Salvation as Justification and Theosis: The Contribution of the New Finnish Luther Interpretation to Our Ecumenical Future

By Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

This life of the Christian in Christ is called in the Lutheran tradition participation in God, although it is often expressed in different terms. The sacramental word and sacraments and faith firstly bring it about that Christ joins himself in a real, but hidden way to the sinner. Participation in Christ and the divine nature means then that in the sinner there takes place a profound and fundamental renewal. From this wells forth true love of God and one’s neighbour. In Lutheranism, this is called by the name, new birth, justification, adoption by God, deification of man.

This statement by the Lutheran team in an Orthodox-Lutheran dialogue represents a New Perspective in the interpretation of the reformer’s doctrine of justification. Traditionally, it has been claimed that the main dividing issue between Roman Catholics and Lutherans is the differing interpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith, and that the issue between Western churches (both Catholic and Lutheran) and Eastern churches is the irreconcilable breach between understanding salvation in terms of justification and theosis, respectively. With regard to the first conflict, it has become a mantra that for Lutherans justification is a forensic action, God declaring the sinner righteous in God’s sight, whereas for Catholics it is making the person righteous. With regard to the latter impasse, textbooks argue that for Lutherans the concept of theosis is almost blasphemous for several reasons: first, it approaches the idea of a “theology of glory”; second, it entertains the problematic view of human-divine synergy, and, finally, it champions the idea of freedom of the will. For Catholics, traditionally, the

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concept of *theosis* has been more acceptable for the simple reason that their understanding of salvation includes becoming righteous (sanctification), and they have never eschewed talk about good works as an integral part of salvation.

Recently, a new paradigm has emerged in ecumenical Luther studies that could become a major influence on the future of the Christian ecumenical movement. The New Interpretation of Luther’s theology, as advanced by the so-called Mannermaa School at the University of Helsinki, has challenged the prevailing German Old School approach, as it were.\(^4\) Beginning in the late 1970s, under the leadership of Tuomo Mannermaa, now emeritus professor of ecumenics at the University of Helsinki, the Mannermaa School has offered an alternative reading of Luther’s theology.\(^5\) Significantly enough, the impetus for this new reading of Luther’s theology came as a result of the dialogue between the Lutheran and Eastern Orthodox churches,\(^6\) to be more precise, between the Russian Orthodox Church and Lutheran Church of Finland. This new paradigm has also been influential in the long standing Roman Catholic-Lutheran conversations on justification.

As early as 1977, the Finnish-Lutheran and Russian Orthodox dialogue produced a highly influential soteriological document titled “Salvation as Justification and Deification.” The preamble to the theses claims that

> Until recently, there has been a predominant opinion that the Lutheran and Orthodox doctrines of salvation greatly differ from each other. In the conversations, however, it has become evident that both these important aspects of salvation discussed in the conversations have a strong New Testament basis and there is great unanimity with regard to them both.\(^7\)

It was found that the doctrine of deification covers the idea of a Christian’s life as righteous and sinful at the same time, as the Lutheran theology has always emphasized.

The basic theses and claims of the New Interpretation can be summarized as follows:

1) Luther’s understanding of salvation can be expressed not only in terms of the doctrine of justification, but also—occasionally—in terms of *theosis*. Thus, while there are differences between the Eastern and Lutheran understandings of soteriology, over questions such as free will and understandings of the effects of the Fall, Luther’s own theology cannot be set in opposition to the ancient Eastern idea of deification.
2) For Luther, the main idea of justification is Christ present in faith (*in ipsa fide Christus adest*). Justification for Luther means a “real-ontic” (a somewhat controversial term we will discuss below) participation in God through the indwelling of Christ in the heart of the believer through the Spirit.
3) In contrast to the theology of the Lutheran Confessions, Luther does not make a distinction between forensic and effective justification, but rather, argues that justification includes both.\(^8\) In other words, in line with Catholic theology, justification means both declaring righteous and making righteous.
4) Therefore, justification means not only sanctification, but also good works, since Christ present in faith makes the Christian a “Christ” to the neighbor.

In this essay, I will approach the question of the compatibility of justification and *theosis* through the lenses of this New Paradigm of Luther studies and draw out its implications for the future of ecumenism.\(^9\) I will first present further insights from the Mannermaa School and second, a number of critical questions and challenges in order to further ecumenical conversation. My aim is neither to convince my audience of the supremacy of the New Paradigm, nor naively believe that the Christian West and East (or even the Western Churches, Protestant and Catholic) could too easily move beyond the centuries-long doctrinal and cultural differences in terms of understanding salvation. In a questioning and learning spirit, I would rather remind my colleagues of the need to maintain an open mind to new ways of viewing ancient questions as well as of the complexity of the issues under consideration. This open mind regarding essential Christian teachings could ready us for new ecumenical breakthroughs.
Justification as Participation in God

In the new interpretation of Luther’s theology, justification can be described in at least three interrelated ways, namely, participation in God, the presence of Christ, or theosis. Luther also occasionally uses other images such as “union with God,” perichoresis, the famous Eastern term, and others.

Christ’s real presence in a believer is the leading motif in Luther’s soteriology. A classic formulation can be found, for example, in his Lectures on Galatians (1535). Speaking about “true faith,” Luther says, “it takes hold of Christ in such a way that Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object, but so to speak, the One who is present in the faith itself . . . Therefore faith justifies because it takes hold of and possesses this treasure, the present Christ” (WA 40, 228–229). For the Mannermaa School, thus, the leading idea in Luther’s theology of salvation and justification is the insistence on “Christ present in faith” (in ipsa fide Christus adest). In other words, Christ in both his person and his work is present in faith and is through this presence identical with the righteousness of faith.

Justification for Luther means primarily participation in God through the indwelling of Christ in the heart through the Spirit. Through faith, a human being also participates in the characteristics of God, or as Luther often says, of the Word of God. On the one hand, this participation means putting down those human traits that are contrary to the righteousness of God, and on the other hand, participating in the goodness, wisdom, truthfulness, and other characteristics of God. Luther also expresses this truth by saying that God in fact becomes truthful, good, and just in the person when God himself makes the person truthful, good, and just. Never is there reason to boast, though, since even the presence of Christ and its consequences are always hidden in the Christian.

Luther’s view of justification can also be called theosis, according to the ancient doctrine of the Fathers with whom Luther agreed. Justification and deification, then, mean the “participation” of the believer in Christ which, because Christ is God, is also a participation in God himself. This participation is the result of God’s love; human beings cannot participate in God on the basis of their own love; rather God’s love effects their deification. Christian participation in Christ thus is the result of the divine presence in the believer as love. This participation, following Athanasius and others, is a participation in the very ousia of God. Luther, unlike the Orthodox tradition, does not know the distinction between God’s energies and God’s essence; yet the distinction between God and the human being is not negated. God still remains God and the human being the human.

There is, then, what the Mannermaa School calls a “real-ontic” unity between Christ and the Christian though the substances themselves do not change into something else. What makes the claim of this new paradigm unique—and controversial, especially with regard to the established canons of German Luther interpretation—is that the idea of Christ’s presence is “real-ontic,” not just a subjective experience or God’s “effect” on the believer, as the neo-Protestant school has exclusively held. I will come back to this key concept at the end of the essay.

Theosis in Luther’s Theology

The Finnish scholar Simo Peura, who has written a full-scale monograph on theosis in Luther, shows that the idea of deification is an integral motif of Luther’s theology. The most explicit passage comes from Luther’s Sermon on the Day of St. Peter and St. Paul (1519): “For it is true that a man helped by grace is more than a man; indeed, the grace of God gives him the form of God and deifies him, so that even the Scriptures call him ‘God’ and ‘God’s son’” (WA 2, 247–48). Another example comes from Luther’s Christmas sermon of 1514: “Just as the Word of God became flesh, so it is certainly also necessary that the flesh become Word. For the Word becomes flesh precisely so that the flesh may become Word. In other words: God becomes man so that
man may become God. Thus power becomes powerless so that weakness may become powerful. The Logos puts on our form and manner’’ (WA 1, 28).

Another way to look at the doctrine of justification in Luther and its parallels with the Eastern doctrine of *theosis* is to focus on Luther’s doctrine of God. What is highly significant here is the fact that for Luther the divinity of the triune God consists in that “God gives” himself. The essence of God, then, is identical with the essential divine properties in which he gives of himself, called the “names” of God: Word, justice, truth, wisdom, love, goodness, eternal life, and so forth. “The *theosis* of the believer is initiated when God bestows on the believer God’s essential properties; that is, what God gives of himself to humans is nothing separate from God himself.” A Christian is saved when the “spiritual goods” or the names of God are given to her or him. God is, as Luther says, the whole beatitude of his saints; the name of God donates God’s goodness, God himself, to the Christian; the spiritual goods are God’s gifts in the Christian. Not only is the human being saved when God gives himself to the Christian; in that very same act, God proves to be the real God when he donates his own being to humanity. “Thus, God realizes himself and his own nature when he gives his wisdom, goodness, virtue, beatitude, and all of his riches to the Christian, and when a Christian receives all that he gives.”

In light of the interpretation of Luther’s own theology as presented above, it will not come as a surprise that the Mannermaa School posits a radical difference between Luther’s own theology and the theology of subsequent Lutheranism; their thesis is that Luther’s own theology has the potential of creating a common foundation in relation to both Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. The conclusion of the Mannermaa School with regard to the differences between Luther’s theology and the theology of the Lutheran confessions and subsequent Lutheranism is well worth hearing because of its profound ecumenical implications. According to Peura, for Luther,

> Justification is not a change of self-understanding, a new relation to God, or a new ethos of love. God changes the sinner ontologically in the sense that he or she participates in God and in his divine nature, being made righteous and “a god.”

The relationship between effective and forensic justification comes to light also in Luther’s theology in his usage of two classic concepts, namely, “grace” (*gratia*, favor) and “gift” (*donum*). The former denotes that the sinner is declared righteous (the forensic aspect) and the latter that the person is made righteous (the effective aspect). As early as the beginning of his career, in his Lectures on Romans (1515/16) (following the terminology of Augustine and the Medieval tradition, on the basis of Romans 5:15) Luther expresses an opinion that is totally in line with the mainline Catholic teaching, but that later Lutheranism has lost sight of: “But ‘the grace of God’ and the ‘gift’ are the same thing, namely, the very righteousness which is freely given to us through Christ” (WA 56, 318). In other words, Luther found it most important already in those early years to relate grace and gift closely to each other, and to understand them both as given to the Christian through Christ. Thus we can see that grace and gift together constitute the donated righteousness of a Christian.

For Luther, then, a distinction between effective and forensic righteousness is not an issue as it has been in subsequent Lutheran doctrine. What is crucial to Luther’s own doctrine of justification is the distinction between two kinds of righteousness, namely, the righteousness of Christ and the righteousness of the human being. The first type Luther defines as the alien righteousness that is being infused to us from outside; it is that kind of righteousness that Christ is in himself and is the righteousness of faith. It is this righteousness of Christ that makes the human being just. Furthermore, Luther states that this first type of righteousness is given without our own works solely on the basis of grace. This is the famous *sola gratia*. Human activity is totally excluded in this process. The infusion of this first kind of righteousness is more than mere forensic imputation, though; it also means the realization of the righteousness of Christ in the believer.

The other kind of righteousness is given righteousness, in this sense human righteousness. Luther
calls it “our” righteousness. It is a result of the first kind of righteousness and makes it effective, “perfection” it. Even though it is called “our” righteousness, its origin and source is outside the human being, in the righteousness of Christ. Christ’s righteousness is the foundation, cause, and origin of human righteousness. Christ present in faith “absorbs all sin in a moment,” since the righteousness of Christ infused into the human heart is “infinite”; at the same time, the power of sin and death is deteriorating day by day but is not fully deteriorated until death. The infusion of Christ’s righteousness into the heart of the believer marks the beginning of the process of nullifying the power of sin and transforming the fallen nature. The emerging good deeds have nothing to do with salvation because the believer is already justified and the only purpose of the good deeds now is the good of fellow people.

Justification and Good Works

What then, if any, is the role of good works in Luther? This has been, again, a major dispute between not only Lutherans and Catholics, but also Lutherans and Orthodox. In line with sola gratia, Luther insists we can certainly do nothing for our salvation. On the contrary, God makes the sinner nihil, “nothing” to help him or her to open up to the righteousness of God. Yet good works spring from the union—thesis, if you may—between Christ and the believer and thus, from Christ’s real presence in the believer.

A Christian becomes a “work of Christ,” and even more a “christ” to the neighbor; the Christian does what Christ does.15 The Christian identifies with the suffering of his or her neighbor. Christ is the subject of good works. This is what Christ present in faith effects in the believer.

The presence of Christ for Luther is not only “spiritual” or extra nos (outside of us) but rather in nobis (with in us), in the language of the Mannermaa school, in a “real-ontic” way. According to Luther, “since Christ lives in us through faith . . . he arouses us to do good works through that living faith in his work, for the works which he does are the fulfillment of the commands of God given us through faith” (Heidelberg Disputation # 27; LW 31, 57). As donum (gift) Christ gives himself in a real way to the Christian to make him or her participate in the divine nature.

Critical Remarks and Tasks for the Future

My first major query about the New Interpretation of Luther has to do with methodological considerations. As already mentioned, the idea of a “real-ontic” union between God and the human being is the key affirmation. In order to understand the significance of this concept one has to take into consideration the views against which this is presented as an alternative. The Mannermaa School is critical of the neo-Protestant, neo-Kantian views according to which we do not have any means of knowing anything about God, we can only know God’s effects in our lives. This so-called transcendental-effect orientation has blurred the meaning of the real presence of Christ in Luther research, they claim. This older paradigm has argued that Luther was moving beyond the old scholastic metaphysics with its idea of “essence” toward a more relational view of knowledge. So, based on neo-Kantian philosophy, this view believes that theology cannot know anything about the “essence” (ontology) of God, but only recognize his “effects” in us. The Mannermaa School argues that this kind of reasoning does not reflect Luther’s “realistic” ontology, but rather is a later philosophical construction. The Mannermaa School is also critical of later interpretative frameworks—mainly among German scholars—of Luther such as the Existentially oriented approach according to which Christ’s presence is only a subjective experience in the believer. Against this modern approach, the Mannermaa School wants to honor Luther’s allegedly “Medieval” ontology and philosophy as is appropriate in its historical context.

I have several observations to make here: I believe the New Interpretation is quite right in questioning the prevailing neo-Kantian and neo-Protestant approaches. Yet at the same time I think that what
the Mannermaa School offers as an alternative is not very viable either. On the one hand, the exact meaning of the term “real-ontic” is left open. Some friendly critics, especially the American Dennis Bielfeldt, have made the obvious observation that there are number of ways to understand this elusive concept; he speaks of various “ontic/ontological” models that could explain what the Mannermaa School here argues. On the other hand, even if we could argue that Luther’s theology is based on the typical Medieval ontology, one cannot on that basis alone argue that the union between God and human being is “real-ontic.” To me this sounds almost tantamount to the old charge—mistaken I believe—against the “physicalist” understanding of *thesis* in the Christian East; even if it is not, the view is subject to misunderstanding. My point here is that while the Mannermaa School has been quite successful in offering a critical response to the canons of the German research, the constructive task still lies ahead.

My second query has to do with the quite liberal use of the concepts of *theosis* and union among the Helsinki scholars in explaining Luther’s doctrine of salvation. Simo Peura himself notes that the term *theosis* itself only occurs little more than thirty times in the whole extensive Luther corpus. That is not much indeed. Yet, in fairness—and this is of course a major point in the Mannermaa School’s line of argumentation—it has to be acknowledged that the idea of deification may be much more extensive than the term itself. The occasional use of the term *unio* is then invoked by the New Interpretation supporters as another key here. Basically that is a correct observation. Yet they fail to deal with the obvious question, how close does Luther’s idea of *unio* come to the Eastern understanding of union? The term *union* is quite widely used in Christian theology—say, for example, in the theology of John Calvin and in theologies as far removed from Lutheranism and Eastern Orthodoxy as Anabaptism or Methodism. It is quite another thing to say that all traditions intent the same meaning with the common word.

This takes me to the third—and I believe—a major critical question to the New Interpretation, an issue the Mannermaa School has almost completely neglected as obvious as it is. It has to do with theological, especially theologico-anthropological ramifications of the doctrine of salvation in Luther and the Christian East. No amount of passages in Luther showing a similarity between his understanding of salvation and the concept of *thesis* can hide the importance of looking at Luther’s anthropology, doctrine of sin and the Fall, and understanding of grace, especially when it comes to the role of human will with regard to God’s gracious offer of salvation. Theological anthropology is of course integrally related to the question of nature *versus* grace relationship. In what ways is Luther’s understanding different from the Thomistic view which emphasizes continuity. A corollary issue, closely related to all of this, has to do with the notion of faith, and how that effects soteriological categories. In this essay, of course, I cannot even begin to tackle this complicated set of issues. My only point here is that unless the Mannermaa School is able to offer a theological analysis of these key anthropological and theological conditions of Luther’s theology, the insistence on the convergence between justification and deification cannot be conclusively established. The Roman Catholic-Lutheran dialogue process devoted considerable time to this issue, yet the issue could hardly be resolved. However, the New Interpretation has been curiously silent about these issues and has not highlighted their significance properly.

A fourth major task for ecumenical Luther scholarship is to critically dialogue with and glean from the developments in New Testament studies on justification, law, Judaism of the time, and related issues as advanced by the New Interpretation of Paul under the tutelage of Paul Sanders, James D. G. Dunn, and a host of others (as well as their critics). My hunch is that much of what the Mannermaa School is saying is in line with the new understanding of Paul. Nevertheless, the fact that Luther built much of his theology on the distinction between the Law and the Gospel, perhaps differently from what the recent NT scholarship understands, may also lead to refinement of some of the findings of the Mannermaa School.

Other tasks await ecumenical reflection such as the relationship between the passivity of faith in Lutheranism and the Eastern Orthodox idea of
synergia. While I believe Luther’s own theology—especially the idea of Christian as “Christ” by virtue of the “real presence” of Christ in the believer—may have resources to tackle this thorny issue, I also acknowledge that curiously little has this question occupied scholars.

In Lieu of Conclusions: Prospects for the Future

We need to ask again what, then, is the relationship between justification and deification? The suggestion by the Orthodox Lucian Turcescu according to which it is a matter of two-stages of salvation (justification initial, theosis final) is hardly convincing either biblically or theologically. Rightly this proposal has been critiqued by George Vandervelde among others. I agree with this rebuttal of Turcescu’s view; yet, I find Vandervelde’s argumentation less than convincing because of his tendency to separate the two discourses—that of justification and of theosis—rather than viewing them complementary. Of course it is true that these two discourses come from two different theological and anthropological environments; yet, in my understanding this rather reflects the legitimate plurality in the biblical canon. There is a host of soteriological metaphors of salvation each speaking to a particular context and need. Therefore, I believe, it is more fruitful biblically, theologically, and ecumenically to see these two discourses as complementary rather than conflict or exclusive of each other. At least, I would like to challenge my colleagues to reconsider the issue.

In my reading, the Joint Declaration between Catholics and Lutherans is going into the right direction by highlighting the diverse nature of even the concept of justification (let alone the constellation of other metaphors):

> Justification is the forgiveness of sins (cf. Rom 3:23–25; Acts 13:39; Luke 18:14), liberation from the dominating power of sin and death (Rom 5:12–21) and from the curse of the law (Gal 3:10–14). It is acceptance into communion with God: already now, but then fully in God’s coming kingdom (Rom 5:1–2). It unites with Christ and with his death and resurrection (Rom 6:5). (# 11)

Under the subheading 4.2, “Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making Righteous,” the document says: “These two aspects of God’s gracious action are not to be separated, for persons are by faith united with Christ, who in his person is our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30): both the forgiveness of sin and the saving presence of God himself” (# 22).

To clarify my approach here, I am not saying that Catholic, Lutheran, and Orthodox soteriologies have given up—or should give up—their distinctive features. What I am saying is that much of the problematics attached to traditional positions, mostly going back to the time of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, are historically conditioned and no longer form an irreconcilable obstacle to dialogue and joint ventures. I am not naïve about what ecumenism is. Ecumenical thinking does not mean collecting pieces from here and there and putting them together to make a more appealing mixture. Sometimes ecumenical work may lead to a more precise and explicit acknowledgment of differences between various Christian traditions or to acknowledgment of convergence despite legitimate differing emphases. The approach taken by the Joint Declaration is to be commended: “[The] Joint Declaration has this intention: namely, to show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ.” Then it adds that this “does not cover all that either church teaches about justification; it does encompass a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations” (# 5). This is a fruitful way to proceed, I suggest, toward a bright future in the ecumenical discussions between Eastern Orthodox and Lutheran theologies as well.

As a footnote, let me suggest that the ecumenical discussion of the doctrine of salvation is not only urgent for the sake of Christian unity, but also in
light of the relation of Christian faith to other religions. The theology-of-religions question may open up new vistas for reconsidering ancient Christian doctrines and help us move beyond the ecumenical impasse. What if the doctrine of divinization were a viable candidate for all Christians to talk about salvation in relation to other religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism and, say, African spiritualities?\(^{23}\) In addition to other religions, the relevance and accuracy of soteriological discourse should also be studied in relation to other cultures where the questions of “salvation” come yet from another angle.\(^{24}\) Little work, if any, has been done in these areas specifically—this is a call for all of us, regardless of our respective traditions.

**Endnotes**

1. This essay is a slightly revised version of my presentation for the “Justification and Justice” Study Group of Faith and Order (USA) in Pasadena, CA, October 2004.


4. I was theologically trained under the mentorship of Professor Mannermaa and his younger colleagues many of whom have become leading voices of this new paradigm. However, I am not a professional Luther scholar, nor do I belong to the Mannermaa School as such. My role is that of a friendly critic and conversation partner. I also serve as a Dozent of Ecumenics at the University of Helsinki.

5. The publications of the Mannermaa School are written mainly in German (and Scandinavian languages). Not until 1998, was the first English monograph, a collection of essays by Finnish Luther scholars edited by two leading American Lutheran experts, offered to the English speaking world entitled, *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). This year saw the publication of the English translation of the groundbreaking work by Tuomo Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith: Luther’s View of Justification* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2005; orig. 1979). A succinct introduction to the methodological orientations and the main results of the Mannermaa School can be found in Tuomo Mannermaa’s essay, “Why is Luther so Fascinating? Modern Finnish Luther Research,” in *Union with Christ*, 1–20. For a synopsis, see also Käkkäinen, *One with God*, ch. 4.

6. A meticulous study on the ecumenical dialogues between Lutherans and Orthodox is offered by Risto Saarinen, *Faith and Holiness*.


8. For the Mannermaa School, the distinction between “Luther’s theology” (denoting the theology of the Reformer himself) and “Lutheran theology” (the subsequent theology of the Confessional Documents of the Lutheran Church, as drafted under the leadership of Philip Melanchthon) is vital. Finnish scholars argue that one of the weaknesses of the older Lutheran research, as conducted mainly in the German academy, is the neglect of this vital distinction. Indeed, one of the main motifs of the New Perspective is to dig into core themes of Martin Luther’s own theology and not hasten to read Luther in light of his later interpreters or vice versa.


10. For documentation and details, see Käkkäinen, *One With God*, ch. 4 especially.

11. Mannermaa argues that for Luther the structuring principle of theology is not justification as is routinely assumed but rather a creative juxtaposition between the theology of the cross and love. This comes to culmination in the 1518 Heidelberg Disputation, the last thesis of which (#28) contrasts the love of God and human love. See further, Käkkäinen, “Evil, Love and the Left Hand of God”; The Contribution of Luther’s Theology of the Cross to Evangelical Theology of Evil,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 79:4 (2002): 215–34.


17. See further, Käkkäinen, *Union with God*, ch. 5.


19. See further, Käkkäinen, *Union with God*, ch. 2. I find the comment by Lucian Turcescu (“Soteriological Issues in the 1999 Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration on Justification: An Orthodox Perspective” 38:1 [Winter 2001]: 64–65) that according to “[c]ontemporary biblical scholarship … Paul’s most frequently used image to refer to the salvation in Christ [is] ‘justification’ (dikaiowmeno)’ quite odd. In my reading of contemporary biblical scholarship “justification” is one of the many complementary images by Paul; furthermore, the meaning
of this term in the New Testament is more debated than Turcescu implies.


21. Vandervelde, “Justification and Deification,” 73

22. For a detailed discussion, see Karkkinen, One With God, 99–108.

23. See Karkkinen, One With God, 1–4, 133–37.