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Calvin on deification: a reply to Carl Mosser and Jonathan Slater

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Abstract

Calvin scholars have disputed whether Calvin had the concept of deification. Carl Mosser was eager to find deification in Calvin's theology. On the other hand, Jonathan Slater was earnest to deny deification in Calvin's thought. Calvin distinguishes between divine essence and divine kind. According to Calvin, we will be partakers of the divine kind, but not of the divine essence. We will be like God, but we will not be God. For Calvin, righteousness and immortality are called divine righteousness and divine immortality because God is its author. They are gifts from God, not God's own essence. Calvin says that we are God's offspring, but in quality, not in essence, inasmuch as he, indeed, adorned us with divine gifts. On the other hand, although Slater argues that Calvin's position is that believers share in what is Christ's according to his human nature, in accordance with Calvin, all the actions which Christ performed to reconcile God and man refer to the whole person, and are not to be separately restricted to only one nature. In this article, I find that Calvin distinguishes between divine essence and divine kind, in other words, essential and non-essential or central and peripheral.

Introduction

Calvin scholars have disputed whether Calvin had the concept of deification. F. W. Norris says, 'John Calvin seems to have avoided teaching deification or not known of it.'[1] However, Norris says that Calvin spoke of the beatific vision and mystical union with God.

> Because significant Western theologians confess this deep sense of sharing in the divine nature and others like John Calvin and Bernard of Clairvaux speak of the beatific vision and mystical union with God, deification should be viewed by Protestants not as an oddity of Orthodox theology but as an ecumenical consensus, a catholic teaching of the Church, best preserved and developed by the Orthodox.[2]

[1] F. W. Norris, 'Deification: Consensual and Cogent', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 49/4 (1996), p. 420.
[2] Ibid., p. 422.

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Carl Mosser, in an article, says, 'I will argue that Calvin knew about and affirmed the deification of believers.'[3] Also he says, 'This article contends that deification is also present in Calvin's theology.'[4] According to Mosser, for Calvin, deification is not a prominent theme in its own right and some of the bolder patristic terminology is not employed; nonetheless, the concept and imagery of deification regularly appear on stage while other doctrines are explicated.[5] Mosser contends that, for Calvin, deification is the eschatological good and blessing greater than which nothing can be imagined.[6]

Jonathan Slater criticises Mosser's assertion. 'In a recent article, Carl Mosser argues that deification is present in the theology of John Calvin. While his thesis may have ecumenical promise, there is little evidence to support it.'[7] He continues to say, 'Rather than understanding salvation as a communication of properties from Christ's divine nature to his human nature so that through Christ's human nature we may come to share in the divine nature, Calvin's position is that believers share in what is Christ's according to his human nature.'[8] According to Slater, the righteousness of Christ with which we are clothed is the righteousness of his human obedience as mediator.[9] For Slater, Calvin's concern, far from emphasising a communication of properties from Christ's divinity to his humanity, is to guard the full integrity of both natures.[10]

In this article, I consider whether Calvin has the concept of deification, dealing with Mosser's thesis, Slater's antithesis and other scholars' arguments. With regard to the doctrine of salvation, Calvin, in his time, disputed with two different opponents, Andreas Osiander and Francesco Stancaro. Osiander argued that, since Christ is God and man, he is made righteousness for us with respect to his divine nature, not his human nature. On the contrary, Stancaro insisted that Christ is the mediator only according to his human nature. In the next section, I will deal with Calvin's criticisms of Osiander and Stancaro.

[3] Carl Mosser, 'The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55/1 (2002), p. 39.
[4] Ibid., p. 36.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Jonathan Slater, 'Salvation as Participation in the Humanity of the Mediator in Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: A Reply to Carl Mosser', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58/1 (2005), p. 39.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

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Calvin, Osiander and Stancaro

Calvin against Osiander

According to Osiander, Christ is our righteousness according to his divine, and not according to his human nature. Osiander says, 'if the question be asked what is righteousness, one must answer: Christ dwelling in us by faith is our righteousness according to His divinity; and the forgiveness of sins, which is not Christ Himself, but merited by Christ, is a preparation and cause that God offers us His Righteousness which He is Himself'.[11] Osiander also says:

> If the question be asked according to what nature Christ, His whole undivided person, is our Righteousness, then, just as when one asks according to what nature He is the Creator of heaven and earth, the clear, correct, and plain answer is that He is our Righteousness according to His divine, and not according to His human nature, although we are unable to find, obtain, or apprehend such divine righteousness apart from His humanity.[12]

Calvin objected to two features of Osiander's doctrine of justification: (1) Christ is our righteousness only according to his divine nature, and (2) Christ is essentially united with the justified believer.[13]

Calvin summarises Osiander's view as follows: 'Osiander's opinion is that, since Christ is God and man, he is made righteousness for us with respect to his divine nature, not his human nature.'[14] Calvin says, 'If Osiander should object that this work, by its very excellence, surpasses human nature; and for this reason can be ascribed only to divine nature, I grant the first point; in the second I say that he is grossly deluded.'[15] Calvin continues to say, 'For even though Christ if he had not been true God could not cleanse our souls by his blood, nor appease his Father by his sacrifice, nor absolve us from guilt, nor, in sum, fulfill the office of priest, because the power of the flesh

[11] *Concordia Triglotta*, ed. F. Bente and W. H. t. Dau (St Louis, MO: Concordia, 1921), p. 153, quoted in James Weis, 'Calvin versus Osiander on Justification', *Calvin's Opponents*, vol. 5 of Richard C. Gamble (ed.), *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), p. 356.

[12] *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 156, quoted in Weis, 'Calvin versus Osiander', pp. 356–7.

[13] Cf. Weis, 'Calvin versus Osiander', p. 362.

[14] *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill and trans. Ford Lewis Battles (2 vols Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960), 3.11.8 (hereafter cited as *Institutes*, followed by book, chapter, and section).

[15] *Institutes*, 3.11.9.

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is unequal to so great a burden, yet it is certain that he carried out all these acts according to his human nature.'[16]

According to Calvin, Osiander speaks of essential righteousness. 'Osiander has introduced some strange monster of "essential" righteousness by which, although not intending to abolish freely given righteousness, he has still enveloped it in such a fog as to darken pious minds and deprive them of a lively experience of Christ's grace.'[17]

In Calvin's view, Osiander, by the term 'essential righteousness', pretends that we are substantially righteous in God by the infusion both of his essence and of his quality.[18] Calvin says, 'Osiander explains "justify" as "to make righteous"'.[19] Consequently, for Calvin, Osiander mixes the gift of regeneration with the free acceptance and contends that they are one and the same.[20] Osiander, in order to prove that God justifies not only by pardoning but by regenerating, asks whether God leaves, as they were by nature, those whom he justifies, changing none of their vices.[21] Calvin says, 'This is exceedingly easy to answer: as Christ cannot be torn into parts, so these two which we perceive in him together and conjointly are inseparable – namely, righteousness and sanctification.'[22] Calvin continues to say, 'Whomever, therefore, God receives into grace, on them he at the same time bestows the spirit of adoption [Rom 8:15], by whose power he remakes them to his own image.'[23] In this place, Calvin mentions the light and heat of the sun.

> But if the brightness of the sun cannot be separated from its heat, shall we therefore say that the earth is warmed by its light, or lighted by its heat? Is there anything more applicable to the present matter than this comparison? The sun, by its heat, quickens and fructifies the earth, by its beams brightens and illumines it. Here is mutual and indivisible connection. Yet reason itself forbids us to transfer the peculiar qualities of the one to the other.[24]

Calvin acknowledges a twofold grace, but denies a twofold righteousness. Calvin says, 'By partaking of him, we principally receive a twofold grace:

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 3.11.5.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., 3.11.6.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

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namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.'[25] On the contrary, Calvin says, 'whoever wraps up twofold righteousness in order that miserable souls may not repose wholly in God's mere mercy, crowns Christ in mockery with a wreath of thorns [Mark 15:17, etc.]'.[26] Also, according to Calvin, to maintain a twofold righteousness is 'an utterly intolerable impiety'.[27]

Calvin against Stancaro

According to Stancaro, Christ was not the mediator between God and men with respect to his divinity, for this would attribute to him a divinity inferior to that of the Father.[28] A mediator is one who intercedes and prays for us, and since intercession and prayer are signs of inferiority in reference to the one who is addressed, Stancaro concluded that Christ was mediator only as a man. Christ's mediation, then, is addressed not only to the Father, but to the entire Trinity.

Calvin wrote two letter-treatises refuting Stancaro's errors on Christ's mediatorship. Calvin's second letter-treatise was written in 1560 and had the title: 'How Christ is the Mediator: A Response to the Polish Brethren to Refute Stancaro's Error'.[29] Calvin says Stancaro's 'arguments deny that Christ can be said to be mediator according to the divine nature, thus he would be inferior to the Father'.[30] Calvin continues to say, 'But we maintain, first, that the name of mediator suits Christ, not only by the fact that he put on flesh, or that he took on the office of reconciling the human race to God, but from the beginning of creation he already truly was mediator, for he always was the head of the Church, had primacy over the angels, and was the first born of every creature (Eph 1:22; Col 1:15; 2:10).'[31] In accordance with Calvin, the only begotten Son of God was the same God and of the same essence with the Father, and nevertheless, he was the mid-point (*medium*) between God and creatures, so that the life which was otherwise hidden in God would flow

[25] Ibid., 3.11.1.
[26] Ibid., 3.11.12.
[27] Ibid., 3.11.11.
[28] Cf. Joseph Tylenda, 'Christ the Mediator: Calvin versus Stancaro', *Calvin's Opponents*, vol. 5 of Richard C. Gamble (ed.), *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), p. 161.
[29] The text is trans. into English, ibid., pp. 167–72.
[30] Ibid., p. 168.
[31] Ibid.

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from him.[32] Therefore, 'whoever denies that Christ is mediator, with regard to his divinity, takes the angels from under his command, and detracts from his supreme majesty, before which every knee should bend in heaven and on earth (Phil 2:10)'.[33] Christ 'could not fulfill other aspects of the office unless by his divine power: it was not within man's capacity to overcome death and the devil, nor could man alone win righteousness, give life, or grant all the benefits which we receive from him'.[34] For Calvin, Christ is the Son of God in respect to both natures, and hence it follows that he is mediator no less by reason of his divinity than by his human nature.[35] Calvin says:

> It is also true to say that all the actions which Christ performed to reconcile God and man refer to the whole person, and are not to be separately restricted to only one nature.[36] Lest this opinion be subject to quibbles, a distinction will be helpful: certain actions, considered in themselves, refer to one nature, but because of the consequent effect they are common to both. For example, dying is proper to human nature, but if we take into account the apostle's meaning when he says that by the blood of Christ our consciences are purified because he offered himself through the spirit (Heb 9:14), we will not separate the natures in the act of dying, since atonement could not have been effected by man alone unless the divine power were conjoined.[37]

Calvin and the partaking of the divine nature

A kind of deification

In his commentary on 2 Peter 1:4, Calvin says, 'He [Peter] points out that the excellence of the promises arises from the fact that they make us partakers of the divine nature, than which nothing more outstanding can do imagined.'[38] Calvin continues to say, 'We should notice that it is the purpose of the Gospel

[32] Ibid., p. 169.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., pp. 169–70.
[35] Ibid., p. 170.
[36] CO 9.340. CO = *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. G. Baum, E. Cunitz and E. Reuss (59 vols Brunswick and Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke, 1863–1900). 'Vere etiam dicitur omnes, quibus ad reconciliandum nobis Deum functus est, actiones ad totam personam spectasse, ut non debeant separatim ad unam tantum naturam restringi.'
[37] Tylenda, 'Christ the Mediator', pp. 170–1.
[38] John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and The First and Second Epistles of St Peter*, trans. William B. Johnson (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1963), p. 330.

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to make us sooner or later like God; indeed it is, so to speak, a kind of deification.'[39] Also Calvin says:

> The word *nature* does not denote essence but kind. The Manicheans used to dream that we took our roots from the stem of God and that when we have finished the course of life we shall revert to our original state. Likewise today there are fanatics who imagine that we cross over into God's nature so that His nature absorbs ours. . . . This kind of madness never occurred to the minds of the holy apostles. They were simply concerned to say that when we have put off all the vices of the flesh we shall be partakers of divine immortality and the glory of blessedness, and thus we shall be in a way one with God so far as our capacity allows.[40]

Also Calvin says, 'We . . . must . . . be content with this one thing, that the image of God in holiness and righteousness is reborn in us on the condition of our sharing in eternal life and glory, so far as is necessary for complete blessedness.'[41]

Concerning the above-mentioned commentary of Calvin, Mosser comments, 'With classic *theōsis* language Calvin interprets the meaning of the phrase "partakers of the divine nature" in terms of being raised up to God and united with him.'[42] Mosser adds, 'In concert with the patristic writers Calvin views the believer's partaking of the divine nature as a kind of deification.'[43] In the opinion of Mosser, Calvin denies that believers will ever be united to the divine essence, but they will partake of the divine nature and be changed to be like Jesus.[44] Also Mosser says, 'Peter's word "nature" does not refer to God's essence but to "kind" or "quality" (note the functional similarity with the Orthodox essence/energies distinction).'[45] Furthermore, Mosser explains that deification is understood in terms of a two-level union of humanity and divinity in Christ:

> For Calvin the union of the believer with God is fundamentally Trinitarian and involves all three members of the Godhead. . . . The fundamental level is the hypostatic union of the eternal Word with the humanity believers share with every other person. At this level there is a communication of

[39] Ibid. CO 55.446. 'Notemus ergo hunc esse evangelii finem, ut aliquando conformes Deo reddamur: id vero est quasi deificari, ut ita loquamur.'
[40] *Second Peter*, p. 330.
[41] Ibid., p. 331.
[42] Mosser, 'Greatest Possible Blessing', p. 41.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., p. 49.
[45] Ibid.. p. 54.

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> properties between Christ's divinity and his humanity. The consequent level is the particular union of Christ with individual believers. Christ unites believers to God because in his person God and humanity are already united.[46]

On the contrary, Slater criticises Mosser as follows; 'for Calvin, believers share in what is Christ's according to his human nature rather than his divine nature. The righteousness with which we are clothed in Christ is the righteousness that is proper to his human nature, and this righteousness is not transferred from his divine nature, but is the righteousness of his human obedience.'[47]

In his commentary on 2 Peter 1:4, Calvin distinguishes between divine essence and divine kind. We will be partakers of the divine kind, but not of the divine essence. We will be like God, but we will not be God. We will experience a kind of deification, but not deification itself. Even though Slater argues that Calvin's position is that believers share in what is Christ's according to his human nature, not his divine nature, Calvin says, in his criticism of Stancaro, 'all the actions which Christ performed to reconcile God and man refer to the whole person, and are not to be separately restricted to only one nature'.[48]

The image of God

According to Calvin,

> God's image is the perfect excellence of human nature which shone in Adam before his defection, but was subsequently so vitiated and almost blotted out that nothing remains after the ruin except what is confused, mutilated, and disease-ridden. Therefore in some part it now is manifest in the elect, in so far as they have been reborn in the spirit; but it will attain its full splendor in heaven.'[49]

Calvin also says, 'Indeed, Paul truly quotes Aratus that we are God's offspring [Acts 17:28], but in quality, not in essence, inasmuch as he, indeed, adorned us with divine gifts.'[50] And, 'At that time, I say, when he had been advanced to the highest degree of honor, Scripture attributed nothing else to him than that he had been created in the image of God [Gen. 1:27], thus suggesting that

[46] Ibid., p. 46.
[47] Slater, 'Salvation as Participation', p. 41.
[48] Tylenda, 'Christ the Mediator', pp. 170–1.
[49] *Institutes*, 1.15.5.
[50] Ibid.

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man was blessed, not because of his own good actions, but by participation in God.'[51]

According to Mosser, 'being created in the image of God is in some sense "participation in God"'.[52] Mosser says, 'The goal of salvation, in other words, is for believers to have the image and likeness of God restored in them as fully as it is in Christ and thus to participate in God and reflect his glory.'[53]

However, Slater says, 'Although Calvin uses the word *participatione*, the broader context indicates that Calvin is not speaking about a sharing in divine qualities. Calvin is speaking about the *origin* of the blessings in which human happiness consists, rather than the *quality* of these blessings.'[54] We can find some evidence to support this thesis of Slater in the *Institutes*. According to Calvin, God's righteousness is the righteousness which is approved of God. Calvin says, 'Every schoolboy should know that God's righteousness is to be understood as that righteousness which is approved of God.'[55] Also according to Calvin, the righteousness of God is called the righteousness of God because God is its author. Calvin says, 'I know that it is sometimes called the righteousness of God because God is its author and bestows it upon us.'[56] On the other hand, Calvin says, 'we are God's offspring . . ., but in quality, not in essence, inasmuch as he, indeed, adorned us with divine gifts'.[57]

The righteousness of Christ

In the *Institutes*, Calvin says:

> For we await salvation from him not because he appears to us afar off, but because he makes us, ingrafted into his body, participants not only in all his benefits but also in himself. . . . But 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. . . . Not only does he cleave to us by an invisible bond of fellowship, but with a wonderful communion, day by day, he grows more and more into one body with us until he becomes completely with us.[58]

[51] Ibid., 2.2.1.
[52] Mosser, 'Greatest Possible Blessing', p. 41.
[53] Ibid., p. 42.
[54] Slater, 'Salvation as Participation', p. 42.
[55] *Institutes*, 3.11.9.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 1.15.5.
[58] Ibid., 3.2.24.

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According to Mosser, Calvin, in his response to 'half papists', emphasises that the salvific benefits which the believer receives are the effect of the union between Christ and the believer. In the view of Mosser, in the above-quoted passages, Calvin stresses the nature and degree of this union – it is union with Christ himself growing by degrees until he and the believer are completely one.[59] Also Mosser says, 'This intimate union is not merely union with Christ as human mediator, but with God.'[60] Mosser, quoting Calvin, continues to say, 'In fact, the Word "took upon himself the person and office of Mediator, that he might join us to God".'[61]

However, Slater criticises Mosser's explanation. 'Mosser explains that this passage is Calvin's response to the accusation that he places Christ outside the believer. The question, however, is whether the union with Christ is with his divinity, or with his humanity.'[62] Slater says, 'That the righteousness with which we are clothed in Christ is the righteousness of his obedience, and thus a righteousness according to his human nature, is strongly reinforced by Calvin's disagreement with Osiander concerning justification.'[63]

Meanwhile, Joseph N. Tylenda says that the *communicatio*, for Calvin, is indirect, to the person rather than to the nature:

> In all of Calvin's five examples, the divine or human property is said of a subject, a person (Jesus Christ), and that subject is designated either in function of his divine nature 'God', or 'Lord of glory', or in function of his human nature as 'Son of Man'. In none of the examples is the property of one nature applied to the other nature as such: it is always applied to a subject possessing that nature.[64]

Whereas Slater says, 'Although there is one Christ who is God and man, Calvin speaks primarily in terms of a transfer from one nature to the other nature, rather than of attributing things "to himself". It is precisely in light of the direct nature of the *communicatio* from nature to nature that it is "improper", only a manner of speaking.'[65] He states:

> Christ's work involves a communication of righteousness to those who had lost righteousness in Adam's disobedience: Hope of life in Christ is

[59] Mosser, 'Greatest Possible Blessing', pp. 47–8.
[60] Ibid., p. 43.
[61] *Institutes*, 1.13.24. Mosser, 'Greatest Possible Blessing', p. 43
[62] Slater, 'Salvation as Participation', pp. 52–3.
[63] Ibid., p. 52.
[64] Joseph N. Tylenda, 'Calvin's Understanding of the Communication of Properties', *An Elaboration of the Theology of Calvin*, vol. 8 of Richard C. Gamble (ed.), *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), p. 153.
[65] Slater, 'Salvation as Participation', p. 49.

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> 'by a wondrous communication Christ transfuses into us the power of his own righteousness'.[66] Our only hope is in a transfusion of righteousness from Christ, not because we will thereby receive a divine righteousness, but because we have no righteousness of our own. Calvin's emphasis is once again on the *origin* of the righteousness, rather than the *quality* of it.[67]

For Calvin, the righteousness which we receive from God is not God's own righteousness, but righteousness as God's gift. Therefore, Slater rightly interprets Calvin's teaching on divine righteousness. However, Slater does not consider Calvin's criticism of Stancaro. According to Calvin, 'all the actions which Christ performed to reconcile God and man refer to the whole person, and are not to be separately restricted to only one nature'.[68]

The mystical union

In the *Institutes*, Calvin maintains that the union between Christ and the believer is the mystical union or the spiritual bond. Calvin says:

> Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts – in short, that mystical union[69] – are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body – in short, because we deign to make us one with him. . . . But Osiander, by spurning this spiritual bond, forces a gross mingling of Christ with believers.[70]

Wilhelm Niesel says that this union in Calvin's theology should be distinguished from the mystical absorption into the divinity in mysticism. Niesel says, 'That union of the faithful with Christ which Calvin teaches has nothing whatever to do with the absorption of the pious mystic into the

[66] *Institutes*, 2.1.6.

[67] Slater, 'Salvation as Participation', p. 43.

[68] Tylenda, 'Christ the Mediator', pp. 170–1.

[69] *Joannis Calvini Opera Selecta* ed. Peter Barth, Wilhelm Niesel and Dora Scheuner (5 vols. Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1926–52), 4.191, 26–30. 'Porro ne suis cavillis decipiat imperitos, fateor hoc tam incomparabili bono nos privari donec Christus noster fiat. Coniunctio igitur illa capitis et membrorum, habitatio Christi in cordibus nostris, mystica denique unio a nobis in summo gradu statuitur:'. The French version translates *unio mystica* by *union sacrée*. CO 4.238. 'Parquoy i'esleve en degré souverain la conionction que nous avons avec nostre chef, la demeure qu'il fait en noz coeurs par foy, l'union sacrée par laquelle nous ioussions de luy:'.

[70] *Institutes*, 3.11.10.

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sphere of the divine being.'[71] François Wendel also says that this union is not a mystical union in the technical sense of the term. He says, 'It remains true that, close as that union may be, man and the Christ are not confused together, but on the contrary keep their own characteristics. Although Calvin calls it so, it is not, in the technical sense of the term, a mystical union.'[72]

Therefore, Tamburello rightly says that the union between God and the believer in Calvin is a spiritual union, not a union of essences. Tamburello says, 'In speaking of union with God (or Christ), both Bernard and Calvin emphatically reject any notion of union of essences. The union between God and the believer is rather a "spiritual" union.'[73]

The wonderful exchange in the Lord's Supper

With regard to the Lord's Supper, Calvin expresses the idea of wonderful exchange between Christ and the believers. Calvin says as follows.

> Godly souls can gather great assurance and delight from this Sacrament; in it they have a witness of our growth into one body with Christ such that whatever is his may be called ours. 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; again, that we cannot be condemned for our sins, from whose guilt he has absolved us, since he willed to take them upon himself as if they were his own. This is the wonderful exchange which, out of his measureless benevolence, he has made with us; that, becoming Son of man with us, he has made us sons of God with him; 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.[74]

According to Mosser, 'Calvin brings together many of terms and images of deification'[75] in the above-mentioned passage on the Lord's Supper. Mosser

[71] Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1956), p. 126.

[72] François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co., 1980), p. 237.

[73] Dennis E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), p. 105.

[74] *Institutes* 4.17.2.

[75] Mosser, 'Greatest Possible Blessing', p. 44.

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continues to say, 'In the same context of the Lord's Supper Calvin says that Christ is called the "bread of life" not because of the sacrament but because he showed himself as such when being made a sharer in our human mortality, he made us partakers in his divine immortality.'[76]

Slater says, 'Mosser also cites a passage from 4.17.2, Calvin's discussion of the Lord's Supper, in support of his thesis. There is, however, nothing in the passage that adds anything to his case. Although Calvin speaks of being sharers in divine immortality, he once again refers to the source of the immortality rather than the kind or quality.'[77] In the view of Calvin, the immortality which we receive from God is not God's own immortality, but immortality as God's gift.

Conclusion

So far I have considered Calvin's teaching on salvation with regard to deification. Also I have dealt with Mosser's thesis and Slater's antithesis concerning Calvin's teaching on deification. Mosser is eager to find deification in Calvin's theology. On the other hand, Slater is keen to deny deification in Calvin's thought. Mosser would do better to consider Calvin's criticism of Osiander. And Slater would do better to treat Calvin's criticism of Stancaro.

As mentioned above, in his commentary on 2 Peter 1:4, Calvin distinguishes between divine essence and divine kind. According to Calvin, we will be partakers of the divine kind, but not of the divine essence. We will be like God, but we will not be God. We will experience a kind of deification, but not deification itself. Although Slater argues that Calvin's position is that believers share in what is Christ's according to his human nature, in accordance with Calvin, all the actions which Christ performed to reconcile God and man refer to the whole person, and are not to be separately restricted to only one nature.

For Calvin, righteousness and immortality are called divine righteousness and divine immortality because God is its author. They are gifts from God, not God's own essence. Calvin says that we are God's offspring, but in quality, not in essence, inasmuch as he, indeed, adorned us with divine gifts.

In this article, I find that Calvin distinguishes between divine essence and divine kind, in other words, essential and non-essential or central and peripheral. In the view of Calvin, we will be partakers of the divine kind, but not of the divine essence.

[76] Ibid., pp. 44–5.
[77] Slater, 'Salvation as Participation', p. 55.

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