

This is an authorized facsimile, made from the microfilm master copy of the original dissertation or masters thesis published by UMI.

The bibliographic information for this thesis is contained in UMI's Dissertation Abstracts database, the only central source for accessing almost every doctoral dissertation accepted in North America since 1861.

U·M·I Dissertation
Information Service

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
800-521-0600 OR 313/761-4700

Printed in 1993 by xerographic process
on acid-free paper

6110

Order Number 8918224

Communion with Christ: An exposition and comparison of the doctrine of union and communion with Christ in Calvin and the English Puritans

Won, Jonathan Jong-Chun, Ph.D.

Westminster Theological Seminary, 1989

Copyright ©1989 by Won, Jonathan Jong-Chun. All rights reserved.

U·M·I
300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

INFORMATION TO USERS

The most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this manuscript from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book. These are also available as one exposure on a standard 35mm slide or as a 17" x 23" black and white photographic print for an additional charge.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

U·M·I

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

**COMMUNION WITH CHRIST: AN EXPOSITION AND COMPARISON OF
THE DOCTRINE OF UNION AND COMMUNION WITH CHRIST
IN CALVIN AND THE ENGLISH PURITANS**

By
Jonathon Jong-Chun Won

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
WESTMINSTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1989

Faculty Advisor : *Sinclair B. Ferguson*
Sinclair Ferguson, Ph.D.

Second Faculty Reader : *William S. Barker*
William Barker, Ph.D.

Chairmen of the Field Committee : *William S. Barker*
William Barker, Ph.D.

c Jonathan Jong-Chun Won, 1989

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT
"COMMUNION WITH CHRIST: AN EXPOSITION AND COMPARISON OF
THE DOCTRINE OF UNION AND COMMUNION WITH CHRIST
IN CALVIN AND THE ENGLISH PURITANS"

by
Jonathan Jong-Chun Won
Westminster Theological Seminary, 1989

This is a study of the Puritan piety which flowered in seventeenth-century England. This particular English piety manifested itself in the Puritan expressions of devotion to the person of Christ as the source of comfort and encouragement for the stricken consciences of Christians living in the context of England's struggles and hardships at the approach of and during the Civil War.

In this study we focus our attention on the particular emphasis of four seventeenth-century Puritans (Richard Sibbes, John Cotton, Thomas Goodwin and John Owen) on *union and communion with Christ*, which became the avenue for their expression of Christian piety. We discover that *affectionate communion with Christ* was the hallmark of this piety.

No piety or theology stands alone. It is vital, therefore, that we understand the sources of, and influence behind, this particular kind of piety. John Calvin's teaching on union and communion with Christ is therefore expounded first, because of his monumental influence on England and the Puritans. In doing this, we bear in mind that there is a controversy among scholars about the relationship between Calvin and the Puritans, on the one hand, and between Puritanism and Medieval piety, on the other, which this study also endeavors to clarify.

We discover that the Puritans' devotion to Christ in their expression of communion with him did not depart from the basic teaching of Calvin; indeed the Puritans stood firmly on his theological foundation.

Yet, differences are detected. For Calvin, *union* with Christ was emphasized more than *communion* with Christ, whereas for the Puritans the trend was reversed. The Eucharist which was the context in which Calvin developed communion with Christ was not the context used by the Puritans. Instead, they used the Song of Songs as a significant tool to express and develop their piety and devotion to Christ. In their interpretation of the Song of Songs, the Puritans went beyond Calvin. We discover that they sided with the traditional spiritual and allegorical interpretation found in Bernard of Clairvaux and elsewhere. This does not mean that the Puritans directly borrowed from Medieval piety. Rather, they stood firmly on Calvinistic and biblical theology, but went beyond the tradition of the Reformers to earlier church tradition to cultivate a piety which would meet the need of the time.

To
Bok-Soon,
my wife
&
Priscilla Ja-Youn and Jessica Mi-Youn,
my two daughters

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
|------------------------|---|

PART ONE FROM GENEVA TO CAMBRIDGE

Chapter

| | |
|--|----|
| I. JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564) | 12 |
| General Context | 14 |
| Mystical Union with Christ | 14 |
| Justification | 19 |
| Faith | 25 |
| Sanctification | 29 |
| Work of the Holy Spirit | 33 |
| Humanity of Christ | 36 |
| Eucharistic Context | 43 |
| Union with Christ | 44 |
| Communion with Christ | 47 |
| Work of the Holy Spirit | 52 |
| Humanity of Christ | 58 |
| Polemic against the Church of Rome | 68 |
| Evaluation | 74 |
| II. WILLIAM PERKINS (1558-1602) | 76 |
| Reception of Calvin's Thought in England | 78 |
| General Context | 87 |
| Union with Christ | 87 |
| Work of the Holy Spirit | 91 |
| Humanity of Christ | 92 |
| Eucharistic Context | 95 |
| Evaluation | 98 |

PART TWO
THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY PURITANS

| | |
|--|-----|
| III. Contemporary Context and Inherited Traditions | 105 |
| General Historical Background of the Seventeenth-Century | |
| England | 105 |
| Political Turmoil | 106 |
| Socio-Economic Revolution | 107 |
| Theological Struggle | 110 |
| Intellectual Revolution | 111 |
| Tradition of the Interpretation of the Song of Songs | 116 |
| Ancient Tradition | 116 |
| Medieval Tradition | 120 |
| Reformation Tradition | 126 |
| Martin Luther | 126 |
| John Calvin | 129 |
| IV. RICHARD SIBBES (1577-1635) | 132 |
| Background | 133 |
| General | 133 |
| Spiritual Brotherhood | 136 |
| Struggle | 137 |
| Gentle Spirit | 139 |
| Works on Communion with Christ | 142 |
| General Context | 143 |
| Union with Christ | 144 |
| Communion with Christ | 147 |
| Affections of Christ | 154 |
| Affections of Believers | 158 |
| Humanity of Christ | 170 |
| Eucharistic Context | 173 |
| V. JOHN COTTON (1584-1652) | 179 |
| Background | 180 |
| General | 180 |
| Spiritual Brotherhood | 180 |
| Struggle | 181 |
| Gentle Spirit | 186 |
| Works on Communion with Christ | 187 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| General Context | 188 |
| Union with Christ | 189 |
| Communion with Christ | 191 |
| Comfort | 196 |
| Duty | 199 |
| Eucharistic Context | 202 |
| | |
| VI. THOMAS GOODWIN (1600-1680) | 206 |
| Background | 206 |
| Early Years and Spiritual Brotherhood | 206 |
| Struggle | 208 |
| Gentle Spirit | 211 |
| Works on Communion with Christ | 212 |
| General Context | 214 |
| Redemptive Necessity of the Humanity of Christ | 215 |
| Divine Nature | 215 |
| Human Nature | 217 |
| Requirement for a Mediator | 217 |
| Embodiment of Reconciliation | 219 |
| Perfect Human Nature | 222 |
| Brotherhood of Christ | 223 |
| Satisfaction of God's Honor | 227 |
| The Affections of Christ in His Humanity | 230 |
| Earthly Ministry | 234 |
| Heavenly Ministry | 238 |
| Priesthood of Christ | 244 |
| The Office of Grace | 245 |
| Christ's Joy of the Priesthood | 246 |
| Continuation of Christ's Priesthood in Heaven | 248 |
| Encouragement of Believers | 253 |
| Eucharistic Context | 253 |
| | |
| VII. JOHN OWEN (1616-1683) | 258 |
| Background | 259 |
| General Context | 264 |
| Fellowship with Christ | 266 |
| Humanity of Christ | 270 |
| Redemptive Necessity | 270 |
| Compassion | 273 |
| Believers' Response | 276 |
| Worship | 276 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Genuine Love | 280 |
| Glory of the Humanity of Christ | 283 |
| Eucharistic Context | 286 |

**PART THREE
EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION**

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| VIII. PURITAN SPIRITUALITY | 293 |
|--------------------------------------|-----|

| | |
|--|-----|
| Common Characters | 294 |
| Spiritual Brotherhood | 295 |
| Shift of Piety: First Stage | 299 |
| Shift of Piety: Second Stage | 308 |
| Spiritual Depression | 309 |
| The Puritan Response | 313 |
| Eucharist | 319 |
| Reformed Background | 320 |
| Separatist Tendency | 322 |
| The Puritan Approach | 326 |
| The Song of Songs | 331 |
| Distinctive Characters | 344 |
| Richard Sibbes | 344 |
| John Cotton | 347 |
| Thomas Goodwin | 348 |
| John Owen | 349 |

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| IX. CONCLUSION | 351 |
|--------------------------|-----|

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 359 |
|------------------------|-----|

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For a baby to be born, "labor" is the necessary and harderst part of the nine months. In writing this dissertation, I have at times been reminded of labor which I witnessed at the birth of my first child. It is only fitting to express gratitude to those who have shared with me this process of "labor" together.

Although I am solely responsible for the development of this entire work, the idea of the development of Puritan piety as the theme of this dissertation was initially conceived within me through my mentor, Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, who not only in his teaching in class but also in his living example in private helped me to appreciate and savor the Puritan piety in which he is ripe. From the conception to the actual delivery of this dissertation, he has carefully and with genuine heart guided and directed the entire process, even including the details of proper English expression. His stay in Scotland did not stop him from providing the genuine care for this process. I am most grateful to him.

Dr. William Berker has also given me stimulating thoughts and helpful hints as he read through the entire work despite his busy schedule. I have been blessed by his godly presence and encouragement when I needed it most during the initial stage of Dr. Ferguson's absence from the Seminary.

I thank Dr. Horton Davies, Henry W. Putnam Professor Emeritus of the History of Christianity in Princeton University who served as the external reader of this dissertation and gave me kind remarks along with helpful suggestions.

The loving and caring heart of Jane Patete and Grace Mullen in the Westminster Theological Seminary Library and their genuine concern for my

work and family when I had to spend a great deal of time away from home, their excellent service and the rich facilities of the Library were tremendous resources for my study. Without them, this work would have been impossible. I am sincerely grateful to Jane and Grace and to the entire staff of Westminster Theological Seminary Library.

As I complete my formal theological education, I must express my sincere gratitude to and appreciation for Westminster Theological Seminary which has taught me both Reformed theology in the best tradition, and Puritan piety which has enriched my union and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ.

To my friends in Christ (Dae-Sik Kim, Jung-Woo Kim, Byung-Hwan Min, Young-Jae Song and many others) who have provided home-away-from home while I was staying in Philadelphia apart from my family in New York, I must express my gratitude. Without their help and encouragement, I would have been miserable.

Most of all, I express my love and gratitude to my wife Bok-Soon (along with our two children: Priscilla Ja-Youn and Jessica Mi-Youn), to whom this dissertation is dedicated. She has labored with me through my entire doctoral studies, willing to sacrifice herself for me and my work as an expression of her faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The baby has been delivered! I thank the Lord in his affectionate compassion toward His people, with which He has also guided me thus far. I trust that the same Lord will do likewise for me, my family and all of his people in the future as well.

Soli Deo Gloria.

Jonsthan Jong-Chun Won
Flushing, New York
December 31, 1988

INTRODUCTION

This study was stimulated by an interest in the piety of those English Puritans whose writings show special interest in devotion to the person of Christ.¹ The distinctive kind of piety expounded by these writers gave rise specifically to the comfort and encouragement of Christian believers. Our concern in the pages that follow is with the precise nature of, and motivation for, such piety; particularly in its Puritan expression.

The investigation of this theme in the context of the Puritan era inevitably drives our research back to Calvin through whom so many of the Puritans traced their spiritual roots. In modern Reformation and post-Reformation scholarship, very different views have been held as to the relationship between Calvin and the Puritans, and between Puritanism and Medieval piety. For example, in the specific context of the doctrine of faith and assurance, R. T. Kendall has defended the thesis that the Puritans seriously deviated from Calvin. According to Kendall, it was Beza's scholasticism (and *distortion* of Calvin) that influenced the Puritans. Under this influence the Puritans departed from the spirit of Calvin. Kendall points out William Perkins especially as an example of one who deviated from Calvin and came under the influence of Beza instead. The

¹As Barrington R. White points out, "... beyond and above all else you will not understand the Puritan unless you realise that at the heart of his faith, his religion, his activity there was an intense, a burning, devotion to Jesus Christ." Barrington R. White, "Echoes of Medieval Christendom in Puritan Spirituality," One in Christ, 16 No 1-2, 78-90 (1980): p.80.

Puritans' attention to the role in assurance of the sanctified life, according to Kendall, was the result of this influence of Beza.² "Calvin pointed men to Christ alone if they doubted their election, whereas Beza pointed men to their sanctification. Perkins followed Beza's solution . . ."³

In response, the English philosopher, Paul Helm has denied the various charges of Kendall, asserting the following five propositions:

(1) Both Calvin and the Puritans taught that Christ died for the elect and intercedes for the elect. There is no evidence that Calvin held that Christ died for all men but intercedes only for the elect.

(2) Both Calvin and the Puritans recognized that in Christian experience there can be saving faith without personal assurance of salvation, though neither Calvin nor the Puritans regarded faith without assurance as desirable.

(3) Both Calvin and the Puritans taught that, typically, conversion to Christ comes about through a preparatory period of conviction of sin brought about by the preaching of the law. But neither Calvin nor the Puritans laid down rigid rules to which all Christian experience must conform.

(4) Both Calvin and the Puritans held that when a person is converted through the preaching of Christ the will is renewed by divine grace and faith and repentance result.

(5) Both Calvin and the Puritans endorse the biblical teaching that saving faith in Christ is a divine gift and not a human work

²R. T. Kendall, "The Puritan Modification of Calvin's Theology," John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World, ed. W. Stanford Reid (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982) p.199ff. For more detail consult R. T. Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.210ff. For an explanation of basic tendencies that mark Protestant scholasticism, see John Stanley Bray, "Theodore Beza's Doctrine of Predestination" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1972), p.245ff. For the understanding of the basic distinction between the theology of Calvin and that of the scholastics, see Brian G. Armstrong, Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth Century France (Madison, 1969), p.248ff.

³Kendall, John Calvin: His Influence, p.205.

meriting salvation, and that no one can condition or prepare himself in such a way to merit salvation or to ensure that God will grant salvation.⁴

Richard Muller likewise defends Reformed orthodoxy (Puritans included) against the charge of departure from Calvin and particularly of overemphasizing the doctrine of predestination:

We encounter, to be sure, a rigidly theocentric causality of salvation, but it is hardly more rigid than the predestinarianism of Calvin and far more open than Calvin to the consideration of problems of secondary causality involving the divine permission. Beside this causal rigidity and the increased systematization of doctrine, we do encounter a propositional rigidity uncharacteristic of earlier Reformed thought. But we must distinguish the form from the content: a propositional rigidity does not of itself indicate a priority of reason over revelation or a departure from the Christocentric soteriology of the Reformation. Exposition of theology by means of logical propositions was characteristic of the Ramist as well as the more traditionally Aristotelian system, and the Ramists particularly Perkins and Ames, provided an impetus to the development of pletism. These final considerations taken together with the positive contribution of Reformed orthodoxy to the development of Christology in relation to predestination within a finely tuned soteriological structure are sufficient to refute the contention that early orthodoxy produced an unbalanced system which overemphasized the doctrine of predestination.⁵

Furthermore, some Roman Catholic interpretation attempts in a more positive way to lay Puritan piety alongside Medieval piety. It suggests that Puritan spirituality is more akin to Medieval piety than to the thought of the Reformers. For example, Louis Bouyer maintains that

⁴Paul Helm, Calvin and the Calvinists (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), p.81.

⁵Richard A. Muller, Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins (Durham, North Carolina: The Labyrinth Press, 1986), pp.181-182.

the seventeenth-century English Puritans in particular were closer to the spirituality of the Catholics than that of the Reformers. Such spirituality, specifically their devotion to Christ, he calls "Puritan mysticism."

Calvin, in his doctrine of sanctification, was undoubtedly the first to introduce the explicit possibility of a *fruitio divina* anticipating eternal beatitude. But it is at least doubtful whether this, as he understood it, could be interpreted in any sort of mystical sense. Following Judaistic literalism, he seems rather to have had in mind a healthy enjoyment of the goods of this world already bestowed by God on his elect in so far as they were truly faithful. And although some of his expressions seem to allow for a foretaste of purely spiritual beatitude too, he does not seem to have been touched by a love of Christ the man in St. Bernard's or St. Francis's sense--a love that was so striking in the Puritans long before the advent of Pietism, and quite independently of Orthodox Lutheran mysticism of whose very existence they were unaware. Not that we may doubt Calvin's love for Christ--but it was a cerebral love, not the spiritual love in which St. Bernard wanted carnal love of the Savior to reach its culmination. With the great spiritual writers of Puritanism, on the other hand, an evangelism still very much tinged with a late medieval love of Christ--evocative of Gerson and the *Imitation*--gave colour to the most Calvinistic themes.⁶

Despite their dependence on Calvin for the basic tenets of their faith, Bouyer claims that the basic currents of the spirituality of the seventeenth century Puritans were very different from those present in the magisterial Reformer.

The Anglo-Saxon Puritans of the seventeenth century were Calvin's most direct spiritual descendants. . . . But they were heirs whom Calvin would have viewed with some consternation. They diverged from him primarily by the marked pessimism with which they viewed the "world"; this gave their "discipline" its streak of gloomy asceticism, a streak unknown to the "discipline" that was Calvin's

⁶Louis Bouyer, A History of Christian Spirituality: vol.3. Orthodox Spirituality and Protestant and Anglican Spirituality (N.Y.: The Seabury Press, 1969), p.135.

dream, for all his authoritarianism and rigorism. But this outer shell of their religion, which made such a deep impression on their hostile contemporaries . . . , concealed a delectable content that was still further removed from Calvin whose intellectualism was so dry even when at its most passionate.⁷

Bouyer also points out that the Eucharist is used by the Puritans as an important source for their cultivation of a spirituality which focused on mystical union with Christ. Bouyer believes that the Puritan approach to the Eucharist is in line with the Catholic spirit. He maintains that the Puritans were far more interested in their polemic against the Anglican "Arminians" and the Zwinglians than they were in the "details of the supposedly idolatrous Catholic liturgy retained by Cranmer and the Caroline divines." According to Bouyer, "They [the Puritans] viewed with horror the rejection, or at least the excessive spiritualization, of Christ's real presence."⁸

The Puritans, on the other hand, while not going so far as to believe that Christ whole and entire, with his humanity and divinity, was to be found in the consecrated species, most certainly believed that eucharistic communion received with faith brought about substantial union with Christ. From this they drew a very realistic mysticism of Christ--one that easily became emoticnel if not carnal, and completed the unconscious Pelagianism lying behind their passionate struggle towards some sort of tangible sanctification.⁹

In fact, Bouyer concludes that the seventeenth-century Puritan spirituality is actually that of the pre-late Medieval period, and is in fact genuine Catholic spirituality. He writes:

⁷ Ibid., pp. 134-135.

⁸ Ibid., p. 135.

⁹ Ibid., p. 136.

Works such as Rous' and Goodwin's represent high water marks in Protestant spirituality and we have no hesitation in adding, in Christian spirituality as a whole. But in seventeenth-century Puritan spirituality works of this kind were not so much the exception as exceptionally successful examples of a wide current of thought. However faithful they were to the great religious intuitions of the Reformation and especially to Calvin at his best in his doctrine of sanctification, coming after Luther's doctrine of justification, we can find nothing in these works to contradict, or even to disagree with Catholic faith. We must go further: whatever their individual doctrine on other points, when these Protestants were dealing with spirituality they expressed a faith whose substance had become Catholic again. In other words, the spiritual and intellectual universe within which Luther, and even Calvin, had thought out their faith had apparently disappeared. That world-- heir to late medieval thought, to Ockham's Nominalism, Scotist voluntarism and exaggerated Augustinianism, the world in which biblical realism had seemed condemned to vaporization in ultra-spirituality, and the transcendence of the Christian God to destruction in an equally radical monism or dualism--that shattered world was no longer theirs.¹⁰

In this array of claims about the Puritans, it is imperative that we explore their piety in relation to Calvin. Not only so, but we must be alert to whether there is in fact some influence of Medieval piety, and, if so, of what nature it is. It is impossible to cover all aspects of Puritan piety. In our study, (especially in the light of Bouyer's claims) the main focus will be on union and communion with Christ since this is a major theme of seventeenth-century English Puritans and is also an important area of teaching for Calvin.

In order fully to understand the nature of the particular piety of the seventeenth-century English Puritan devotion to the person of Christ, we will, first of all, explore Calvin's exposition of union and communion with Christ. In Calvin the concept of union and communion with Christ is a

¹⁰Ibid., pp.142-143.

major theme. Here we will explore his teaching in the general context of his Christology and soteriology. Then we turn in particular to Calvin's treatment of the Lord's Supper where his teaching on union and communion with Christ is given specific exposition, often in a polemical context.

Calvin lived in a period of monumental theological unsettlement. As the Reformers broke away from Rome, the nature of soteriology was of great importance; to them a clear understanding of the nature of salvation was essential. Furthermore, the Lord's Supper was enmeshed in controversy even among the Reformers. In connection with Luther's notion of the ubiquity of Christ's humanity on the one hand and the so-called Zwinglian notion of the Supper as memorial on the other, Calvin could not escape the necessity of expounding his doctrine of union and communion with Christ in his humanity in a polemical as well a didactic context. This, then, was the ethos in which Calvin's doctrine of union and communion with Christ was hammered out.

For the purpose of our research the following four seventeenth-century Puritans have been selected: Richard Sibbes (1577-1635), John Cotton (1584-1652), Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) and John Owen (1616-1683). As a forerunner to this group, William Perkins (1558-1602), who enormously influenced the coming generation of Puritans, is added as the bridge to Calvin, both theologically and chronologically, in his approach to union and communion with Christ. In that respect, Perkins' teaching may help to provide a better understanding of the seventeenth-century Puritans.

Sibbes, Cotton, Goodwin and Owen were major figures in the flowering of seventeenth-century Puritanism, and without exception heavily influenced the Puritan mind. They demonstrated their devotion to

Christ in the wealth of their writings. Moreover, these men because of their intimate personal relationships constituted a virtual lineage of Puritans. It would not be surprising if we discovered among them common characteristics in their exposition of union and communion with Christ, as well as in their relation to Calvin.

The thesis presented in these pages may be summarized as follows. In the Puritan exposition of union and communion with Christ, there is no major departure from Calvin's theology. Yet, distinctions may be detected. In his treatment of union and communion with Christ, Calvin's major interest is soteriological. By contrast, the Puritans' main concern is expressed in the *application* of union and communion with Christ to the life of the believer in order to bring encouragement and comfort to smothered and afflicted consciences. There is in these Puritans a characteristic interest in the *use* of the doctrine.¹¹

One explanation for these differences in approach may be found in the different contexts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The seventeenth century was a turbulent period. Of course, one can say the same thing about the sixteenth century. But, as England moved toward the Civil War during the first half of the seventeenth century, the unsettlement became especially severe. In this context it becomes clear why the Puritans placed special emphasis on devotion to the person of Christ. They considered the *theology* of union and communion with Christ

¹¹ Cf. "Directory of Preaching" in The Directory for the Public Worship of God, or Westminster Confession of Faith (Reissued by the Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1976), p.380. Puritan sermons were to have standard divisions into "Doctrine, Reason and Use".

to have been adequately expressed by the Reformers. But now was a time to *apply* that theology to bring comfort and encouragement to believers in the midst of profound turmoils. It was a time for specific application as well as exposition.

A further difference can be found in the context in which their doctrine of the Lord's Supper is set. In his exposition of the Eucharist, Calvin gave a great deal of attention to union and communion with Christ's humanity. By contrast, there is far less material on the Lord's Supper itself in the Puritans. Even within the available material, devotion to the person of Christ in terms of union and communion does not seem to figure predominantly. Despite their full understanding and clear expression of union and communion with Christ in the spiritual use of the Lord's Supper, the Puritan material tends to focus on warnings against ritualism and an insistence on the maintenance of the purity of the sacrament. There is a reluctance to take the Lord's Supper as a context in which to express devotion to Christ.

In tracing this development, the whole study will be divided into three parts. In part one (chapters one and two), John Calvin and William Perkins will be studied. We will deal in chapter one with Calvin's notion of union and communion with Christ in two contexts: first, in his Christology and soteriology; second, in his teaching on the Lord's Supper. This provides the framework in which a comparison between Calvin and the Puritans can be made. In his approach to union and communion with Christ, William Perkins has closer ties to Calvin than the four seventeenth-century Puritans. His teaching is examined in chapter two, following the same structure as in chapter one. Later, he will be used

along with Calvin to provide a better understanding of seventeenth-century Puritan piety in terms of its devotion to Christ.

In part two (which consists of chapters three to seven) we will explore and expound the teaching of the seventeenth-century Puritans. In chapter three, first of all, we will review the seventeenth-century general historical background of the England in which these Puritans were living, and the hermeneutical traditions they inherited and used for their exposition of the Song of Songs which was a significant tool for flowering their devotion to Christ. This will set the stage for the exposition of the four Puritans: Richard Sibbes, John Cotton, Thomas Goodwin and John Owen. In this exposition of the Puritan teaching, a similar pattern will be employed. Their teaching on union and communion with Christ in general is traced, and the theme is then expounded in the specific context of their teaching on the Lord's Supper.

This leads to part three: chapters eight and nine. In chapter eight we will have an evaluation of the teaching of the four Puritans, analyzing Puritan spirituality in its historical context. We will examine their common and distinctive characters. Especially the influence on these seventeenth-century Puritans of the Ancient and Medieval piety (expressed by the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs) will be carefully checked. Our conclusion will follow in chapter nine where a comparison of Calvin and the Puritans in their teaching on union and communion with Christ is made. On this basis their similarities and differences are assessed and explained, and the nature of the continuity and discontinuity between Calvin and the Puritans is clarified.

PART I

FROM GENEVA TO CAMBRIDGE

CHAPTER I

JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564)

In this chapter we will explore Calvin's view of union and communion with Christ. Later, Calvin will be used as a reference for the understanding of seventeenth-century English Puritan piety by comparing its teaching on union and communion with Christ with that of Calvin. The present chapter will be divided into two sub-sections. In the first section, Calvin's view of union and communion with Christ will be dealt with in the context of soteriology since it is the major framework within which he himself discusses union and communion. In the second section, the theme will be explored in the context of the Lord's Supper, also an important area of Calvin's discussion of union and communion with Christ.

There are many standard works on different aspects of Calvin's theology.¹ But, Calvin's doctrine of union and communion with Christ has not been extensively explored. There is no standard work on Calvin's

¹E.g. T. H. L. Parker, Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959); Edward A. Dowey, Jr., The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965); T. F. Torrance, Calvin's Doctrine of Man (London: James Clark & Co., 1956); Killian McDonnell, John Calvin, the Church, and the Eucharist (Princeton University Press, 1967); Benjamin Charles Milner, Calvin's Doctrine of the Church (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970); Heinrich Quistorp, Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things, tr. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955); Francois Wendel, Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought, tr. Philip Mairet (London: Collins, 1963).

doctrine of union and communion with Christ.² This, however, should not undermine the importance of the doctrine of union and communion with Christ in Calvin's theology. Recently, Charles Patree wrote an article suggesting that Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ be the "central dogma" of his theology and thus "adequate to serve as a basis for surveying the Institutes from a central perspective."³ As he points out the importance of doctrine of union with Christ in Calvin's theology, Patree says,

Without denying or minimizing the importance and excellence of various other ways of approaching Calvin's thought, this essay has attempted to suggest the breadth and depth of the doctrine of "union with Christ" as the central mystery of Calvin's theology which means that this viewing point is present in Calvin's thinking about every other doctrine and with the expectation that it is a useful and comprehensive way of introducing and surveying Calvin's theology.⁴

²Cf. Lucien Joseph Richard, The Spirituality of John Calvin (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974), pp.97-116. Here Richard deals with union and communion with Christ in the context of Calvin's doctrine of justification and sanctification. Ronald S. Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), pp.17-27. Here, again, Wallace treats Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ as the foundation for justification and sanctification. But these are not definitive works on the subject. They are rather limited in scope and are used as springboards for other major doctrines such as justification and sanctification.

³Charles Patree, "Calvin's Central dogma Again," The Sixteenth Century Journal 18, 2, (Summer, 1987) : p.196. He provides numerous quotations of Calvin from his commentaries on Romans 6:5; 1Corinthians 6:15, 11:24; 1Peter 1:20; John 14:6, and from the Institutes 2:16:19; 3:11:10; 3:24:5 in pp.197-198.

⁴*ibid.*, p.196.

General Context

Mystical Union with Christ

The concept of union with Christ in Calvin constitutes the foundation of his soteriology. In Institutes, Book III Calvin expresses his intention to explain how "we receive those benefits which the Father bestowed on his only-begotten Son".⁵ Logically the topic follows Institutes, Books I and II, in which all the blessings that God the Father had planned and the Son had obtained according to the Father's will are clearly laid out. Calvin now explains how these are to be received by us. Union with Christ is the way the benefits of the work of Christ are communicated to us. Says Calvin, "as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us."⁶ Without seriously taking this notion of union with Christ to be the foundation, that is, without recognizing it as the way personally to appropriate the benefits of the work of Christ for us, one cannot properly understand the basic structure of Calvin's soteriology. We can readily recognize this intent of Calvin in his various expressions to describe the believer's union with Christ.

Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us. For this reason, he is called "our Head" [Eph.4:15], and "the first-born among many brethren"

⁵John Calvin, Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. John T. McNeill, tr. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 3:1:1. From now on, this will be designated as Inst.

⁶Ibid.

[Rom.8:29]. We also, in turn, are said to be "engrafted into him" [Rom. 11:17], and to "put on Christ" [Gal.3:27]; for, as I have said, all that he possesses is nothing to us until we grow into one body with him.⁷

To the above four ways to describe union with Christ (headship, fraternity, engrafting and clothing), Calvin adds another illustration from the Bible: the marriage imagery. It underlines union with Christ as being the only way for us to possess salvation. By the marriage relationship, our union with Christ is illustrated in "that sacred wedlock through which we are made flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone [Eph. 5:30], and thus one with him."⁸ Yet, the fact that we are united with Christ does not merely convey the congeniality between Christ and us through his humanity, but also indicates a profound substantive communication and sharing with Christ. "As Eve was formed out of the substance of her husband Adam, and thus was a part of him, so if we are to be the true members of Christ, we grow into one Body by the communication of His substance."⁹ In fact, our relationship with Christ in union with him actually goes beyond the level of the illustration of marriage relationship. According to Calvin, it is more than an analogy provided by a description of the human marriage relationship. For union *with Christ* is a mystical union.

Such is the union between us and Christ, that in a sense He pours Himself into us. For we are not bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh, because, like ourselves, He is man, but because, by the power of His Spirit, He engrafts us into His body, so that from Him we

⁷Ibid.

⁸Inst. 3:1:3.

⁹John Calvin, Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, tr. T.H.L. Parker, ed. D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), vol. 11, Eph. 5:30. From now on this will be called Comm.

derive life.¹⁰

Through mystical union with Christ, his church as a bride receives the benefits of the bridegroom's work. "This is a remarkable passage on the mystical communication which we have with Christ."¹¹ Thus, we are not to "coldly contemplate him as outside ourselves--indeed, far from us."¹² In fact, "This union alone ensures that, as far as we are concerned, he has not unprofitably come with the name Savior."¹³

What, in actuality, does it mean that there is a communication of substance? According to Calvin, it is the communication of the flesh of Christ, or Christ himself with his saving work on the cross.¹⁴ Calvin never tries to explicate the nature of the process of this mystical communication. But he holds the view that by this mystical communication of substance through the Holy Spirit we become united with Christ. Granting the fact that Calvin resorts to mystery when it comes to explain this communication of substance and the nature of the mystical union with Christ, it is clear that he comprehends it soteriologically. Calvin does further explain the result of that substantive communication and the union by which we appropriate our salvation.

Through mystical union with Christ, Calvin maintains, we have become one with him. This leads to our sharing of what he had obtained,

¹⁰Comm. Eph. 5:31.

¹¹Comm. Eph. 5:29.

¹²Inst. 3:1:3.

¹³ibid.

¹⁴Inst. 4:17:11. Cf. pp.53 ff. of this study.

through the bond that was established by the union. This is the communication of Christ's gifts and the reception of his benefits. Calvin "confess(es) that we are deprived of this utterly incomparable good until Christ is made ours. Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts--in short, that mystical union--are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with Him in the gifts with which he has been endowed."¹⁵

The primary "gift" Calvin has in view is "righteousness". In the union there is an exchange between Christ and us whereby we become righteous before God. In other words, "his[Christ's] righteousness is imputed to us . . . because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body--in short, because he designs to make us one with him."¹⁶ That imputation involves exchange. Christ took upon himself all our sins, and we receive his righteousness. Only in Jesus Christ, that is, having become one with him, is this communication possible.

How are we righteous in the sight of God? It is assuredly in the same respect in which Christ was a sinner. For he assumed in a manner our place, that he might be a criminal in our room, might be dealt with as a sinner, not for his own offences, but for those of others, inasmuch as he was pure and exempt from every fault, and might endure the punishment that we are now righteous in him--not in respect of our rendering satisfaction to the justice of God by our works, but because we are judged of in connection with Christ's righteousness, which we have put on by faith, that it might become ours. On this account I have preferred to retain the particle, in, rather than substitute in its

¹⁵Inst. 3:11:10.

¹⁶ibid.

place, through, for that signification corresponds better with Paul's intention.¹⁷

Hence our salvation is rooted in our being "ingrafted into his body" and we have become "participants not only in all his benefits but also in himself."¹⁸ "Since Christ has been so imparted to you with all his benefits that all his things are made yours, that you are made a member of him, indeed one with him, his righteousness overwhelms your sins; his salvation wipes out your condemnation; with his worthiness he intercedes that your unworthiness may not come before God's sight."¹⁹

In Christ our relationship with God has been altered from that of enmity to that of love. God loves us now despite our sinful nature, due to the union we have with Christ. We cannot receive God's love apart from Christ because "the love with which God loves us is no other than that with which he loved his Son from the beginning, so as to render us also acceptable to him, and capable of being loved in Christ."²⁰ It is only because of our union with his beloved Son that we can partake in the same love. Thus, we are beneficiaries of God's love for his Son purely on the basis of our union with him. Outside of the union there is no alternative for us to obtain God's love because "apart from Christ, we are hated by God, and he only begins to love us, when we are united to the body of his beloved Son."²¹ In other words, "as the Father cannot look upon his Son

¹⁷Comm. 2Cor. 5:21.

¹⁸Inst. 3:2:24.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Comm. John 17:26.

²¹Ibid.

without having likewise before his eyes the whole body of Christ, so, if we wish to be beheld in him, we must be actually his members."²²

When we are united with Christ, then, we are justified by God. Our sins are forgiven and we are reconciled with God, prior to which we were enemies of God because of our sins which separated us from God.

Engrafted into the death of Christ, we derive a secret energy from it, as the shoot does which was contrary to us, to His cross. Therefore, being crucified with Him, we are freed from all the curse and guilt of the law. . . . But let us remember that we are delivered from the yoke of the law only when we are made one with Christ, as the shoot draws its sap from the root only by growing into one nature.²³

Thus, him whom he receives into union with himself the Lord is said to justify, because he cannot receive him into grace nor join him to himself unless he turns him from a sinner into a righteous man."²⁴

Justification

We have seen so far how Calvin views mystical union with Christ. We have detected the crucial role that union with Christ plays in his soteriology. Calvin's intention was to ascertain what is involved in appropriating righteousness and thus in obtaining salvation from God.

In this particular section, the aspect of justification in union with Christ will be explored in the polemical context in which Calvin expounded it. Calvin was very conscious of the enormous theological and polemical task that he was facing. On the one hand, the Roman Church taught an

²²Ibid.

²³Comm. Gal. 2:19, 20.

²⁴Inst. 3:11:21.

erroneous soteriology as a result of Medieval Scholastic teaching, on the other there was also some confusion among the Reformers. It was a time of monumental theological unsettlement, as the Reformers broke away from the Church of Rome. Calvin took this polemical opportunity more sharply to define and elaborate his soteriology in terms of union with Christ.

First of all, union with Christ became an essential doctrine for explaining the nature of our salvation in polemic against the Roman doctrine of co-operation. The issue arose from the notion that human beings can do good because "a universal grace has been given them, as if it had been implanted in them naturally."²⁵ The so-called "Papists" claimed that "we have a certain faculty, not indeed sufficient in itself, but which, aided by God's grace, co-operates with it. . . . The papist invention is that we can do nothing without Christ but that when we are helped by Him we have something of ourselves in addition to His grace."²⁶ Indeed, it was difficult for the Church of Rome to accept the teaching of justification by faith alone "for they cannot be brought to acknowledge a free remission of sins; and except the remission of sins be gratuitous, we must confess that righteousness is not by faith alone, but also by merits."²⁷ Furthermore, Calvin also accuses the "Papists" of being erroneous--in this case, more acutely--because of their "mingling and confounding pardon of sin with

²⁵Comm. John 15:1.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷John Calvin, Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, tr. John Owen, vol. 4 (Edinburgh: Printed for the Calvin Translation Society, M.DCCC.XLVI:1.), Habakkuk 2:4.

repentance."²⁸ They acknowledge that a man is justified by free grace through Christ, but add, that it is because we are renewed by him. Thus they make our justification to depend partly on the pardon of sins and partly on repentance."²⁹ In other words, our renewal through repentance, according to them, became a merit on which our salvation is partly based. This is where Calvin discovers a serious problem. They confused the nature of soteriology so that repentance might be isolated from God's grace of forgiveness of sins through Christ's atoning work and adopted as an independent element of a merit required for justification.

By way of polemic against this, Calvin insists that "we have no power to do good save what comes from Himself."³⁰ According to Calvin, Christ "does not merely extol the assistance of His grace in co-operating, but deprives us completely of all power except what He supplies."³¹ Calvin teaches the radical total depravity of man in contrast to the teaching of Rome.

The Papists rightly say, that we are not justified by the intrinsic worthiness of works, but afterwards they do not consider how imperfect our works are, for no work proceeds from the perfect love of God, and where the perfect love of God does not exist, there is corruption there. It hence follows, that all our works are polluted before God; for they flow not except from the impure foundation of the heart. . . . much filth always remains in our hearts, and . . . nothing

²⁸John Calvin, Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, tr. William Pringle, vol. 4 (Edinburgh: Printed for the Calvin Translation Society, M.DCCC.XLVIII.), Isaiah 59:20.

²⁹ibid.

³⁰Comm. John 15:1.

³¹ibid.

is pure and genuine before God except where the perfect love of him exists."³²

Now a stage is set for Calvin's explanation for the way in which we can become righteous before God and do good. That is by way of union with Christ. Such union with Christ is the only way we can be accepted by God as being righteous and is the only foundation on which we can produce anything good.

It follows that man's nature is unfruitful and destitute of all good. For no man has the nature of the vine until he is implanted in Him. But this is given by special grace to the elect alone. So the Father is the first Author of all blessing, planting us with His hand. But the beginning of life is in Christ, in that we begin to take root in Him.³³

Through union with Christ, his righteousness is imputed to us by faith as our righteousness. It is not ours by any meritorious works. Calvin thus calls this

imputative righteousness, for they thus show that it is not a quality, but on the contrary, a relative righteousness, and . . . that he who lives by faith derives life from another, and that every one who is just by faith, is just through what is not in himself, even through the gratuitous mercy of God.³⁴

Calvin had difficulty not only with the teaching of the Church of Rome, but also with that of the Lutheran, Osiander. According to Calvin, Osiander confused the whole notion of union with Christ by injecting what is known as "essential" righteousness" which is likewise obtained by union with Christ. Such righteousness is not the kind of righteousness that is ours by the work and merit of Christ alone. In other words, it is

³²Comm. Habakkuk 2:4.

³³Comm. John 15:1

³⁴Ibid.

not through the substitutionary work of Christ alone that we have become righteous, rather it is a "substantial righteousness in God by the infusion both of his essence and his quality."³⁵ The essence and quality of Christ that was infused into us for our justification is the essence and quality of deity. Osiander "concludes that Christ has been given to us as righteousness, not in respect to his human but to his divine nature. And although this can be found only in the person of the Mediator, still it is not a righteousness of man but of God."³⁶ "For this is the reason why he contends so vehemently that not only Christ but also the Father and the Holy Spirit, dwell in us."³⁷ So, Osiander's view of Christ's indwelling in us inevitably leads to a conclusion "that the Father and Spirit are in Christ, and even as the fulness of deity dwells in him [Col.2:9], so in him we possess the whole deity."³⁸

The problem became more sophisticated because of Osiander's distinctive view of union with Christ. According to his view, in which the Holy Spirit is at work to create a special bond between Christ and us, the union has no significance "unless Christ's essence be mingled with ours."³⁹ This is essentially foreign to Calvin's view of union with Christ. Calvin teaches that the benefits of Christ are imputed to those who are in union with him by the exchange of our sins with Christ's righteousness. He says,

³⁵Inst. 3:11:5.

³⁶Inst. 3:11:12.

³⁷Inst. 3:11:5.

³⁸ibid.

³⁹ibid.

"You see that our righteousness is not in us but in Christ, that we possess it only because we are partakers in Christ; indeed with him we possess all its riches."⁴⁰ Osiander's teaching, according to Calvin, inevitably leads to an entirely erroneous soteriology whereby the substitutionary work of Christ is no longer the sole foundation for our justification. Thus, says Calvin, "we are not," according to Osiander's view, "justified by the grace of the Mediator alone, nor is righteousness simply or completely offered to us in his person, but that we are made partakers in God's righteousness when God is united to us in essence."⁴¹

Calvin calls this a "gross mingling of Christ with believers."⁴² Indeed, Calvin asserts that in our justification, which is by union with Christ, we have nothing whatsoever to present to God in any meritorious sense. We have been justified before God "solely by the intercession of Christ's righteousness. This is equivalent to saying that man is not righteous in himself but because the righteousness of Christ is communicated to him."⁴³ The so-called "essential righteousness", which was obtained from the essence and quality of Christ's deity and was infused into us, cannot be any part of the ground for our justification. Rather, what is involved in union with Christ, according to Calvin, is the emptiness with which we come to Christ by faith. Indeed, "by faith we

⁴⁰Inst. 3:11:23.

⁴¹Inst. 3:11:5.

⁴²Inst. 3:11:10.

⁴³Inst. 3:11:23.

come empty to him to make room for his grace in order that he alone may fill us!"⁴⁴

Faith

Having, in the previous section, explored the nature of Calvin's teaching on union with Christ in terms of justification, we now turn our attention more specifically to Calvin's teaching on the nature of faith in relation to union with Christ. In fact, faith is part and parcel of his notion of union with Christ. Our purpose here is not to explore Calvin's understanding of the nature of faith in an exhaustive fashion. Rather, we will examine it specifically in its role as a means to obtain justification and sanctification.

As we have seen, in union with Christ, especially in connection with the imputation of Christ's righteousness for our justification, faith is an element required on our part. It is by faith we are justified. That is, we must come to Christ by faith to be united with him and receive all his benefits for our salvation. Faith is the means by which we appropriate union with Christ and thereby justification before God through the imputation of his righteousness. Calvin makes two points concerning the nature of faith: "first, that faith does not stand firm until a man attains to the freely given promise; second, that it does not reconcile us to God at all unless it joins us to Christ."⁴⁵ Faith in itself, in other words, possesses no meritorious character because "there can be no firm condition of faith

⁴⁴Inst. 3:11:10.

⁴⁵Inst. 3:2:30.

unless it rests upon God's mercy."⁴⁶ Also, "saving faith" has no validity and meaning "except in so far as it engrafts us into the body of Christ."⁴⁷

In Calvin's time, as he himself describes, there was much confusion in understanding what exactly was the nature of faith in connection with union with Christ. Thus, Calvin desires to "scrutinize and investigate the true character of faith with greater care and zeal because many are dangerously deluded today in this respect. . . . In fact, when faith is discussed in the schools, they call God simply the object of faith, and by fleeting speculations . . . lead miserable souls astray rather than direct them to a definite goal."⁴⁸

This saving faith, according to Calvin, although it looks to God, should have Christ as its object. It is the Father's design, emphasizes Calvin, that through Christ he might be revealed.

For God would have remained hidden afar off if Christ's splendor had not beamed upon us. For this purpose the Father laid up with his only-begotten Son all that he had to reveal himself in Christ so that Christ, by communicating His Father's benefits, might express the true image of his glory [cf. Heb. 1:3]. It has been said that we must be drawn by the Spirit to be aroused to seek Christ; so, in turn, we must be warned that the invisible Father is to be sought solely in this image.⁴⁹

Calvin again finds himself in polemic against the doctrine of the Church of Rome concerning the true nature of faith. As we have already

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Inst. 3:2:1.

⁴⁹Ibid.

seen, to Calvin there is only one kind of faith, that is the true saving faith which leads us to union with Christ to obtain righteousness through imputation and thereby justification by God. According to the "Popists", however, the meaning of faith is again confused. Although they are "forced ... to admit the righteousness of faith", they make a distinction between "formed faith" and "unformed faith".⁵⁰ Because of their unwillingness to accept the doctrine of justification by faith alone, they adopted the notion of "formed faith" or "moulded faith" which as genuine "piety", contains "the fear of God", and by it justifies sinners. This kind of faith is distinguished from "unformed faith" which does not contribute to justification. "And by calling faith unformed they seem to think that we can embrace the promises of God without the fruit of regeneration."⁵¹ Calvin violently rebukes this kind of teaching as a product of utter ignorance because the only faith (i.e. truth faith) is the faith that is wrought as the result of "the peculiar gift of the Spirit" and inherently possesses "a pledge of our adoption."⁵²

Faith inevitably produces fruit, without which it cannot be accepted as genuine "saving faith", that is the means with which we are united with Christ. According to Calvin, the fruit includes both justification and sanctification.

Christ was given to us by God's generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely that being reconciled to God through Christ's

⁵⁰Comm. Habakkuk 2:4.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.⁵³

Christ is offered to us so that we might embrace him by faith. But, Christ "is offered not only for righteousness, forgiveness of sins, and peace, but also for sanctification [cf. 1Cor.1:30] and the fountain of the water of life [John 7:38; cf. ch. 4:14]--without a doubt, no one can duly know him without at the same time apprehending the sanctification of the Spirit."⁵⁴ Faith necessarily entails not only justification but also sanctification because true saving faith, which unites us to Christ, inherently possesses "a devout disposition."⁵⁵

Calvin is emphatic about the inseparable relationship between faith and sanctification when he says, "Christ cannot be known apart from the sanctification of his Spirit."⁵⁶ This means that according to Calvin the beginning of our exercise of faith which leads to union with Christ for justification coincides with the beginning of a sanctified and devout life because all true saving faith in itself has the Spirit of sanctification and thus naturally expresses its outcome in a holy life. In Calvin's words, "When they have begun to devote themselves to God, he accepts the upright disposition of their hearts equally as if it were pure and perfect; for faith

⁵³Inst. 3:11:1.

⁵⁴Inst. 3:2:8.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

not only reconciles a man to God, but also sanctifies whatever is imperfect in him . . ."⁵⁷

Sanctification

Our union with Christ produces as its benefits both justification and sanctification through Christ's righteousness imputed to us by the means of faith. When Calvin says, "Let then the faithful learn to embrace him, not only for justification, but also for sanctification, as he has been given to us for both these purposes"⁵⁸ he does not mean that it is on our own initiative from now on to live a holy life since we have been justified by faith through union with Christ. We do not possess that inherent natural ability to lead a sanctified life. It is true that once we are justified through union with Christ by faith, we would lead a sanctified life. But it is not enough to say that in Calvin's view sanctification is just an outcome of justification because that does not exhaustively reveal the intimate relationship between sanctification and union with Christ. It is more accurate to say that Calvin's view of sanctification is directly rooted in union with Christ. Without the notion of union with Christ as the foundation for not only justification but also equally for sanctification, we do not do justice to Calvin's view.

Having become one with Christ, Calvin states, one "does not live by his own life but is animated by the secret power of Christ, so that Christ

⁵⁷John Calvin, Commentary on the Book of Psalms, tr. James Anderson, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Printed for the Calvin Translation Society, M.DCCC.XLV.), Psalms 32:11.

⁵⁸Comm. Rom. 8:13.

may be said to live and grow in him. For, as the soul quickens the body, so Christ imparts life to His members."⁵⁹ Our life, once united with Christ, consists of on-going fellowship with him, in which we behold Christ as the example of our life. Calvin reminds us "that we so live in the world that we also live in heaven; not only because our Head is there, but, because, in virtue of union, we have a life in communion with Him."⁶⁰

Indeed, the mystical union with Christ sets the stage for "our conformity to the example of Christ" in which "we grow together with Him." For this purpose, in our union with him, Christ "revives us by His Spirit, and transfers His power to us"⁶¹ so that union with Christ naturally leads to a life-long communion with him, in which our sanctification takes place as a life-long process. As Calvin says, "sanctification is not instantly completed in us on the first day, but that we make progress in it through the whole course of our life, till at length God, having taken away from us the garment of the flesh, fills us with his righteousness."⁶² Once we are united with him, we are set apart to follow the example of Christ after the pattern of his life throughout our life time.

Now it is true that Calvin sees "reconciliation with him [Christ]" as "the foundation from which all other blessings flow."⁶³ According to Calvin, "The first . . . of all the blessings of which we have the true and

⁵⁹Comm. Gal. 2:19, 20.

⁶⁰ibid.

⁶¹Comm. Rom. 6:5.

⁶²Comm. John 17:17.

⁶³Comm. Psalms 103:3.

substantial enjoyment, is that which consists in God's freely pardoning and blotting out our sins, and receiving us into his favour."⁶⁴ Then, "the consequence of free forgiveness is that God governs us by his Spirit, mortifies the lusts of our flesh, cleanses us from our corruptions, and restores us to the healthy condition of a godly and upright life."⁶⁵ But this should not reduce the force of the unmediated and intimate relationship between sanctification and union with Christ because it does not mean that sanctification is a mere consequence of forgiveness and therefore of justification.

Calvin asserts that we are united with Christ not only for our justification but also for our sanctification. In fact, our justification has as its ultimate end that we should "serve God in holiness of life."⁶⁶ When we become partakers of his Spirit who brought us to Christ for union with him, we have also begun in our life of sanctification. For, "Christ indeed does not cleanse us by his blood, nor render God propitious to us by his expiation, in any other way than by making us partakers of his Spirit, who renews us to a holy life."⁶⁷ The Spirit brings about our union with him and thereby justifies us. But at the same time, he sanctifies us for the holy life.

In this respect, it is not surprising to find Calvin saying, "he [Christ] is said to have been made to us righteous; but he is likewise

⁶⁴ibid.

⁶⁵ibid.

⁶⁶Comm. Rom. 6:2.

⁶⁷ibid.

said to have been made to us sanctification (1Cor. 1.30), because he has, so to speak, presented us to his Father in his own person, that we may be renewed to true holiness by his Spirit."⁶⁸ Our "engrafting signifies not only our conformity to the example of Christ, but also the secret union by which we grow together with Him, in such a way that He revives us by His Spirit, and transfers His power to us."⁶⁹ Our life then should be patterned after that of Christ because we are in union with him and by that union we receive the power of sanctification. As "Christ once died to sin and lives for ever to God," we must also die while living--that is, renounce sin--and learn "how we are to live after having by faith received the grace of Christ."⁷⁰ Calvin further explains:

Take this view of your case,--that as Christ once died for the purpose of destroying sin, so you have once died, that in future you may cease from sin; yea, you must daily proceed with that work of mortifying, which is begun in you, so you are regenerated by the grace of God, that you may lead a life of holiness and righteousness, inasmuch as the power of the Holy Spirit, by which ye have been renewed, is eternal, and shall ever continue the same.⁷¹

But, Calvin in following the thrust of Rom.6:11 stresses that this process of sanctification through daily mortifying one's flesh is done *in* Jesus Christ. In the expression, "in Jesus Christ", Calvin draws out the significance of union with Christ based on which sanctification is to be wrought as he says, "I prefer to retain the words of Paul, *in Jesus Christ*,

⁶⁸Comm. John 17:19.

⁶⁹Comm. Rom. 6:5.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

rather than to translate with *Erasmus, through Christ Jesus*, for thus the grafting, which makes us one with Christ, is better expressed.⁷²

Work of the Holy Spirit

In our treatment of the different facets of Calvin's understanding of union with Christ, we have at various points touched on the significance of work of the Holy Spirit. For a more elaborate picture of Calvin's view of the soteriological nature of union with Christ, it is necessary to explore his view of the role of the Holy Spirit in union with Christ.

We have already seen that Calvin ultimately resorts to mystery in his exposition of the exact nature of our union with Christ. Calvin acknowledges that "we cannot know by idle speculation what is the sacred and mystic union between us and Him".⁷³ Following Scripture itself, he uses the relationship of the union between the Father and the Son as an analogy to show the ineffable nature of our union with Christ. Furthermore, Calvin emphasizes the experimental dimension of this union where he stresses that "the only way to know it is when He pours His life into us by the secret efficacy of the Spirit."⁷⁴ Yet, this we can know only through "the experience of faith".⁷⁵

In Calvin's mind, in our union with Christ it is the Holy Spirit that is in operation to produce the different facets of our union with Christ.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Comm. Eph. 3:17.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

We have already seen that it is by the work of the Holy Spirit that the mystical bond has been established between Christ and us. Through this union we have become one with Christ so that all of Christ's benefits could be communicated to us.

Not only establishing the bond of the union, but also bringing about our justification is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit. We do not possess within ourselves the ability to bring ourselves to Christ. We "are altogether away from God and infected and filled with a hatred of Him [Christ] until He [Christ] changes our hearts."⁷⁶ Again, "the power of quickening exists in the Spirit of Christ, which is able to absorb our mortality."⁷⁷ The manner of Christ's changing of our heart is through the Holy Spirit. Until we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, we cannot come to Christ.

Also, it is the Holy Spirit who works out our sanctification. The Holy Spirit now dwelling within us as the result of our union with Christ works in us so that "the newness of life" might begin in us. "For as by the Spirit He consecrates us as temples to Himself, so by the same Spirit He dwells in us . . . until the remains of sin are entirely abolished" at the end.⁷⁸

It is unfair to Calvin to dissect the work of the Holy Spirit in any detailed fashion because Calvin does not actually portray it in such a way. In fact, Calvin views all as the single fruit of the the work of the Holy

⁷⁶Comm. John 14:23.

⁷⁷Comm. Rom. 8:10.

⁷⁸ibid.

Spirit. The creating of the bond of union, justification, and the beginning of sanctification are all the unified result of the Holy Spirit's work, none of which can be chronologically isolated. Once we are united with Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit, we are justified and we begin our life of sanctification. So, it would be more accurate to say that even though in Calvin's view the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be sharply divided into different categories, nevertheless, according to Calvin, the Spirit operates in different aspects of union with Christ, resulting in a variety of benefits.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit then encompasses the operation of all the aspects of union with Christ. It is by the indwelling Holy Spirit that our union with Christ is maintained for both our justification and for our sanctification. But this indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Calvin's view is the indwelling of Christ. Here, we encounter Calvin's view of the inseparable relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit. (Calvin uses the two expressions, the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Christ, interchangeably.)

They are mistaken who hope the Spirit can be obtained apart from obtaining Christ; and they are equally foolish and absurd who dream that Christ can be received without the Spirit. Both must be believed. We are partakers of the Holy Spirit to the extent that we share in Christ; for the Spirit will be found nowhere but in Christ, on whom He is said to have rested for that purpose. Nor can Christ be separated from His Spirit; for then He would be, so to say, dead, and empty of His power.⁷⁹

Thus, when Calvin says that "in the person of Christ was exhibited a specimen of power which belongs to the whole body of the Church"⁸⁰, he

⁷⁹Comm. Eph. 3:17.

means that to Christ is assigned by the Father "a life-giving Spirit" through which the Church could receive all benefits from him.

Humanity of Christ

We now turn our attention to another aspect of Calvin's view on union with Christ, namely the humanity of Christ. Calvin's notion of the humanity of Christ may not be as directly related to his understanding of union with Christ as some other elements explored above. But, as it has crucial importance in Calvin's understanding of soteriology, it has just as much significance for Calvin's view of union with Christ especially as it meets the need for our nearness to Christ and for close fellowship through communion with him. The importance of the humanity of Christ in Calvin's mind can be readily seen in the following, not untypical, statement:

... we are justified in Christ, in so far as he was made an atoning sacrifice for us: something that does not comport with his divine nature. For this reason also, when Christ would seal the righteousness and salvation that he has brought us, he sets forth a sure pledge of it in his own flesh. ... the matter both of righteousness and of salvation resides in his flesh; not that as mere man he justifies or quickens by himself, but because it pleased God to reveal in the Mediator what was hidden and incomprehensible in himself.⁸¹

For Calvin, Christ in his humanity is the only way for us to come to God: "God is made known to us in no other way than in Christ: for as to the essence of God, so immense is the brightness that it dazzles our eyes, except it shines on us in Christ. It hence follows, that we are blind as to

⁸⁰Comm. Rom. 8:11.

⁸¹Inst. 3:11:9.

the light of God, until in Christ it beams on us."⁸² Through the humanity of Christ "we may venture more freely to call God our Father, because his only Son, in order that we might have a Father in common with him, chose to be our brother."⁸³ Thus, "by His means " we "come familiarly to God."⁸⁴

For us to know not only God the Father, but also the Son himself, his humanity is necessary. Calvin says, "Christ was made manifest in the flesh: that is to say, became man; like unto us in all things, sin only excepted (Heb. 4:15). . . . He took this burden upon Himself, that we through His grace might be disburdened. We cannot know Jesus Christ to be a mediator between God and man, unless we behold Him as man."⁸⁵ Not only to know him as a mediator, but to trust him in order to "have a true knowledge of faith . . . is impossible . . . unless we understand His manhood . . ." ⁸⁶

Furthermore, Calvin teaches that the humanity of Christ plays a specific role in our union with him because it is the only way for us to partake in Christ. "Let us remember that it is written, the Son of God appeared in the flesh; that is, He became very man, and made us one with Himself; so that we may now call God our Father. And why so? Because we are of the body of His only Son. But how are we of His body? Because

⁸²Comm. Heb. 1:3.

⁸³Comm. Luke 1:35.

⁸⁴John Calvin, "The Mystery of Godliness," The Mystery of Godliness and Other Selected Sermons (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), p.17.

⁸⁵ibid.

⁸⁶ibid., p.19.

He was pleased to join Himself to us, that we might be partakers of His substance."⁸⁷ Christ's partaking of our flesh then implies our partaking of his flesh, which opens the way for union and communion between Christ and us based on the nature of common substance. Both Christ and we, sharing the common substance, now could call God the Father. Of course, this presupposes the work of the Holy Spirit on the part of God and Spirit-born faith on the part of man for the humanity of Christ to function as the way for union and communion.

Yet, the humanity of Christ, in Calvin's view, has primarily soteriological significance. Indeed, for the establishment of our union with him, it was necessary for Christ, the Son of God, to bear humanity to bring about salvation: "since neither as God alone could he feel death, nor as man alone could he overcome it, he coupled human nature with divine that to atone for sin he might submit to the weakness of the one to death; and that, wrestling with death by the power of the other nature, he might win victory for us."⁸⁸ Christ took human nature "to atone for the sins of men by the sacrifice of his body, to reconcile them to the Father by the price of his blood, and, in a word, to fulfill every part of the salvation of men."⁸⁹

Christ came in human nature to "satisfy God's judgement, and pay the penalties for sin."⁹⁰ Adam disobeyed and the whole human race was

⁸⁷Ibid., pp.18-19.

⁸⁸Inst. 2:12:3.

⁸⁹Comm. Matt. 1:23.

⁹⁰Inst. 2:12:3.

lost with him. In order to counteract the disobedience of Adam, it was necessary for Christ to take exactly the same human nature as Adam. "Accordingly, our Lord came forth as true man and took the person and the name of Adam in order to take Adam's place in obeying the Father, to present our flesh as the price of satisfaction to God's righteous judgement, and, in the same flesh, to pay the penalty that we had deserved."⁹¹ The Son of God "put on our nature that he might thus make himself capable of dying" because only through death of the Mediator the satisfaction is rendered to God.⁹² So, the "sole purpose of Christ's incarnation was our redemption."⁹³

Why did Christ, the Son of God, have to come down in taking human nature? Was there no other being who could effect satisfaction? Calvin makes the important point that since we could not ascend to God, God had to descend to us, whereby "God is joined and made one with us in the person of His Son."⁹⁴

Since our iniquities, like a cloud cast between us and him, had completely estranged us from the Kingdom of Heaven [cf. Isa. 59:12], no man, unless he belonged to God, could serve as the intermediary to restore peace. But who might reach to him? Any one of Adam's children? No, like their father, all of them were terrified at the sight of God [Gen. 3:8]. One of the angels? They also had need of a head, through whose bond they might cleave firmly and undividedly to their God [cf. Eph. 1:22; Col.2:10]. What then? The situation would surely have been hopeless had the very majesty of God not descended to us.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Comm. Heb. 2:14.

⁹³ Inst. 2:12:4.

⁹⁴ Calvin, The Mystery, p.13.

Since it was not in our power to ascend to him. Hence, it was necessary for the Son of God to become for us "Immanuel, that is, God with us." [Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:23], and in such a way that his divinity and our human nature might by mutual connection grow together.⁹⁵

Not only was Christ to be real man, but also to be sinless so as to "expiate our sins, and vanquish death and Satan in our flesh".⁹⁶ Unless the Mediator be "free from every spot and blemish", he could not cleanse others. Indeed, although Christ was of the seed of Abraham, he remained sinless because "the Spirit of God kept him pure from the very commencement".⁹⁷

Having examined Calvin's understanding of the necessity of the humanity of Christ for our salvation, we now turn our attention to the benefits that we receive from the humanity of Christ besides our salvation. In a sense, what we have just discussed has to do with union with Christ where justification was the key message, but now in the benefits we deal more with the aspect of our communion with Christ that we have after justification.

The first benefit of the humanity of Christ is our assurance of salvation. Having taken our nature upon himself, Christ imparted to us what is his for our salvation. But assurance comes only when we realize that he became one with us partaking of our very flesh. Says Calvin,

Therefore, relying on this pledge, we trust that we are sons of God, for God's natural Son fashioned for himself a body from our body, flesh from our flesh, bones from our bones, that he might be one with us. . . . Hence that holy brotherhood which he commends with his own

⁹⁵Inst. 2:12:1.

⁹⁶Comm. Luke 1:35.

⁹⁷ibid.

lips when he says; 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God' [John 20:17]. In this way we are assured of the inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom; for the only Son of God, to whom it wholly belongs, has adopted us as his brothers. 'For if brothers, then also fellow heirs with him.' [Rom. 8:17]⁹⁸

This assurance is not strengthened unless we can have a sense of nearness to our Mediator since he who brought about salvation for us is the only one who stands between God and us. On a daily basis, our nearness to him is necessary for our assurance and this is possible through the realization that our Mediator is none other than he who bore the same flesh as we do now. The "Spirit calls him 'man,' thus teaching us that he is near us, indeed touches us since he is our flesh."⁹⁹ Calvin quotes Hebrews 4:15 to support this: "We have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning."¹⁰⁰ In the assurance of salvation by nearness to Christ through his humanity we enjoy genuine communion with him because "our common nature with Christ is the pledge of our fellowship with the Son of God".¹⁰¹

Were the Mediator only a Son of God, we would have no way to be assured and comforted: "for who of us does not dread the sight of the Son of God, especially when we consider what our condition is, and when our

⁹⁸Inst. 2:12:2.

⁹⁹Inst.2:12:1.

¹⁰⁰Inst. 2:12:3.

¹⁰¹ibid.

sins come to mind?"¹⁰² The comfort and assurance comes only when we realize that "the Mediator, who can pacify God towards us, is one of ourselves."¹⁰³

Calvin probes deeper into different aspects of the humanity of Christ which promote fellowship with Christ through communion with him. In Calvin's view, for the sake of communion with Christ what is more significant about his humanity is not the mere fact of his bearing our flesh, but the same "affections or feelings" that we bear in our flesh.

Christ

had not only put on the real flesh of man, but also all those feelings which belong to man, and he also shows the benefit that hence produces; and it is the true teaching of faith when we in our case find the reason why the Son of God undertook our infirmities; for all knowledge without feeling the need of this benefit is cold and lifeless. But . . . Christ was made subject to human affections, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest.¹⁰⁴

Not only our affections and feelings, but also our miseries, not including sin, which Christ had taken upon himself in his humanity, make us more akin to him in our communion with him. The bearing our miseries was not absolutely necessary for *Christ* to have communion with us. But it is for the benefit of *our* communion with him that he bore our miseries. Through this communion, by realizing the common bond between Christ and ourselves even in our miseries, we are comforted and encouraged all the more.

¹⁰²Comm. Heb. 4:15.

¹⁰³ibid.

¹⁰⁴Comm. Heb. 2:17.

The Son of God had no experience of mercy that he might know the emotions of mercy; but we could not be persuaded that he is merciful and ready to help us, had he not become acquainted by experience with our miseries; but this, as other things, has been as a favour given to us. Therefore, whenever any evils pass over us, let it ever occur to us, that nothing happens to us but what the Son of God has himself experienced in order that he might sympathize with us; nor let us doubt but that he is at present with us as though he suffered with us.¹⁰⁵

Christ, then, bore our infirmities and miseries, "not only that he might attain a victory over them for us, but also that we may feel assured that he is present with us whenever we are tried by them."¹⁰⁶

Eucharistic Context

Having examined Calvin's view of the believer's union and communion with Christ in the general context of his soteriology, we now turn to consider it in the context of the Lord's Supper.

Calvin gives detailed and extensive attention to the Lord's Supper as an important context for his teaching of union and communion with Christ. The Supper is a representation of believers' relationship with Christ in their union with him, and in their partaking, it provides them with assurance of their relationship with him. This process of assurance in their relationship with Christ, which the partakers receive as their benefit by partaking of the Lord's Supper, according to Calvin, is the communion taking place in the Lord's Supper.

In this section we will also deal with the work of the Holy Spirit and the role of the humanity of Christ, since in Calvin's thought the Supper

¹⁰⁵Comm. Heb. 2:17.

¹⁰⁶Comm. Heb. 4:15.

cannot have any validity and substance without the premise of their genuine reality.

Union with Christ

In Calvin's view the Lord's Supper is a sign that represents the believer's union with Christ. Further, a "symbol and pledge" of "our union to Christ . . . is given to us in the holy Supper."¹⁰⁷ That union occurs when we become one with Christ and it is signified by our partaking of Christ himself in the Supper. Of the union, says Calvin,

Such is the union between us and Christ, who in some sort makes us partakers of his substance. "We are bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh," (Gen.ii.23;) not because, like ourselves, he has a human nature, but because, by the power of his Spirit, he makes us a part of his body, so that from him we derive our life.¹⁰⁸

"The manner and character of this union" is incomprehensible because it is achieved through "the infinite power of the Divine Spirit". Calvin speaks of it as "the depth of this mystery". The Lord's Supper is the sign that illustrates this union because "the flesh and blood of Christ are exhibited in the Lord's Supper."¹⁰⁹

As Calvin asserts that "the flesh and blood of Christ are offered to us in the Supper," he also responds to those who doubt the reality of the union between Christ and the Church that is represented by the Supper.¹¹⁰ When the question arose as to the nature of the flesh and blood of Christ

¹⁰⁷Comm. Eph. 5:30.

¹⁰⁸Comm. Eph. 5:32,33.

¹⁰⁹ibid.

¹¹⁰Comm. Eph. 5:32.

being offered in the Supper, Calvin recognized that here he faced the ultimate mystery of the eucharist.

It is in vain that men fret themselves to comprehend, by the understanding of the flesh, its manner and character; for here God exerts the infinite power of His Spirit. . . . I am overwhelmed by the depth of this mystery, and with Paul am not ashamed to acknowledge in wonder my ignorance. How much more satisfactory is this than to undervalue by my carnal sense what Paul declares to be a deep mystery! Reason itself teaches us this; for whatever is supernatural is clearly beyond the grasp of our minds.¹¹¹

"Since . . . this mystery of Christ's secret union with the devout is by nature incomprehensible, he shows its figure and image in visible signs best adapted to our small capacity."¹¹² These visible signs are portrayed in the Lord's Supper.

Despite his acknowledgement of the mystery of the union, Calvin confidently emphasizes that our union with Christ is to be grasped in terms of our being one with his *flesh*:

[It] is only when we obtain Christ himself, that we come to partake of Christ's benefits. He is, however, *obtained*, I affirm, not only when we believe that he was made an offering for us, but when he dwells in us--when he is one with us--when we are *members of his flesh*, (Eph. V. 30)--when, in fine, we are incorporated with him (so to speak) into one life and substance. . . . Christ does not simply present to us the benefit of his death and resurrection, but the very body in which he suffered and rose again.¹¹³

In this context of our union with Christ in his flesh, Calvin directs our attention to the Supper where Christ's flesh is signified and presented.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Inst.* 4:17:1.

¹¹³ *Comm.* 1Cor. 11:24.

In the Supper our partaking of the substance not only signifies our union with Christ, but also nurtures our souls. Thus, continues Calvin,

I conclude, that Christ's body is really, (as the common expression is,)--that is, truly given to us in the Supper, to be wholesome food for our souls. . . . *our souls are nourished by the substance of the body, that we may truly be made one with him, or, what amounts to the same thing, that a life-giving virtue from Christ's flesh is poured into us by the Spirit, though it is at a great distance from us, and is not mixed with us.*¹¹⁴

But this partaking is vain unless, in Calvin's view, "the name of the thing signified is not applied to the sign simply as being a representation of it, but rather as being a symbol of it, by which the reality is presented to us."¹¹⁵

Hence the bread is Christ's body, because it assuredly testifies, that the body which it represents is held forth to us, or because the Lord, by holding out to us that symbol, gives us at the same time his own body; for Christ is not a deceiver, to mock us with empty representations. Hence it is regarded by me as beyond all controversy, that the reality is here conjoined with the sign; or, in other words, that we do not less truly become participants in Christ's body in respect of spiritual efficacy, than we partake of the bread.¹¹⁶

With this emphasis on the real substance and the presence of the flesh of Christ in the Supper, Calvin intensifies the analogy between our actual union with Christ and the way it is represented in the Supper.

We must not dream that his substance passes, in a natural manner, into our souls; but we eat his flesh, when, by means of it, we receive life. For we must attend to the analogy or resemblance between *bread* and *flesh*, which teaches us, that our souls feed on Christ's own *flesh*

¹¹⁴Comm. 1Cor. 11:24.

¹¹⁵*ibid.*

¹¹⁶*ibid.*

in precisely the same manner as *bread* imparts vigour to our bodies. The *flesh* of Christ, therefore, is spiritual nourishment, because it gives life to us. Now it gives life, because the Holy Spirit pours into us the life which dwells in it.¹¹⁷

It is then precisely by the *partaking* of the *body* of Christ in the Supper and thereby becoming one substance with him that we are properly said to be in union with Christ.

Souls feed on *his flesh and blood*, in precisely the same manner that the body is sustained by eating and drinking. Accordingly, as he lately testified that nothing but death remains for all who seek life anywhere else than in *his flesh*, so now he excites all believers to cherish good hope, while he promises to them life in the same *flesh* . . . I acknowledge that there is nothing said here that is not figuratively represented, and actually bestowed on believers, in the Lord's Supper; and Christ even intended that the holy Supper should be, as it were, a seal and confirmation of this sermon.¹¹⁸

Communion with Christ

As we have seen, the Lord's Supper itself according to Calvin represents our union with Christ by our partaking of the bread and wine which signify the body and blood of Christ. But, the Supper is, for Calvin, designed so that we could have communion with Christ, in which our partaking of the bread and wine result in the sustaining our spiritual life by experiencing the assurance of what is represented in the Supper, that is, our union with Christ and the benefits that we receive from it. In this sense, Christ and his work on the cross which lie at the heart of our union with him are not only represented by the Supper but also presented by it

¹¹⁷Comm. Matt. 26:26.

¹¹⁸Comm. John 6:54.

with a view to our communion with him. Thus, we are nurtured by the Supper.

God has received us, once for all, into his family, to hold us not only as servants but as sons. Thereafter, to fulfill the duties of a most excellent Father concerned for his offspring, he undertakes also to nourish us throughout the course of our life. And not content with this alone, he has willed, by giving his pledge, to assure us of this continuing liberality. To this end, therefore, he has, through the hand of his only-begotten Son, given to his church another sacrament, that is, a spiritual banquet, wherein Christ attests himself to be the life-giving bread, upon which our souls feed unto true and blessed immortality [John 6:51]. . . . the signs are bread and wine, which represent for us the invisible food that we receive from the flesh and blood of Christ. For as in baptism, God, regenerating us, ingrafts us into the society of his church and makes us his own by adoption, so we have said, that he discharges the function of a provident householder in continually supplying to us the food to sustain and preserve us in that life into which he has begotten us by his Word.¹¹⁹

Calvin explains this aspect of the function of the Supper to be an encouragement in our Christian life: "Now Christ is the only food for our soul, and therefore our Heavenly Father invites us to Christ, that, refreshed by partaking of him, we may repeatedly gather strength until we shall have reached heavenly immortality."¹²⁰

But exactly in what manner does the Supper nurture believers' spiritual life? It is related to God's purpose of instituting the Supper as not only a symbol that merely represents but also as a pledge that cultivates and strengthens our assurance. That is to say, God's purpose of instituting the Supper is

¹¹⁹Inst. 4:17:1.

¹²⁰ibid.

to confirm for us the fact that the Lord's body was once for all so sacrificed for us that we may now feed upon it . . . and that his blood was once so shed for us in order to be our perpetual drink. . . . We are therefore bidden to take and eat the body which was once for all offered for our salvation, in order that when we see ourselves made partakers in it, we may assuredly conclude that the power of his life-giving death will be efficacious in us.¹²¹

Thus, the purpose of the Supper is to bring assurance to believers by means of presenting Christ and his work on the cross to us for our communion with him.

For seeing we are so weak that we cannot receive him with true heartfelt trust, when he is presented to us by simple doctrine and preaching, the Father of mercy, disdaining not to condescend in this matter to our infirmity, has been pleased to add to his word a visible sign, by which he might represent the substance of his promises, to confirm and fortify us by delivering us from all doubt and uncertainty.¹²²

Thus, the Supper "sign[s] and seal[s] in our consciences the promises contained in his gospel concerning our being made partaker of his body and blood, and . . . give[s] us certainty and assurance that therein lies our true spiritual nourishment . . ."¹²³ Also, says Calvin, "the efficacy of the Supper is to confirm to us the reconciliation which we have with God through our Savior's death and passion; the washing of our souls which we have in the shedding of his blood; the righteousness which we have in his

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² John Calvin, "Short Treatises on the Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ," Calvin's Tracts and Treatises (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), vol. II, pp.166-167.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.167.

obedience; in short, the hope of salvation which we have in all that he has done for us."¹²⁴

With the assurance of our salvation and thus of our union with Christ being the purpose of the Supper, Calvin explains the specific manner by which this takes place in our mind during the Supper. According to Calvin, the manner lies in our devoted focus on the work of Christ on the cross. We "... by feeding [during the Supper] feel in ourselves the working of that unique sacrifice" on the cross.¹²⁵ The Supper becomes "a mirror, in which we may contemplate our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified to take away our faults and offences, and raised again to deliver us from corruption and death, restoring us to a celestial immortality."¹²⁶ In doing this, the Supper "directs and leads us to the cross of Jesus Christ and to his resurrection, to certify to us that whatever iniquity there may be in us, the Lord nevertheless recognises and accepts us as righteous . . ."¹²⁷

It is not, therefore, the chief function of the Sacrament simply and without higher consideration to extend to us the body of Christ. Rather, it is to seal and confirm that promise by which he testifies that his flesh is food indeed and his blood is drink [John 6:56], which feed us unto eternal life [John 6:55]. . . the Sacrament sends us to the cross of Christ, where that promise was indeed performed and in all respects fulfilled.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ibid., pp.169-170.

¹²⁵Inst. 4:17:1.

¹²⁶Calvin, Tracts and Treatise, p.168.

¹²⁷ibid.

¹²⁸Inst. 4:17:4.

By partaking in the Supper, especially while feeding on the bread and wine, we are to be continually reminded of our being one with Christ and thereby to experience the efficacy of the work of Christ represented by the elements.

Thus, when bread is given as a symbol of Christ's body, we must at once grasp this comparison: as bread nourishes, sustains, and keeps the life of our body, so Christ's body is the only food to invigorate and enliven our soul. When we see wine set forth as a symbol of blood, we must reflect on the benefits which wine imparts to the body, and so realize that the same are spiritually imparted to us by Christ's blood. These benefits are to nourish, refresh, strengthen, and gladden. For if we sufficiently consider what value we have received from the giving of that most holy body and the shedding of that blood, we shall clearly perceive that those qualities of bread and wine are, according to such an analogy, excellently adapted to express those things when they are communicated to us.¹²⁹

Calvin, therefore, states, "Godly souls can gather great assurance and delight from this Sacrament".¹³⁰ By partaking in the Supper, we witness "our growth into one body with Christ such that whatever is his may be called ours."¹³¹ Indeed, Calvin here describes the assurance of the benefits of our union with Christ, which we draw from participating in the Supper.

As a consequence, we may dare assure ourselves that eternal life, of which he is the heir, is ours; and that the Kingdom of Heaven, into which he has already entered, can no more be cut off from us than from him; that we cannot be condemned for our sins, from whose guilt

¹²⁹Inst. 4:17:3.

¹³⁰Inst. 4:17:2.

¹³¹Ibid.

he has absolved us, since he willed to take them upon himself as if they were his own.¹³²

The Lord's Supper in Calvin's view, then, represents our union with Christ by means of the work of Christ represented by bread and wine. But it also presents Christ and his work on the cross for us so that we may have communion with him by taking bread and wine resulting in our assurance of our union with Christ and of the benefits deriving from it.

Work of the Holy Spirit

Despite the importance of the above considerations, we cannot fully understand Calvin's idea of union and communion in the Supper without recognizing his view of the work of the Holy Spirit. We find in Calvin's teaching that the Holy Spirit works as the agent in the Supper so that our union with Christ might be authenticated and our communion with him might take place.

Especially against the background of the teaching of the Church of Rome and the Lutherans we can appreciate the enormous significance of this particular aspect of Calvin's teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit in the Supper. Calvin categorically denies the validity of the idea of the physical presence of the body of Christ in the Supper taught by both the Roman doctrine of Transubstantiation and the Lutheran doctrine of Ubiquity.¹³³ In contrast to both of these views, Calvin maintains that the Lord's Supper is a sign and a symbol. The institution of the Lord's Supper is "a figurative expression by which the name of the thing signified is

¹³²ibid.

¹³³inst. 4:17:11-31.

given to the sign."¹³⁴ Yet, Calvin cautions that one should "never dare assert that an empty symbol is set forth by him. . . . the truth of the thing signified is surely present there."¹³⁵ The Supper "is not a bare figure but is combined with the reality and substance."¹³⁶ Only with this reality and substance can we have "communion . . . in the body and blood of the Lord Jesus." Calvin points out, "It is with good reason then that the bread is called the body, since it not only represents but also presents it to us. Hence . . . the name of the body of Jesus Christ is transferred to the bread, inasmuch as it is the sacrament and figure of it."¹³⁷ The reality and substance of what is signified in the Supper is actually communicated to us by the Holy Spirit.

What is the substance that is communicated in the Supper? Calvin says, "I call Christ with his death and resurrection the matter, or substance."¹³⁸ And, "I confess that our souls are truly fed by the substance of Christ's flesh."¹³⁹ As a result of the communication of the substance we receive "redemption, righteousness, sanctification, and eternal life, and all the other benefits Christ gives to us."¹⁴⁰ Thus says Calvin, "When,

¹³⁴Inst. 4:17:10.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Calvin, Tracts and Treatises, p.171.

¹³⁷Ibid. p.172.

¹³⁸Inst. 4:17:11.

¹³⁹CR 9:70, quoted by Ronald S. Wallace in Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), p.199.

¹⁴⁰Inst. 4:17:11.

therefore, we speak of the communion which believers have with Christ, we mean that they communicate with His flesh and blood not less than with His Spirit, so as to possess thus the whole Christ."¹⁴¹

I indeed admit that the breaking of bread is a symbol; it is not the thing itself. But, having admitted this, we shall nevertheless duly infer that by the showing of the symbol the thing itself is also shown. For unless a man means to call God a deceiver, he would never dare assert that an empty symbol is set forth by him. Therefore, if the Lord truly represents the participation in his body through the breaking of bread, there ought not to be the least doubt that he truly presents and shows his body. And the godly ought by all means to keep this rule: whenever they see symbols appointed by the Lord, to think and be persuaded that the truth of the thing signified is surely present there. For why should the Lord put in your hand the symbol of his body, except to assure you of a true participation in it? But it is true that a visible sign is given us to seal the gift of a thing invisible, when we have received the symbol of the body, let us no less surely trust that the body itself is also given to us.¹⁴²

From this, one might say that the substance of Christ is the spiritual reality of the body and blood of Christ that is communicated to the partakers in the Supper that results in all the benefits arising from the work of Christ. Ultimately, however, in Calvin's mind this communication of Christ's substance to the partakers in the Supper remained a mystery. But he is emphatic in pointing out that this is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Calvin tried to find an alternative to Luther and Zwingli in their views on the presence of Christ in the Supper. This is already evident in the first edition of the Institutes. On the one hand, he denied that the bread and wine are literally body and blood of Jesus Christ. On the other,

¹⁴¹O.S. 1:435, quoted by Wallace, p.199.

¹⁴²Inst.. 4:17:10.

he also rejected the view that the elements are mere signs. Instead, Calvin introduced the idea of spiritual feeding in the Eucharist. By interjecting the role of the Holy Spirit as the agent who is present in the Supper, Calvin maintains that the partakers are spiritually fed in the sacrament.¹⁴³

Here is the genius of Calvin. On the one hand, Calvin denies the "Real" in the sense of "physical" presence of the body of Christ in the Supper. On the other, the enormous gap between the humanity of Christ in heaven and believers on the earth, created by his denial of the physical presence, is bridged for our union and communion by the Holy Spirit in the Supper.

Even though it seems unbelievable that Christ's flesh, separated from us by such great distance, penetrates to us, so that it becomes our food, let us remember how far the secret power of the Holy Spirit towers above all our senses, and how foolish it is to wish to measure his immeasurableness by our measure. What, then, our mind does not comprehend, let faith conceive: that the Spirit truly unites things separated in space.¹⁴⁴

But that participation in the body of Christ . . . is presented to us in the Supper, does not require a local presence, nor the descent of Christ, nor infinite extension, nor anything of that nature, for the Supper being a heavenly action, there is no absurdity in saying that Christ, while remaining in heaven, is received by us. For as to his communicating himself to us, that is effected through the secret virtue of his Holy Spirit, which can not merely bring together, but join in one, things that are separated by distance of place, and far remote. . . . It seems incredible, that we should be nourished by

¹⁴³Hermann Sasse, This is My Body: Luther's Contention for the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1954), p.322.

¹⁴⁴inst. 4:17:10.

Christ's flesh, which is at so great a distance from us. Let us bear in mind, that it is a secret and wonderful work of the Holy Spirit, which it were criminal to measure by the standard of our understanding.¹⁴⁵

Calvin holds that the human nature of Christ is retained in heaven without any impairment of his flesh. That is, in his glory in heaven his divinity did not destroy the true human nature of Christ.¹⁴⁶ Hence, the body of Christ is bounded in a locality and this locally bounded humanity of Christ and his benefits are communicated to us by His Spirit.

The Lord by His Spirit bestows upon us the blessing of being one with Him in soul, body, and spirit. The bond of connection is therefore the Spirit of Christ, who unites us to Him and is a kind of channel by which everything which Christ has and is, is derived to us.¹⁴⁷

In fact, in the Supper it is "by the secret virtue of the Holy Spirit, [that] life is infused into us from the substance of his flesh, which not without reason is called heavenly food."¹⁴⁸

The work of the Holy Spirit in the Supper confirms the work of the Holy Spirit in uniting us to Christ so that we might receive all the benefits of Christ unto eternal life. But, in Calvin's view, that does not seem to include all that the Spirit does in the Supper. The Spirit brings the flesh of Christ to us in the Supper, so that it might be a reality and substance rather than an empty symbol, and communicates that to us. Logically speaking, the moment this takes place cannot be the moment of

¹⁴⁵Comm. 1 Cor. 11:24.

¹⁴⁶Inst. 4:17:24.

¹⁴⁷Inst. 4:17:12.

¹⁴⁸Calvin, Tracts and Treatises, vol. II, p.277.

salvation because the Supper is received by those who have already been brought to union with Christ.

So, in Calvin's view, what the Spirit actually does, while we are partaking in the Supper, besides representing the nature of our union with Christ is to make possible our communion with Christ. Through the work of the Holy Spirit we are lifted up in our communion with him. The indwelling Holy Spirit lifts us up to heaven to Christ.

For the sake of fully presenting the nature of the work of the Spirit in our communion with Christ, Calvin also discusses the work of the Spirit in terms of our experience.

Now, that sacred partaking of his flesh and blood, by which Christ pours his life into us, as if it penetrated into our bones and marrow, he also testifies and seals in the Supper--not by presenting a vain and empty sign, but by manifesting there the effectiveness of his Spirit to fulfill what he promises. And truly he offers and shows that reality there signified to all who sit at that spiritual banquet, although it is received with benefit by believers alone, who accept such great generosity with true faith and gratefulness of heart.¹⁴⁹

Participating thus in the Supper "we are lifted up to heaven with our eyes and minds, to seek Christ there in the glory of his Kingdom".¹⁵⁰

Thus Christ is not prevented from exerting his power wherever he pleases, in heaven and on earth. He shows his presence in power and strength, is always among his own people, and breathes his life upon them, and lives in them, sustaining them, strengthening, quickening, keeping them unharmed, as if he were present in the body. In short, he feeds his people with his own body, the communion of which he bestows upon them by the power of his Spirit. In this manner, the

¹⁴⁹Inst. 4:17:10.

¹⁵⁰Inst. 4:17:18.

body and blood of Christ are shown to us in the Sacrament.¹⁵¹

In the Supper then, according to Calvin, the Holy Spirit not only brings the flesh of Christ to us to signify our union with him, but also actually works out the process of communion by bringing Christ and us together.

The Humanity of Christ

Now that we have explored Calvin's view of the role of the Holy Spirit for our communion with Christ in the Supper, we are at a stage to examine his thought on the humanity of Christ in the Supper.

At the outset it must be noted that Calvin does speak of the importance of maintaining the deity and humanity of Christ in unity. Ultimately, our union with Christ is with the whole person of Christ, both divine and human nature. Thus in the Supper we are to direct our faith to the whole Christ.¹⁵²

He is both God and man in us for, in the first place, He makes us alive by the power of His Holy Spirit: then He is man within us, for He makes us participate in the sacrifice He offered for our salvation, and declares to us that it is not without cause that He has appointed His flesh to be our food indeed, and his blood our drink indeed.¹⁵³

Despite his stand on maintaining the divinity and humanity of Christ in unity, the humanity is too important for Calvin not to emphasize

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Inst. 3:11:9.

¹⁵³Sermon on Luke 2:1-4, C.R. 46:966, cf. O.S. 1:508, quoted by Ronald S. Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), p.200.

its critical role, not only because "he carried out all these acts [of atoning sacrifice to fulfill the office of priest] according to his human nature"¹⁵⁴ but also because through his human nature we have union and communion with him.

Calvin teaches that the humanity of Christ is the channel through which we participate in both the divine and human nature of Christ.¹⁵⁵

There is no other way in which He can become ours than by faith being directed to His flesh. For no man will ever come to Christ as God who despises Him as man; and therefore, if you wish to have any interest in Christ, you must take care, above all things, that you do not disdain His flesh.¹⁵⁶

Christ's humanity and divinity cannot be separated, yet without his humanity his divine elements cannot be communicated.

Two things are to be sought for in Christ, that we may find salvation in Him: His divinity and His humanity. His divinity contains in itself His power, righteousness and life which are communicated to us by His humanity.¹⁵⁷

Furthermore, the humanity of Christ is that with which we can identify ourselves, and is presented to us in a visible fashion by means of bread and wine in the Supper. The humanity of Christ is presented to us in the Supper so that it might signify our union with him and thereby it might inculcate and maintain our assurance of the benefits resulting from our union with Christ. Calvin remarks, "when Christ would seal the

¹⁵⁴Inst. 3:11:9.

¹⁵⁵Comm. on John 6:51.

¹⁵⁶Comm. on John 6:56.

¹⁵⁷Comm. on Rom. 1:3.

righteousness and salvation that he has brought us, he sets forth a sure pledge of it in his own flesh."¹⁵⁸ That pledge is found in the sacrament because "he [Christ] calls himself 'the bread of life' [John 6:48], but, in explaining how, he [Christ] adds that 'his flesh is truly bread, and his blood truly drink' [John 6:55]."¹⁵⁹

This method of teaching is perceived in the sacraments; even though they direct our faith to the whole Christ and not to the half Christ, they teach that the matter both of righteousness and of salvation resides in his flesh; not that as mere men he justifies or quickens by himself, but because it pleased God to reveal in the Mediator what was hidden and incomprehensible in himself.¹⁶⁰

For Calvin, this is where the humanity of Christ has enormous significance in the Supper. Since, through his body and blood represented by bread and wine, the Supper presents Christ to us to signify our union, the humanity of Christ for Calvin also becomes the very object of our communion. The Supper shows that we have become one with Christ by becoming one with his flesh and through this flesh we have communion with Christ.

If Calvin maintains the union of the two natures of Christ, how could he simultaneously treat the humanity of Christ in the Supper in such a way that the humanity seem to be employed independently from his deity? In answering this question one must probe the eucharistic controversy among the Reformers.

¹⁵⁸Inst. 3:11:9.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

Luther was different from Calvin in this matter. Luther, who advocated Real Presence and ubiquity, maintained the inseparable unity of the two natures of Christ so that the humanity of Christ could never be separated from the deity. "Where Christ is there is the Godhead in all its fulness."¹⁶¹ In fact, the incarnate humanity of Christ has significance as the sign of God's revelation, in which the man Jesus Christ *is* the sacrament. The humanity of Christ in his humility and suffering signifies the love of God. Thus Luther saw the glory of the Godhead revealed only in the humanity of Jesus Christ.

Since this was the case, it was impossible for Luther to see any division of the divine attributes from the humanity of Christ. The omnipresence of God must be present in the humanity of Christ and the divine attributes communicable to the humanity of Christ. Thus, the ubiquity of Christ entails the ubiquity of the humanity of Christ. Consequently, there is no theological difficulty in holding the doctrine of the bodily presence in the Lord's Supper, indeed it is only fitting. Says Luther, "We believe that Christ, according to his human nature, is put over all creatures (Eph. 1.22) and fills all things as Paul says in Eph. 4:10. Not only according to his divine nature, but also according to his human nature, he is lord of all things, has all things in his hands, and is present everywhere."¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Martin Luther, Luther's Works, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann, vol. 37 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), p.56.

¹⁶² Luther, Works, ed. Abdel Ross Wentz, vol. 36 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p.342.

To Zwingli, the ubiquity of the humanity of Christ based on this kind of theology was a form of docetism.¹⁶³ The humanity of Christ cannot be omnipresent. There is a distinction between the deity and humanity of Christ. Zwingli did not accept the Lutheran teaching of the "communicatio idiomatum", in which the divine attributes are communicable to the humanity of Christ.¹⁶⁴

For Zwingli, the suffering of Christ on the cross was the work of the humanity of Christ. There cannot be any element of the deity involved in the bodily form. Only the human nature can suffer and die. For Luther, however, this was a complete denial of the mystery of the unity of the person of Christ. The work of Christ on the cross cannot just be the work of one nature of Christ. The whole Christ has to be involved in the expression of the love of God on the cross.¹⁶⁵

In his Christology, Calvin was careful to maintain the union of the two natures in Christ. Yet, Calvin was also insistent on distinguishing between the two natures of Christ. He would not separate Christ from his unity with God, yet when it was necessary the humanity of Christ was distinguished from his divinity.¹⁶⁶

In fact, Calvin later introduced a careful warning to safeguard against the confusion of the two natures of Christ.

¹⁶³Sasse, p.149.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., p.150.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., p.151.

¹⁶⁶Francois Wendel, Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thoughts, tr. Philip Mairet (S. James's Place, London: Collins, 1963), p.219.

We must beware of the raging madness of Eutyches, who, in trying to demonstrate the unity of the person in Jesus Christ, destroyed both natures. For we have already adduced so many evidences where the divine nature is distinguished from the human, and there are so many throughout the Scriptures, that they ought to shut the mouths of even the most contentious.¹⁶⁷

Jesus Christ then was adorned with this excellence according to the flesh . . . of being the Son of God: but we must not, however, imagine the unity of his person as a confused mixture which robs the deity of what belongs to it.¹⁶⁸

In one sense, Calvin rejected Luther's notion of "communicatio idiomatum" and thus the ubiquity of the humanity of Christ. The human nature of Christ, as far as Calvin was concerned, could not partake of the divine attributes. The divine nature of Christ cannot be divested of its divinity. Only the humanity of Christ suffered on the cross. In this Calvin clearly deviated from Luther's view of the person of Christ in relation to the eucharist. In Luther, the union of the two natures of Christ was firmly held with the teaching of the communication of the attributes so that the ubiquity of Christ could be applied to the humanity of Christ. Yet, in Calvin distinction was made between the two natures of Christ by rejecting the communication of the attributes.

Although Calvin rejects the Lutheran interpretation that leads to the ubiquity of the humanity of Christ, in another sense he does accept the communication of attributes in maintaining unity of the two natures in the one person of Christ:

¹⁶⁷Inst. 2:14:4.

¹⁶⁸Inst. 2:14:7.

For we affirm his divinity so joined and united with his humanity that each retains its distinctive nature unimpaired, and yet these two natures constitute one Christ. . . . Thus, also, the Scriptures speak of Christ: they sometimes attribute to him what must be referred solely to his humanity, sometimes what belongs uniquely to his divinity; and sometimes what embraces both natures but fits neither alone. And they so earnestly express this union of the two natures that is in Christ as sometimes to interchange them. This figure of speech is called by the ancient writers 'the communicating of properties.'¹⁶⁹

But the communicating of characteristics or properties consists in what Paul says: 'God purchased the church with his blood' [Acts 20:28 p.], and 'the Lord of glory was crucified' [I cor. 2:8 p.]. John says the same: 'The Word of life was handled' [I John 1:1 p.]. Surely God does not have blood, does not suffer, cannot be touched with hands. But since Christ, who was true God and also true man, was crucified and shed his blood for us, the things that he carried out in his human nature are transferred improperly, although not without reason, to his divinity. Here is a similar example: John teaches 'that God laid down his life for us' [I John 3:16 p.]. Accordingly, there also a property of humanity is shared with the other nature. Again, when Christ, still living on earth, said: 'No one has ascended into heaven but the son of man who was in heaven' [John 3:13 p.], surely then, as man, in the flesh that he had taken upon himself, he was not in heaven. But because the selfsame one was both God and man, for the sake of the union of both natures he gave to the one what belonged to the other.'¹⁷⁰

Yet, the ubiquity, for Calvin, could be applied only to the divine nature of Christ and the humanity of Christ has no part in it. It seems that in Calvin we see the priority of the humanity of Christ in his treatment of the person of Christ in the Supper.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹Inst. 2:14:1.

¹⁷⁰Inst. 2:14:2.

¹⁷¹Wendel, p.224.

What, then, of our union and communion with the humanity of Christ? Since it is in his human nature that Christ fulfilled his duty as the Savior and our union with him is through the body of Christ, Calvin recognizes the significance of the humanity of Christ for our union with him. The human nature of Christ became the point of contact through which the exchange took place and the life-giving power for salvation is conveyed as a consequence of the union.

This is the wonderful exchange which, out of his measureless benevolence, he has made with us; that, by his descent to earth, he has prepared an ascent to heaven for us; that, by taking on our mortality, he has conferred his immortality upon us; that, accepting our weakness, he has strengthened us by his power; that, receiving our poverty unto himself, he has transferred his wealth to us; that, taking the weight of our iniquity upon himself (which oppressed us), he has clothed us with his righteousness.¹⁷²

[As] the eternal Word of God is the fountain of life, (John 1.4,) so his flesh, as a channel, conveys to us that life which dwells intrinsically, as we say, in his Divinity. And in this sense it is called life-giving, because it conveys to us that life which it borrows for us from another quarter. This will not be difficult to understand, if we consider what is the cause of life, namely, righteousness. And though righteousness flows from God alone, still we shall not attain the full manifestation of it any where else than in the flesh of Christ; for in it was accomplished the redemption of man, in it a sacrifice was offered to atone for sins, and an obedience yielded to God, to reconcile him to us; it was also filled with the sanctification of the Spirit, and at length, having vanquished death, it was received into the heavenly glory. It follows, therefore, that all the parts of life have been placed in it, that no man may have reason to complain that he is deprived of life, as if it were placed in concealment, or at a distance.¹⁷³

¹⁷²Inst. 4:17:2.

¹⁷³Comm. John 6:51.

Through partaking of the flesh of Christ, then, our union with him and therefore our possession of the benefits that arise from the work of Christ by his humanity are actualized.

Yet, the union with Christ and the benefits from it, which was once obtained by the partaker and are now represented by the Supper, are not to be left buried. Instead, we are to be reminded of that benefit through our communion with the humanity of Christ by participating in the Lord's Supper. It is through this communion with the humanity of Christ, being assisted by the work of the Holy Spirit, that we experience comfort and encouragement by constantly cultivating assurance of our union with him and all the benefits we have received from it, according to God's pledge signed and sealed in the Supper. Thus says Calvin, "we enjoy more abundantly . . . because flesh once offered in sacrifice in daily set before us to be enjoyed."¹⁷⁴ "The flesh of Christ gives life, not only because we once obtained salvation by it, but because now, while we are made one with Christ by a sacred union, the same flesh breathes life into us . . ." ¹⁷⁵ Having been in union with Christ, we are also to grow in communion with him. "The Lord's Supper is a help whereby we may be engrafted into Christ's body, or, engrafted, may grow more and more together with him, until he perfectly joins us with him in the heavenly life."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴Calvin, Tracts and Treatises, vol. II, p.193.

¹⁷⁵C.R. 9:30f, quoted by John D. Nicholls, "Union with Christ: John Calvin on the Lord's Supper", Union and Communion, 1529-1979 (London: Westminster Conference, Westminster Chapel, 1979), p.37.

¹⁷⁶inst. 4:17:33.

Therefore, if, in Calvin's view, the Spirit is taken to be the agent who carries out the actual work of union and communion in the Supper, the humanity of Christ should be thought of as the substance that the Spirit brings to us for our union and communion. Calvin writes: "by the secret virtue of the Holy Spirit, life is infused into us from the substance of his flesh, which not without reason is called heavenly food."¹⁷⁷ The humanity of Christ, in Calvin's view, indeed becomes "the substance of our spiritual life"¹⁷⁸ because, says Calvin, "in order to have our life in Christ our souls must feed on his body and blood as their proper food."¹⁷⁹ Thus, "Christ now feeding us with the flesh sacrificed for us, . . . we may draw life from its substance."¹⁸⁰ Through the figure of bread and wine in the Supper, which represents the humanity of Christ, Jesus Christ is presented as "the source and substance of all good" out of which "the fruit and efficacy of his death and passion" flow.¹⁸¹ Thus, Calvin calls our union and communion with Christ in the Supper "participat[ion] in his humanity."¹⁸²

Consequently, Calvin asserts that the humanity of Christ symbolized by bread and wine in the Lord's Supper is life-giving power. This is not only in the sense that we are in union with Christ through the humanity of Christ but also that we constantly receive power from

¹⁷⁷Calvin, Tracts and Treatises, vol. II, p.277.

¹⁷⁸ibid. p.171.

¹⁷⁹ibid., p.170.

¹⁸⁰ibid., p.293.

¹⁸¹ibid., p.170.

¹⁸²ibid.

partaking in the same humanity of Christ through communion with him in the Supper. The flesh of Christ of which we partake is that which was quickened by the power of the "life-giving, Word of the Father [John 1:1], the spring and source of life". As we partake in the bread and wine, we are partaking in the humanity of Christ in which "dwells fullness of life, so that whoever has partaken of his flesh and blood may at the same time *enjoy* (Italics mine) participation in life."¹⁸³

I say, therefore, that in the mystery of the Supper, Christ is truly *shown* (Italics mine) to us through the symbol of bread and wine, his very body and blood, in which he has fulfilled all obedience to obtain righteousness for us. Why? First, that we may grow into one body with him, secondly, having been made partakers of his substance, that we may also *feel* (Italics mine) his power in partaking of all his benefits.¹⁸⁴

Polemic against the Church of Rome

Despite his disagreement with Luther on Christ's real presence in the Supper, Calvin's polemic was first and foremost against the Roman Church. Although Calvin did write against the Lutheran view of the Supper, the main content of the first edition of the Institutes in 1536 was aimed at the Roman church. By 1559 Calvin had fully worked out his polemic against the Roman view of the mass.

To understand Calvin's formulation of the theology and spirituality of the eucharist, one has to understand the background of his polemic against the Roman Church.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³Inst. 4:17:9.

¹⁸⁴Inst. 4:17:11.

In Calvin's view the Roman Church stole the authority of Christ.

The Roman Church developed an ecclesiology by which she could exercise

her lordship, dispensing small blessings and pieties, living in regal contempt of penitence, expecting to be served, binding others but herself unbound, finding her pleasures in ceremonial pronouncements and ritual busyness. Under pain of anathema she demanded submission to all that she said, or was about to say. She was not content to invoke the Holy Spirit but conferred him. Such a church did more than represent Christ; she displaced divinity.¹⁸⁶

The supreme example of the abuse of the power of the Roman Church, as Calvin sees, is found in the sacrament. The sacramental order of the Roman Church was the natural outcome of the expression of her ecclesiology. It became a tool to exercise the authority which properly belongs to Christ. The sacraments were abused as the source of the authority of the Church. The Church taught that people were to seek God's grace and gift *in* the sacrament which the Church alone possesses and distributes. Says Calvin, "There are those who attach to the sacraments some sort of secret powers with which one nowhere reads that God has endowed them."¹⁸⁷ It is even taught that "the cause of justification and the power of the Holy Spirit are enclosed in the elements, just as in vessels or vehicles."¹⁸⁸

In fact, the sacramentalism of the Roman Church was pervasive.

The spiritual life of the people was dependent on the sacraments. Ritual

¹⁸⁵ Killian McDonnell, John Calvin, the Church, and the Eucharist (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 107-108.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁸⁷ Inst. 4:14:14.

¹⁸⁸ Inst. 4:14:17.

obsession and sacramental ceremonialism were the only way to commune with God. The seven sacraments dominated the whole course of one's spiritual life

so that without them his [the Christian's] life was unhallowed and his salvation uncertain, as though justification consisted in sprinkling with water, anointing with oil, or the words of absolution. Not only was there no salvation outside the church, there was no salvation within the church for those who withdrew from the organizational busyness of the sanctuary. Not only was there no salvation outside the church, there was no salvation outside the sacraments. So Calvin read the pastoral practice of the Roman Church of his time.¹⁸⁹

Calvin condemns the abuse of the sacraments by the Roman Church because they replaced the core of theology by the sacramental order.

Calvin says,

Any man is deceived who thinks anything more is conferred upon him through the sacraments than what is offered by God's Word and received by him in true faith. From this something else follows: assurance of salvation does not depend upon participation in the sacraments, as if justification consisted in it.¹⁹⁰

Against the background of the Medieval theology on the sacrament, which even taught that the sacraments are the causes of salvation, Calvin rightly asserted the centrality of Christ in the sacrament.

I say that Christ is the matter or (if you prefer) the substance of all the sacraments; for in him they have all their firmness, and they do not promise anything apart from him. The less tolerable, then, is the error of Peter Lombard, who learnedly makes them the causes of righteousness and salvation, of which they are but parts. Accordingly, bidding farewell to all causes which man's ingenuity fashions for itself, we ought to hold to this single cause.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹McDonnell, p.112.

¹⁹⁰Inst. 4:14:14.

In Calvin's view, this Roman sacramentalism entirely lacked genuine spirituality. The personal dimension of the spirituality was replaced by an obsession with the mechanics of it. Practice was completely divorced from faith. The grace of God was dispensed without any reference to personal faith. What the laity practiced was based merely on a superstitious belief in the sacramental system taught by the Roman Church.

The schools of the Sophists have taught with remarkable agreement that the sacraments of the new law (those now used in the Christian church) justify and confer grace, provided we do not set up a barrier of mortal sin. How deadly and pestilential this notion is cannot be expressed--and the more so because for many centuries it has been a current claim in a good part of the world, to the great loss of the church. Of a certainty it is diabolical. For in promising a righteousness apart from faith, it huris souls headlong to destruction. Secondly, because it draws the cause of righteousness from the sacraments, it binds men's pitiable minds (of themselves more than enough inclined to earth) in this superstition, so that they repose in the appearance of a physical thing rather than in God himself.¹⁹²

Calvin criticizes the abuse of the Roman Catholic Eucharist in the form of the mass. He was aware that the mass was taken by the Roman Church to be the application of the merits of the death of Christ and abhorred the notion that the sacrifice of the mass was the tool to apply the work of Christ and so render efficacious the death of Christ. The doctrine of transubstantiation which lay at the heart of the mass was distorting the spiritual reality of the Eucharist. The spirituality of union and fellowship with Christ was lost in the visibility of the body and blood of Christ. The personal and spiritual dimension of partaking in the bread

¹⁹¹Inst. 4:14:16.

¹⁹²Inst. 4:14:14.

and wine in the Lord's Supper was dominated by ritualism. The mass seen as the means of grace to bring about salvation was in fact destroying the faith of the people. The institution of the mass was taken to be the object of faith whereas the object of faith must be the Lord of the institution, Jesus Christ. Calvin speaks:

It boils down to this: that Christ is to be sought in what they call 'species of bread' . . . But whatever words they introduce to disguise it, this is the purpose of them all: through consecration, what was previously bread is made Christ, so that thereupon Christ lies hidden under the appearance of bread. . . . One can see in what great superstition not only the common folk but also the leaders themselves have been held for some centuries, and today are held in papists' churches. They are little concerned about true faith by which alone we attain fellowship with Christ and cleave to him ¹⁹³

To Calvin the doctrine of the real presence endangers the doctrine of the humanity of Christ. This is more critical because our salvation rests on the human nature of Christ. The Christological significance of the Eucharist is strongly felt and asserted by Calvin:

But we must establish such a presence of Christ in the Supper as may neither fasten him to the element of bread, nor enclose him in bread, nor circumscribe him in any way (all which things, it is clear, detract from his heavenly glory); finally, such as may not take from his own stature, or parcel him out to many places at once, or invest him with boundless magnitude to be spread through heaven and earth. For these things are plainly in conflict with a nature truly human. Let us never (I say) allow these two limitations to be taken away from us: (1) Let nothing be withdrawn from Christ's heavenly glory--as happens when he is brought under the corruptible elements of this world, or bound to any earthly creatures. (2) Let nothing inappropriate to human

¹⁹³Inst. 4:17:13.

nature be ascribed to his body, as happens when it is said either to be infinite or to be put in a number of places.¹⁹⁴

In this sense Calvin was opposing both Lutheran Christology and its implication for the Real Presence and Roman Catholic Christology with its implication for Transubstantiation. Either view destroys the true humanity of Christ and endangers a right understanding of salvation. Eucharistic theology must maintain the true nature of the humanity of Christ. "It is the true nature of a body to be contained in space, to have its own dimensions and its own shape. Away, then, with this stupid fiction which fastens both men's minds and Christ to bread."¹⁹⁵

One can see clearly, then, why Calvin developed his doctrine of the Lord's Supper with such a care and intensity with regard to the person of Christ, and especially the humanity of Christ. The Roman abuse of the Supper endangered the very faith of the people for salvation. The Supper is intended to manifest the heart of the gospel, but this was obscured by superstitious beliefs, a wrong theology of the mass and the institutionalism taught by the Roman Church in order to enhance their authority through the rite. By contrast, for Calvin, Christ is to be the main object and the focus of the Lord's Supper, not the ritual itself, nor the church that is administering it. Calvin recognized the deep problem involved with the Supper taught by the Roman Church.

¹⁹⁴Inst. 4:17:19

¹⁹⁵Inst. 4:17:29.

Evaluation

From our study of Calvin's teaching on our union and communion with Christ, the following conclusions may be drawn, and used as standards of reference for comparison and contrast to understand and assess the seventeenth-century English Puritans' teaching on union and communion with Christ.

(1) Over all, Calvin's concept of the believer's union and communion with Christ has more emphasis on union than communion both in the general and in the Eucharistic context. In the general soteriological context, union with Christ takes up most of Calvin's concern although in his treatment of the humanity of Christ we do find some emphasis on the comfort and encouragement of believers. Calvin does this by directing our attention to communion with Christ through focusing on his bearing a common nature with us. In the context of the Lord's Supper, the emphasis on union is almost equally shared by that on communion.

(2) In the context of the Lord's Supper, one can say that the emphasis on communion with Christ is not any less than on union with Christ. Although the Supper signifies union with Christ, Calvin indicates clearly that God's purpose of instituting the Supper is to nurture our souls by the sign and the pledge of our relationship with Christ exhibited in the Supper. Thus, as we partake of the Supper, we are confirmed and assured of the relationship with Christ that has been established by our union with him. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, we experience assurance of our union as we partake of the substance of his flesh.

(3) Why does Calvin in general have more emphasis on union than communion? This has to do with the context in which Calvin writes. As the Reformers broke away from the Church of Rome, a monumental theological task lay ahead of them. Soteriology was one of the important areas for debate and discussion. Calvin found himself in debate not only against the Church of Rome who inherited the Medieval Scholastic theology that distorted biblical teaching on soteriology as a whole, but also against other Reformers whose understanding on the finer aspects of soteriology differed from his. In this context, Calvin's concept of union with Christ had special significance. Since the basic motive and structure of Calvin's teaching on union with Christ lies in his effort to develop accurate theology, his writings on this theme tend to be more theological and didactic than applicatory and exhortatory.

(4) Despite his emphasis on the communion with Christ in the Lord's Supper, Calvin made no attempt to provide comfort and encouragement of believers in his teaching. Although these elements were present, the general character of his presentation remained theological and didactic. Calvin had to pay close attention to the contemporary theological issues in the Eucharistic debate that were dividing the whole Reformation effort. He was not only concerned about the abuse of the Lord's Supper by the Church of Rome, but also about an inadequate understanding among the Reformers, especially on the subject of the mode of presence of the body and blood of Christ. Calvin tried to hold the middle ground between Luther and Zwingli as he rejected both the notion of ubiquity on the one hand and pure memorialism on the other.

CHAPTER 2

WILLIAM PERKINS (1558-1602)

Before we turn to the four main Puritans (Richard Sibbes, John Cotton, Thomas Goodwin, John Owen) whose teaching on union and communion with Christ we set out to examine in comparison with Calvin, we will first consider the views of William Perkins.

Perkins is important for our purpose because he is not only a major figure among the English Puritans, but also the predecessor of those whom we are to examine. In his teaching on union and communion with Christ, he serves as a transitional figure between Calvin and the four seventeenth-century English Puritans. Although as the most influential figure for the seventeenth century English Puritans, he remained much closer to Calvin in his approach to union and communion with Christ than his successors did. Here, Perkins' teaching on union and communion with Christ will be examined in the light of Calvin's and later it will also be employed as a point of comparison with the four Puritans.

William Perkins promoted Calvinism in a systematic way with ease and clarity. His style was popular because he adopted clear and popular language in his theological writings especially as he fought against the insurgent Arminianism of his time. His preaching was founded on the principle of simplicity and plainness. His books were enormously popular, running through many editions, and being translated into French, Dutch, Italian and Spanish. Perkins gathered disciples at Cambridge while

he held his post as a fellow and lecturer and his influence lasted for forty years even after his death. His "writings exercised such an important influence upon the whole fraternity of spiritual preachers that we must reserve them for special attention . . ."1 Among those who were influenced are such noted Puritan figures of the seventeenth century as John Preston, William Ames, John Cotton, William Gouge and Thomas Goodwin.² It has been said that in 1613, when Thomas Goodwin came to Christ's College in Cambridge, "the town was then filled with the discourse of the power of Mr. Perkins's ministry, still fresh in most men's memories."³

William Perkins was born in Warwickshire in 1558 and entered Christ's College, Cambridge in 1577. He was a disciple of Laurence Chaderton. He was elected as a Fellow at Christ's College in 1584 when he received his M.A. and began his career as a lecturer at Great St. Andrews in the same year.⁴

¹William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), p.64.

²Christopher Hill, Puritan and Revolution. Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1965), pp.216-217.

³Robert Holley, "Memoir of Dr. Thomas Goodwin," The Works of Thomas Goodwin, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1861), p.lviii.

⁴For the life of Perkins, see Thomas Fuller, D.D., Abel Redevivus: Or, the Dead yet Speaking. The Lives and Deaths of the Modern Divines, vol. 2 (London: William Tegg, 1867), pp.145-156. Also cf. The Works of William Perkins, ed. Ian Brewster, the Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics, vol. 2 (Berkshire: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1970); Charles Henry and Thomas Cooper, Athenae Contrabrigienses, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1861); William Perkins, ed. T. T. Merrill (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graff, 1966); Charles Robert Munson, "William Perkins Theologian of Transition"

Reception of Calvin's Thought in England

Even though Leonard J. Trinterud has challenged the thesis that John Calvin's influence on the Puritans was profound⁵, one cannot deny the strong influence of Calvin in England during Perkins' time. Commenting on Trinterud's thesis, Ian Breward says, "He (Trinterud) rightly pointed out debts to Tyndale and Rhineland theologians like Decolampadius, but suggested that puritanism was indigenous not exotic because its characteristics were controlled by 'the heritage from medieval English thought and life.'⁶ But, Breward maintains that "Calvinist theology played an important role in the articulation of puritan concerns about polity, worship and the Christian life."⁷

Knappen agrees that Calvin exercised a radical influence on Puritanism in general. "Calvin cast such a deep shadow over the Puritan world that he determined the tone of its entire thinking."⁸ Despite

(Ph. D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1971); J. R. Tufft, "William Perkins (1558-1602)" (Ph. D. diss., Edinburgh, 1952).

⁵"Puritanism was indigenous, not exotic, to England." Trinterud finds that the foreign influence, indeed if could be considered foreign, was "taken up not primarily from John Calvin of Geneva, but from the Reformers of the Rhineland: Zwingli, Jud, Bullinger, Decolampadius, Capito, Bucer, Martyr, and a host of other leaders in the Reformation movement in Zurich, Basel, Strassburg, and other Rhineland cities." Leonard J. Trinterud, "The Origins of Puritanism," Church History, 20 (1951): p.37.

⁶William Perkins, ed. Ian Breward, The Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics, vol. 3 (Appleford, England: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1970), p.17.

⁷Ibid.

⁸M. M. Knappen, Tudor Puritanism: A Chapter in the History of Idealism (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), p.376.

Trinterud's claim, Calvin's influence on the shaping of Puritanism has been widely accepted.⁹

Calvinism was a great force in the English Reformation, and later became a major source of influence on the Puritan movement. Calvin never visited England personally. But there were many different ways in which his theology had an impact on the island. The Reformers' interest in England can be seen particularly in the case of Bullinger and Bucer. They showed their interest even from abroad before they actually came over to England.¹⁰

Calvinism was most successfully spread in England during the reign of Edward VI. During his reign foreign influence on England was at its height. The oppression of foreign influence by Henry VIII was lifted

⁹See the following: John T. McNeill, Modern Christian Movement, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), pp.26-27; Patrick Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, p.434; Victor Lewis Priebe, "The Covenant Theology of William Perkins" (Ph. D. diss., Drew University, 1967), pp.124-125; William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism, p.8.; F. Ernest Stoeffler, The Rise of Evangelical Pietism (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), pp.54-55; Lionel Greve, "Freedom and Discipline in the Theology of John Calvin, William Perkins and John Wesley: An Examination of the Origin and Nature of Pietism" (Ph.D. diss., The Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1976), p.162.

¹⁰Bullinger was hospitable to English Protestants at Zurich, and took special steps to keep informed on the religious situation in England. . . . Martin Bucer at Strassburg sought to persuade Henry VIII, through German rulers, to suspend the Act of the Six Articles. He wrote to Crammer that ". . . if we could only discover by what means we might be able to help you, it would be our greatest delight to afford such assistance as is due from brethren and members of the same body."(Original Letters, I, p. 227; II, pp.608-09, quoted in Charles D. Crameans, The Reception of Calvinistic Thought in England (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949), pp.27-28.

after his death. Edward VI opened the door for foreigners, and England became the refuge for the foreign Protestants.¹¹ Many Continental Calvinistic Reformers came to England and took important positions in the churches and universities.

... Books and pamphlets printed in English began to be imported from Zurich and Basel shortly after Henry VIII's death. The English press, too, was free to all enemies of the old beliefs, though closed tightly against the supporters of Roman Catholicism. . . . This ascendancy of foreign opinion was stimulated by the presence of many notable European divines on English soil. . . . the hospitality of the English Church and government which, through Cranmer and the Duke of Somerset, made them welcome and gave many of them desirable places in the church and in the universities. Prominent among these distinguished exiles were Bucer and Fagius of Strassburg, Peter Martyr Vermigli and Bernardin Ochino of Italy, Peter Alexander of Arles, and John Lasco, the polish nobleman. . . . Bucer became Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge and Peter Martyr held the same post at Oxford.¹²

The Continental Reformers came to England in order to promote the unity of Protestants in England in their fight against the Roman Church. The Roman Catholics were building up their strength in unity at the Council of Trent in 1546. Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, wanted to have a unified Protestant doctrine over against the Council of Trent.

¹¹While Edward VI was king, England was a refuge for foreign Protestants, and a challenge to those of them who were eager to see their particular doctrines and preachments triumph in this new field for reform. . . the government let down the bars that had kept out Protestant propaganda." James Gairdner, The English Church in the Sixteenth Century from the Accession of Henry VIII to the Death of Mary (New York: AMS Press, 1973), p.266.

¹²Cremeans, p.28.

Thomas Cramner, the Archbishop of Canterbury, . . . close to his heart was a scheme for bringing together in England the chief leaders of Protestantism where they could work out a statement of their doctrine which would give the unity to Protestantism which he felt was necessary if it were to carry on the struggle with the Roman Catholic Church, then manifesting its unity at the Council of Trent. . . . [He] wished to bring . . . Bullinger, Melancthon, and Calvin.¹³

Although Calvin never came to England, there were many other ways for his influence to be spread there. The renowned Continental Reformed figures such as Bullinger and Bucer in particular successfully achieved this goal.¹⁴

By the time of Elizabethan rule, Calvinism became the dominant theological source for the English Protestants. Despite Elizabeth's Episcopal policy Calvinism was never in any danger.

The works of Calvin and Bullinger became the text-books in the English Universities. Those who did not hold the predestinarian theory were branded with reproach by the name of Freewillian Pelagians; and when the opposite tenets came to be advanced, as they were at Cambridge about 1590, a clamour was raised as if unusual heresy had been broached.¹⁵

¹³ibid.

¹⁴See W. M. Southgate, "The Marian Exiles and the Influence of John Calvin," *History*, XXVII, pp. 148-52; "Bucer, in England, was just as anxious to have Calvin make his opinion felt in that country as Calvin was to have Bucer help him. . . . Calvin and Bucer were old associates. Bucer had brought Calvin to Strassburg when he was expelled from Geneva in 1538. In Strassburg, Calvin was pastor of the French congregation and worked beside Bucer. The two men agreed on most things, and it was Bucer, according to several recent students of the subject, who had more influence on Calvin's thinking than any other contemporary." ; cf. Cremeans, pp.30-31.

¹⁵Henry Hallam, *The Constitutional History of England*, I, p.230, quoted in Cremeans, p.60.

Even after Calvin's death, which was shortly after the beginning of the Elizabethan reign, his influence in England continued through his successor Theodore Beza's connection with England. Within the body of the Church of England there were important supporters for the spread of Calvinism ¹⁶

Many scholars have analyzed Perkins' teaching since he is a seminal figure among the English Puritans and a founder of English Puritan piety. Before considering his views on union and communion with Christ, some attention should be given to these analyses. At a later stage a general assessment will be made of these various views in the area of union and communion with Christ.

R. T. Kendall, in common with others, has argued that the Puritans deviated from Calvin. It was Beza, and especially his scholasticism, that influenced the Puritans and gave birth to a departure from the spirit of Calvin. Kendall points to Perkins as a prime example of those who deviated from Calvin and came under the influence of Beza. According to Kendall, the Puritans' obsession with the sanctified life of believers was the result of the influence of Beza.¹⁷ "Calvin pointed men to Christ alone if they doubted their election, whereas Beza pointed men to their sanctification. Perkins followed Beza's solution . . ."¹⁸

Breward, by contrast, underlines the similarity between Perkins and Calvin as a result of his influence on Perkins on the following points:

¹⁶Crèmeans, pp.62-63.

¹⁷For a detailed argument see Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649, pp.199 ff.

¹⁸*ibid.*, pp.79-93.

A profound sense of God's majesty and sovereignty over human life, a deep conviction about the rebellious pride and willful ignorance of the human heart, a quest for assurance that one was in fact a child of God and not a limb of Satan, a careful examination of the nature of the mystical union between Christ and his elect, a concern for a life consonant with election and a pervasive sense of the shortness of human life accompanied by expectation of imminent judgement.¹⁹

Yet, Breward also recognizes the difference between Calvin and Perkins. This difference is the result of the influence of the reformed orthodoxy on Perkins which made him deviate from the balance of Calvin.

Calvin is only one of the influences contributing to his [Perkins'] thought and piety. He resembles Calvin most in his concern to link genuine piety and biblical theology, but he was too deeply influenced by reformed orthodoxy to end up with a synthesis like Calvin's.²⁰

Lionel Greve, however, observes a greater similarity between Calvin and Perkins in the general structure of their theology, the similarity in the balance between "the objective and subjective dimensions" of their piety.

In summary, Perkins' concept of piety consists of both objective and subjective dimensions. The former concerns his theological formulations while the latter concerns his understanding of Christian life. The manner in which he correlates these two dimensions gives his piety a unique outlook. He, like Calvin, strove to avoid charges of both legalism and antinomianism.²¹

¹⁹Ian Breward, p.30.

²⁰Ibid., p.105.

²¹Greve, "Freedom and Discipline in the Theology of John Calvin, William Perkins and John Wesley: An Examination of The Origin and Nature of Pietism" p.165.

In general the piety and theology of Calvin and Perkins bear a striking similarity. It is quite clear, according to Greve, that there was a direct influence of Calvin on Perkins.

The piety of William Perkins resembles that of Calvin in many ways. The stress on theocentricity as the foundation of piety is readily apparent. However, the emphasis that Perkins places on man's assurance of his salvation tends, on occasion, to lessen this theocentricity. But, like Calvin, he desired to keep theology and piety in a dynamic and correlative relationship.

Further, the similarity to Calvin's piety may be extended to his understanding of the Church, worship, sacraments and prayer--even to the degree that identical or at least similar terminology is employed.²²

The area in which Perkins advanced beyond Calvin, according to Greve, is the area of Covenant. Perkins used the Covenant to establish a tangible means for establishing the relationship between the sovereign God and responsible man. Says Greve,

Whereas Calvin left the dynamic relationship between God and man in terms of grace and discipline, Perkins went one step further and visualized election by a more tangible principle. A covenant could be seen as a contract, with both parties having responsibility, whereas election was more intangible. Perkins had not disagreed with Calvin but had gone beyond him with his dynamic view of covenant. While for Calvin the source of piety was in election, for Perkins it was in the covenant.²³

Indeed, the chief difference between Calvin and Perkins lies in Perkins' renewed adaptation of the idea of Covenant. Because of the crucial interest in the assurance of salvation, Perkins' theology became increasingly anthropocentric.²⁴

²²Greve, p.213.

²³ibid., pp.169-170.

²⁴To Perkins the question of the assurance of salvation plays a crucial role in motivating the direction of his theology. For example he says

Patrick Collinson also says, "For Perkins, as for his readers, the crucial question for religion was how a man might be sure of his salvation, which for a Calvinist was to have assurance of his election."²⁵ The analysis of godliness and sanctification became a matter of great importance because it speaks about one's condition in his relationship to God in the Covenant.²⁶ Grave explains this in terms of covenant and conscience.

Both Calvin and Perkins viewed piety as a correlation between grace and discipline. However, Perkins interpreted grace in terms of covenant, and discipline in terms of conscience. Therefore, Perkins' concept of piety is best understood as correlation between covenant and conscience. The covenant was the means of transmitting God's

the following: "This apprehending of Christ is not done by any corporall touching of him, but spiritually by assurance which is, when the elect, are perswaded in their hearts by the holy Ghost, of the forgiveness of their owne sinnes, and of Gods infinite mercie toward them in Jesis Christ." William Perkins, A Treatise Tending unto a Declaration whether a Man be in the Estate of Damnation or in the Estate of Grace. The Works of William Perkins, vol.1, 2 bound in one volume (London: John Legatt, 1631), p.363. "But the knowledge of the elect is pure, certain, sure, distinct, & particular for it is joynd with a feeling & inward experience of the thing known" (ibid., p.363.). "The means to attaine to the fight of sin is by diligent examination of a mans owne selfe" (ibid., p.364).

²⁵Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, p.434.

²⁶Victor Priebe puts it clearly: "The problem confronting Perkins is age-old. Committed unswervingly to the preservation of the doctrine of God's free and absolute sovereignty, Perkins nevertheless, must find an acceptable place for man's responsibility or active involvement in the covenant relation. For neither he nor anyone else, was willing to consider man a continuously totally passive recipient." Victor Lewis Priebe, "The Covenant Theology of William Perkins." (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1967), p.73. See also, Charles Robert Munson, "William Perkins: Theologian of Transition" (Ph. D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1971), pp.128-130.

election, whereas the conscience, as a form of discipline, was the means of making sure one, indeed, had been elected.²⁷

Thus, the difference between Calvin and Perkins is not a difference of kind. It is a difference of degree suited to the needs of their different times. As dogma develops, building on the previously established tradition, it is only natural that one has to read the needs of the times. Theological formulation may meet the needs of one time, but in a future time it is common for new concerns and needs to develop that go beyond the previous ones. The basic theology does not have to be necessarily different. Building on the basic tenets of a soundly-established tradition of theology, one can explore the present context and make any necessary modification to meet the contemporary need. This can be applied to the relationship between Calvin and Perkins.

The terms that might be employed in comparing Calvin and Perkins are intensification and elaboration. Perkins intensified some of Calvin's basic concepts and elaborated where Calvin had merely stated an operating principle. Although Calvin's and Perkins' understanding of the covenant is similar, Perkins developed it and utilized it as a central and controlling idea in his piety and theology. Calvin also spoke of the covenant but did not require it to perform to the degree and intensity of responsibility Perkins insisted it must have.²⁸

We must now turn our attention to the focus of our interest and see how Perkins dealt with the subject of union and communion with Christ. In so doing we will be able to make our own assessment of Calvin's influence on him in this area and will see Perkins' role in the development of piety in the English Puritan tradition. Again as in the case of Calvin, we

²⁷Greve, p.213.

²⁸Ibid., pp.213-214.

will examine Perkins' teaching of union and communion with Christ first in a general context and then in the context of the Lord's Supper.

General Context

Union with Christ

Perkins' famous book, A Golden Chain, provides us with insight into his historical context. The occasion was the controversy over predestination. In 1579 a professor of Divinity at Cambridge named Peter Baro initiated the teaching of Arminianism through his lecture on Jonah. Baro's teaching was Pelagian and there was strong opposition to this from Laurence Chaderton. In 1595 Peter Baro and William Barret launched a full-blown attack on Perkins' high view of predestination.²⁹ It was against this background that Perkins wrote A Golden Chain.

In the preface Perkins lays out the purpose of the book.

CHRISTIAN READER, THERE ARE AT THIS DAY four several opiniuons of the order of God's predestination. The first is of the old and new pelagians who place the cause of God's predestination in man, in that they hold that God did ordain men either to life or death, according as he did forsee that they would by their natural free will either reject or receive grace offered. The second of them, who of some are termed Lutherans, which teach that God forseeing how all man kind being shut up under unbelief would therefore reject grace offered, did hereupon purpose to choose some to salvation of his mere mercy without any respect of their faith and good works, and the rest to reject, being

²⁹M. M. Knappen, Tudor Puritanism (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), p.370.

moved to do this because he did eternally foresee that they would reject his grace offered them in the gospel. The third, semi-pelagian papists which ascribe God's predestination partly to mercy and partly to men's foreseen preparations and meritorious works. The fourth, of such as teach that the cause of the execution of God's predestination is his mercy in Christ, in them which are saved, and in them which perish, the fall and corruption of man: yet so, as that the decree and eternal counsel of God concerning them both hath not any cause beside his will and pleasure. Of these four opinions, the three former I labour to oppugn as erroneous, and to maintain the last, as being truth which will bear weight in the balance of the sanctuary."³⁰

It is in this highly polemical book that Perkins' basic tenet of theology is laid out. The soteriological thrust of A Golden Chain is paramount, dealing as it does with "predestination and its implications for Christian life, giving it a prominence that Calvin had avoided."³¹

As far as Christology is concerned, we see nothing unusual compared to the orthodox Chalcedon doctrine of the person of Christ.³² The notion of union with Christ is discussed as part of the effectual calling through which "a sinner being severed from the world is entertained into God's family."³³ The topic of effectual calling is treated in two parts: the first, election and the second,

the reciprocal donation, or free gift, of God the Father, whereby he bestoweth the sinful man to be saved upon Christ and Christ again actually and most effectually upon that sinful man, so that he may boldly say this thing, namely, Christ, both God and man, is mine and I for my benefit and use enjoy the same."³⁴

³⁰A Golden Chain, ed. Breward, pp.175-176.

³¹*Ibid.*, p.172.

³²Chap. XVI, XVII of A Golden Chain, Breward, pp.199-202.

³³*Ibid.*, p.225.

In the process of salvation, Perkins depicts the believer's union with Christ by the imagery of marriage relationship.

The like we see in wedlock. The husband saith, This woman is my wife, whom her parents have given unto me so that, she being fully mine, I may both have her and govern her. Again, the woman may say, This man is mine husband, who hath bestowed himself upon me and doth cherish me as his wife.³⁵

In this way,

Christ is made the head and every repentent sinner a member of his mystical body. This albeit it be a most near and real union, yet we must not think that it is by touching, mixture or, as it were, by soldering of one soul with another: neither by a bare agreement of the souls among themselves; but by the communion and operation of the same Spirit which, being by nature infinite, is of sufficient ability to conjoin those things together which are of themselves far distant from each other.³⁶

This union is said to be a "spiritual union" as it "is made by the Spirit of God applying Christ unto us and on our parts by faith receiving Christ Jesus offered unto us."³⁷ The nature of the union is described in terms of the faithful being

crucified with Christ and with him to die and to be buried, to be quickened, to be raised up and placed in heaven . . . because they are accepted of God certainly to have done all these things in Christ, even as in Adam's first sin all his posterity afterwards was tainted of " sin.³⁸

³⁴Golden Chain, p.77, from *ibid.*, pp.225-226.

³⁵*ibid.*, p.226.

³⁶Golden Chain, 77-78 from *ibid.*, p.226.

³⁷*ibid.*, p.78, Breward, p.227.

³⁸*ibid.*

Thus, this union is explored fully in terms of salvation within the whole scheme of the plan of God. "An actual living member of Christ is everyone elected which, being ingrafted by faith and the Spirit into Christ, doth feel and show forth the power of Christ in him."³⁹

In An Exposition Of The Symbole Or Creed Of The Apostles, Perkins' treatment of the mystical union is located in the section on ecclesiology, where "the nature, estate, and parts of the Church are set forth." In this context two points are to be considered. The first is "the efficient cause" of the church which is "God's Predestinaion", the second is "the forme" of the church which is "mysticall vnion".⁴⁰ Perkins defines the mystical union as

the very forme of the Church, whereby all that beleue are made one with Christ. To the causing of this Vnion, two things are required, A Donation or guiding of Christ vnto men which is to bee made one with him, and a Coniunction betweene them both.⁴¹

In his understanding of "Donation" we see Perkins' attention given to the Incarnation and the humanity of Christ. In order for the mystical union to be possible, as he quotes Isaiah 9:6 ("Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . .") and Romans 8:32 ("who spared not his own son, but gave him for us all . . ."), he points out that God donated his Son in the nature of humanity to us.

The concept of union with Christ then is central to Perkins' soteriology. As Perkins draws the picture of the marriage relationship, he

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Perkins, Works, vol. I, p. 298.

⁴¹ Ibid.

maintains that in the marriage relationship husband and wife freely communicate with one another. They are united as one body in the marriage relationship and out of this union they love each other as their own possession. Likewise, in union with Christ, Christ and the believer share each other as their own possession. There is a mutual donation whereby mutual imputation occurs. Christ's righteousness is imputed to believers as if it were their own and the sins of believers are imputed to Christ as if they were his own, as Perkins says,

And we are given vnto him, that our bodies and soules are made his, not onely as he is God, but also as he is our redeemer: and our sinnes with the guilt thereof are made his by imputation and the punishment thereof is wholly laid vpon him.⁴²

The Work of the Holy Spirit

In his exposition of union with Christ, Perkins never neglects the working of the Holy Spirit. More specifically, the manner in which we are united with Christ

is altogether celestial and spirituall: Partly because it is brought to passe by the meere diuine operation of the holy Ghost: and partly, because in respect of vs, this gift is receiued by an instrument which is supernaturall, namely faith, whereby we lay hold on, and apply vnto ourselves the Euangelicall promises.⁴³

The "Donation", which, as we have seen, indicates Perkins' notion of God donating his Son in human flesh for our salvation. It is the foundation for our union with Christ, but its fruit in our salvation is effected only through the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is an action or worke of God the Father by the Holy Ghost, whereby Christ as redeemer in the appointed time is really communicated to

⁴²ibid., p.299.

⁴³Perkins, Works, vol. I, p.298.

all ordained to saluation, in such manner, that they may truly say, that Christ himselfe with all his benefits is theirs, both in respect of right thereto, and in respect of all fruits redounding thence, and that as truly as any man say that house and land giuen him of his ancestours is his own both to possesse and to vse.⁴⁴

More specifically, it is in the Word and the sacrament that the Holy Spirit works out the mystical union as Perkins declares, "the word preached and the sacraments are (as it were) the hand of God whereby he exhibites and giues Christ vnto vs with all his benefits."⁴⁵

Perkins employs the term, "Conjunction," to denote the nature of this union as a spirituall union. Through the Spirit of God believers are united to Christ in his humanity.

for the very same spirit of God that dwels in the manhood of Christ. & filleth it with all graces aboue measure, is derliued thence and dwels in all the true members of the church, and filleth them with the like graces in measure. . . . Hence it follows, that the bond of this conjunction is one and the same spirit descending from Christ the head to all his members, creating also in them the instrument of faith, whereby they apprehend Christ and make him their own.⁴⁶

The Humanity of Christ

Like Calvin, Perkins maintains the unity of the person of Christ. According to him, believers are in union with the whole person of Christ: both the humanity and divinity. ". . . what is the very thing giuen? *Ans* *Whole Christ God and man* is giuen, because his humanity without Godhead, or the Godhead without humanity doth not reconcile vs to God."⁴⁷

⁴⁴ibid.

⁴⁵ibid., vol. II, p.265.

⁴⁶ibid., vol.I, p.299.

To Perkins it is unthinkable to separate the work of the humanity of Christ from that of divinity. Humanity alone cannot fulfill the work of redemption to bring about our salvation. Divinity alone cannot be the object of our union because it brings in "the heresie of the Maniches," and would "maintaine a composition and a commixtion of our natures with the nature of God."⁴⁸

Nonetheless, again as in Calvin, the humanity of Christ is presented by Perkins as of primary significance for our union with Christ and the communication of his benefits. Perkins writes:

... why not onely in the preaching of the word, but also in the institution of the Lords Supper, expresse mention is made not only of Christs merit, but also of his very body and blood, whereby the whole humanity is signified, as appears by the place, where it is said, Ioh. 1. 14 that the *Word was made flesh*. And though the flesh of it selfe profit nothing, as Saint Iohn saith, yet as it is ioyned to the godhead of the Sonne and doth subsist in his person, it receiue thence quickening venture, to reuiue and reueue all those to whom it shall be giuen. Lastly, among the blessings that are giuen vnto vs by imputation as when we are iustified by the righteousnesse indeede inherent in his manhood, but imputed vnto vs: some by infusion, as when holiness is wrought in our hearts by the spirit, as a fruit of that holinesse which is in the manhood of Christ, and deriued from it, as the light of one candle from another.⁴⁹

In his A Golden Chaine, Perkins more succinctly explains the manner in which the union is to occur. Even though the union is with the whole person of Christ, the humanity has its precedence in the actual working out of the union.

⁴⁷Ibid., vol. 1, p.298.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

In this union not our soul alone is united with Christ' soul, or our flesh with his flesh, but the whole person of every faithful man is verily conjoined with the whole person of our savior Christ, God and man. The manner of their union is this. A faithful man first of all and immediately is united to the flesh or human nature of Christ and afterward by reason of the humanity to the Word itself, or divine nature. For salvation and life dependeth on that fullness of the Godhead which is the flesh and by the flesh of Christ.⁵⁰

Perkins is insistent that the union is between our whole person and the whole person of Christ. Yet, he underscores the order of the union within the whole person of Christ: "we are first of all and immediately joyned to the menhood of Christ, & by the menhood to the godhead."⁵¹ Although Calvin would acknowledge that the humanity of Christ be the instrument for believers to be united with Christ, he would not employ this type of temporal emphasis in his expression. The idea is similar, but here we find in Perkins a tendency to use more precise expression.

Perkins stresses the critical importance of the humanity of Christ in the mystical union that actualizes salvation. It is in this vital union with Christ that the benefits of the work of Christ on the cross and in his resurrection can be applied to us. Only through such a union with Christ incarnate, crucified and risen, is the communication of his benefits possible.

⁵⁰Golden Chain, p.78 from Breward, p.226.

⁵¹Perkins, Works, vol.1, p.299.

Eucharistic Context

The Lord's Supper, for Perkins, as for Calvin, serves as a representation of believers' union with Christ, so that we are joined to him even though he is in heaven. Says Perkins, "though I now haue my abode vpon earth, & Christ in respect of his manhood be locally in heaven; yet [as manifested in the Supper] is he truly mine, to haue and enjoy, his body is mine, his blood is mine."⁵²

In this connection, the humanity of Christ is the vital instrument for the grace of the union to be actualized, and this is represented and signified in the Supper by the bread and wine.

this is the cause, why not onely in the preaching of the word, but also in the institution of the Lord's Supper, expresse mention is made, not only of Christ's merit, but also of his very body and blood, whereby the whole humanity is signified . . . And though flesh of it selfe profit nothing, . . . yet as it is ioyned to the godhead of the Sonne and doth subsist in his person, it receueth thence quickening vertue, to reuiue and renue all those to whom it shall be given.⁵³

Thus,

the godhead of Christ is giuen to vs, not in respect of substance which is communicable, but only in respect of operation. But the very flesh or manhood of Christ is really giuen to the beleeuing heart . . . By it wee receiue eternall life from the godhead, and by it God is ioyned to man, and man to God.⁵⁴

In Perkins, we find the sacrament dealt with especially in the context of covenant. The sacrament is viewed as a visible sign and seal of

⁵²ibid.

⁵³ibid., vol. II, p.265.

⁵⁴ibid.

the covenant made between God and his people. As a visible sign it becomes the source of great comfort and strengthens the pledge made between the two parties. According to Perkins, the covenant is found "generally in the Word, and more specifically in the ministrie of the Gospel and administration of the Sacraments, annexed as seeles unto the covenant."⁵⁵ Perkins' idea of a sacrament being a visible sign to comfort and encourage the participants is similar to Calvin's. But taking the sacrament as the sign and seal of the *covenant* is not clearly found in Calvin. As Greve pointed out earlier, Perkins advanced on Calvin in terms of more precisely expressing the covenant relationship between sovereign God and the responsible man. Perkins' viewing the Supper as the sign and seal of the *covenant* is an evidence of this.

Perkins, like Calvin, views communion with Christ as an important element of the Lord's Supper. He gives a particularly detailed explanation of how the sacrament as a sign helps the participants to develop their assurance of salvation. Although in Calvin we find the same idea of the Supper as an instrument to nurture the participants by promoting the assurance of their relationship to Christ, we do not find in Calvin such a detailed explanation as to the psychological and emotional outworkings of the believer's mind in this process. Perkins says:

The signes and visible elements affect the sense outward and inward: the senses convey their object to the minde: the minde directed by the holy Ghost reasoneth on this manner, out of the promise annexed to the Sacrament: He that useth the elements aright, shall receive grace thereby: but I use the elements aright in faith and repentence, soith the minde of the believer: therefore shall I receive from God increase

⁵⁵William Perkins, *A Godly and Learned Exposition of the Whole Epistle of Jude containing Threescore and six sermons*, Works, vol.III, p.520.

of grace. Thus, then, faith is confirmed not by the worke done, but by a kind of reasoning caused in the mind, the argument or prooffe whereof is borrowed from the elements, being signes and pledges of God's mercie.⁵⁶

In the same vein, Perkins explores how signs which are external can enhance the faith of the participants by conveying the internal reality of the sacrament. Here we may note a certain 'precisionist' tendency in Perkins. This 'precisionism' is of course one reason why Perkins is so often classified with the reformed scholastics. He writes:

... there is a certaine agreement and proportion of the externall things with the internall, and of the actions of one with the actions of the other; whereby it cometh to passe, that the signes, as it were certaine visible words, incurring into the external senses, do by a certain proportionable resemblance draw a Christian mind to the consideration of the things signified, and to be applied.⁵⁷

Perkins was sensitive to the mistaken notion of the Lord's Supper then prevalent in Roman Catholicism. At this point he refutes the notion of transubstantiation in order to repudiate the idea of the Real Presence (i.e. literal and physically local) of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. Even although he realizes the importance of the humanity of Christ in our union with him signified particularly in the Lord's Supper, Perkins is careful to emphasize the spiritual presence (i.e. through the power of the Spirit) of the humanity of Christ in the Lord's Supper. He writes,

For Christ to this very houre retaineth still the essence and essentiall properties of a true body, and we beleue that really & visibly he ascended into heeuen, and there abides till his second

⁵⁶Perkins, Reformed Catholike Works, vol. 1, p.610.

⁵⁷Perkins, Golden Chaine Works, vol.1, p.72.

coming to the last judgement: who then hauing but common reason would imagine a communication of the body of Christ pent vp in the element of bread and conueyed into our bodies by the mouth and stomacke?"⁵⁸

Like Calvin, Perkins emphasizes the spiritual presence of Christ in the Supper, rather than his bodily presence in the bread and the wine:

We differ not touching the presence it selfe, but onely in the manner of presence. For though wee hold a real presence of Christs body and blood in the sacrament, yet doe we not take it to bee locall, bodily, or substantial, but spirituall and mysticall, to the signes by sacramental relation and to the communicants by faith alone.⁵⁹

Yet, 'the presence' does not merely signify the presence only of the humanity of Christ. The participants are to receive the whole Christ, both the human and divine Christ. Rather than appealing to the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit for explanation as does Calvin, Perkins explains Christ's presence to the believer in a psychological manner:

... the elements of bread and wine are present to the hand and to the mouth of the receiver; at the verie same time the body and blood of Christ are presented to the minde: thus and no otherwise is Christ truly present with the signes.⁶⁰

Evaluation

We have seen clear similarities between Calvin and Perkins in the area of the believer's union and communion with the person of Christ. Like Calvin, union with Christ took up most of Perkins' concern and, as in Calvin, was expounded in a primarily soteriological context. Much of

⁵⁸Perkins, Works 1, p.299.

⁵⁹Perkins, Reformed Catholike, Works, vol. 1, p.590.

⁶⁰ibid.

Perkins' concern in presenting his notion of union with Christ was polemical. Thus his approach remained theological and didactic. Like Calvin, it was in the context of setting forth an accurate soteriology that Perkins' teaching on the union was treated.

As for the content of Perkins' teaching on union with Christ, the Holy Spirit, and faith on the part of man, are the working agents in reciprocal imputation and the actual communication of benefits. The humanity of Christ is emphasized as an important element of the union providing, as it does, a congruity between Christ and believers. Here, too, there is harmony between Perkins and Calvin.

Perkins differ from Calvin, however, in his tendency toward scholasticism, his rational and precisionistic explanations sometimes leading to detailed psychological descriptions of the participants of the Supper, rather than leaving things unexplained as mysterious, as Calvin did. Calvin did not provide a psychological description of the partakers' mind in the Supper as much as Perkins. That was not his interest, nor important to him. But with Perkins, the psychological description was integrated with the theology of the Supper. This is, however, partly in line with his general scholastic tendency to be precise in his teaching and is also partly an evidence that Perkins' theology became more anthropocentric than Calvin. Is this necessarily a failure? I should think not. It is true that one has to maintain the balance between a theocentric and an anthropocentric approach in theological methodology. Perhaps, Calvin was better in presenting his theology in this sense. But, the historical flow of theology dealing with the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man may have required Perkins to emphasize the anthropocentric dimension, since an important issue for the Puritan

theological agenda at this time was to better understand and to more clearly express the validity of man's act under the sovereignty of God. At any rate, even though he remained close to Calvin's theology, this marked a significant difference in the character of Perkins' theological approach.

It must also be recognized that Perkins does not provide us with the same wealth of material that we find in Calvin on union and communion with Christ, either in the general or in the Eucharistic context. Perkins' interest at this time, besides his polemic against Arminians, was in moral renewal through the careful direction of believers' consciences. There was from the Catholic side enormous silent pressure for Protestants to produce teaching on cases of conscience. A practical guide in moral matters had been a desperate need among the Protestants since they broke away from the Church of Rome and thereby abandoned the usage of Roman casuistry.⁶¹ His concern in this area led him to produce a series of works: On Conscience (1596), A Whole Treatise of Cases of Conscience (1606) and A Treatise on Vocations (1605). In one sense, Perkins' work on casuistry and the conscience was an effort to realize the dream of the Puritans following the ideal of Bucer's De Regno Christi. They wanted to see the kingdom of God in England. They labored to implement it in the state as well as in the Church of England, conflicting with both royalty and ecclesiastical authorities. But, that was not to be the way. Along with the main stream Puritan approach of internalizing this vision, Perkins'

⁶¹ Ian Breward, "William Perkins and the Origins of Casuistry," Faith and a Good Conscience. (Papers read at the Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference, December 18, 19, 1962), p.7.

work on casuistry was to crystallize the dream in the heart of the individual.⁶²

Furthermore, Perkins' real concern in the Lord's Supper was not on understanding its theological implications in terms of union and communion with Christ, but on promoting the participants' spirituality in terms of preparation for the Eucharist. Here the focus lay in the internal examination of participants' spiritual condition demanded before partaking of the Supper. "Preparation for communion," for Perkins, "became a focal point of sacramental piety; one suspects that it was more important to some Puritans than the sacrament itself. In The Golden Chain, where Perkins laid out sacramental doctrine with systematic precision, he devoted over a third of his discussion to preparation."⁶³

⁶²Mark Shaw, "The Marrow of Practical Divinity" (Th.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1981), pp.286-287.

⁶³E. Brooks Holifield, The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570-1720 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), p.55. Neglect of theological work on the Lord's Supper was a tendency of the seventeenth century English Puritans who followed Perkins. Their negative attitude toward ritualism led them to concentrate on polemic against the Church of Rome and the Church of England, rather than on a positive exposition of the Eucharist. Calvin had similar difficulty with the teaching of the Church of Rome on the sacrament. But, by contrast, he did not neglect the positive theological themes in the Lord's Supper. Rather, he endeavored to rectify erroneous theology by paying more attention to the whole range. However, many English Puritans were content just to recite Calvin's idea on the issues as we shall see in chapters four through seven when we deal with the seventeenth century Puritans. For them the Lord's Supper was no longer the context for the teaching on communion with Christ as it was in Calvin. In fact, their teaching on communion with Christ was done outside of the context of the Eucharist.

Nevertheless, within that limited material on the Supper where teaching is given on union and communion with Christ, Perkins does show some emphasis on communion with Christ. Such communion promotes assurance of salvation. The Lord's Supper is the context in which the union is signified and sealed through a visible sign.

We also saw that for Calvin God's intention in instituting the Supper was to nurture believers through the sign and pledge of the bread and wine. This was to provide a sense of assurance in the participants' union with Christ and the benefits of it. While Perkins' aim was the same as Calvin's, that is, to enhance assurance of our relationship with Christ and thereby of our salvation, Perkins interjected the covenant idea into it and defined the Supper as the sign and seal of the covenant. This idea is not clearly expressed in Calvin. Yet, still the primary purpose of the covenant itself was to breed assurance of salvation in a tangible form when people could not have a sense of assurance in the doctrine of election. So, for Perkins the Supper as the sign and seal of the covenant is thus given to enhance assurance of salvation for the partakers.

Much in the same vein as Calvin, Perkins also discusses devotion to the humanity of Christ in the context of the Lord's Supper. As we receive the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, we are one with him through his humanity. As in Calvin, although the humanity of Christ is not bodily present in the Supper (it is in heaven), the Holy Spirit bridges the spatial gap between Christ in heaven and believers on the earth. Thus, Christ is spiritually present in the Supper. It signifies spiritual union and fosters actual communion with him.

In general, Perkins' teaching on union and communion with Christ bears striking similarities to Calvin's. The conclusion is unavoidable¹ that

there is a clear and direct link between Calvin and Perkins in this area. The differences exist especially in Perkins' scholastic tendency, the usage of the covenant idea and his emphasis on preparation for partaking of the Supper. But so far as Perkins' teaching on union and communion with Christ is concerned, these differences did not constitute a setting for a serious theological deviation from Calvin. All the important pillars of Calvin's teaching in this area are also present in Perkins, albeit in miniature. In fact, Perkins stands much closer to Calvin in the general framework of this area of teaching than he does to those seventeenth-century Puritans we are about to examine--despite his link with and influence on them. As we will see, their interest in *communion* with Christ was largely focused *outside* of the context of the Lord's Supper.