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**Johannes Piscator and Debates over
Christ's Active Obedience**

Heber Carlos de Campos Jr.



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Doctrine in Development

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Acknowledgments

This work identifies trajectories of continuities as well as the maturation of a tradition within one theological locus. It is not primarily a work about one theologian, though Johannes Piscator receives special attention due to his position in the debate described in this monograph. It is not even a work on a doctrine as broad as justification, or the atonement, or Christ's mediatorship. Instead, what my research attempts to do is much narrower. By taking a more specific topic such as the nature of the imputation of Christ's active obedience in our salvation, I am able to survey a significant number of theologians on one particular issue and come out with a provisional history of the doctrine.

One significant outcome of this history, in my judgment, is to detect doctrinal continuities and discontinuities within the Reformed tradition. As doctrines are formulated, challenged, and reframed, it is undeniable that a certain development occurs. Theological controversies always brought forth different perceptions of the tradition in which they were. Most of the time, those involved in the controversies covered in this present work were likely unaware of any shift or development on their part. But a bird's eye view allows us to see when it is anachronistic to claim that a certain theologian has a clear understanding of the doctrine and when there is maturation of the topic.

This understanding of the Post-Reformation tradition is something I owe to Richard A. Muller, who taught at Calvin Theological Seminary and advised this present research as a doctoral dissertation almost ten years ago. To him I am very grateful for opening up the world of Post-Reformation theology as it solidified and expanded the understanding of the faith promulgated by the Reformers.

My gratitude also goes to those who are part of the RHB team. Thanks go to Jay Collier, who was a great encourager and kept me excited with this project all along; Ryan Hurd, an exceptional editor who helped me smooth the edges of my prose; and Joel Beeke, for his vision and desire to make the theology of the Puritans known all over the world, including my home country.

Lastly, a word of thanks both to my school and to my family. It is a great privilege to see an increasing interest in the Reformed tradition in Brazil through schools like Andrew Jumper Graduate Center. I am especially grateful to my wife, Natalie, and children, Bianca, Samuel, and Nicole, to whom I dedicate the efforts of my study.

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CHAPTER 1

Locating a Turning Point

In the Post-Reformation period, the doctrine of Christ's active obedience was primarily handled under two theological loci. From a more christological perspective, it was discussed under Christ's mediatorial role, where Christ was said to have perfectly obeyed the law in our stead. The controversies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries surrounding this discussion were not whether Christ perfectly obeyed the law during the period of His humiliation, and not even if in some sense He obeyed for us (i.e., for our benefit). No reputable Reformed theologian denied either claim. The issue was whether His positive righteousness, His active obedience of the law, had a substitutionary purpose. The other locus, related to what is traditionally considered to be soteriology, was the doctrine of justification, where Christ's active obedience was claimed to be imputed to believers, thus being the meritorious cause of their justification. In close relation to the doctrine of justification, the discussions of law versus gospel also touched upon Christ's active obedience.

With regard to the doctrine of justification and its correlated debates over law and gospel, some may question whether there would be significant development in the Post-Reformation period since it had been the major banner of the Protestant Reformation from its inception. Martin Luther (1483–1546) spoke of it as “the article” upon which “rests all that we teach and practice against the pope, the devil, and the world.”¹ Since the topic of justification had been thought through and worked out by every major Reformation theologian, both first and

1. Martin Luther, “The Smalcald Articles,” in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions*

second generation, one would think that all the major issues had been covered by the end of John Calvin's life (1509–1564). Some issues were, in fact, decidedly Protestant by the early 1560s. Luther's *iustitia aliena* (alien righteousness) as our justifying righteousness,² his identification of *iustitia Christi* (the righteousness of Christ) as the righteousness of God in Romans 1:17,³ and Philip Melancthon's (1497–1560) expression of the notion of an imputed righteousness were all part of the forensic terminology that characterized the Protestant view of justification.⁴ By the 1530s, Melancthon already was asserting the notion of imputed righteousness,⁵ and this teaching became a hallmark of Protestantism. When the controversy surrounding the teaching of Andreas Osiander (1498–1552) came about, both Lutheran and Reformed vigorously opposed his abandonment of the forensic nature of justification. Therefore, the topic under debate in this monograph is not simply the teaching of imputed righteousness—it is clear that such doctrine was taught by the first Reformers. The issue is narrower. It responds to the question, what constitutes this righteousness? In other words, does the imputation of righteousness consist merely in Christ's payment for sins on the cross, or does it also include His lifelong obedience to the divine precepts as the second Adam?

If the broader issue of imputed righteousness was settled in controversy with Rome, the narrower topic of the imputation of Christ's active obedience was debated in-house. The ideas of Johannes Piscator

of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 2.1.

2. Cf. Martin Luther, "Two Kinds of Righteousness" (1519), in *Luther's Works*, ed. Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 31:297–306 (hereafter *LW*); Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 2 band (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1966), 145–52 (hereafter *WA*).

3. Cf. Heiko A. Oberman, "'*Iustitia Christi*' and '*Iustitia Dei*': Luther and the Scholastic Doctrines of Justification," *Harvard Theological Review* 59, no. 1 (January 1966): 1–26.

4. Timothy J. Wengert, *Law and Gospel: Philip Melancthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia*, Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 179–85; Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 212–13.

5. Stephen Strehle, "*Imputatio iustitiae*: Its Origin in Melancthon, Its Opposition in Osiander," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 50, no. 3 (1994): 201–19; McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 237–41.

(1546–1625) raise one of the first debates surrounding the Protestant doctrine of justification. Therefore, studying his theology on Christ's life as it relates to justification is a crucial step to advance a better understanding of how the Reformed doctrine of the imputation of Christ's active obedience was shaped in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

History of the Question

With regard to Piscator, there is a dearth of secondary sources both on him as well as on the history of the doctrine of active obedience within Reformed circles, even though both Piscator and active obedience were the object of significant debates in the Post-Reformation period. This lacuna on both of these issues leads modern historians of Reformers in the mid-sixteenth century to overlook the development of the doctrine of imputation of righteousness and the discontinuities between these Reformers and Post-Reformation theology. Their anachronistic evaluation leads them to conclude that some Reformation figures were either for or against the imputation of Christ's active obedience. Those who variously construed the thought of Calvin, Zacharias Ursinus (1534–1583), and Caspar Olevianus (1536–1587) on Christ's active obedience during the seventeenth century were involved in polemics and often produced contrasting analyses. However, even contemporary scholarship has been guilty of the same hermeneutical duality without noticing the development of the doctrine in Protestant scholasticism and Puritan writings. The secondary opinion surrounding this problem will be assessed in chapter 3, examining both the views of seventeenth-century theologians and those found in more recent literature.

Historiography on Piscator is very limited, and the brief allusions to him in historical or theological surveys are arguably incorrect.⁶ James Willson portrays Piscator's position as claiming that "it must be on

6. Not only in matters of justification, but even some representations of Piscator's view of predestination appear to be ungrounded. Some writers claim that Piscator fell to Arminianism. Cf. Rose, *A New General Biographical Dictionary*, 11:126; Albert Henry Newman, *Modern Church History (A.D. 1517–1932)*, vol. 2 of *A Manual of Church History* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1933), 338; Müller, "Piscator (Fischer), Johannes," s.v. in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Such interpretation can be corrected by the remarks of Donald W. Sinnema, "The Issue of Reprobation at the Synod of Dort (1618–19) in Light of the History of This Doctrine" (PhD diss., University of St. Michael's College, 1985), 91–95.

the footing of our own personal holiness that we gain admission to Heaven.”⁷ James Buchanan makes the same assessment when he says that Piscator’s exclusion of the imputation of Christ’s active obedience as the believer’s title to eternal life “left a door open for the introduction of his own personal obedience, as the only ground of his future hope, after he had obtained the remission of his past sins.”⁸ While Buchanan’s analysis may work in his own theological system, it does not in Piscator’s, as will be demonstrated. William G. T. Shedd comments that Piscator “contended that the holiness of Christ does not justify in the forensic and objective sense, but only as it becomes the inward principle of the soul,—adopting substantially the Tridentine theory of justification by sanctification.”⁹ However, Piscator was vehemently against the Catholic understanding of justification, as his book against Robert Bellarmine shows.¹⁰

Other assessments on Piscator and justification are either limited in original sources, partial in perspective, or reliant on secondary sources. Both James Dennison and Wesley White describe Piscator’s point of view based on his single work translated into English.¹¹ D. Ferdinand Christian Baur deals with Piscator in contrast to the Lutherans rather than the Reformed contingent with whom he debated the most.¹² Albrecht Ritschl confesses having no access to Piscator’s writings,¹³ and thus relies mainly on J. H. Gerhard’s *Loci Theologici* (1621) and

7. James R. Willson, *A Historical Sketch of Opinions on the Atonement* (Philadelphia: Edward Earle, 1817), 42.

8. James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification: An Outline of Its History in the Church and of Its Exposition from Scripture* (Birmingham, Ala.: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2006), 175.

9. William G. T. Shedd, *A History of Christian Doctrine*, 3rd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, n.d.), 2:344.

10. *De justificatione hominis coram Deo, libri duo: Oppositi sophismatis Roberti Bellarmini jesuitae*, first published in 1590.

11. James T. Dennison, Jr., “Johannes Piscator and the Doctrine of Justification,” *The Outlook* 53, no. 10 (December 2003): 8–11; J. Wesley White, “The Denial of the Imputation of the Active Obedience of Christ: Piscator on Justification,” *The Confessional Presbyterian* 3 (2007): 147–54.

12. D. Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Die Christliche Lehre von der Versöhnung in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung von der ältesten Zeit bis auf die Neueste* (Tübingen: C. F. Osia-nder, 1838), 352–70.

13. Albrecht Ritschl, *A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, trans. John S. Black (Edinburgh: Edmonton and Douglas, 1872), 248.

Baur's analysis. Though the scholars in this second group have correct interpretations on most of their analysis of Piscator, their assessment is methodologically flawed and thus incomplete.

The only significant book-length treatment of Piscator was done by Frans Lukas Bos and was based on his doctoral dissertation.¹⁴ But the book deals with Piscator's theology as a whole—including topics such as his exegesis, philosophy, view of the Lord's Supper, predestination, and covenant—leaving only a chapter for Piscator's view on the meritorious cause of justification. Though this is the best treatment on Piscator to date, there are a couple shortcomings that hinder the author's intention of portraying how Piscator was “a contribution to the history of Reformed theology,” as the subtitle indicates. First, Bos addresses antecedents very briefly—mainly addressing the Reformers without mentioning the medieval idea of active obedience—and he does not consider how the doctrine was shaped in view of Piscator's argumentation. Thus, for example, Bos considers Christ's obedience as the counterpart to all of Adam's disobedience as a “strange analogy,”¹⁵ indicating a lack of precision with respect to historical debates. Secondly, he errs by constructing some of Piscator's view on active obedience based on letters written to Piscator, rather than from Piscator's own writings. Bos makes good use of letters (in print or in manuscript) to piece together the history of the conflicts in which Piscator was involved, but does not explore Piscator's published writings to systematize his thought.

There is also a general scarcity of historical studies on Christ's active obedience, as well as some misrepresentations. Nicolaas Gootjes addresses the confessional development of the doctrine of Christ's active obedience,¹⁶ and Chad Van Dixhoorn analyzes the issue within the debates over justification during the Westminster Assembly.¹⁷ Both are significant but limited contributions to the broader understanding

14. Frans Lukas Bos, *Johann Piscator: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der reformierten Theologie* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1932).

15. Bos, *Johann Piscator*, 139.

16. Nicolaas H. Gootjes, “Christ's Obedience and Covenant Obedience,” *Koinonía* 19, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 2–22.

17. Chad B. Van Dixhoorn, “Reforming the Reformation: Theological Debate at the Westminster Assembly, 1643–1652” (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2004), 1:270–344.

of the historical development in Reformed thought on the issue. Bill Berends incautiously affirms that the doctrine of the active and passive obedience of Christ began early in the Reformation, but, on the other hand, insightfully notes the innovative aspect of Theodore Beza (1519–1605).¹⁸ Charles Hodge’s understanding of the history after Piscator is flawed since he notes that Piscator’s “departure” from the traditional Protestant doctrine of justification “passed away without leaving any distinct trace in the theology of the Reformation.”¹⁹ The fact that Piscator’s doctrine was condemned in French and Swiss Reformed circles as well as by Lutherans, as Hodge observes,²⁰ should not lead one to diminish the lingering significant minority within the Reformed who used Piscator to deny the traditional understanding of the imputation of Christ’s active obedience. Richard Baxter lists David Pareus, Abraham Scultetus, Johann Heinrich Alsted, Marcus Friedrich Wendelin, John Cameron, Sibbrandus Lubbertus, John Forbes, Anthony Wotton, and Thomas Gataker as among only some Reformed supporters of Piscator on the issue.²¹ Bos adds to this list the names of Rudolph Goclenius, Jacobus Kimedoncius, and Johannes Bogerman, among others.²² In the following chapters, some of these theologians will receive brief surveys of their position on Christ’s active obedience, thus demonstrating that Piscator’s view had significant continuity among Reformed in the seventeenth century.

Another inaccuracy which is found among histories of soteriology concerns the person of Christ in relation to the law. Ritschl creates a distinction between the Lutheran and Reformed perspectives on the person of Christ and His obligation to obey the law. He asserts that since the Reformed tradition did not hold to the Lutheran understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum*, which tradition affirmed the God-man to be Lord of the law, Christ as a man was under the obligation to fulfill it. Ritschl concludes from this that Lutheran and Reformed assertions

18. Bill Berends, “The Obedience of Jesus Christ: A Defense of the Doctrine of Christ’s Active Obedience,” *Vox Reformata* 66 (2001): 26–51; “Christ’s Active Obedience in Federal Theology,” *Vox Reformata* 69 (2004): 27–46.

19. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 3:182.

20. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:185.

21. Richard Baxter, *A Treatise of Justifying Righteousness* (London: St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1676), 18–21.

22. Bos, *Johann Piscator*, 136.

concerning the vicarious nature of Christ's active obedience resulted from different arguments. The Lutherans argued from Christ's superiority to the law according to both natures, while the Reformed had to appeal to Christ's whole life as our Surety and Head.²³ This thesis has not gone unnoticed. Franks reads Piscator through Ritschl and follows him regarding the Reformed tradition on Christ and His obligation toward the law as a man.²⁴ Alister McGrath perpetuates the same interpretation of the history of Reformed and Lutheran christology.²⁵

Though it is true that Lutherans and Reformed had different understandings of the person of Christ, such a distinction of argumentation in favor of the imputation of active obedience fails to observe that one of the Reformed arguments against Piscator was that the person of Christ, both His natures being considered, was freed from the obligation of fulfilling the law on His own behalf. This will be explained more fully in chapters 7 and 8. Thus, not only the Lutherans but even the Reformed would argue from the person of Christ, rather than merely from His mediatorial role.

Summary of the Present Work

In light of the paucity of sources both on Piscator and on the history of the doctrine of Christ's active obedience, as well as the shortcomings thereof, this monograph intends to contribute by filling part of the historiographical gap and correcting some historical readings of the doctrine of active obedience. I will argue that Piscator's objections to the imputation of Christ's positive righteousness functioned as a turning point in the Reformed understanding of active obedience, since it generated responses that brought together several other doctrines to support the imputation of Christ's active obedience in a way that Reformed theologians had not previously done. Piscator was not alone in provoking later Reformed theologians to articulate the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's obedience to the law, and thus I will point to other theologians who also played a role in this controversy. However, a number of reasons made Piscator a leading figure on this issue in

23. Ritschl, *Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, 250–51.

24. Robert S. Franks, *A History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 359.

25. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 273.

the seventeenth century. Theological debates in which he was involved throughout his long career, his early opposition in which he presented solid arguments which anticipated much of the later debates, and his name being constantly repeated in later dogmatic responses to those who challenged the imputation of Christ's positive righteousness—all these contributed to making Piscator the major representative of the opposing side. His pivotal role then provides a reason to focus on his theological discourse, though in connection with other theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who agreed with him in this debate.

Piscator's early position in Post-Reformation history is important for what it says concerning the theologians who preceded him. This work will demonstrate that representative theologians in the Reformed tradition prior to Piscator did not exhibit a precise delineation of the imputed righteousness of Christ, since in their context active obedience was touched upon in discussions of justification and Christ's mediatorial role, but it was not refined so as to clarify how much or what type of Christ's obedience was actually imputed to the Christian. Hence, I will conclude that it is anachronistic to refer to figures such as Calvin, Ursinus, and Olevianus as either for or against the imputation of active obedience as it was understood in the seventeenth century. Theodore Beza will be presented as an exception in formulating a clear and consistent doctrine which specified the different parts of Christ's righteousness that were imputed to the believer. In fact, it was mainly in response to Beza and those who concurred with him that Piscator presented his case, which spurred controversies by the end of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Finally, I will also attest to the development of the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness after Piscator and his followers and demonstrate how the defense of active obedience as imputed provided an enhanced comprehension of issues regarding the law and the covenants, the meritorious cause of justification, and the person of Christ as mediator. Though not the only points of connection to active obedience, these three loci will be shown as constantly reappearing in Reformed defenses of Christ's active obedience as the meritorious cause of our justification.

But a word regarding method and structure. This monograph is not concerned with the history of technical terms such as "active

obedience,” since in the early debates the terminology was fluid, and later theologians might have disagreed with the terminology. Therefore, the explanation will focus on the concept, which receives a variety of names. But in order to clarify what will be meant by the term “active obedience” throughout this research, it is first important to define it. This doctrine claims that Christ’s vicarious redemptive work is not restricted to His death and resurrection, but also includes His life (from conception to His passion). It does not mean that everything performed during the period of His humiliation is performed in the place of another (e.g., miracles and teaching), because the major focus of the doctrine is not chronological. Nor does it focus on Christ’s moral accomplishments (e.g., endurance of suffering, holiness, love) as an example to be followed—although this teaching does have its place in Reformed theology—because the doctrine is concerned simply with substitutionary acts of Christ. It focuses particularly on His obedience rendered to the law, thus acquiring from the law the status of righteous. The importance of this mediatorial function in Reformed theology is the understanding that in order for a Christian to be justified, the second Adam, Christ, needed not only to pay for the penalty resulting from the transgressions of the law (both original and actual sins) but also to fulfill the law perfectly in order to acquire the right to eternal life. In other words, justification was understood as going beyond simply having sins remitted. It also included having positive righteousness (doing what the law commands) through the imputation of Christ’s active obedience. Both sides (negative and positive) of a single righteousness are required within a covenantal structure (covenant of works) where eternal life comes as a result of obeying the law. This summarized definition will enable the reader to look for the elements of the doctrine which surface early on in the history of Reformed theology, as well as those elements which do not.

Chapter 3 is a survey of the historiography on the doctrine of Christ’s active obedience, both early and more recent, in order to provide the major understanding of how the doctrine was a matter of concern (either pro or against) in the first key Reformed theologians. This chapter will demonstrate a need for reassessment of the primary sources for a more precise understanding of what early Reformed theology understood by Christ’s vicarious righteousness.

In order to reassess the development of the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's active obedience, the topic will undergo a chronological treatment. Chapter 4 will start with a survey of what some Medievals affirmed on the given issue in order to establish the distinctions already present by the time of the Reformation. This survey will be followed by a section on the Lutherans to show the developed concept arising out of polemics a couple decades before Piscator's first writings against the imputation of active obedience. The last section of the chapter analyzes the Reformed theologians (Calvin, Beza, Ursinus, and Olevianus) who wrote before Piscator and how they should be classified. These four theologians have been chosen not only because of their status as representatives of the tradition but also for being figures with whom Piscator dialogued—whether personally or through their writings—and who are important within the history of the doctrine. This will end the overview of the doctrine prior to Piscator and enable a reassessment of secondary literature on the Reformers.

Chapters 5 and 6 will examine Piscator's point of view both exegetically as well as theologically. This portion of the study will start by pointing out the similarities Piscator had with the Protestant understanding of justification—how Christ obeyed the law for us, and how His righteousness is imputed to us (though these two ideas differ from the later understanding of the imputation of Christ's active obedience)—before analyzing his unique argumentation. Piscator's activity as a commentator allowed him to carefully address all the proof texts for the imputation of active obedience which were used by his theological opponents both during his lifetime and afterward. As one who commented on all the books of the Bible, he confidently attested that the Scriptures were silent in respect to the imputation of Christ's active obedience. For these reasons, his commentaries will be an important source for investigation. Piscator will also be analyzed theologically through his disputations and theological letters, as well as his treatises on justification, mainly the one on the meritorious cause of justification, *Apologia Disputationis de Causâ Meritoriâ Justificationis Hominis Coram Deo*, published in 1618. This appraisal of Piscator's doctrine will set the context for the responses to his doctrine that arise in the seventeenth century. It will also facilitate future research to compare what arguments are already present in Piscator's theological framework and

which ones arise in seventeenth-century opponents of the imputation of Christ's active obedience.

Chapters 7 and 8 of this work will be a tentative systematic organization of the doctrinal development that arose in the responses to Piscator's ideas and was embraced by theologians. Chapter 7 will single out a few debates over active obedience which happened during Piscator's life and after. Chapter 8 will also scrutinize seventeenth-century Reformed theologians both from the British Isles and Continental Europe to look at the various doctrines interconnected with active obedience and how they were used as arguments in favor of it.

Chapter 8 of this work will show that there were developments in at least three areas. The first was with regard to the law and the covenants. The idea of Christ fulfilling, through His active obedience, the covenant of works became a much clearer idea as seventeenth-century theologians worked in response to Piscator. This was a reworking of the concept of the divine law being stable and valid in all dispensations, always requiring the fulfillment of its demands. In Wilhelmus à Brakel's (1635–1711) words, "The law does not demand *either* punishment or holiness, but *both*."²⁶ Also, the importance of Calvin's third use of the law was maintained, in spite of accusations from Piscator and his followers that the imputation of active obedience left no reason for the Christian to obey the law.

Second, there was development with regard to justification. Both active and passive obedience were understood as two sides of the coin of justification, sides which could not be separated from one another. This was a response to Piscator's clear-cut disjunction. Part of the reason why he criticized the imputation of active obedience was because he thought that the righteousness obtained through Christ's life would obfuscate the work of the cross—that is, would make the payment for sin unnecessary. Though upholding the unified view of Christ's whole obedience, the defenders of the imputation of Christ's active obedience still emphasized the need for a twofold obedience. The necessity of it becomes tied to the distinction (without separation) between remission of sins and eternal life. In Wollebius's words, "As Christ's Passion was

26. Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, trans. Bartel Elshout (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1992), 1:610–11.

necessary to expiate sin; so was his active Obedience and Justice, to obtain life eternal."²⁷

Third, there was development with regard to the person and mediatorial work of Christ. In contrast to Piscator's view, Christ according to His humanity was understood as not having to obey the law for Himself, because this obligation is required of a person, not simply of a nature. In other words, His person, composed of two natures, divine and human, freed Him from the obligation of living a perfect life for His own sake in order to please God the Father. Christ's divine holiness allowed Him to be pleasing to God from His birth. Thus, His life of obedience was due only as a mediator. This was the context in which Beza's threefold righteousness of Christ is addressed again and explained in more detail.

Finally, the conclusion will summarize the thesis of the development of the doctrine and how it reassesses the secondary literature on the debates. It will also show how the controversial name of Piscator became iconically attached to discussions over Christ's active obedience, stimulating some maturing continuities on the issues of Christ's merit and our justification as well as insightful distinctions on the same.

27. Johannes Wollebius, *The Abridgment of Christian Divinitie*, trans. Alexander Ross (London: T. Mab and A. Coles, 1650), 120. Wollebius observes that active and passive obedience do not differ in time nor in subject. It should not be understood as a division of parts, but it is merely "a distinction taken from the end; to wit, the twofold satisfaction, for punishment, and for life eternal; The curse upon the transgressors of the Law requires the former, *Deut.* 27.26. The promise of life under the condition of perfect obedience and righteousness requires the latter, *Lev.* 18.15." Wollebius, *Abridgment of Christian Divinitie*, 109.