J. V. Fesko

Beyond Calvin

Union with Christ and Justification in Early Modern Reformed Theology (1517–1700)

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

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ISBN Print: 9783525570227 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647570228

Reformed Historical Theology

Edited by
Herman J. Selderhuis

In co-operation with

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Elsie McKee, Richard Muller

Volume 20

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

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Dedicated to Dave and Bryan

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data available online: http://dnb.d-nb.de.

ISBN 978-3-525-57022-7
ISBN 978-3-647-57022-8 (E-Book)

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www.v-r.de

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Typesetting by: SchwabScantechnik, Göttingen
Printed and bound in Germany by ♁ Hubert & Co, Göttingen

Printed on non-aging paper.

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ISBN Print: 9783525570227 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647570228

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Abbreviations

Commonly Referenced Works

CD	Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*
CNTC	Calvin's New Testament Commentaries
CO	*Calvini Opera*
CR	*Corpus Reformatorum*
DLGTT	Richard Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*
DNB	*Dictionary of National Biography*
HC	Heidelberg Catehchism
LC	Westminster Larger Catechism
LCC	Library of Christian Classics
LW	Luther's Works
NPNF	*Nicene Post-Nicene Fathers*
OS	John Calvin, *Opera Selecta*
PRRD	Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*
SC	Westminster Shorter Catechism
SHC	Second Helvetic Confession
WCF	Westminster Confession of Faith
Werke	*Martin Luthers Werke*

Periodicals

ARG	*Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*
ATR	*Anglican Theological Review*
CH	*Church History*
CTJ	*Calvin Theological Jounral*
CTQ	*Concordia Theological Quarterly*
EJ	*Evangelical Journal*
IJST	*International Journal of Systematic Theology*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*

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JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JHI	*Journal for the History of Ideas*
MAJT	*Mid-America Journal of Theology*
ModTh	*Modern Theology*
PRJ	*Puritan Reformed Journal*
RTR	*Reformed Theological Review*
SBET	*Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*
SCJ	*Sixteenth Century Journal*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
TCP	*The Confessional Presbyterian*
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
ZKG	*Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

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Preface

My initial objective was to write a history of the doctrinal relationship between union with Christ and justification in the Reformed tradition from 1517 to present day. However, the complexity and richness of the material caused me to reevaluate and conclude the present work with the end of High Orthodoxy (1700). My hope is, God willing, to continue to research and write on the history of union and justification in follow-up projects covering other areas of early modern and modern history in the Reformed tradition. This book, then, represents the first of what I hope are several more monographs on the topic.

This is a work of historical theology. I have done my best to let the primary source evidence, read in its early modern context, drive the conclusions. I use available translations of primary sources in consultation with the original language editions whenever possible. I have made minor modifications of translations at times, which is indicated in the relevant footnotes. I have also updated archaic English spelling in quotations to facilitate easier reading but have left the titles of the works unchanged for ease of reference.

In the course of writing this book I was able to present my research in a number of different academic forums both inside and outside of Westminster Seminary California (WSC). I am especially thankful to my colleagues at WSC for the opportunity to present my research at our Warfield Seminars, a colloquium where faculty present their latest research for discussion and interaction with faculty and students. I taught a good portion of this material in an elective, Union with Christ and Justification, in the fall semester of 2010. I presented versions of two chapters, one on Melanchthon and the other on Socinus, at regional and national meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society, respectively. Earlier versions of several other chapters (Metaphysics, Luther, Vermigli, Arminius, Zanchi, Perkins, Owen, and Bullinger) appeared as journal articles. Readers can consult the bibliography to see where those pieces originally appeared.

I would like to thank a number of people who helped me along the way: Ross Hodges, Nic Lazzareschi, Brent Ferry, Robert Lotzer, and Kim Riddlebarger. Thank you, Luca Baschera, for offering helpful comments on an early draft of my chapter on Zanchi. Todd Billings also read a number of chapters and passed along some of his own work on union. I also wish to thank Richard Muller and

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am grateful for the interaction I had with him on a number of issues related to union and the *ordo salutis* as well as his willingness to share a couple of chapters from his forthcoming book on Calvin. I want to thank Mark Jones for reading through the whole manuscript and offering a number of helpful critical comments. I am also grateful for my colleague, Dave VanDrunen who, chapter by chapter, read through the whole manuscript and gave me numerous corrections and suggestions that helped me polish the manuscript into its present form. Greg Fox, thank you for allowing me to use your terrific digital version of Perkin's famous ocular catechism.

I want to thank Dick Gaffin. I am grateful for the interaction we have had via personal discussion and e-mail correspondence over the material presented in this work. My family and I have personal affection, respect, and regard for his work for our denomination, the Orthodox Presbterian Church (OPC). Some of my conclusions are different than Dr. Gaffin's on this subject, but there is no doubt, we are brothers, and I look forward to further interaction in the future. In the end, I hope this work brings much needed light, rather than heat, to the present discussions over union and justification in the North American Reformed ecclesiastical context.

I also want to thank Herman Selderhuis for reading my manuscript and enthusiastically offering to publish it in Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht's Reformation 500 series. Much thanks is also due to Christoph Spill, Tina Hoffmann, and the staff at V & R in seeing the book through the publication process.

Thanks must go to my wife, Anneke, and my two sons, Val and Rob. My beloved family, thank you for your love, encouragement, and sacrifice. Your constant support and love has sustained me throughout the process of writing this book. Thank you for putting up with me when I "zone out" and seem to be in a far away place thinking about sixteenth and seventeenth-century history.

I remember the first time I met David VanDrunen and Bryan Estelle. We were at the General Assembly for the OPC at Dordt College and I recall when they asked me if I wanted to join them for dinner at that out-of-the-way steak house. I later excitedly called my wife and told her that two characters from WSC wanted to take me out to dinner. I walked away from that meal feeling as if I had just made two good friends. I believe the last nine years has proven me correct. I am thankful for their friendship, support, and the love of Christ they have shown my family and me. They both challenge me to be a better minister—their scholarship is first-rate, their love for Christ's church is exemplary, and their service to his church is indefatigable. Therefore, I dedicate this book to you, Dave and Bryan.

J. V. Fesko February, 2012

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ISBN Print: 9783525570227 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647570228

1. State of the question

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Luther and union with Christ

Over the centuries theological historians have mined droves of dusty volumes in search of new discoveries. They have returned to heavily trodden ground hoping to unearth an overlooked element of a theologian's thought or a hidden doctrine. One can characterize the recent upsurge in historical studies on Martin Luther (1483–1546) and the doctrine of union with Christ in this way. Though thoroughly mined over the centuries, studies originating out of the University of Helsinki have emerged claiming that Luther's doctrine of union with Christ has been eclipsed by later Lutheranism and its infatuation with legal and forensic categories and the doctrine of justification. Luther's doctrine of union with Christ, it has been argued, is not only a broader more encompassing model of soteriology, but also a potential ecumenical bridge between the Lutheran and Eastern Orthodox communions.[1]

1.1.2 Calvin and union with Christ

What is good for the goose is good for the gander, or so the old cliché goes. And so it should come as no surprise that a similar, though perhaps a little more subdued, trend has emerged in the field of Calvin studies. The study of John Calvin (1509–64), the great Genevan Protestant reformer, is no longer dominated by the older studies claiming that Calvin's doctrine was driven by a *Centraldogma*, one theological principle from which his entire system of

[1] See Carl E. Braaten / Robert W. Jenson, ed., *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Tuomo Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005); Paul Louis Metzger, "Mystical Union with Christ: An Alternative to Blood Transfusions and Legal Fictions," *WTJ* 65/2 (2003): 201–14; Mark Seifrid, "Paul, Luther, and Justification in Gal 2:15–21," *WTJ* 65/2 (2003): 215–30; Carl R. Trueman, "Is the Finnish Line a New Beginning? A Critical Assessment of the Reading of Luther Offered by the Helsinki Circle," *WTJ* 65/2 (2003): 231–44; Robert W. Jenson, "Response to Seifrid, Trueman, and Metzger on Finnish Luther Research," *WTJ* 65/2 (2003): 245–50.

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thought could be deduced, in this case, the doctrine of predestination.[2] With the paradigm shift in Reformation studies more broadly, and Calvin studies more narrowly, brought about by the work of Heiko Oberman (1930–2001), David Steinmetz, Richard A. Muller, and others, historians have been driven back to the primary sources. A genuine effort to understand the Reformation (1517–65) in light of its theological and historical connections to the Middle Ages (600–1450) and the subsequent development in the post-Reformation periods of Early (1565–1630 / 40), High (1630 / 40–1700), and Late Orthodoxy (1700–90) has been undertaken. Nevertheless, even with studies by those such as Muller's *Christ and the Decree*, which demonstrated the errors of the *Centraldogma* theory, there has still been an attempt to identify the center or key of Calvin's theology.[3]

1.2 Calvin and the centrality of union with Christ

1.2.1 Karl Barth

Like the Finnish school's interpretation of Luther and union with Christ, a number of scholars over the last twenty five years or so have made similar attempts to identify union with Christ as the key or organizing principle of Calvin's theology, which is in contrast to those who have identified its importance but have not made it the architectonic key to Calvin's theology.[4] Karl Barth (1886–1968), for example, explains that according to Calvin, there are two aspects to union with Christ: sanctification (*regeneratio*) and justification (*gratuitat iustitiae acceptio*). But he goes on to note, "Calvin did not draw out the consequences of this twofold meaning of *unio*, and he obviously did not

[2] Commonly cited examples of this literature include Alexander Schweizer, "Die Syntese des Determinismus und der Freiheit in der reformierten Dogmatick. Zur Vertheideigung gegen Ebrard," *Theologishe Jahrbücher* 8 (1849): 153–209; Hans Emil Weber, *Reformation, Orthodoxie und Rationalismus*, 2 vol. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966); Heinrich Heppe, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformirten Kirche Deutschlands, Schriften zur reformirten Theologie*, Band I (Elberfeld: Friederichs, 1860); idem, *Reformed Dogmatics Set Out and Illustrated from the Sources,* ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1950), esp. 150–89. For a more expansive bibliography and interaction with these sources, see Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin:Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 63–80, 206–208 nn. 1–14.

[3] Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986).

[4] Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (1956; Cambridge: James Clark, 2002), 120–39; François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (1953; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 233–63.

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perceive its central significance."[5] He explains that by the definitive 1559 edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin made real advances in making union with Christ the common denominator in the application of redemption. Barth argues that when Calvin treats *de modo percipiendae gratiae* in book three, there are numerous appeals to union with Christ. But he also states, "Yet we cannot really say that the totality is projected and worked out in the light of it." In book three, Barth believes that Calvin unpacks the basic significance of union but again stipulates: "Yet we are then astonished to find that it is not exploited very differently in what follows, but for long stretches is concealed again by lengthy deliberations of an earlier origin and resting on a very different basis."[6] One suspects that Barth's point is, due to the ad hoc nature of the compilation of the *Institutes*, Calvin's editing was driven by doctrinal exigencies rather than a desire to write in such a manner as to have union with Christ permeate the whole of his work, not simply book three.

1.2.2 Charles Partee

On the other hand, while some have been circumspect about claims concerning the centrality of union for Calvin, others claim that union with Christ is *the* key to his theology. Charles Partee claims that union with Christ does not answer every mystery in Calvin's thought, "but union with Christ is one master key that opens many doors which have been closed for a long time."[7] Partee carefully parses what he means when he states that union with Christ is central, not as "*the* central dogma based on the older philosophic view of 'essence,' but as *a* central doctrine around which other doctrines in fact cluster based on the newer (Wittgensteinian) conceptualization of 'family resemblances.'"[8] Partee identifies a number of implications that arise not only for a clearer understanding of Calvin's theology but also for comprehending the nature of the Reformed tradition.

Concerning the nature of the Reformed tradition, Partee argues that other theologians contributed its development but that Calvin is still "the greatest systematic thinker among them" and the *Institutes* is "a single text to study and by which every exposition can be judged."[9] And for this reason, Partee explains:

[5] CD, IV/3.2:552.
[6] CD, IV/3.2: 552–53.
[7] Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville: WJK, 2008), xvi.
[8] Partee, *Theology of Calvin*, xvi n. 18.
[9] Partee, *Theology of Calvin*, 3–4.

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"So powerful was his influence that the movement," the Reformed tradition, "is often called by his name".[10] To substantiate this claim Partee relies upon, among others, the earlier opinions of Philip Schaff (1819–93), who believed that Calvin was the greatest theologian among the Reformers and one of the foremost leaders in all of Christian history.[11] However, Partee is willing to grant a sociological but not theological connection between Calvin and the rest of the Reformed tradition. Partee believes that the later Reformed tradition, unlike Calvin, had a "confident spirit" and "represented diminished theological insight but enhanced logical rigor".[12] He claims that later Reformed theologians imitated each other more than they did Calvin.[13] Later Reformed theologians, for example, extended the doctrine of the covenant in legal directions, which obscured the role of union with Christ in their theology.[14] Given these divergences (logical rigor vs. biblical fidelity, and legal vs. relational), Partee insists that Reformed Orthodoxy represents a serious distortion of Calvin's theology.[15] Partee argues: "To put the point briefly and sharply, Calvin is not a Calvinist because union with Christ is at the heart of his theology—and not theirs."[16] Partee places Calvin at the foundation of the tradition and then posits the sharpest antithesis with subsequent Reformed theologians precisely over the doctrine of union with Christ.

1.2.3 Julie Canlis

Other historians have found an ecumenical bridge for dialog between the Reformed and Eastern Orthodox churches because of the supposed parallels between Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ and the doctrine of theosis.[17]

---

[10] Partee, *Theology of Calvin*, xii.

[11] Philip Schaff, "Calvin's Life and Labors," *Presbyterian Quarterly and Princeton Review* 4 (1875): 254–72, esp. 255–56; Partee, *Theology of Calvin*, xii-xiii.

[12] Partee, *Theology of Calvin*, 14.

[13] Partee, *Theology of Calvin*, 14 n. 46.

[14] Partee, *Theology of Calvin*, 19 n. 65.

[15] Partee, *Theology of Calvin*, 26, 31.

[16] Partee, *Theology of Calvin*, 27.

[17] See Brian G. Armstrong, "*Duplex Cognitio Dei*, Or? The Problem and Relation of Structure, Form, and Purpose in Calvin's Theology," in *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.*, ed. Elise Anne McKee / Brian G. Armstrong (Lousiville: WJK, 1989): 135–53; D. Willis-Watkins, "The Unio Mystica and the Assurance of Faith According to Calvin," in *Calvin Erbe und Auftrag: FS für Wilhelm Heinrich Neuser zum 65 Geburstag*, ed. Willem van't Spijker (Kampen: Kok, 1991): 77–84; Charles Partee, "Calvin's Central Dogma Again," *SCJ* 18/2 (1987): 191–99; Carl Mosser, "The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification," *SJT* 55/1 (2002): 36–57.

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For example, a recent study by Julie Canlis argues that for Calvin, union with Christ was Calvin's central concern, not the doctrine of justification by faith. Calvin's followers, on the other hand, exchanged Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ for a chronological *ordo salutis*, one in which union with Christ is dependent upon a sequence of steps in the application of redemption, unlike Calvin who grounded all of soteriology in union with Christ.[18] Like the claims of the Finnish school that pits Luther's doctrine of union against later Lutheranism's forensic justification, Canlis argues: "Unfortunately, Calvin's focus on salvation *extra nos* has primarily come to mark the Protestant tradition, rather than his equally warm and vibrant theology of participation."[19] One to whom Canlis appeals in her reading of Calvin is Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., as one who represents a "re-appropriation of union over against a traditional *ordo salutis*".[20]

1.3 The Gaffin-school on Calvin and union

1.3.1 Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.

Gaffin has argued over the years to one degree or another that the traditional *ordo salutis* needs to be reconfigured along redemptive-historical or biblical-theological lines.[21] Canlis has noted this and has expressed her approbation of Gaffin's conclusions that Calvin's understanding of the doctrine of adoption is founded upon a *historia* rather than an *ordo salutis* model.[22] Gaffin has argued in a number of different places that the central feature of Calvin's soteriology is not justification by faith, as it is commonly argued, but union with Christ. Gaffin argues that union with Christ is foundational, the source from which the *duplex gratia* of justification and sanctification flow.[23] Gaffin explains that sanctification flows from union; conversely, Gaffin argues that Calvin would not say that sanctification is caused by justification. Justification is not the source or

[18] Julie Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander and Participation in God," *IJST* 6/2 (2004): 172–73.

[19] Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander, and Participation," 176.

[20] Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander, and Participation," 173 n. 13. Canlis appeals to Gaffin's published doctoral dissertation, *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1987).

[21] Gaffin has demurred over the idea that there is an interpretive school attributable to his reading of Calvin (Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "A Response to John Fesko's Review," *Ordained Servant* 18 [2009]: 106–07). However, others such as William Evans, one of Gaffin's students, credits him with such a role (William B. Evans, "Déjà vu All Over Again? The Contempoorary Reformed Soteriological Controversy in Historical Perspective," *WTJ* 72 [2010]: 138–41).

[22] Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander, and Participation," 183 n. 55.

[23] Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. "Justification and Union with Christ," in *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes: Essays and Analysis*, ed. David W. Hall / Peter A. Lillback (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2008), 253.

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ISBN Print: 9783525570227 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647570228

cause of sanctification, rather union with Christ is.[24] Elsewhere Gaffin explains the implications of union with Christ vis-à-vis Calvin's understanding of the relationship between justification and sanctification.

He claims that for Calvin, there is no priority between justification or sanctification because both are simultaneously received through union with Christ. Gaffin expounds the superiority of Calvin's view with respect to the sixteenth century Roman Catholic view when he writes concerning the common charge of antinomianism:

> Calvin destroys Rome's charge by showing that faith, in its Protestant understanding, entails a disposition to holiness without particular reference to justification, a concern for godliness that is not be understood only as a consequence of justification. Calvin proceeds as he does, and is *free* to do so, because for him the relative 'ordo' or priority of justification and sanctification is indifferent theologically. Rather, what has controlling soteriological importance is the priority to both (spiritual, 'existential,' faith-) union with Christ.[25]

Gaffin's argument boils down to this: union with Christ is the source from which flow two distinct but un-prioritized benefits: justification and sanctification. In comparison with later Reformed expressions with the *ordo salutis*, Gaffin argues: "This, in a nutshell, is Calvin's *ordo salutis*: union with Christ by (Spirit-worked) faith."[26] All of the benefits of redemption come in union.

Gaffin's overall intent is not only to show the dominant position of union with Christ in Calvin's theology, but also to contrast it with Lutheran expressions. Gaffin contends that in contrast to Calvin's view, and more broadly the Reformed view of justification and union with Christ, Lutherans argue that union with Christ is caused by, is a fruit of, or an effect of justification.[27] Gaffin makes this point more explicitly elsewhere when he writes:

> Here is a consideration that has sometimes been eclipsed in the Reformation tradition, where a tendency is observable to conceive of justification as a stand-alone imputative act, without particular reference to union with Christ. Unless I need to be corrected, this

[24] Gaffin, "Justification and Union with Christ," 256.

[25] Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Biblical Theology and the Westminster Standards," *WTJ* 65/2 (2003): 176–77.

[26] Gaffin, "Biblical Theology," 172.

[27] Gaffin, "Biblical Theology," 173. Gaffin appeals to two Lutheran works to support his contention: J. T. Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1934), 320, 381; F. A. O. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 4 vol. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1951–53), 2.410, 434 n. 65, 3.8 n. 9, 398; and Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 3rd rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg: 1961), 481–82.

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> is more the case in the Lutheran tradition, where, in the *ordo salutis*, union is regularly sequenced following justification, as a fruit of consequence of justification. The Reformed tradition has recognized better and more clearly that, as answer 69 of the *Westminster Larger Catechism* puts it, justification is among the realities that 'manifest' that union.[28]

More recently, however, Gaffin has refined his presentation of Calvin's understanding of union, justification, and sanctification.

Gaffin has recently clarified his understanding regarding the relationship between justification and sanctification by arguing that Calvin rightly believes that justification is logically prior to *progressive* sanctification, the on going process of conformity to the image of Christ. Gaffin writes, "Justification is prior to sanctification in the sense that the latter, as a life-long and imperfect process, follows the former as complete and perfect from the inception of the Christian life."[29] Gaffin then goes on to explain that in Calvin justification is simultaneous with *definitive* sanctification, a doctrine inherited from John Murray (1898–1975), but anticipated in Calvin.[30] So, then, one can say that Gaffin argues that Calvin believes that union with Christ is the more fundamental category with justification being logically prior only to *progressive* sanctification, not *definitive* sanctification. Gaffin's conclusions have been carried forth by others for both historical theological and dogmatic ends.

1.3.2 Craig Carpenter and Lane Tipton

In many respects the law of unintended consequences has arisen with regard to Gaffin's earlier reading of Calvin, as he has produced a school of historians and theologians who have come to similar conclusions. Craig Carpenter, a former student of Gaffin's, argues that the all-determinative question between Calvin and the Council of Trent's pronouncements on justification is not merely the question of infused versus imputed righteousness but how and when a person

[28] Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *By Faith, Not by Sight: Paul and the Order of Salvation* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 50. One should note that Gaffin reproduces the exact same footnote as found in "Biblical Theology," 173 n. 19 to support his claim here in the work cited in this footnote.

[29] Gaffin, "Response," 106–07; for the initial review that prompted Gaffin's response see, J. V. Fesko, "A Tale of Two Calvins: A Review Article," *Ordained Servant* 18 (2009): 98–104.

[30] Gaffin, "Response," 111–12; idem, "Calvin's Soteriology: The Structure of the Application of Redemption in Book Three of the *Institutes*," *Ordained Servant* 18 (2009): 72, 73–74; cf. John Murray, "Definitive Sanctification," in *Collected Writings*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 277–93.

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is united to Christ.[31] Like Gaffin, Carpenter argues: "Calvin's *ordo salutis* does not require the logical or temporal priority of a forensic act to a renovative act."[32] Making similar claims is another former student and now colleague of Gaffin's, Lane G. Tipton. Tipton argues that the Reformed view conceives of union with Christ and imputation as distinct but nonetheless simultaneous realities, whereas Lutherans hold that they are distinct and separable. Calvin, argues Tipton, offers "a classic formulation".[33] Like Gaffin, Tipton cites J. T. Mueller (fl. 1950s) and Francis Pieper (1852–1931) as examples with which to contrast the Reformed view and argues that the Lutheran view holds that justification causes union with Christ and sanctification.[34] However, in addition to the same Lutheran references to which Gaffin appeals, Tipton also draws upon the analysis of Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949). Tipton quotes a passage from Vos, who analyzes the differences between Reformed and Lutheran soteriologies.[35] Vos explains that by faith, Christians become members of the covenant of grace and receive all of the benefits that are in Christ; in other words, believers are in union with him. Vos claims that with the Lutheran view, "The Holy Spirit first generates faith in the sinner who temporarily still remains outside of union with Christ; then justification follows faith and only then, in turn, does the mystical union with the Mediator take place." By contrast, argues Vos, the Reformed view is the opposite: "One is first united to Christ, the Mediator of the covenant, by a mystical union, which finds its conscious recognition by faith. By this union with Christ all that is in Christ is simultaneously given."[36] Vos draws these conclusions from the work of Lutheran theologian Matthias Schneckenburger (1804–48) to substantiate his claim.[37]

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[31] Craig B. Carpenter, "A Question of Union with Christ? Calvin and Trent on Justification," *WTJ* 64/2 (2002): 369.

[32] Carpenter, "Calvin and Trent on Justification," 381. Carpenter indicates that Gaffin's reading of Calvin has informed his own reading and cites Gaffin's *Resurrection and Redemption* (127–43) for support ("Calvin and Trent on Justification," 378 n. 47). Gaffin, on the other hand, later cites Carpenter in support of his reading of Calvin ("Biblical Theology," 177 n. 26).

[33] Lane G. Tipton, "Union with Christ and Justification," in *Justified in Christ: God's Plan for Us In Justification*, ed. K. Scott Oliphint (Fearn: Mentor, 2007), 39.

[34] Tipton, "Union with Christ," 42–43.

[35] Tipton, "Union with Christ and Justification," 44.

[36] Geerhardus Vos, "The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1980), 256.

[37] Schneckenburger writes that for Lutherans, "Faith is certainly the subjective means of union with Christ, but is not itself already the realization of this union. That it is a work of the Holy Spirit does not yet make its subjective laying hold of Christ that possessing of Christ by which mystical union takes place . . . This real union, however, occurs by the divine act of justification . . . by which Christ himself, the personal, divine-human Redeemer, is implanted in me as a real life-principle. This union with

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1.3.3 Mark A. Garcia

Carpenter and Tipton are not alone in their claims, as two additional former students of Gaffin, Mark A. Garcia and William B. Evans have offered their own larger contributions to the ongoing discussion with published versions of their doctoral dissertations. Garcia's dissertation focuses upon Calvin and coordinates the *duplex gratia* with the doctrine of union with Christ. Like Gaffin, Garcia argues that for Calvin, the foundation for his understanding of the *duplex gratia* is union with Christ.[38] Unlike Gaffin, however, Garcia makes a greater effort to situate Calvin in his historical context. Garcia compares Calvin's views with three key Lutheran theologians, Luther, Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560), and Andreas Osiander (1498–1552), though Luther and Melanchthon appear as supporting cast, as the bulk of Garcia's analysis focuses upon Calvin's debate with Osiander. The conclusions to Garcia's study can be summarized as follows. First, Garcia rejects the troubled *Centraldogma* theory but nonetheless argues that union with Christ is singularly determinative for Calvin's soteriology.[39] Second, he believes that significant differences lie between the Lutheran and Reformed camps on justification and union with Christ because Lutherans are more willing to equate justification with salvation, whereas Calvin sees salvation as union with Christ, which is the broader all-encompassing reality, one that embraces both the forensic and renovative dimensions of redemption.[40] Third, Garcia argues that Lutheranism views justification as the source of sanctification and good works. For example, in his analysis of Melanchthon's views, he writes: "Ultimately, this necessity is based upon a model which regards imputation or justification as the *source* of sanctification, understood in terms of cause and effect."[41] Garcia also contends: "By attributing a generative quality to justification (justification produces sanctification), such a schema compromises the

Christ, which takes place by justification and which includes regeneration unto adoption as a child of God, is something much more sublime than that other, purely subjective moral union of faith. . . It must also be kept in view that the work of the Holy Spirit by which justifying faith is worked in the contrite heart, is not at the same time a work of Christ himself, that, on the contrary, Christ is poised purely as an object before this faith produced by the Holy Spirit" (Matthias Schneckenburger, *Vergleichende Darstellung des Luterhischen und Reformirten Legrbegriffs*, vol. 1 [Stuttgart: 1855], 203–04).

[38] Mark A. Garcia, *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin's Theology*. Studies in Christian History and Thought (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 2–3.

[39] Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 18.

[40] Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 126–27, 241.

[41] Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 104 n. 41.

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strictly forensic, purely declarative notion of justification that is the lifeblood of Melanchthon's (and the classical Lutheran) gospel."[42]

Fourth, hence the common equation of the statements, "Justification is the article upon which the church stands or falls," commonly attributed to Luther, with Calvin's famous, "Justification is the hinge upon which all religion turns," is incorrect. Luther and Calvin are saying very different things, according to Garcia.[43] Fifth, and lastly, Garcia believes that Calvin's views became normative for the Reformed tradition as a whole: "Calvin is not exhaustive of Reformed theology, not even in its sixteenth-century expression. Other important Reformed thinkers from the period must be read and studied with great care." Nevertheless, Garica insists: "Still, as his place in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed thought certainly suggests, Calvin did function as the principal theologian and systematizer of the tradition in its infancy, often providing the necessary sophistication in theological form and structure."[44] So while Calvin is not the prescriptive theologian of the Reformed tradition, he is nevertheless one who is chiefly responsible for the shape and substance of its theology. The intended message is that Calvin's understanding of the *duplex gratia* and union with Christ is somewhat normative for the tradition.

1.3.4 William B. Evans

Evans makes many similar points as Garcia in his own full-length study; however, Evans casts a broader net. Garcia focuses primarily upon Calvin whereas Evans begins with Calvin and then covers Reformed Orthodoxy, New England theologians such as Jonathan Edwards (1703–58), Samuel Hopkins (1721–1803), and Timothy Dwight (1752–1817), Mercersburg theologian John W. Nevin (183–86), Old Princeton theologians Charles Hodge (1797–1878) and A. A.

[42] Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 105. Garcia makes this claim several times in his study (*Life in Christ*, 264) but also goes as far as to claim that Charles Hodge's (1797–1878) doctrine of justification is Lutheran rather than Reformed: "In later Reformed theology, a more Melanchthonian (i.e., classical Lutheran) pattern of argument appears to have become standard, resulting in the frequent exposition of justification and good works as cause and effect. See, e.g., what in light of our finds is a rather remarkable statement by Charles Hodge . . . 'There as never been any real difference of opinion among Protestants . . . It was universally admitted that good works are not necessary to our justification; that they are consequences and indirectly the fruits of justification, and therefore cannot be its ground'" (*Life in Christ*, 267 n. 24).

[43] *Life in Christ*, 260–61. It should be noted, though the statement is often attributed to Luther, Alister McGrath has traced the statement back to Johannes Alsted (1588–1638), a Reformed theologian (see Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* [Cambridge: CUP, 2005], vii n. 1).

[44] Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 259–60.

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Hodge (1823–86), and concludes his study with a survey of Louis Berkhof (1873–1957). Unlike Garcia, Evans notes a greater degree of diversity on the issue of the Reformed tradition's understanding of union with Christ as it relates to the *duplex gratia* of Calvin. Evans argues that though Reformed theologians have generally placed applied soteriology under the overarching rubric of union with Christ, there are "fundamental and pervasive disagreements among prominent representatives of the tradition regarding the substance and implications of the theme."[45]

Evans starts with Calvin and argues that both he and Luther believed that justification had a certain priority. Unlike Garcia, Evans believes that Luther's article upon which the church stands or falls is the same as Calvin's hinge upon which all religion turns.[46] However, Evans contends that the more fundamental controlling factor is union with Christ. He believes for Calvin that union with Christ has causal priority: both justification and sanctification come through union and is the instrumental basis for both justification and sanctification, the two inseparable but distinct blessings. Like Garcia, he explains that by having this structure, Calvin avoids the problem of making sanctification depend upon justification or of making sanctification a mere response to justification.[47] The problem, as Evans sees it, is that after Calvin, his formulation all but perished. Reformed Orthodox theologians, intent on guarding the priority of justification, developed the *ordo salutis* where justification and sanctification were related in a logical sequence and union with Christ was modified to accommodate this *ordo*. In fact, later theologians resorted to creating two types of union: federal and spiritual.[48] Among the other declensions in Reformed orthodoxy was the employment of the medieval theological term *habitus*. Evans appeals to Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562) and Jerome Zanchi (1516–90) as examples of this trend.[49] However, in addition to the perceived declension in Reformed Orthodoxy, Evans also sees the same differences between Calvin and Lutheranism on the relationship between union and justification that other Gaffin students find, namely that justification causes union.[50]

Evans closes his study by expressing the dogmatic relevance for his historical

[45] William B. Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*. Studies in Christian History and Thought (Eugene: Paternoster and Wipf & Stock, 2008), 2.

[46] Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, 30.

[47] Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, 38–39.

[48] Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, 39–40.

[49] Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, 49.

[50] Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, 55 n. 43. One should note that Evans cites two of the same sources as Gaffin, Schmid's *Doctrinal Theology of the Lutheran Church*, and Vos, "The Reformed Doctrine of the Covenants" 255–57.

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theological research. First, he expresses his agreement with Gaffin's understanding of union with Christ. Second, he calls for a return to the theology of Calvin in contrast to that of Reformed Orthodoxy. Evans states the "soteriology of Calvin offers a significant and positive alternative to the bipolar approach of *ordo salutis* federal theology."[51] He goes on to write:

> A decisive break with the *ordo salutis* thinking that has vitiated Reformed thought since the early seventeenth-century is clearly implied here. This historical record shows that as long as justification is viewed as taking place at a specific point in time . . . it is nearly impossible to find a meaningful relationship between justification and the economy of faith . . . Only when the traditional *ordo salutis* is eschewed can a truly forensic and synthetic doctrine of justification that is at the same time relational and dynamic be articulated.[52]

Though Evans is aware of earlier studies that pit Calvin and against the Calvinists, and characterizes such as "Calvin is sometimes viewed as Paradise, with Reformed scholastic orthodoxy as the Fall," it is difficult to see how he does not arrive at this precise conclusion.[53] For Evans, Calvin is good and Reformed Orthodoxy is bad; Calvin is for union and Reformed Orthodoxy is for the *ordo*.

1.4 Analysis of the recent claims

1.4.1 Calvin as the norm

Looking at the present state of affairs, it appears as though there has been a recent paradigm shift in Calvin studies, a shift from acknowledging the importance of union with Christ in Calvin's theology to one where it is viewed as the architectonic principle either of his theology or soteriology. This shift has not gone unnoticed.[54] There are a number of seemingly problematic conclusions that have

[51] Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, 262.

[52] Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, 264–65.

[53] Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, 3.

[54] See Cornelis Venema, *Accepted and Renewed in Christ: The "Twofold Grace of God" and the Interpretation of Calvin's Theology* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 136 n. 9; Thomas L. Wenger, "The New Perspective on Calvin: Responding to Recent Calvin Interpretations," *JETS* 50/2 (2007): 311–28; idem, "Theological Spectacles and a Paradigm of Centrality: a Reply to Marcus Johnson," *JETS* 51/3 (2008): 559–72; J. Todd Billings, "United to God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification," *HTR* 98/3 (2005): 315–34; idem, "John Calvin's Soteriology: on the Multifacted 'Sum' of the Gospel," *IJST* 11/4 (2009): 428–47.

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been drawn. First, surely union with Christ is an important and even fundamental element of Calvin's soteriology. Recent studies have rightly affirmed such a conclusion.[55] However, to remove the priority of justification by faith is historically problematic. Second, despite the paradigm shift in Reformation studies over the last twenty-five years, it seems as though Calvin is still held as the normative theologian of the Reformed tradition. Gaffin, for example, claims that Calvin's treatment of justification in book three is the matured expression from the "first generation of the Protestant Reformation". He goes on to write: "One does not overstate to say that it has few peers and arguably is unsurpassed among numerous other excellent treatments that have appeared subsequently, particularly in the tradition of confessional Reformed orthodoxy, for which Calvin has proven to be such an important fountainhead figure."[56] Gaffin never identifies any of the other treatments that are excellent but fall short of Calvin's mark.

All of the aforementioned estimations of Calvin's influence and place in the Reformed tradition are part of an ever-growing contemporary mythology. For example, some scholars have elevated Calvin to the status of icon. Karl Barth, for example, contends:

> The historical Calvin is not a fixed, finished, dead entity imprisoned in the years 1509–1564 and unable to leave them. The 59 volumes of the Corpus Reformatorum that contain his works are not secretly his coffin. In Calvin studies we cannot keep Calvin to what he once said as though he had nothing more or new to say today! His work did not simply occur then; it still occurs today. In what he once said he still speaks, saying what he once wanted to say. We may not speak merely of Calvin's historical impact; Calvin himself has an ongoing history into which we insert ourselves when we deal with him.[57]

Calvin is something to be experienced, not simply studied. On a similar note, recent Calvin biographer Bruce Gordon begins his work by writing: "John Calvin was the greatest Protestant reformer of the sixteenth century, brilliant, visionary and iconic."[58] Claims that elevate Calvin to this status originate in the twentieth and twenty-first century, not from Calvin's own sixteenth century. For this, and a number of other reasons, these claims are problematic.

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[55] See, e.g., J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers In Union with Christ* (Oxford: OUP, 2007); Randal Zachman, "*Communio cum Christo*" in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 365–71.

[56] Gaffin, "Justification and Union with Christ," 248.

[57] Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (1922; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 6–7.

[58] Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2009), vii.

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For all of the claims of dissonance between the Reformed and Lutheran traditions on justification and union with Christ it seems that one of the major differences between the two communions has only been formally acknowledged. Namely, Luther has fountainhead status for the Lutheran tradition, but Calvin does not have such a status in the Reformed tradition. Unlike Calvin, Luther's writings are a part of the Lutheran confessional corpus. Moreover, confessions such as the Formula Concord (1577) were written to establish who in the Lutheran tradition was true to Luther's theology, the Osiandrians, Phillipists, or Gnesio-Lutherans. In fact, the Formula Concord endorses Luther's 1535 commentary on Galatians as the definitive Lutheran expression on the doctrine of justification. By contrast, the Reformed tradition has not been historically defined by appeal to any one individual theologian but to confessional documents such as the Helvetic Confessions (1536, 1562), the Consensus Tigurinus (1548), the Belgic Confession (1561), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), the Canons of Dort (1618–19), and the Westminster Standards (1647).[59] As Carl Trueman argues: "Scholarship cannot treat Reformed theology as a discrete entity that flows from the writings of one individual, John Calvin. It represents a movement which is pluriform in origin and eclectic with regard to its sources."[60] Such an observation is not based upon the like or dislike of Calvin, as some scholars have suggested.[61] Rather, such a conclusion is based upon documentary evidence from the sixteenth century. In Calvin's own day, he was certainly esteemed as an important theological leader, and sometimes as *primus inter pares*, but for the most part, he was simply one among a host of Reformed theologians.[62]

1.4.2 The absence of primary sources

Another problematic element of the arguments presented above is that the bulk of the claims of difference between the Reformed and Lutheran understandings of justification and union are built upon a thin veneer of primary sources, though Garcia's study is an exception, as he investigates both Luther

[59] Carl R. Trueman, "Calvin and Calvinism," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed., Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 225.

[60] Trueman, "Calvin and Calvinism," 239.

[61] Partee, *Theology of Calvin*, 26–27.

[62] Richard A. Muller, "Demoting Calvin: The Issue of Calvin and the Reformed Tradition," in *John Calvin, Myth and Reality: Images and Impact of Geneva's Reformer*. Papers of the 2009 Calvin Studies Society Colloquium, ed. Amy Nelson Burnett (Eugene: Cascade, 2011), 9.

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and Melanchthon. Reformed scholars have noted, for example, the problematic nature of Heinrich Heppe's (1820–79) *Reformed Dogmatics*. Though it has a wealth of primary source material, the arrangement of topics and often-fragmentary quotations have led readers to false conclusions. The same is likely true of Schmid's *Doctrinal Theology of the Lutheran Church*, the source for more than one of the aforementioned authors regarding the Lutheran view of justification and union with Christ. Moreover, no matter how prominent a place Pieper, Mueller, and Schneckenburger, may hold in the Lutheran tradition, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Lutherans do not qualify as sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Lutherans.

1.4.3 Whig Historiography

What much of the above-surveyed scholarship represents is, to one degree or another, a "Whig" interpretation of history. Herbert Butterfield (1900–79), historian and philosopher of history, describes Whig history as the effort to study the past with constant reference to the present.[63] Butterfield argues that by constantly evaluating the past in terms of the present, contemporary ideas are imposed upon history and the past merges with the present so that historians can show one continuous line of progress and growth.[64] This type of methodology is evident, for example, in Barth's characterization of Calvin as something to be experienced, something into which we insert ourselves. A milder form of this appears in Gaffin's imposition of twentieth-century theological categories upon Calvin's theology, such as Murray's doctrine of definitive sanctification. Garcia and Tipton evaluate Calvin's circumstances in terms of later denominational developments between Lutherans and the Reformed, lines that were not so decisively drawn in the sixteenth century. And Evans shows his hand at the end of his study when he confesses, "There is a need to reorient and revision Reformed soteriology in a way that avoids these problems and aporias, and we may at this point ask what such a reformulation might look like." What is Evan's solution? "We have already suggested that the three-element soteriology of Calvin offers a significant and positive alternative to the bipolar approach of *ordo salutis* federal theology."[65]

[63] Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1965), 11.

[64] Butterfield, *Whig Interpretation of History*, 12.

[65] Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, 262.

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1.4.4 Charting a way forward

The remedy for these aforementioned approaches is an examination that, at least for the sake of discussion, largely ignores Calvin. Rather than investigating Calvin and then trying to impose the results upon the rest of the tradition as normative, or contrasting his views with the tradition to demonstrate a supposed declension or similarity, one must investigate the rest of the tradition. In order to have a better understanding of the early modern Reformed understanding of union with Christ and justification, one must investigate a broad cross-section of contributors and seek to understand the presented theology on its own terms.[66] One must seek to connect the Reformed understanding of union with Christ to earlier medieval iterations of the doctrine. The investigation must also transgress contemporary denominational boundaries, such as the Lutheran-Reformed divide, and recognize that, though there were issues that separated the different camps, that they often embraced and employed one another's thought on a host of subjects including union with Christ and justification.[67] In other words, one cannot, as Partee suggests, make Calvin's *Institutes*, book 3, the sole arbiter of what qualifies as the Reformed understanding of union with Christ.[68] Instead, as Quentin Skinner (1940 -) has suggested, one must seek to create a contextual reading of an idea.[69] In other words, by conducting a broad investigation of the doctrines of union with Christ and justification, surveying a number of key theologians from the period, both within and without the Reformed tradition, one can establish what the accepted norms were for these doctrines during the early modern period. From such a survey the categories, terms, biblical texts, exegesis, and sources of the period rise to surface rather than imposed contemporary categories that end up distorting our understanding of the historical past. When historians look down the well of history, they should double-check their vision if they see their own reflection in the water.

[66] Richard A. Muller, "Reflections on Persistent Whiggism and Its Antidotes in the Study of Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Intellectual History," in *Seeing Thing Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion*, ed. Alister Chapman / John Coffey / Brad S. Gregory (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 135.

[67] Muller, "Reflections on Persistent Whiggism," 145.

[68] Partee, *Theology of Calvin*, 4.

[69] Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8/1 (1969): 40.

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1.5 Argument of the present essay

In this survey of the early modern Reformed tradition on union with Christ and justification, there are several chief goals that will be accomplished. First, this study will show that Calvin's formulations on union with Christ and justification are in no way normative for the tradition. Calvin is one star in a much bigger galaxy. There is no one theological figure that serves as the lodestar as in the Lutheran tradition. For far too long studies have focused almost exclusively on Calvin with little to no comparison offered with other theologians of the period. Hence, this study offers a portrait of the broader tradition, which has the benefit of painting the bigger picture for those who wish to reevaluate Calvin's views in the light of his historical-theological context.

Second, this study will demonstrate that there is no one doctrine of union with Christ and no one *ordo salutis*. There are a number of different permutations and combinations that one can find in the tradition. Some argue that regeneration is a preparatory work of the Holy Spirit and that once a person accedes to union with Christ in faith, he is then united to Christ. Others argue that regeneration brings the believer into union with Christ. Some argue that justification has adoption annexed to it, while others claim that adoption has a distinct place in the *ordo salutis*. In a word, there is no one Reformed *ordo salutis*, but rather there are a number of different *ordos* that exist within the tradition. There are certainly shared general patterns but there are also many differences in the details.

Third, this study will show that according to the surveyed figures, to talk of union with Christ is to speak of the forest, and to talk of the *ordo salutis* is to speak of the trees. There are not two different entities, or two different unions as some argue, but they are one in the same—the forest is made up of the trees. The *ordo salutis* was not foisted upon Calvin's doctrine of union to preserve the forensic integrity of justification. Rather, every theologian (Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Arminian, or Reformed) has an *ordo salutis*. What becomes key in the unfolding of the tradition is how a theologian orders his understanding of redemption.

Fourth, related to the previous point, this study will validate the following claim: union with Christ has the double-benefit of justification and sanctification. But the hallmark of an early modern Reformed doctrine of union with Christ is according theological priority to justification over sanctification, or priority of the forensic over the renovative. Another way to say this is that justification is the legal basis of the believer's redemption. Or still yet, a person can say, "I am sanctified because I am justified." But he cannot say, "I am justified

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because I am sanctified." For a number of reasons that will surface throughout this study, Reformed theologians recognize that justification and sanctification are dual benefits of union with Christ, but they neither confuse nor separate them. The priority of justification over sanctification sets Reformed views over and against the patristic formulation of Augustine, the medieval views of Bernard, Aquinas, and Gerson, the view of Trent, or the Protestant views of Socinus, Arminius, or Baxter.

1.6 Plan of the present essay

1.6.1 Part I: Intellectual background

Part I will address the intellectual backdrop and context for four key issues that arise in the study: the metaphysics of justification, the history of the criticism of the *ordo salutis*, the history of the development of the *ordo salutis*, and the antecedent historical backdrop. Approaching two of these key subjects (metaphysics and the *ordo salutis*) synchronically rather than diachronically is advantageous as it clarifies issues foundational to the rest of the study. Chapter two, therefore explores the metaphysics of salvation. It has been claimed that employing causal language is the exclusive property of Lutheran theology. Chapter two will show that far from being unique to Lutheran theology, it was common to most sixteenth and seventeenth-century theology, Reformed, Lutheran, or Roman Catholic. This was not due to any specific type of understanding of soteriology but rather due to the dominance of the Aristotelian worldview during the period. Chapter three explores the history of the criticism of the *ordo salutis* and shows that much of it originates in secondary sources apart from a close examination of primary sources.

Chapter four then explores primary sources to explain that the *ordo salutis*, or as it was more commonly called, the *golden chain*, has been part and parcel of Reformed theology from the earliest days of the Reformation. Rather than a competing model of soteriology, the golden chain was simply a formalization of what Reformation theology had already understood. Far from being a chronological, temporal, or sequential administration of redemption, it is simply a way to prioritize logically the multifaceted nature of a holistic redemption. Chapter five then surveys the antecedent patristic and medieval history leading up to the Reformation with a survey of the views of Augustine (354–430), Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), Jean Gerson (1363–1429), and Johann von Staupitz (ca. 1460–1524). Covering these theolo-

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gians demonstrates that union with Christ was not a unique doctrine to Calvin or the Reformed tradition. Rather, it had been employed from the patristic period and throughout the Middle Ages. But what did change is how union with Christ relates to the doctrines of justification and sanctification. From Augustine through the Middle Ages, theologians did not prioritize justification over sanctification. Rather, justification hinged upon the sanctification of the believer. It is not until Staupitz that justification is given theological priority over sanctification.

1.6.2 Part II: Reformation (1517–65)

Part II treats a number of key figures from the Reformation (1517–65) that extends far beyond the city walls of Geneva, Switzerland. Regardless of whatever disdain some contemporary Reformed authors have for the Lutheran tradition, the plain truth of the matter is that Martin Luther was one of the foundational theologians of the Reformation. Luther wrote his mature and definitive commentary on Galatians in 1535, one year before Calvin published the first edition of his *Institutes*. While Calvin was still wet behind the ears, Luther was a seasoned theologian offering his mature thought on the relationship between union with Christ and justification. Chapter six, therefore, surveys the views of Luther.

Chapter seven treats the views of Melanchthon, who is something of a villain in the history of theology because he is supposedly responsible for injecting an imbalanced forensicism into the Protestant Reformation, an element that corrupted both Lutheran and Reformed theology. Nevertheless, Melanchthon does have a doctrine of union with Christ. Given his position as a key first-generation reformer, looking at his views is important for understanding his contribution to the Reformation. Chapter eight examines the views of Juan de Valdes (ca. 1509–41), one who articulated a Protestant view of union with Christ and justification as a result of reading the works of Luther and Melanchthon. Valdes hardly, if ever, figures in accounts of the Reformation, but he nevertheless was influential upon others, especially Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562). Chapter nine covers the position of Heinrich Bullinger (1504–75), a key but often neglected first-generation Reformer. Bullinger often stands between the looming peaks of Zwingli and Calvin, hidden in their shadows. However, Bullinger was quite influential upon the development of Reformed theology, particularly through his confession-writing labors. Bullinger was also personally involved in the training of Vermigli. Hence chapter ten will survey the views of Vermigli.

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1.6.3 Part III: Early Orthodoxy (1565–1630/40)

Part III turns to the period of Early Orthodoxy (1565–1630/40) to explore the views of four key figures that often go neglected in discussions about union with Christ: Girolamo Zanchi, Faustus Socinus (1539–1604) and the Racovian Catechism (1605), William Perkins (1558–1602), and Jacob Arminius (1560–1609). Zanchi was trained both by Bullinger and Calvin, and though never formally adopted, wrote a confession of faith that was supposed to supersede Bullinger's Second Helvetic Confession. Hence, chapter eleven explores Zanchi's views. Chapter twelve covers a much maligned but infrequently examined villain of post-Reformation Europe in Faustus Socinus. Socinus presents the historian with an interesting foil because not only does he completely reconstruct the doctrine of justification, but he too also has a doctrine of union with Christ. Moreover, Socinus' influence was significant through the Racovian Catechism, a document that spread throughout Europe. The chapter on Socinus also lays the groundwork for one of the last chapters in the study, as his name is invoked in the midst of one of the seventeenth-century's greatest theological debates over justification.

William Perkins is usually dismissed from discussions about union with Christ because he is famously known for his promotion of the *ordo salutis* in his *Golden Chaine*. Surely one who defends the *ordo* would not also hold to the doctrine of union with Christ, right? Yet, Heinrich Heppe (1820–79) characterizes Perkins as the theologian of union with Christ. Chapter thirteen, consequently, explores Perkins' formulations. Arminius is seldom if ever explored, but what might surprise some is that he too held a doctrine of union with Christ, and like Calvin, affirmed the *duplex gratia* of justification and sanctification. However, this does not mean that Arminius came to the same conclusions. Chapter fourteen on Arminius demonstrates that the affirmation of union with Christ means little, but what really matters is how the Dutchman explains the relationship between justification and sanctification. Like medieval views, Arminius believed that justification did not have priority over sanctification.

1.6.4 Part IV: High Orthodoxy (1630/40–1700)

Part IV examines the period of High Orthodoxy (1630/40–1700). Chapters fifteen and sixteen examine the views of John Owen (1616–83) and Richard Baxter (1615–91) respectively. Owen affirmed both the doctrine of union with Christ and its two key benefits of justification and sanctification. But in his

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theology Owen formalizes the relationships between predestination and the application of redemption through his use of the *pactum salutis*. What was formerly expressed in terms of "being predestined in Christ" among earlier Reformed theologians, Owen, along with other theologians of the period, more explicitly coordinated the doctrine of the covenant with his soteriology. In this way Owen gives priority to the forensic dimension of redemption. By contrast, Owen's sparring partner, Baxter, had a very different understanding of union with Christ and justification. Baxter believed that Owen's formulations were inherently antinomian because they made no place for the believer's good works. Baxter's formulation of union with Christ and justification, therefore, merits attention given its uniqueness among other expressions of the period.

Chapter seventeen examines the views of Francis Turretin (1623–87), a theologian who is perhaps the poster-child for Reformed Scholasticism. His views are important because in many ways, his formulations are a garden-variety sample of what was common orthodoxy of the late seventeenth century. The last chapter, chapter eighteen, covers the views of Herman Witsius (1636–1708), who is perhaps one of the best-known scholastic and covenantal Reformed theologians of the seventeenth century. But this chapter examines his views through the lens of a little-known but massive debate in seventeenth-century England on the doctrine of justification.

1.7 Conclusion

In many ways, as many figures as this study covers, there are still many gaps to be filled. Nevertheless, this study seeks to create a sketch of the early modern Reformed tradition on union with Christ and justification. The only way that this can be done is to move beyond Calvin and explore what the other luminaries of the tradition have offered. By casting a wide net, one can have a broader understanding of the Reformed tradition as well as benefit from a multi-generational, geographical, and historical reflection upon these two key subjects.

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2. Metaphysics and Justification

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Garcia's claims

In recent years there has been a wave of new research on the doctrine of union with Christ as it occurs in both Luther and Calvin.[1] In the last several years there have been studies published on the subject of Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ and its relationship with the *duplex gratia* of justification and sanctification.[2] In particular, the published doctoral dissertation of Mark Garcia covers Calvin's doctrine of union and at points makes a number of comparisons between Calvin's and Lutheran understandings of both union with Christ and especially the relationship between justification and sanctification.[3] Among Garcia's many conclusions is the claim that in the wake of the justification controversy surrounding Lutheran theologian Andreas Osiander, there was a decided break between Calvin and the subsequent Reformed tradition and the Lutheran tradition on the doctrine of justification.[4] Of particular consideration for this chapter is one of the key claims that Garcia makes regarding the differences between Lutheranism and Calvin. Garcia argues that, for Calvin, the *duplex gratia* of justification and sanctification is grounded in the more fundamental category of union with Christ and therefore justification cannot be accorded any sort of priority over sanctification. By contrast, he concludes that Lutheran theologians do not ground justification and sanctification in union, but rather instead place the two in a causal relationship: justification causes sanctification, or sanctification is the effect of justification.[5]

In one respect investigating the viability of such a claim would far exceed the scope of this study. So instead of exploring every single claim from Lutheran and

[1] See Chapter 1 for relevant literature.

[2] J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers In Union with Christ* (Oxford: OUP, 2007); William B. Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*. Studies in Christian History and Thought (Eugene: Paternoster and Wipf & Stock, 2008).

[3] Mark A. Garcia, *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin's Theology*. Studies in Christian History and Thought (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008).

[4] Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 251.

[5] Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 61ff, 104–05, 241, 260–61, 264, 267 n. 24.

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Reformed theologians on union with Christ, this chapter will focus upon the narrow question of the doctrine of justification and metaphysics in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed theology with particular attention to its relationship to sanctification and union with Christ. Now at first, raising the issue of metaphysics vis-à-vis the doctrine of justification may invoke cries not unlike Tertullian's (ca. 160–ca. 220), "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" After all, the Reformation was a recovery of the gospel, particularly Paul's doctrine of justification, and the Reformers' commitments to *sola Scriptura* would certainly preclude any talk of metaphysics, would it not? What of Luther and Calvin's brusque and blunt condemnations of philosophy? Simply stated, the Reformation never completely excised the use of philosophy in theology, not even Luther or Calvin.

2.1.2 Metaphysics defined

Metaphysics is perhaps a word that sends shivers down the spines of some biblically minded theologians, but in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century theology, the use of metaphysics was quite common.[6] Perhaps many fear metaphysics because in reality, they do not know what the word means. However, as Frederick Copleston (1907–94) explains, everyone in some sense is a metaphysician. An ordinary person who knows nothing of philosophy can place wood in an oven and toss a match upon it knowing that the wood is capable of undergoing change—the wood possesses potentiality. Or a person enters a room and finds a pie with a missing slice; she knows instinctively and by common sense that either someone made the pie that way or someone ate the slice of pie. In other words, there was a cause that can be traced back to explain the missing piece of pie, the effect. Copleston explains: "A metaphysician comes along and announces that finite things are metaphysically composed of act and potentiality and that every event has a cause or causes."[7] In other words, metaphysics abstractly considers everyday occurrences in an effort to understand various events and relationships, whether in terms of act and potentiality, cause and effect, or substance and accidents.[8] In this light, metaphysics is not necessarily speculative or rationalistic.

[6] One should note that this chapter employs a functional definition of the term. Scholarship has noted that there is no commonly settled definition (see Peter Simons, "Metaphysics," in *A Companion to Metaphysics*, ed. Jaegwon Kim / Ernest Sosa [Oxford: Blackwell, 1995], 310–12).

[7] Frederick Copleston, *Aquinas* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), 38–39.

[8] Copleston, *Aquinas*, 81.

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2.1.3 Thesis

In this vein, then, this chapter will demonstrate that causal language was common among Reformed theologians of the Reformation (1517–65) and Early Orthodox (1565–1630/40) periods. Cause and effect language is not the exclusive mark of Lutheran theology. However, beyond this, it is one thing to demonstrate that cause and effect language can be found in Reformed explanations of justification and sanctification and quite another to explain *why* such language occurs. Hence, going beyond mere observation, this chapter will offer some basic reasons as to why the language is commonly found among Reformed theologians as well as why it ceased to appear in later theological works. In order to prove the thesis of this chapter, that causal language appears in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed theology and is not a phenomenon exclusive to Lutheranism, we will first begin with a brief overview of the use of metaphysics in Calvin's doctrine of justification. Second, the chapter will survey a number of Reformed works from the Reformation through Early Orthodoxy to show the use of causal language in explanations of the relationship between justification and sanctification. Third and last, the chapter will offer a basic explanation as to why metaphysics was used in the explanation of doctrine and why it eventually vanished.

2.2 Metaphysics in Calvin's doctrine of justification

2.2.1 Fourfold causality

Over the years there have been a number of studies on Calvin's doctrine of justification, though few have focused exclusively upon the question of metaphysics. Metaphysics is especially relevant when Calvin expounds the relationship between good works and the believer's holiness and does so using Aristotelian fourfold causality. In a passage that dates back to the 1539 edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin explains that the efficient cause of obtaining eternal life is the mercy of the heavenly Father; the material cause is Christ and his obedience; the formal or instrumental cause is faith; and the final cause is both the demonstration of divine justice and the praise of God's goodness.[9] Calvin is not off upon a blind

[9] Calvin confuses the categories of formal and instrumental causes at this point because as Paul Helm notes, in Calvin's theology the formal cause would be election, or God's plan of redemption (see Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* [Oxford: OUP, 2004], 401).

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flight of philosophical fancy but demonstrates fourfold causality from Scripture. He explains that the final cause appears in Rom 3.23–24, the material cause in Rom 3.25, and the final cause in Rom 3.26.[10] Earlier in the *Institutes* in his refutation of Osiander, Calvin identifies faith as the "instrument for receiving righteousness" and distinguishes it from Christ "who is the material cause."[11]

Calvin's employment of fourfold causality is not restricted to explaining how faith in justification obtains salvation apart from works. Calvin employs the same metaphysical explanation in two other ways: (1) in relating the work of the trinity to the sinner's redemption; and (2) in explaining the place of works in salvation. First, in more general terms of Aristotelian causality, Calvin explains that the "highest cause or origin" of redemption is God's love; the "second and proximate cause" is faith in Christ.[12] He also explains in book three that the efficient cause of salvation is God's love, the material cause is the son's obedience, the instrumental cause is the Spirit's illumination (namely, faith) and the final cause is the glory of God.[13] Recall, Calvin is known as the great theologian of union with Christ. However, when it comes to specific details, he can dissect the various causes of salvation in order to distinguish the multifaceted elements that bear upon a person's salvation. How does one correlate the work of the trinity and the role of faith without confusing them, or confusing justification and sanctification, faith and works? The answer lies in Calvin's use of metaphysical distinctions.

2.2.2 Faith and works

Calvin explains the relationship between faith and works by again appealing to fourfold causality. After explaining the different roles of the trinity and the

[10] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, LCC vol. 20–21, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 3.14.17. Cf. Aristotle, *The Physics*, 2 vol. (1929; Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1970), 2.3, 7.

[11] Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.7: "quae instrumentum est duntaxat percipiendae iustitiae . . . Christo, qui materialis es causa" (OS 4.189). Calvin uses fourfold causality to explain Eph 1.5–8, where he identifies "the three causes of our salvation" as: Christ the material cause, the efficient cause is God, who has sent his Son, the formal cause is the preaching of the gospel, and he then goes on to mention the fourth, (the final cause) the praise of God's grace (see idem, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, & Colossians*, CNTC, ed. David Torrance / T. F. Torrance [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 126–28). "In hoc membro tres salutis nostrae causas exprimit" (idem, *Opera Exegetica*, vol. 16, ed. Helmut Feld [Geneva: Droz, 1992], 160–62).

[12] Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.17.2: "Videmus ut priorem locum teneat Dei dilectio, tanquam summa causa vel origo: sequatur fides in Christum, tanquam causa secunda et proprior" (OS 3.510).

[13] Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.14.21.

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place of faith, Calvin has at this point assigned no place for works in his causal scheme. Calvin then goes on to write:

> These do not prevent the Lord from embracing works as inferior causes. But how does this come about? Those whom the Lord has destined by his mercy for the inheritance of eternal life he leads into possession of it, according to his ordinary dispensation, by means of good works. What goes before in the order of dispensation he calls the cause of what comes after. In this way he sometimes derives eternal life from works, not intending it to be ascribed to them; but because he justifies those whom he has chosen in order at last to glorify them, he makes the prior grace [justification], which is a step to that which follows, as it were the cause. But whenever the true cause is to be assigned, he does not enjoin us to take refuge in works but keeps us solely to the contemplation of his mercy.[14]

Calvin is willing to assign good works the role of an inferior cause of salvation, but properly understood and within the context of his explanation it is ultimately a consequence of God's decision to save the sinner. But what is important to note is that Calvin calls justification a cause of good works. In a concluding thought Calvin closes the chapter by writing concerning causality: "In short, by these expressions sequence more than cause is denoted. For God, by heaping grace upon grace, from the former grace takes the cause for adding those to which follow that he may overlook nothing for the enrichment of his servants."[15] Calvin's use of metaphysical distinctions here not only shows how the various aspects of redemption relate to one another, but is the way he gives justification priority over sanctification.[16] At this point Calvin's use of metaphysics presents counter-evidence to Garcia's claim that causal language is the exclusive property of the Lutheran tradition.

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[14] Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.14.21: "Priorem gratiam, quae gradus est ad sequentem, causam quodammodo facit" (OS 4.239).

[15] Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.14.21: "Denique istis loquutionibus series magis notatur quam causa: quia Deus gratias gratis cumulando, ex prioribus causam sumit secundas adendi, nequid ad locupletandos servos suos omittat" (OS 4.239).

[16] In Garcia's analysis of this passage he argues that Calvin can use causation language, but that it can only be understood in the context of *replication*, the idea that believer's imitate or replicate the conduct of Christ through the power of the Spirit, a concept quite different from Thomas a'Kempis' *imitatio Christi*. Hence, causation language must be read in the context of *replication*: "Calvin regards what comes prior in God's appointed *ordo* as 'causing' what follows, thus making it possible to insist that Christian obedience, as it comes before the reception of the inheritance of eternal life, yields this reward. Hence, in Calvin's replication principle, the sequential contextualizes the non-meritorious causal" (*Life in Christ*, 144–45). While this observation may explain the function of good works as "inferior causes," it still does not adequately address the priority Calvin gives to justification by placing justification first in the sequence.

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2.3 Other Reformed witnesses

Part of the problem with Garcia's claims is that he examines a narrow cross-section of theologians, largely Calvin, Luther, and Melanchthon and then makes sweeping conclusions about two entire theological traditions without presenting more evidence. To this end, when we expand our study to explore other Reformed witnesses, it will become evident that causal language was present in the Reformed tradition during the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

2.3.1 Reformation

During the Reformation Calvin was not alone in the work of reform. Calvin was a second-generation reformer and built upon the labors of Luther, Melanchthon, Ulrich Zwingli, Guillaume Farel (1489–1565), Heinrich Bullinger, and the like. Among Calvin's co-laborers was Peter Martyr Vermigli. Vermigli was one of the more influential Reformed theologians during his lifetime, especially in his labors at Oxford University. He was instrumental in the formulation of the 1549 Prayer Book, a work on which he collaborated with Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), as well as the Thirty-nine Articles.[17] Like Calvin, Vermigli saw that union with Christ was of great importance for a biblical soteriology.[18] Vermigli, for example, writes: "Delivered by the grace of God, we are joined to Christ by the Spirit, to Christ himself being raised from the dead. By this union we may bring forth fruit to God, and no more death and damnation."[19] Vermigli is quite clear, that union with Christ is the source of bearing "fruit to God," or good works. However, like Calvin, he too could use causal language. Vermigli explains: "Because we do not reject good works, we say that they ought to be held in a place of honor, since a very close connection obtains with the imme-

[17] See Frank A. James III, *De Justificatione: The Evolution of Peter Martyr Vermigli's Doctrine of Justification* (Ph.D, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, 2000), 199–217, 254–84; John Patrick Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 170–96.

[18] For an analysis of correspondence between Calvin and Vermigli on union with Christ see Chapter 9 below.

[19] Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, ed. and trans. Frank A. James III, The Peter Martyr Library, vol. 8 (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2003), 102 (idem, *Loci Communes* [London: 1576], § 12, p. 581). James, notes, though, that union with Christ does not feature prominently in his locus on justification (*De Justificatione*, 337–38).

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diate consequences of justification."[20] Note here that Vermigli considers good works the consequence of justification.[21] Like Calvin, Vermigli also couched his explanation of justification and sanctification in the language of fourfold causality. Concerning Rom 1.16, Vermigli writes: "These words touch on the efficient cause of our justification, namely the power of God; the final cause is our salvation; the instrumental cause by which it is received is faith."[22]

Some might respond that it is only natural that Vermigli would use such language, as it was quite common to medieval scholasticism and Vermigli received his theological training in Thomism.[23] The use of this language is simply the leftovers of scholasticism. While such thoughts might be common, perhaps even some suggesting that the employment of these terms and scholastic precision represents a declension from Calvin's more pristine biblical theology, they represent an inaccurate understanding of the relationship between the Reformation and Middle Ages.[24] Arguably, such language and distinctions never left the theology of the Reformation but remained throughout. However, even beyond the questions of the influence of scholasticism, Vermigli understood such formulations to be much older than the scholasticism of the Middle Ages.

One of the key elements in much of the anti-Roman Catholic polemics was the effort to use their own claimed sources against them, in this case, to employ the church fathers for the cause of the Reformation. Calvin is well-known for his letter to Cardinal Jacopo Sadoleto (1477–1547) and the claims that the Reformation appropriated the best of patristic theology.[25] In this vein, Reformed theologians constantly appealed to the church fathers to support their case and Vermigli was no different. In a section from his locus on justification, which the editor of the critical edition labels, "Good works are the fruit of justification," Vermigli writes: "Now it remains for us to show from the fathers how

[20] Vermigli, *Justification*, 144: "Et quoniam opera bona non reiicimus, sed ea suo loco colenda dicimus, ut quae arctissima necessitudine adeptam iam iustificationem consequuntur" (*Loci Communes*, § 36, p. 599).

[21] For the sake of brevity, this chapter is focusing upon fourfold causality and cause and effect language, though it should be noted that there are other terms that convey the same ideas, such as *necessistas consequentis* (necessity of the consequent) (see DLGTT, 200).

[22] Vermigli, *Justification*, 160: "Illis verbis attingitur causa efficiens iustificationis, nempè potentia Dei: et finis, salus videlicet nostra: et instrumentum quo percipitur, fides" (*Loci Communes*, § 47, p. 607).

[23] For a survey of Vermigli's training see Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 13–41; Frank A. James III, "Peter Martyr Vermigli: At the Crossroads of Late Medieval Scholasticism, Christian Humanism and Resurgent Augustinianism," in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. R. Scott Clark / Carl R. Trueman (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999): 62–78.

[24] See Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, 49.

[25] See John Calvin, "Reply by John Calvin to Letter by Cardinal Sadolet to the Senate and People of Geneva," in *Tracts and Letters*, 7 vol., ed. and trans. Henry Beveridge (1844; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009): 1.25–70 (OS 1.457–489).

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