

**Imputation and the Christology of Union with Christ:
Calvin, Osiander, and the Contemporary Quest for a Reformed Model**

Mark A. Garcia

I. Introduction

Discussion of union with Christ and justification generally, and imputation specifically, is continuing at a pace which makes it increasingly difficult to follow with the kind of patient care all would agree is desirable. The abundance of fresh studies in Pauline theology is not the only reason for this state of affairs, however; a wide, cross-disciplinary range of questions has a full right to the floor, including not only the exegetical and biblical-theological but also the specialist historical, systematic, homiletical, and ethical voices in the Church. The aim of this article is intentionally modest. With a view to a growing literature arguing that imputation language is rendered superfluous by Paul's union with Christ, the goal here is to draw attention to an important and necessary facet of this discussion which does not yet seem to have been given much sustained consideration: the christological.

Of course, the idea that contemporary work on Paul and union with Christ has perhaps neglected the christological will no doubt sound absurd to many, so it makes sense to clarify from the start that "classical" Christology is in view. Though the connections between Pauline scholarship and recent christological programs are often deep and sometimes explicit, especially in narrative theology, the concerns of classical Christology are largely bypassed. The relevance of this development for our question

will be discussed more fully below, but the principal effect in view in this article (considered negatively, at least) may be summarized as follows. Briefly stated, granted that union or participation in and with Christ is of central importance to Paul's gospel (a long-standing and, in my view, faithful reading of the Apostle's theology), it remains the case that, within that union, the believer does not *become* Christ. Union with Christ does not obscure the distinction between Christ and the believer united to him. In what follows, it is argued that recent proposals which assume the incompatibility of union with Christ and imputation in Paul lack a compelling theological rationale for this crucial distinction. Alongside the case that can be (and has been) made at the linguistic and exegetical levels in favor of the idea, "imputation," properly understood, safeguards this distinction as part of a broader theological conception of justification. It expresses much more than this, but not less than this.

This concern, at least as I am framing it, is clearly an essentially (classical) christological concern. Yet it must be appreciated that its implications are far reaching indeed. Despite its apparent simplicity, at stake in this question, especially for those who aim to work from within the Reformed tradition, is nothing less than the identifiable complex of biblical and theological concerns that distinguishes this tradition from others. The concern to give clear expression to the distinction that persists within the reality of union with Christ lies at the heart of the Reformed tradition as such. Framed in yet another way, the exegetical issues that underlie the union/justification (and imputation) question, and which dominate contemporary discussion, have a history and a theological context that need to be kept clearly in view.

Now, in highlighting select historical-theological features of this issue alongside exegetical ones I certainly have no interest in distracting attention away from the properly central questions of Pauline exegesis. At the moment, however, a wealth of noteworthy, important studies in biblical, especially Pauline, exegesis are serving well to defend imputation in a sophisticated manner, and are frequently doing so from the perspective of concerns I share. I think particularly of D. A. Carson's vigorous defense of imputation in Paul as necessarily contextualized by a properly understood union with Christ.¹ Instead, as one who is zealous for the biblically rooted unity of the biblical-theological and systematic-theological tasks, in this study I am concerned to widen the circle of exegetical and biblical-theological interest to include self-consciously the historical and theological contexts within which this exegesis may be most fruitfully and faithfully carried out. In particular, in this article I aim to uncover the extraordinary contemporary relevance of the nuanced interplay of theology and exegesis at the heart of John Calvin's extensive refutation of the model of union with Christ and justification propounded by Andreas Osiander, a controversial Lutheran. At the same time, my

Mark A. Garcia is Visiting Scholar in the Faculty of History and Post-Doctoral Research Associate with Wolfson College, Cambridge University, and Research Fellow for the Craig Center for the Study of the Westminster Standards, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.

¹ D. A. Carson, "The Vindication of Imputation: On Fields of Discourse and Semantic Fields," in *Justification: What's At Stake in the Current Debates* (ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 46-78.

intentions are also not exclusively critical; indeed, I hope to make clear that many features of the model under review reflect necessary, salutary concerns. Further, after drawing attention to the main christological problem in the non-imputative model of union, a preliminary sketch will be drawn of how the imputation/union with Christ relationship might be expressed more compellingly by those who work from within the Reformed tradition.

II. *The Non-Imputative Model of Union: A Selective Profile*

What is the non-imputative model of union with Christ, at least in the form that many Reformed Christians have encountered it? In a recent essay on the subject Rich Lusk, a Presbyterian pastor, vigorously asserts that his “in-Christ-ness makes imputation redundant. I do not need the moral content of his life of righteousness transferred to me; what I need is a share in the forensic verdict passed over him at the resurrection. Union with Christ is therefore the key.”² The tension that Lusk assumes exists between imputation and “a share in [Christ’s] forensic verdict” through union is a bald

² Rich Lusk, “A Response to ‘The Biblical Plan of Salvation,’” in *The Auburn Avenue Theology, Pros and Cons: Debating the Federal Vision* (ed. E. Calvin Beisner; The Knox Theological Seminary Colloquium on the Federal Vision; Fort Lauderdale: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004), 142. Lusk’s essay is in response to Morton H. Smith, “The Biblical Plan of Salvation, With Reference to the Covenant of Works, Imputation, and Justification by Faith,” in the same volume (96-117).

polarization in the title of Don Garlington’s essay, “Imputation or Union with Christ?”³ Others express themselves similarly. For instance, after a short history of imputation, Michael F. Bird, buttressed by quotes from Calvin on union with Christ, outlines the concerns of Robert Gundry and Mark Seifrid among others as an entrée into his own proposal, which is simply that the centrality of incorporation in Paul shows imputation to be wrong-headed.⁴ Gundry polarizes what he calls a “covenantal framework” (the NT framework) and a “bookkeeping framework” (the imputation framework), and Seifrid also seems convinced imputation is gravely deficient inasmuch as it does not take into view the full range of Paul’s perspective. Bird furthers the tension with his conclusion that “the notion of imputation fails to grapple with Paul’s ‘in-Christ’ language that gravitates more towards the concepts of incorporation, substitution, and representation.” Thus, for Bird, Paul’s clearly Christocentric doctrine of justification suggests instead the more suitable language of incorporation into Christ and incorporated righteousness, which he feels renders “imputation” misleading inasmuch as it speaks of something “abstracted from Christ and projected onto them.” Though Bird allows a place for

³ Don Garlington, “Imputation or Union with Christ? A Response to John Piper,” *Reformation and Revival Journal* 12 (2003): 45-113; cf. John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002).

⁴ Michael F. Bird, “Incorporated Righteousness: A Response to Recent Evangelical Discussion Concerning the Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness in Justification,” *JETS* 47 (2004): 253-75.

imputation language in the discourse of systematic theology, he is convinced it does not comport well with Paul's understanding of justification.⁵

Among these advocates of the non-imputative model of union it appears that at least two convictions, acting like premises, lead to this conclusion: (1) union with Christ as central and comprehensive in Paul's gospel, with justification contextualized by this union; and, set opposite this framework, (2) the externalist understanding of justification and salvation that rules among evangelical Christians, both scholars and laypersons, which is ordinarily focused on the idea of imputation *extra nos* ("outside us").

Acceptance of these premises (the first as a salutary advance in understanding, the second as regrettable) is thought to lead naturally to the conclusion that union with Christ, taken seriously, cannot support the externalist orientation to which "imputation" language points. Though, as we will soon see, a great deal of exposition is necessary, this

⁵ Ibid., 274-75. Like Garlington and Lusk, Bird also appeals (275 n. 127) to Richard Gaffin's study of the resurrection in which Gaffin argues for the centrality of union with Christ for Paul's concept of salvation (Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978]). They also appeal frequently to Calvin along these lines. But these appeals are simply irresponsible: the most these passages from Gaffin and Calvin accomplish is to establish union with Christ as Paul's controlling framework for the multi-faceted grace of salvation. They say or suggest nothing about imputation being made superfluous on account of this union; in fact, both Gaffin and Calvin vigorously affirm imputation within the context of union, but neither Garlington, Lusk, nor Bird adequately explores why this is so.

conclusion, in my view, does guard a strength of the traditional Reformed understanding of union with Christ and justification that is much too under-emphasized: justification on the grounds of a righteousness that is located *extra nos* must be understood as derivative and aspectual of the union with Christ which is its context.⁶ From this point, however, it is concluded by these writers that imputation language is incompatible with, perhaps even destructive of, the reality of this union. Rather than speak so much of imputation, the concern to locate our justifying righteousness in Christ is ably served by speaking *instead* of our union with the righteous Christ himself. As Garlington puts it, “It seems to me far simpler and exegetically more straightforward just to stay with the Pauline language. Everything is explained by his doctrine of union with Christ, and one need look no

⁶ See the discussion of 1 Cor 1:30 below. Exegetically, the exposition of this orientation as properly reflective of the Apostle Paul’s own orientation is to be found in Gaffin (*Resurrection and Redemption*) who deepens and extends insights gleaned from the history of Reformed theology extending from Calvin to Geerhardus Vos and John Murray. For the historical side of the question, the investigation of this orientation as, in a variety of ways, distinctly Reformed is found in Mark A. Garcia, “Life in Christ: The Function of Union with Christ in the *Unio-Duplex Gratia* Structure of Calvin’s Soteriology with Special Reference to the Relationship of Justification and Sanctification in Sixteenth-Century Context” (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 2004), which looks at Calvin (and some others) in relationship to his Lutheran contemporaries in terms of the exegesis of conditional language in Paul and the context of the ubiquitarian controversy.

further for a rationale or elucidation.”⁷ According to this model, “union with Christ” accomplishes what “imputation” formerly did, but in a more biblical manner.

But this conclusion is hardly self-evident and needs to be demonstrated. In particular, for “union with Christ” truly to serve *in place of* “imputation” it would have to express all that “imputation” does in traditional theological discourse, both positively and negatively. In addition, as detailed below, “imputation” renders a crucial service to a Reformed theology of union with Christ, something which is lost entirely by the non-imputative model.

1. *N. T. Wright, Χριστὸς, and Vocational Christology*

There is, of course, a wider discussion in progress which the non-imputative model reflects, and to which it is in many ways directly indebted. It would serve us well to gain at least a general sense of this discussion by hearing from some of its most prominent voices. In a climate of opinion where participationist models are increasingly interwoven with narrative sensitivities, such as in the influential explorations of mimesis and Christology in James Alison and James McClendon,⁸ N. T. Wright focuses a great

⁷ Garlington, “Imputation or Union with Christ?,” 78.

⁸ Cf. James Alison, *On Being Liked* (New York: Crossroad, 2003), who uses mimetic theory to critique penal substitutionary atonement; and James W. McClendon, Jr., *Doctrine* (vol. 2 of *Systematic Theology*; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), who focuses on kingdom and eschatology. For an analysis, see Peter Smith, “Alison and

deal of attention on participation in Christ through the perspective of the incorporative motif in Paul. As Wright explains, the tradition of Pauline interpretation which saw in Χριστὸς merely a proper name rather than a title is misguided. Χριστὸς is a title, and as such focuses on the incorporative, that is, “it refers to the Messiah as the one in whom the people of God are summed up, so that they can be referred to as being ‘in’ him, as coming or growing ‘into’ him, and so forth.”⁹ Without entering here into a full discussion of Wright’s model, incorporation, being “in Christ,” is primarily ecclesiological language, signaling the truth that, precisely *as Messiah*, all that Christ is he is for those united to him. The Messiah, whose self-understanding Wright frames along “vocational” lines, “sums up his people in himself, so that what is true of him is true of them.”¹⁰

McClendon in *Conversation on Mimesis, Atonement and Christology*” (paper presented at the Colloquium on Violence and Religion, Koblenz, Germany, 7 July 2005).

⁹ N. T. Wright, “Χριστὸς as ‘Messiah’ in Paul: Philemon 6,” in *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 41.

Wright argues from the importance of Messiahship in Paul’s letters.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 48; cf. Wright, “The Letter to the Galatians: Exegesis and Theology,” in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 216. Of course, for Wright justification is also primarily ecclesiological: “Justification, to offer a fuller statement, is the recognition and declaration by God that those who are thus called and believing are in fact his people, the single family promised to Abraham, that as the new

The incorporative motif is clearly prominent in Paul, and awareness of (even struggle with) this motif is among the most conspicuous features of modern Pauline scholarship, but there is a theological lacuna that begs for attention. How might the relationship of the Messiah and those incorporated into him be expressed theologically, that is, in conversation with the language and thought forms of catholic Christology? What kind of union-incorporation is in view? Within the reality of this union-incorporation, can we still speak of Christ, in any sense, as *other* than ourselves? If so, how does this affect the reality of the union? In Wright, as in most participants in the discussion, this question is left (to date, at least) without elucidation.¹¹

2. *Richard B. Hays and the Nature of Narrative Participation*

At the same time, while many continue to overlook this crucial question, at least one prominent voice has not. In his influential exposition of a narrative-christological perspective on Paul's theology of faith and justification, Richard B. Hays points to the frequent polarization of "participation in Christ" and "justification" and offers a tentative covenant people their sins are forgiven, and that since they have already died and been raised with the Messiah they are assured of final bodily resurrection at the last" ("Letter to the Galatians," 235). This is set opposite the view that justification is the way someone becomes a Christian.

¹¹ The rapidity with which Wright generates new publications leads me to note that this observation is true at the time of writing this article, but not necessarily at the time of its publication.

solution. While many argue that “participation in Christ” is the key to Pauline soteriology, Hays accurately identifies the outstanding question: the *nature* of this participation. Is this union or participation to be understood as a magical baptismal transformation along the lines of the mystery religions? Or is it rather, with Schweitzer, a physical participation? Or is it perhaps to be framed existentially, as in Bultmann’s view that one encounters in the apostolic *kerygma* the possibility for a radically new existence of self-understanding and is thus confronted with the necessity of decision? And what effect does this variety of unions have on our own language of participation or union with Christ? Each of these proposals, explains Hays, demonstrates the truth of E. P. Sanders’s estimation: the problem is paradigmatic. We simply lack the categories of “reality” with which the Apostle operates, and thus only arrive at inadequate glimpses of it.¹²

Are we then condemned to ignorance, without the promise of any meaningful connection with a most prominent feature of the Apostle’s teaching? According to Hays, the despair of our felt distance from Paul’s reality need only be short-lived. For Hays, a narrative approach that draws on the power of story to “lead hearers into an experience of identification with the story’s protagonist” provides the solution to nailing down Paul’s categories. Paul is theologian as he is Paul the storyteller.

¹² Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Paul’s Theology in Galatians 3:1–4:11* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 213-14; cf. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 522-23. Wright (“Letter to the Galatians,” 232) makes a similar point.

Generally speaking, a Reformed theologian, conversant with the history of biblical theology as it is tied up with the history of covenant theology, will immediately recognize the validity of the idea that narrative (even narrative-participation, heavily qualified) is an inescapable part of the gospel.¹³ But in Hays one finds this idea is taken in a decidedly different direction when it serves to bridge our distance from Paul's conceptual world. As he explains, "In the case of a story that becomes foundational for the self-understanding of a community, the identification of community members with the protagonist may be so comprehensive that it can be spoken of as 'participation' in the protagonist's destiny. If Paul's gospel is the story of Jesus Christ, then we might participate in Christ in somewhat the same way that we participate in (or identify with) the protagonist of any story." Reflecting some appropriation of the existentialist-Bultmannian orientation, which spurns potential objectification, Hays highlights the effect of such narrative identification upon the individual: in choosing the in-Christ paradigm over another, one gains a new self-understanding which is "both posited within and engendered by the story itself." The link between narrative Christology and participationist soteriology, then, is that the narrative which climaxes with the vindication/justification of Messiah Jesus ἐκ πίστεως becomes one's own narrative or

¹³ I hasten to add that, critically examined and recast along more theologically compelling lines, the narrative-theological sensibilities commended so widely in contemporary NT studies may aid in exploring and clarifying the christological-pneumatological center and foundation of union with Christ, as I hope to show in further work on the subject.

story as well in a real, though somewhat undefined, sense.¹⁴ Though a full discussion and interaction with Hays (and others), which is easily warranted, is not possible here, it should be noted that this is essentially what Hays intends when he states the “logic of Paul’s soteriological narrative is *participatory*.”¹⁵

Clearly, however, framing the union this way only raises anew the christological question with which the Church is always confronted: what is the nature of this narrative-christological participation in conversation with the concerns of Chalcedon? The union-participation of Hays is narrowly concerned with the structure of narrative experience, and is not explored with a view to its implications for the Church’s confessed faith. As is much too often the case, perhaps reluctance to engage these issues is due to modern distaste for questions of ontology and the pre-modern categories of substance and nature. However, this is precisely where the christological difficulties in Wright’s and Hays’s

¹⁴ Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 210-15. See also, at greater length, Hays, “Christ Died for the Ungodly: Narrative Soteriology in Paul?” *HBT* 26 (December 2004): 48-68. As the author notes, this article overlaps somewhat with Hays, “Is Paul’s Gospel Narratable?” *JSNT* 27 (2004): 217-39.

¹⁵ Hays, “Christ Died for the Ungodly,” 62. I note Hays’s work because his *Faith of Jesus Christ* is groundbreaking in importance for understanding the current passion for “narrative” constructs. For those interested in pursuing some of these matters further, the problem of defining and circumscribing narrative participation is a common theme in the essays collected in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (ed. Bruce W. Longenecker; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

concepts of incorporation are most notable (and, to be fair, one must remember that Hays offers these points as suggestions for further reflection): is the union-participation in or with Christ, then, only imaginative? Hays strives to emphasize the non-fiction reality of the Christ-story for Paul, which ostensibly serves to ground the Christian's participation experience in reality as well, but at the end of the day the nature of the union in view remains limited to an existentialist-type identification with a commonly held story.

Taken together, these observations point up one facet of a larger problematic feature of much of the relevant literature, that is, the rather ambiguous relationship of notable voices like Wright's to orthodox Christology.¹⁶ This crucial question has been

¹⁶ This is not overstatement; even "rather ambiguous" will be considered overgenerous by many. He does not express himself as forcefully as James D. G. Dunn (e.g., "Why 'Incarnation'?" A Review of Recent New Testament Scholarship," reprinted in Dunn, *Christology* [vol. 1 of *The Christ and the Spirit*; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 407-11). However, even on the most generous reading, Wright's "vocational" Christology still seems clearly to deny Jesus' divine self-consciousness in favor of an emphasis on his vocation to perform tasks restricted by Israel's God to himself, and in this way *be* the presence of YHWH among Israel. See N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God*; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 645-53, esp. 652-53 where Wright distinguishes Jesus' awareness of his "vocation" from "some traditional statements of gospel christology" and calls the "[attempt] to make Jesus of Nazareth conscious of being the second person of the Trinity" an instance of "pseudo-orthodox[y]"; cf. also Wright, "Jesus and the Idea of

raised in general terms elsewhere;¹⁷ for our purposes, it is specifically the Chalcedonian concern for an *otherness within union* that is in view. This question has clearly not been

God,” *ExAud* 14 (1998): 42-56. Cf., on the developing faith of Jesus’ followers, Wright’s portrayal of Paul’s coming to believe that by his resurrection Jesus was vindicated by God from the charge of false messianism and, through a process of reflection, also “somehow or other, ‘equal with God’” (Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* [vol. 3 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God*; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003], 393-98; 571-78); and, more fully, Wright, “Jesus Christ is Lord,” in *Climax of the Covenant*, 56-98. A recent collection of essays takes up questions related to Wright’s portrait of Jesus: *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright’s “Jesus and the Victory of God”* (ed. Carey C. Newman; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999). See n. 17 below.

¹⁷ Carey Newman’s edited volume is a good start for such an analysis but more is needed. His concluding assessment (*Jesus and the Restoration of Israel*, 287), which seems justifiable, is especially disconcerting and must be taken seriously: “But herein lies a deep irony: at the very moment Wright makes Jesus a credible, crucified, apocalyptically minded, first-century Jewish prophet and messiah, he renders him less credible as the object of devotion (on par with Yahweh) for the first-century church. That is, the more Jesus is historically comparable to Isaiah, Jeremiah and John the Baptist (prophets) and to other messianic figures (e.g., Simon bar Kochba), the less it seems likely that this Jesus would wind up as the focus of public, sanctioned, organized and regular worship. It is not at all clear how Jesus, the prophet to Israel, and Jesus, the

at the forefront of discussion (and even raising it may suggest to some we are overlooking the narrowly historical interest of the participants in this discussion) but we need to be perfectly clear that the post-Enlightenment distrust of classical Christology does not alleviate the burden to deal with Chalcedon, especially for those who intend to work from within a confessional tradition. In his assessment of recent literature on the subject, Geoffrey Grogan properly recognizes this question of the “Christ of faith” and the “Jesus of history” to be of supreme importance to the gospel and the Church. His defense of a common biblical and post-biblical, confessional faith in the full humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ is most welcome in a climate which increasingly doubts such a fundamental element of the Christian faith.¹⁸ Revisiting the narrative participation just profiled, it can be said with fairness that though the idea of story-participation in Christ would appear to circumvent the traditional two-natures question through avoiding it

Messiah of Israel, become Jesus, the Lord of the church. The shoulders of Wright’s Jesus do not appear to be sturdy enough to bear the christological weight the church willingly placed upon them. Wright appears to have dissolved all the potential ontological elements of Christology into narrative. That is, for Wright, Christology is simply this: Jesus is the chief protagonist in the stories he tells and enacts.”

¹⁸ Geoffrey Grogan, “New Testament Christology—Or New Testament Christologies?” *Them* 25 (1999): 60-73. For all the real value of many of the essays in the volume, the evasive “sense of center” (xii) recognized by the contributors to *Contours of Christology in the New Testament* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), is hardly more encouraging.

altogether, in fact, a narrative-existentialist Christology of union fails to satisfy the Chalcedonian concern for safeguarding the distinction that remains between object and subject within the reality of union. Lest such an assertion seem unwarranted, it is noteworthy that, though many are silent or at least ambiguous about this reconstruction of the Pauline gospel of “God was in Christ,” other proponents are uninhibited and forthright about the negative relationship narrative Christology bears to Chalcedon.¹⁹

III. *Union and Righteousness in 1 Corinthians 1:30: The Christological Infrastructure of Salvation*

But is this reconstruction really so significant, so consequential for the faith of the Church? To explore this question we need to consider the function of the imputation idea in connection with the origins of Reformed theology, and one could hardly do better than draw attention to the sharp differences between John Calvin and Andreas Osiander over the exegesis of 1 Cor 1:30, “By His doing you are in Christ Jesus [or, “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus”—RSV, ESV], who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption” (NASB) (ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὃς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν ἀπὸ θεοῦ, δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἁγιασμὸς καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις).²⁰ The fact that this passage is a *locus classicus* in contemporary

¹⁹ E.g., George W. Stroup III, “Chalcedon Revisited,” *ThTo* 35 (1978): 52-64.

²⁰ The importance of Osiander to the contemporary discussion is reflected in essays addressing the current state of the question by both Mark A. Seifrid, who notes Osiander’s importance (“Paul’s Use of Righteousness Language Against Its Hellenistic

discussion of union and imputation in Paul gives such a study even more immediate relevance.²¹

Background,” in *The Paradoxes of Paul* [vol. 2 of *Justification and Variegated Nomism*; ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004], 71; and Seifrid, “Luther, Melancthon and Paul on the Question of Imputation: Recommendations on a Current Debate,” in *Justification: What’s At Stake*, 144); and Bruce McCormack, who discusses Osiander at greater length (“What’s At Stake in Current Debates Over Justification? The Crisis of Protestantism in the West,” in *Justification: What’s At Stake*, 96-106). Note especially McCormack’s remark that “in the history of the development of the Protestant doctrine of justification in the sixteenth century, the role played by Andreas Osiander in forcing further clarification of Luther’s view can scarcely be overestimated” (96). McCormack’s analysis is greatly relevant to the interests of this article, as is the relationship of narrative to Calvin’s Christology explored recently in Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin’s Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. 220-36; and Edmondson, “Christ and History: Hermeneutical Convergence in Calvin and Its Challenge to Biblical Theology,” *Modern Theology* 21 (2005): 3-35, but space constraints require that I interact with their work elsewhere.

²¹ See, e.g., Garlington, “Imputation or Union with Christ?,” 79-81, who follows Wright’s view that finding the imputation of righteousness in this verse requires that we speak also of the imputed wisdom, sanctification, and redemption of Christ (cf. N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of*

A basic exegesis of Paul's statement needs to account at least for the following features. From an opening emphasis on the priority of divine action (ἐξ αὐτοῦ),²² Paul

Christianity? [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 123). In my view this is hardly necessary. By simply listing rather than explaining these graces Paul evidently assumes the Corinthians are sufficiently familiar with their meaning; hence, he does not think it necessary to explain fully (here at least) the distinctive features, parameters, or modalities of each. To say with Garlington that "Christ has become our righteousness by virtue of union with himself, plain and simple" (81) does nothing to address satisfactorily the relationship of union to the concept of imputation. As will become clear below, it is the exegete's own Christology that will determine how he or she understands the relationship of union to forensic righteousness. That said, in light of the definitiveness Paul appears to have in view (ὡς ἐγενήθη), I agree with Garlington (81) that the "sanctification" of 1 Cor 1:30 ought to be understood in its "definitive" rather than "progressive" sense (which is the majority sense in the NT, on which idea see John Murray, "Definitive Sanctification," in *The Collected Writings of John Murray* [4 vols.; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977], 2:277-84; cf. David Peterson, *Possessed By God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness* [New Studies in Biblical Theology; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995], 42-47).

²² David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 79, notes the theological amplification of this phrase in Eph 2:8-9 ("For by grace you have been saved through

moves immediately to identify the nature of this action: God (ἀπὸ θεοῦ) has made Christ to be salvation for his people, and that salvation is a matter of union with Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). This element of the Apostle's statement deserves careful consideration. Ultimately for Paul, the gift of salvation (cf. Eph 2:8) is the gift of Christ himself, and he is our salvation inasmuch as we are united to him. The structural or conceptual note sounded here, then, is one that places beyond doubt that union with Christ, rather than any particular benefit of that union, is the *substantia* of salvation; it is what salvation actually *is*. From this point the Apostle proceeds to identify several of the blessings or benefits that come to the believer in union with Christ. And the movement of thought here is perhaps the most significant feature of Paul's statement for our purposes. In his movement from the comprehensive reality of union with Christ as the result of God's saving action to the specific blessings listed (σοφία, δικαιοσύνη, ἁγιασμός, and ἀπολύτρωσις),²³ the Apostle clearly understands each of these benefits to be related to faith, and this is not from yourselves [οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν] . . ."), where the same point is made but negatively.

²³ Wisdom (σοφία) is set off from the triad of δικαιοσύνη, ἁγιασμός, and ἀπολύτρωσις, so the four are not strictly coordinate (cf. Garland, *I Corinthians*, 79, contra NIV, NKJV). Raymond Collins relates the triad to σοφία appositionally (Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians* [SP 7; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999], 112). In line with the theme of the section, the accent is on Christ as the eschatological wisdom of God; the triad, then, is presented as the fruit of God's wisdom in Christ. That they are not strictly coordinate does not, however, detract from the basic structure Paul conveys

the ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in an *aspectival* and *derivative* manner: each of the saving graces is an aspect of the union with Christ, and is also derivative of that union.²⁴ The graces are distinguished and yet they are inseparable insofar as they are not independent realities but aspects of one reality: union with the resurrected Christ. The questions we must address, however, concern the *nature* of this union, and from that basis the relationship of the union to the δικαιοσύνη of Christ in which we participate. For these questions a look at an episode in the exegetical history of the passage is very valuable.²⁵

1. *Osiander's Use of 1 Corinthians 1:30*

here: Christ is x, y, z for his people, and thus those who are in him enjoy the blessings of x, y, z.

²⁴ Hence they are to be understood as simultaneously bestowed, not sequentially related (e.g., sanctification does not “follow” justification). See Calvin’s perceptive commentary on the verse in *Calvini Opera* (ed. Wilhelm Baum, Edward Cunitz, and Edward Reuss; 59 vols.; Braunschweig: C. A. Schwetschke & Sons, 1863–1900), 49:331-32, hereafter cited as *CO* (for ET see Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* [ed. and trans. John Pringle; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996], 1:93-94); cf. also Peterson, *Possessed By God*, 42.

²⁵ Much of what follows in the next section is drawn selectively from material in Garcia, “Life in Christ,” 175-223. Those interested in a much fuller discussion and defense of my analysis of Calvin and Osiander are directed there.

I will not take the time to introduce Andreas Osiander or to survey the controversy within Lutheranism that was precipitated in part by his theology; instead, I will assume a general familiarity not only with Osiander but also with the basic features of Calvin's response to his theology.²⁶ Though much of Calvin's response to Osiander is

²⁶ Calvin's fullest refutation of Osiander's doctrine of justification is found in *Inst.* (1559) 3.11.5-12 (ET: *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; 2 vols.; LCC; Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1960] [henceforth, *Institutes* (LCC)], 1:729-43). See also Calvin, "Contra Osiandrum," *CO* 10:165-67, of which an ET is available in *Calvin's Ecclesiastical Advice* (trans. Mary Beaty and Benjamin W. Farley; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 32-34. For Osiander's biography, s.v. "Osiander, Andreas" by Gottfried Seebass in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand; 4 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), vol. 3, cols. 183b-85a; s.v. "Osiander, Andreas" by Rainer Vinke in *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation* (ed. Peter G. Bietenholz and Thomas B. Deutscher; 3 vols.; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 3:35-36 (includes a portrait reproduction); also see David C. Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 91-99. For fuller studies, see Gottfried Seebass, *Das reformatorische Werk des Andreas Osiander* (Einzelarbeiten aus der Kirchengeschichte Bayerns 44; Nuremberg: Selbstverlag des Vereins für Bayerische Kirchengeschichte, 1967); Seebass, ed., *Bibliographia Osiandrica: Bibliographie der gedruckten Schriften Andreas Osianders d. Ä., 1496–1552* (Nieuwkoop: de Graaf, 1971); Seebass, "Zwei Schreiben von Andreas Osiander,"

directly relevant to the question under review here, our attention will be focused on Calvin's argument that Osiander's formulation of a non-imputative union with Christ is implied in the Lutheran interpretation of the *communicatio idiomatum* as this is reflected in ubiquitarianism. While there is discontinuity at points between Osiander's views and contemporary versions of a non-imputative model of union with Christ, the overlap that does exist is, in my view at least, immensely significant, and reveals the extent to which a Reformed model of union is rooted, principally, in applied Chalcedonian Christology.

As the exegetical epicenter of the controversy, the Apostle's language in 1 Cor 1:30 became the biblical *locus classicus* of both Osiander's formulation and Calvin's reply. This was the case for Osiander at least from the early 1550s. In his highly controversial *Disputatio*, for example, in which he laid out his theology of justification, Osiander said of Christ, "*ipse enim factus est nobis a Deo sapientia, iustitia, sanctificatio et redemptio*," quoting the words of this verse.²⁷ Here Osiander had adopted for the

Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg 57 (1970): 201-15; and Martin Stupperich, *Osiander in Preussen, 1549–1552* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 44; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973). Osiander has become a subject of intensive research in recent decades. The completion of a critical edition of his works, including correspondence, has greatly facilitated a fresh examination and reappraisal. See *Andreas Osiander d. Ä. Gesamtausgabe* (vols. 1–6 ed. Gerhard Müller; vols. 7–10 ed. Gottfried Seebass; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1975–1995), hereafter *AOG*.

²⁷ Osiander, *Disputatio de Iustificazione/Eine Disputation von der Rechtfertigung*, proposition no. 18 (*AOG* 9:430/431). The German reads, "Dan er ist uns worden zur

defense of his theology a strain of Luther's occasional language, often found in sermons, in which Christ was said to be our righteousness according to OT promise.²⁸ In fact,

weisheit von Gott und zur gerechtigkeit, zur heiligung und zur erlösung." Cf. also Osiander, *Disputatio de Lege et Evangelio*, proposition nos. 41 (*AOG* 9:512) and 44 (*AOG* 9:513).

²⁸ For Osiander's theology, see Rainer Hauke, *Gott-Haben—um Gottes Willen: Andreas Osianders Theosisgedanke und die Diskussion um die Grundlagen der evangelisch verstandenen Rechtfertigung* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999); Hauke, "Sola Dei iustitia: Die theozentrische Rechtfertigungslehre des Andreas Osiander (1498–1552): Eine misslungene Belehrung der forensischen Rechtfertigungslehre?" in *Belehrter Glaube: Festschrift für Johannes Wirsching zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Elke Axmacher and Klaus Schwarzwäller; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1994), 101-32; Claus Bachmann, *Die Selbstherrlichkeit Gottes: Studien zur Theologie des Nürnberger Reformators Andreas Osiander* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1996); Patricia Wilson-Kastner, "Andreas Osiander's Theology of Grace in the Perspective of the Influence of Augustine of Hippo," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 10 (1979): 72-91; Heinz Scheible, "Melancthon und Osiander über die Rechtfertigung," in *Reformation und Recht: Festgabe für Gottfried Seebass zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Irene Dingel, Volker Leppin, and Christoph Strohm; Gütersloh: Christian Kaiser, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), 161-75. From the perspective of the Formula of Concord, see Henry P. Hamann, "The Righteousness of Faith Before God," in *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord* (ed. Robert D. Preus and Wilbert H. Rosin; St. Louis: Concordia, 1978), 137-62. Attention to

Osiander's theology is coming increasingly from those who desire to defend him from caricature or to employ his ideas in the service of modern ecumenism, e.g., to reconcile Lutheranism with Rome by way of the East. See, in its most controversial embodiment, the so-called "Finnish school" of Luther research which revives in basic form an Osiandrian reading of Luther (though note the differences observed in Hauke, *Gott-Haben—um Gottes Willen*, 471-90). For the Finnish school see the work of its head, Tuomo Mannermaa, "In ipsa fide Christus adest," in *Der im Glauben Gegenwärtige Christus: Rechtfertigung und Vergottung zum ökumenischen Dialog* (Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Theologie des Luthertums 8; Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1989); Mannermaa, "Theosis as a Subject of Finnish Luther Research," *ProEccl* 4 (1995): 37-48; and the collection of essays in *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (ed. Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). For critical responses to this development from within orthodox Lutheranism, see, among others, John F. Brug, "Osiandrianism—Then and Now: Justification through Christ Dwelling in Us," (Mequon, Wisc.: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2001), cited online 19 May 2006: <http://www.wlsessays.net/authors/B/BrugOsiander/BrugOsiander.rtf>; Brug, "The Lutheran-Catholic Statement of Justification," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (Winter, 1984): 66-70; Carl Lawrenz, "On Justification: Osiander's Doctrine of the Indwelling Christ," in *No Other Gospel: Essays in Commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the Formula of Concord* (Milwaukee, Wisc.: Northwestern Publishing House, 1980), 149-73. See also the highly influential presentation by F. Bente, "The Osiandrian Controversy," in *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1921), cols. 152-59, criticized by Wilson-

according to Bizer, in Luther's own transitional period Paul's statement in 1 Cor 1:30 aided him in understanding the righteousness of God in Rom 1:17.²⁹

Employing not only this verse but also the OT background recognized by Luther in Jeremiah and Daniel,³⁰ Osiander regularly appealed to 1 Cor 1:30 in defense of his

Kastner as "informative but notoriously biased" ("Andreas Osiander's Theology of Grace," 71 n. 3). Others who seek to defend Osiander from Orthodoxy (in particular, the triumph of Melancthon's forensicism) include Gunter Zimmermann, "Die Thesen Osianders zur Disputation 'de iustificatione,'" *KD* 33 (1987): 224-44; Zimmermann, "Calvins Auseinandersetzung mit Osianders Rechtfertigungslehre," *KD* 35 (1989): 236-56; Stephen Strehle, "Imputatio iustitiae: Its Origin in Melancthon, Its Opposition in Osiander," *TZ* 50 (1994): 201-19; and Strehle, *The Catholic Roots of the Protestant Gospel: Encounter between the Middle Ages and the Reformation* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought 60; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 66-85.

²⁹ Ernst Bizer, *Fides ex Auditu: Eine Untersuchung über die Entdeckung der Gerechtigkeit Gottes durch Martin Luther* (2d ed.; Neukirchen: Neukirchner, 1961), 115.

³⁰ See, e.g., Osiander, *Von Dem Neu Gebornen Abgott* (*AOG* 9:361-62), where Jer 23:6 and 1 Cor 1:30 are brought together: "Als wan er uns durch seinen antichrist wil verführen, der glaub allein rechtfertige nicht, sonder es müssen gute werck darbey sein, so disputir nicht mit im, welchs gute werck sein, wie, wan und warumb man sie thun müsse oder ob sie vor oder nach der rechtfertigung kommen, sonder sprich: *Christus ist unser gerechtigkeit, Jeremie 23[6], 1. Cor 1[30]*, der ist in uns, Johan. 17[23], und ist darumb in unser fleisch kommen, das uns sein gerechtigkeit zugerechnet werd, und welcher geist

thesis that it is God himself, Christ in his divine nature, who is the righteousness of justification.³¹ Publications from the period indicate that Lutheran opposition to Osiander

das nicht bekennet, der ist des antichrist geist.” Italics mine. For the same combination, see *AOG* 9:529, 695; 10:169/170, 205/206, et al. For examples of how Osiander appeals

to Luther’s works for this combination, see his collection of Luther citations, *Etliche Schöne Sprüche* (*AOG* 9:585-86) and *De Unico Mediatore* (*AOG* 10:174/175), where

Osiander appeals to Luther’s distinction *de duplici iusticia* (“Sermo de duplici iustitia,”

1518), writing: “Prima iusticia est aliena et ab extra infusa, qua Christus iustus est, sicut

1. Cor. 1[30] dicitur: ‘Qui factus est nobis sapientia a Deo, iusticia, sanctificatio et

redemptio’ etc.” Osiander also refers to Augustine behind Luther’s use of the verse

(*AOG* 9:600). The connection of Paul to Jeremiah here is far from unique to Osiander.

When James Ussher, seventeenth-century Archbishop of Armagh, discussed the passage, he also carefully related the Apostle’s language to the promise in Jeremiah. See

Praelectiones Theologicae (1610) in *The Whole Works of the Most Rev. James Ussher,*

D. D. (ed. C. R. Elrington and J. H. Todd; 17 vols.; Dublin: Hodges, Smith & Co., 1847–

1864), 14:477. Cf. the appeal to Jer 23:6 in Garlington (“Imputation or Union with

Christ?,” 45) in order to make a similar point regarding the “modality” of justification.

³¹ See the biblical indexes to vols. 9 and 10 in the critical edition of Osiander’s works to appreciate how frequently Osiander appealed to this verse. For a discussion of this verse in connection with Osiander’s important 1551 work, *Von Dem Einigen Mittler/De Unico Mediatore* (*AOG* 10:49-300, nos. 488/496), see the editor’s introduction in *AOG* 10:55-61. One of Osiander’s chief Lutheran opponents, Joachim

recognized the significance of this verse to the dispute and summoned the Fathers to make their case. In his published comment on 1 Corinthians, for example, Cyriakus Spangenberg combined quotations from Cyril and Hilary to criticize the notion that God dwells in us by his divine nature. Augustine on the righteousness of justification in Rom 3 served equally well to show that this is not the righteousness belonging to the divine essence but a gift to those with faith.³²

2. Calvin's Use of 1 Corinthians 1:30

Turning to Calvin one is immediately drawn into the irony of the situation. From his earliest publications, and increasingly in the 1550s, Calvin made a use of this verse that can scarcely be exaggerated in importance. In fact, observing his pattern of usage

Mörlin, referred (as Calvin would) to the same verse in defense of a non-essential (i.e., non-Osiandrian) doctrine of justification. See "Mörlin an Osiander" (*AOG* 9:622, no. 454).

³² For the use of Cyril and Hilary, see Cyriakus Spangenberg, *Die erste Epistel S. Pauli an die Corinthier* . . . (Frankfurt: Weygand Han and Georg Raben, 1561), L^v; for the use of Augustine, see Spangenberg, *Ausslegung der ersten Acht Capitel der Episteln S. Pauli an die RO[e]MER* (Strasbourg: Samuel Emmel, 1566), xcv^v. For these citations and other ways Spangenberg used the Fathers, see Robert Kolb, "Patristic Citation as Homiletical Tool in the Vernacular Sermon of the German Late Reformation," in *Die Patristik in der Bibelexegese des 16. Jahrhunderts* (ed. David C. Steinmetz; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 155-79 (here p. 169).

one concludes that he employed it as a kind of biblical short-hand for his *unio Christi-duplex gratia* soteriology. When Calvin wishes to clarify the distinct-yet-inseparable character of the saving benefits (the *duplex gratia*) that come in union with Christ, he cites or refers to the language of this verse with striking regularity.

For example, in the first (1536) edition of his *Institutes*, Calvin's affirmation of the necessity of Christian holiness is rooted in the implications of the Christ/Spirit relationship for a proper understanding of union with Christ. If Christ the Mediator, who was and is filled with the Spirit of holiness, is made ours, we too share in the same Spirit. So Calvin argues that to be a Christian under the law of grace does not entail moral license. Rather, "By Christ's righteousness we are made righteous and become fulfillers of the law. . . . Thus is fulfilled Paul's statement: 'Christ was made righteousness, sanctification, and redemption for us.'"³³ Later, in his 1537/1538 Catechism and in his response to Caroli, the same use is made of the Apostle's language.³⁴

³³ Calvin, *Inst.* (1536) (CO 1:48-49) (ET: *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [1536] [trans. Ford Lewis Battles; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies/Eerdmans, 1986], 34): "Hanc vero certitudinem nullus assequi potest nisi per Christum, cuius solius benedictione a maledictione legis liberamur, quae omnibus nobis edicta et denunciata est; cum ob imbecillitatem, quam ex patre Adam haereditariam accepimus, legem operibus nostris implere non possimus, ut necesse erat iis, qui sibi iustitiam inde comparare velint, cuius deinde iustitia, iusti ipsi et legis impletores fimus. Hanc enim ut nostram induimus, et sane pro nostra nobis a Deo accepta fertur, ut pro

sanctis, puris et innocentibus nos habeat. Ita impletur quod ait Paulus: Christum nobis factum esse iustitiam, sanctificationem, et redemptionem.”

³⁴ Calvin, *Catechismus seu Christianae religionis institutio ecclesiae Genevensis*, in *Ioannis Calvini opera omnia denuo recognita et adnotatione . . .*, Series III: *Scripta ecclesiastica*, vol. 2 (ed. Anette Zillenbiller; Geneva: Droz, 2002) (henceforth, OC III/2), 44-45: “Id autem in Symbolo, quod vocant, explicatur; *nempe qua ratione factus sit nobis a Patre Christus sapientia, redemptio, vita, iustitia, sanctificatio.*” In the French, p. 52: “C’est à sçavoir comment Christ nous a esté faict du Pere sapience, redemption, vie, justice, saintification (*mg*: ‘1 Cor 1’).” Calvin’s statement against Caroli does not cite the language of the verse but clearly reflects it (*Confessio Genevensium praedicatorum de Trinitate*, OC III/2 [ed. Marc Vial; Geneva: Droz, 2002], 147): “Nam ut nuncupatur vita, lumen, salus, iustitia, sanctificatio nostra, ita fiduciam spemque omnem in ipso reponere et eius nomen invocare docemur.” I am grateful to Prof. Irena Backus for pointing me to this reference. Cf. also *Catechismus*, OC III/2, p. 40: “Siquidem requievit super eum spiritus Domini citra mensuram: spiritus, inquam, sapientiae et intellectus, consilii, fortitudinis, scientiae, timoris Domini: ut de eius plenitudine hauriamus omnes, et gratiam pro gratia. Falluntur ergo, qui fide Christi gloriantur, sanctificatione spiritus eius prorsus destituti. *Christum factum esse nobis non iustitiam modo, sed sanctificationem quoque, Scriptura docet.* Proinde recipi a nobis iustitia eius fide non potest, quin illam sanctificationem *simul* amplectamur. Eodem enim pacto Dominus, quod in Christo nobiscum ferit, se nostris iniquitatibus propitium fore, et legem suam cordibus nostris inscripturum pollicetur.” The French text is on p. 41 (facing). Cf. I. John

Similarly, in his important 1539 rebuttal of Sadoleto's charge of a legal fiction, Calvin uses this verse to clarify the relationship of justification to sanctification. Again in the light of the Christ/Spirit/union relationship, Calvin explains why the Reformation doctrine of justification, properly understood, does not marginalize the indispensability of good works for the one justified *sola fide*. "We deny that good works have any share in justification, but we claim full authority for them in the lives of the righteous," explains Calvin.

For, if he who has obtained justification possesses Christ, and at the same time, Christ is never where his Spirit is not, it is obvious that free righteousness is necessarily connected with regeneration. Therefore, if you would properly understand how inseparable faith and works are, look to *Christ, who, as the Apostle teaches, has been given to us for justification and for sanctification*. Wherever, therefore, that righteousness of faith which we maintain to be free is, there too Christ is, and where Christ is there too is the Spirit of holiness, who regenerates the soul to newness of life.³⁵

Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 19-20; and Calvin, *Instruction in Faith (1537)* (ed. and trans. Paul T. Fuhrmann; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 43. Italics mine.

³⁵ Calvin, *Responsio* (found in *Ioannis Calvini opera selecta* [ed. P. Barth, W. Niesel, and Dora Scheuner; 5 vols.; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1926–1952] [henceforth, *Opera*

This is only a taste of the extent to which the language of 1 Cor 1:30 structures Calvin's understanding of salvation. By the Spirit through faith believers are united to Christ who is in himself both righteousness and sanctification. Hence are these graces (1) distinct but inseparable, and entirely out of reach unless we are united to Christ; and (2)

Selecta], 1:470; and in *Tracts and Treatises* [trans. Henry Beveridge; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958], 1:43): “Opera bona in homine iustificando negamus ulla habere partes: in iustorum vita regnum illis vindicamus. Nam si Christum possidet qui iustitiam est adeptus, *Christus autem nusquam sine suo spiritu est*, inde constat, *gratuitam iustitiam cum regeneratione necessario esse coniunctam*. Proinde si rite intelligere libet, quam sint res individuae, fides et opera, *in Christum intueri: qui, ut docet apostolus, in iustitiam et sanctificationem datus nobis est*. Ubi ergo cunque ista quam gratuitam praedicamus fidei iustitia est, illic est Christus. Ubi Christus, illic spiritus sanctificationis: qui animam in vitae novitatem regeneret.” Italics mine. Note Calvin's following statement: “Contra vero ubi non viget sanctitatis innocentiaeque studium, illic nec spiritus Christi nec Christus ipse est. Ubi non est Christus, neque etiam illic est iustitia, imo neque fides: quae Christum in iustitiam, sine spiritu sanctificationis, apprehendere non potest.” Italics mine. Note also that in the important sixth chapter added to the 1539 revision of the *Institutio*, “*De Iustificatione Fidei, et meritis operum*,” there are two significant allusions, without marginal annotation, to 1 Cor 1:30 (*Institutio christianae religionis nunc vere demum suo titulo respondens* [Strasbourg: Wendelin Rihel, 1539], fols. 208, 210).

simultaneously bestowed, something Calvin is careful to emphasize repeatedly.

Consequently it is impossible to entertain either a justification *without* works (works as dispensable for justification) or a justification *through* works (works as instrumental for justification).

Without going into much more detail, then, it is clear that by the time Osiander had become infamous Calvin had already “adopted” this verse and relied heavily upon it for the clarification of his own ideas. With Osiander now touting a widely rejected theology of justifying union with Christ that is ostensibly rooted in the language of 1 Cor 1:30, ambiguity inevitably is introduced to Calvin’s own theology. His handling of this verse (and its core ideas of union and righteousness) is thus understandably prominent in his 1559 refutation. Explicit references are actually few in number, but a close reading reveals several clear allusions to it. When Calvin refers to the idea that “Christ is our righteousness,” he is usually alluding to this verse, and occasionally in connection with its OT background in Jeremiah and elsewhere.

He [Osiander] says that we are one with Christ. We agree. But we deny that Christ’s essence is mixed with our own. Then we say that this principle is wrongly applied to these deceptions of his: that *Christ is our righteousness* because he is God eternal, the source of righteousness, and the very righteousness of God.³⁶

³⁶ Calvin, *Inst.* (1559) 3.11.5; *Opera Selecta* 4:186 (*Institutes* [LCC] 1:730): “Dicit nos unum esse cum Christo. Fatemur: interea negamus misceri Christi essentiam

Even more significant is Calvin's formal comment on the verse, which was originally published in 1546 and, though the commentary as a whole was revised in 1556, was left practically untouched. When Paul says that Christ "is made unto us righteousness (*nobis factum esse in iustitiam*), by [this] he means that we are on his account acceptable to God, inasmuch as he expiated our sins by his death, and his obedience is imputed to us for righteousness." He concludes, "For as the righteousness of faith consists in remission of sins and a gracious acceptance, we obtain both through Christ." Then, after discussing sanctification, Calvin explains the theological significance of Paul's mode of expression, which sounds recognizably Chalcedonian both in language and concern:

Observe . . . that these two offices of Christ are conjoined (*coniungi*) in such a manner as to be, notwithstanding, distinguished (*distinguatur*)

cum nostra. Deinde perperam hoc principium trahi dicimus ad illas eius praestigias: *Christum nobis esse iustitiam*, quia Deus est aeternus, fons iustitiae, ipsaque Dei iustitia." Italics mine. Cf. another probable allusion in Calvin, *Inst.* (1559) 3.11.6; *Opera Selecta* 4:187 (*Institutes* [LCC] 1:731-32): "Secondly, he sharply states that Christ is himself our righteousness (*ipsum esse iustitiam nostram*), not in so far as he, by expiating sins as Priest, appeased the Father on our behalf, but as he is eternal God and life."

from each other. What, therefore, Paul here expressly distinguishes (*discernit*), it is not allowable mistakenly to confound (*confundere*).³⁷

³⁷ Calvin, *Comm.* 1 Cor 1:30 (CO 49:331-32; *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, 1:93-4): “Secundo dicit, nobis factum esse in iustitiam: quo intelligit, nos eius nomine acceptos esse Deo, quia morte sua peccata nostra expiaverit, et eius obedientia nobis in iustitiam imputetur. Nam quum fidei iustitia in peccatorum remissione et gratuita acceptione consistat, utrumque per Christum consequimur. Tertio vocat sanctificationem: quo intelligit, nos alioqui natura profanos, spiritu eius regenerari in sanctitatem, ut serviamus Deo. Unde etiam colligimus *non posse nos gratis iustificari sola fide, quin simul sancte vivamus*. Ista enim gratiae quasi individuo nexu cohaerent: *ut qui eas separare nititur, Christum quodammodo discerpat*. Proinde qui per Christum gratuita Dei bonitate iustificari quaerit, cogitet fieri hoc *non posse quin simul in sanctificationem eum apprehendat*: hoc est, eius spiritu renascatur in vitae innocentiam et puritatem. Qui autem nos calumniantur, quasi gratuitam fidei iustitiam praedicando a bonis operibus avocemus homines, abunde hinc refelluntur, quod fides non minus regenerationem in Christo apprehendit quam peccatorum veniam. Rursum observa sic duo ista Christi officia *coniungi*, ut tamen *distinguat*ur unum ab altero: quae ergo Paulus nominatim *discernit*, perperam *confundere non licet*. Quarto, in redemptionem datum esse docet: quo intelligit eius beneficio nos tam ab omni peccati servitute, quam omni miseria, quae inde manat, liberari. Ita redemptio primum Christi donum est quod inchoatur in nobis, et ultimum perficitur. Hoc enim salutis est initium, quod ex peccati et mortis labyrintho extrahimur: interea tamen usque ad ultimum resurrectionis diem

Outside the *Institutio*, this is perhaps the most concise articulation of Calvin's soteriology. Calvin himself claims one will "scarcely meet with another passage of Scripture" that is so clear as this, and his comment reflects each of his most basic concerns: the obtaining of righteousness exclusively in Christ, the inseparability of sanctification from justification in the light of the controlling significance of union with Christ (in his sermon on the passage this is emphasized with a view to the sinfulness of mankind and the restoration of the *imago Dei* in Christ),³⁸ the importance of the proper distinction of these benefits, and the consequent indispensability of sanctification or good

gemimus desiderio redemptionis, ut habetur Rom 8:26. Modus autem si quaeritur, quo Christus in redemptionem nobis datus est, respondeo, quia pretium se constituit.

Postremo, bonorum omnium, quae hic recensentur, non dimidium aut partem aliquam, sed complementum in Christo quaeramus. Neque enim dicit Paulus, nobis datum esse in supplementum vel adminiculum iustitiae, sanctitatis, sapientiae, redemptionis: sed solidum omnium effectum ei soli assignat. *Quoniam autem vix occurret alius in scriptura locus, qui distinctius omnia Christi officia describat, ex eo quoque optime poterit vis et natura fidei intelligi. Nam quum proprium fidei obiectum sit Christus, quicumque novit quae sint erga nos Christi beneficia, ille etiam edoctus est quid sit fides.*"

Italics mine.

³⁸ *Primier Volume, contenant 58 Sermones faict sur les 9. primers chapitres de la I Epistre de Sainct Paul Aux Corinthiens, par M. Jean Calvin, 1555, 76^r-83^v (serm. on 1 Cor 1:30), preached 17 November 1555, MS no.: BPU MS. fr. 26.*

works (“we *cannot* be justified freely through faith alone without at the same time living holy”).³⁹

Joined to the Chalcedonian concern noted above, the function of the verse in Calvin’s critique may be explored. While Osiander assumes, in the course of using this verse, that the hypostatic union implies Christ was “made righteousness for us” according to the divine nature, Calvin argues, using the same verse, that if Christ is “made righteousness” for us according to his divine nature alone, than this saving work is not peculiar to Christ but common to the Father and Spirit as well. For the divine righteousness of the Son is common to the Father and Spirit. On the grounds argued by Osiander, the true referent in Paul’s verse would be the whole Trinity and not Christ

³⁹ An additional connection should be noted. Calvin states in *Inst.* 3.1.1 (new in 1559) that the Holy Spirit is the “bond (*sanctum vinculum*) by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.” Then Calvin immediately explains that this pertains also to what he taught in Book 2 concerning Christ’s anointing. This connection between the Spirit as *vinculum* and Christ as anointed Mediator is explicit in his statement here that 1 Cor 1:30, more than any other passage, “distinctly marks out all the offices of Christ.” In light of the function of (1) the Spirit as *vinculum* (central to Calvin’s critique), (2) the offices of the Mediator, and (3) the centrality of 1 Cor 1:30 in Calvin’s response to Osiander, this threefold complex is arguably the most significant indicator of the Christ-Spirit (christological-pneumatological) foundation of the justification-sanctification relationship in Calvin’s thought. This justifies speaking of Calvin’s distinctive thought structure as a *filioque soteriology*.

alone, and the Apostle's statement that the eternally divine Son was "made righteousness for us" by God, in time and still exclusively according to the divine nature, would be nonsensical.⁴⁰ In other words, any real distinction between eternal-trinitarian, ontological, and incarnate-historical categories is obscured, and Christ, whose earthly

⁴⁰ Calvin, *Inst.* (1559) 3.11.8; *Opera Selecta* 4:189 (*Institutes* [LCC] 1:734): "Sed hoc Osiandri placitum est, quum Deus et homo sit Christus, respectu divinae naturae non humanae factum nobis esse iustitiam. Atqui si proprie hoc in divinitatem competit, peculiare non erit Christo, sed commune cum Patre et Spiritu: quando non alia est unius quam alterius iustitia. Deinde quod naturaliter ab aeterno fuit, non congrueret dici nobis esse factum. Sed ut hoc demus, Deum nobis factum esse iustitiam; qui illud quod interpositum est conveniet factum esse a Deo? Hoc certe peculiare est Mediatoris personae: quae etsi in se continet divinam naturam, hic tamen insignitur proprio elogio, quo seorsum a Patre et Spiritu discernitur." Cf. Melanchthon, *Corpus Reformatorum* (ed. K. G. Bretschneider and E. Bindseil; 28 vols.; Brunswick: C. A. Schwetschike, 1834–1860), 8:580, who advances a similar argument against Osiander saying he confuses the trinitarian persons and does not discern the necessity of the Mediator for the obedience necessary for justification: "Deinde confusio est personarum: homo est iustus iustitia Patris, Filii et Spiritus S. Hic non discernitur mediator a ceteris personis, cum necesse sit, retineri hanc doctrinam: nos propter solum mediatorem, et quidem propter obedientiam eius iustos id est reconciliatos ac Deo acceptos esse. Sicut 1 Timoth. 2. Dicitur: *Unus Deus, et unus mediator Dei et hominum, homo Christus Iesus*; et Rom 5.: *propter obedientiam unius iusti constituuntur multi.*"

(human) work is by implication made irrelevant, could not be said to have been “made” anything to us by God. On Calvin’s view, Osiander’s commitment to an essential-ontological, non-imputative model of union with Christ yields nothing but absurdities.

3. *Excursus: A Patristic Parallel*

Interestingly, the function of 1 Cor 1:30 in Calvin’s critique of Osiander bears striking similarities to an earlier use made by Chrysostom. It has been shown that for Calvin, Chrysostom was first among the Fathers as an exegete of the NT and particularly the Apostle Paul. This high regard is reflected, for example, in Calvin’s early effort toward editing an edition of Chrysostom for the benefit of his beloved French-reading public.⁴¹ It has also been noted, significantly for our purposes, that Chrysostom is the

⁴¹ See John Robert Walchenbach, “John Calvin as Biblical Commentator: An Investigation into Calvin’s Use of John Chrysostom as an Exegetical Tutor” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1974); Alexandre Ganoczy and Klaus Müller, *Calvins handschriftliche Annotationen zu Chrysostomus: Ein Beitrag zur Hermeneutik Calvins* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1981); and W. Ian P. Hazlett, “Calvin’s Latin Preface to His Proposed French Edition of Chrysostom’s Homilies: Translation and Commentary,” in *Humanism and Reform: The Church in Europe, England, and Scotland, 1400–1643: Essays in Honour of James K. Cameron* (ed. James Kirk; SCH Subsidia 8; Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 129-50.

Father cited most frequently in Calvin's commentary on 1 Corinthians.⁴² While there is no explicit reference by Calvin to Chrysostom in connection specifically with 1 Cor 1:30 (whether in Calvin's own proposed edition, in his commentary, or in the course of his other work),⁴³ the case for Calvin's use of Chrysostom here is strengthened both by Calvin's familiarity with Chrysostom's 1 Corinthians homilies and by the nature of Calvin's use of the verse in his response to Osiander.

In his homily, Chrysostom notes the Apostle's emphasis on the magnanimity of divine grace, evidenced by the fact that Paul lists several of the benefits that come to the believer in union with Christ. Then, long before the Osiandrian controversy would raise the question of the divine *essentia*, Chrysostom followed this with a significant

⁴² Walchenbach, "John Calvin as Biblical Commentator," 58. But note that Walchenbach's statistics are based on the occasionally erroneous indices in *CO*. Thus there is a need for caution, as Walchenbach himself notes (57 n. 1).

⁴³ This is the case so far as I have been able to determine through extensive searches. Walchenbach ("John Calvin as Biblical Commentator," 58) does not include 1:30 in his list of Calvin's citations of Chrysostom, whether "explicit or implicit." The edition by Ganoczy and Müller also does not include reference to 1:30. It is altogether likely, however, that, in the approximately twenty years that span his critical work on Chrysostom and his encounter with Osiander's theology, Calvin in his reading recognizes and incorporates the theological and polemical value of Chrysostom's observation.

distinction: “*non per ipsius essentiam (οὐσιώσεως), sed per fidem.*”⁴⁴ Chrysostom’s distinction between being and faith, or ontological and spiritual participation, lies at the heart of the disagreement in the 1550s over Paul’s language, and it appears that this basic issue is of great relevance to the current debate as well. It is this distinction of Chrysostom’s, moreover, with the crucial factor of the Spirit’s role, that is ultimately decisive for Calvin in his response to Osiander: Osiander, Calvin argues, does not observe the *nexus* or *vinculum* of union, the Spirit, and thus misunderstands the union itself and its implications for justification.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor. 5* (PG 61:42): “Cur autem non dixit, Fecit nos sapientes, sed, *Factus est nobis sapientia?* doni ostendens abundantiam, ac si diceret, Seipsum nobis dedit. Et vide quomodo procedat. Prius enim nos sapientes fecit cum ab errore liberavit, et tunc iustos et sanctos, Spiritum largitus, et sic nos a malis omnibus liberavit, ita ut ipsius simus, non per ipsius essentiam, sed per fidem (καὶ οὐ τῆς οὐσιώσεως τοῦτο δηλωτικὸν ἀλλὰ τῆς πίστεως).”

⁴⁵ Ordinarily, in the absence of concrete evidence, one would hesitate to conclude that Calvin is definitely using Chrysostom here. However, in view of the other relevant data regarding Calvin, Chrysostom, and 1 Corinthians, the connection appears to stand upon evidence that is more than sufficient for a definitive judgment. Note the comments of A. N. S. Lane on the significance of the silence in Ganoczy/Müller. In short, the absence of a notation on this specific passage is greatly outweighed by Calvin’s citations of other passages in Chrysostom’s Corinthian homilies not noted or underlined. In view of the other evidence, Calvin’s use of Chrysostom’s homilies for other unmarked

4. *The Soteriological Motive of Christological Controversy*

The nature of Calvin's use of Chrysostom against Osiander highlights the importance of recognizing the background of Calvin's refutation in order to appreciate its relevance for our purposes. Important in this connection is the ontological concern Calvin has with Lutheran Christology. In the course of polemic with Westphal and Heshusius, Calvin often argues that the omnipresence (ubiquity) of Christ's human nature and its "location" (thus understood) in the bread and wine only confuses what is properly divine and human. In part acknowledging this context, Marijn de Kroon correctly views the Calvin/Osiander polemic as a struggle over the idea of *distance*. Calvin saw in Osiander (and, significantly, his fellow Lutherans) an unpardonable transgression of the ontological distance between men and God, between the Creator and his creatures.⁴⁶

To appreciate fully the relevance of this point, however, one needs also to remember that Christ, salvation, and sacrament belonged together in the sixteenth-century passages is sufficient to remove this objection. See A. N. S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 72-73, 168, 194, 222-23, 234.

⁴⁶ Marijn de Kroon, *The Honour of God and Human Salvation: A Contribution to an Understanding of Calvin's Theology According to His "Institutes"* (trans. John Vriend and Lyle D. Bierma; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 102-3. Note that de Kroon finds an inconsistency in Calvin here (104). Prof. Irena Backus, in private correspondence, has similarly referred to Calvin's "allergic" reaction to any transgression of this distance, evident also in Calvin's critique of Servetus.

mind, something easily overlooked if we distinguish too sharply the eucharistic from the justification controversies of the period. These controversies were more than merely contemporaneous. Indeed, as W. Peter Stephens has argued with respect to the Marburg Colloquy (1529), there was from the start a strong soteriological motivation underlying the eucharistic controversy. The animating concern of both Luther and Zwingli was rooted in their understandings of *salvation*, not the Supper in isolation. For Zwingli, the idea of a physical presence of Christ in the Supper shifted the locus of faith from the spiritual, immaterial, truly saving “reality” (Christ) to a visible, material object incapable of bearing salvation. In his view, Luther’s position threatened the central Christian affirmation that salvation is to be sought in Christ alone, *sola fide*, not in anything on this earth.⁴⁷ For Luther, Zwingli’s rejection of Christ’s personal presence in the Eucharist ruled out the only hope for salvation. Recognizing the “poison” of Andreas Bodenstein

⁴⁷ W. Peter Stephens, “The Soteriological Motive in the Eucharistic Controversy,” in *Calvin: Erbe und Auftrag: Festschrift für Wilhelm Neuser zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Willem van’t Spijker; Kampen: Kok, 1991), 203-13. Cf. Brian Gerrish, “Eucharist,” in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, vol. 2, col. 74a: “If grace were bound to the sacraments, the clergy would have God at their disposal and could grant or withhold salvation at will. Indeed, the very notion of sacramental grace implies another way of salvation, in competition with the *sola fide* (‘by faith alone’) of the Reformation.”

von Karlstadt, Luther perceived in Zwingli's spiritualism a rejection of the divinely ordained connection between the outer Word and sacraments as vehicles of inner grace.⁴⁸

This soteriological orientation to matters of christological-sacramental dispute is of course eminently catholic, forming as it did the context for earlier patristic and medieval struggles to clarify and interpret the two-natures model. With good reason, then, we expect to (and do) find a similar inter-connectedness in Calvin. Because the grace of salvation and the grace of the sacraments are the same grace, one anticipates the mutually interpretive language of union with Christ that pervades Calvin's exposition of the sacraments. A sacrament is, says Calvin, using traditional language, a visible or outward attestation of divine benevolence. It is a visible instrument, a sign that figures spiritual grace and seals the promises of God to us.⁴⁹ For Calvin, moreover, union with

⁴⁸ See Luther, *Sermon von dem Sakrament des Leibes und Blutes Christi, wider die Schwarmgeister* (1526) in *Luther's Works* (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan; 55 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia/Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955–1975), 36:346-54; and the points made by Gerrish, "Eucharist," col. 75a-b.

⁴⁹ Calvin, *Catechismus ecclesiae Genevensis*, . . . (Strasbourg, 1545; Latin trans. of 1541/1542 *Le Catéchisme de l'église de Genève* [*Opera Selecta* 2:130; *Tracts and Treatises* 2:83-84]). For Calvin on the sacraments see, among many others, Thomas J. Davis, *The Clearest Promises of God: The Development of Calvin's Eucharistic Teaching* (New York: AMS, 1995), who addresses important questions of theological development; B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993); Kilian McDonnell, *John Calvin, the Church, and*

Christ in his flesh and blood is the *res* of the sacraments; union or communion is the blessing for which they were divinely instituted.⁵⁰ Furthermore, this central participatory reality of incorporation is bound to a correct understanding of the grace(s) in the object or *res* to which the sacramental *signa* refer. For these reasons and others, Calvin states repeatedly that the area of difference between him and his opponents has to do not with whether Christ is truly present in the Supper or whether believers truly commune with him but with the *modus* of his presence. Because, for Calvin, a specific (non-corporeal) view of presence requires a correspondingly similar (spiritual) view of communion, the question of the mode of eucharistic presence naturally involved the question of the nature

the Eucharist (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1953; rep., Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1995), who collates many of Calvin's sacramental passages in summary form; and Hughes Oliphant Old, "Biblical Wisdom Theology and Calvin's Understanding of the Lord's Supper," in *Calvin Studies 6* (ed. John H. Leith; Colloquium on Calvin Studies, Davidson College, January 1992), 111-36, who provides an interesting account of Calvin's perspective in the light of biblical wisdom literature.

⁵⁰ The basic themes are ably expounded in Sinclair Ferguson, "Calvin on the Lord's Supper and Communion with Christ," in *Serving the Word of God: Celebrating the Life and Ministry of James Philip* (ed. David Wright and David Stay; Edinburgh: Christian Focus and Rutherford House, 2002), 203-17.

or mode of communion. The two questions (*modus praesentiae* and *modus communionis*) thus belong together.⁵¹

And of course this question (the nature of union) inevitably raises the Chalcedonian question. Indeed, perhaps the most prominent formal or structural elements in Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ, both soteriological and sacramental, are the Chalcedonian *distinctio sed non separatio* formula and the *signa/res* relationship in Augustinian signification.⁵² Calvin's concern with the focus in late medieval piety on

⁵¹ Philip Walker Butin's statement that "for Calvin, the primary issue in the eucharist was not how Christ was present in the elements; rather, it was how God worked in the eucharist to unite believers to Christ by the Spirit, and the benefits that this union brought" (*Revelation, Redemption, and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1995], 114) is potentially misleading as it separates questions that belong together. If the "how" question is not the primary issue in the 1536 *Institutes* (from which Butin quotes) it certainly is in Calvin's 1550s ubiquitarian polemic. See, e.g., *Tracts and Treatises* 2:401, 411, 414, 528, et al., where Calvin identifies the *modus praesentiae* question as the single issue dividing him from his Lutheran opponents.

⁵² Peter Lombard's discussion of the sacraments opens with a reference to Augustine's theory of signification and the relation of *signa* and *res* (Lombard, *Sententiae*, 1.1.2; cf. 1.1.1, citing Augustine, *Quaest. Hept.*, bk. III, q. 84). A sacrament is "the visible form of an invisible grace" (*sacramentum est invisibilis gratiae visibilis forma*); as a sign of a thing, it is both itself a thing and yet necessarily not the thing

objects, on “things” like images and relics, rather than the gospel reality which comes in the Word preached and heard, carried over into a rejection of an inappropriately lofty view of the sacramental elements, whether in the form of carrying them in lifted hands or gasping when they hit the ground. This perverted state of affairs, thought Calvin, encouraged people to place their trust in the tangible and the visible, the earthly, when by divine institution these are intended to point us away from the visible to the invisible, from the earthly to the heavenly. As G. R. Evans has explained, this debate over the proper place of the sacraments in relation to the preached Word has its roots in “a double medieval heritage: a broad and comprehensive understanding of ‘sacramentum,’ and

referred to (Lombard, *Sententiae*, 1.1.3, citing Augustine, *Doctr. chr.*, bk. II., c. 1, n. 1: “Signum vero est res praeter speciem, quam ingerit sensibus, aliud aliquid ex se faciens in cogitationem venire”). Augustine had provided a hermeneutically oriented discussion of *signa* and *res*, and the basic contours of his view underwent significant modification in the medieval period. On the primarily hermeneutical development of Augustinian signification in the late medieval period leading up to the Reformation, see Christopher Ocker, *Biblical Poetics Before Humanism and Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), esp. 31-71. In Augustinian sign theory, the *signum* aids in grasping the *res*, so that there is a positive, necessary relationship. Calvin focuses attention on the necessary distinction or difference in Augustine’s teaching between *signa* and *res*. If something is a sacrament it cannot simultaneously be the thing signified.

Augustinian sign-theory.”⁵³ While rejection of the former was common among the reformers, the latter functioned differently in Reformed and Lutheran teachings on the Eucharist.

In Calvin’s eucharistic thought, the Augustinian *signa/res* relationship functions as the sacramental form of the christological “distinction-without-separation” of Chalcedon. In countering Rome and Wittenberg, Calvin’s accent is naturally heavy on the *distinctio*, expressing a dominant concern that the ontological distance between God and humankind, or divinity and humanity, must not be minimized. Sacramental signification requires that the *signa* are not confused with the *res*; otherwise their identity as signs rather than reality is lost. Yet this is to be maintained without their separation. For all his concern to keep distinct things distinct, the factor of inseparability is equally crucial to Calvin’s position: sacramental signification, as a true identification of the *signa* with the *res* by way of metonymy, indicates the closest possible unity and yet prevents confusion. Repeatedly in Calvin’s criticism of ubiquitarianism he alleges that his opponents violate the cardinal rule of signification: there is a sacramental, not substantial identification of the *signa* with the *res*.⁵⁴ Thus in the language he employs he regularly objects to the “confusion” and “mixing” of substances, in particular the humanity of

⁵³ G. R. Evans, “Calvin on Signs: An Augustinian Dilemma,” *Renaissance Studies* 3 (1989): 35.

⁵⁴ See, e.g., Calvin, *Inst.* (1559) 4.17.11; the summary in Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Word and Sacrament*, 159-65; and the discussion in Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, 164-67.

Christ with his divinity or the sacramental reality (Christ's body and blood) with its sign (the elements). Despite the efforts of some to reinterpret Calvin's model in a *theosis* or deification perspective,⁵⁵ Calvin's applied model of the *communicatio idiomatum* (and his view of the Person of Christ more generally) is clearly concerned to extend the implications of the Chalcedonian "distinction-without-separation" to the deeply interwoven question of Christ, the Supper, and salvation *in relationship*.

5. Calvin's Response as Applied Christology

These observations aid in the discovery of what is really the theological heart of what Calvin perceives in Osiander: an application of his distinctly Lutheran idea of Christ

⁵⁵ A recent effort to follow the Finnish misunderstanding of Luther into Calvin studies is Carl Mosser, "The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification," *SJT* 55 (2002): 36-57. See in reply Jonathan Slater, "Salvation as Participation in the Humanity of Mediator in Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion: A Reply to Carl Mosser," *SJT* 58 (2005): 39-58. Cf., from the perspective of the "Radical Orthodoxy" program, J. Todd Billings, "Calvin, Participation and the Gift: The Activity of the Believer in Union with Christ" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard Divinity School, 2005); Billings, "United to God through Christ: Calvin on the Question of Deification," in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: Deification/Theosis in the Christian Tradition* (ed. James Pain, Michael Christensen, and Boris Jakim; forthcoming); and Billings, "John Milbank's Theology of the 'Gift' and Calvin's Theology of Grace: A Critical Comparison," *Modern Theology* 21 (2005): 87-105.

and the Supper, which, unlike his controversial doctrine of justification, is *common* to all Lutherans (the Philippists perhaps excepted). Upon close examination one finds that, though ostensibly only about justification, Calvin in his polemic in reality attacks Lutheran Christology and sacramentology as the cause of which Osiander's heresy is the effect. Indeed, Calvin's pattern of expression and argument suggests it is this crucial subtext of Calvin's response that is in fact the *principal point* of his entire refutation.

The times Calvin employs the language of the eucharistic controversy in his refutation are numerous. The form they usually take is in Calvin's objection to Osiander's "essential mixing" of natures, human and divine, and, consequently, of the saving benefits. For instance, just as other Reformed theologians attacked the Lutheran *communicatio idiomatum* and ubiquitarianism as a Manichaeic error, so Calvin says that Osiander is bordering on Manichaeism in "his desire to *transfuse* the *essentia Dei* into men."⁵⁶ Osiander's ontological confusion of the physical and spiritual, the human and

⁵⁶ Calvin, *Inst.* (1559) 3.11.5; *Opera Selecta* 4:185-86: "Conceperat vir ille quiddam affine Manichaeis, ut essentiam Dei in homines transfundere appeteret." Calvin makes this association twice. Cf. with *Calvin's Ecclesiastical Advice*, 33 (CO 38:166): "Adde, quod essentialis illa communicatio ex Manichaeorum deliriis sumpta est." The Lutheran Heshusius accused Calvin of Manichaeism, to which Calvin objected vigorously (*De Vera Participatione* [CO 9:466]; cf. *Calvin: Theological Treatises* [trans. J. K. S. Reid; LCC; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954], 263). Cf. Calvin here with Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Dialogue on the Two Natures of Christ* (ed. and trans. John Patrick Donnelley, S.J.; Peter Martyr Library 2; Kirksville, Mo.: Thomas Jefferson University

divine, and his idea of the “essence of communion”— that is, that the “essence of God’s righteousness is accidental, present with a man one moment and absent the next”⁵⁷— leads to this recognizably Augustinian charge of “bordering” on the error of the Manichees. Moreover, applying the Reformed critique of the Lutheran *communicatio*, Calvin explains that while it is true we are one with Christ, his *essentiam* is not *mixed* with our own (*interea . . . misceri Christi essentiam cum nostra*).⁵⁸ Osiander, Calvin says, is discontented with “the righteousness which has been acquired for us by Christ’s obedience and sacrificial death” and prefers instead that we are made righteous substantially by *infusion* of the divine essence and quality (*substantialiter in Deo iustos esse tam essentia quam qualitate infusa*).⁵⁹ Osiander claims a *mixture of substances*

Press/Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1995), 116, 126. Flacius made the same accusation of Manichaeism against Osiander, and Calvin makes a near identical point against Menno elsewhere (*CO* 38:167): “Mennonis doctrina, quam ex deliriis Manichaeorum hausit, mihi non erat incognita.”

⁵⁷ Calvin, *CO* 38:166 (*Calvin’s Ecclesiastical Advice*, 33): “Nec video quomodo excusari possit hoc absurdum, essentialem Dei iustitiam esse accidens, quod adesse nunc homini possit, nunc abesse.”

⁵⁸ Calvin, *Inst.* (1559) 3.11.5; *Opera Selecta* 4:186: “Dicit nos unum esse cum Christo. Fatemur: interea negamus misceri Christi essentiam cum nostra.”

⁵⁹ Calvin, *Inst.* (1559) 3.11.5; *Opera Selecta* 4:186: “. . . dilucide tamen exprimit se non ea iustitia contentum, quae nobis obedientia et sacrificio mortis Christi parta est, fingere nos substantialiter in Deo iustos esse tam essentia quam qualitate infusa.”

(*substantialem mixtionem*) by which God *transfuses* (*transfundens*) himself into us, making us a part of himself. Indeed, Osiander regards the Spirit's work as practically useless unless *Christ's essence is mingled with ours* (*nisi eius essentia nobis misceatur*), unless we are united to God *essentialiter*.⁶⁰ Calvin explains that had Osiander confined himself to a union by conjunction of essence (*essentiali coniunctione*) insofar as Christ is our Head, or with the essence of the divine nature poured into us, then he would have "fed on these delights with less harm" and the controversy ("the great quarrel") would not have arisen. But Osiander insists instead on understanding the justifying *iustitia* not as free imputation but as a personal righteousness flowing from the indwelling divine essence of God (*quam Dei essentia in nobis residens*).⁶¹

⁶⁰ Calvin, *Inst.* (1559) 3.11.5; *Opera Selecta* 4:186: "Deinde substantialem mixtionem ingerit, qua Deus se in nos transfundens, quasi partem sui faciat. Nam virtute Spiritus sancti fieri ut coalescamus cum Christo, nobisque sit caput et nos eius membra, fere pro nihilo ducit, nisi eius essentia nobis misceatur. Sed in Patre et Spiritu apertius, ut dixi, prodit quid sentiat: nempe iustificari nos non sola Mediatoris gratia, nec in eius persona iustitiam simpliciter vel solide nobis offerri: sed nos fieri iustitiae divinae consortes, dum essentialiter nobis unitur Deus."

⁶¹ Calvin, *Inst.* (1559) 3.11.6; *Opera Selecta* 4:187: "Si tantum diceret Christum nos iustificando essentiali coniunctione nostrum fieri: nec solum quatenus homo est, esse caput nostrum, sed divinae quoque naturae essentiam in nos diffundi: minore noxa deliciis se pasceret, nec forte propter hoc delirium tanta esset excitanda contentio. . . ." In connection with this criticism, one should note Calvin's *Brevis Confessio* in which a

Calvin's approach to Osiander *as a Lutheran* is still more explicit when he criticizes Osiander's confusion of justification and renewal by explaining that "reason itself forbids us to *transfer the peculiar qualities of the one to the other (transferre tamen quod unius peculiare est ad alterum, ratio ipsa prohibet)*," a clear attack on the fundamental ubiquitarian premise. He continues, making the connection with ubiquitarianism clear, that "in this *confusion of the two kinds of grace (duplicis gratiae confusione)* that Osiander forces upon us there is *a like absurdity (similis est absurditas)*."⁶² The connection of a specifically Lutheran Christology and ubiquitarianism with Osiander's model of union with Christ now made explicit, Calvin continues to observe that the correct way of thinking, which sees in Christ's flesh the

similar point is made. There Calvin explains that justification is by faith inasmuch as it is by faith that the Mediator is savingly grasped and the promises of the gospel are relied upon. "Wherefore I detest," Calvin continues, "the ravings of those who endeavor to persuade us that the essential righteousness of God exists in us, and are not satisfied with the free imputation in which alone Scripture orders us to acquiesce" (*Tracts and Treatises* 2:133).

⁶² Calvin, *Inst.* (1559) 3.11.6; *Opera Selecta* 4:187: "Verum si solis claritas non potest a calore separari, an ideo dicemus luce calefieri terram, calore vero illustrari. Hac similitudine nihil ad rem praesentem magis accommodum? Sol calore suo terram vegetat ac foecundat, radiis suis illustrat et illuminat; hic mutua est ac individua connexio: transferre tamen quod unius peculiare est ad alterum, ratio ipsa prohibet. In hac duplicis gratiae confusione, quam obtrudit Osiander, similis est absurditas. . . ."

“sure pledge” (*certum pignus*) of spiritual life, is seen also in the correct (i.e., Calvin’s own) sacramentology: “This method of teaching is perceived in the sacraments; even though they direct our faith to the whole Christ and not to a half-Christ, they teach that the matter both of righteousness and of salvation resides in his flesh—not that as mere man he justifies or quickens by himself but because it pleased God to reveal in the Mediator what was hidden and incomprehensible in himself.”⁶³

In his pattern of expression, then, Calvin appears to parallel Osiander’s diminution of the humanity of Christ in justification with his denial of a proper (circumscribed) humanity in his Lutheran sacramentology. This parallel is important and continues the relationship that Calvin has been highlighting between the Lutheran model of eucharistic communion and Osiander’s doctrine of justification. To make this relationship firm, Calvin is most explicit near the end of his refutation, where there can no longer be any question about the intention of his strategy and the heart of his theological critique. Osiander, Calvin says, spurning the Spirit-bond (*spirituali coniunctione*) of union,

⁶³ Calvin, *Inst.* (1559) 3.11.9; *Opera Selecta* 4:191: “Quae ratio docendi in sacramentis perspicitur: quae etsi fidem nostram ad totum Christum non dimidium dirigunt, simul tamen iustitiae et salutis materiam in eius carne residere docent; non quod a seipso iustificet aut vivificet merus homo, sed quia Deo placuit, quod in se absconditum et incomprehensibile erat, in Mediatore palam facere.”

forces a *gross mingling of Christ with believers*. And he therefore calls “Zwinglian” all who disagree with his “*essential*” righteousness *because they do not say Christ is eaten in the Supper*. . . . Osiander’s violent insistence upon *essential* righteousness and *essential* indwelling of Christ has this result: first, Osiander holds that God pours himself into us as a *gross mixture, just as a physical eating in the Lord’s Supper*.⁶⁴

The connections are drawn compellingly by Calvin as he ties Osiander’s soteriology to his sacramentology, his idea of justification by an “essential,” non-imputative union with the divine Christ to his Lutheran interpretation of the *communicatio idiomatum* and eucharistic communion.

In short, Calvin is convinced that Osiander’s *iustitia essentialis* rests upon the presupposition of a Lutheran Christology and sacramentology, in particular the Lutheran *communicatio idiomatum*. This crucial observation comports well with recent Osiander

⁶⁴ Calvin, *Inst.* (1559) 3.11.10; *Opera Selecta* 4:192: “Sed Osiander hac spirituali coniunctione spreta, crassam mixturam Christi cum fidelibus urget: atque ideo Zuinglianos odiose nominat, quicumque non subscribunt fanatico errori de essentiali iustitia: quia non sentiant Christum in Coena substantialiter comedi. . . . Quod ergo essentialem iustitiam et essentialem in nobis Christi habitationem tam importune exigit, huc spectat, primum ut crassa mixtura se Deus in nos transfundat, sicuti in Coena carnalis manducatio ab ipso fingitur. . . .”

scholarship which has confirmed earlier suggestions that Osiander's doctrine of justification is based upon his christological presuppositions.⁶⁵ Not only does it rest upon this presupposition, however. Calvin evidently perceives in Osiander's aberrant doctrine of justification the inevitable soteriological implications of a consistently held Lutheran Christology and sacramentology. Osiander, in Calvin's eyes, is *effectively the only consistent Lutheran*, and serves therefore as an ideal foil (remember Osiander is widely rejected by his Lutheran colleagues) for demonstrating what he regards as the dangerous irrationality at the heart of Lutheran ideas about eucharistic communion with Christ. According to Calvin, the confusion of what is properly divine and human at the level of Lutheran Christology and ubiquitarianism is simply carried through at the soteriological level in Osiander's model of justifying union with Christ. And all this, it should be remembered, finds expression in the struggle for a faithful theological exegesis of the Apostle's statement in 1 Cor 1:30.

6. *Assessment*

What are the lessons to be learned from this sixteenth-century episode in the history of Pauline exegesis? No doubt there are many, but at least three are unmistakable. First, the complex of 1 Cor 1:30, Christology, and justifying union with Christ cannot fully be engaged without considering the nature of the union in view. Thus, there is a question that must be asked of those who would argue in favor of the non-imputative model of union with Christ: What theology of union is reflected in such a

⁶⁵ See Hauke, *Gott-Haben–um Gottes Willen*, 213-36, 258-59.

construction? In other words, what is the necessary christological precondition for a non-imputative model of union with Christ? Calvin's response to Osiander makes clear it must be a theology of union proceeding from non-Reformed christological presuppositions.

Second, and related to the first, Calvin's interaction with Osiander's ideas pointedly demonstrates that asking the patently theological "nature of union with Christ" question is not foreign to the task of Pauline exegesis but is required by it. The consistent interest in this facet of Paul's theology on the part of pre-modern exegetes (including the patristic commentators) ought to appeal to those who reject the modern "Christ of faith" vs. the "Jesus of history" polarization inasmuch as it renders theological interaction with the biblical text not merely desirable but natural and even necessary. What Chrysostom, Osiander, and Calvin all make clear is that interest in the structure, the implicit layeredness of Paul's theology, is an inevitable extension of faithful reflection on the gospel he proclaims.

Third, if what I have argued more fully elsewhere regarding Calvin's refutation of Osiander as historically the inception of an explicit divergence between Lutheran and Reformed understandings of salvation,⁶⁶ then the question needs to be raised to what extent the non-imputative model of union proposed by contemporary Reformed writers unintentionally and yet inevitably compromises the very ideas that gave birth to the tradition as such. Inasmuch as the Reformed tradition has its origins (and deepest theological roots) in the application of Chalcedonian Christology to the question of

⁶⁶ See Garcia, "Life in Christ," 175-223, 227-34.

communion with Christ, and to the extent that Reformed theologians recognize this application of Chalcedon to be faithful to Scripture, this is a perfectly valid question.

IV. *Imputation as Soteriological Attribution: A Suggestion*

This negative assessment of the non-imputative model of union with Christ need not be the final word, however. Instead, I suggest that the very christological structure that renders this construal problematic may actually point to a more compelling one. We begin by noting an area of very important agreement: too often in expositions of the doctrine of justification, even within Reformed circles, the impression is given, no matter how inadvertently, that Christ truly remains *extra nos*. Put differently, even where the confessed theology is at variance with such an idea, union with Christ is frequently related to justification in a manner that suggests implicitly that justification supplies its context (which is actually the Lutheran view), rather than the reverse. As indicated above, this way of speaking is not faithful to the biblical and Reformed understanding of how justification is related to the saving reality of union with Christ.⁶⁷ But what then is a more faithful way of speaking about this relationship? And can this relationship be

⁶⁷ We must agree, then, with Garlington's criticism of Piper, who, in an effort to distinguish the two, unjustifiably grounds sanctification in justification: "God's imputed righteousness, and our right standing with God, over against our sin (Rom 6:7) is the clear and distinct and necessary ground for sanctification—our liberation from sin (v. 6, 'no longer enslaved to sin')" (*Counted Righteous in Christ*, 77-78 and similar language on 80; cf. Garlington, "Imputation or Union with Christ?," 65).

expressed and expounded in such a way that one errs neither in rejecting the importance of imputation (*distinctio*) nor in obscuring the controlling significance of union with Christ (*sed non separatio*) as the context for justification?

To enter into a full exposition here is not possible, but I would like at least to outline a proposal for consideration. I suggest that, pursuing further the christological principles highlighted above, an application of the Reformed interpretation of the *communicatio idiomatum* (specifically its “attribution” feature) may provide a coherent, instructive model for relating union with Christ and imputation. In short, I suggest that “imputation” should be understood as the soteriological corollary of christological “attribution,” particularly in terms of its function in expressing the reality of distinction *within* the more basic, controlling context and reality of union.

1. *The Christological “Attribution” Model*

In contradistinction to the Lutheran interpretation of the *communicatio*, particularly as the necessary theological precondition for ubiquitarianism, the Reformed have typically preferred a model which focuses on the idea and language of attribution: what is properly true of one nature is *attributed* to the whole of Christ’s person. Put concisely, the divinity and humanity of Christ, and thus the qualities proper to these natures, must be kept distinct; hence the “communication” is not “horizontal,” from nature to nature, which would compromise the integrity of Christ’s full humanity, for example, through its participation in the ubiquity of Christ’s divinity. At the same time, the two natures belong inseparably to Christ’s person, and what is predicated of one

nature is, through the reality of union, predicated of the whole of his person.⁶⁸ On the Lutheran model, the enhypostatic subsistence of the human nature of Christ in the divine person supplies the theological rationale and grounds for the ubiquity or omnipresence of his human nature. As Richard Muller notes, it is on this point (the *genus maiestaticum*) that the Reformed Orthodox strongly rejected the Lutheran model, preferring instead to speak of a “*praedicatio verbalis*, or verbal predication, of *idiomata* from both natures of the person.”⁶⁹ On this understanding, what is proper to a nature remains so, and yet is truly or really predicated or attributed to the whole of the Person.

⁶⁸ The literature is vast, but note the useful summaries in G. C. Berkouwer, *The Person of Christ* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 271-301; Joseph N. Tylenda, “Calvin’s Understanding of the Communication of Properties,” *WTJ* 38 (1975–1976): 64; and, for the post-Reformation period, Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics* (trans. G. T. Thomson; ed. and rev. Ernst Bizer; 1950; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978; repr., London: The Wakeman Trust, n.d.), 439-47; and Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), s.v. “communicatio idiomatum/communicatio proprietatum,” 72-74.

⁶⁹ Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, 74. Muller helpfully explains what the Lutheran model did and did not intend. It bears noting that, as Calvin’s refutation of Osiander makes poignantly clear, much of the Reformed criticism of the Lutheran model was directed not primarily at the conclusions the Lutherans reached (with important exceptions, of course) but at their failure to follow through fully on the

Significantly, the tradition of Reformed reflection on the *communicatio* reflects a controlling concern not to impinge on the reality of the union while insisting on the distinction that persists. J. Wollebius, for instance, calls the communication of properties “a manner of speaking, whereby that which belongs to either nature is predicated of the Person of Christ,” and explains specifically that the communication is “verbal or real: verbal in respect of the manner of speaking but real in respect of the foundation, to wit, the personal union.” Speaking as Wollebius does of the personal union as the “foundation” for the relationship of distinct natures highlights the priority of the union as the context for distinction. Importantly, the attribution in view is verbal *but not merely so*. It is not, in other words, the Zwinglian *allaeosis* model (rejected forthrightly by the Reformed), according to which the relationship is *purely* verbal and thus, as Luther insisted, unreal. The relationship is not metaphorical. It is truly the Person of Christ who is the acting subject at all times, yet an action or quality may still belong “properly” only to one of his natures. When ignorance is attributed to Christ, for example, Wollebius explains this is meant “properly” of his human nature only.⁷⁰

implications of their christological and sacramental presuppositions. For Calvin, Osiander was an exception.

⁷⁰ John Wollebius, *The Abridgment of Christian Divinitie So exactly and Methodically compiled, that it leads us, as it were by the hand To the Reading of the Holy Scriptures*, . . . (3d ed.; trans. Alexander Ross; London: T. Mabb for Joseph Nevill, 1660), 125. He goes on to note that the “excellency” of the human nature of Christ “consists partly in those gifts which proceed from the grace of union . . .” (122-23). I

2. *Imputation as Soteriological Attribution*

We should note the significant parallel with the idea of imputation, particularly in terms of an ontological-theological safeguard within the reality of union with Christ: the distinctive righteousness of Christ, which is proper to him alone, is “attributed” to believers *only within and because of*⁷¹ the reality of their union with him. This “attributed” righteousness, proper to Christ alone, is ours “improperly” but truly because of the reality of the union. The parallel, and the resulting formulation, may be summarized as follows: Imputation is the *attribution* to the believer of the righteousness which is proper to Christ and yet truly the personal possession of the believer within the context of his union with Christ, the “foundation” for this attribution. Put differently, in the indissoluble union of the believer with Christ, the righteousness which is proper only to Christ is *attributed* to the whole (Christ-and-the-believer-in-union) in such a way that

should perhaps mention that “properly” in this discussion should be understood not in the sense of appropriateness or suitability but in its common philosophical sense of strictly limiting something through designation, e.g., “not the suburbs but the town proper.”

⁷¹ By “because of” I do not mean “on account of,” which would suggest, falsely, that union with Christ rather than the righteousness of Christ forms the meritorious grounds of justification. Instead I intend to stress that, as its context, union with Christ provides the *only theological rationale* for justification, an eminently Reformed point arguably made more coherent and compelling theologically by the attribution model of imputation I am proposing here.

the imputed righteousness truly belongs to the believer but, as far as justification is concerned, “improperly,” that is, by attribution.

We can inquire as to the usefulness of this model by thinking through the linguistic facet of the present debate. It can easily be seen that the question of theological vocabulary is an important feature of the union/imputation discussion. Certainly we must ask, with a view to the suggestion that union language should be substituted for imputation language: What function does “imputation” serve in theological discourse? Within the broader doctrine of justification, what concerns are expressed through use of this language? Certainly basic to the concept of imputation is the idea of a *declarative reckoning*, specifically of one’s righteousness to another, which leads us to the relatively straightforward observation that imputation is (among other things) a verbal or linguistic action. And here is the crucial point that must not be overlooked. As a verbal or linguistic action, *imputation gives expression to the otherness that persists within the reality of union with Christ*. “Imputation” clarifies that, within the context of the action itself, two distinct beings are always in view; to speak of righteousness as imputed is to say, among other things, that the righteousness of *one* is reckoned as *another’s*. The question with which we began can now be raised in terms of an assertion: imputation safeguards the fact that, within the reality of the believer’s union with Christ, Christ and the believer remain distinct. Abandoning (or downplaying) the imputation idea, one lacks the unambiguous safeguard that clarifies that, though united to Christ, the believer does not *become* Christ. Hence, it also clarifies that, as the ground of justification, the imputed or “attributed” righteousness proper to Christ is distinct from the “inherent”

righteousness proper to the believer. The non-imputative model of union noticeably lacks this ontological and gospel-preserving distinction.

Furthermore, imputation has natural ties to attribution inasmuch as imputation, because it is a reckoning, is a kind of attribution. One can state that the righteous obedience of Christ is “attributed” to another just as felicitously (and preserving the same intention) as one can state that Christ’s righteousness has been “reckoned” to another. The linguistic ties are rendered more explicit (and significant) when the figure of speech, synecdoche, is brought into view. Like attribution language, synecdoche speaks of a whole named for one of its parts, and has often been summoned to explain the Reformed attribution model of the *communicatio*. Amandus Polanus, for instance, linked christological attribution explicitly with synecdoche, stating that the *communicatio* “is a Sinecdoche, whereby that is spoken of Christ’s person, which is proper to one of the natures in the person.” He adds that if the *concretum* rather than the *abstractum* is used, “for the most part there is added *a note or particle of difference* restraining it to one or other of the natures. . . . And by these notes of difference is signified the property of the one nature, which cannot be spoken of the other nature.”⁷² In christological attribution, then, the action or quality which is “proper” to one is attributed, in a synecdochal manner, to the whole of the person. Similarly, in union with Christ the righteousness imputed (or

⁷² Amandus Polanus, *The Substance of the Christian Religion, Soundly Set Forth in two bookes, by definitions and partitions, framed according to the rules of a naturall method by Amandus Polanus professor of Divinitie* (trans. E. W.; London: R. F. for John Oxenbridge, 1595), 67-68.

attributed) is “properly” Christ’s own (and, as imputed, remains so) and yet is truly or really *my* own inasmuch as I am united to Christ. The union is the context for the imputation, and neither the union nor the imputation is truly coherent independent of the other. This sketch of an attribution model of imputation furthers an apparent sensitivity to this relationship in the tradition. For example, Turretin describes imputation “proper” as to “hold him who has not done a thing, as if he had done it.” Then, responding to the “legal fiction” charge, he points to the context of imputation: “. . . nor does it lack justice because there is granted a communion between us and Christ, which is the solid foundation of this imputation.”⁷³

It should not be overlooked that when contemporary writers discuss the one-for-another benefit or effect of union with Christ, they occasionally use the imputation-type language of attribution, though not with the advantage of clarity that the Reformed *communicatio* model affords. For instance, when in the context of discussing incorporation Wright points to 1 Cor 1:30, though he denies imputation he still notes that Paul here describes a “transfer of attributes” where “what is true of the Messiah is true of

⁷³ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (ed. James T. Dennison, Jr.; trans. George Musgrave Giger; 3 vols.; Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992), 2:648 (top. 16, q. III.vii); cf. p. 649 where imputation is a “reckoning.” Note that in his brief discussion Muller defines imputation in the period of Orthodoxy as an “act of attribution” and uses the language of “divine attribution” several times (*Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, s.v. “imputatio,” 149).

his people.”⁷⁴ The specific christological context I am suggesting renders Wright’s choice of language here rather promising theologically, though I fear not as Wright intends it.

Speaking of possible interpretations of this attribution model, an important note of qualification is definitely in order. In proposing an essentially christological model for the union/imputation relationship I do not wish to suggest that christological and soteriological unions are of the same order; they certainly are not. Unlike what is in view in the christological *communicatio* model, the union of Christ with the believer is not a hypostatic union. In our union with Christ, as Calvin repeatedly insisted, there is a union of persons in the bond of the Spirit— a union, then, of a different order. The Reformed Orthodox were wisely sensitive to this point, including in their discussions of the *unio mystica* or *unio spiritualis* the added qualifier *sive praesentiae gratiae tantum* (“by the presence of grace alone”) in order to distinguish saving union with Christ from the hypostatic union of natures in the person of Christ.⁷⁵

Properly understood, imputation framed as a soteriological corollary to christological attribution, then, may supply the compelling thought structure needed to do justice to the equally important truths that (1) the *res* of salvation is the righteous Christ himself with whom believers have been united for justification and every other saving grace (the soteriological); and (2) even within the unassailable verity and reality of union

⁷⁴ Wright, “Χριστὸς as ‘Messiah’ in Paul: Philemon 6,” 48.

⁷⁵ So Muller, s.v. “*unio mystica sive praesentia gratiae tantum*,” in *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, 314-15; cf. Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 431-32.

with Christ, the distinction between Christ and those united to him persists, that is, in union with Christ one does not become Christ (the christological). As I have indicated, this recognizably Chalcedonian way of speaking of distinction without separation, and its application to questions concerning salvation, has a rich pedigree in the Reformed tradition. Outside of this model, I am not aware of a compelling way to safeguard either the controlling significance of union with Christ or the heart of a Chalcedonian and Reformed Christology. Indeed, to the extent that the eucharistic and ultimately soteriological application of a distinctly Reformed jealousy for the truth of Chalcedon lies at the origins of the Reformed tradition as such, the suggestion that imputation and union with Christ may be related along the lines of attribution simply continues along these established—and, in my view, stimulating and profitable—lines of reflection.⁷⁶

V. Conclusion

⁷⁶ I acknowledge that there are constituent elements of the non-imputative model that would require revision if the attribution model is to be accepted. For instance, like imputation, the attribution model still assumes a traditional Reformed-covenantal understanding of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Paul, which is sometimes described pejoratively in the literature as a “thing” or “commodity” that can be transferred to another (so Garlington, “Imputation or Union with Christ?,” 97; cf. the discussion in N. T. Wright, “On Becoming the Righteousness of God: 2 Corinthians 5:21,” in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 2 [ed. D. M. Hay; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993], 200-208). However important (and it is crucial to the question), this is clearly not a discussion we can enter into here.

We return now briefly to the thesis that union with Christ makes imputation superfluous, and no doubt some of our conclusions here can already be anticipated. What Christology must a non-imputative model of union with Christ presuppose? It would not appear that it is a Christology that does full justice to the concerns of Reformed Christology. In this light, particularly with a view to those who aim to work from within a distinctively Reformed framework, it is clearly understandable why the near non-engagement with the (classical) Christological question would be so disquieting. At heart the Reformed tradition is distinctive for its reply to the question, What is the Christology of union with Christ? It thus has a vested, healthy interest in inquiring what is the Christology at work that would ostensibly render imputation superfluous. The nature of the union/imputation debate, then, when seen in its broader theological context, poignantly demonstrates that the issues in this discussion are basic not only to a faithful understanding of justification *per se* but to the christological-pneumatological-soteriological nexus of convictions rooted in the deeper structures of Reformed identity.

The net result of our investigation can be summed up with two points. First, for all its crucial, central significance, “union with Christ” cannot simply be asserted; it must be explained. What is more, it must be explained in a way that reflects an understanding of the various contexts—exegetical, historical, theological—in which this idea has been and is still embedded. Doing so, one learns there *is* a distinctly Reformed theology of union with Christ, and that this theology of union is one that renders impossible from the start any confusion between Christ and the believer.

Second, we have found that, pursuing the christological structures of the Reformed tradition still further, “imputation” functions in a way broadly analogous to “attribution” in Reformed Christology, so that, in the quest for a more compelling model than presently exists, imputation may be understood as the attribution of the righteousness that is properly Christ’s to the whole, that is, to the fullness of the eschatological reality that is Christ-and-his-people. On an attribution model of imputation, the believer is able to confess with Paul in a lucid, cogent manner that he is simultaneously ἐν αὐτῷ (“in him”) *and* has a righteousness which is, in some sense, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην (“not my own”) (Phil 3:9). This righteousness is proper to Christ and is mine by attribution (“improperly”) in the context of union with Christ. The non-imputative model of union, on the other hand, lacks the christological structure that would simultaneously safeguard and give coherent theological expression to both elements of Paul’s confession.

An additional comment is necessary here. I do recognize that the line of argument pursued in this essay assumes the ongoing usefulness of the Chalcedonian formulation as a faithful statement of the biblical, catholic understanding of the Incarnation, a point certainly not conceded in much modern theology. It has not been possible, of course, to offer an adequate defense of the Definition, and I have anticipated my readership as one that continues to recognize this standard of orthodoxy as consistent with biblical revelation. At the same time, it should be noted that even those theologians and biblical scholars most antagonistic toward the Definition must recognize that they inevitably work within the map of questions and perspectives that it continues to shape.

This is particularly true of those who desire to be identified with and work from within a tradition defined in positive relation to Chalcedon (such as the Reformed tradition) in a meaningful way.⁷⁷ Regarding Chalcedon, John McIntyre has aptly stated, “No alternative seems to have successfully challenged its place, and even when one has been offered, it has been a derivative of it, or an attempted translation, or even a negation of it which in itself is an admission of dependency.”⁷⁸ What this means for recent construals of the

⁷⁷ We must disagree in the strongest terms, then, with the sharply critical assessment of Reformation and post-Reformation disputes over the application of Chalcedon, especially analyses which pit the latter against the former in principal, theological terms, as in, e.g., Hans Schwarz, *Christology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 175: “Like the christological controversies following Chalcedon, these post-Reformation controversies [i.e., between Reformed and Lutheran theologians] pursued dead ends. They led away from the central emphasis of the Reformation, that Christ being truly divine and truly human is not just a logical theory to be explored in all its ramifications, but foremost the way in which God worked out salvation for humanity.” Not only does Schwarz attack a straw man here (as noted above, these disputes reflected from the start a concern for the gospel, not for logical curiosities), but it is precisely in the course of these disputes that a distinctive Reformed theological framework emerged as the fruit of sophisticated exegetical and theological interaction with those otherwise closest to them: the Lutherans.

⁷⁸ John McIntyre, *The Shape of Christology: Studies in the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 312-13. For a recent, robust defense of

union with Christ/imputation relationship is a question that clearly deserves the most careful reflection.

Furthermore, in step with the earlier “Quests” for the historical Jesus which ultimately found it impossible, in the face of the fully human Lord, to confess with the ancient Church *ex animo* his full deity, it bears scrutiny to what extent the same hesitation, or refusal as the case may be, on the part of expositors of narrative and vocational Christology reflects an essentially Nestorian Christology, relating the human and divine in Christ voluntaristically at best. While the non-imputative model of union with Christ suggests an implicit Eutychianism (by implication, of course, not by confession), narrative Christology, particularly in its “vocational” form, seems equally indebted to an implicit Nestorianism, and in this case may have not yet emerged from the destructive premises that doomed those “Quests.”

On a final note, the widespread and multi-faceted exploration of the union idea among theologians of widely different persuasions is appropriate: the way forward in discussions of justification truly does involve further work on this eminently biblical truth. We must conclude, however, that the non-imputative model of union is not a step in the direction of a more faithful understanding and appropriation of Paul’s gospel. Ultimately, it would seem we should agree enthusiastically with D. A. Carson who writes:

the Chalcedon formulation, see Donald Macleod, “The Christology of Chalcedon,” in *The Only Hope: Jesus Yesterday, Today, Forever* (ed. Mark Elliott and John L. McPake; Fearn, Ross-shire, and Edinburgh: Mentor and Rutherford House, 2001), 77-94.

Although the “union with Christ” theme has often been abused, rightly handled it is a comprehensive and complex way of portraying the various ways in which we are identified with Christ and he with us. In its connections with justification, “union with Christ” terminology, especially when it is tied to the great redemptive event, suggests that although justification cannot be reduced to imputation, justification in Paul’s thought cannot long be faithfully maintained without it.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Carson, “The Vindication of Imputation,” 77.

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