REWORDING THE JUSTIFICATION/SANCTIFICATION RELATION WITH SOME HELP FROM SPEECH ACT THEORY

ERIC L. JOHNSON[*]

Criticism of the Reformation understanding of justification by faith alone has arisen again and again since its earliest articulations. Catholics, of course, were among the first to object, arguing that justification necessarily involved human cooperation with divine grace.[1] From within the Reformation, Osiander tied justification to the Christian's transformation of life.[2] In the following century, some Arminians apparently rejected the doctrine of imputation.[3] The great Puritan divine Richard Baxter was also critical of imputation and developed a doctrine of justification that shared some features with Catholicism.[4] Perhaps unsurprisingly, liberal theologians in the 19th century, like Schleiermacher and Ritschl, and process theologians in the 20th century taught against the classical Reformation doctrine (CRD).[5] More recently, New Perspective advocates[6] raised some of the same objections, but bolstered them with the hermeneutical criticism that the Reformers misinterpreted Paul, biased by their historical context and personal experiences. Radical Orthodoxy has most recently added its Anglo-Catholic voice to the critical chorus.[7]

Concerns about the CRD, then, have taken some different forms over recent centuries, but one theme appears to be fairly consistent: since the divine justification of Christians includes the righteous quality of their acts enabled by divine grace, the CRD of justification by faith alone based on the imputation of Christ's righteousness cannot be correct.[8]

---

[*] Eric Johnson is Lawrence and Charlotte Hoover Professor of Pastoral Care at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY 40280.

[1] Robert D. Preus, "Perennial Problems in the Doctrine of Justification," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 45 (1981) 163–84; http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent.html.

[2] See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) 731–33 (3.11.6).

[3] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939) 513; Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1998) 348.

[4] Ernest F. Kevan, *The Grace of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) 204–6.

[5] Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 348; Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan: 2011) 992.

[6] James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); N. T. Wright, *Justification* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009).

[7] John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[8] Of course, what is at stake in the debates is the proper articulation of the respective roles of God and humanity in salvation and so ultimately the manifestation of the glory of God displayed in the gospel and the salvation of sinners. While all Christian schemes must emphasize grace (as do the schemes critical of the CRD), the CRD schemes more fully capture the paradoxical quality

I. A PROBLEM WITH TERMINOLOGY

Where there is smoke over centuries, there is usually something burning somewhere.[9] While the basic stance of the Reformation on these matters seems sound, in the face of such criticism over long periods of time from very different quarters, humility should lead us to ask, Are there any legitimate weaknesses in the articulations of these matters that may have contributed to the repeated critiques? In this paper, I will investigate a tiny fire: the choice of terminology used to distinguish what some CRD supporters have labeled the "forensic" and "transformative" categories of salvation: "justification" (understood as a once-for-all divine judicial act based on the person and work of Christ to which nothing can be added by its recipients) and "sanctification" (understood as an ethico-spiritual process based on justification, but involving human activity dependent upon the Holy Spirit).

There are two related problems with the CR terminology. First, no NT author, including Paul, makes this particular distinction uniformly. Instead, second, the two relevant Greek cognate word-groups—*dikaioō* (*dikaios, dikaiosunē*) and *hagiazō* (*hagiasmos, hagios*), which are translated by the English terms "justification"/"righteousness" and "sanctification"/"holiness" respectively[10]—are both used in the NT to refer both to the absolute positive status of Christians with respect to God's favor and to the gradually improving positive, ethico-spiritual quality of their lives. Some uses of the *diakaioō*-word group (particularly the verbs) would seem undeniably to convey the idea of a legal reckoning that is pure gift (Rom 1:17; 3:22–24; 4:3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 13, 22; Gal 2:16; 3:6; Eph 4:24; Phil 3:9–10) and some uses of the *hagiazō*-word group refer to a process of increasing holiness of life (2 Cor 7:1; 1 Thess 3:13; 5:23; Heb 12:14). However, there are other uses of the *diakaioō* cognates which refer to the Christian's progressive righteousness (e.g. Rom 6:13–20; Phil 3:6; 2 Tim 2:22, 3:16; Titus 3:5): Christians are encouraged to pursue righteousness (1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22); their deeds and conduct can be righteous (1 Thess 2:10; 1 John 3:12; Rev 19:8); and in Rom 6:16–22 Paul described the developing of "ethical righteousness"[11] (*diakaiosunē*, vv. 16, 18, 19, 20) and even labeled it "sanctification" (*hagiasmon*, v. 22)! Conversely, there are also many occasions where cognates of *hagiazō* would seem to convey the notion of a holy state one enters upon conversion to Christ, when one is "set apart" for God (e.g. consider the noun *hagios*—"saint": Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:2; Phil 1:1; but see also 1 Cor 3:17; 6:11; 7:14; Col 3:12). So, it would appear that, upon faith in Christ, Christians

---

of salvation as revealed in Scripture, affirming simultaneously the absoluteness of God's involvement and the necessary, but radically dependent nature of human involvement. As with the many conundrums in theology (and human life), this paradoxical complexity also helps to explain the perennial resistance to the CRD, since it cannot be grasped at the level of a simple formal logic. See Eric L. Johnson, "Can God Be Grasped by Our Reason?," in *God Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God* (ed. Douglas Huffman and Eric L. Johnson; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) 71–104.

[9] The problem for fire investigators is of course to determine the actual cause, and in the present case there are many possibilities, including misinterpretation of Paul on both sides of the debate.

[10] Complicating matters a little further, there are two sets of English words to translate each Greek word group, derived from the Latin and Germanic languages that have shaped English.

[11] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 406.

are immediately justified/righteous and sanctified/holy, and they are to grow in both righteousness/justification and holiness/sanctification.[12]

Such facts provide fodder to the critics of the CRD of justification by faith. Depending on the context, *diakaioō* cognates in the NT epistles may convey either a forensic or a transformative meaning, and sometimes both. This terminological complexity does not, of course, demonstrate that the CRD is wrong. On the contrary, if it can be reasonably demonstrated that even one text teaches that Christians are declared to be righteous by faith, the CRD is established, and there are a number of such texts. Nevertheless, the situation described above does suggest that it may have been a misstep for Reformation theologians early on to select the terms "justification" and "sanctification" to denote the Christian's initial state of grace and the process of salvation, respectively.[13] As a result, and with some trepidation, I would like to suggest that it is not too late to reconsider these conventional labels for the higher-order concepts and to look for better, clearer terms to designate the respective categories of salvation.

II. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH:
AN EXEMPLARY STATUS CHANGE

Paul's doctrine of justification by faith, more clearly than any other biblical teaching, conveys both the absolute supremacy of God in salvation and the

---

[12] Early on, Luther recognized this dual meaning (perhaps we could call it "bivocality") with regard to the *dikaioō*-word group in the NT in his essay, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (ed. T. F. Lull; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005) 134–40. More recently, K. L. Onesti and M. T. Brauch distinguish between "Righteousness Declared," "Righteousness as Gift," and "Righteousness of Faith," on the one hand, and "Righteousness of Obedience," on the other, in "Righteousness, Righteousness of God," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid; Downers Grove: InterVarsity) 827–37.

Responding to this bivocality within the hagiazō-word group, John Murray developed the concept of "definitive sanctification," which he distinguished from progressive sanctification. See "Definitive Sanctification," in Collected Works of John Murray, 2: Systematic Theology (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977) 277–84. However, Murray was focused on the "once-and-for-all" nature of the former, which he contrasted with the ongoing nature of the latter, but both kinds of sanctification were still located within the believer, and not in the word of God. Declarative sanctification, that renders the believer immediately a "saint" upon faith in Christ, is also "once-and-for-all," and it is the verbal ground of its reception by faith through which definitive and progressive sanctification proceed.

David Peterson is better, arguing that definitive or positional sanctification—the holiness believers initially obtain through faith in Christ and so understood as a status-concept—is actually the root concept in the NT, upon which progressive sanctification is based. See *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). Demarest alludes to the complexity in this area when he remarks that "justification amounts to positional sanctification." (*The Cross and Salvation* 375). However, the respective nuances of each word-group remain important, pointed to in Paul's use of both in 1 Cor 6:11, "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus."

One way NT theologians have addressed the status/transformation duality of Christian salvation is with the "Indicative/Imperative" distinction. See, e.g., Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (trans. J. R. De Witt, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001). However, the justification/sanctification terminology continues to be used by systematic theologians.

[13] The distinction is at least as early as Calvin, who makes reference to it in the *Institutes* (3.11.6; 3.16.1–3) and in his commentary on John (see 17:19). See his *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 180–81.

absolute inability of humans to do anything in themselves that could contribute to their standing before and relationship with God. As a former Pharisee who had thought he was serving God in his devotion to the Hebrew religion and his persecution of Christians (Phil 3:5–6), Paul surely came to appreciate the human capacity of religious self-deception and the folly of boasting in one's capacities or attainments (1 Cor 1:29–31). All this contributed to the clearest articulation of justification by faith found in the Bible.

Why did Paul concentrate so much on the concept of righteousness in his model of salvation? The most obvious reason is the profound influence the Hebrew canon had on Paul's thinking, since righteousness is such a prominent theme there.[14] We learn there that the covenant God of Israel, the judge of all the earth (Gen 18:25), is the very essence and source of righteousness (Ps 89:14; 111:3; Isa 61:11), and that he had established a "covenant of law" with the people of Israel (the chosen representatives of the human race) who continually and increasingly disobeyed and fell under the condemnation of God. No other concept so well highlighted both God's ethical purity and the judicial condemnation under which all humans live apart from Christ (Eph 2:3).

In addition, the forensic overtones of the righteousness concept point toward the verbal nature of divine salvation. On the basis of Christ's substitutionary death, God the judge could justify sinners, that is, render a verdict of "innocent" on their behalf, radically altering their status before him, if they only believe (Rom 3:21–26; 10:6–10).

But righteousness/justification is not the only aspect of salvation that appears to involve a transition in one's position vis-à-vis God. We have already made reference to "sainthood." Adoption into God's family is another salvific outcome, closely akin to justification,[15] that results in a new status. In fact, upon reflection all of salvation involves some kind of change in one's status, for example, union with Christ, redemption, and reconciliation (more on this below).

So justification by faith for Paul was exemplary or paradigmatic, for it is a good illustration of the overall nature of God's salvation. He spent more time developing the doctrine of justification by faith than any other facet of salvation, in part because it is particularly apt for conveying a pivotal feature of salvation, since it provides such a clear example of the definitive change in one's status that occurs when one believes in Christ. However, Paul's occasional teaching about salvation in the epistles was not a thorough exposition of his entire theology.[16] Nor was it systematically developed. As with the NT teachings on the Trinity, Paul's teachings on salvation in the inspired canon warrant fuller elaboration.

---

[14] Onesti and Brauch, *Dictionary of Paul*; Schreiner, *Paul*.

[15] "Adoption is, like justification, a judicial act." John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955) 133. See also Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1997), who refers to "legal adoption," as a subcategory in his chapter on justification.

[16] Richard B. Gaffin Jr., "Gerhardus Vos and the Interpretation of Paul," in *Jerusalem and Athens* (ed. E. R. Geehan; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1971) 228–36.

III. AN ALTERNATIVE TERMINOLOGICAL SOLUTION
USING SPEECH ACT THEORY

A solution may be found in speech act theory. This product of ordinary language philosophy in the latter half of the 20th century is based on the assumption that speech is a kind of action. As J. L. Austin, the founder of this approach to language, suggested, we "do things" with words. [17] Austin suggested that any statement can be examined from three standpoints: as a locution, an illocution, and a perlocution. A locution is the basic meaning of a statement—including that to which the words refer; an illocution, in contrast, is the particular semantic force of the statement, that which the statement does (e.g. assert a fact, command an action, or make a promise); and a perlocution is the statement considered with respect to the effects or byproducts (if any) that it has upon its recipients (its readers or hearers). For example, let us assume that the locution, "It's raining outside," considered as an illocution, is a descriptive statement about the actual presence of rain currently falling from the sky. However, its essence as a perlocution is evident when a hearer grabs an umbrella before heading out the door. The speaker's or author's desired impact on the hearer/reader is called the "perlocutionary intent" of the speaker/author.

Most utterances are illocutions—they have a meaning the speaker or author is intending to convey. However, an utterance is not necessarily a perlocution; it "becomes" a perlocution only if and when the illocution leads to some outcome, whether intended or not.

According to Searle, [18] there are five kinds of illocutions: assertives (descriptive statements), commissives (e.g. promises), expressives (e.g. exclamations), directives (e.g. commands), and declaratives. [19] Our focus will be on declaratives, so we will discuss them in some detail. Declarative statements are a kind of illocution that bring about a change in the world—creating a new state of affairs—simply by their being spoken or written. According to Alston, this class of speech acts consist of "verbal exercises of authority, verbal ways of altering the 'social status' of something, an act that is made possible by one's social or institutional role or status."[20] Examples of declarative speech acts include, "I now pronounce you man and wife"; the statement of a college president toward the end of a graduation ceremony that confers upon its graduates their degree; "You're hired"; "Class dismissed"; and a peace treaty (including the appropriate signatures).

Christians believe that the Bible is inspired by God and therefore consists of the words of God that are simultaneously the words of human authors. As a result, the Bible can be read as a set of divinely uttered speech acts. There are many fruitful implications for the Christian faith of such an approach to

---

[17] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

[18] *Mind, Language, and Society: Philosophy in a Real World* (New York: Basic, 1998).

[19] Searle points out that an illocution can perform more than one of these illocutionary functions (ibid. 150).

[20] William P. Alston, *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning* (Syracuse, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000) 71.

Scripture.[21] Vanhoozer, for example, points out that, contrary to the way in which most Christians tend to think about Scripture, it consists of more than descriptive statements. In addition to all the historical and doctrinal truths presented there, the divine author has made promises to humanity and to Christians regarding salvation, the future and his special care of believers; he has expressed his heart toward humanity, his desire for their salvation and his wrath against their sin, and toward believers, his fatherly love for them and his design to overcome their sin; and he has issued many commands.[22] It has also been pointed out that each speech act may have more than one illocutionary point and that larger texts, composed of multiple statements, can be analyzed for their illocutionary force at the micro-level (each individual speech act) or the macro- or discourse level, considering the text as a single illocution.[23] Consequently, one can interpret the whole Bible as a description of God, human beings, and salvation, as well as a kind of command, a promise, and an expression of God's heart.

1. *Declarative salvation.* We move next to examine the significance of declaratives for salvation. As far as we humans are concerned, some of God's most momentous statements in human history are the salvific declaratives that God has uttered with regard to Christ and all who believe in him. Though nowhere discussed exhaustively, in many places in the NT it is suggested that whenever someone believes in Christ, God the Father utters a declarative with regard to him or her based on Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension (though from our standpoint, perhaps we could say, a set of declaratives).[24]

Before discussing this in detail, it should be pointed out that understanding salvation as a declarative speech act comports well with biblical teaching regarding the triune God and his acts. To begin with, God the Father has eternally spoken the Word of God his Son (John 1:1), a Word that was most fully expressed in the creation in the Son's manifestation on earth in his earthly life, crucifixion, and resurrection (John 1:14; Heb 1:2).[25] However, God's acts

---

[21] See Gregg R. Allison, *Speech Act Theory and its Implications for the Doctrine of the Inerrancy/Infallibility of Scripture* (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1993); Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Richard Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech-Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002); Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998); idem, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002); Timothy Ward, *Word and Supplement: Speech Acts, Biblical Texts, and the Sufficiency of Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[22] Because of Scripture's dual authorship, analyzing its speech acts requires examining them at both the human and divine levels. There will usually be a great deal of overlap, but they are not necessarily identical, for example, when sinners are quoted speaking sin. Consequently, it will require biblical and theological interpretive skill to discern God's illocutions that diverge from the human illocutions, and especially when they transcend the latter. Obviously, in this paper we are concentrating here on the divine level of Scripture.

[23] Nick Fotion, *John Searle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[24] "Speaking economically, God the Father declares the sinner righteous, and God the Holy Spirit sanctifies him." Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939) 514.

[25] Or shall we say, *Discourse*? See Robert H. Gundry, *Jesus the Word According to John the Sectarian* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) xv.

in creation and providence are also portrayed in Scripture as directive speech acts that are immediately realized: "'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Gen 1:3; and vv. 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26; see also Ps 33:6–9) and "He sends forth his command to the earth; his word runs very swiftly. He gives snow like wool. . . . He sends forth his word and melts them; he causes his wind to blow and the waters to flow" (Ps 147:15–16a, 18). The sovereign God simply issues commands and new states of affairs are immediately brought into being.

However, things are more complicated with humans. God uttered commands to humans in the Garden, but in their freedom they disobeyed and became sinners. God continued to issue commands to humans, particularly to the Israelites, but in their sin they did not, and could not, fully comply. In salvation God first utters declaratives in Christ that establish a new state of affairs—the new creation—which is brought into actuality over time as they are freely believed. So we might say that the declaratives turn into directives by the Holy Spirit through one's deepening faith in Christ and all that he has accomplished.

The verbal analogy between creation and new creation was typified in Christ's raising Lazarus from the dead with his words, "Lazarus, come forth!" (John 11:43). Paul also noted this connection: "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ'" (2 Cor 4:6).

Perhaps the clearest representative case in the Bible of a divine, salvific declarative is that of justification. We are told, for example, that Abraham believed God and "it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6), signifying that God declared Abraham to be righteous at a point in time and as a result of or by the medium of faith. Yet, in light of our discussion above, justification ought actually to be considered simply an exemplary salvific declarative speech act, but by no means the only one. The following is a list of many of the divine declaratives that are suggested in the Bible: election (Matt 24:22; Eph 1:4); union with Christ (Rom 8:1; Eph 1:3; Phil 1:1; 1 Pet 5:14); justification (Rom 5:1–2), including the forgiveness of sin (Acts 10:43; 26:18; Col 1:14; 1 John 1:9, 2:2), death to the law/no condemnation (Rom 7:4; 8:1), and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer (Rom 4:3–5; 8:30; Gal 2:16–17; 3:6, 24), so that Christ becomes the believer's righteousness (1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21); adoption (John 1:12; Rom 8:16–17, 21; 9:8; Gal 3:26; 4:5–7; Eph 1:4; Phil 2:15; Heb 2:13; 1 John 3:1–2, 10), including the believer's future inheritance (Acts 26:18; Eph 1:11, 14, 18; Col 1:12; 3:24; Heb 9:15; 1 Pet 1:4); redemption, resulting in no longer being under the jurisdiction of the false ruler of this world, Satan (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 12:31; Eph 1:7; Col 1:13–14); sainthood (Acts 26:18; Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; Phil 1:1); personal reconciliation to the triune God[26] (Rom 5:8–11; 2 Cor 5:18–21; Col 1:20–22); incorporation into God's people (Rom 9:25; 1 Pet 2:10) and membership in the body of Christ (Eph 4:12–16; 1 Cor 12–27; Eph 5:30); heavenly citizenship (Eph 2:19; Phil 3:20; Heb 12:22); belovedness (Rom 1:7; Eph 1:7; Col 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13); and session with Christ in the

---

[26] See Demarest's discussion of this under the heading of justification in *Cross and Salvation* 377.

heavens[27] (Eph 2:6; Col 3:3), so that believers are said to be already "complete" (*peplērōmenoi*, Col 2:10) and "perfect" (*teteleiōken*, Heb 10:14).

These statuses are flawless and comprehensive; they cannot be improved upon. Justification, for example, "is complete at once and for all time. There is no more or less in justification; man is either fully justified or he is not justified at all."[28] The declarative nature of justification and adoption is easier to see, because of the forensic nature of these speech acts. However, upon reflection, all of the above new statuses would seem to be similarly a function of a single, global declarative speech act of God uttered "over" the believer as soon as he or she believes. Paul seems to have given us something like a trinitarian explanation of God's global declaration regarding the believer, perhaps anticipating Christian speech act theory:

> the Son of God, Christ Jesus . . . was not yes and no, but is yes in him. For as many as may be the promises of God, in him they are yes; wherefore also by him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. Now he who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. (2 Cor 1:19–22)

This passage focuses on the commissive quality of the illocution God has spoken in Christ. The triune God has made many commitments to protect and preserve those who believe, and has given himself, in the Spirit, as the downpayment of the final, completely realized salvation in eternity. Christ is the sign and medium of these promises, so that through union with Christ believers become their beneficiaries. Being "in Christ" establishes one in the Father's salvific "Yes," an absolute, positive relation to the Sovereign of the universe. This suggests that the many divine declaratives we noted above are aspects of a single, global declarative regarding those in union with Christ, in which he promises to be "for" them (Rom 8:31).[29] Perhaps we could liken the different "subdeclaratives" to the different colors refracted through a prism, and Christ—the Father's promissory-declarative Word—to the original beam of light. Union with Christ, in fact, would seem to be the supreme subdeclarative, from which all others flow. "We possess in Christ all that pertains to the perfection of heavenly life, and yet faith is the vision of good things not seen."[30] Declarative salvation, then, is the eschatological "already" of God's gift of redemption that will only be fully realized in eternity.

Using speech act theory to understand salvation can illuminate the broader range of semantic contexts within which the various subdeclaratives are uttered, better than do traditional discussions. For example, the Reformation traditions have rightly noted the forensic nature of justification. However, the courtroom is not the only metaphoric context for the multiple declarative speech acts referred to in Scripture. Most notably, the believer's status as

---

[27] Perhaps speech act theory helps us to understand better the mysterious teaching that Christian believers are now "seated with Christ in heaven," while existing consciously on earth. Perhaps because the Father has declared them to be united with Christ, they are *in that sense* in heaven.

[28] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* 513.

[29] Recall that an illocution can perform more than one illocutionary function.

[30] Calvin, *Institutes* 426.

"beloved" (Col 3:12) is better understood within the metaphoric context of a husband-wife and parent-child relationship.[31] The appellation "beloved" is also a term of endearment. Like justification, it indicates a new state-of-affairs—a legal transfer from one status to another—but it is also simultaneously an expressive—an exclamation from the heart of the triune God that expresses his affection for the believer who is in the Beloved (Eph 1:7). Because all humans are under God's judgment by nature, the courtroom analogy bears on salvation in general and especially illuminates some of the specific divine declaratives. However, it is not as central for understanding some of the other aspects of salvation, so we must carefully consider the particular metaphoric or connotative contexts for each specific subdeclarative when seeking to understand the variety of the new states of affairs established through faith in Christ.

A declarative construal of the "status" aspect of salvation has a number of benefits. To begin with, it links together all the diverse features of salvation that are objectively grounded in God's word about the believer in Christ that are every believer's portion immediately upon believing in Christ, but irrespective of the believer's participation. As a result, it is superior to collaborative accounts of salvation that entail some partitioning of divine and human effort, since this phase of salvation is entirely of God. In addition, it clearly distinguishes the purely divine origin of salvation from the transformative and developmental aspects of salvation that are the outworking of God's word and are necessarily dependent upon the believer's participation through faith and the work of the Holy Spirit (Phil 2:12–13). It might be objected that some of the statuses mentioned above would seem to obscure this distinction because they seem to entail subjective experience (e.g. belovedness), but that is not the case. All the statuses listed above are established by God's word, quite apart from our experience of them, even our belovedness. They begin in the nature and work of the triune God and are spoken by the Father in Christ over all who merely receive that Word. Actually, one influential strain of CR thought obscured the distinction being made here by arguing on the basis of a faulty (hyper-Calvinist) logic that regeneration (God's transformative work within) must temporally precede faith (in God's word), and both precede justification.[32] There are many problems with this construction, including its lack of biblical support. For obvious reasons, it led to preparationism in the Puritan era, since it unwittingly directed people to look within rather than to Christ for salvation. This model bears an ironic affinity to Catholicism, for it posited a "supernatural" infusion of grace separate from God's word and personal faith (though the source of the infusion is not a sacrament, but the divine decrees). Gaffin argued that salvation is better understood as a unified act (could we say a speech act?),[33] and Horton has recently put forward a speech act solution

---

[31] Adoption has both forensic and love-relational features. The CR traditions have tended to emphasize the forensic aspect, but both are essential to this special aspect of salvation.

[32] See Murray, *Redemption*, Part II, chap. 1.

[33] Richard B. Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978) 138.

in a Reformed reconceptualization by tying regeneration to effectual calling.[34] We may never be able to grasp fully the paradox of divine and human activity in salvation, but the *ordo* presented here would seem to be faithful to the Christ-centered emphases of Scripture and therefore helpful in pastoral care.

How does a declarative speech act model of the believer's new status compare with the more strictly forensic model of the CRD? This is a complex question. The canon's emphasis on the forensic dimension of salvation, rooted in the sacrificial concept in the OT, is essential to properly grasping humanity's desperate condition of alienation from God as a result of his holy and righteous wrath. Consequently, the forensic element is rightly understood as permeating everything in the God-human relation. Yet the new relation believers in Christ have with God is rooted in something greater: the triune love of God (John 17). Indeed, the believers' forensic change with respect to God is grounded in that love (see 1 John 4:10). God's speech toward believers in Christ is multifaceted: it is judicial, therapeutic, and eschatological, based in the triune God's agapic affections and desire for their manifestation.

Where and when are these declarative speech acts uttered? There would seem to be four interlocking episodes within redemptive history regarding the uttering of the global divine declarative: at the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ 2000 years ago; upon one's personal faith in Christ; now in heaven in the present all the time; and at the end of the age, in the final judgment.

First, what teaching we have been given on this matter frequently links the divine declaratives to Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension. At the institution of the Lord's Supper, Christ said that his blood of the covenant was "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28). The Father "made him who knew no sin to be sin" (2 Cor 5:21). The Father was pleased to crush him, rendering him as a guilt offering (Isa 53:10); "My Servant will justify the many, as he will bear their iniquities" (Isa 53:11); and "Yet he himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors" (Isa 53:12). These teachings suggest that (at least some negative) declarations imputing guilt were uttered in the death of Christ.

However, we are also told that Christ "was declared (or appointed) the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness" (Rom 1:4). Paul preached, "the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that he raised up Jesus" (Acts 13:33). In light of what we have so far considered, we might suppose that in the resurrection of Christ, the Father was uttering a declarative that established Christ in his new post-resurrection role as the Savior of the world. In passing through his death and resurrection, Christ the Word became the divine salvific illocutions/declarations, so that now he is our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21).[35]

Second, there is also evidence that divine declarations are uttered with reference to individual believers only upon faith in Christ. The clearest evi-

---

[34] Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Salvation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007).
[35] "Jesus Christ is God's illocutionary act." Kevin Vanhoozer, *First Theology* 189.

dence of this is found in the speech act of justification (or forgiveness). The NT authors teach that justification (or forgiveness) occurs upon confession of sin or belief in Christ (Acts 10:43, 13:38; Rom 5:1; 1 John 1:9, 2:2). Before that time, humans are "children of wrath" (Eph 2:3), those upon whom the wrath of God abides (John 3:36). Consequently, humanity in general is not declared righteous in Christ.[36] The divine declarations are not uttered personally apart from personal faith. But as soon as people believe in the Lord Jesus or confess their sins to God, at that point in time their sins are covered, they receive absolution, and they are reckoned righteous.

Believers, of course, never actually hear or read the specific declarations uttered over them, individually. What believers have access to instead is the scriptural report or witness (or Testament) regarding these speech acts, and there they are promised that these speech acts are uttered over anyone who believes in Christ. It is apparently God's design that this inspired testimony be enough, for faith can properly lay hold of what we might call second-hand human accounts (indeed, the entire Bible is such an account).

Third, there would seem to be a sense in which the meaning of the divine declaratives is being perpetually reiterated in heaven in Christ. This would seem to be a consequence of the believer's union with Christ, who is now seated in heaven at the right hand of the Father, so that, believers are also now "seated with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6). Consequently, believers are told, "keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:1–3). That is also where we are told the believer's inheritance is located (Heb 9:15; 1 Pet 1:4) and where "every spiritual blessing" resides. The glorious meanings established and associated with the above declarations are important parts of the "above things," upon which believers are to "set their minds" (Col 3:1–2).

As heavenly utterances, the divine declaratives are also to be understood as eschatological utterances, which will be uttered over individual believers in their hearing at the final judgment, when their meaning will be perfectly realized, a fulfillment necessarily tied to (but fortunately not *ultimately* dependent upon) their perlocutionary realization in the believer's life. At that point, God will render a final verdict that for believers will correspond to the divine declaratives uttered earlier in human history in Christ and over the believer and that will complete the believer's always imperfect hearing and obedience: "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of

---

[36] Here the CR understanding of salvation differs markedly from that of Barth, since he maintained that salvation is so established in Christ that it transcends the historical occurrence of individual faith. See Bruce L. McCormack, "*Justitia aliena*: Karl Barth in conversation with the Evangelical Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness," in Bruce L. McCormack, ed., *Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008) 167–96. Apart from its lack of biblical support, such supralapsarianism has the inevitable effect of undermining personal faith, and so the personal involvement of individual believers, as hyper-Calvinism has historically done. Though Barth's intentions were undoubtedly the opposite, his post-Kantian reconstruction of salvation, for all its other merits, profoundly undermines God's design in salvation to draw his image-bearers into personal, dependent "active participation" with him.

My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited me in'" (Matt 25:34–35).

It is challenging, to say the least, for temporal creatures like us to understand eternal realities. A model of four closely interrelated speech act episodes is simply an attempt to understand something of the "eternal life" (*zōen aiōnion*) of believers from the perspective of finite temporality.[37] From God's standpoint, he does not repeat himself; but from our standpoint, God is always present in our time and interacting with us. So, once we obtain forgiveness in Christ (Acts 10:43), we are still to confess our sins, in order to receive new forgiveness for new unrighteousness (1 John 1:9), and so our ongoing, existential faith participates in and yields eternal life throughout our lives (Col 1:23).

2. *Christiformative salvation: The perlocutionary effects of declarative salvation.*   We turn now to the conceptual field that the CR traditions have historically referred to as "sanctification," the "becoming" aspect of salvation in Christ, which is not yet fully realized in this age. Whereas declarative salvation pertains to the speech of the Father in the Son and therefore also with reference to those who are in Christ through faith, this area deals with the perlocutionary work of the Holy Spirit that actually brings about constructive change in the lives of believers through the meaning of the Son, the declarative Word of God. As noted above, speech acts often have consequences or effects on their recipients as they understand the speech acts expressed to them and act accordingly. When this occurs, the same illocutions are also perlocutions. The Father's speaking to us in his Son (Heb 1:2) has definite perlocutionary intentions to save/heal/improve human life. Our focus in this article is the Father's perlocutionary intentions relating to his declarative utterances about believers in Christ.

The realization of those Fatherly intentions through the Son in believers is a major part of the Holy Spirit's mission: "The Spirit renders the word effective by achieving its intended perlocutionary intention."[38] Yet this does not happen magically, through a priestly or sovereign infusion of grace.[39] Rather, it is due to the mysterious co-agency of the Holy Spirit and the individual believer (Phil 2:12–13), mediated by the believer's faith. Spiritual growth is promoted directly through the Christian's active believing/receiving/consenting to the declarative word of God. To understand better how this happens, it is necessary to extend the model of salvation in this paper further by identifying a second aspect: Christiformative salvation.

God's perlocutionary intention in Christ for those made in his image is the ongoing (though halting) reformation of the characters of believers into the

---

[37] Interestingly, Paul ties eternal life both to declared righteousness and holiness of life; see Rom 5:21 and 6:22 respectively.

[38] Vanhoozer, *First Theology* 199. He adds, "the Spirit accomplishes these effects not independently of the words and illocutions but precisely *by*, *with* and *through* them."

[39] Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Salvation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007) chap. 10.

form of Christ. As finite, temporal, and embodied creatures Christians become conformed to Christ gradually, over time, by means of multiple faith-experiences of God and his word, through which the brain-soul of believers becomes more or less permanently restructured by (1) their relationship with God; (2) God's declarative word ("You are already righteous and holy in Christ"); and (3) virtuous practice (which depends upon and flows from relationship with God and his declarative word), such that through faith the believer's character is more disposed to perceive, feel, and act similarly in the future. This gradual, long-term change is what is being termed "Christiformative salvation." The initial changes created by God's word through faith include regeneration (Titus 3:5; John 1:13) or being made alive to God (Eph 2:5);[40] the entrance of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the believer (Rom 5:5; 8:11; 1 Cor 3:19); the freedom to love and obey God; the death-blow given to the old self (Rom 6:6; Gal 2:20); and the birth of the new self (2 Cor 5:17; Col 3:10). Long-term, ongoing (yet halting) Christ-centered characterological change includes the growing ability to abide in Christ and commune with God, encompassing greater knowledge, intimacy, and love for God for who he is in himself, and so better, purer worship; greater and deeper repentance, fuller, deeper faith that permeates more of one's inner world; better obedience; growth in the quality of the fruit (or virtues) of the Spirit; increasing self-awareness and less self-deception; growing reliance upon the indwelling Holy Spirit, the mortification of the old self and fighting against the flesh (Romans 6; 8:13; Gal 5:16–20; Col 3:9–10), and increase in the psychological complexity, power, and influence of the new self (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10, 4:24); greater acceptance that one is a child of God (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6); deepening fellowship with the saints and mutual edification (Ephesians 4); greater wisdom and skill in witnessing to others of Christ; greater focus on helping the poor and weak; and more contented suffering. In the context of a living relationship with God, the more deeply and thoroughly believers consent to God's declarative words—"You are already righteous and holy in Christ"—the more deeply, thoroughly, and permanently they actually become righteous and holy in Christ, given by God and mediated by his word, and their experience, practice, and human relationships. The perlocutionary effects of Christiformity mean that believers "become who they are" in Christ. The figure in Appendix 1 offers a diagram of the two aspects of salvation that are the focus of this paper (the fundamental role of the church in this process is not being addressed in this article).

Let us return to the creation/new creation analogy. As we noted above, God speaks in creation and providence, and its meaning is immediately realized. With regard to the non-human creation, God's illocutions necessarily realize their perlocutionary intent. Humans, however, are made in God's image.

---

[40] In the Reformed tradition, it has been common to teach that regeneration must precede faith, since humans are dead in sin and unable in themselves to believe. Human spiritual inability, however, should not be used as a premise of human reason to force a deductive resolution in the paradox of the relation between faith and divine salvation. In the Puritan era, the temporal priority of regeneration led disastrously to "preparationism," in which people would wait for "signs of regeneration" before believing. Scripture teaches that faith is the medium of salvation, and human reason must submit itself to divine revelation when faced with such mysteries.

Consequently, they are hearers/receivers/respondents. In contrast to the rest of creation, the word of God addressed to humans requires their active reception and participation for its meaning to be realized. Through faith they "receive the word implanted, which is able to save [their] souls" (Jas 1:21), as its illocutions are internalized and their perlocutionary intent brought into being over time. [41]

Some have criticized the CRD of justification by faith alone for being a reflection of nominalism, the late medieval position that humans only have access to words, not essences (since according to the CRD, believers are named righteous, though they are not actually righteous in their life and character). [42] However, the creation/new creation analogy shows that accusation to have no merit.

> Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. (Gen 1:11–12)

When the eternal God speaks into a temporal creation, the realization of its meaning takes time. But just as surely as plant life came into being according to God's command, so the life of the new creation will emerge from his declaratives that established this new state-of-affairs in Christ. It just takes more time. Being hearers/receivers/respondents, humans have to believe this new creation word, and the more fully and deeply they consent to it, the more its perlocutionary intent is brought into being. This is hardly nominalism.

Complicating matters extraordinarily, of course, are the significant barriers believers have to the internalization/manifestation process of Christiformity. The most serious barrier is indwelling sin, which we might define as a persistent, largely unconscious resistance to God's word. Second, Christians have sinful patterns of thinking, feeling, and willing that diverge from the form of Christ and predispose them to believe the word superficially, so that it only affects one's conscious beliefs and overt behaviors. Lastly, people vary in terms of the damage they have sustained to their created dynamic soul-structures, particularly their memory, reasoning, emotional, and volitional subsystems, as a result of suffering, especially in childhood. However, it is part of God's perlocutionary intentions to undermine indwelling sin, overturn vice, and bring healing to damaged soul-structures through the reception of his word. [43]

Though not widely used in our day, the term "Christiformity" has a long history in the church, [44] and it is my candidate for a replacement for "sanc-

---

[41] See Eric L. Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007) chaps. 17 and 18.

[42] See John Milbank, "Alternative Protestantism: Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition," in *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition* (ed. James K. A. Smith and James H. Olthuis; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005) 27–29.

[43] This deconstruction is discussed in more detail in Johnson, *Foundations*, chap. 16.

[44] Philip E. Hughes, *Lefevre: Pioneer of Ecclesiastical Renewal in France* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

tification," for the following reasons: First, it does not have the baggage of the status/process ambiguity associated with the *hagiazō* cognates discussed above. Second, sanctification is a tad more abstract than Christiformity. What is sanctification? There has been significant debate about that in recent church history, in part because the precise extension of the word itself it somewhat obscure. By contrast, the term Christiformity contains the substance and goal of spiritual growth—Jesus Christ—so it immediately conveys more effectively what the process is about. Third, because the term sanctification is more vague, it can be understood in a variety of ways, for example, as something we are primarily responsible for, but accomplish with God's help. "Christiformity" focuses our attention on our Master, Savior, Lover, and Friend.

The end of Christiformative salvation—the entire divinely intended perlocutionary consequences of the declarative words of the Father in Christ—is Christlikeness, both individual and communal—at least as much as is possible in this age. The final end, of course, is perfect conformity to Christ known as glorification, and it will only occur after this age is over.

One more point. The temporal sequence of declarative salvation first, followed by the Christiformative is basic to a speech act model. However, emphasizing temporality may obscure a more important truth: the necessary and perpetual dependence of Christiformative salvation on declarative. Personal conformity to the image of Christ feeds and rests upon the word of God. It is not something that originates in human effort, the spiritual disciplines, or the practice of the virtues; its energy is produced by the powerful word of God that can only be received from above: "'Is not My word like fire?' declares the Lord, 'and like a hammer which shatters a rock?'" (Jer 23:29). His word is the Christian's secret to a happy life.

III. SPEECH ACTS AND COMMUNION WITH THE TRIUNE GOD

Vanhoozer also noted that, in addition to being illocutionary and having perlocutionary intent, communicative action is interlocutionary: it occurs among persons.[45] Speech act theory as developed by Austin, Searle, and Alston is notoriously abstract, perhaps in keeping with good analytic philosophy generally. More is needed to make it humane, and much more is needed to make it divine. In Christian salvation, we are not simply dealing with bare declarative speech acts appearing out of a void that we are to master intellectually. The Father has spoken to us in his Son (Heb 1:2). Jesus Christ *is* God's declarative word; the believer's righteousness and sanctification (1 Cor 1:30). The Father's declaratives in Christ are articulations of the majesty, love, righteousness, holiness, and humility of the Trinity. At the same time the vicarious humanity of Christ, evident in his loving obedience and intercession on behalf of those who believe, constitutes their declarative status. So the declaratives of the gospel have additional illocutionary qualities, since they *express* the glory of the Trinity and the God-man, and also command and invite images of the Trinity (persons-in-communion) to participate in the Divine *koinōnia*/

---

[45] Vanhoozer, *First Theology* 174.

fellowship/communion by means of the Lamb slain and in the power of his Spirit. So relationship precedes and grounds God's declarative speech acts, in election and in mission, and communion with God and one another is their ultimate doxological goal. The forensic is subservient to the triune God who speaks the truth in love.

A focus on God's salvific declarations in Christ is important in our salvation because they are its initiation, and believers are encouraged and strengthened by believing who they are in Christ. However, the Christian life is most concerned with God, and Christiformity is most promoted by focusing on the triune God in communion, worship, and love. So the various aspects of declarative salvation ought not to be our primary interest. It is the Giver, after all, and not his gifts, that is most central to the Christian faith.

IV. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SCRIPTURE IN THIS MODEL?

Scripture is essential to a speech act model of salvation. Christians desperately need to know deeply God's mind and heart toward them in Christ. The declaratives of interest to us were uttered at the cross and over us upon our personal faith in Jesus Christ, and now in Christ in heaven. However, because God does not utter these words audibly, we need a sure and fixed record or report of God's mind and heart towards us in Christ, infallibly and inerrantly reported. So Scripture is the authoritative, necessary, sufficient, and primary medium of the communication of God's intentions for us in Christ. Without Scripture, we would not have intergenerational access to these speech acts, and the possibility of distortions in the oral tradition would grow exponentially over time. By contrast, liberal Christians take seriously neither the scriptural record of these declaratives nor the necessity of personal faith for their perlocutionary realization in the lives of individual believers.

At the same time, God's individual declaratives regarding particular believers in Christ cannot be identified with Scripture. This distinction should be obvious—the specific divine declarative that Martin Luther is justified is nowhere found in Scripture. Rather, by means of the different illocutions of Scripture, God announces that he will justify anyone who believes, on the basis of Christ's person and work. The Bible inerrantly and infallibly proclaims to humanity the *possibility* of the particular divine declarations, but it is not itself those divine declarations, which are uttered in Christ upon faith in Christ. Making this distinction may seem unnecessary, but it is important for Christians to keep their focus in the Christian life centered on God in Christ. Fundamentalists, by contrast, would seem to have a pathological, even idolatrous obsession with the phenomenon of Scripture itself.

V. CONCLUSION

The CR conceptual distinction between justification and sanctification is a sound one, based in biblical teaching, even if the terms themselves may have contributed a little smoke in the debates about them. While the Catholic position regarding justification (and that of its newer cousins) rightly asserts that salvation is entirely derived from God's grace, so that God's role in it is

radically asymmetrical with that of believers, by blurring the biblical distinction between the immediate gift of "good status" bestowed through faith in Christ and the consequent transformation into Christ's image, believers would seem to share degree of ultimate responsibility for their salvation with God, even it be a relatively small part. By underscoring the basis of all of salvation in God's word in Christ, a speech act model makes clearer the radical discontinuity between God and human involvement by highlighting better God's transcendent, originating activity in salvation and absolute human dependence and responsiveness.

At the same time, Protestants have had a hard time explaining and so maintaining the close relationship they know should exist between justification and sanctification. A speech act model strengthens the CRD at this point, because speech acts are both illocutions and perlocutions (as its meaning produces effects). Declarative salvation (God's illocution in Christ) and Christiformative salvation (God's perlocution through the Holy Spirit) are simply different aspects of the one speech act; they are two sides of the same verbal coin. The challenge remains, of course, for Christians to realize the meaning of the declaratives.[46]

A speech act model is also superior to Barth's approach to the relation between justification and sanctification. Because of his Christ-centered orientation to both concepts, he argues that they are coextensive and already realized in Christ.[47] However, it is difficult to see in such a framework how believers personally come to share in that already fully accomplished work and grow in grace. Integral to a speech act model is an emphasis on the believer's personal reception and appropriation of the declarative word of justification/sanctification and the subsequent realization of its meaning more and more in his or her life.

The speech act rewording of the CR justification/sanctification distinction offers a number of advantages as one way of understanding new covenant salvation. First, it is an intrinsically trinitarian model, with the Father speaking salvation, the Son being the meaning of God who is being expressed in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and the Spirit as the One who realizes the perlocutionary intent of their Father-Son discourse in the lives of believers after Pentecost. Second, it grounds and locates both the new status of believers and their transformation in the same speech act(s). It is the same speech act whether viewed as illocution and perlocution. Third, such an orientation helps believers to focus their attention *not* primarily on their activity or even on the Spirit's activity within them, but on God's triune (speech-)activity, the word of God, which believers are always free to receive more deeply and pervasively by faith. Fourth, this model broadens the new status category of salvation beyond justification and adoption to include all the new statuses the

---

[46] On that score, the Catholic understanding offers no advantage. In fact, it seems obvious that a speech-act model better reflects the actual, compromised experience of all Christians in this age than does a Catholic model, which posits the *actual infusion of divine righteousness* into the life of active Christians. That is a very strong claim that would seem to have less supporting evidence in the lives of Catholics than does the more modest claims of the Reformers. Perhaps Catholics simply accept this infusion by faith.

[47] See Karl Barth, CD IV.1 546–49. See also McCormack, "*Justitia aliena*."

believer receives in Christ, labeling them declarative salvation. Fifth, a speech act model nicely highlights the analogy between God's verbal activity in creation and providence and his recreative verbal activity in redemption. Sixth, the illocutionary/perlocutionary order of this model corresponds to God's design in human development. There is abundant empirical evidence that early human development proceeds through the internalization of the discourse of caregivers.[48] By adulthood, having becoming personal agents, mature humans have become more intentional participants in their own change, entailing the deliberate reception of discourse of importance to them. It was the triune God's intention that the primary source of human transformation be his Word in Christ. Seventh, with its label for the transformative aspect of salvation, it explicitly points believers to the perlocutionary goal of the God's redemptive speech act: conformity to the image of Christ. Eighth, a declarative/Christiformative model of salvation is able to take into account the value of the indicative/imperative model previously identified by NT theologians and broadens it by underscoring the divine and verbal origins of the indicative and focusing the imperatives on their end in Christ. Ninth, the already/not yet dialectic of Christian salvation is built into this model, because declarative salvation is the eschatological already and Christiformative salvation is the becoming of the already in their lives through faith, which is not yet fully realized and will not be until eternity. Finally, it makes clearer the necessity of faith than does Barth's Christ-centered model. While Barth rightly distinguished justification and sanctification and recognized that both are fundamentally located in Christ, his articulations of salvation seem to render personal faith as of negligible importance. By contrast, while declarative salvation in the NT is available to all, it is only announced in Christ with reference to those who believe, and Christlikeness requires personal appropriation of the word of God by faith.

Speech act theory, therefore, would seem to provide some useful tools for understanding, enhancing, and elaborating the valid CR distinction between justification and sanctification, by more faithfully reflecting the biblical record of all that the triune God has accomplished through the speech act of his Son, the Word of God, in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and through a declarative speech act about each believer, meaning the effects of which are being realized through the Spirit's perlocutionary activity in the lives of believers in this age. And he who has begun a good speech act in them will continue to perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:6).[49]

---

[48] For a brief review and Christian interpretation of this literature see Johnson, *Foundations*, chap. 16.

[49] Thanks to Keith Whitfield for first suggesting to me that speech act theory might have application to soteriology and to Kevin Vanhoozer for his helpful comments on an earlier draft.

Appendix 1

Divine Illocutions ⟶ *Realization of Divine Perlocutionary Intent*

The Father's Word ⟶ *Effectual, Substantial Change By the Holy Spirit*

Declarative Salvation ⟶ ## Christiformative Salvation

Declarative Salvation	Christiformative Salvation
Union with Christ	Empowerment of the Holy Spirit
Justification: forgiveness & imputation of alien righteousness	"Righteousness," Better, purer obedience, righteous living
Sainthood, Definitive Sanctification	Becoming more holy, Progressive Sanctification
Adoption Rights to inheritance	Corresponding changes in filial identity and attitude
Reconciliation	Deepening communion with the triune God
Redemption from Satan's authority	Godly choices, resulting in more virtuous character, & godly improvisation
Establishment of and membership in the Body	Greater capacity to love and receive love
Belovedness	Growth in one's relational capacities with God and others
Seated with Christ in the heavenly places	Corresponding growth in the new self that one really is in Christ