained or brought forth in the resurrection or the exaltation of Christ. Thus, the resurrection not only made it possible for Christ to apply His merit, but the result of His merits, His righteousness, eternal life and sonship is brought forth in His exaltation and something He Has gained and acquired Himself.

It is thus present in His person through His exaltation. While the bondsman-analogy of Gerhard isn't directly derived from Scripture, it is very fitting to explain this. But other analogies could be used as well.

This naturally then leads to the question of how this is then applied to us. I have already dealt a bit with that when dealing with pastor Rydecki's dealing Gerhard. I have also dealt with Chemnitz's approach in his work on the Lord's Supper, namely that it happens through union with Christ, who gives Himself to us in the means of grace where we receive Him by faith.

Before going further into this, I will deal with the objection that this leads to Osiandrianism.

Union with the exalted Christ by faith

Several scripture passages indicate that justification happens through union with Christ. The passages referred to above dealing with our being buried and raised with Christ are all speaking about union with Christ. And they show that we are not just dealing with a union that justifies because of the indwelling of the divine nature, but a union that justifies because we participate in the salvific events of Christ's life.

There are many other passages connecting union with Christ and justification. I'll only mention a few:

Ro 8:1 says: *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Theologia Didactico-Polemica, Sive Systema Theologicum. Prs tertia. P. 783. <https://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/113475/992> As translated and quoted in Preus, Robert <https://archive.org/details/JustificationInLutheranOrthodoxTheologiansRp/page/n7/mode/2up?view=theater>

⁶⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 8:1.

2 Cor 5:21 says: ²¹ *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* ⁶¹

The “in Christ” formula is best understood as referring to union with Christ.

While the Formula of Concord rejects the idea that our justification before God depends on the indwelling of the Trinity or even the divine nature of Christ, it does affirm that justification depends on something we might call union with Christ.

While some of the Finnish Luther-interpreters have perhaps come close to Osiandrianism in their rejection of the Formula of Concord, this is not the case for all of them. I do not believe this is the case for the approach of Olli-Pekka Vainio in *Justification and participation in Christ*.⁶²

What does the Formula of Concord reject when it rejects Osiandrianism?

Let us first address exactly what is rejected as Osiandrianism in the Formula of Concord before dealing with what it says positively about union with Christ preceding justification.

First, Osiandrianism is not simply the teaching that the Trinity dwells in believers. Rather, such doctrine is explicitly taught by the FC and the denial of this indwelling of the Trinity is condemned, when in the condemnations the FC condemns the following:

⁶⁵ *6. That not God dwells in the believers, but only the gifts of God. (FC SD III, 65)*

Thus, according to the FC, God himself dwells in believers. This claim in itself therefore is not Osiandrianism.

Osiandrianism is also not simply the idea that union with Christ precedes justification. When the FC rejects Osiandrianism, it condemns the following in FC SD III, 63:

63 4. That faith looks not only to the obedience of Christ, but to His divine nature as it dwells and works in us, and that by this indwelling our sins are covered before God.

Osiander's idea was that our righteousness is based on the indwelling of the divine nature of Christ, which works in us. Against this, the FC says that our righteousness is the obedience of Christ.

What is condemned here is not the same as saying that the righteousness of Christ that He has earned through His obedience is made ours through union with Christ through His human nature, which is what Chemnitz teaches as that through which we receive salvation.

Osiandrianism is defined in the Formula of Concord, Solido Declaratio article III:

2 For one side has contended that the righteousness of faith, which the apostle calls the righteousness of God, is God's essential righteousness, which is Christ Himself as

⁶¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Co 5:21.

⁶² Vainio, Olli-Pekka, *Justification and Participation in Christ_ the development of the Lutheran doctrine of justification from Luther to the Formula of Concord*. 2008.

*the true, natural, and essential Son of God, who dwells in the elect by faith and impels them to do right, and thus is their righteousness, compared with which righteousness the sins of all men are as a drop of water compared with the great ocean.*⁶³

And again, in FC SD III, 54:

*54 Likewise also the disputation concerning the indwelling in us of the essential righteousness of God must be correctly explained. For although in the elect, who are justified by Christ and reconciled with God, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who is the eternal and essential righteousness, dwells by faith (for all Christians are temples of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who also impels them to do right), yet this indwelling of God is not the righteousness of faith of which St. Paul treats and which he calls *iustitiam Dei*, that is, the righteousness of God, for the sake of which we are declared righteous before God; but it follows the preceding righteousness of faith, which is nothing else than the forgiveness of sins and the gracious adoption of the poor sinner, for the sake of Christ's obedience and merit alone.*⁶⁴

In all these we see that the problem with Osianders teaching is that he sees the righteousness by which a sinner is justified to be the essential righteousness of the divine nature in Christ which indwells the believer.

Instead, the obedience of the whole person of Jesus Christ in both of His natures is the righteousness which justifies.

While the obedience of Christ according to both natures is the righteousness that justifies, this doesn't mean that no union with Christ precedes justification logically as it's cause, nor does it mean that both natures are the medium through which this union takes places.

As we have already seen above, both Gerhard and Chemnitz talk about being grafted into Christ as a cause of justification and Chemnitz specifically talks about being grafted into the human nature of Christ.

Thus, the rejection of Osiandrianism does not rule out that participation in or union with Christ is the medium through which the righteousness which is the obedience of Christ becomes ours.

The Formula of Concord affirming a union with Christ preceding justification as its cause

The Formula of Concord – while it rejects the indwelling of the divine nature as basis of justification does talk about something we could call union with Christ preceding justification as a cause.

In the FC Ep III 5 it says:

⁶³ Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church: German-Latin-English. (Source: <https://bookofconcord.org>)

⁶⁴ Ibid.

3. We believe, teach, and confess that faith alone is the means and instrument whereby we lay hold of Christ, and thus in Christ of that righteousness which avails before God, for whose sake this faith is imputed to us for righteousness, Rom. 4:5.⁶⁵

It is thus Christ himself we apprehend or lay hold of by faith. We don't just lay hold on a promise separated from Christ himself, nor do we lay hold on a righteousness that is somehow separated from Christ or transferred through a legal fiction.

Even more clearly this union or participation in Christ is expressed when the Formula of Concord teaches regarding the spiritual eating of Christ's flesh in FC SD VII:

61] There is, therefore, a two-fold eating of the flesh of Christ, one spiritual, of which Christ treats especially John 6:54, which occurs in no other way than with the Spirit and faith, in the preaching and meditation of the Gospel, as well as in the Lord's Supper, and by itself is useful and salutary, and necessary at all times for salvation to all Christians; without which spiritual participation also the sacramental or oral eating in the Supper is not only not salutary, but even injurious and damning [a cause of condemnation].

62] But this spiritual eating is nothing else than faith, namely, to hear God's Word (wherein Christ, true God and man, is presented to us, together with all benefits which He has purchased for us by His flesh given into death for us, and by His blood shed for us, namely, God's grace, the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and eternal life), to receive it with faith and appropriate it to ourselves, and in all troubles and temptations firmly to rely, with sure confidence and trust, and to abide in the consolation that we have a gracious God, and eternal salvation on account of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁶⁶

Faith thus eats Christ spiritually, and this is called a spiritual participation. It is, however, the flesh of Christ which is eaten spiritually. This has to do with the human nature of Christ.

Whereas Osiandrianism teaches that it is the indwelling of the divine nature that justifies, according to the FC it is through the human nature of Christ, we receive the righteousness, which, to be sure, is the obedience of both natures of Christ.

That the human nature specifically is meant here is also clear from FC SD VIII, 59 which teaches:

59] 3. Thirdly, the Scriptures speak not merely in general of the Son of Man, but also indicate expressly His assumed human nature, 1 John 1:7: The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin, not only according to the merit [of the blood of Christ] which was once attained on the cross; but in this place John speaks of this, that in the work or act of justification not only the divine nature in Christ, but also His blood per modum efficaciae (by mode of efficacy), that is, actually, cleanses us from all sins. Thus in John 6:48-58 the flesh of Christ is a quickening food; as also the

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Council of Ephesus concluded from this [statement of the evangelist and apostle] that the flesh of Christ has power to quicken; and as many other glorious testimonies of the ancient orthodox Church concerning this article are cited elsewhere.⁶⁷

We shall see below how Martin Chemnitz emphasizes the human nature of Christ too as being present with us and being the medium through which Christ communicates his merits.

Union with Christ and justification in Lutheran fathers

Luther on union with Christ and justification

Again, we should look at Luther's Galatians Commentary which the FC refers to for more information. Luther here emphasizes the connection between union with Christ and justification several places.

Commenting on Galatians 2:20

Here Paul clearly shows how he is alive; and he states what Christian righteousness is, namely, that righteousness by which Christ lives in us, not the righteousness that is in our own person. Therefore when it is necessary to discuss Christian righteousness, the person must be completely rejected. For if I pay attention to the person or speak of the person, then, whether intentionally or unintentionally on my part, the person becomes a doer of works who is subject to the Law. But here Christ and my conscience must become one body, so that nothing remains in my sight but Christ, crucified and risen.⁶⁸

Living in me as He does, Christ abolishes the Law, damns sin, and kills death; for at His presence all these cannot help disappearing. Christ is eternal Peace, Comfort, Righteousness, and Life, to which the terror of the Law, sadness of mind, sin, hell, and death have to yield. Abiding and living in me, Christ removes and absorbs all the evils that torment and afflict me. This attachment to Him causes me to be liberated from the terror of the Law and of sin, pulled out of my own skin, and transferred into Christ and into His kingdom, which is a kingdom of grace, righteousness, peace, joy, life, salvation, and eternal glory. Since I am in Him, no evil can harm me⁶⁹

But so far as justification is concerned, Christ and I must be so closely attached that He lives in me and I in Him. What a marvelous way of speaking! Because He lives in me, whatever grace, righteousness, life, peace, and salvation there is in me is all Christ's; nevertheless, it is mine as well, by the cementing and attachment that are through faith, by which we become as one body in the Spirit. Since Christ lives in me,

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Martin Luther, [Luther's Works, Vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 26 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 166.

⁶⁹ Martin Luther, [Luther's Works, Vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 26 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 167.

grace, righteousness, life, and eternal salvation must be present with Him; and the Law, sin, and death must be absent.⁷⁰

We see in these quotes that Luther sees the righteousness by which we are justified as something that is present in Christ who is present in and with us by faith.

Since the Formula of Concord article III does refer to Luther's Galatians Commentary as authoritative on the doctrine of justification, we cannot interpret the rejection of Osiandrianism in the Formula of Concord in a way that contradicts what Luther is here saying.

Nor do we need to. Luther is not speaking about the essential righteousness of the divine nature in Christ, but about the righteousness of His obedience as both God and man.

Martin Chemnitz on union with Christ and justification

We will look at Martin Chemnitz again. In his Enchiridion/Handbüchlein question 151, he answers the question about how the merits of Christ are applied to us and answers first by referring to the means of grace and then secondly to faith. Regarding faith he writes:

The other thing that is required for application is that we apprehend, receive, and apply to ourselves the benefit of the Son of God that is offered and presented to us in the Word and the Sacraments; this is done by no other means or instruments than faith. Ro 1:17; 3:28; 4:5; Jn 3:15-16: G1 3:22, 24. For faith is, as it were, our hand with which we take, apprehend, and accept the benefits of Christ. Jn 1:12. And it is a kind of bond by which we are bound to Christ, that He might be and dwell in us (Eph 3:17) and that we might be found in Him (Ph 3:8-9)⁷¹

So, the role of faith in applying the merits of Christ is to bind us to Christ, so that He is in us and we in Him, according to Chemnitz in this handbook for the examination of pastors.

Chemnitz explains this further in other places. In his work On the Two Natures in Christ, he treats this issue especially when dealing with the use of the doctrine of the communication of majesty.

Chemnitz writes:

The Fathers also teach that He wills to demonstrate His human nature when he deals with us and works in us His activities as savior, so that he thereby might bestow His grace and benefits upon us. For the power, grace, efficacy, merits, and blessings of Christ are not communicated outside of or without His person, as if He himself were not present, as the adversaries themselves admit. They also admit that it is necessary above all things that Christ himself be given to us, that he become ours, and that he

⁷⁰ Martin Luther, [Luther's Works, Vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#), ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 26 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 167-168.

⁷¹ Chemnitz, Martin. *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion*. Translated by Luther Poellot, J.A.O. Preus, and Georg Williams. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1981 p. 75:

*be present with us and joined to us, so that from Him and in Him and through Him we might be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19).*⁷²

We should note here that Chemnitz is dealing with the application of the merits and grace of Christ. So, he isn't just speaking about sanctification or some other benefit but about justification. And here Chemnitz clearly teaches that this is communicated to us through Christ being given to us and joined to us. It is not given outside His person.

This fits well with how Chemnitz in other places speak about us being freed from condemnation through being grafted into His human nature which has been freed from condemnation.

A little later Chemnitz emphasizes that it is the presence of the human nature of Christ that communicates all of this:

“Among the scholastic writers many have argued that Christ’s human nature only has the value of merit. There are not a few today who suggest that there was use for the assumed nature in Christ only at the time when the Son of God through His humiliation, obedience, and suffering destroyed death, restored life, and obtained eternal redemption. For they think that the merits of Christ can be separated from his Person in such a way that the application of Christ’s merits can be given to believers through the Holy Spirit even if the person of Christ is not present; or that these merits can be given by the presence, work and activity of Christ’s divine nature alone. They think that the other benefits of His office can be given without the communication of the other nature.

They imagine, therefore, that Christ’s human nature was immediately discharged from the duty for which it had been assumed when He said on the cross, “It is finished” [John 9:30], so that now after the exaltation, the Son of God in His kingdom does not manifest His assumed humanity at all in carrying out, expediting, or completing the works of salvation which He is now accomplishing in the church among the believers in His work as our Messiah, King, priest and Head. ... Thus some men reject the statements of the Council of Ephesus that the flesh of Christ gives life, that is they say that the flesh of Christ by his suffering and death on the cross merited only this, that when death had been destroyed, life might be restored, and that now the deity alone vivifies believers, without any communion or cooperation from the humanity. But the fathers of Ephesus defined it this way on the basis of Scripture: The flesh of Christ on account of the union with the divine nature, which is life itself, is made life-giving or a life-giver, and it thus has the authority or power to give life, and this authority it exercises in the action of the Lord’s Supper in believers. And it gives

⁷² Chemnitz, Martin. *The Two Natures in Christ: A Monograph Concerning the Two Natures in Christ, Their Hypostatic Union, the Communication of Their Attributes, and Related Questions*. Translated by J. A. O. Preus. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1971 p. 472

life to those who eat, just as heated iron has the power of giving heat, and does give heat, as we have explained in the foregoing.”⁷³

We see here again that Chemnitz emphasizes the human nature of Christ as the medium through which salvation is given to us.

This again fits well with what Chemnitz has written about the human nature of Christ being freed from condemnation and our sharing in this through being grafted into His human nature.

Conclusion on union with Christ

We see that both Scripture, the Formula of Concord, Luther and Chemnitz see union with Christ as that through which the merits and righteousness of Christ are communicated to us.

This rules out the idea that all men were already justified before and apart from faith. Christ was identified with humanity in His work, but humanity was not identified with Him.

Human beings are identified with Christ through union with Him, and this happens through the means of grace and faith.

But this answers one of the concerns of those who hold to UOJ, namely that something objective is given to faith to hold on to. What is objectively given in the gospel is, however, not just a thing nor is it just a promise of something in the future. It is rather Christ himself and in Him everything that was earned by his obedience and obtained by Him in His exaltation.

That Christ himself is given in the means of grace with all His gifts, including righteousness, sonship, and inheritance of eternal life, also solves the problem with introspection that is one cause of the UOJ-discussion. Emphasizing union with Christ through the means of grace does not lead to introspection, but to looking to Christ in the means of grace, who comes to you with His salvation.

Conclusion

While I share many of pastor Rydecki’s concerns regarding UOJ it seems to me that he and the CLM is being reactionary. I think we need to dig deeper into the causes of the whole UOJ-discussion, and I think we need to guard ourselves against overreactions in one direction or the other.

The Lutheran fathers did not teach that all men are already justified. But they did teach that Christ, in His resurrection and ascension, on account of the work of His humiliation, acquired or obtained the righteousness by which we are justified.

This as we have seen, is also scriptural. This all happened in Christ and to His human nature. Christ assumed a condemned human nature with the infirmities that are a result of sin, but without original sin itself. He did that in order to free the assumed human nature from condemnation and restore it to righteousness and life.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 473-474

He did that through fulfilling the law, resisting temptations, condemning sin in the flesh, becoming a curse, and being attacked and falsely accused by Satan in his humiliation. And because he is God, his life, suffering, and death were enough to outweigh the sins of all men and therefore conquer the accusations of Satan and the condemnation of the law.

Therefore, Christ as God and man rose from the dead and ascended to the holy of holies as the new and life-giving Adam, high-priest and first-born of many brethren, who has received righteousness, sonship, and eternal life on behalf of those who are in Him. This is both biblical, confessional, and traditional Lutheran teaching.

While both the divine and human nature of Christ were agents of His salvific work, only the human nature received anything. But what it received in the exaltation was what we receive in justification, because we are grafted into Him, share in His salvific work, and are identified with Him to whom we are united.

Much more could be said and written; hopefully, I will get the time to write more on this later.

To summarize my claim:

- Christ assumed a cursed and condemned human nature without sin, whereby He was identified with us, took responsibility for the sins of the world, and by his active and passive obedience, He made satisfaction for those sins.
- On account of His vicarious satisfaction, Christ as man, by His resurrection and ascension, obtained universal righteousness, adoption, and eternal life.
- All that Christ won exists in Him and is received through union and identification with Him through His human nature - a union which happens through the means of grace where He is present and by faith which apprehends Christ in these means.
- When an individual is joined to Christ by baptism and faith, he is buried and raised with Christ, ascended with Christ, and clothed in Christ so that by this union with Christ he is truly and in time forgiven, justified, adopted as God's child, and made an heir of eternal life.

Soli Deo Gloria

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