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When Martin Luther traveled to Schmalkald to present his articles to the princes in December of 1537, one of those with him was Andreas Osiander (1498–1552) who had been with him also at Marburg (1529) and was a trusted, even if controversial, friend. At Schmalkald, Luther was confessing and preaching that "through faith we receive a different, new, clean heart and that, for the sake of Christ our mediator, God will and does regard us as completely righteous and holy. Although sin is not completely gone or dead, God will nevertheless not count it or consider it" (SA III, 13, 1).

While Luther was saying what he had "consistently taught," Osiander was suggesting quite another doctrine, namely justification by faith on the basis of the indwelling Christ. By 1548 Osiander became more explicit and by 1550 publicly controversial. After Luther’s death and because of an academic position in Königsberg (in eastern Prussia; now Kaliningrad, Russia), he was required to articulate his views publicly. He did so in a 1550 disputation in which he rejected what he considered, in David Steinmetz’s words, the "cold doctrine of forensic justification." However cold it might have been, a heated conflict erupted immediately. His views


4 See Martin Chemnitz, “Judgment on Certain Controversies Concerning Certain Articles of the Augsburg Confession Which Have Recently Arisen and Caused Controversy,” in *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and James

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were denounced on all sides as contrary to the Protestant understanding of Scripture.

Since that time, despite the many internal disagreements on other questions, there has been among confessional Protestants a remarkably unified doctrine of forensic justification, that is, the notion that justification is a definitive divine declaration that a person, though intrinsically sinful, is in fact legally righteous in "in foro divino." Nevertheless, in the modern period there has been a vigorous assertion to the effect that, despite the fact that he was rejected by Protestant confessionalists in the sixteenth century, Osiander's doctrine of justification was more faithful to the Scriptures than that of the Protestant confessional tradition, which is seen as originating from Philipp Melanchthon.

This essay is in four parts. In the first section, I survey the ways Luther has been interpreted in the modern period. In the second, Luther's doctrine of justification is set in its medieval context. The third section sketches the development of Luther's doctrine of justification. The last section offers a detailed survey of Luther's doctrine of justification as it came to expression in 1535-1536.

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5 The *Confessio Augustana*, Part 1, Art. 4 says that believers are "iustificantur propter Christum per fidem . . ." [Phillip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 3.10.] The Second Helvetic Confession, Art. 15.3-4 (Schaff, *Creeds*, 3.266-67) affirms that the ground of justification is "the iustitiam Christi" that God imputes to us. God justifies sinners "propter Christum" and they receive that grace "per fidem" and "sola fide in Christum . . ." *Belgic Confession* Art. 23 says that sinners are justified "propter Iesum Christum" and that by faith we "soli Iesu Christi crucifixi obedientiae innixi . . ." [H. A. Niemeyer, *Collectio Confessionum in Ecclesiis Reformatis Publicatarum* (Leipzig: Julius Klinkhardt, 1840), 374.] *Heidelberg Catechism* question 60 says that before God we are "iustus" "sola fide in Iesum Christum" whereby "mihi perfecta satisfactio, iustitia et sanctitas Christi, imputetur ac donetur" so that it is as though "eam obedientiam, quam pro me Christus praestitissem" (Niemeyer, *Collectio*, 442). Finally, the Epitome of the *Formula of Concord* 3.2 says that God "donat atque imputat nobis iustitiam obedientia Christi." In 3.3 "solum fidem esse illud medium et instrumentum" by which the sinner lays hold of Christ and his righteousness (Schaff, *Creeds*, 3.116).
I. The Issue and Methodological Problems

Whether and to what degree Philipp Melanchthon was faithful to Luther's theology is a question beyond the scope of this study. It is necessary to note, however, that it has been a controversial question since the mid-1530s and is at the heart of Lutheran denominational disagreements. Melanchthon has long been a convenient whipping boy for those who have wished to separate Luther from Protestant orthodoxy. According to Peter C. Hodgson, the great Pietist Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714)

ascribes to Melanchthon an even greater share in the deplorable turn of events that in so short a time were taken by the Reformation. He brought more darkness and error into theology than light and strength, Arnold maintains, since he prepared and opened the way for corrupted reason to suppress the simplicity of Christian doctrine and to pervert the truth by pompous, quarrelsome speculation.6

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, at least, it has become a datum for many that the confessional Protestant doctrine of justification was not only theologically misguided, but was also Melanchthon's—not Luther's—child.

Virtually any topic in Luther studies is important because Luther is massively important. To some degree, all Protestants derive their identity from Luther. This makes studying him particularly difficult. Whoever controls the "Luther story" has gained a powerful advantage in claiming to represent authentic Protestant teaching. For this reason there have been many Luthers: for Pietists, Luther became the man of the Turmerlebnis; for modernists, the anti-authoritarian hero; and for some contemporary interpreters of Luther, he has become the theologian of theotic union with Christ.

The study of Luther's doctrine of justification also faces the challenge of the rejection of the forensic understanding of justification. Since the nineteenth century, the relational (or participationist) approach to understanding justification has quite eclipsed the forensic.7 Whereas in the

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7 E.g., Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004). Generally the turn to participationist
earlier period, the real was the rational (or empirical) and *vice versa*, in our age the real is the relational and the relational is the real. The theological influence of this hermeneutical move is evident in a number of recent works. In the present culture, to say that justification is primarily forensic is the rhetorical equivalent of saying that one teaches an implausible, cold, impersonal, and even arbitrary doctrine of justification.\(^8\)


Students of Luther's doctrine of justification also face the daunting task of attempting to account for a doctrine that was at the center of one of the most significant theological revolutions in the last two millennia and which is a moving target. Luther's doctrine of justification was one thing in 1513 and became another by 1536. This development, and the failure (or refusal) to observe it carefully, has also contributed to confusion.

In contrast to much, but not all, Luther scholarship since the nineteenth century, I contend that, read against his medieval background, the imputation of Christ's alien righteousness was essential to Luther's Protestant doctrine of justification. Put negatively, the modern attempt to revise the confessionalist account of Luther's doctrine of justification, whereby Luther is said to have taught justification on the basis of a theotic and not legal union with Christ, has the effect of making Luther repudiate his own Reformation doctrine of justification in favor of an intrinsic ground of justification before God, namely Christ's presence by virtue of union. If the revisionist account of Luther is historical, then Osiander was correct to claim that he was the true heir of Luther's doctrine of justification.9

II. The Quest for the Luther of History

Over the past century the confessional Protestant account of Luther's doctrine of justification has been called into question as a misrepresentation. The implication is that if we would be faithful to the Luther of history over against the Luther of faith, we should repudiate the accretions layered upon Luther's gospel by Protestant orthodoxy and return to the genuine Luther.

According to the confessional Protestant story, where the medieval theologians and the Council of Trent following them taught a realistic doctrine of progressive justification through sanctification, Luther's great theological breakthrough was a forensic, definitive, non-realistic (i.e., non-infusionist) doctrine of justification. He taught that Christ's righteousness is extra nos. The righteousness, on the basis of which sinners are declared righteous before God is alien to them and proper to Christ: it is nothing but

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his obedience for his people imputed to sinners and received through faith that trusts in Christ and his finished work.10

Scholars within and without Protestant confessionalism, both Reformed and Lutheran (R. Seeberg, B. B. Warfield, and the more recent scholarship of T. H. L. Parker, Berndt Hamm, François Wendel, W. Stanford Reid, David Steinmetz, and Brian Gerrish) have held that the confessional Protestant doctrine of justification had its roots in Martin Luther.11 The orthodox Lutheran identification with Luther is no surprise, but some might be surprised to learn the degree to which the Reformed orthodox identified with Luther on this point. It was J. H. Alsted, a seventeenth-

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century Reformed orthodox theologian, who said that the doctrine of justification is the *articulus cadentis et stantis ecclesiae*.\(^{12}\)

In his early account of Luther’s doctrine of justification, Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1898) described Luther’s view as a personal experience of forgiveness.\(^{13}\) He read Luther as a proto-modern. According to David W. Lotz, Ritschl argued that, in response to Roman criticisms and Melanchthon’s influence, Luther’s doctrine of justification converged with Melanchthon’s more forensic doctrine.\(^{14}\) As James Stayer has noted, Ritschl argued that after the second century, “speculative metaphysics had encroached upon Christianity . . . .”\(^{15}\) According to Gerhard O. Forde, Ritschl found an ambiguity inherent in the Protestant doctrine of justification. Luther never settled the relations between justification and rebirth. The orthodox solution to the problem committed orthodoxy necessarily to abstract metaphysics.\(^{16}\) Ritschl attempted to solve this problem “by describing Christ’s work solely in terms of its actual historical significance in the community rather than in terms of some objective past transaction; in this way the act of justification will always occur simultaneously with the subjective experience of rebirth.”\(^{17}\) Forde contended that Ritschl conflated Luther with Kant and reversed his order of law and gospel.\(^{18}\)

According to Ritschl, Philipp Melanchthon is the true founder of the Lutheran church and a symptom of the decline of Protestant orthodoxy. In his *Die Christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung* (1870-1874),\(^{19}\) Ritschl argued that with his adoption of the law-gospel distinction and in works such as *De servo arbitrio* (1525; which Luther regarded with his Large Catechism as

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\(^{13}\) David W. Lotz, *Ritschl and Luther: A Fresh Perspective on Albrecht Ritschl’s Theology in Light of His Luther Study* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon, 1974), 32.

\(^{14}\) Lotz, *Ritschl*, 32-33.


his most valuable work) kerygma became dogma: Luther fell victim to the corrupting forces of orthodoxy.20

Adolph von Harnack (1851-1930) chronicled Luther’s reformation as a rise and decline of charismatic religion into “doctrine, ceremony and organization.”21 For Harnack, the German spirit and Protestantism were almost (or should be) indistinguishable.22 Using the kerygma-to-dogma analysis, he argued that Melanchthon and other epigones of Luther “abandoned the ‘sola fides’ doctrine” in favor of synergism.23 Harnack’s Luther was the restorer of ancient, biblical, Pauline dogma par excellence.24 Luther’s simple, powerful, and existential religion was corrupted by the epigones into systematic theology.25 Justification was not a single doctrine but rather “the fundamental form of the Christian’s state.”26

What is new is not that in a scrupulous and scholastic way Luther separated the justificatio and sanctification, and regarded the former as a forensic act (actus forensis), taking place once for all; that is the wisdom of the Epigones, who were always great in distinctions . . . .27

Harnack granted that the non-imputation of sin and the imputation of righteousness is part of what was new about Luther’s doctrine of justification, but it is much more than that. Justification is “being righteous and becoming righteous.”28 In this conclusion, he anticipated aspects of the so-called Luther Renaissance.29

In a speech delivered in 1906, Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) argued, quite rightly in my opinion, that there was a clear distinction between, as Brian Gerrish summarizes it, Alt and Neuprotestantismus.30 The pre-modern

20 Stayer, Luther, 5–6.
21 Stayer, Luther, 8.
22 Harnack, History of Dogma, 7:171.
26 Harnack, History of Dogma, 7:207.
27 Harnack, History of Dogma, 7:207.
29 Stayer, Luther, 11.
30 S. A. Riddoch, “The Ernst Troeltsch-Karl Holl Controversy and the Writing of
world was a church civilization, determined by objective, divinely revealed norms. In the modern world, by contrast, authority is determined by the inherent power of an idea to produce conviction through demonstrating its rationality.\(^{31}\) Luther, he argued in contrast to Ritschl, belonged to the old, pre-modern, pre-critical world.\(^{32}\) He was asking essentially pre-modern questions, about heaven, hell, and salvation.\(^{33}\) “Atonement, therefore, becomes the central doctrine of Protestantism. . . .”\(^{34}\) What Troeltsch recognized, in effect, was that Protestantism was premised on a kind of Creator-creature distinction not shared by most medieval theologians, in that it rejected the notion of an ontological \textit{reditus ad Deum}, but that, in many ways, the Reformation was a re-shaping of medieval ideas.\(^{35}\)

Karl Holl (1886–1926), one of the principal sources of the so-called Luther Renaissance, was present for, and horrified by, Troeltsch’s argument. He reacted to what he perceived to be Troeltsch’s marginalization of Luther.\(^{36}\) He criticized Troeltsch’s Luther scholarship as too reliant on secondary material, biased, unhistorical, and colored by his political commitments.\(^{37}\) The so-called Luther Renaissance was marked by

\(^{31}\) Troeltsch, \textit{Protestantism}, 23–24. Stayer has argued quite persuasively that, in fact, there was no Luther Renaissance. He argues that Holl’s supposed re-discovery of the “Luther History” by finding in Luther what was neither familiar to confessionalism or \textit{Kulturprotestantismus} is really more German cultural mythology than history.


\(^{33}\) Riddoch, “Troeltsch-Holl,” 2–3.


\(^{35}\) Troeltsch, \textit{Social Teaching}, 2:477–484. It might be argued that the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) not only denounced Joachim of Fiore (cap. 2) but asserted a doctrine of analogy. Joachim was condemned, however, for his errors on the Trinity not for teaching an ontic continuum between God and humans. The Council held: “. . . quia inter creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda.” See H. Denzinger, \textit{Enchiridion Symbolorum}. 30th ed. (Friburgi: Herder, 1955), 202. It is not clear that this affirmation of analogy is materially identical to the Reformation distinction between the Creator and the creature.

\(^{36}\) Stayer, \textit{Luther}, xii–xiv, 3–4. Stayer argues provocatively that Holl and the Barthians who succeeded him were actually, like Nietzsche, anti-modern modernists.

\(^{37}\) Carolyn Donine Ocheltree, “The Medieval and Renaissance Luther: A Study of Ernst Troeltsch’s and Karl Holl’s Interpretation of Luther” (M.A. thesis, University of
a new sophistication in Luther study, the recovery of source materials such as Luther's lectures on Romans, the use of the relatively new Weimar edition of *Luther's Works*, the interpretation of Luther against the broader backdrop of the history of Western theology, and a careful reading of Luther in his original context.

These methods were not in themselves objectionable. As Thomas Brady, James Stayer, and others have noted, however, Holl's study of Luther, was not naïve. It occurred in multiple contexts. First, he had a polemical interest in Luther. He had a passionate hatred for Roman Catholicism and was responding to virulently provocative criticism of Luther by Roman scholars such as Heinrich Denifle (1844-1905), who argued that Luther's doctrine of justification necessarily produced immorality. These criticisms were not new but they had a new plausibility and posed a greater threat because Denifle had trumped Lutheran scholars by re-discovering Luther's lectures on Romans. These criticisms may have spurred Holl toward distancing Luther from Lutheran orthodoxy.

In response, Holl engaged in a sort of quest for the historical Luther, parallel to the quest for the historical Jesus. He rejected Luther's own recollection about his breakthrough as the confused or self-interested recollection of an old man. This move allowed Holl to blur the distinction between Luther's earlier sub-Protestant views from his later more developed views. Thus, according to Holl, as with Ritschl and von Harnack, Luther made no sharp distinction between being made righteous and being declared righteous. That distinction belonged to orthodoxy. He identified Luther's Augustinian turn, in the course of the *Dictata super psalterium* (1513-1514), with Protestantism. The wedge driven between

California Los Angeles, 1982), 41.


39 T. A. Brady, s.v., "Luther Renaissance," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*.


41 This approach has been influential not only among Ritschlians, but also among modern Evangelicals. G. W. Bromiley, "The Doctrine of Justification in Luther," *Evangelical Quarterly* 24 (1952): 91-100.

42 Stayer, *Luther*, 33-38.
Luther and Melanchthon by Ritschl, Harnack, and Holl has become a datum.  

Second, Holl had a powerful cultural interest in Luther. For Holl, as for Ritschl and Harnack, German culture was closely identified with Luther. Troeltsch had argued that Calvinism was better suited to the modern world than Lutheranism. In turn, Holl saw the First World War as a conflict between Lutheranism and Calvinism. In his 1917 address, What did Luther Understand by Religion?, he waxed eloquent on Lutheran Christianity and German identity. Brady argues that, having rejected German liberalism and the identity of Luther with Wilhelmine culture after the war, Holl found in Luther the basis for post-liberal theology, a way to marginalize both pietism and orthodoxy and a reason to continue to identify Luther with German Christianity. To suggest that Luther was no longer relevant was, in effect, to suggest that Germany was no longer relevant. Indeed, according to Brady, the chief aim of the so-called Luther Renaissance was to "demonstrate the relevance of Martin Luther's theology to the Modern world."

Alister McGrath has added his voice to those who see forensic justification as foreign to Luther. "Luther himself did not teach a doctrine of forensic justification in the strict sense. The concept of a forensic justification necessitates a deliberate and systematic distinction between justification and regeneration, a distinction which is not found in Luther's earlier works." He argues that it was Melanchthon who turned to the forensic doctrine, inspired in part by Erasmus' Novum Instrumentum (1516), in which Erasmus had replaced the Vulgate's reputatam with imputatam.

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43 So fixed has the Luther v. Melanchthon interpretation become that Carl Braaten (following a 1947 essay by Richard Caemmerer) has even written of a "Melanchthonian Blight" (i.e., synergism) on the Lutheran Church. See Carl E. Braaten, "The Melanchthonian Blight," Dialog 25 (1986): 82-83. See also the response by Mark Ellingsen, "Ecumenical Implications of the 'Melanchthonian Blight,'" Dialog 25 (1986): 299-301.

44 Stayer, Luther, 25-27.

45 Brady, "Luther Renaissance."

46 Brady, "Luther Renaissance."


48 See Alister E. McGrath, "Justification—'Making Just' or 'Declaring Just'? A Neglected Aspect of the Ecumenical Discussion on Justification," The Churchman 96
In a 1994 essay, Stephen Strehle argued that the concept of forensic justification came not from Luther but from Melanchthon's adaptation of Nominalism, beginning in his 1532 commentary on Romans. He turned to the Franciscan-Nominalist and voluntarist understanding of acceptance as an expression of the divine will. According to Strehle, Melanchthon was caught between Anselm and Ockham. As a result, Melanchthon reduced Luther's (and Calvin's) doctrine of justification by union with Christ to a one-dimensional, forensic system.

The so-called New Finnish School says that Luther did not teach a forensic doctrine of justification, but rather justification by theosis, participation in the divine being. Tuomo Mannermaa argues that, for Luther, there was no real distinction between justification and

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50 Strehle, Imputatio, 207.

51 Strehle, Imputatio, 218.

Clark: *Justitia Imputata Christi* 281

sanctification.\(^53\) He contends that the “idea of participation and/or *theosis* is fundamental for one’s understanding of various *loki* in Luther’s theology.”\(^54\) In *Christ Present By Faith*, he sets Luther against Lutheran confessionalism, arguing that, for Luther, “justifying faith does not merely signify a reception of the forgiveness imputed to a human being for the sake of the merit of Christ, which is the aspect emphasized by the *Formula of Concord.*”\(^55\) Justification means “participation in God’s essence in Christ.”\(^56\) The happy exchange is not forensic, but personal and even ontic. Christ takes upon himself “the sinful person of a human being and bestows his own righteous person upon him or her.”\(^57\) Justification is a kind of communication of attributes between the sinner and Christ.\(^58\) He argues that Luther did not reject the medieval doctrine of justification by *fides formata caritate* because it was realistic, but because the medievals replaced Christ with love.\(^59\) Further, Luther did not oppose *theosis per se*; he opposed any view of *theosis* that has us moving “toward transcendence” rather than receiving the fullness of Christ’s deity in faith.\(^60\)

Though critical of Mannermaa and affirming the Lutheran confessions, Kurt Marquart (1934–2006) notes Luther’s 1526 comment: “God pours out his dear Son over us and pours Himself into us and draws us into Himself, so that He becomes completely humanified (*vermenschet*) and we become completely deified (*ganzt und gar vergottet*, ‘Godded-through’) and everything is altogether one thing, God, Christ, and you.”\(^61\) He appeals to a 1525 sermon in which Luther said that, by union with Christ, we have

\[\ldots\] everything that He is and can do, be fully in us and mightily work, that we be completely deified (*vergottet*), not that we have a particle or only some pieces of God, but all fullness. Much has been written about

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\(^{53}\) Mannermaa, “Justification and Theosis,” in *Union With Christ*, 38.


\(^{56}\) Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 17.

\(^{57}\) Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 17.

\(^{58}\) Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 17. He says that Luther thinks of the presence of Christ through faith “realistically” (21).


\(^{60}\) Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 29.

how man should be deified; there they made ladders, on which one should climb into heaven, and much of that sort of thing.  

He concludes by lamenting that Lutheranism has lost this aspect of Luther's theology under the influence of alien philosophical influences.  

Most recently, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen has taken the New Finnish school as his starting point for unapologetically reinterpreting Luther's doctrine of justification along theotic lines.  

Mark Seifrid has followed this approach arguing that the doctrine of justification on the basis of Christ's righteousness imputed is Melanchthon's and not Luther's.  

Not everyone, however, adopted the various revisionist analyses.  

Paul Althaus (1888-1966), who succeeded Holl as president of the Luther Gesellschaft, continued to represent a more or less confessionalist reading of Luther, arguing that for Luther justification (considered narrowly) is the non-imputation of sin and the imputation of Christ's alien righteousness to the sinner.  

He recognized that Luther was willing to speak of justification  

62 WA 17.1:438 See Marquart, “Luther and Theosis,” 197. The older English translation had, “much has been written about the way we are to become godlike.” See Martin Luther, The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther, tr. and ed. J. N. Lenker. 7 vols (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 4:2, 280.  

63 Marquart, “Luther and Theosis,” 197. “When one ponders the lively, full-blooded realism of Luther's theology, one can only wonder how such a legacy could have been so tragically squandered in world 'Lutheranism' over the centuries.”  

64 Kärkkäinen, One with God, 37-66. Given the very strong criticisms (see below) of the New Finnish School by historians, it is surprising to see the author simply assuming the correctness of their thesis.  


66 Contra Seifrid's claim that “[v]irtually everything I have to say here will be regarded as commonplace not only by reformation scholars, but by European theologians in general”; see “Luther, Melanchthon and Paul,” 138.  

more broadly, in a way that included moral renewal, but that justification is not proper or before God. He criticized Holl for allowing the latter aspect to overshadow the former so that Holl abandoned Luther’s “on account of Christ” in the sense of the imputation of Christ’s alien righteousness.68

Robert D. Preus (1924-1995) argued that far from corrupting Luther’s doctrine of justification, among the much maligned spokesman of seventeenth century Lutheran Orthodoxy no “other article of faith is developed by Lutheran theology with such conscious dependence upon Luther as the article of justification.”69 Whereas one can read Chemnitz, Gerhard, and Quenstedt for pages on the sacraments with no reference to Luther, when they come to justification they often simply paraphrased Luther.70 Gerhard Forde (1927-2005) criticized Holl’s account of Luther as still trapped within the Ritschlian paradigm (gospel before law).71 He argued that Holl made Luther’s a "religion of conscience," thus confusing Luther for Kant.72 For Bengt Hägglund, the differences between Melanchthon and Luther have been over-estimated and overplayed.73 Recognizing divergence over free-will, the Lord’s Supper, and church politics,74 he nevertheless calls attention to Melanchthon’s unwavering commitment to sola gratia and to Luther’s own high estimate of Melanchthon. Helmer Junghans has criticized the attempt to find a doctrine of theosis in Luther on the grounds that it ignores the fundamental and determinative nature and function of Luther’s distinction between the theologia crucis and the theologia gloriae.75

Lowell C. Green has also criticized Mannermaa’s construal of Luther for failing to observe the distinction between the earlier and later Luther, and for quoting Luther selectively. From an historian’s point of view, Green criticizes Mannermaa’s heavy-handed and systematic-theological


68 Althaus, Theology of Martin Luther, 241.
70 Preus, “Classical Lutheran Orthodoxy,” 24-25.
71 Forde, Law-Gospel Debate, 129.
72 Forde, Law-Gospel Debate, 130.
75 Helmar Junghans, “Luther und die Welt der Reformation,” 125-129.
appropriation of Luther regardless of the Reformer's context and historical development.\textsuperscript{76} Green notes that in Schmalkald Article I, on justification, Luther spoke not a word about \textit{theosis} or theotic union and much about Christ's substitutionary atonement.\textsuperscript{77} When Luther wrote of the "Joyful Exchange" (\textit{der fröhliche Wechsel}), he never implied an ontological but only a legal transaction.\textsuperscript{78} According to Green, relations between Melanchthon and Luther were "much more complex than is commonly recognized . . . ."\textsuperscript{79} Melanchthon was not "willing to sacrifice evangelical truth upon the altar of metaphysical philosophy."\textsuperscript{80} He rejects completely the notion that Melanchthon "merely took Luther's teachings and pressed them into scholastic formulations."\textsuperscript{81}

Bernd Moeller and others have criticized Holl for failing to locate Luther in his social context. Further, too many modern appropriations of both Troeltsch and Holl have failed to understand them against their own background of the World War I Germany.\textsuperscript{82} Carl Trueman has made some of the most pointed and useful criticisms of the Finnish school. He accuses them of disregarding the methods of modern-Luther historiography and of being inattentive to the hermeneutics and development in Luther's writings. According to Trueman, if the question is whether "in fact" the Finnish School "represents a fair and proper interpretation of what Luther himself actually believed" the answer must be no.\textsuperscript{83}

Heiko Oberman put the question of the relation of justification to union in Luther as clearly as anyone. In 1966 he wrote of an argument between those who interpret Luther to teach "imputatio-justification over against" those who interpret Luther to teach "unio-justification."\textsuperscript{84} This is exactly the question.

\textsuperscript{76} Green, "The Question of Theosis," 168-175.
\textsuperscript{77} Green, "The Question of Theosis," 169.
\textsuperscript{78} WA, 7:25, 34; LW 31:352.
\textsuperscript{80} Green, "Melanchthon's Relations to Scholasticism," 285.
\textsuperscript{81} Green, "Melanchthon's Relations to Scholasticism" 285.
\textsuperscript{82} Riddoch, "The Ernst Troeltsch-Karl Holl Controversy and the Writing of Reformation History," 13-15.
\textsuperscript{84} Heiko A. Oberman, "'Iustitia Christi' and 'Iustitia Dei:' Luther and the Scholastic
III. The Medieval Background

It is impossible to understand the development of Luther’s Protestant doctrine of justification without some grasp of the views he came to reject. For our purposes, it is essential that one understand that there was a broad consensus in medieval theology that one is ordinarily justified because and to the degree that one is intrinsically sanctified, whether as a necessity because of the divine nature (as in realism) or as a consequence of an apparently arbitrary divine will (as in voluntarism), whether from a strongly predestinarian standpoint (e.g., Bradwardine) or a Pelagianizing approach (e.g., Ockham). Justification was a process begun at baptism and ordinarily concluded only at the judgment. This process was described in different ways with differing degrees of emphasis on the nature and role of human cooperation, but, in virtually every pre-Reformation scheme, God is said to have taken the initiative (gratia praeveniens) to infuse within the sinner divine grace. By all accounts, the sinner was obligated to cooperate with that grace toward final justification. In the medieval schemes, grace begins as alien to the sinner but, for righteousness to result, it cannot remain alien but it must become proper. Peter Lombard (c. 1100-1160) represents the consensus through the twelfth century: the ground of justification was proper, intrinsic righteousness, which is the product of created grace and cooperation with that grace.\(^85\)

In his analysis of Osiander’s theology, Robert Kolb has noted the influence of neo-Platonism as an underlying ontological assumption in his doctrine of justification.\(^86\) This dependence, however, did not begin with Osiander. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1224-1274) was also deeply influenced by neo-Platonism, which is evident in his doctrine of participation in the divine essence. Grace, he taught, is “God’s action in us leading us to union with him.”\(^87\)

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Nothing can act beyond its species, since the cause must always be more powerful than its effect. Now the gift of grace surpasses every capability of created nature, since it is nothing short of a partaking of the Divine Nature, which exceeds every other nature. And thus it is impossible that any creature should cause grace. For it is as necessary that God alone should deify (deificet), bestowing a partaking (participatio) of the Divine Nature by a participated likeness, as it is impossible that anything save fire should enkindle.  

For Thomas, justification is sanctification and that is participation in the divine nature. Though the evidence that Luther was directly aware of Thomas's theology is disputed, those who attribute to Luther a doctrine of justification by theotic union are guilty of Thomafying or more accurately, Platonizing him.

Gabriel Biel (c. 1420-1495) upheld the doctrine of justification by proper righteousness. We are justified by grace and free will. With virtually the entire pre-Reformation Western church, merit was said to presuppose the free cooperation with grace. Grace is nothing other than infused charity. Though the Sixth Session of the Council of Trent (1547) met after Luther's death and formulated their language in reaction to Luther, it is nevertheless a pointedly accurate summary of the prevailing medieval doctrine of justification. Those who argue that Luther taught justification

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89 Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 262.
92 According to chapter three, it is only those to whom "the merit of His passion is communicated." In chapter four, justification is "translation" to a "state of grace" effected through the "laver of regeneration." In chapter five, the "beginning of justification" is said "to be derived from the prevenient grace of God." Sinners are "disposed through His quickening and assisting grace." They must cooperate with existing, assisting grace. Justification follows preparation. It is "not remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man, through the voluntary reception of the grace, and of the gifts, whereby man of unjust becomes just..

by theotic union with Christ must show that Luther turned away from one intrinsic ground of justification (prevenient grace and cooperation with grace) to another intrinsic ground, namely Christ inherent in the believer. I do not think that the revisionists have made that case.

IV. Luther's Gradual Development

One is sometimes left with the impression that Luther only mentioned his turn to his Reformation view of justification in the 1545 preface to his Latin writings, but such is not the case. The same basic account occurred more than once in Luther's writings. For example, in his 1541 lecture on Genesis 27, he described his frustration with the Roman system of progressive justification. He recounted his struggle over and discovery of the true meaning of Romans 1:17. The key to his new understanding was his use of forensic categories. The righteousness by which we are justified is extrinsic and received through faith.

Scholars have too often focused on what Heiko Oberman called the "romantic and unrealistic" notion of a "one-time breakthrough." For example, Holl failed to recognize the development in Luther's theology in the period 1513-1521. As a consequence, he used as a baseline to determine Luther's doctrine of justification things Luther said in that period but that he later rejected. It is more historical to say that gradually, from 1513 to

...” We are “not only reputed, but are truly called, and are, just, receiving justice within us ... according to each one’s proper disposition and co-operation.” In justification, the “charity of God is poured forth, by the Holy Spirit, in the hearts of those that are justified, and is inherent therein: whence, man, through Jesus Christ, in whom he is ingrafted, receives, in the said justification, together with the remission of sins, all these (gifts) infused at once, faith, hope, and charity.” What is significant about this passage is the clarity with which it expressed the medieval conviction that justification is the product of union with Christ, which, in turn, produces inherent, intrinsic righteousness, with which the sinner must cooperate in order to be finally justified. Faith is assent to the dogma of the church, and also a trust in Christ and his merits, but it exists only to the degree it is “formed by love.” Since justification is a process, “no one can know with a certainty of faith ... that he has obtained the grace of God.” See Trent, Session 6, chapters 4–7, 9.

93 LW 5:157-158; WA 43:537.

94 Scholars have cast doubt of Luther's later recollection of this same episode, but it is completely credible to say that at age 58 Luther could still remember clearly the nature and period of his new understanding of justification.

1521, Luther came to reject the doctrine of progressive justification in favor of the forensic doctrine of definitive justification. Denifle, Stayer, and Green are correct in saying that there was an early and later Luther.96 Holl’s approach to Luther’s 1545 preface to his Latin works was clumsy. There is no good reason to doubt the reformer’s own account: “I did not learn my theology all at once, but had to search deeper for it, where my temptations took me.”97

In 1966, Heiko Oberman offered what he justly described as a sober interpretation of the so-called Turmerlebnis.98 Oberman argued that Luther was not describing a sudden, unprepared vision.99 What Luther discovered, in medieval terms, is that “the heart of the gospel is that the iustitia Christi and the iustitia Dei coincide and are granted simultaneously.”100

Green has noted that “scholars have not been careful enough in the past in using the terms faith and grace in the early Luther.”101 As we observed in Holl, as a consequence of this blurry reading of Luther, scholars have overlooked “the process by which he . . . gradually came to” his “mature convictions.” 102 Graham Tomlin has also criticized Holl’s approach in favor of a progressive understanding of Luther’s theological development to his Reformation views.103 Recently, Timothy George has suggested quite

96 Stayer, Luther, 122.
97 WATR 1:146, 12-14 as translated in Gordon Rupp, Luther’s Progress to the Diet of Worms 1521 (London: SCM Press LTD, 1951), 38.
98 Oberman, “‘Iustitia Christi’ and ‘Iustitia Dei,’” 1-26.
99 Oberman, “‘Iustitia Christi’ and ‘Iustitia Dei,’” 7-8.
100 Oberman, “‘Iustitia Christi’ and ‘Iustitia Dei,’” 19. Oberman’s point is well taken, that Luther’s language “extra nos esse est ex nostris viribus non esse. Est quidem iustitia possessio nostra, quia nobis donata est ex misericordia, tamen est aliena a nobis, quia non meruimus eam” (WA, 39.1:109) is directed against the “fides formata caritate” (22). It is more difficult, however, to see how “the central concept ‘extra nos’ does not stand on the side of an imputatio-justification over against a unio-justification” (21). Oberman concluded that this expression was meant to “show that justification is not based on a claim of man, on a debitum iustitiae” (21). As Oberman has shown, Luther understood the implications of the medieval scheme of progressive justification whether construed in Pelagianizing or predestinarian ways. The intent of Luther’s language was manifestly to reject justification on the basis of any intrinsic ground, whether by infusion or union, in favor of an extrinsic ground. Extra nos means extra nos.
103 Graham Tomlin, The Power of the Cross: Theology and the Death of Christ in Paul, Luther, and Pascal (Paternoster Biblical and Theological Monographs. Carlisle, UK:
helpfully that Luther moved toward his mature Protestant views in two stages, first toward Augustinianism ca. 1513-1514 and in 1518-1519 to “a clear and different understanding of justification.” It seems clear now that an appeal to a Turnererlebnis cannot determine how Luther’s writing from 1513 to 1521 should be interpreted.

In the academic year 1513-1514, his first series of lectures took him through the Psalms. Under the influence of Augustine’s lectures on the Psalms and perhaps through Staupitz’s influence, Luther moved away from Biel’s semi-Pelagianism toward a more thoroughly Augustinian position on original sin and predestination. This was perhaps Luther’s first move toward what became his later mature soteriology. Some have pointed to his exposition of Psalm 71 and his “mira et nova diffinitio” (or redefinition) of justice as another crucial step away from the realistic doctrine of justification. Though he was moving in an Augustinian direction, he was still a Nominalist pactum theologian. For the early Luther, unless one meets the condition of the pactum, “God cannot do it,” that is, justify. In this context, grace still meant a medicinal substance dispensed for sinners by the church and faith was shorthand for the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and love.

In the winter of 1515-1516, he began lecturing on Romans, interpreting fides in Romans 1:17 as a synecdoche for the theological virtues. Green concludes that before “1518, Luther’s doctrine of faith was definitely pre-Reformational. It was still dominated by the medieval construction of the

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104 Timothy George, “Martin Luther,” in Reading Romans through the Centuries, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and Timothy Larsen (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 113.
105 Green, “The Influence of Erasmus,” 193. See also Rupp, Luther’s Progress to the Diet of Worms, 38.
three theological virtues of fides, caritas et spe." At the same time, it seems clear that even in the first course of lectures through Romans, he had abandoned an intrinsic ground of justification. The emphasis in his comments on the first nine verses of Romans 4 was clearly on the extrinsic ground of justification. Justice is reputed to the believer, not because of intrinsic, Spirit-wrought sanctity, but because of faith. Abraham's circumcision signified the righteousness of faith. This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the scholia on Romans 4:7, where he distinguished explicitly between self-justification, which is always intrinsic and justification before God, which is always extrinsic.

The saints are always sinners intrinsically [intrinsic], and therefore always justified extrinsically [extrinsic]. But the hypocrites are always righteous intrinsically, and thus always sinners extrinsically. I say "intrinsically" to show how in ourselves, in our own eyes, in our own estimation; and the term "extrinsically" to show how we are before God and in his reckoning [reputation]. Therefore we are righteous extrinsically when we are righteous solely by the reckoning [reputation] of God and not of ourselves or of our own works. For his reckoning [reputation] is not ours by reason of anything that is in us or in our own power. Therefore our righteousness is neither in us or in our power.

It would be a mistake to read into these comments Luther's entire mature view, but they do set a trajectory toward what became his mature turn to a strictly forensic doctrine of justification. In the first Romans lectures (especially in the scholia in Romans 1:17), faith was a synonym for sanctity, and justification was said to be pronounced in view of intrinsic righteousness setting up a strong tension with his later lectures and scholia on chapter 4. That tension, however, was moving toward resolution by 1518.

110 Green, "Faith, Righteousness, and Justification," 67.
111 LW 25:36.
112 LW 25:37.
In his *Sermo de triplici iustitia* (1518), Luther described actual sin as the fruit of original sin and as *propria peccata*. In this transitional sermon, both sin and righteousness were said to be “natal, essential, original, alien.” However much this language might have verged into some idea of proper righteousness, Luther certainly was not teaching justification by theotic union. He quoted Romans 5 to show that the ground of justification is Christ’s *obedientia* by which we are constituted righteous.

The conceptual fuzziness of that sermon was clarified in his *Sermo de duplici iustitia* (1518–1519), where he distinguished clearly between a first, extrinsic, justice and a second, consequent, intrinsic justice. The first justice comes “without our works through grace alone.” It is received *per fidem*. “This primary justice is the ground, the cause, and the origin of all our proper or actual justice.”

In contrast to the lectures on Romans only a few years earlier, now Luther’s definition of faith was substantially revised. After the Leipzig Disputation (27 June–16 July 1519) and by the time he published his second course of lectures on Galatians (1519), he was working with a different notion of faith. In his lecture on Galatians 2:15, 16 he distinguished between his definition of faith and the medieval definition of faith as *habitus*. Where faith was fundamentally an infused virtue, now it is that thing through which “the heart and the name of the Lord cling together.” It is those who “trust in the name of the Lord” whose “sins...
are forgiven, and righteousness is imputed to them.\textsuperscript{124} This is a signal development. When addressing justification directly he taught in forensic, not theotic, categories. On Galatians 2:21 he said:

It follows now that the man who is righteous through faith does not through himself give to anyone what is his; he does this through another, namely, Jesus Christ, who alone is so righteous as to render to all what should be rendered them. As a matter of fact, they owe everything to Him. But he who believes in Christ and by the spirit of faith has become one with Him not only renders satisfaction now to all but also brings it about that they owe everything to him, since he has all things in common with Christ. His sins are no longer his; they are Christ's. . . . Again, Christ's righteousness now belongs not only to Christ; it belongs to His Christian.\textsuperscript{125}

This passage illustrates that, for Luther, faith brings the believer into union with Christ and through that union Christ communicates not just the benefit of justification but himself. Nevertheless, it is equally clear that Luther did not have the Christian justified on the basis of anything else but Christ's imputed righteousness. He made a logical distinction between these aspects of union with Christ while not divorcing them.

The development and clarification of Luther's doctrine of justification continued in the early 1520s. As in the 1518-1519 sermons, in On Christian Freedom (1520), Luther juxtaposed our sin which is proper to us with Christ's alien merits.\textsuperscript{126} By 1522, "law" and "gospel" as distinct hermeneutical categories were firmly established in Luther's thought.\textsuperscript{127} In his preface to Romans (1522; revised 1546), Luther worked within forensic,

\textsuperscript{125} LW 27:241. "Iam sequitur, quod iustus per fidem nulli dat quod suum est per seipsum, sed per alium, scilicet lesum Christum, qui solus ita iustus est, ut omnibus reddat quot reddendum est, immo omnia ei debent Qui autem in Christum credit et spiritu fidei unus cum eo factus est, iam non solum satisfacit omnibus, sed id quoque efficit, ut omnia sibi debeat, habens cum Christo omnia communia. Peccata sua iam non sua, sed Christi sunt. . . . Rursum, iusticia Christi iam non tantum Christi, sed sui Christiani est" (WA 2:504).
\textsuperscript{126} WA 7:51 "qui pro te passus et resuscitatus est, ut in eum credens alius homo hac fide fieres, donatis omnibus peccatis tuis et iustificato te alienis meritis, nempe Christi solius." See also WA 7:55.
not ontological or theotic categories.\textsuperscript{128} The law demands righteous obedience. “So it happens that faith alone makes a person righteous and fulfils the law. For out of the merit of Christ it brings forth the Spirit.”\textsuperscript{129} “Through faith a person becomes free from sin . . . .”\textsuperscript{130} The gospel is “nothing but preaching about Christ . . . who by his death and resurrection has overcome for us the sin, death, and hell of all men who believe in him.”\textsuperscript{131} Interpreting chapter 7 by an analogy with marriage, the intimate union between Christ and the believer was premised on a legal justification. Nowhere does one find evidence that Luther saw a theotic union in Romans. There is no reason to assume that the relational aspect of his doctrine of justification took logical precedence over the legal.

Though Luther regarded \textit{De servo arbitrio} (1525) as one of his most important works, it does not appear often in expositions of his doctrine of justification. Luther, however, regarded his doctrine of divine sovereignty and his forensic doctrine of justification as corollaries in his repudiation of Erasmus’s moralism. Because by nature the will is in bondage, justification by works is impossible. The righteousness of faith is the antithesis to justification by works.\textsuperscript{132} Luther’s response to the claim of any intrinsic ground of justification was to point to imputation:

Notice how Paul dwells on the word “reckoned,” how he stresses, repeats, and insists on it . . . . He repeats the word “reckon,” nearly ten times in this chapter. In short, Paul sets the one who works and the one who does not work alongside each other, leaving no room for anyone between them; he asserts that righteousness is not reckoned to the former, but that it is reckoned to the latter provided he has faith.\textsuperscript{133}

His conception of faith was in strict opposition to the exercise of the free will. He argued: “. . . if there is nothing by which we are justified but faith,
it is evident that those who are without faith are not yet justified."\textsuperscript{134} In the context of this discussion, the free exercise of the will is that intrinsic virtue, that he contrasted with the extrinsic righteousness of Christ imputed to the sinner and received through faith alone. One finds nothing in \textit{De servo} regarding justification by theotic union.

\textbf{V. Luther's Doctrine of Justification 1535–1536}

It seems clear that it is a mistake to use Luther's transitional statements on justification from 1513 to 1521 as definitive of all other statements. Teachers should hope that their students will understand that what they said recently is more representative of their thinking than what they said prior. It is common sense that we should treat Luther the same way. It remains to be demonstrated, however, that Luther did teach essentially the view that became the confessional Protestant view of justification. Thus this essay turns to three of Luther's clearest mature expositions of justification, namely his 1535 lectures on Galatians and two disputations held in 1536 on justification.

From some secondary literature, one might gain the impression that Luther only spoke occasionally about imputation of an alien righteousness to sinners and indeed such a view might be defensible, if one focuses solely on Luther's earlier writings. If, however, one reads Luther's mature work (post 1521), when his Protestant convictions were more settled, then quite another picture emerges. He had a truly vibrant doctrine of union with Christ through faith, but in his lectures on Galatians he made the imputation of Christ's alien righteousness, not theotic union with Christ, the ground of justification.

In his summary of the argument in Galatians, he distinguished between \textit{iustitia activa} and \textit{iustitia passiva}. The former is that accomplished by Christ and the latter describes what we receive by faith in Christ.\textsuperscript{135} Humans are

\textsuperscript{134} LW 33:275; "Si enim nihil est, quo iustificemur, nisi fides, evidens est, eos qui sine fide sunt, nondum iustificatos esse" (WA 18:775).

\textsuperscript{135} "Quare nullum remedium habet afflicta conscientia contra desperationem et mortem aeternam, nisi apprehendat promissionem gratiae oblatae in Christo, hoc est hanc fidei, passivam seu christianam iustitiam, quae cum fiducia dicit: Ego non quaero iustitiam activam, deberem quidem habere et facere eam, et posito, quod eam haberem et facerem, tamen in eam non possum gratiae, remissionem peccatorum misericordiae, spiritus sancti et Christi quam ipse dat, quam recipimus et patimur" (WA 40.1:42–43).
capable only of civic righteousness. Eternal, divine righteousness comes to sinners only through imputation.\textsuperscript{136}

This is our theology, by which we teach precisely to distinguish between these two righteousnesses, the active and the passive, lest morality and faith, works and grace, politics and religion be confused. For both are necessary, but must be kept within their limits.\textsuperscript{137}

For Luther, this distinction is essential to the gospel; it is the thing that distinguishes Christianity from all other world religions.

For if the article of justification is lost, the whole Christian teaching is lost. And those in the world who do not hold it are Jews or Turks or Papists or Sectarians, because between these two righteousnesses, the active righteousness of the Law and the passive righteousness of Christ: there is no middle ground.\textsuperscript{138}

His distinction between active and passive righteousness was a direct corollary to his distinction between law and gospel. The law demands active righteousness or condign merit. It is this that Christ accomplished \textit{pro nobis}. Passive righteousness comes to us, and that is gospel. It comes to us by imputation of Christ’s active, alien righteousness and is received through faith. The ground of justification is a not personal, spiritual union with Christ or Spirit-wrought sanctity with which we cooperate. The ground of justification is Christ’s active obedience credited to us.

Just as Luther’s view of the ground of justification matured, so did his definition of faith in the act of justification. It is evident in his first series of lectures in Galatians that, by 1519, Luther was no longer defining faith in medieval terms. In the 1535 lectures on Galatians, faith was no mere virtue, no synecdoche for sanctity; rather it was the instrument through which the righteousness that is proper to Christ and alien to us is made our own. Commenting on Galatians 2:16 he said:

\textit{\textit{... nisi per gratuitam imputationem ...}} (WA 40.1:43).

\textsuperscript{136} Modified from LW 26:7.\textsuperscript{137} “Haec est nostra theologia qua docemus accurate distinguere has duas iustitias, activam et passivam, ne confundatur mores et fides, opera et gratia, politica et religio. Est autem utraque necessaria, sed quaelibet intra suas fines contineri debet” (WA 40.1:45).

\textsuperscript{138} Revised from LW 26:8; “Siquidem ammiso articulo iustificationis amissa est simul tota doctrina Christiana. Et quotquot sunt in mundo qui eam non tenent, sunt vel Iudaei, vel Turcae, vel Papistae, vel Sectarii, quia inter has duas iustitias, activam legis et passivam Christi, non est medium” (WA 40.1:48).
Here it is to be noted that these three things are joined together: faith, Christ, and acceptance or imputation. Faith takes hold of Christ and has Him present, enclosing Him as the ring encloses the gem. And whoever is found having this faith in the Christ who is grasped in the heart, him God accounts as righteous. This is the means and the merit by which we obtain the forgiveness of sins and righteousness. "Because you believe in Me," God says, "and your faith takes hold of Christ, whom I have freely given to you as your Justifier and Savior, therefore be righteous." Thus God accepts you or accounts you righteous only on account of Christ, in whom you believe.\footnote{LW 26:132; "Est et hic notandum, quod ista tria, Fides, Christus, Acceptio vel Reputatio, coniuncta sunt. Fides enim apprehendit Christum et habet eum praeuentem includitique eum ut annulus gemmam, Et qui fuerit inventus cum tali fide apprehensi Christi in corde, illum reputat Deus iustum. Haec ratio est et meritum, quo pervenimus ad remissionem peccatorum et iustitiam. Quia credis, inquit Deus, in me et fides tua apprehendit Christum quem tibi donavi, ut esset Justificator et Salvator tuus, ideo sis iustus. Itaque Deus acceptat seu reputat te iustum, solum propter Christum in quem credis etc." (WA 40.I:233).}

As he continued, acceptatio or reputatio is extremely necessary because we are not purely righteous, that is, we are not intrinsically righteous.\footnote{WA 40.I:233.} Sin still adheres to our flesh in this life.\footnote{WA 40.I:233.} Our sins, however, are hidden from God on account of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the sinner. They are "hidden in the sight of God, because Christ the mediator stands between; because we take hold of him by faith . . . ."\footnote{LW 26:133; " . . . sed absconditum est peccatum, non vult sequer, obstat Christus quem apprehendi fide propter illum apprehensum . . . ." (WA 40.I:234). This interpretation dissents from that offered in Mark S. Seifrid, "Paul, Luther, and Justification in Gal 2:15–21," Westminster Theological Journal 65 (2003): 223–227 where he construes Luther's definition of faith purely in terms of "union," and overlooks its relations to Luther's forensic definition of justification.}

Like Melanchthon and Protestant orthodoxy, Luther made the forensic doctrine of justification specifically, rather than union with Christ more broadly, the basis of Christian comfort before the terrible law and justice of God.

This doctrine brings firm consolation to troubled consciences amid genuine terrors. It is not in vain, therefore, that so often and so diligently we inculcate the forgiveness of sins and of the imputation of righteousness for the sake of Christ, as well as that a Christian ought to
have nothing to do with the law and the sin, especially in a time of temptation.\textsuperscript{143}

\textit{Oratio} led to \textit{meditatio} (the \textit{Turmerlebnis}) on the righteousness of God in Christ and \textit{iustitia aliena imputata} was our ground in \textit{tentatio}.

The later Galatians lectures are an essential part of the background to the series of disputations on justification that occurred in 1536. There are other elements to the background. Among these is the nature of these disputations themselves. Common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, disputations developed as an academic procedure in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as a way of coming to a clearer understanding of the truth.\textsuperscript{144} A disputation is a dialectic between two people, a master and a respondent. According to Bernd Moller, "It was assumed that, with the help of a dialectical process of understanding, through artful questions and answers to these questions, through the confrontation of assertion and repudiation, through orderly use of authorities and other arguments, and finally by harmonizing contradictions . . ." it was possible to "find the truth again."\textsuperscript{145} Luther valued them because it was through them, according to Moeller, that he made his most important breakthroughs in 1518 (Heidelberg) and 1519 (Leipzig). Disputations were a regular part of academic life, which occurred publicly at fixed points on the academic calendar, as part of graduation exercises, and in private between pupils and masters. Special disputations were also held frequently, as in 1536, to resolve a controversial question.

Behind these disputations, both Luther and Melanchthon had a long-running argument with Agricola on the relation of the Christian to the law. Agricola argued the antinomian thesis that the Christian is no longer morally obligated to the law, but only to the gospel. Luther and

\textsuperscript{143} Revised from \textit{LW} 26:133–134. "\textit{Ista doctrina afferi firmam consolationem conscientiis in veris pavoribus. Ideoque non frustra tam saepe et tanta diligentia inculcamus remissionem peccatorum et imputationem iustitiae propter Christum; Item, quod Christiano nihil prorsus negocii debet esse, praesertim in tentatione, cum lege et peccato . . .}" (WA 40.1:235).


\textsuperscript{145} Bernd Moeller, s.v., "Disputations," in \textit{The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation}.
Melanchthon rejected this position vigorously. They also faced the challenge of Andreas Osiander’s doctrine of justification by union with Christ. This, of course, is the great irony of the modern debate. The dominant story is that it was Melanchthon and Calvin who, in reaction to Osiander (and they did reject vehemently Osiander’s position) turned to a solely forensic doctrine of justification. The impression is left that Osiander was correct, that he really was the more faithful representative of Luther’s doctrine of justification.\textsuperscript{146} As interesting as this hypothesis is, it suffers from a serious weakness: it is utterly contrary to fact. Luther was quite aware of Osiander’s view and rejected it.\textsuperscript{147} For Luther, to turn to justification by \textit{unio-theosis} was to go back to the medieval doctrine of justification by divinization.

Though the chronology is difficult, and fortunately for this study not very important, it appears that the first disputation occurred on 10 October 1536.\textsuperscript{148} Luther understood clearly the question at hand, how or whether works can be said to be necessary for justification. In a disputation from this period he said:

\begin{quote}
\ldots Works are necessary to salvation, but they do not cause salvation, because faith alone gives life. On account of the hypocrites we must say that good works are necessary to salvation. It is necessary to work. Nevertheless, it does not follow that works save on that account, unless we understand necessity very clearly as the necessity that there must be an inward and outward salvation or righteousness. Works save outwardly, that is, they show evidence that we are righteous and that there is faith in a man that saves inwardly, as Paul says, “Man believes with his heart and soul is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved” [Rom. 10:10]. Outward salvation shows faith to the present, just as fruit shows a tree to be good.\textsuperscript{149}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{146} Strehle suggests just this in “\textit{Imputatio Iustitiae}.” The New Finnish School also implies this.


\textsuperscript{148} LW 34:148.

\textsuperscript{149} LW 34:165. “\textit{Opera sunt necessaria ad salutem, sed non causant salutem, quia fides sola dat vitam. Propter hypocritas dicendum est, quod bona opera sint etiam necessaria ad salutem. Oportet operari. Tamen non sequitur, quod opera ideo salvant, nisi valde necesse intelligamus, quod oporteat esse internam et externam salutem sive iustitiam. Opera salvant externe, hoc est, testantur nos esse iustos, et fidem esse in homine, quae interne salvat, ut Paulus inquit: Corde
For Luther, works are necessary, but not as a ground or instrument of justification. They are necessary only as the fruit of justification. This is the second justification about which he had preached in 1518.

Thus, he began the disputation, in theses 1-4, by distinguishing between justification *coram Deo* and *coram hominibus*.\(^{150}\) Works justify us before other people, but one is justified before God by faith (*fide*), even if one finds only ignominy with humans. In the several theses (5-19) following he elaborated on the paradox of civic righteousness.

In thesis 20, however, he turned to *iustitia coram Deo*. Righteousness before God is not about temporal recognition, but looks "*ad futuri Regni gloriam . . .*."\(^{151}\) The saints are righteous because God decrees (*decernit*) them to be righteous.\(^{152}\) Because the decree is eschatological, and its full actualization is not evident, "we think" (*sentimus*) a man is "not yet" (*nondum*) righteous, but (at best) only on his way toward righteousness.\(^{153}\) As the theses begin to move to conclusion, the doctrine becomes more pointed. Despite appearances, "Wherefore, whoever is justified is still also a sinner and nevertheless he is reputed as if fully and perfectly just, forgiven and pitied by God."\(^{154}\) Because Christ is our high priest, interceding for us with God, he sanctifies "our beginning of righteousness."\(^{155}\) This is taken to be a reference back to our actual, intrinsic righteousness. Christ's righteousness imputed acts like an umbrella (*umbraculum*) against the heat of God's wrath toward our inchoate actual righteousness.\(^{156}\) In thesis 27 he became even more explicit about the exact nature of this umbrella of righteousness before God. "Now it is certain that Christ or the righteousness of Christ, since it is outside of us and alien to us, is not able to be comprehended by our works."\(^{157}\) The contrast with the preceding categories is quite clear. What is perfect and

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\(^{150}\) WA 39.1:82.  
\(^{151}\) WA 39.1:83.  
\(^{152}\) WA 39.1:83.  
\(^{153}\) WA 39.1:83. "... in ipso motu seu cursu ad iustitiam."  
\(^{154}\) WA 39.1:83. "Ideo et peccator est adhuc, quisquis iustificatur, et tamen velut plene et perfecte iustus reputatur, ignoscente et miserente Deo."  
\(^{155}\) WA 39.1:83. "nostrum initium iustitiae . . . ."  
\(^{156}\) WA 39.1:83.  
\(^{157}\) WA 39.1:83. "Iam certum est, Christum seu iustitiam Christi, cum sit extra nos et aliena nobis, non posse nostris operibus comprehendi."
able to protect the sinner from God’s righteous wrath is Christ’s righteousness. What is imperfect is first our civic righteousness before men and second the beginning of intrinsic righteousness in this life. These two kinds of righteousness are faulty because they are proper to us and this world. The righteousness that stands before God is eschatological and proper to Christ; it is his active righteousness, but it is alien to us. It is outside us and alien. It is this extra and aliena quality that distinguishes it from the two other kinds of righteousness. It is this that is reputed and not the others.158

Though he taught clearly that the righteousness by which we are justified coram Deo is extrinsic and reputed, his actual interest in this disputation was in the nature of the means by which it is comprehended. Our works (i.e., our cooperation with grace) are insufficient, "but faith, which is from our hearing Christ through the Holy Spirit, is infused by which Christ is comprehended."159 Ironically, having redefined faith away from the notion of an infused virtue, he was able to return to the metaphor of infusion to describe faith as an instrument. Faith has no virtue of itself (i.e., being formed by love), but its only power is that it lays hold of Christ. The source of faith is not Spirit-wrought sanctity or even union with Christ, but "ex auditu Christi." In the preached gospel, the sinner hears the voice of Christ. The word comes from outside and faith itself comes from outside; it reciprocally reaches outside of the sinner, even after infusion, in order to justify the sinner.

This is why sola fides (as opposed to fides formata caritate) justifies without works. For it is impossible to say, "I made Christ or the righteousness of Christ."160 It is impossible because it is not Christ formed in me whereby I am justified (contra theotic union and the medieval definition).161 It was Christ, as it were, formed for me. Faith is the only adequate instrument to apprehend Christ. By contrast, it is possible for us to "produce the justice of heaven through the Spirit" (sanctity) or the "justice of the earth through

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158 It is difficult to see how Oberman could say that this thesis is not about imputation-justification.
159 WA 39.I:83. "Sed fides, quae ex auditu Christi nobis per spiritum sanctum infunditur, ipsa comprehendit Christum."
161 Green, "Theosis," 171-172
nature” (i.e., civic justice) because these are proper to us.\footnote{WA 39.1:83. “Sicut tamen possum dicere: Ego facio opera sive iustitiae coelestis per spiritum, sive terreneae per naturam.”} Having been justified by a righteousness extra nos and aliena nobis, we can do “opera bona in Christo.”\footnote{WA 39.1:83. “Quod iustificari ista includit, fide scilicet propter Christum reputari nos iustos.”} This language is arguably a reference to union with Christ and it is worth noting that it does not occur in his discussion of justification, but in his discussion of the consequence of justification, namely, sanctification.

In theses 31, 34, and 35, Luther was quite clear about the logical necessity of good works flowing from justification, and equally clear that they belong to a category of righteousness distinct from that which commends the sinner to God. Luther gave his definition of justification in thesis 33 when he said, “to be justified includes the following: namely, our being reputed just, by faith, on account of Christ.”\footnote{On these two figures see Robert Rosin, s.v., “Cordatus, Conrad,” and idem, s.v., “Cruciger, Caspar,” in The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation.} The forensic theme in his doctrine of justification in the October disputation was unmistakable. His logic and categorical distinctions were clear. In this disputation, as in the 1535 lectures on Galatians, Luther was indistinguishable from his orthodox, confessional successors in the Formula of Concord and in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The second disputation of 1536 to be considered was held perhaps in the home of Johannes Bugenhagen (1485-1558), in November, in response to a controversy that had arisen between Conrad Cordatus (c. 1480-1546) and Caspar Cruciger (1504-1548) over the role of works in justification.\footnote{Martin Brecht, Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church 1532–1546, tr. J. L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 148. This narrative follows Brecht’s account.} In July of 1536, Cordatus heard Cruciger give a lecture in which the latter argued that “in addition to the work of Christ human repentance was also necessary in justification.”\footnote{Martin Brecht, Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church 1532–1546, tr. J. L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 148. This narrative follows Brecht’s account.} Cordatus saw this as a threat to the doctrine of justification and he demanded a retraction. Eventually, Cruciger replied by saying that he was not denying the doctrine of justification, but only following Melanchthon’s lead in trying to account for the role of works in justification. At a graduation disputation between two students, where Cruciger was presiding, he managed to raise the issue directly, which
provoked a reaction from Luther to the effect that Cruciger had returned to the Roman doctrine of penance.\textsuperscript{167} Cruciger appealed to the faculty for toleration while Melanchthon defended his own position. The episode came to a head at a disputation in November at Bugenhagen's house "to clarify the matter."\textsuperscript{168} Melanchthon supplied the questions and, for the purposes of this disputation, served as the magister. Luther responded in writing, which he delivered during the actual disputation.\textsuperscript{169} It is to this disputation that we now turn.\textsuperscript{170}

In his account of this disputation, Martin Greschat suggests that Melanchthon cast himself in the role of prosecutor in this disputation.\textsuperscript{171} Nothing in the text of the disputation, however, supports such a reading. There is nothing prosecutorial whatever in the tenor of Melanchthon's questions and nothing defensive in Luther's responses. This disputation reads more like a catechism lesson than anything else.\textsuperscript{172}

Melanchthon put the same question to Luther repeatedly, namely, whether there is any way in which works or sanctity contribute to

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[167] Brecht, \textit{Martin Luther}, 149.
\item[168] Brecht, \textit{Martin Luther}, 150.
\item[169] WA 39.I.79.
\item[170] \textit{Disputatio Philippi Melanchthonis, cum Doctore Martino Luthero Anno 1536}. The text of the disputation is found in Philipp Melanchthon, \textit{Epistolae, iudicia, consilia, testimonia aliorumque ad eum epistolae quae Corpore Reformatorum desiderantur}, ed. H. E. Bindseil and Robert Stupperich (Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1975), 344-348. All English translations of this dialogue are mine. The fact that this disputation appears in Melanchthon's works and not Luther's suggests the possibility that the language attributed to Luther in this disputation was modified by Melanchthon. Green, "The Influence of Erasmus," 196-197, suggests that the use of reputare reflects Melanchthon's style or influence. He also argues, however, that Luther was quite happy to have Melanchthon rephrase his thoughts. In defense of the authenticity of this disputation, it should be observed that it has strong similarities with the others of the period about which there is less doubt. At all events, even though the style may not be Luther's, the theology is.
\item[171] Martin Greschat, \textit{Melanchthon Neben Luther: Studien zur Gestalt der Rechtfertigungslehre zwischen 1528 und 1537} (Wittenberg: Luther Verlag, 1965), 233. In response to an earlier version of this paper, Michael Horton pointed out that the Socratic Method is pedagogical, not prosecutorial.
\item[172] The questions are obviously leading. These are the pedagogical and catechetical equivalents to "straight lines" in a comedy routine. If Wengert is correct, that by this point Melanchthon's own views and vocabulary had narrowed to exclusively forensic terms and categories, then Melanchthon must be seen to have acted in a purely formal, dialectical capacity so that these questions cannot be thought to reveal his own views.
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justification. At the outset of the disputation, Melanchthon raised the fundamental question of the Reformation: "Do you understand man to be righteous whether by intrinsic renewal as Augustine, or by truly gracious imputation, which is outside of us, and by faith, i.e., by trust, that has arisen from the Word?"\footnote{173} Luther's response was unequivocal: "I think this, and am most persuaded and certain that this is the true opinion of the Gospel and of the Apostles, that only by gracious imputation are we righteous with God."\footnote{174}

Melanchthon then raised the question whether man is righteous "\textit{sola illa misericordia . . .}" or whether our \textit{iustitia} is grounded partly in "a good conscience in works."\footnote{175} The questioning continued to probe Luther's resoluteness on forensic justification. Melanchthon asked whether, since Luther had preached (in 1518) a "double justice" (\textit{duplicem iustitiam}) and conceded in previous disputations the logical and moral necessity of good works as the fruit of justification, and since it is understood that the perfection is not required but that faith supplies what is lacking, Luther will concede that "a man is righteous principally by faith, and less principally by works . . ." In other words, since works are necessary and you have already conceded double justification, is it not true that we are not justified \textit{sola fide}?\footnote{176}

Luther responded unequivocally. To "become just, to be, and to remain just is \textit{sola misericordia}."\footnote{177} What justifies us is perfect righteousness that

\footnote{173} Disputatio, 344. "Vos vero utrum sentitis hominem iustum esse ilia novitate, ut Augustinus, an vero imputatione gratuita, quae est extra nos, et fide, id est, fiducia, quae oritur ex verbo?"

\footnote{174} Disputatio, 344; "Sic sentio, et persuaissimus sum ac certus, hanc esse veram sententiam Evangelii et Apostolorum, quod sola imputatione gratuita sumus iusti apud Deum."

\footnote{175} Disputatio, 344-345; "An homo sola illa misericordia iustus est? Quod non sit sola illa misericoridea iustus, videtur, quia necessaria est iustitia nostra, hoc est, bona conscientia in operibus . . ."

\footnote{176} Disputatio, 344-345; "Hominem sentio fieri, esse, et manere iustum, seu iustam personam simpliciter sola misericordia. Haec est enim iustitia perfecta, quae opponitur irae, morti, peccato etc. et absorbet omnia, et reddit hominem simpliciter sanctum, et innocentem, ac si revera nullum in eo esset peccatum. Quia reputatio gratuita Dei nullum vult ibi esse peccatum, sicut
opposes death and absorbs God’s wrath for us. No mere human is capable of such righteousness and it could never be intrinsic to us. Therefore it is by God’s gracious reputation that the sinner is righteous. Only after that reputation, is one righteous and said to produce the fruits of righteousness. Even these fruits are only external work and righteousness, which God requires and rewards, but this is not righteousness before God but evidence of justification before others.

Melanchthon pressed Luther by asking whether, in the case of Paul, his rebirth was the ground of his acceptance before God. Luther replied in the negative: faith brings renewal and faith justified him. Melanchthon asked again whether virtues or works could be less principally grounds of justification? Again, Luther answered that one’s virtues and works are righteous only because one’s person is righteous (which is righteous by imputation only). Melanchthon followed by asking again how Luther can say that works are necessary but not justifying. Luther answered that they are necessary, “but not of legal necessity, or of co-action, but of gracious necessity, or consequence, or of immutability.” He continued to explain that they are as necessary and immutable as sunshine is necessary from the sun. The sunshine does not flow “of law, but of nature.” No one has to tell the sun to shine. That is its nature. So, too, the Christian, because he is a “creatura nova,” created “unto good works,” produces sanctity.

Melanchthon replied by raising the specter of the Roman critic Cardinal Sadolet (1477-1547) who accused the Protestants of being inconsistent in contending for sola fide and the logical necessity of good works. Luther replied that "falsi frateres et hypocritae" are often confounded just as it was in Elijah’s day with the priest of Baal. Melanchthon again asked whether, in view of our renewal, one could say that Paul was renewed in order to be pleasing to God, so that our works (not because they are ours) to the degree (tantum) that one could be said to be pleasing (placeat) on account of mercy? Luther would not even accept this very subtle attempt to wedge in

Ioan. dicit . . . Post hanc iustitiam homo est, et dicitur iustus opere seu fructibus, quos et ipsos requirit Deus, et remunerat. Hanc ego externam et operum iustitiam voco . . . ."

178 Disputatio, 345-346.

179 Disputatio, 346; “Necessaria est, sed non necessitate legali, seu coactionis, sed necessitate gratuita, seu consequentiae, seu immutabili. Sicut sol necessario lucet, si est sol, et tamen lucet non ex lege, sed ex natura, seu voluntate (ut sic dicam) immutabili, quia sic creatus est, ut luceat, Sic justus creatura nova, facit opera necessitate immutabili, non lege seu coactione: iusto enim non est lex posita. Deinde creati sumus (ait Paulus) in opera bona . . . .”

180 Disputatio, 346.
some intrinsic ground of righteousness, accepted not as *proprium obedientiam* but only *propter misericordiam*. No, Luther replied, Paul’s obedience only pleases God because Paul believes, and by faith his person is just in perpetuity. He rejected as an evil division the premise of the question, that the *principium, medium et finem* of a just person can be divided. The beginning and end of justification is gracious imputation of alien righteousness.181 If justification were by anything other than faith, its glory would be eclipsed.

Melanchthon appealed to the necessity that Paul should preach the gospel as an example of some other sort of necessity of good works for justification. Luther replied that there can be no partial cause of justification because “faith is always efficacious or it is not faith.” If faith is so, then works (i.e., whatever is intrinsic to the justified and perceptible to the world) is like the radiance of the sun.182 Melanchthon raised the issue of disagreeing with Augustine on the question of intrinsic righteousness, and Luther politely but firmly held his ground.

The concluding discourse of the disputation was Luther’s in reply to a very brief question from Melanchthon as to whether the proposition is true: “*Iustitia operum est necessaria ad salutem* [the righteousness of works is necessary for salvation].”183 Works, Luther replied, do not work or obtain salvation, but “they are present to the faith obtaining or they are with” it, just as I am necessarily “present or in the presence of my salvation.”184 The person is justified by the imputation of Christ’s perfect righteousness, therefore he is just. A just person produces works necessarily; therefore they are necessarily present in the person justified. *Pace* Sadoleto, the one who believes has already fulfilled “the first or primary part of the law . . . .” Luther called this the *principium iustificationis seu iustitiae*.185 That is, he elaborated, “I have in principle, also the other works required after faith.”186 Sadoleto was wrong: Faith is not a “work of precept,” but a

181 Disputatio, 347; “Imo obedientia placet propter Paulum credentem, alioqui non placeret eius obedientia, et quia persona iusta est, iusta est perpetuo, et tamdiu iusta ex fide, quamdiu fides manet. Mala ergo divisio est, personam dividere in principium, medium, et finem. Opera igitur fulgent radiis fidei, et propter fidem placent, non eontra.”

182 Disputatio, 347; “. . . quia fides est semper efficax, vel non est fides.”

183 Disputatio, 347.

184 Disputatio, 347; “Non quod operentur seu impetrant salutem, sed quod fidei impetrantes seu coram sunt, Sicut ego necessario adero ad salutem meam . . . .”

185 Disputatio, 348.

186 Disputatio, 348; “Ergo qui credit, implevit unam vel primam partem legis, et sic habet
work of promise," that is, "the gift of the Holy Spirit." This gift having been given "makes a person perpetually new, which person yet does new works." New works do not make the new person, but the new person does the new works.\textsuperscript{187} For that reason, one "owes no personal righteousness by works before God . . ."\textsuperscript{188} There are different qualities of works and rewards, but "they do not justify a person, for all we are equally just in one Christ, all equally loved and pleasing according to person."\textsuperscript{189}

In this disputation, Melanchthon dutifully played the magister and Luther the respondens. Melanchthon poked and probed throughout the disputation looking for any place Luther might concede the point that intrinsic sanctity might be a part of the ground or instrument of justification, and from the outset Luther repudiated any such notions using the same sorts of metaphors and language found in the earlier disputation. For Luther in 1536, the ground of justification is Christ's alien righteousness reputed to the sinner, and faith is the medium by which one apprehends Christ and his alien righteousness. In both disputes, he turned to intrinsic categories only when considering the sanctity that flows from justification.

VI. Conclusions

The various attempts to revise Luther's doctrine of justification along wholly relational and theotic contours is ill conceived and largely unhistorical, mostly prosecuted against an empty slate with Luther decontextualized from his medieval setting.\textsuperscript{190} Timothy Wengert is right to remind us that the Finnish interpretation of Luther is not new at all. "In the 1550s, Andreas Osiander insisted that the indwelling of the Son of God

\textit{principium iustificationis seu iustitiae. Sed principio habito, requiruntur et alia praecepta opera post fidem.}"

\textsuperscript{187} Disputatio, 348; "Nam si fides esset opus praeceptum. . . At nos dicimus, fidem esse opus promissionis, seu donum Spiritus sancti, quod quidem ad legem faciendam necessarium est, Sed per legem et opera non impetratur. Donatum autem hoc donum, facit personam novam perpetuam, quae persona tamen facit opera nova, non contra opera nova facta sunt personam novam."

\textsuperscript{188} Disputatio, 348; "Nulla ergo iustitia personalis debetur operibus coram Deo . . . ."

\textsuperscript{189} Disputatio, 348; "Sed personam non iustificant, omnes enim aequaliter iusti sumus in uno Christo, omnes aequaliter dilecti et placentes secundum personam, tamen, differt stella a stella per claritatem."

makes us substantially righteous. His position found some sympathy among theologians in Wurttemberg, including Johannes Brenz, whose view of justification Luther and Melanchthon had attempted to correct already in 1531."^{191}

Both the so-called Luther Renaissance and the Finnish School share a neglect of the development of Luther's theology from medieval to Reformation. Both interpretations are too anxious to make Luther relevant either to early-twentieth-century German nationalism or early-twenty-first-century ecumenism. The attempt by Ritschl, the Luther Renaissance, and the Finnish school to juxtapose Luther against Melanchthon and against confessionalism ignores the fact that Luther was a writer of symbolic documents himself. It also ignores Luther's own view of Melanchthon. As Wilhelm Pauck has observed, there is no evidence in Luther that he regarded Melanchthon's narrowing vocabulary from 1534 to 1536 as a departure from or narrowing of his own doctrine of justification.\(^{192}\) The "Luther v. the Lutherans" interpretation, as with the "Calvin v. the Calvinists" school, tells us more about the interpreters than it does about Luther or Lutheran orthodoxy.

There are good reasons to doubt Mannermaa's reconstruction of Luther's doctrine of justification. First, and to his credit, he is explicit about his ecumenical interests.\(^{193}\) Second, he shows little historical sensitivity in his interpretation of Luther. This much is evident in Mannermaa's appeal to Luther's first lectures on Romans, where Mannermaa makes no note of the date or transitional nature of these lectures. Third, he freights arbitrarily passages that speak of anything intrinsic even though Luther was not speaking of justification directly.\(^{194}\) Fourth, Mannermaa loads Luther's joyful exchange with ontic or theotic meaning so that it becomes an "exchange of attributes" wherein Christ "himself takes on the sinful person of man and give to us His own righteous person" so that there is a


^{193} Robert W. Jenson, "Response to Tuomo Mannermaa, 'Why is Luther So Fascinating?'" in Union with Christ, 21, is even more explicit about his ecumenical interest in the Finnish revision of Luther.

^{194} For example, in "The Doctrine of Justification and Christology," 210, regarding Luther on Rom 7:18 in WA 56:343, 16-21; LW 25:331-332.
communicatio idiomatum not just between the two natures of Christ, but between the sinner and Christ.\textsuperscript{195} As fascinating as Mannermaa’s point is, Luther said nothing of the kind, not even in the passage Mannermaa quotes. For Luther, the joyful exchange happens by receptive believing, not by theotic union. For Luther, however intimate the union between bride and bridegroom, they are never ontologically confused. The context certainly does not suggest the sort of ontic indwelling that Mannermaa imports into the passage.\textsuperscript{196}

The attempt by Kärkkäinen to correlate the Finnish view with Luther’s theologica crucis/gloriae distinction fails to understand the distinction Luther was making. His appeal to the Heidelberg Disputation (1518) as proof of theosis is particularly puzzling. It appears that his reading of it stands only if we allow him to read Luther not against his medieval background but against the background of modern European philosophical theology.

Marquart’s approach to the question of theosis in Luther is more measured than that of the New Finnish school, and he is more sensitive than some to the difficulties of this project. He proposes a twofold test to evaluate whether theosis can be said to be an explanation of Luther’s doctrine of justification and compatible with Luther’s theology of the cross.\textsuperscript{197} The first test is that any theotic doctrine of justification must be christocentric. The second test is that it has to have God coming to us. It seems to me, however, that Thomas’s program of divinization would pass the test. The only sorts of divinization that Marquart’s test filters out would be crassly Pelagian. Marquart’s test has the appearance of solving the problem while conceding the very thing Luther sought to prevent.

Earlier I quoted from Kurt Marquart’s 1999 essay, in which he quotes a 1525 Sermon on Ephesians 3:13-21 as evidence of a doctrine of theosis in Luther. On first reading, Marquart seems to have grounds for his claim. He re-translates the sermon creating the impression that Luther was intending to teach theosis. The sermon, however, was about sanctity not divinization.

\textsuperscript{195} Mannermaa, “The Doctrine of Justification and Christology,” 210.

\textsuperscript{196} In a private discussion regarding the relations between Luther’s doctrine of justification and ontology, Robert Kolb has suggested that we should speak of Luther’s “ontology of the Word of God,” so that, Luther’s forensic language is not Nominalism, but creative of reality. See Robert Kolb, “Romans 6 and Luther’s Understanding of Justification (1535),” Lutheran Quarterly 12 (1998): 50-53.

\textsuperscript{197} Marquart, “Luther and Theosis,” 196-197.
Further, even if one concedes that those paragraphs were about theosis, Luther concludes the sermon by saying, "But no one should think that such a thing can happen fully to any man in this life." Indeed, we are filled with Adam’s fullness (Adams fulle). According to Luther, even granting Marquart’s revisions, we are not going to be divinized in this life. If justification is divinization, then we are not justified. This conclusion creates the irony of having Luther teach that we are not justified in this life.

Marquart’s tests notwithstanding, for Luther, the notion that one is just before God on the basis of the indwelling Christ by theotic union is nothing if not theologia gloriae and an improbable reading of Luther. The point of the theologia crucis is the necessity of the tension between the already of the declaration of the justification and the not yet of the consummated, glorified, vindicated state. Surely Luther was working with these categories when he said in his 1527 lecture on 1 John 3:2:

We shall be like Him but not identical with him [Similes erimus, non iidem], as Pythagoras thought. For God is infinite, but we are finite creatures [Deus est infinitus, nos creaturae finitae]. Moreover, the creature will never be the Creator [Nunquam autem creatura evadet creator]. Yet we shall be like Him. God is life. Therefore we, too, shall live. God is righteous. Therefore we, too, shall be filled with righteousness. God is immortal and blessed. Therefore, we, too, shall enjoy everlasting bliss, not as it is in God [non qualis in Deo] but the bliss that is suitable for us.

This was the language of analogy not christocentric theosis.

I see no compelling reason to treat Luther’s doctrine of union and his doctrine of justification as if they were mutually exclusive. Both doctrines were important to Luther’s Protestant development, but they were logically distinct and Luther ordered them quite differently than Ritschl, Holl, and the New Finnish school would have us think. We are justified by virtue of our legal union with Christ, who accomplished active righteousness pro nobis, and, for Luther, the justified life is lived in vital union with Christ and is inconceivable apart from that union. That is not the same thing as saying, however, that sinners are justified by virtue of a

198 WA 17:1, 438: "Es soll aber kehner dencken, das solchs, hnn diesen leben hrgent ehnen menschen volkomlich widderfare . . ." Cf. Luther, The Complete Sermons, 4:2, 280. See WA 17:1, 438. I am grateful to Ryan Glomsrud (Pembroke College, Oxford) for his comments on this section of the paper.

199 LW 30:268; WA 20:698.
theotic union with Christ. Even if it is discovered definitively that Luther did conceive of some sort of theotic union between Christ and the believer, it is clear that it never entered his doctrine of justification. For Luther, union with Christ is a consequence of the forensic, definitive act of justification.