

John Calvin's Soteriology: On the Multifaceted 'Sum' of the Gospel

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Abstract: This article explores John Calvin's soteriology through examining his multivalent and yet succinct 'sum' of the gospel: the double grace of justification and sanctification received in union with Christ. The essay begins with a description of the scope and range of this teaching in Calvin, its biblical, patristic and Reformational sources, and its application to a wide range of doctrinal *loci*. After this, particular features of Calvin's account are highlighted as promising for contemporary retrieval. The essay concludes with historiographic reflections that intersect with ongoing disputes in interpreting Calvin's teaching on union with Christ and the double grace.

What is 'salvation' in the thought of John Calvin? On the one hand, there is an expansive answer to that question, for his theology of salvation intersects with many doctrinal *loci* – including the Trinity, creation, election, covenant, the law and the Christian life. But there is also a shorter answer to that question, as Calvin himself describes the 'sum of the gospel' as the 'newness of life' and 'free reconciliation', which 'are conferred on us by Christ, and both are attained by us through faith'.¹ To draw from elsewhere in his writing to expand this summary, the gospel is the double grace of justification and sanctification accessed through union with Christ by the Spirit, received through the instrument of faith.

On the one hand, this 'sum' of the gospel points to a thread that runs through much of Calvin's doctrinal work: the double grace of union with Christ is a simple, yet expansive description of salvation, for it incorporates forensic and transformational images of salvation together, without absorbing one category into the other. Calvin claims that there is no temporal gap between the gifts – for they are inseparable, yet distinguishable. Moreover, the context for this formulation is both trinitarian and christocentric. Its trinitarian character is displayed by one of Calvin's

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1 *Institutes* 3:3:1. Unless otherwise noted, English translations of the *Institutes* are from John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1559*, ed. J.T. McNeill and F.L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

favorite images for salvation – adoption – for in salvation one receives both the legal declaration of becoming a child of the Father (as one united to Christ), and also the inheritance of adopted children by receiving the Spirit who conforms believers ever more into the image of Christ. Yet, it is unmistakably christocentric: all of this takes place in the context of union with Christ, through participation in Christ by the Spirit.

On the other hand, Calvin was not a 'systematic theologian' in the sense of placing one article of doctrine at the center, and deducing the rest from this point of doctrine. Calvin wrote as an exegetical theologian – organizing his teaching into a series of topical common places (*loci communes*) in the *Institutes*, but deriving his teaching from exegetical expositions of Scripture through his commentaries. As such, Calvin's theology of salvation sought to be as wide-ranging as the theologies of salvation derived from the exegesis of Scripture itself. However, given the limited space for this essay, and the topics covered in other essays in this issue of *IJST* which have soteriological weight, I will focus upon Calvin's 'sum of the gospel' of the double grace of union with Christ by the Spirit. As we will see, even this 'sum' is far-reaching and expansive.

Scope of the language of 'union with Christ'

First, the nature and scope of our topic needs to be sharpened so as to avoid the projections of modern categories onto Calvin's thought. There is a sense in which Calvin did not have a sharply defined 'theology' of 'union with Christ' as a distinct doctrinal *locus*, in the same way that he has a 'theology' of baptism, or even a 'theology' of justification by faith.² The phrase 'union with Christ' is best seen as shorthand for a broad range of themes and images which occur repeatedly through a wide range of doctrinal *loci*. These images are often clustered together – like participation in Christ, ingrafting in Christ, union with Christ, adoption and participation in God. Yet, the images function differently in different doctrinal and, at times, polemical contexts. Moreover, this pattern of images does not present a Christ-and-the-individual mysticism. Instead, Calvin gave a distinctly communal accent to these images for salvation (incorporated into Christ means being incorporated into Christ's communal body, the church), functional within a trinitarian framework with a strong emphasis upon the Spirit's role in uniting believers to Christ. Calvin used these images in relation to a very wide range of doctrinal *loci*, as I explore below.

2 As Marcus Johnson points, this does not suggest that union with Christ and the double grace is unimportant to Calvin's thought – to the contrary, it is one of the primary categories used in the exposition of faith, the sacraments and other topics that we explore below. See Marcus Johnson, 'New or Nuanced Perspective on Calvin? A Reply to Thomas Wenger', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51 (2008), pp. 557–8.

Union with Christ in Calvin's early work

In Calvin's early writing, he made significant use of union with Christ imagery in his account of justification. Calvin spoke of believers being adopted as children of the Father, engrafted into Christ, and experiencing such 'participation in him [Christ] that, although we are still foolish in ourselves, he is our wisdom before God; while we are sinners, he is our righteousness; while we are unclean, he is our purity'.³ Adoption, engrafting and participation in Christ are all images used in expositing justification – and the way in which believers are declared righteous before God is based upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

To set the proper context for understanding Calvin's doctrine of justification, we should examine the doctrine that Calvin inherits as a second-generation member of the evangelical movement. Justification by grace through faith alone was a key exegetical and doctrinal insight of Martin Luther, developed by Philipp Melancthon, and incorporated into the Reformed tradition by Calvin, Vermigli, Bucer and others. Although the Reformation was, in many ways, a revival of Augustinianism, on the point of justification, Scripture was seen as providing a corrective to Augustine and a later, quite diverse, Augustinian tradition of scriptural interpretation. Luther shared with Augustine a strong theology of sin – holding that the human will is in bondage to sin apart from regeneration. Luther also shared with Augustine a robust theology of grace, in which the Spirit effects the regeneration that God initiates rather than making the process dependent upon a synergy of divine and human wills.

Yet, Luther departed from the received interpretation of Augustine on the meaning and significance of the biblical term 'justification'. According to these interpretations of Augustine, 'justification' refers to the process of internal renewal by the Spirit in the believer.⁴ His view was not Pelagian, because the Spirit is the effectual cause of this renewal. Yet, in this schema, God declares believers righteous because they are, in fact, being made righteous through the holiness imparted and infused by the Spirit. In contrast to this, Luther made two moves – one with great clarity, and the second with more subtlety. Both are apparent by 1520 in his work *The Freedom of the Christian*.⁵ First, Luther argued that the righteousness which justifies believers is alien and external – contained in Jesus Christ himself – and thus received by faith as a fully sufficient gift. As such, 'justification' refers not to the gradual

3 *Institutes*, 1536 edition, trans. F.L. Battles (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 37.

4 Calvin, for his part, largely conceded that Augustine does not properly distinguish justification from regeneration, see *Institutes* 3:11:15.

5 For an exposition of Luther's doctrine of justification in 1520, its notional distinction from sanctification, and a response to the Finnish Lutheran school's downplaying of the forensic notion of justification in Luther, see Carl Trueman, 'Simul peccator et justus: Martin Luther and Justification', in Bruce L. McCormack, ed., *Justification in Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), pp. 75–92. Luther's notional distinction between justification and sanctification becomes particularly pronounced by the time of his 1535 commentary on Galatians.

process of transformation by the Spirit, but to the change in God's decision or judgement toward believers – believers who have accessed the alien righteousness of Jesus Christ by faith. Luther's second departure from Augustine was that the process of growth and renewal in Christ became notionally distinct from that of 'justification' – such that 'justification' is not an internal transformation of the believer, but a change in status before God because of the alien righteousness of Christ, so that believers are at once holy 'saints' and 'sinners', still in need of redemption. Luther's doctrine of justification by faith operated within a theology of union with Christ – but justification itself became the focus since the Augustinian approaches that Luther opposed also worked within a theology of union with Christ, but with a different theology of justification. Thus, for a second-generation theologian like Calvin, the question was not whether to have a broadly Augustinian theology of 'union with Christ', but what *kind* of theology of union with Christ. On this question, Calvin sided with the basic convictions of Luther and other early Reformers who approached justification as God's declaration of Christ's external righteousness upon the believer, making the internal process of renewal notionally distinct from justification.

While Melancthon had significant continuity with Luther on justification,⁶ he also developed the theme of justification by accenting the forensic (legal) character of justification and clarifying the notional distinction between justification (as a legal 'declaration of righteousness', as in a courtroom), and sanctification or regeneration (the internal work of the Spirit in believers). For Melancthon, the distinction between these two is crucial – for if our own works (sanctification) become even a small part of the basis of justification, then Luther's central insight is lost: that our justifying righteousness is contained in Jesus Christ alone, and not in ourselves – and thus we are justified by grace, which faith alone is sufficient to access. Justification – as the forgiveness of sins through the imputation of Christ's righteousness – must be kept distinct from good works performed by the Spirit. Yet, Melancthon also sought to clarify the common misunderstanding that justification by faith alone means that justification is not accompanied by good works. Justification by faith necessarily leads to good works.⁷ But the good works come as part of the Spirit's gradual healing and redeeming work, not as the ground for God's judgement of believers as righteous in God's sight.

Calvin seems to share a great deal with Melancthon – and early Lutheranism – on the doctrine of justification. This is not surprising, as Calvin subscribed to Melancthon's revised version of the Augsburg Confession in 1540 without reservation, including its doctrine of justification. Consider Calvin's definition of

6 The degree to which Melancthon has continuity with Luther on justification is a point of dispute. For a brief statement of the case for strong continuity, see Trueman, 'Martin Luther and Justification', pp. 88–92.

7 While Luther makes this point as well, it becomes emphatic in Melancthon. See Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, second edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 214.

justification in 1543, retained without revision through to the final 1559 edition of the *Institutes*: 'Therefore, we explain justification simply as the acceptance with which God receives us into his favor as righteous men. And we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness.'⁸ Calvin articulated a definition that displays great commonality with early Lutherans, over and against Rome. In fact, in quite precise terms, Calvin's definition of justification would be prohibited by Trent in 1547 – and he retains this definition after Trent.⁹ While in Calvin's *Antidote* to Trent he insisted that justification is inseparable from sanctification,¹⁰ he continued to insist upon describing justification as 'the gratuitous acceptance of God' grounded wholly in the imputation of Christ's righteousness.¹¹ In terms of the doctrine of justification, it is clear that Calvin sought to be 'orthodox' by an early Reformational standard, affirming that justification involves God's free pardon of sin because of the external righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed onto the believer.

This conviction about justification endures throughout Calvin's work. Its importance does not fade (in the 1539 *Institutes* he writes that justification by faith is 'the main hinge on which religion turns', keeping this through to the final edition).¹² But as he entered into his 'program' of writing commentaries and revising the *Institutes* – as well as various doctrinal disputes – this doctrine of justification became increasingly incorporated into a larger theological fabric in which the cluster of images related to union with Christ is key.

Expansion of the theme through Calvin's 'program' of biblical exegesis

Calvin's exegesis of the epistle to the Romans was key for the expansion and development of his theology of union with Christ and the double grace. Calvin was working on his Romans commentary at the same time as his 1539 *Institutes*, the edition of the *Institutes* which moves it from a catechism to an ordered set of theological *loci*. In the prefaces to these two works, he outlines his 'program' that he would follow for the next two decades. The commentaries would strive for 'lucid

8 *Institutes* 3:11:2.

9 Trent condemns those for whom justification is 'either by the sole imputation of the righteousness of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of grace and charity . . . or that the grace by which we are justified is only the goodwill of God'. Translation from Alister McGrath, *Historical Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 192.

10 'It is not to be denied, however, that the two things, Justification and Sanctification, are constantly conjoined and cohere; but from this it is erroneously inferred that they are one and the same.' 'Antidote to Trent' (sixth session), trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1851), quoted from *Tracts and Treatises in Defense of the Reformed Faith* (repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), vol. 3, pp. 115–16.

11 *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 3, p. 116.

12 *Institutes* 3:11:1.

brevity' in unfolding 'the mind of the writer' in Scripture.¹³ The *Institutes* include a 'sum of religion' to prepare readers to profit from Scripture, organized into a series of exegetically-derived 'common places', or *loci communes*. The ordering of the *loci* in the *Institutes* appear to emerge largely from Calvin's reading of Romans.¹⁴ Indeed, Calvin is open about the exegetical centrality of Romans for his program. 'If we have gained a true understanding of this Epistle, we have an open door to all the most profound treasures of scripture.'¹⁵

Thus, it is not surprising that in the 1539 and 1543 *Institutes*, the cluster of images related to union with Christ expanded greatly – not only in his section on justification, but in sections on the sacraments, the *imago dei*, the Trinity, Christ and the Spirit. Because of the centrality of Romans, the images of union, participation and ingrafting are spread through the *Institutes*. Moreover, as Calvin continued his 'program' in the writing of biblical commentaries in the 1540s and the 1550s, these images form a 'cluster' that appear in numerous commentaries as complementary images, even where there is no warrant from the immediate biblical context for this clustering.¹⁶ Romans was used by Calvin as an exegetical key to the rest of Scripture, as well as a doctrinal key for the *Institutes*.

In light of this, it is worth examining how, exactly, Calvin expounded justification, sanctification and union with Christ in his commentary on Romans. According to Calvin's analysis, the first five chapters focus upon 'the main subject of the whole Epistle', namely, 'that we are justified by faith'.¹⁷ In Calvin's exposition of these chapters, there is particular emphasis upon the inadequacy of human works to make us righteous before God – we are in need of 'the righteousness of faith' which is, in fact, 'the righteousness of Christ'.¹⁸ Yet, faith is not a work meriting God's pardon, but the instrument for receiving God's mercy offered to sinners in Jesus Christ. 'When, therefore, we are justified, the efficient cause is the mercy of God, Christ is the substance (*materia*) of our justification, and the Word, with faith, the instrument. Faith is therefore said to justify, because it is the instrument by which we receive Christ, in whom righteousness is communicated to us.'¹⁹ Thus, faith is the mode to apprehend Christ, who alone possesses the righteousness by which sinners are justified. In these chapters, Calvin argues that it is imperative to understand that justification takes place by grace through faith, because 'men's consciences will never be at peace until they rest on the mercy of God alone'.²⁰

13 *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (CNTC): *Romans and Thessalonians*, trans. Ross MacKenzie (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 1.

14 See Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 119–30.

15 CNTC: Romans, p. 5.

16 See J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 93–4.

17 CNTC: Romans, p. 5.

18 CNTC: Romans, p. 73.

19 CNTC: Romans, p. 73.

20 CNTC: Romans, p. 71.

It is in the exposition of Romans chapters 6 and 8 that sanctification and the double grace enter prominently into Calvin's commentary. In Calvin's reading of Romans, the earlier chapters on justification provide the indispensable context for these chapters.

With the image of being united with Christ in chapter 6 (glossed by Calvin as an 'ingrafting' into Christ),²¹ we see how 'no one can put on the righteousness of Christ' in justification 'without regeneration. Paul uses this as the basis of exhortation to purity and holiness of life.'²² Thus, although believers are not declared righteous on the basis of their good works, spiritual renewal and works of regeneration always accompany God's free pardon in justification. 'The truth is that believers are never reconciled to God without the gift of regeneration. Indeed, we are justified for this very purpose, that we may afterwards worship God in purity of life.'²³ In the *Institutes*, passages from Romans 6 are later incorporated into a section which explains how the doctrine of justification does not dampen zeal for good works, but actually frees persons to serve God with their works rather than performing works as acts of merit.²⁴ This fits into Calvin's view of Christian obedience in which the conscience is allowed to rest from the 'perpetual dread' of fulfilling God's law (because of justification), empowered by the Spirit to obey God 'cheerfully and in great eagerness' – performing good works in gratitude, not because it is required for justification.²⁵ While Calvin emphasized that justification and sanctification are inseparable in his reflections on Romans 6, he also suggested a logical (but not temporal) ordering of being 'justified' for the purpose that 'afterwards' the life of holiness lived would not be focused on acquiring righteousness before God, but serving God in eager gratitude.²⁶

In Romans 8, many of the earlier themes related to justification and sanctification continue, but several key features are added which characterize Calvin's theology of union with Christ. First, the Spirit is portrayed as the agent of union with Christ – apart from the Spirit's work in believers, Christ is like a 'dead image or a corpse'.²⁷ The Spirit dwells in believers, and mediates Christ to believers. Second, union with Christ is set in the trinitarian context of adoption. Calvin accents the trinitarian dimensions of the Spirit enabling believers to call out to God as 'Abba, Father' as adopted children of God (who are one with Christ). Third, this section includes emphatic statements about the inseparability of justification and sanctification. 'We must always bear in mind the counsel of the apostle, that free remission of sins cannot be separated from the Spirit of regeneration. This would be,

21 CNTC: Romans, p. 124.

22 CNTC: Romans, p. 8.

23 CNTC: Romans, p. 122.

24 *Institutes* 3:16:2.

25 *Institutes* 3:19:4–5.

26 CNTC: Romans, p. 122.

27 CNTC: Romans, p. 164.

as it were, to rend Christ asunder.'²⁸ 'Let believers, therefore, learn to embrace Him [Christ], not only for justification, but also for sanctification, as He has been given to us for both of these purposes, that they may not rend Him asunder by their own mutilated faith.'²⁹ In light of this final point, Calvin drew the following inferences in the 1539 edition of the *Institutes*:

But, since the question concerns only righteousness and sanctification, let us dwell upon these. Although we may distinguish them, Christ contains both of them inseparably in himself. Do you wish, then, to attain righteousness in Christ? You must first possess Christ; but you cannot possess him without being made partaker in his sanctification, because he cannot be divided into pieces [1 Corinthians 1:13]. Since, therefore, it is solely by expending himself that the Lord gives us these benefits to enjoy, he bestows both of them at the same time, the one never without the other. Thus it is clear how true it is that we are justified not without works yet not through works, since in our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness.³⁰

Thus, not unlike the two natures of Christ as defined by Chalcedon, which are 'without confusion' or mixture, and yet 'without division' and 'without separation', Calvin argued for the inseparability (yet distinction) of the double grace based upon the oneness of Jesus Christ himself. Thus, also in 1539, Calvin wrote: 'By partaking of him [Christ], we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.'³¹ In this short passage, we see how the inseparability of justification and sanctification is found in the person of Christ. By participation in Christ through faith, believers enter into a trinitarian drama of encountering a gracious Father who pardons our sin because of Christ's blamelessness (justification), and a powerful Spirit who sanctifies believers for new life (sanctification). Both of these aspects are accessed through participation in Christ – but both aspects would be dramatically altered if the two sides of the double grace were mixed, or collapsed into one another.

Many of the continued extensions and expansions of this theme of union with Christ continue along the lines outlined above, particularly following the themes from Romans. Some start to be developed with particular clarity in occasional works – such as Calvin's sacramental theology, and his disputes with Lutherans such as Heshusius and Westphal. In other places, the cluster of images and themes related to

28 CNTC: Romans, p. 164.

29 CNTC: Romans, p. 167. The image of rending Christ is also used in Calvin's commentary on Romans 6:1.

30 Cf. the editorial strata indicated in *Institutes* 3:16:1, in 1559 edition.

31 Cf. the editorial strata indicated in *Institutes* 3:11:1, in 1559 edition. Note the way in which sanctification is received 'secondly'.

union with Christ is extended to even more *loci* – including, by 1559, to his discussions of the incarnation, the atonement and the resurrection, along with the earlier topics of justification, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the *imago dei*, predestination and the Christian life.³²

For the purposes of our focus upon the double grace in union with Christ, there are three developments which are particularly significant: Calvin's use of the Church Fathers on union with Christ; the double grace in writings on the Christian life; and Calvin's polemic against Osiander in the 1559 *Institutes*.

Calvin's use of the Church Fathers on union with Christ

The topic of Calvin's use of the Church Fathers is a broad and complex one, and space does not allow a complete overview of Calvin's use of the patristic writings. Yet, it is worth noting that Calvin did make use of patristic material on the theme of union with Christ and the double grace, incorporating patristic language (and at times patristic distinctions) into his account.

Like other sixteenth-century interpreters of the Church Fathers, Calvin did not approach them in a 'disinterested' way. On the one hand, he was interested in finding commonality between his own theology and patristic writings as much as possible – thus vindicating his claim (contra Rome) that the Reformation is not a 'new' movement, of 'recent birth'.³³ On the other hand, Calvin sought to be clear about Scripture as the final authority, so he was quite willing to point out 'errors' in the patristic writings when he judges them as inconsistent with Scripture.

On the topic of union with Christ, the key authors that Calvin engaged were Irenaeus, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria and (although in the medieval period, functioning in a similar way) Bernard of Clairvaux. Drawing upon Irenaeus, in *Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, Calvin sought to clarify that finding one's life 'in Christ' rather than 'in oneself' is not an annihilation of the created human nature, but a restoration of it.³⁴ More so than Irenaeus, Augustine was a major figure of engagement for Calvin. Calvin, like Luther, is deeply indebted to Augustine's overall theology of sin and grace. In addition, on the double grace Calvin draws upon particular passages about faith and Jesus Christ as the righteousness of believers.³⁵ Yet, Calvin openly parted from Augustine on the issue of justification (in a similar way to Luther, above).³⁶ With Cyril of Alexandria's writings, Calvin made selective

32 See Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, p. 101, and pp. 108–16 on prayer and the Christian life. On predestination, see *Institutes* 3:24:1, 4.

33 See Calvin, *Institutes*, 1536 edition, pp. 5–6.

34 See *Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice Against Pighius*, trans. Graham I. Davies, ed. A.N.S. Lane (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), pp. 71–2.

35 For example, see *Institutes* 3:12:3, 3:12:8, 3:14:4.

36 *Institutes* 3:11:15.

use of their union with Christ theme on the Lord's Supper, repeatedly drawing upon Cyril's image of the body and blood of Christ as life-giving for the receiver.³⁷ Finally, Calvin made a selective use of the work of Bernard of Clairvaux for his overall theme of union with Christ, in his critique of a Roman Catholic theology of merit, and positively for the justifying qualities of faith.³⁸ In all of these cases, Calvin drew upon patristic writings with the learned sensitivity of a humanist scholar, yet also for the doctrinal and polemical purposes that suited his needs. Yet, the fact that Calvin incorporated their language into his positive position, and drew additional distinctions for his position while engaging their thought, indicates that his interaction with patristic writings did influence his thought.

The double grace and the Christian life

Through the development of Calvin's 'program', the soteriological movement within the double grace appears increasingly in Calvin's writings on the Christian life, prayer, and his theology of the 'sacrifice of praise' in the Lord's Supper. For the most part, these sections do not seek to give precise doctrinal schemas as much as pastoral instruction. Nevertheless, it is important to see how Calvin was arguing for a consistent piety in these different areas, grounded in the double grace, accessed through union with Christ by the Spirit.

For example, consider Calvin's chapter on prayer, which undergoes significant expansion in the course of his theological 'program'. His 1559 additions are particularly revealing. With reference to Romans 8, Calvin writes in the final edition that 'to pray rightly is a rare gift' – properly done in and through the power of the Spirit – for 'our natural powers would scarcely suffice'. Yet, believers must also be watchful in prayer, expending great effort, for saying that the Spirit empowers prayer ought not to lead us to 'vegetate in that carelessness to which we are all too prone'.³⁹ Stated differently, prayer is a Spirit-enabled human activity – one in which the Spirit activates human beings to pray to God as Father by the Spirit's power. But the indispensable context for this action is that our confidence to approach God in prayer is provided by justification. While Calvin admonished his readers to include a confession of sin in prayer, it must be done in the confidence that characterizes prayer overall, confidence derived 'solely from God's mercy'. 'For if anyone should question his own conscience, he would be so far from daring intimately to lay aside his cares before God that, unless he relied upon mercy and pardon, he would tremble at every approach' (1559 addition).⁴⁰ Why should we have this confidence? Because

37 For an account of this, see Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, pp. 49–50.

38 For example, see *Institutes* 3:12:3, 3:12:8, 3:13:4, 3:15:2. See Dennis E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994).

39 *Institutes* 3:20:5.

40 *Institutes* 3:20:9.

we pray as ones who belong to the Mediator, Jesus Christ, who offered a sufficient blood sacrifice on our behalf. For God was 'appeased by Christ's intercession, so that he received the petitions of the godly'.⁴¹ In light of this, Calvin frequently warns against the sin of ingratitude in prayer,⁴² and readers are admonished to offer prayers as a 'sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving'.⁴³ Prayer is an act of Spirit-empowered gratitude, an act in which the conscience is calmed, because prayer is an act aware of the fully sufficient priestly sacrifice and intercession of Jesus Christ, a sacrifice for forgiveness received in justification.

A very similar logic is followed in Calvin's polemic against the Mass in *Institutes* 4:18 when Calvin sharply distinguished between the once for all sacrifice of the cross, to 'wash sins and cleanse them that the sinner . . . may return into favor with God', and the 'sacrifice of praise' performed in grateful thanksgiving to God.⁴⁴ The sacrifice of praise, which includes the whole life of sanctification and 'all the duties of love', has 'nothing to do with appeasing God's wrath, with obtaining forgiveness of sins, or with meriting righteousness'.⁴⁵ For Calvin, the Mass reprehensibly confused the two forms of sacrifice, offering the Mass as a sacrifice acquiring merit. In doing so, the Mass mixed the two sides of the double grace – failing to see that our righteousness before God is found in Jesus Christ alone and his once for all sacrificial work, and that the Christian life as a 'sacrifice of praise' is a life of gratitude in response to Christ's sacrifice. These reflections flesh out the pastoral implications of the double grace for the Lord's Supper.

While many other texts could be cited reflecting the influence of the double grace of union with Christ upon Calvin's view of the Christian life, it is worth noting that these sections seem to have a greater emphasis upon pastoral instruction than precise, doctrinal clarity. The section on prayer above does not begin with a precise statement of the double grace, but interweaves themes amidst giving practical 'rules for prayer' and an exposition of the Lord's Prayer. In a similar way, when Calvin included material about the mortification and vivification of the believer in the final edition of the *Institutes* (as part of regeneration, 3:3–10), he included it before his discrete chapter on justification. This ordering has puzzled some commentators, since as we see from the material surveyed above, the grace of regeneration takes on its character as Spirit-empowered gratitude in light of justification.⁴⁶

41 *Institutes* 3:20:18.

42 *Institutes* 3:20:14, 19, 28, 41.

43 *Institutes* 3:20:28.

44 *Institutes* 4:18:13.

45 *Institutes* 4:18:16.

46 For recent debate that refers to the relevant secondary literature on this issue, see Marcus Johnson, 'New or Nuanced Perspective on Calvin? A Reply to Thomas Wenger', esp. pp. 551–4, and Thomas Wenger, 'Theological Spectacles and A Paradigm of Centrality: A Reply to Marcus Johnson', esp. pp. 563–8, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51 (2008), pp. 543–58 (Johnson) and pp. 559–72 (Wenger).

Nevertheless, in this section, Calvin still defines justification very clearly as the 'free imputation of righteousness' in contrast to regeneration.⁴⁷ Calvin gives sufficient clarity in these sections to counter a view of the Christian life based upon the calculus of works-righteousness, but in this context he does not broach the more technical disputes about the nature of justification and sanctification. His focus was to give pastoral instruction about the Christian life, being clear that while faith alone justifies, faith necessarily leads to an active life of pursuing holiness by the Spirit's power.⁴⁸ The logic of this pastoral instruction fits with what he states in his chapter on justification: that sanctification is the 'second of these gifts' of the double grace, for until one understands 'the nature of his [God's] judgment concerning you, you have neither a foundation on which to establish your salvation nor one on which to build piety toward God'.⁴⁹

Osiander controversy

Calvin expanded and developed his theology of the double grace as part of a polemic against Andreas Osiander in the 1559 edition of the *Institutes*. Osiander himself died in 1552, thus the timing may appear strange for a heated dispute. The reason is that, during the 1550s, Calvin was accused by his Lutheran opponents of being Osiandrian in theology.⁵⁰ Osiander was a Catholic priest who had converted to Lutheranism, and then was disowned by his fellow Lutherans for denying a forensic doctrine of justification by faith. Osiander sought to do this arguing that the righteousness of Jesus Christ is infused to believers by faith such that they 'participate in the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1:4) through union with Christ. As such, Jesus Christ is the righteousness of salvation, but his righteousness is infused not forensically imputed. With the loss of forensic imputation, a key Reformational feature of the doctrine of justification by faith was lost, and there was no longer ground to clearly distinguish between justification and sanctification. According to Osiander, they were both part of a process of the infusion of Christ's righteousness, received in union with Christ.

Calvin was determined to prove the 'Osiandrian' accusation false – and reaffirm his Reformational orthodoxy on the issue of justification by faith alone.⁵¹ Yet, there is no doubt that he had some commonalities with Osiander. With Osiander, Calvin

47 *Institutes* 3:3:1. In other words, while Calvin leaves his technical exposition and defense to *Institutes* 3:11 and following, he presents the doctrine with sufficient clarity to serve the purposes of his pastoral instruction on the Christian life in 3:3:1 on regeneration and repentance.

48 This section's particular focus on pastoral instruction for the Christian life is indicated, as well, by chs. 3:6–10 being popularly published separately from the *Institutes* as *The Golden Book of the True Christian Life*.

49 *Institutes* 3:11:1.

50 See David Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), p. 91.

51 Mark A. Garcia departs significantly from this reading of the Osiander controversy at this point. The final section of this essay returns to his position.

used emphatic language about the oneness of believers with Christ, and the indwelling of Christ by the Spirit. Indeed, for Calvin, the double grace is not a set of abstract benefits acquired in themselves. This double grace is acquired as part of an intimate union with Christ. 'He [Osiander] says that we are one with Christ. We agree.'⁵² In fact, in his 1559 polemic against Osiander, Calvin goes on to write one of his most emphatic statements about affirming the reality of this union with Christ:

Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts – in short, that mystical union – are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body – in short, because he deigns to make us one with him.⁵³

Thus, for Calvin, affirming the imputation of Christ's righteousness (justification) should not just be seen as a dry, abstract legal decree. Justification is irreducibly forensic, but it is accessed as part of the double grace of union with Christ – a 'mystical union' of intimacy with the believer, of Christ dwelling within the believer.

But for Calvin, an intimate union with Christ should not lead one to downplay the forensic character of justification as the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Indeed, Calvin claims that Osiander makes serious exegetical and doctrinal errors in his proposal which rejects the forensic character of justification. First, in Osiander's conception of union by the infusion of Christ's divine nature, 'he [Osiander] does not observe the bond of this unity', namely, 'to be united with Christ by the secret power of his Spirit'.⁵⁴ For Calvin, union with Christ is always by the work of the Holy Spirit. Second, Osiander's infusion of Christ's nature approach results in a 'confusion of the two kinds of grace' in union with Christ, namely, justification and sanctification⁵⁵ – a distinction Calvin goes on to defend against Osiander on scriptural grounds.⁵⁶

Third, and perhaps most decisively, Calvin complained that Osiander grounds the justifying work in Christ's divine nature, to the exclusion of his human nature. This moves deeply against the logic of Jesus Christ as the Mediator in his divine-human state.⁵⁷ But even more significant for Calvin is that this diminishes a crucial scriptural and doctrinal connection: the cross of Christ and the forgiveness of sins. Here, Calvin argues that 'we are justified in Christ, in so far as he was made an atoning sacrifice for

52 *Institutes* 3:11:5.

53 *Institutes* 3:11:10.

54 *Institutes* 3:11:5.

55 *Institutes* 3:11:6. In this section, Calvin gives a response to Osiander's reading of Rom. 4:4–5 and 8:33 in support of his interpretation.

56 *Institutes* 3:11:12.

57 *Institutes* 3:11:8.

us'.⁵⁸ Yet, this act of atonement is not performed simply in the divine nature: 'For even though Christ if he had not been true God could not cleanse our souls by his blood, nor appease his Father by his sacrifice, nor absolve us from guilt . . . yet it is certain that he carried out all these acts according to the human nature'.⁵⁹ This final point is significant for Calvin because it shows that he maintained a strong link between the cross of Christ and justification. By the instrument of faith, believers are justified in union with Christ. But they are not simply united to a 'divine nature' that is righteous because it is divine, or even a second Adam who lived a righteous life and hypothetically could have died a natural death. Rather, the righteousness of Jesus Christ is the righteousness of the cross – the mystery of the cross connected to the 'wondrous exchange' language which is so closely related to imputation – in which the sin of sinners is imputed upon Christ, and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to sinners. As Calvin writes elsewhere, 'that, receiving our poverty unto himself, he [Christ] has transferred his wealth to us; that, taking the weight of our iniquity upon himself (which oppressed us), he has clothed us with his righteousness'.⁶⁰

Having given a portrait of Calvin's teaching on union with Christ and the double grace above, we now proceed to two sets of reflections which are particularly relevant for the interpretation and possible retrieval of Calvin's teaching on this point for today.

Possibilities for contemporary retrieval

Calvin's theology emerged from wide-ranging biblical exegesis, but it also developed in engagement with the patristic writings, and broader catholic streams of thought as well. Methodologically, Calvin's approach shows the richness of an approach which takes seriously the complexity of biblical exegesis, but is also committed to interpreting Scripture within the context of broadly catholic christological and trinitarian commitments. Like Calvin, other Reformers gave close attention to both biblical exegesis and patristic studies, and these trajectories continue to develop in Reformed communities into the seventeenth century. Indeed, as Irena Backus has shown, while patristic anthologies developed by the Reformed certainly reflect polemical doctrinal purposes, they also indicate a genuine interest in the history and theology of patristic writings.⁶¹ While Calvin and others who draw heavily upon the Church Fathers on issues related to union with Christ (such as Peter Martyr Vermigli)⁶² did not hesitate to disagree with the Church Fathers at points, they

58 *Institutes* 3:11:9.

59 *Institutes* 3:11:9.

60 *Institutes* 4:17:2.

61 See Irena Dorota Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), ch. 4.

62 See Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification: Two Theological Loci*, trans. Frank A. James III (Truman State University Press, 2003).

generally assumed that they are among the highest non-biblical authorities on Christian doctrine.

But the richness of Calvin's account is also included in the material content of his teaching on union with Christ and the double grace. As described above, it is integrated, like a thread, through a very wide range of doctrinal *loci*. It is a consistently trinitarian account, while also being christocentric. It is deeply pastoral, integrated with concerns for a Christian life as one of voluntary gratitude. Contrary to common criticisms of Calvin, it shows how Calvin refused to see divinity as a polar opposite to humanity, but saw union with Christ as the restoration of primal communion and differentiated union⁶³ with God. This soteriological restoration does not set divine and human agency at odds with each other, but conceives of the uniting communion with Christ through the Spirit as involving the healing and activating of the primal, created nature of humans. As I have argued elsewhere, Calvin's theology of participation and union with Christ provides a counter-example to key critiques of Calvin as having a 'coercive' God, criticisms common among theologians of Radical Orthodoxy, theologians of the 'gift' and feminist theologians.⁶⁴

In addition, a key area of richness in Calvin is the way in which he held together biblical images of salvation that are legal and forensic with those which are transformational, in a way that is non-reductive. While I do not think that Calvin was 'distinctive' here – for he has much in common with both many Lutheran and other Reformed theologians in his day and after – his formulation is nevertheless rich and multifaceted. Because of Calvin's extensive biblical commentary work and his reading of the overall doctrinal *loci* in light of the double grace that he finds in Romans, his account is expansive rather than reductive. Reductionisms on this point continue to be a temptation in theology – whether it is the 'either/or' approach of some New Perspective on Paul advocates in insisting that justification is ecclesial but not also substantively soteriological in scope,⁶⁵ the 'either/or' that many contemporary theologians pit between 'participation' or 'deification' and forensic imputation,⁶⁶ or the 'either/or' tendency in major ecumenical documents like *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* in their appropriation of images of salvation.⁶⁷ In contrast to these reductionistic alternatives, Calvin's exegetically-derived, composite

63 I use the phrase 'differentiated union' with God to indicate that when Calvin speaks of union with God before the fall and in final redemption, it is a union in which the Creator–creature distinction is sustained – creatures are not 'absorbed' into the divine.

64 See Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, esp. chs. 1 and 6.

65 See the careful analysis and response to this aspect of the New Perspective on Paul in Simon J. Gathercole, *Where is the Boasting?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

66 This is particularly common for the theologians associated with Radical Orthodoxy. For an overview of this tendency in the contemporary discussion in contrast to Calvin's position, see Billings *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, pp. 9–12, 51–61.

67 See Michael Welker, *What Happens in Holy Communion?*, trans. John F. Hoffmeyer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 152–4.

model of the double grace in union with Christ can offer suggestive possibilities toward a 'both/and'.

Continuing interpretive debates and historiography

As with any figure in the history of theology with a large corpus of work, interpretive disputes continue related to Calvin's soteriology, and his account of union with Christ and the double grace in particular. Lurking behind many contemporary disputes in the interpretation of Calvin's soteriology are historiographic differences.⁶⁸ Well known is the 'Calvin versus the Calvinist' thesis, which posits a sharp break between Calvin's thought and later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed theology, which allegedly degrades into the rationalistic 'scholasticism' that Calvin himself protested against. While this is not the place to rehearse this overall discussion, it is worth noting that union with Christ is one of the doctrines that is used to argue for discontinuity. Charles Partee goes so far as to say that, in relation to the theology of the Westminster Standards, 'Calvin is not a Calvinist because union with Christ is at the heart of his theology – and not theirs.'⁶⁹ Considering the fact that one can find definitions of the mystical union, justification and sanctification in the Westminster Standards that are very close to those of Calvin, this is a rather astonishing claim.⁷⁰ The critique seems to be rooted in a sense that the development of federal theology, with Adam as the federal head of the covenant of works and Christ as the federal head of the covenant of grace, is antithetical to Calvin's theology of union with Christ.⁷¹ On this point, it is worth noting that a key mediating figure between Calvin and the later development of federal theology was Heidelberg theologian Caspar Olevian. Olevian not only has a strong acquaintance with the theology of Calvin (having lectured through the *Institutes* for three terms and published an *Epitome* of the *Institutes*),⁷² he gives the theology of union with Christ and the double grace a key place in his thought, as the double grace becomes the 'double benefit' which is the 'substance' of the covenant of grace. Whether or not one agrees with the theological claims of Olevian, he certainly makes

68 For a more comprehensive overview of the historiographic issues involved in contemporary discussions of union with Christ see Michael S. Horton, 'Calvin's Theology of Union with Christ and the Double Grace: Modern Reception and Contemporary Possibilities', in J. Todd Billings and I. John Hesselink, eds., *Calvin's Theology and Its Reception* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, forthcoming). My account here benefits from that excellent essay.

69 Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), p. 167.

70 On this point, see J. Todd Billings, 'Calvin's Theology of Union with Christ and the Double Grace and Its Early Reception', in Billings and Hesselink, *Calvin's Theology and Its Reception* (forthcoming).

71 Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, p. 17.

72 R. Scott Clark, *Caspar Olevian and the Substance of the Covenant* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Heritage Books, 2008), p. 84.

a substantial appropriation of Calvin's doctrine on this point, and he uses the developing doctrine of the covenant with creation and the covenant of grace as a way to preserve – rather than undermine – Calvin's insights.⁷³

A related, but not identical, historiographic issue is whether one construes Calvin as 'against the Lutherans', or in much more continuity with Luther, Melancthon and other points in early Lutheran thought. As noted in the portrait above, Calvin's subscription to the revised Augsburg Confession and commonality with both Luther and Melancthon on the meaning of justification suggests that on this point there is considerable common ground. There are differences – particularly differences in emphasis. Calvin's emphasis upon the third use of the law as instruction for Christian life, for example, is a teaching present in Luther and early Lutheranism at points, but not as emphatically developed. However, since the nineteenth century, there has been a historiographic tendency to search for a core doctrinal incompatibility at the root of the historic fissure between Reformed and Lutheran Christians. On union with Christ, Matthias Schneckenburger (1804–48) typified a view that has become commonplace among 'Calvin versus the Lutherans' approaches to union with Christ. In Partee's summary of Schneckenburger, 'for Lutheran theology, union with Christ is the result of the process of justification while for Reformed theology union with Christ is the condition for the process of justification'.⁷⁴ Apart from the highly problematic reference to justification as a 'process' in the two traditions, this sets forth the basic interpretive framework followed by a number of interpreters today.

Probably the most articulate recent advocate of the 'Calvin versus the Lutherans' thesis toward Calvin on union with Christ is Mark A. Garcia in *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and the Twofold Grace in Calvin's Theology*. In this learned and substantial work, Garcia gives a detailed examination of key texts and controversies related to Calvin's doctrine of the double grace. The result is a very close reading of a limited number of relevant texts. Of particular importance is Garcia's account of Calvin's dispute with Osiander. Pointing to the commonality in language with Calvin's debate with Gnesio-Lutherans about the sacraments, Garcia claims that Calvin uses the Osiander debate to make an attack upon Gnesio-Lutheran sacramental theology and soteriology together. Although Osiander had been disowned by the Gnesio-Lutherans, Garcia thinks that Calvin is painting Osiander as 'the only consistent Lutheran', for if the Gnesio-Lutherans applied their sacramental Christology consistently to soteriology, they would end up denying the forensic character of justification, just like Osiander.⁷⁵

73 See Billings, 'Calvin's Theology of Union with Christ and the Double Grace and Its Early Reception'; Clark, *Caspar Olevian*, chs. 6–7.

74 Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, p. 224.

75 'Calvin evidently perceives in Osiander's aberrant doctrine of justification the inevitable soteriological implications of a consistently-held Lutheran Christology and sacramentology.' Mark A. Garcia, *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin's Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), p. 246.

Garcia's interpretation is a fresh treatment, worthy of consideration. But there are serious challenges for the thesis to overcome on historical, theological and history-of-reception grounds. Historically, Garcia's argument is one of inference based upon the parallels between Calvin's soteriological debate with Osiander and his sacramental debate with the Lutherans. Yet, Calvin did not make this connection explicit, or directly suggest in the Osiander dispute that he was attacking Gnesio-Lutheran soteriology. To the contrary, historical circumstances could suggest that Calvin was doing quite the opposite: defending his Reformational orthodoxy in his 1559 attack upon Osiander, and thus defending his commonality with Lutherans in their forensic doctrine of justification. As Garcia also notes, since Osiander died in 1552, a key part of Calvin's 1559 'dispute' with Osiander is to distance himself from this disowned Lutheran who was known as heretical, since Calvin himself had been accused of being Osiandrian.⁷⁶ But this sets a peculiar rhetorical context for what Garcia claims to take place: a below-the-surface, read-between-the-lines attack upon his accusers, rather than a more direct defense of his Reformational orthodoxy on the forensic character of justification. As shown in the portrayal above, justification was a point on which Calvin saw himself in considerable continuity with early Lutheranism and their protest against Rome. Why would Calvin move away from his earlier efforts to cultivate unity with Lutherans on this central point of doctrine? And if he did so, why would Calvin be so indirect about such a significant change in his position?

The theological problem with this interpretation is that it consistently uses a formulation like that of Schneckengerber to set up a contrast between Calvin and the Lutherans, seeing 'the *duplex gratia* as a consequence of union with Christ' for Calvin,⁷⁷ in contrast to early Lutheran literature, in which often 'justification and salvation were equated',⁷⁸ and which construes sanctification as the 'necessary effect' of justification.⁷⁹ Indeed, Garcia's contrast goes so far as to suggest that the Lutheran tendency to see sanctification as flowing from justification (as a cause) can undermine the forensic character of justification itself – a quite astonishing claim in light of early Lutheran insistence upon the forensic character of justification.⁸⁰ As my portrayal above suggests, a theological account relying upon such stark contrasts involves a questionable interpretation of Calvin, as well as of early Lutheran sources. While at other points Garcia does say that there was still 'significant continuity' between early Lutherans and Reformed (namely, Calvin) on soteriology, there is a

76 Garcia, *Life in Christ*, p. 215.

77 Garcia, *Life in Christ*, pp. 240–1.

78 Garcia, *Life in Christ*, pp. 240–2.

79 Garcia, *Life in Christ*, pp. 206–7. This comment from Garcia is about the thought of Melancthon, in particular.

80 'Rooting sanctification in justification as its cause would also appear to forfeit a cardinal Reformation concern in justification, for it would attribute to justification a generative and ultimately transformative, and thus not a purely declarative and forensic, nature.' Garcia, *Life in Christ*, p. 264.

'subtle but significant difference' between the two in how they relate justification and sanctification.⁸¹ Ultimately, Calvin's 1559 Osiander refutation 'marks the inception of an *explicit* divergence between Lutheran and Reformed in the area of salvation'.⁸²

Yet, the claim for the late 'inception' of this Lutheran-Reformed 'divergence' forces Garcia into a difficult position on the continuity between Calvin and the later Reformed tradition. Although Garcia is appreciative of the work of Richard Muller and others who emphasize the continuity between Calvin and 'the Calvinists', Garcia has to admit that what he considers to be a more 'Lutheran' account of justification and sanctification 'appears to have become standard' in later Reformed theology.⁸³ Garcia claims to identify the largely implicit yet emphatic essential soteriological difference between the Reformed and Lutherans, and in doing so, he has ended up where the 'Reformed versus the Lutherans' historiographic thesis tends to put one: claiming that Calvin is, indeed, in dramatic discontinuity with 'the Calvinists', because Calvin held the key insight to what was distinctively Reformed, which was either missed or abandoned by later Reformed theology.

In addition to the historical and history-of-reception challenges to Garcia's thesis, Garcia's theological account has a weakness in the way in which he (and Marcus Johnson)⁸⁴ correlate several genuine insights that they have about Calvin's theology of union with Christ. As Garcia points out, Calvin's language does, in fact, mirror the language of Chalcedon, for the gifts of the *duplex gratia* are 'without mixture' and yet 'without division' and 'without separation'. Moreover, both are correct in asserting that the gifts are 'simultaneous', in Calvin's view. The problem comes in the inference that there can be no logical ordering in the relationship between the two, and that a forensic justification is logically compromised if sanctification is said to 'flow' from it. On an interpretive level, numerous texts on this issue were noted above which suggest that there is an important sense in which sanctification is the 'second of these gifts'.⁸⁵ But this interpretive dispute appears to relate not only to texts, but to logical possibilities. The question is not whether sanctification is of secondary value,⁸⁶ or whether salvation itself is sufficiently construed as 'justification' such that sanctification becomes an afterthought. For Calvin, both gifts of the *duplex gratia* are significant and salvation is constituted by justification and sanctification in Christ together, not just justification. Yet, there is still a sense in which sanctification as a life of gratitude is profoundly dependent upon the forensic declaration of justification in a way that shows a non-temporal 'ordering' between the two. The nature of sanctification as gratitude – in response to justification – is a wide-ranging theme in Calvin's theology, penetrating his theology of prayer, the sacraments and many aspects of his teaching on the Christian life, as

81 Garcia, *Life in Christ*, p. 252.

82 Garcia, *Life in Christ*, p. 251.

83 Garcia, *Life in Christ*, p. 267.

84 See Johnson, 'A Reply to Thomas Wenger', pp. 552–8.

85 *Institutes* 3:11:1.

86 See Johnson, 'A Reply to Thomas Wenger', pp. 552–3.

shown briefly above.⁸⁷ The internal renewal by the Spirit of sanctification is, indeed, simultaneous and inseparable from justification. But the ordering between the two gifts of the *duplex gratia* provides the key context for sanctification as Spirit-empowered, voluntary gratitude rather than moral calculus.

In sum, while interpretive debates will continue about Calvin's theology of union with Christ and the double grace, it is important not to lose sight of the forest for the trees. In general, there is broad agreement in recent studies that Calvin's theology of union with Christ and the double grace is a very significant soteriological motif in Calvin, and, indeed, a very rich motif in its biblical-exegetical, theological and pastoral dimensions. It is a topic in which Calvin drew constructively upon the Church Fathers, which he integrated into his pastoral instruction on the Christian life and wove together with his trinitarian and christological motifs. It provides connection points to his sacramental theology, his ecclesiology, his theology of the *imago dei*, his ethics and his eschatology. Weaving together the biblical images of union, engrafting, participation and adoption, Calvin's theology of the double grace of union with Christ by the Spirit is an expansive, multifaceted 'sum' of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

87 Also see Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, chs. 4–5.