

Louis Berkhof uses the term "mystical union" to include both the federal union of Christ and those who are His, and the subjective union of Christ and believers:

Lutherans generally treat the doctrine of the mystical union anthropologically and therefore conceive of it as established by faith. Hence they naturally take it up at a later point in their soteriology. But this method fails to do full justice to the idea of our union with Christ, since it loses sight of the eternal basis of the union and of its objective realization in Christ, and deals exclusively with the subjective realization of it in our lives, and even so only with our personal conscious entrance into this union. Reformed theology, on the other hand, deals with the union of believers with Christ theologically, and as such does far greater justice to this important subject. In doing so it employs the term "mystical union" in a broad sense as a designation not only of the subjective union of Christ and believers, but also of the union that lies back of it, that is basic to it, and of which it is only the culminating expression, namely, the federal union of Christ and those who are His in the counsel of redemption, the mystical union ideally established in that eternal counsel, and the union as it is objectively effected in the incarnation and the redemptive work of Christ.

-- Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*
(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), p. 447.

B. Development of the Doctrine

1. Scriptural background

John 14:20 -- "In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

John 15:1-10 -- "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love."

John 11:20-23 -- "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they