The
Stromata

> *By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by under standing He set the heavens in place.*
>
> Proverbs 3:19

Editor—Joshua S. Benton!

In This Issue

Lewis' Imaginative Use of Exhortation:

The Significance of C.S. Lewis'
Apologetical Theology for
Contemporary Ministry
by Jordan J. Ballor

He [Jesus] said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. --Matthew 22:37-40 NRSV

I. Introduction

C. S. Lewis provides a valuable resource for the elucidation and application of Biblical principles, especially he relates and examines the commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself." His use of the "potentiality" idea can help the modern church to give Christians an effective tool for evoking the proper love and respect for our neighbors (brothers, sisters, and enemies). Lewis' sermon, "The Weight of Glory," is an exhortation to put this commandment of neighborly love into practice. It is equally relevant for Christians today as it was for Lewis' audience.

Simply put, the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself is central to Christian morality. What Lewis does so effectively is to imaginatively illustrate how we are to put commandments such as this into practice in our daily lives. The need for clear and moving exhortation is timeless, as we constantly need to be reminded of our Christian duties and our proper theocentric focus. This paper will examine a single aspect of Lewis' sermon, "The Weight of Glory," as an example of his continuing relevance.

The aspect of the sermon that will be reviewed is Lewis' use of the "potentiality" idea to enable his audience to better implement and work their commandment of neighborly love. The commandment itself is well known, especially among Christians. Nevertheless, the knowledge of this commandment does not mean that it is practiced. Lewis exhorts his audience to use their imagination and picture their neighbor as immortal beings, who cannot then be viewed as ordinary or unimportant. In the following sections, Lewis' examination of the commandment of neighborly love, use of imagination and the imaginative character of his exhortation, and value as a link to the ancient tradition of the Church, will be explored.

II. The Neighborly Love Commandment

Lewis begins his exposition in the sermon "The Weight of Glory" by claiming the primacy and superiority of the virtue of love. According to Lewis, if you had asked which was the highest virtue "any of the great Christians of old…would have replied, Love" (*Weight* 25). The difference between this positive and active attribute and the negative term "Unselfishness" is of the utmost importance. The difference is not merely in etymology; it lies in the fundamental outlook of the subject. To love is to actively pursue the good of the beloved. To be unselfish implies a self-denial that is not necessarily present in love. For Lewis, this negative, self-denying idea of "Unselfishness" is not the "Christian virtue of Love" (*Weight* 25). Real love is, in fact, the greatest virtue and the greatest pleasure.

In the quotation from Matthew that precedes this paper, there are two commandments that are lifted up as the greatest. Both deal with love. The first deals with the love that exists in the relationship between human and God. That is, it is the love that is due from us for God. The second commandment deals with the relationship between human and human. It is with this second commandment that the most immediate impact in moral activity can be seen. Crimes against God may not be as directly viewable as crimes against our fellow human being. In "The Weight of Glory," Lewis deals primarily with the meaning and moral call of this second commandment of neighborly love.

After a discussion of the transtemporal and eternal, Lewis turns to the practical application of the Christian virtue of Love. As he states, "Meanwhile the cross comes before the crown and tomorrow is a Monday morning" (*Weight* 38). In the concluding paragraphs, Lewis gives us a useful exhortation, which enables us to actively apply the things that we have learned from his discourse. For Lewis, the move away from self-centeredness is of great importance. In the second command of neighborly love, the focus be-

comes "other" in the sense of relationship with another human. As Lewis states, "It may be possible for each [person] to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbor" (*Weight* 39). The impetus here then is to move attention away from one's self and concentrate on our neighbor.

Truly, we are to concentrate not only on our neighbor, but to love him or her in the sense of actively pursuing his or her positive good. Lewis' idea of gift-love is important here. As he writes in his book The Four Loves concerning Affection, "The instinct desires the good of its object, but no simply; only the good it can itself give. A much higher love – a love which desires the good of the object as such, from whatever source that good comes – must step in" (*Loves* 50-51). This understanding may help to clarify the difference alluded to in the Introduction of this paper. Love is a positive, active desire for the good of the object, whatever the source. Unselfishness or Kindness is simply a wish for the object's happiness, the former at the expense of yourself and the latter usually resulting from your actions. The essential difference lies in the fact that Love does not value the object's happiness above all else, but instead it values the object's good. These two may not be immediately agreeable. In the sense of the person's eternal soul, sometimes earthly and corporeal suffering or unhappiness must be undergone in order to achieve a better righteousness or good.

III. Imagine the Possibility

How then do we act out in response to this commandment of neighborly love? Lewis tells us we should use our imaginations! He states, "It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses" (*Weight* 39). A person's potential becomes the focus here. Lewis goes on further, as it is essential "to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare" (*Weight* 39). We are to use our imaginations, which enable us to picture these things that are not readily apparent. The immortality of the human soul is a truth, but one that we cannot see with our eyes or hear with our ears.

For J. Bolt, the use of and appeal to imagination is extremely important in ministry. In an article entitled, "The Necessity of Narrative Imagination for Preaching," Dr. Bolt defines imagination as "the human capacity to make *present* to our consciousness that which is either spatially or temporally absent" (Bolt 10). This is precisely what Lewis is urging us to do. We must employ our imaginations in order to view our neighbors in their proper light. In a post-modern era that has effectively removed all meaning from life, it becomes essential for contemporary ministry to effectively make use of imagination. "If imagination is simply one of the important human capacities or faculties of God's created *image* bearers, why should it be more suspect than say reason or the human will" (Bolt 9)?

Lewis is urging exactly the sort of imaginative use of our minds that Bolt has in mind. The potentiality of a person to become a glorious being or a corrupted horror is real, but we must use our imaginations to see such possibilities in our normal lives. It is not readily apparent, but "All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations" (*Weight* 39). Lewis continues, "It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics" (*Weight* 39). We must use our imaginations to help us effectively act with respect to the command to love our neighbors.

These imaginative possibilities do not explicitly agree with our experiences. It is not a traditional human practice to value another person because of his or her potentiality. This is especially true in the case of the abortion debate in contemporary America. The potentiality of the fetus has no bearing on its value. Conversely, for Lewis the imagination and resulting realization of another person's potential is of utmost importance. In this way, Lewis fulfills his role as preacher in this sermon, as the preacher's task "is imaginatively to present the congregation with an alternative narrative" to the one offered by this world (Bolt 12).

The relevance of Lewis' message to our post-modern culture is clear. He has examined the command to love our neighbors, and given us an effective tool for keeping this commandment. When we imaginatively realize "it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit – immortal horrors or everlasting splendors," our life takes on a whole new meaning and importance (*Weight* 39). As Bolt writes:

> Perhaps what the church needs today is less preoccupation with so-called *relevance* (the strategy of accommodating the world's narrative) and more attention to *reimagining* what it can be to participate as *living characters and agents* in the only true narrative plot scripted and directed by the Lord of his-

tory who came onto the world's stage to be the "leading man" in its definitive redemptive scene (Bolt 14).

Lewis in his "potentiality" idea gives us a clear view of what to expect at the end of this unfolding drama. Human beings have one of two ultimate destinies: glorified salvation or cast-out damnation.

With this firmly in mind, we can recognize that "our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feelings for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner" (*Weight* 39). Lewis urges us to keep the commandment of neighborly love, by imagining the reality of our neighbor's potential destiny and acting out of love for the everlasting good of the beloved.

IV. Links to Tradition

These imaginative exhortations of Lewis' have their roots in the writings of St. Augustine. In Augustine's *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, he urges his audience to view the potentiality of their neighbors just as Lewis does. Augustine is primarily concerned with reconciling the commands to love your brothers and sisters and also to love your enemies. The Scripture reads, "The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also" (I John 4:21 NRSV). Jesus also commands us, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-5 NRSV). How are we to reconcile these two commandments? Do they need reconciliation? In what ways are we to love our enemies?

Augustine's answer is clear from a prior understanding of Jesus' command. Augustine writes, "Let your desire for him [your enemy] by that together with you he may have eternal life: let your desire for him be that he may be your brother. And if that is what you desire in loving your enemy – that he may be your brother – when you love him, you love a brother" (Augustine 217-8). The idea of potentiality is clear in this context. We are to love our enemies as if they would be our brothers, and in doing so obey the command of the Lord and accomplish the task of making them our brothers. Augustine goes further, "You love in him, not what he is, but what you would have him be" (Augustine 218). The connection with Lewis here is apparent.

The exhortation to use the imagination then does not originate with Lewis, but is continued in a cogent and effective manner by him. Augustine appeals to the same "potentiality" idea that Lewis does. For Lewis as well as Augustine, you must love your neighbor (brother, sister, and enemy) with the proper perspective of their eternal destiny. Augustine accomplishes his tasks of reconciling these concepts of love for brother and for enemies, as "even in your love of enemies you will be showing love of brothers" (Augustine 217).

Lewis does not make a distinction between brothers/sisters and enemies as Augustine does. Lewis seems to be working from the command to love "your neighbors" while Augustine is specifically dealing with the command in the Johannine epistle. Nevertheless, both employ very similar arguments to exhort their respective audiences to adhere to these commandments. The love of others must be done with the appropriate view of their immortal natures, and the resulting possibilities of their existence. We must wish our human neighbors to become children of God.

While acknowledging the possibility of two destinations, Heaven and Hell, Lewis clearly states which one is the proper one for humans. Humans were not created to be condemned, but to fulfill their proper potential and to live in glorified righteousness. The existence of the possibility of damnation does not legitimize it as an end. Lewis states, "Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses" (*Weight* 40). With an understanding of Lewis' Anglican views of communion, we can clearly see that God created humans for the purpose of righteous glorification. Damnation of a human soul is possible, but it is not the proper path. As such, we as loving Christians must as best we can learn to love our neighbors and work for their glorification. This is the proper fulfillment of their potential. Lewis writes, "The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbour's glory should be laid on my back, a load so heave that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken" (*Weight* 39). In this sense then, it is not only our own cross that we pick up daily, but the burdens of others, and as they pick up ours, each of our loads are lightened.

V. Conclusion

C. S. Lewis is a relevant resource for proper guidance and instruction in the application of Biblical moral principles in our lives. The entire potential" idea that he concludes "The Weight of Glory" address with is an attempt to make practical application of his discussion of love. He states, "It may be asked what practical use there is in the speculations which I have been indulging. I can think of at least one such use" (*Weight* 39).

Lewis then proceeds on to his discussion of the "potential" of the neighbor as a motivating factor for exhibiting Christian love.

This paper has attempted to examine Lewis' view of proper Christian love, especially as it relates to the commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself." Additionally, it has sought to explore the imaginative nature of Lewis' exhortation, and its relevant application to the contemporary Church. Finally, the some of the links between Lewis and Augustine have been analyzed. It is clear that Lewis was expecting something tangible from his audience, and his uses of "potential" idea were aimed at evoking the proper Christian loving reaction from his audience toward their neighbors. It is as true of our age as it was of Augustine's that the temptations toward self-love and pride are plentiful and powerful. Lewis' attempts to move the focus away from ourselves to our neighbors are laudable. I find that the employment of this imaginative technique is effective. It is far easier to objectify someone or belittle them with only an earthly, temporal view of their existence in mind. I find that when I consider their true nature, that of immortal soul, it is far more difficult to treat my neighbor badly.

This view is certainly consistent with Lewis. For him, love gives us the proper lens through which to view people. If we look with love upon our neighbor, we see a deeper truth than is apparent to the naked eye. We see, in essence, their potential. We see their true, immortal nature. We even can begin to imagine in a way their true purpose. It is easier therefore, to move beyond the corporeal and temporal and consider the spiritual and everlasting nature of humanity. This is the deeper and lasting truth. A proper love for our neighbors grows out of the respect for their created nature: that of an immortal soul, made to be glorified in righteousness by God. Lewis' use of the "potentiality" idea is extremely effective, as it gives his audience an imaginative tool for implementing the proper Christian perspective in the commandment of neighborly love.

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Christ on Rood:
A poetic look at Christ on the Cross as seen in *The Dream of the Rood*
By Joshua S. Benton!

As human beings, we love heroes. From Beowulf to Robin Hood to Superman to Rambo to Harry Potter, we love heroes. In our hodge-podge world, though, our heroes are of a paradoxical sort. They must be strong, good willed, looking out for the under dog at the same time they must sacrifice themselves for the better good of humanity. We expect so much out of them, and appreciate them so little. In the early 1990's we saw the death of one of our most beloved heroes. Superman died. Yet he died in a very Anglo-Saxon way. He knew the consequences, he knew that it might be a losing battle, yet, he knew he must, he needed to battle the monster Doomsday. Against all odds he fought; fought to the death. Though he was a fictional character, the world, the real world, mourned his loss. We had a world without a superman.

The same is true years later, towards the end of the 1990's. We had a new hero born out of the ashes of our superman, out of the ashes of mistrust, of dispensation of unwanted heroes. Harry Potter became the most controversial hero of his day. He holds the same attributes of our Superman. Harry's heroism is a collective. With Ron and Hermione, Harry and his friends battle evil, knowing that it must be done, willing to sacrifice their lives for each other and for the rest of the world. As they are looking for the Sorcerer's Stone in the first book *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* a magical game of Chess appears, forcing them to play as physical chess pieces. In the Process, Ron, Harry and Hermoine are willing to go against all odds to try and save their school and subsequently, the world.

As with Superman, Harry, Ron, and Hermione there is the non-questionable idea of sacrifice for their fellow human being. Each story riffled with the struggle to do right. Yet, stemming back centuries, flying through time back to the early Middle Ages, to the poetry and to the mindset, they see their heroes with the same majesticness as we do Superman and the Harry Potter gang and yet they see so much more. Like Superman, there is a sense of exile from their homeland, searching for a new hearth and hall. Like Harry Potter, there is a sense of uniquen—Christ. And of which, one of the most famous poems that

attempts to understand Christ, his humanity, his divinity and his victory, is that of *The Dream of the Rood*.

The poem begins with the Dream telling us, the audience, of a vision he had of a glorious "rood," or a cross. "This was surely no felons gallows" the poet tells us,[1]" but holy spirits beheld it there, men upon earth, and all this glorious creation." The rood was covered in gold and gems of all kinds, showing how venerated it was, how important this cross was to all. Yet, through the gold and the jewels the Dreamer tells how it can see it's agony, that "through the gold, I might perceive ancient agony of wretches." The Rood bleeds on its right side, and begins to tell the Dreamer its story.

"It was long ago—I remember it still— that I was hewn down at the wood's edge, taken from my stump." The Rood was taken without it's wanting, what some would call a comparison to Mary, something that shall be looked later on in this paper. The Rood continues its tale, telling of a Heroic warrior, God Almighty, stripping down and climbing bravely on the cross to be crucified. "I trembled when the warrior embraced me," the Rood tells the dreamer, "yet I dared not bow to earth, fall to the ground's surface; but I must stand fast." The Rood continues his harrowing experience, tasting the pain that Christ felt, experiencing Christ's humanity.

I was raised up, a cross; I lifted up the Mighty King, Lord of the Heavens: I dared not bend. They pierced me with dark nails: the wounds are seen on me, open gashes of hatred. Nor did I dare harm any of them. They mocked us both together. I was all wet with blood, drenched from the side of that Man after he had sent forth his spirit. I had endured many bitter happenings on that hill. I saw the God of hosts cruelly racked. The shades of night had covered the Ruler's body with their mists, the bright splendor. Shadow came forth, dark beneath the clouds. All creation wept, bewailed the King's fall; Christ was on Cross.

The Cross is then taken and buried, as Christ is buried and is raised once more by St. Helen, the mother of Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor and adorned with jewels

and venerated as Christ was raised up[2].

The poem ends with the Cross telling the Dreamer, as in Christ's great commission to all, to go and tell others of the Cross and of the vision; to "disclose with your words that it is of the tree of glory on which Almighty God suffered for mankind's many sins and the deeds Adam did of old." The dreamer then prays, asking for guidance and for Jesus to be his friend, thanking God and Jesus for his salvation and for this vision.

Throughout the poem there is a great deal of paradox that the poet is trying to understand—the Rood being the cause of death and yet the way to life, the Rood being an instrument of torture and bondage yet it is the way to freedom; the divinity and humanity, the Dues-Homo, of Jesus Christ and the redemption of the Cross/Rood[3]. Through the methods of metaphor, the poet understands Christ's humanity through the Cross, the association of the Cross and Mary and the association of Christ with Adam via the Cross. Through the narration of the Rood, the poet comes to a stronger understanding of the warrior/king who brings salvation, in doing so, leads the audience to a deeper understanding of Christ.

With the Rood acting as an agent of expressing the humanity of Jesus, we see that there is an emotional intensity of Christ's agony…conveyed by a device that evades the awkward issue of his susceptibility to pain. Christ's humanity is transferred to the person of the cross, which insist that the nails were driven into himself, on him the malicious wounds are to be seen; it is he who is stricken with arrows covered with blood. (Swanton, 99).

The Rood is just like Christ in that it has human attributes personified: the Rood bleeds like Christ bled, the Rood feels the pain that Christ felt (Swanton, 95). The Rood, in affect "has also taken upon itself Christ's Pas-sion" (Greenfeild, 96). The Rood is like Christ, paradoxically taking upon itself Christ's humanity, telling the story of Jesus' crucifixion in a way that allows the reader and the audience to understand Jesus' pain and suffering and what might have been going through the mind of the Savior at the time. This "close association of the rood and Christ allows Jesus' dignity to be persevered, as much of the ostensibly ignoble suffering is projected onto the cross." (Flood, 2) The Rood is connected to Christ through the nails, called "the arrows" in the poem, that have been hammered into Christ, nailing Him to the Cross. The Rood allowed for the poet to be able to express the human intention of Jesus, skirting around the problem of blasphemy of trying to understand what was in Jesus' mind, his pain and his suffering (Swanton, 96-97). It allowed the reader to understand why

> in accordance with his assumed human form, Christ, the Creator, suffered on the Cross and sent on his spirit in the act of death as he was bound to do, and his natural creation mourned the apparent outrage. As the eternally divine Son of God, he rose from the tomb and delivered mankind from death and hell, opening the way to everlasting life and the Crucifixion perceived as a victory. (Garde, 109)

Through the use of the Rood as the way of speaking of Jesus' humanity, the poet is able to justify his use of the Rood as the narrator of Christ's pain "by depicting the speaking Cross as suffering and grieving" (Hill, 297).

The Rood has taken on these personifications of Christ, but as well, the Rood has taken on some of Mary's veneration. Both Mary and the Cross have been chosen from all others to be an instrument of God's will (Irvine,437-8). Mary bore Jesus while the Rood bore Christ; both participate in the glory of the incarnation. Mary brought the human child Jesus into the world; the cross allowed Christ to ascend from this world(Alexander, 183). The Rood claims it is "exalted above all trees just as Mary was exalted above all womankind" (Alexander, 183). Both Mary and the cross were picked from all others and given a place in the redemption history of Jesus. The poet tries to understand that with the Rood,

> Just as Mary was the agent of Christ's Incarnation by bearing—in the maternal sense—the Word of God, so the Cross is agent of Incarnation: first, by bearing the Word-made-flesh in the Passion; second, by speaking the Word to the Dreamer; third, by becoming

the *beacen* or sign that points to Christ." The dreamer likewise becomes agent of Incarnation by telling his vision to others. Members of the poem's audience make this cycle of identification complete when they, like the Dreamer, become conscious of the Cross, and allow the *geong haeleth*, the eternal Word/reason, to become Incarnate within themselves. (Wheelock, 8)

The Rood is the mother of the incarnation, in respects, due to it's being the one who carried Christ during the Passion, by speaking to the Dreamer, counseling him, and, much like the poems of Mary, acting as an agent to speak of Christ to a specific audience[4].

The poet deals with Christ as the Second Adam through the Rood, leading to the poet's understanding of of the mystery of redemption through the Rood. There is a paradoxical pun seen in the earlier quote of the Rood to the Dreamer, when the Rood says "that it is of the tree of glory on which Almighty God suffered for mankind's many sins and the deeds Adam did of old." Through the Cross, Christ, the second Adam is able to then now correct, re-enacts, in fact, recapitulates what was done by the first Adam (Greenfield, 198). This is a strong theological ideal seen in the poem. The way that this may be seen is that Adam first sinned, getting kicked out of Eden and subsequently brought death and sin to mankind. Christ, being the second Adam, died valiantly on the Rood, suffering and dying. Through his death he lead the way out of sin and back into Paradise, conquering death (Irvine, 436). In *Dream* we see Christ, in poetic fashion, recapitulates Adam, re-enacting the story of Adam to bring salvation, to undo what was done. In *Dream* Christ, while re-enacting the story of Adam (Knudsen, 130), does specific actions in order to un-do what had been done. We see that

while Adam after his fall immediately puts on clothes (Gen. 3:7), Christ is stripped before the crucifixion (Matt. 27:28, 31). In the poem this becomes a voluntary act by Christ, who paradoxically strips rather than arming himself as a preparation for battle*. (Irvine, 445)

Christ re-enacts the story of Adam. Paul states explicitly in his epistles that Adam was a pattern for the one to come (Rom. 5:14). Furthermore, Paul writes that "for as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22 NIV). And again, Paul writes, quoting Isaiah 22:13, that "'the first man Adam became a living being'", the last Adam, a life-giving spirit"(1 Cor. 15:45, NIV)[5]. In the poem, we see that the Rood again, acts as the narrator of Christ when "the Cross too undergoes a stripping as Christ's body is taken from it." (Irivine, 436) Because of the Crucifixion, the Rood is now dressed, completing what Adam had done and revealing Christ's victory, acting "as a garment by which people cam be saved. The image of clothing taken off or put on, is another reminder of the significance of the Adam-Christ link in the poem" (Irvine, 436).

Through the narration of the Rood, the humanity of Christ is discussed, the correlation with Mary is looked at and so is the re-enactment of Adam by Christ. Through the narration of the Rood, the dream speaks of Christ as a warrior king, bringing salvation to the entire world. The Rood tells the Dreamer

I saw the Lord of mankind hasten with stout heart, for he would climb upon me. I dared not bow or break against God's word when I saw the earth's surface tremble. I might have fallen all foes, but I stood fast. Then the young Hero stripped himself—that was God Almighty—strong and stouthearted. He climbed on the high gallows, bold in the sight of many, when he wold free mankind. I trembled when the Warrior embraced me, yet I dared not bow to earth, fall to the grounds surface; but I must stand fast.

It is true that this isn't an exact Biblical account of the Passion found in the Gospels (Greenfield, 196).

Unlike the Gospels, Christ isn't brought in front of Pontius Pilate; He doesn't carry the Cross through Jerusalem; Christ is alone, save for the Rood, with no one offering a sponge, no one crying, no one moaning. Christ is bravely, by himself on the Rood. He doesn't call out to saying " My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? (Mark 15:34 NIV)" Instead, he bravely climbs the Cross, he courageously faces death, doing what must be done. We see that Christ "vigorous and single minded, he strips himself for battle and a kingly victory" (Swanton, 98). Yet seeing Christ climb bravely on to "the Cross, an admirable symbol of His divinity and of the earlier Middle Age's conception of the redemption" (Greenfield, 196).

Christ is an eager sacrifice. He goes forward and meets his face. It is entirely an "act of dominant free will by a prince confident of victory" (Swanton, 98). Again, we see Christ resembling the Anglo-Saxon ideal hero and saviour, for Christ stands firm in what he is doing, knowing that this is what is supposed to be done, it is what he must do (Swanton, 99). Christ is obedient to God's command, "the emphasis is on Christ the King and Son of God who freed man by his obedience and

death" (Raw, *Iconography*, 167). To the Anglo-Saxon mind set, "Christ is adored *because he was obedient* to death and therefore glorified"(Raw, *Iconography*, 167 Italics mine). There is, in fact, a general Anglo-Saxon understanding of Christ as Lord of Victories (Garde, 91). He is the Lord of Victories, because he is obedient to God, because he heroically climbs the cross, and because he bravely does what he must do (Swanton, 98). This is seen also as a military victory, Christ climbs the Rood, triumphing over death and weakness[6], doing what he must (Raw, *Iconography*, 169). He must die for the sins of others, brining redemption to humanity.

The greatest mystery of all that the Poet is trying to understand through *The Dream of the Rood* is the paradox of redemption (Garde, 95). In the poem, the dreamer tries to comprehend what just happened to him after the Rood leaves him with a benediction to tell all what he had just seen. The Dreamer says "Now is there hope of life for me, that I am permitted to seek the tree of triumph." The Dreamer, after being told of the story of Christ, has now committed his life to Christ, knowing that he has salvation. The Dreamer now has a powerful friend, a retainer who is willing to protect him. The Dreamer exclaims,

May the Lord be my friend, who once   here on earth suffered on the gallows-tree for man's sins: he freed us and granted us life, a heavenly home. Hope was renewed, with joys and with bliss, to those who endured fire. The Son was victorious in that foray mighty and successful.

The poet, along with the dreamer, places Christ "at the center of redemption history and relates the cross, the tree of life, to the dreamer's need for forgiveness and protection." (Raw, *Trinity*, 101) The poet is mediating on Christ's death and the redemption that is offered(Raw, *Trinity*, 101). The Rood is the symbol of Christ's triumph over death, and His brining of redemption to all; it is the symbol of the Redeemer (Garde, 93) who is our retainer and our protector. "Throughout the work, the Rood is powerfully drawn as redemptive agent and sign (Garde, 93)" allowing the Dreamer, the Poet, and the audience to have a deeper understanding of Christ's Crucifixion on the Rood and his Resurrection.

What is intriguing is that to the Anglo-Saxon mind set, as is in our modern era, is the paradox of the Cross—and the redemption it brings. The Rood both caused death and brought life (Jennings 7); it was a form of destruction and a pathway to resurrection. Certainly, "the early Christians understood that their way of living in the world was characterized by the paradox of the cross in that the instrument of defeat had become the instrument of victory" (Jennings, 7). It is amazing, yet this "petty and common cross gave expression to the fundamental laws that governed all that happened in the world 'creating a huge paradox, a gigantic and incredible contrast between word and meaning'" (Jennings, 7).

Throughout *The Dream of the Rood* the poet is trying to grasp an understanding of who the saviour Christ is and the mysteries surrounding Him. The Rood is both adorned and clothed and venerated yet at the same moment, it is but a mundane piece of wood, used against its will. The Rood allows the poet to be able to establish the voice of Jesus to be able to understand the humanity of Jesus verses the Divinity of Christ, brining the both together, Jesus Christ is on the Cross, valiantly facing death, doing what God commands. In doing so, Christ brings redemption to all, conquering death, brining eternal life, through death, to all of humanity, allowing us to be able to come to God as a loyal retainer, a protector of man, setting aside a place in the "heavenly home" for us so that we can spend eternity with him.

Jesus is more than Harry Potter or Superman. That, in it self is, as said in the vernacular, " a no brainer." *Of course Christ is greater than any fictional character*, yet the attributes, the qualities and the strengths that we admire in those fictional characters are shown in the character of Christ in *The Dream of the Rood*.

We are able to see these paradoxical characteristics that we admire in those who we hold up as heroes. They are willing to be in exile, yet help bring us salvation, in a sense. They are willing to die for us, so that we may have life. With Harry, Ron, and Hermione, we get the story of three ordinary people turned "special" in that they are now endowed with power and responsibility. They know they must do what is considered the "right thing." These three youngsters from Hogwarts have a deep understanding of what is right and what is wrong, knowing that they must do what is needed, even at the expense of their own lives, as we saw with Ron and the magical chess Game.

The same is true with the death of Superman. He died in what we, and the Anglo-Saxons, would deem a valiant death. That is what makes him the hero we respect and wish for. With every ounce of his being, Superman defended Metropolis and the world from the evil menacing monster

called Doomsday. He fought him, knowing that he may not survive. He fought him because he was Superman, it was what he was meant to do, to protect the world. And, like Christ, to die doing so. Clark Kent knew what he was getting into when he put on the tights and cape. He knew the dangers. Just as Christ knew what he needed to do. Just like Christ in the poem, knowing that it must be done, the Rood must be embraced. Both were to die a hero.

   With Harry Potter, Superman, and the Dream of the Rood, there is an acknowledgment of the actions. Each one becoming greater. With Harry Potter and Ron's game of chess, they are given praise for their deeds, the protecting of the Sorcerer's Stone from evil, in front of all of Hogwarts Academy. They are told that they did a good and respectful job of doing what must be done.

   With Superman, the world mourns the loss of their hero. With the following issues of the death of Superman, we see people trying to do what Superman stood for: protecting the weak and helpless, giving hope to a world that was said to have no hope. Superman personified all that was good and the fictional people of Metropolis tried to be a small "Superman" in their neighborhood, feeding the homeless, volunteering at shelters, being there for their neighbors. They did their best to do what Superman tried to do on a larger scale.

   Yet there is a greater difference with Christ in *The Dream of the Rood*. Christ is more than Harry Potter and his friends. Christ is greater than Superman ever could try and be. Christ died so that we may have atonement for sins. Christ died so that we could be able to come to God, without the stain of sin on our souls. For, as the Rood tells the Dreamer about the redemption of Christ and the atonement of sins: "There need none be afraid who bears on his breast the best of tokens, but through the Cross shall the kingdom be sought by each should on this earthly journey that thinks to dwell with the Lord." It is through the paradox of the Cross that we have salvation.

   The poet of *The Dream of the Rood* understood this.

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End Notes

1. Traditionally when citing poetry, the line number is given in accordance to the quote. Yet due to the age of the poem and the Editor of *The Norton Anthology of the Middle Ages* choice to give the translated poem in a prose setting does not allow to give an accurate citation to the correct line number. Hence all quotes pertaining to the poem *The Dream of the Rood* can be found in *The Norton Anthology of the Middle Ages* pages 26 to 28. It is this writers wish to use the correct citations, but alas, it is not possible.

2. This story of the Cross is actually lost in the original manuscript. Yet the story was so well known to the Poet's audience of the time that a simple reference to the event was most likely all that was needed. This information can be found on pg. 27, Footnote 9.

3. The overwhelming presence of paradox in *The Dream of the Rood* should be traced not to a single liturgical act nor to a specific but to a complex of worship patterns which used the cross to remind the faithful of the seemingly fundament absurdity of divinity in humanity and of its continuing manifestation in the Christian life. Jennings, Margaret. *English Language Notes*, "Rood and Ruthwell: The Power of Paradox" pg. 8

4. There is a tradition of Anglo-Saxon and Middle English Poems to and of Mary wherein Mary acts as intercessor to Christ for those who pray to her. As well, there is the tradition of Mary acting as one speaking to a set audience concerning her son's crucifixion. For more information and readings on Middle English Marian Poems, please see Karen Saupe's collection found in her book *Middle English Marian Lyrics*, pages 118 to 128 and 137 to 144

5. Christ as recapitulating what Adam had done, bringing salvation to humanity has been an age-old Christian belief started with Irenaeus in his book Against the Heresies. As well, for more information, on Recapitulation may I suggest reading Irenaeus as well as Hans Urs Von Balthasar's analysis of him in his book *The Glory of the Lord*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, 1984.

6. Some "manuscript pictures show Christ as both suffering and victorious. This approach was developed by the homeliest of the late Anglo-Saxon period who stressed that Christ triumphed through weakness." Raw, *Iconography*, pg. 169

I. INTRODUCTION

Homosexuality and the CRC
By Ken Vander Horst

The issue of homosexuality has sparked debate, stirred emotions, and incited the Christian Reformed Church to offer an official ethical position. But the occasion for the issue was more than a need for an ethic — the pastoral challenge of ministering to those with homosexual orientations or tendencies[1] has necessitated study and denominational reflection. How does the CRC hold forth an ethic while remaining faithful in its task to bring the gospel to all those who hurt, including those struggling with homosexuality?

I approach this issue with grave pastoral concerns which arise from my work as youth director at Seymour CRC in Grand Rapids. Youth work involves dealing with sexual identity, and also the reality of teen suicide. Churches sometimes avoid such topics, and yet studies and pastoral experience tell us that teens, Christian ones included, wrestle with questions surrounding their sexual orientation, and struggle with suicidal thoughts. These two issues may be related. Ron Nydam, professor of Pastoral Care at Calvin Seminary, suggests that as many as one-third of teen suicides result from young people who cannot see past personal struggles about their sexual orientation.[2] Why would teens be tempted to believe that the best means of resolving issues about their sexual orientation is to end their lives?

We live in a society that is becoming more and more polarized on the issue of sexual orientation. Questions abound as to how people with homosexual orientation are to live within a society that is comprised with a majority of people having heterosexual orientation. Polarization is due partly to questions about legal rights, adoption rights, and benefits to same-sex domestic partners, but also to prejudice towards those of homosexual orientation. Such prejudice, in its ugliest form, manifests itself as homophobia, and short-circuits good thinking, discussion, and reflection on homosexuality. In most North American social contexts, jokes about sexual orientation are rampant, and are often shared in a nasty spirit. Sadly, members of the CRC have reflected their social contexts, and therefore have failed to provide a safe environment for those who struggle.

A note of apology: my comments are specific to a North Amer

In spite of such limits, I offer this report as an outline of the CRC's position on homosexuality thus far, and a prescription for how the CRC ought to respond to the ongoing debate about and the need to minister to those struggling with the issue of homosexuality.

II. CRC HISTORY OF THE ISSUE

The CRC Synod of 1970 appointed a study committee in response to Overture 23 from the Council of CRCs in Canada. The overture requested that, since we have homosexual members and different attitudes about such members, "we ought to develop a genuinely Christian and rehabilitative attitude toward these members"(Acts of Synod 1970, 540). The council's concern arose also because of legislative changes considered by the government of Canada, which sought to decriminalize homosexual behavior. Citing Belgic Confession Article 36, the council concurred with the legislation, arguing that it was not the task of government to legislate private morality (AC S 1970, 610).

A. Report 42 of The Committee to Study the Homosexual Problem — Synod 1973

The following is a summary of Report 42. Page references to the *Acts of Synod 1973* are simply given in brackets, rather than in footnotes.

The Committee's mandate was to "provide guidelines for our understanding of the problem of homosexuality and the formulation of a Christian position … [and] pastoral advice to serve the churches." (609) Given the sexual revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s,[3] questions about homosexuality arose within the context of a plethora of competing perspectives on sexual practices. Thus, in its introduction, the report declares: "Sexuality is a mysterious and basic dimension of human existence and of great importance to us as persons." (611) But while sex is a vital part of human existence, it is not to be exalted. (626)

In spite of sexuality's mysterious character, the report distinguished between homosexual orientation and homosexual practice. The former, referred to as <u>homosexuality</u>, was defined by the report as "the condition in which an adult's sexuality is directed to his own sex." It is a condition of personal identity. The latter, referred to as <u>homosexualism</u>, was defined as explicit

homosexual behavior. (612)

While the report makes this distinction, it also concedes that the distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality is not always clear cut. Conservative estimates in the report claim that 7% of males have more homosexual experiences than heterosexual for at least part of their lives, while 2% are exclusively homosexual throughout their life span. Numbers of female homosexuals are slightly lower.

The report did not designate any one cause for homosexuality. The condition is precipitated in early life experiences, and may also be due to a chemical or hormonal imbalance. (613) Therefore, a person is not personally responsible for her/his condition. (613, 616) Instead, the measure of moral responsibility a homosexual bears is what willful contribution s/he has made to the condition. (623) The report then judged that "it is one of the great failings of the church and Christians generally that they have been lacking in sympathy and concern for the plight of the homosexuals among them." (614)

A summary of biblical teaching on homosexuality showed that Scripture makes no distinction between homosexuality and homosexualism. Genesis clearly outlines how to be human is to be sexual, and that heterosexuality is the pattern of human existence. Therefore, homosexuality is a disordered condition that is a consequence of the invasion of sin into creation. (615-616) Leviticus 18 is the only text in the Old Testament that clearly refers to homosexuality, and there it is condemned as abominable. The Apostle Paul, in his letters to the New Testament churches, only refers to those who practice homosexual acts. (619) The report's conclusion on the biblical testimony is that homosexual acts are sinful. (621)

The conclusion that homosexualism is sinful does not bar the homosexual from the Kingdom of God. The church must provide room for all to be part of the body and experience love and acceptance and healing. Again the report laments:

"Unfortunately the homosexual has not experienced this kind of love and acceptance of his person in either the church or society. It has been said that the homosexual has been far more sinned against than he has sinned. In the light of our understanding of homosexuality today, Christians bear a great burden of guilt relative to such persons." (626)

With respect to ethical guidelines, the report declares that the homosexual has responsibility to seek healing. (627) However, "to expect the means of grace and prayer to redirect a firmly fixed homosexual is to expect a miracle." (627) Nevertheless, the church cannot make exceptions to a homosexual who burns with passion, since it does not make such exceptions to those heterosexuals who burn with passion. Thus the church ought not allow homosexual marriages. (629)

The report concluded with the following points of pastoral advice:
1. Homosexuality is a condition of disordered sexuality.
2. The homosexual may not be denied community acceptance.
3. Homosexualism — as explicit homosexual practice — must be condemned.
4. The church must exercise patient understanding and compassion as it does for all sinners.
5. The homosexual needs the loving support and encouragement of the church.
6. Homosexuals should be encouraged to seek help in reorientation. However, those who cannot be healed must receive the ministry of the church.
7. Homosexuals should be encouraged to use their gifts in the cause of the Kingdom, and should not be supposed to lack the gift of self-control.
8. Pastors need to be informed so as to minister to the homosexual, parents, and others intimately involved, and to educate the congregation.
9. The church needs to promote good marriages and healthy family life and sexual relations.
10. Institutions related to the church need to assist ministers to become better informed.
11. The church should speak prophetically to a culture that distorts and glorifies sexuality. (631-633)

B. Intervening Period

In the years following the 1973 Report and its ratification, the CRC's practice may be characterized as being strong on its ethical stance, but not on acceptance. Few of those struggling

with homosexuality and homosexual practice felt safe to share their struggle and enlist the help of their churches. In short, CRCs generally failed to follow the pastoral guidelines of 1973, except for guideline number three, which called for condemning homosexual behavior. The series of overtures that came to Synod in the intervening period were almost all about the CRC's ethical stance:

1974 — Classis Lake Erie overtured Synod on the grounds that the 1973 report was unclear and ambiguous with respect to the definitions of homosexuality and homosexualism. Interestingly, one of the pastors of this classis, Rev. George Vander Weit, personally appealed saying that changes were unnecessary. Synod did not accede to Lake Erie's overture, calling the 1973 report helpful and clear (Acts of Synod 1974, 78-79).

1977 — Kettering CRC of Dayton, Ohio overtured Synod, asking that it add to the 1973 report and Synodical declarations the declaration "lusting after a person of the same sex is a sin just as lusting after a person of the opposite sex is a sin". Synod 1977 declined, judging that the 1973 report was sufficiently helpful and clear (AC S 1977, 16 and 680).

1993 — Classis Hudson overtured Synod, asking it to declare that "a man cannot be a minister in good standing in the CRC if he practices or espouses the practice of homosexuality or fails to accept the biblical teaching that the practice is sinful." The catalyst for this overture was Rev. Jim Lucas' speech at Calvin College in which he declared publicly his homosexual orientation. Synod did not accede to this overture because the position articulated in the 1973 report "speaks clearly" to the issue raised (Agenda for Syond 1993, 279 and AC S).

1993 — Sunshine Community CRC in El Paso overtured Synod to terminate relationships with the GKN Church[4] because it refused to repent of its pro-homosexual position. Synod did not accede, again declaring that the CRC position as articulated in 1973 and subsequent decisions of Synod were clear.[5]

1994 — Classis Heartland sent a detailed overture which called Synod to declare that homosexuality includes both orientation and behavior, thus disagreeing with the 1973 report's distinction between homosexuality and homosexualism. The overture also requested that lusting be included as part of homosexuality, and consider such lusting as sin for which a homosexual is responsible (AG S 1994, 275). Synod did not accede to the overture, reaffirming its commitment to the position adopted in 1973 (AC S 1994, 448).

1995 — The Orthodox Presbyterian Church called the CRC to repent of its position on homosexuality. The OPC, at its General Assembly of 1995, affirmed its position on homosexuality, calling it a part of "the corruption of [man's] nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil" (Westminster Larger Catechism 25) and that "sodomy, and all unnatural lusts … [and] all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes and affections" (Westminster Larger Catechism 139) are sin. Synod simply took note of and accepted the apology for misquoting the 1973 Report that the OPC had made at its General Assembly (AC S 1995, 614-15, 701).

1995 — Champlain Valley CRC overtured Synod, asking that the following declarations be adopted: "That homosexual orientation, a person's inner sexual preference for persons of the same sex is sin for which the homosexual bears the same responsibility before his or her Creator as does any other sinner for any other sin" and that the church's responsibility is to "preach, teach, model, and provide resources of the gospel of God's grace involving the Holy Spirit's work of turning away from that shameful sexual preference."   Champlain Valley CRC expressed that the church should only accept members who cling to God's grace, and ordered that any office bearer found to be homosexual be suspended from office and put under special discipline AC S 1995, 529).

Synod 1995 did not accede to Overture 79, saying there were no new grounds, and that previous decisions had already addressed its concerns.

1996 — Borculo CRC overtured Synod to repent of being "lukewarm" in love toward God and homosexual members for having an improper view of sexual sins. The overture also called for an examination of classical homosexual support groups. Classis Wisconsin overtured Synod to declare that members who deny that the Bible condemns homosexual activity are "delinquent in doctrine"(AG S 1996, 288-91). Classis Chatham also sent an overture — without a call to repentance — seeking a review of the 1973 guidelines and asking for direction for providing pastoral care to homosexuals (AG S 1996, 309-10). Synod did not accede to Borculo's or Wisconsin's overtures, sensing inconsistencies with 1973's report and that the proposed courses of action were inappropriate. It did accede to Classis Chatham's overture, and appointed a study committee to "give direction about and for pastoral care of homosexual members in a manner consistent with the decisions of Synod 1973 (AC S 1996, 572-75).

1997 — The Board of Trustees of the CRC reported to Synod that the American Family Association misrepresented the CRC position on homosexuality, but that the AFA was doing little to amend its error (AG S 1997, 31). Synod 1997 expressed commitment to the 1973 report, and, at the request of an overture from Classsis Columbia (AG S 1997, 554-57), accepted apologies from the editor of *The Banner* and the director of CRC Publications for running an advertisement for the Gay And Lesbian Association (GALA) (AC S 1997, 622-23).

C. 1999 — Report of *Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members*

The following summary of the report of the *Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members* offers page references of the *Agenda of Synod 1999* in brackets, rather than in footnotes.

This study committee was mandated by Synod 1996 to give direction for pastoral care for homosexual members, to see how recommendations of Report 42 were being carried out, and review various ministries that seek to provide care for homosexuals.

The committee met with homosexual members of the CRC from diverse locations to listen to their particular experiences, and to glean from them the degree to which they have experienced care (or the lack thereof) in the CRC. Pastors were surveyed to determine the degree to which these primary pastoral care givers were familiar with the ethical position and pastoral guidelines of the 1973 report, as well as pastors' assessments of their congregations' knowledge of it. 75% of the pastors considered themselves quite familiar with the report, but deemed that congregations were not, except perhaps with the distinction between homosexuality and homosexualism. Though the survey was admittedly "non-scientific", the committee judged it helpful (AC S 1997, 601), though it was scathing of the CRC's care of homosexuals:

> "Survey results paint a picture of lack of awareness, denial, and systematic neglect of homosexual members by pastors, councils, and congregations, with only a few exceptions, and suggest that, though a majority of ministers feel at least fairly knowledgeable about the 1973 report, they do not believe that their parishioners have much familiarity with the report. It appears that most people in the CRC have only a cursory knowledge of the details of the report and that even those who believe they are quite familiar with the position of the CRC have not been familiar with the pastoral recommendations for ministry and the responsibility of the churches to homosexual members." (242)

Ministry to homosexuals was described as "largely nonexistent, and at best, ineffective for the most part." (242) Therefore, the committee felt that it was fitting for the CRC to seek forgiveness for its neglect in caring for its homosexual members. To ensure the report would become the product of denomination-wide thinking and reflecting, so that churches would not simply keep a new report "on the shelf", the committee made their report available to the churches, and sought responses in order to alter the report accordingly for presentation to Synod 2001, and ratification at Synod 2002.

From the interviews with homosexual members of the CRC, the committee gleaned the following as common spiritual issues for homosexuals:

1. Shame about a very deep part of their personality.

2. Identity in community.
3. Self identity: "We need to challenge the idea that one's sexuality is the predominant definer of who a person is." (251)
4. Temptation and sin.
5. The gift of celibacy (self-control).
6. Sexual brokenness and healing. (248-256)

Rather than evaluating specific ministries in the CRC, which may have aroused controversy and further hurt, the report offers guidelines to churches that can be used to evaluate ministries. The common features of effective ministries should be: acceptance and affirmation, hope for healing, fostering intimate non-sexual relationships, accountability and supportive small groups, understanding distinction between godly sorrow and shame, belief in the power of the resurrection to break the power of sin and sinful behavior, help with anger, and God-centred, joyful and hopeful worship. Along with suggested features is caution against ministries which:
1. Promise complete or immediate change.
2. Offer little or no hope for change in desires and orientation.
3. Mandate specific roles or traits that have no biblical foundation.
4. Do not respect individual abilities to hear God's voice and make decisions.
5. Advocate inflexible legalistic or prescribed models of ministry.
6. Too quickly identify same-sex attraction as irreversible homosexuality. (256-257)

To conclude its findings, the report calls churches to have compassion for those who struggle, create a hospitable climate, have elements of worship that educate about, confess, and pray for those struggling with sexual sin, encourage small groups which are mixed in composition. It also stresses ministry to families — calling them to love even when they do not always fully understand, and providing them with a small circle of support that is willing to provide continuing ministry even when orientation or behavior of a loved one does not change. Pastors play a key role in modeling empathy for congregations. (258-259)

The report offered the following questions for the denomination to reflect on, and then respond with suggestions prior to the writing of the final draft.
1. How should we respond to a homosexual in a same-sex partnership wishing to participate in the Lord's Supper?[6]
2. What should we do about a non-practicing homosexual who wishes to serve as a Cadet counselor?
3. What do we say to parents who ostracize or disown their homosexual child? What do we say to a homosexual member who has cut off all relationships with her/his family?
4. What about same-sex spousal rights?
5. How should we respond to those, including leaders in the church, who disagree with the 1973 report?
6. How do we foster effective ministry to and with homosexuals?

Since the report was intended to provide pastoral help to congregations, it did not delve into contemporary biological, psychological or exegetical study of the homosexual issue. However, three appendices summarized recent findings in these areas. Appendix B admits that "There is no generally accepted hypothesis regarding the development of homosexuality," (273) but contends with the numbers of the 1973 report, acknowledging that homosexuality almost certainly characterizes less than 3 percent of the population, but hypothesizing that the correct percentage may be even lower than 2 percent. (274) Perhaps the most contentious position of the report is its statement about change: "it is evident from the data that sexual orientation is not readily or easily changed." (277)

Having submitted its initial report, the *Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members* awaits denomination-wide response.

III. BEYOND 1999/AWAITING 2002 — *"Already but not yet"*

As part of the response to the report of the *Committee to Study Pastoral Care to*

Homosexuals, the entire Synod of 1999 prayed a prayer of confession, led by Rev. Peter Slofstra, chairperson of the advisory committee on pastoral ministries. Some in the denomination were pleased that Synodical delegates expressed remorse for the way that the CRC failed in ministering to those with homosexual struggles. Others were confused, expressing that those struggling with homosexuality are the ones who are to repent, rather than the church as a whole.

In addition to encouraging churches to repent, Synod 1999 approved the study committee's request that churches consider the report, wrestle with the questions raised, and respond in writing to the committee, which intends to submit another report to Synod 2001. This second report will be available to the church which would again be solicited for responses that will enable the committee to present a final report at Synod 2002.

Jerry Zandstra,[7] one of the authors of the 1999 report, laments that only a handful of responses reached the committee prior to the April 2000 deadline. He attributes this to apathy as well as fear of the issue. His hope was that the official publication of the CRC, *The Banner*, would have presented a series of articles on the topic, as Synod 1999 had asked, before the deadline. Editor John Suk disclosed[8] that the publication of these articles was delayed, since one of the articles had to be pulled. Its author, a pastor, is currently embroiled in local church controversy after having disclosed his sexual orientation to his church council.

It seems that once again the CRC is failing in its ministry to homosexuals. Rather than wrestling with the recommendations of this report and engaging with honesty and integrity with this difficult pastoral dilemma, the lack of responses indicates a missed opportunity — an opportunity that would tell believers, church communities and a broader society, all of whom are in need of thoughtful theological and ethical thinking on homosexuality, that the CRC cares deeply for people who are struggle with homosexuality.

To me such a missed opportunity confirms the CRC's need to repent of its apathy towards and fear of homosexuality.

IV. OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS & THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The 1999 study committee provided the CRC with a wealth of material for its churches to reflect upon and consider with respect to their pastoral ministries. The questions included for further discussion are sufficient to stimulate good discussion on the issue of homosexuality. Nevertheless, there are questions that, in my estimation, remain outstanding and need to be considered and reflected upon prior to offering various positions that churches can hold in response to the 1999 report.

Is the distinction between homosexualism and homosexuality viable?

Not only is there no distinction between behavior and orientation in Scripture, but broader North American culture does not seem to make such a distinction either. The CRC position distinguishing between orientation and behavior may not be understood by the society to which the church proclaims the good news of Christ. Should the lack of understanding of our society cause the church to drop its distinctions? I think not. In spite of Scripture's silence, the distinction needs to be retained in order for the CRC to minister pastorally to those struggling with homosexuality. The church has needed to distinguish between the state of temptation — orientation — and the state of succumbing to temptation — behavior — because of the contention that it is very difficult for homosexuals to avoid or put off their orientation. Such a contention is, of course, controversial. May we not allow the controversial nature of the issue to subvert good thinking and reflection!

Such a distinction is viable. Only by such a distinction can we deal justly with those with homosexual struggles, and offer them the hope that they can be welcomed into the church of God, in spite of temptation. Jesus was tempted in every way (Hebrews 4:15), and yet was without sin.

Distinguishing between temptation and behavior often is referred to as a "love the sinner, hate the sin" approach. Ron Nydam is uncomfortable with this maxim. He wonders[9] whether it is actually possible for people to separate the person from her/his sin. How can we tell people whose identity is, like most heterosexuals, intricately tied to their sexual orientation — that their orientation is a distortion of God's norm?

This question leads to considering the importance of sexual orientation in the formation of one's sexual identity. By asking homosexuals not to give expression to their fallen sexual orientation,

we make it exceedingly difficult for those brothers and sisters to develop a healthy sense of self. Henri Nouwen, in his article "The Self-Availability of the Homosexual", addresses these concerns. He writes:

> The strong social pressure that exists in respect to homosexual behavior makes it very difficult for the homosexual to come to terms with his own sexuality and to relate to his own feelings in a realistic way …
>
> [H]ow can you relate to a reality that is not available to you? …
>
> Much suffering is the result of detachment from feelings that were never really available.[10]

From an anthropological perspective, everything that a person does involves all the dimensions of one's being — sexual, as well as spatial, emotional, physical, mental, etc. The CRC needs to understand that by asking homosexuals to refrain from giving expression to their sexual orientation, we are asking that they "shut off" an integral part of themselves. Ultimately, we are asking that they remain less than whole until their orientation changes, or until they die, or Christ returns!

Is the homosexual issue a creedal issue? Or is it on the level of wisdom?

These questions are asking whether or not the creeds of the CRC refer to homosexuality. One such reference may be *Heidelberg Catechism* Question and Answer 108:

LORD'S DAY 41

108 Q. *What is God's will for us*
in the seventh commandment?

A. God condemns all unchastity.
We should therefore thoroughly detest it
and, married or single,
live decent and chaste lives.

Lyle Bierma, historical and systematic theologian at Calvin Seminary, understands that the meaning of the word "unchastity" was originally intended to refer to sexual relations outside of wedlock.[11] The *Catechism* quite simply does not refer <u>explicitly</u> to homosexual relations. By <u>implication</u>, however, the *Catechism* forbids homosexual relations, since they are, by virtue of being same-sex relations, outside of wedlock. Moreover, I would argue that this implied reference pertains only to behavior — not orientation. Others may feel that homosexual orientation constitutes unchastity. However, the position of the 1973 report suggests otherwise, when it considers that a homosexual is not personally responsible for her/his condition. (613, 616)

Another possible basis for this issue to be creedal is *Heidelberg Catechism* Question and Answer 43.

LORD'S DAY 43
112 Q. *What is God's will for you*
in the ninth commandment?

A. God's will is that I
never give false testimony against anyone,
twist no one's words,
not gossip or slander,
nor join in condemning anyone
without a hearing or without a just cause …

Some would contend that the homosexual issue is creedal on the basis of Q & A 108. If that were granted, the CRC would also have to allow Q & A 43 to be given equal weight in terms of the

Creedal testimony on this issue. The 1999 study committee lamented that many homosexuals in the CRC do not feel free to share their struggles out of fear of hasty discipline and ostracization. Again, repentance by the whole denomination, not simply by those struggling with homosexuality, is in order.

Even though I consider the issue not specifically creedal, this does not mean that the issue is *adiaphora.* An issue can still be important if it is not creedal. Therefore the CRC, besides being called to repentance, is called also to speak clearly and pastorally on this difficult issue.

One final question: *Is it realistic to ask homosexuals to change their orientation?*

Some contend that asking someone to change his/her homosexual orientation is as difficult as asking someone to change her/his heterosexual orientation. This may indeed be true. The CRC needs to exercise loving patience and sympathy for those dealing with changing, or not giving expression to, their homosexual orientation. Given the Scripture's promise that God's grace is sufficient, the hope for change needs always to be set before those struggling with any sinful condition. However, change in orientation ought never to be a condition for membership and loving congregational support.

In the C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*, senior devil Screwtape explains to his nephew apprentice how to derail Christians' attempts at effective ministry: "The game is to have them all running about with fire extinguishers whenever there is a flood." May our fear of the fiery nature of the issue of homosexuality never cause us to be ill-equipped amidst the flood of pain that members struggling with homosexuality face.

V. THREE POSITIONS

Finally, having considered the reports of 1973 and 1999, the overtures and Synodical responses of the intervening period, and the present state of formal denominational discussion, and with some further questions and reflection on the issue, I now outline three positions that the CRC could take with respect to the homosexual issue.

With this issue there are many "positions" one could take with respect to the specifics of the issue, such as calling for a change in orientation, whether same sex unions ought to be recognized by the church, and whether homosexuals can serve in church office, etc. Two people within one of the three positions I outline could disagree on some of the specifics within the broader issue. To examine various positions on each of the specifics related to the broader issue would require writing a paper well beyond the limits assigned to this paper, as well as exceed the abilities of the author.

The heart of the positions that this paper outlines raises the issue of how homosexuals are to be accepted as members of the church. Such acceptance requires explanation.[12] By acceptance I mean that a person is considered a full member of the church. Full membership means that a member has the opportunity to serve in every ministry of the church — leadership roles, teaching roles, supportive roles — and that a member receives the full care and fellowship of the church community.

There are two positions — conditional acceptance and unconditional acceptance. But within conditional acceptance are two positions. So there are three positions that the CRC could take as its official position with respect to homosexuals as members. All three positions assume that acceptance is conditional upon one's general repentance of sin and desire to "put to death"[13] one's sinful nature. The words "conditional" and "unconditional" refer to the matter of homosexuality and homosexualism.

A. Conditional Acceptance — *Repentance of Orientation*

A homosexual may be accepted as a member on the condition that s/he repent of both her/his orientation in addition to her/his behavior. Goshen CRC takes such a position in its overture to Synod 2000. "We reject the notion that a person can be received as a brother or sister in Christ without repentance." This church's overture considers both orientation and behavior are sinful, therefore homosexuals may become members of Christ's church only when they declare that they are formerly homosexual.[14]

I do not advocate this position. I find it troubling, and a regression from the position of the 1973 report, which did not posit that orientation was a sin for which the homosexual ought to

repent. While the report did encourage homosexuals to seek help in changing their orientation, it did not render such a change as necessary for full membership to be gained or maintained, as Overture 24 suggests. Given how difficult it is for homosexuals to change their orientation, and how difficult it is to measure whether or not such a change has taken place (we can only measure behavior), this position drives homosexuals out of the church. The 1999 Report describes the church as the best resource for a homosexual to find grace, hope and healing. The CRC ought not adopt or tolerate such a position.

B. Conditional Acceptance — *Repentance of Homosexualism (if applicable)*

The second position that calls for conditional acceptance is different than the first for it calls homosexuals to repent only of homosexualism, and therefore does not necessarily call for repentance. Just as the church does not impose more stringent demands for repentance of specific sexual sins for its heterosexuals as a condition for full membership, so the church ought not do so for its homosexual members and seekers. All members are required to repent of sin in general as a condition of their full membership. In the first vow, the forms for public profession of faith include such general repentance. But none of the vows specify particular sins. Only in cases of unrepentant sin should the church bar a person from membership or terminate membership. Therefore only in cases of unrepentant homosexualism, as defined by the 1973 report, should membership be withheld or terminated.

It is important that the church speak prophetically this conditional acceptance position. Besides the call to general repentance for those who struggle with homosexual sin, the church needs to welcome into full membership such repentant sinners so as to uphold them in their burdens. We need to accept sisters or brothers who live with the burden of a homosexual orientation so that we can do all that we can as a church to support their efforts to live a blameless life.

C. Unconditional Acceptance

The position of unconditional acceptance posits that homosexuals need to be welcomed as full members without a condition of repentance for either orientation or behavior. Such a position denies that homosexual orientation is a result of the fall and consequently does not consider homosexual relations as sinful.

David Myers, professor of psychology at Hope College, proposes the unconditional acceptance position. He cites studies which claim that a greater tolerance for homosexuality does not increase the number of those with such an orientation, that there exists a prenatally influenced difference between gay and straight men, and that efforts to change orientation often fail (Myers, 5). Myers asks: "Can we accept gays who, not given what Catholics call the gift of celibacy, elect the functional equivalent of marriage (which society denies them) over promiscuity" (Myers, 7)?

Lewis Smedes, ethicist and retired professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, and an ordained pastor in the CRC, also proposes this position. Since he regards lifelong celibacy for homosexuals as "unreasonable", he advocates monogamous homosexual "marriages", on the grounds that the CRC allows second marriages for divorced persons, and suggests that the allowance of the latter is grounds for accepting the former (Smedes, 10). He argues against the assumption that homosexual behavior is "contrary to nature" on the basis that such thinking was based on heterosexual relations being according to nature merely because of its procreative potentialities. Smedes writes: "I believe He [God] gives his supportive grace to the way homosexuals improvise marriage-like covenants for themselves even though they cannot by sexual means create families" (Smedes, 10). Monogamous relationships are reasonable ways for people with homosexual orientation to find appropriate sexual expression, and the Bible does not condemn homosexual behavior within the bonds of fidelity and marriage.

Interestingly, the highest court of the Presbyterian Church (USA) recently ruled that local congregations have the right to conduct ceremonies celebrating holy union of homosexual relationships only if such unions are not considered marriages. The court also instructed regional church bodies to make clear distinctions between marriages and "blessing services." The denomination is also wrestling with a candidate for ministry who has disclosed not only his homosexual orientation, but also his intent not to remain celibate. The court ruled that the denomination's standards for fidelity and chastity ought not be applied during candidacy, but instead

at the time of ordination.

I believe that the CRC ought not adopt such a position. It denies the fallen nature of the homosexual orientation. Moreover, allowing for homosexual unions or marriages, while suggested by Smedes as a "lesser evil" than "forcing" them to experience sexual relations outside of a permanent, blessed union, would be granting that persons may opt for a creationally anti-normative means for sexual fulfillment and intimacy. In short, this unconditional acceptance position contradicts the position of the 1973 and 1999 Report. The 1973 Report was forged during the turbulent years of the sexual revolution, and the denomination stood by it for many years, in spite of overtures calling for its modification. The 1999 Report agreed with the 1973 Report. To adopt a position of unconditional acceptance would be unwise, given the wealth of wisdom available to us.

VI. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

When I began this study, I was glad that the minimum requirement for this paper was ten pages. My estimate was that this report would be no more than twelve.

To my surprise, this paper is over twenty two pages. This study has been an enriching intellectual exercise, and has also caused me to look deeply at my own sensitivities or lack of them. I have outlined what I believe is the best position for the CRC to hold on homosexuality, for the most part on the basis of the history of the denomination's thinking on this issue.

To conclude, however, I would like those who have personally experienced the burden of having a homosexual orientation to voice their plea to those who seek to deal pastorally with such persons while upholding the ethical position I advocate.

Rev. Jim Lucas:

"Who would choose to subject himself or herself to the shame and ridicule that we who are gay must endure in this society"

"The Christian Community must begin by listening, trying to understand, and struggling with us who are gay. Only then will we as a community know the appropriate questions to ask. Only then will gay people be able to hear the teaching of the Christian community on issues related to our sexuality. And only then will the Christian community be able to express genuine love to those who are gay."[15]

Anonymous:

"Whether you believe homosexuality is right or wrong, we are still people who search for God as you do. We want to share in a community of faith as you do."[16]

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End Notes

1 In this paper, persons with homosexual orientation or tendency will be referred to as "homosexuals". I am reluctant to do so, recognizing that the term reduces personal identity to one's sexual identity. Yet I do so simply out of expediency. The phrase "persons with homosexual orientation or tendency" becomes cumbersome for a paper on this topic. My hope and prayer for the Christian Church is that only the phrase is rendered cumbersome, and that expediency does not also render ministry to "persons with homosexual orientation or tendency" as cumbersome.
2 Class lecture on homosexuality, PR TH 701 (Pastoral Care) course at Calvin Seminary.
3 I wonder when this revolution ended. Or is it ongoing?
4 The Reformed denomination in the Netherlands in which many in the CRC originally had their membership prior to immigrating to North America. This church is, in some ways, considered the "mother" church of the CRC.
5 *Acts of Synod 1993*, 412-413, 420-421. The CRC's relationship with the GKN was first called into question in 1983. The Interchurch Relations Committee of the CRC began discussing restricting the relationship on the basis of the GKN's position on homosexuality.
6 Synod 1999 changed this question to read, "How should we pastorally apply the recommendations of the 1973 report?" (*Acts of Synod 1999*, 602.)
7 While serving on staff at Seymour Church where Zandstra serves as pastor, I have had opportunity to converse with him regularly on this topic over the past two years.
8 Telephone interview, June 5, 2000.
9 Lecture on homosexuality in Pastoral Care 701 class.
10 Henri J. Nouwen, "*The Self Availability of the Homosexual*" in chapter 10 of Is Gay Good? Edited by W. Dwight Oberholtzer (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 205-207.
11 Personal interview, June 12, 2000.
12 I am indebted to Prof. Vadim Shilenko, visiting scholar at Calvin Seminary, for demonstrating to me the need to define carefully the word "acceptance."
13 The language of one of the forms for Public Profession of Faith.
14 Goshen CRC Overture 24, *Agenda For Synod 2000*, 506.
15 Jim Lucas, "For Heterosexuals: An Invitation To Understand" *Calvin College Chimes*, March 7, 1997.
16 Anonymous, "Pursuing Questions". *Calvin College Chimes*, March 7, 1997.

Hypocrisy is one of the most refined fruits of human sinful nature. It refers to the category of human will and practice that tries to achieve moral excellence by and for one's self. All humans are genetically predisposed hypocrites; but only Christians, through the daily exercise of dying and rising with Christ, are able to discern and prevail against the delusion of hypocrisy.

What is hypocrisy?

Literally, hypocrisy means to put on a mask. It comes from the word for the Greek actors, "hypocrites." Jesus used this word to vividly describe the kind of righteousness of the Pharisees, i.e. putting on a face to make a good impression.[1]

Analyzing Hypocrisy
By Sarah Zhang

Hypocrisy is a spiritual disease that paralyzes people's hearts. By setting confidence in their outward appearance, the hearts of hypocrites become stony, so that they become unable to be genuinely grateful to God, graceful to others and truthful to themselves. Furthermore, hypocrisy counterfeits itself as righteousness and gives the impression that a person owns his or her share of righteousness, therefore, people who are caught by hypocrisy feel entitled to judge others.

Hypocrisy consists of three elements: a set of outward moral standards, a will to meet them, and a trust in one's own strength to do so. The outward moral standards are the primary light of life for the hypocrites; it brings order and meaning to their lives. This emphasis on outward behavior is not by itself wrong. Indeed people could learn to cultivate proper dispositions and the "spirit of the law" by observing physical disciplines if only they allow what touches their bodies and minds to touch their hearts as well, knowing that any change of person must relate to one's heart. However, what makes such endeavor fruitless is its combination with the disintegrated human soul. As James points out, people are caught up in a state of "two souls" or "double-mindedness," so they can both believe and doubt, both wish others well and let them go in hunger, and be both active at external and inactive at internal.

Second, behind the will to meet these standards is a will to be righteous, or rather, a disguised desire to earn self-righteousness. akes delight in a righteous person, but one cannot earn God's favor by building up self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is the counterfeit of righteousness, and in fact it is the opposite of true righteousness. The will to be self-righteous belongs to the work of Satan, who is continuously whispering to the hypocrites: "after all, you are good…" This desire to be self-righteous does not take seriously the total depravity of human nature, and therefore makes light of the salvation of Christ.

Third, all problems rest on one point: the trust in one's self. A hypocrite lives in an egocentric world—no matter how subtle it is. She chooses the image she wants to have in society and she strives to realize it. All seems "politically right," but in practice there is no place for God—or He is merely given an infinitely distant reference. This egocentric feature is not new but common to all sins; hypocrisy just mas-querades it under the cloak of righteousness. Under the camouflage of righteousness, a hypocrite can do more harms than a blatantly egocentric person, because she often uses "orthodoxy" reasons to divide the holy assembly from within.

Viewing these three elements in our daily life, we are like an acrobat who is good at keeping a balance—a balance between sharpening and showing what we are good at and hiding what we are not. On matters where it is easy to take a right stance, e.g. homosexuality, we tend to be boastfully confident and sternly criticize others who find it difficult to hit this mark. On matters with which we struggle, e.g. lust, we conveniently compartmentalize ourselves within on the one hand, and on the other, become allergic to critiques from others. To the point, what works and matters is the rules, the cold dead letters, and not the spirit and love.

To know hypocrisy better, we may also compare it to its two siblings: deception and unbelief. First, a hypocrite must deceive, for she must maintain her outward image as gloriously as possible and convince her that this outward image is truly herself, whether she is conscious of her dark side or not. As time goes on, this self-deception erodes her consciousness. "First we deceive ourselves, and then convince ourselves that we are not deceiving ourselves."[2] As a result, a hypocrite actually lives in brokenness—within and without herself, segreted by her deception.

The second, unbelief, is an alarm to the believers. Unbelief bears family resemblance to hypocrisy: both of them start with one's self and return to it; both say no to the grace of God; both refuse to tolerate a sense of sin in one's self or to pursue the way of repentance.[3] The difference? "Unbelief is not the only way of suppressing the truth about God…It is the most honest."[4] Hypocrisy, being more urbane, promises people autonomy from God *and* a godly appearance—like that of a businessperson cheating you of your money under his or her friendly face. Once in a Hong Kong jail, a merchant chatted with his inmate, a robber. "What have you done?" The robber answered: "Rob people's money." The merchant laughed at him, "why bother to be a robber to get money; be a merchant and you can make people willingly put their money—lots of money—into your pocket!"

In short, deceived by the illusion that every-

thing is manageable by herself for she can manage her outward appearance, a hypocrite makes God a nominal King, which is not far from denying Him as the King. All have stolen the glory of God.

Why Hypocrisy?

The answer could be very short: any person wants to be better and higher than he or she actually is, as can be seen in competitions of various means in almost all areas of human life. Furthermore, they want themselves to look good first and foremost in the eyes of others. When the proper road to the goal is hard and long, people, thanks to their inherited sinful nature, divert from the main road and find shortcuts. As for hypocrisy, it is a shortcut to righteousness. Since "others" exist *outside* of one's self, it seems to people that the shortcut to impress others is to polish one's *outward* appearance. Hypocrisy helps people to enjoy a short and shallow period of glory by mimicking the fruit of true righteousness but leaves them living in virtual misery and undefended at the final judgment.

We may also look at hypocrisy from another angle, namely, with respect to spiritual warfare. Satan not only directly attacks the army of the LORD but also masqueraders himself as the angel of light. By means of the latter, he seduces people from the Way who are zealous to please God. For next to God who mercifully knows all aspects of us, Satan knows us best. He knows what the soft spot of a person is so that he can purse in his poisonous sting. Since this soft spot for many people, especially the religiously zealous, is their yearning to be (or look) righteous, Satan provides them with a user-friendly (just follow the rules), individually tailored (you name rules), and cheap (you don't need to give up yourselves) counterfeit. Because religious people are still in their recovery from sin, they are often undiscerning of this rosy trap (and how much more would it be for unreligious people), for it appeals to their appetite for righteousness on the outside *and* their old self's inclination underneath.

The real reason that one wants to turn to the shortcut or be seduced by Satan is not her desire to be righteous, but both her inability to discern true righteousness from the counterfeit righteousness and her double-mindedness. This is due to the fact that she has a mingled love, both godly affections for the new life and worldly passions from the old self, which feels at home with Satan's shortcuts.

How to deal with hypocrisy?

Since the root of hypocrisy is self-idolatry, one then can argue back and say that the remedy for this disease is to deny one's self, so that one may find integrity in the new life, which grows from the depth of the heart.

Several religions see this problem and know this solution. For instance, Buddhism also instructs people to deny self, regarding people's clinging to self as the fountain of evils. Taoism teaches people to empty self, saying only after emptying your dirty self, you can have space for the Tao (Chuangzi). However, only Christianity, rooted in the divine revelation, points out that denying one's self is not the way of salvation by itself. This self-denial is the antithesis of becoming Christ-like, and thus is only one side of the coin. Moreover, it is through the exercise of becoming Christ-like, namely, daily dying and rising with Christ through the work of the Spirit, that one can deny one's self, and not the other way around. In other words, without receiving the renewed spirit freely given by Christ, the dying of self bears both theoretical and practical difficulties.

In short, hypocrisy is a life-long disease that may plague any person who is struggling with the dying away of the old self—the sinful human nature. People become hypocrites when they try to give others a righteous impression, while by doing so deny their primary state as sinners who need the Great Physician. Only Christians who commit themselves to Christ everyday in dying and rising with Him, can make progress in becoming truly righteous—the antithesis of hypocrisy.

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1. Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing about Grace?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), p. 202.
2. A word of Lewis Semdes, quoted from Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be—A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p.107.
3. Peck sees this refusal as the heart of sin. Ibid., p.99.
        Ibid., p.109

The Origins of the Qumran Sect
By Jordan J. Ballor

The relationship between the caves of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Wadi Qumran excavation site is one that has intrigued scholars for the past half century. The discovery of the Scrolls has been called the greatest archaeological find of the 20th century. As we move forward in the 21st century, discussions of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Qumran still dominate the archaeological landscape. In many ways, the Scrolls are still being discovered, as their release and publication has been a long, tedious process. As new material surfaces, old arguments are rejoined and new theses are put forth.

One such thesis involves the origins of the Qumran community itself. The linkages that are seen by L. Schiffman involving Qumran and the Sadducees in light of his examination of the MMT warrant some further analysis.[1] In order to reach the proper context for the discussion of the people of Qumran and their Scrolls, however, certain prolegomena issues must be addressed. It is necessary, in fact, to establish the relationship between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran Community before any worthwhile examination of either may begin. This is especially true as there have been serious challenges to the existence of any such relationship.

The varied attempts to undermine the link between the community and the Scrolls ignore a number of obvious facts. The discovery of inkwells in the archaeological excavations at Qumran seem to initially lend some credence to the theories supporting the authorship of the majority of the Scrolls as belonging to the Qumran Community. As the inkwells and related finds are examined more closely, the link becomes even more clear. In a room that has been identified as the Scriptorium of the community, the followingwere found: two plastered writing desks, benches, a tabletop, and three inkwells. The use of the furniture may be questioned, but the inkwells are a concrete connection to the Dead Sea Scrolls. As the use of this room was being examined, "The final clue to the use of this room was provided by the discovery in it of two inkwells made of bronze and terra cotta,"[2] with a third being found close by. The evidence does not stop here however, as the contents of these inkwells "tallied exactly with the lampblack and gum ink of the majority of the Scrolls."[3] These discoveries illustrate that most of the Dead Sea Scrolls were products of the Scriptorium of the Qumran Community.

As an aside, in order to believe that the Scrolls had no connection to the residents, one must overlook the close proximity of the caves to the buildings. Cave 4 is located very near to the community. It does, in fact, directly overlook the community, and would have been in plain view of anyone standing outside or looking out of a window. To postulate, as N. Golb does, that there is no relationship between the Scrolls and the community, one must believe that the Scrolls lay hidden in the caves right under the noses of the residents of Qumran for hundreds of years without ever being discovered. As Golb writes, "there is no satisfactory evidence that they [the inhabitants of Qumran] engaged in writing or copying Scrolls there or that it was they who hid away the manuscripts later discovered in the caves."[4] This statement blatantly ignores the existence of the inkwells, the Scriptorium, and the proximity of the caves to the community itself. The obvious existence of a relationship between the Scrolls and the inhabitants of Qumran will be assumed for the remainder of this work.

A note is necessary here concerning the use of Josephus and other historical accounts in the interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Dead Sea Scrolls, particularly the identifiably sectarian Scrolls, give us firsthand insight into the life and worldview of the inhabitants of Qumran. The Scrolls, being penned by the community itself, are the most direct link that we have with the Qumran Community. The interpretation of archaeological finds may rightly be interpreted in light of these Scrolls. Nevertheless, Josephus and other historical sources should not be used to graft otherwise unsubstantiated interpretations onto the Scrolls and the other archaeological finds. Josephus is a secondary source, not directly involved in the community, who sometimes gives us selective or unreliable information.

Attempts to form complete and perfect agreement between the Scrolls and Josephus are doomed from their very inception to fail. L. Schiffman summarizes the situation in this way, as Josephus "himself admits to having included more than one group of sectarians under the heading 'Essenes.' Judging from the generalizations he made in regard to his 'fourth phi-

losophy,' it can be seen that several groups may have been described as one by Josephus." In any case, where the Scrolls, the archaeological evidence, and the historical sources all agree, we may be reasonably certain that we have an accurate picture of that aspect of sectarian life. Working in this manner, first from the Scrolls, second from the excavation of the site, and third from contemporaneous historical material, we can be reasonably assured that we will not arrive at any artificial interpretations or understanding of the Qumran Community existence.

We now turn our attention to the theses put forth by Schiffman regarding the Sadducean origins of the Qumran sect, especially as it is illustrated in 4QMMT. According to Schiffman, "a process of sectarianism and separatist mentality grew throughout the Hasmonean period and blossomed in the Herodian period. As a result, a group of originally Sadducean priests, under the leadership of the Teacher of Righteousness…developed into the group that left us the sectarian texts found at Qumran."[6] This argument is very convincing, except for Schiffman's identification with the Qumran sect with the Sadducees. It nevertheless seems clear that the Sadducees and the Qumran sect shared roots in the priesthood. However, it may be helpful to place the Sadducees and the Qumran sect as two groups under the general heading of the priestly class.

The identity of the Qumran sect as priestly must first be established, and then the identification of this group as specifically Sadducean may be countered. F. M. Cross writes, the "community referred to its priesthood as the 'sons of Zadok,' that is, members of the ancient line of high priests established in Scripture."[7] This points to the joint priestly roots of the Sadducees and the Qumran sect. Before the exile into the wilderness, the Maccabean and Zadokite priesthoods had both existed, with the Zadokites in control of the Temple cult. According to J. Charlesworth, with the success of the Maccabean Revolt, "between 152 and 140 B.C.E., however, the Zadokites, the descendants of Aaron and the legitimate high priests, were expelled from the Temple, to be superseded by the Maccabees." This is the split that Shiffman misidentifies as a split within the Sadducean sect. It was, in fact, the transition of power from one priestly group to another, with the defeated being exiled, of their own accord or not, out of Jerusalem.

The self-identification of the Qumran sect with the "sons of Zadok" fit with the nature of the settlement. The residents were in fact learned and held a long literary and religious tradition. The Scriptorium and its extensive use give evidence of this, as well as the nature of the scroll collection itself. D. Dimant argues against the identification of the Qumran sect as Zadokite, as she notes, "the self-designation 'Sons of Zadok'… is not necessarily to be taken as an indication of the Zadokite lineage of the leading core of the sect or of the Teacher of Righteousness himself."[9] Nevertheless, the self-identification of the sect with a Zadokite lineage ought to be taken as a reference to their rightful place as the high priesthood of Israel, especially following their expulsion from participation in the Temple cult by the Maccabees.

It is within this context that the fierce polemic against the Maccabees and the Sadducean priesthood arises within the Dead Sea Scrolls. Having been cast out of participation in the Temple cult, the newly formed Essenes, as Zadokite priests in exile, were forced to formulate a new way of life. One way of validating their existence was emphasizing their rightful place as the high priesthood of Israel and keepers of the faith. The dominant use of Hebrew in the Scrolls is testament to this. Hebrew is recognized as "a 'holy tongue,'"[10] with traditions lifting it up as the original language of humankind and the language that will be spoken after the coming of the messiah. This recognition of Hebrew as a "holy tongue" is closely linked with the Temple cult. Weitzman writes, "It seems likely that this expression was originally suggested by the use of Hebrew in the Temple cult (its construction resembles that of other cult-related expressions like 'the holy shekel,' i.e., a shekel weighed according to the Temple standard)."[11] If true, this would validate the Essenic claim to the rightful priesthood, as they remain loyal to the traditions of the Temple and keep the faith, while the Sadducees engage in Hellenizing practices, even to the point of involving Gentiles in the Temple practices.

For the Essenes, the difference must have been clear between those who remain faithful and those who defile the Temple. To this end, the Temple Scroll contains various teachings and ordinances with regard to the ideal Temple. In fact, some of the scroll is "clearly polemical, such as the *halakhah* concerning the Temple and the Temple-city which stands in contrast to the practice in the contemporary Hasmonaean Temple as known from various sources."[12] Being expunged from the Temple cult surely left a bitter taste in the mouths of the Zadokites, and they took their revenge through their writing. The establishment of the Qumran Community was inherently a retreat from the dominant culture, which had overtaken the Temple cult and seized power in Jerusalem.

M. Hengel writes, "The community of Qumran has its roots in the Maccabean revolt and the failure of the 'Hellenistic reform' between 175 and 164 BC. Without these events this radical eschatological reform party

would never have come into being."[13] What would become this reform party had presumably dominated the Temple cult since the return from the Babylonian Exile and construction of the Second Temple. Only after the institution of the Maccabean priests, the Sadducees, were the Zadokites to become the exiled Essenes. However, Hengel's further characterization of the sect, "as a movement of strict opposition against the expansion of Hellenistic civilization in Jewish Palestine"[14] is accurate, but must be viewed in light of the sect's primary anti-Maccabean motivations.

In this way, we have a priesthood that has been removed forcibly from participation in the Temple Cult, and presumably exiled into the wilderness. The actual withdrawal from the city of Jerusalem itself may have not been forced, but nevertheless, a group exists which is struggling to validate itself in light of the recent developments. The reason that the Essenes withdrew, according to 4QMMT, is "out of a desire for absolute faithfulness to the revealed word, of which only they possessed the correct understanding."[15] The use of languages other than Hebrew, the Hellenization of Jerusalem and the Temple cult, and their expulsion from and Sadducean domination of the cult, all resulted in this withdrawal from the dominant culture. The withdrawal is a sort of protest against all of these things, and the Essenes instituted their beliefs into the *praxis* of the Qumran community. Weitzman writes, "Perceiving itself to be the authentic heir to biblical Israel, but now surrounded by a hostile and ignorant social world, the Qumran community evidently sought to legitimate its religious status in ways that did not depend on external validation from outside the community."[16] To this end, the Temple cult under the Sadducees is undermined in the Qumran literature.

The Essenes seem to have left Jerusalem under the guidance of the Teacher of Righteousness, and headed eastward to settle in the wilderness. The questions surrounding the original use of the site itself abound. N. Golb writes, "The site must be considered a fortress because its tower, water-storage system, strategic location and other characteristics – not merely the Roman attack – all point to its having been built and used as a fortress."[17] Golb is correct in asserting that the site was built as a fortress. It was, in fact, "one of the many [fortresses] that surrounded Jerusalem in Hasmonean and Herodian times."[18] Nevertheless, as the site was originally built as a fortress, this does not necessitate its militaristic use by the Essenes. The Roman destruction of the site did pave the way for its use by the Romans. However, the lack of any human remains from this destruction period point only to the destruction of the buildings in preparation for the construction of a Roman encampment, not necessarily to a Roman military siege of the site. The Essenes themselves could have easily been scattered or run off prior to this destruction. In short, a battle between the Romans and the Essenes was not necessarily fought circa 70 A.D. at Qumran. It is possible, therefore, that the group under the Teacher of Righteousness left Jerusalem and settled in an abandoned or unused fortress, converting it into use for their own priestly and literary purposes.

The identification of the Qumran Community specifically with the Essenes has not been previously addressed or defended in this work, and this is the place to do so. As stated above, the use of the historical sources should be used as secondary material to the sectarian literature and the archaeological discoveries. Where the three agree, we can be fairly certain that we have an accurate picture. A fundamental argument for recognition of Qumran as an Essenic community comes from the agreement of the sectarian texts and historical information. J. VanderKam writes, "What the sectarian texts have to say coincides much more closely with Essene thought and action than with what the sources

say about Pharisaic and Sadducean views."[19] VanderKam also cites a study by T. Beall, which concluded that "there are twenty-seven parallels between Josephus and the Scrolls regarding the Essenes, twenty-one probable parallels, ten cases in which Josephus makes claims about the Essenes that have no known parallel among the Scrolls, and six discrepancies between them."[20] Overall, the similarities are stunning, and the many of the discrepancies can be attributed to non-uniformity among the groups labeled Essenes by Josephus.

With the origins of the Qumran Community firmly in mind, an analysis of Schiffman's relation of the community to the Sadducees must be examined. It is the case that the Essenes, as Zadokite priests, and the Sadducees, as priests of the Maccabean order, would share some similarities. Addressing the seemingly Sadducean aspects of the MMT, J. VanderKam writes, "Especially in the case of these two groups, one would expect some shared views because both had strong priestly roots. The Qumran group was founded and led by priests, the sons of Zadok; the very name *Sadducees* seems to be derived from this same Zadok, and influential priests are known to have been Sadducees."[21] This throws the issue into even greater relief. These two groups, both priestly, claimed authority from the same source: Zadok. However, one of these groups became Essenes and the other became Sadducees. The Essenes claimed to be the *true* Zadokite priests, while the Sadducees were viewed as illegitimate.

Comparisons of Sadducean and Essenic doctrines, therefore, find many similarities, as is to be expected. Nevertheless, the differences between the two are also numerous, and appear irreconcilable. The first major difference that is unavoidable is the difference between the Sadducees and the Qumran Community regarding the supernatural. Our ancient authorities agree on one salient feature of the Sadducees: a denial of the supernatural.[22] In addition, the Gospel of Mark describes "some Sadducees" as the ones "who say there is no resurrection."[23] These beliefs also closely resemble the Sadducean beliefs with regard to Fate, as explained by J. VanderKam. His citation of Josephus reads, "the Sadducees do away with Fate, holding that there is no such thing and that human actions are not achieved in accordance with her decree, but that all things lie within our own power, so that we ourselves are responsible for our well-being, while we suffer misfortune through our own thoughtlessness."[24] As shown briefly here, the Sadducees held no belief Fate, the supernatural in general, or the resurrection in particular.

The beliefs of the Qumran Community on these matters are completely opposite the Sadducean standpoint. With regard to the Essenic belief in Fate, J. VanderKam cites the Manual of Discipline, 1QS. This scroll speaks of God's "glorious design," "dominion in accordance with the mysteries of God," and of things "ordained for them."[25] In this way, "the views contained in the Manual of Discipline are identical with Essene thinking as described by Josephus" and "furthest from the Sadducean position."[26] Again, Schiffman's assessment of the Qumran sect's origins as Sadducean does not follow without resolution of this disagreement.

As for the Essenic doctrine concerning the supernatural, recognition of angels and spiritual forces are essential to their understanding of the creation order. Collins also cites 1QS, what he calls the Rule of the Community, in showing the Essene belief in angels and the supernatural. There is a sort of "qualified dualism" between the Angel of Light and the Angel of Darkness, as "the powers of these spirits or angels are clearly limited by the creator, but they are supernatural powers nonetheless."[27] Here again, the Sadducean and the Essenic doctrines are in conflict. The eschatological beliefs of the Essenes especially illustrate this. The War Scroll, in fact, "is a description of the final eschatological war between the forces of Light, commanded by the archangel Michael, and the forces of darkness, headed by Belial."[28] The Essenic belief in the supernatural is not merely a modification of Sadducean roots, but rather is a central and salient feature of their belief system.

These Zadokite priests must have held these tenets prior to their expulsion from the Temple, and this area of disagreement was likely one of the contested points between the Sadducees and Essenes. This emphasis on the supernatural and eschatological can be attributed to the Essenic need to validate their beliefs independent of the Temple cult authority. The Qumran Community sought to legitimize their doctrines "in part by recontextualizing itself within an alternative and much more receptive social world – the heavenly world where it found among the angels the sacerdotal approval and communal acceptance lacking in the mundane world below."[29]

The Essenic belief in resurrection marks a third feature that is in conflict with the Sadducean view. Multiple cemeteries and burial sites surround the ruins at Qumran. According to E. Puech, "it is almost certain that the tombs are contemporaneous with the occupation of the nearby buildings of the *Khirbeh* by the Essene community."[30] It is Puech's assertion that the examination of these related tombs reveals insight into the Essenic belief in an afterlife. The separation of the graves of men and women "clearly indicates an intentional use of the graves."[31] These observations "turn into fact the religious belief of the Essene community in an afterlife."[32] If true, these facts would elucidate the conflict between the Essenes and the Sadducees in this area. In this way, "the Qumranic burial practices, which are typical and unique, seem in full agreement with the Essene belief in the afterlife written in the manuscripts found in the caves."[33] The Essenes, therefore, believed in an afterlife and a resurrection, in direct opposition to the doctrines of the Sadducees.

It would be difficult to defend a position that espoused a Sadducean origin of the Essenes in light of these, among numerous other, differences. Schiffman is correct in his analysis of the MMT, in that he recognizes commonalities between the Essenes and the Sadducees, but he incorrectly assumes that the authors of the MMT find their origins in the Sadducees. A far superior theory holds that the authors of the MMT (the Essenes) and the Sadducees have a common background in the priesthood of Israel, and that this is from whence their commonalities are derived. Everything that we have of the sectarian literature, even the archaeological evidence, points to a deep and extreme division between the Essenes and the Sadducees, concerning such varied matters as doctrine, language, *praxis*, and participation in the Temple cult.

J. Magness' discussion of a hoard of coins found at Qumran may further clarify some of these points. Three pots were found in Locus 120 that held a total of 360 coins. There are references to a half-shekel tax in 4Q159, 4Q513, and the Temple Scroll. Each of these seems to relate the tax to a one-time obligation to be paid at the age of maturity.[34] This is significant because "the sect must have objected to the half-shekel sanctuary

offering because it was instituted as an annual obligation for all Israel only after they had segregated themselves from the Jerusalem Temple and the rest of Israel."[35] As Magness writes, "the character and composition of the hoard are best understood in connection with the sect's interpretation of the Temple tax as a one-time payment made when a man reached adulthood."[36] The fact, of course, that these coins were never sent to the Temple may illustrate the negative attitude of the Essenes toward the Temple under Sadducean control.

A point of contention that many have raised with the identification of the Qumran Community with the Essenes has been the issue of celibacy. According to our historical sources, the Essenes were celibate. The discovery of the remains of women and the inclusion of laws and regulations concerning women in the Scrolls seem to present some conflict with this. There are a few solutions to this problem, however. One of the Scrolls forbids burial in Jerusalem, and a central cemetery for each of four cities is to be instituted.[37] The Zadokite priests leaving Jerusalem for the wilderness possibly could have left some family behind. Additionally, as new members were initiated into the community, their families presumably would remain living in the city. It is possible that the remains of the women and children were moved to the Qumran graves after their death, as ordered in 11QTemp 48:11-14.[38] Our data concerning these issues are of course limited, as less than about 5% of the graves have been examined.[39] However, in Martínez's understanding of 4QMMT, among the ways in which the rest of the people have gone astray is the "marriages of priests to the laity."[40] It does not seem unfounded to hold that the community at Qumran may have indeed been celibate, and this may have been yet another point of contention between the Essenes and the Sadducees. Again, the discrepancies may also be explained in party by Josephus' conflagration of many groups under the general Essene heading.

The fact that the community at Qumran was inhabited by Essenes following their dismissal from Jerusalem seems to be fairly certain. L. Schiffman's attempts to link the authors of the Scrolls, and thereby the residents of Qumran, to Sadducean origins is incorrect. The difficulty lies in the shared priestly tradition of the Sadducees and the Essenes. Nevertheless, the salient features of each group, including their doctrine concerning the supernatural and resurrection, clearly do not leave room for a Sadducean origin of the Qumran community. Additionally, N. Golb's assertions that the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran Community are unrelated are entirely unconvincing.

It seems clear that in Qumran, we have a group of learned men who, after their expulsion from Jerusalem, sought to revitalize and validate their religious beliefs. In any case, the identification of the Dead Sea Scrolls as being closely related to the Essenes is firm, as are the Zadokite origins of the sect. The life of the Essenes at Qumran may accurately be viewed as an effort to cope with the loss of the Temple cult, something that prefigured the state of Judaism in general after the destruction of the Temple. It is interesting to note that the Qumran society itself, despite its strong objections to the state of the Temple cult under the Sadducees and its best efforts to the opposite, did not long survive the destruction of the Second Temple. Both of these rival sects suffered the same fate, as the Roman army was the agent of destruction for both the Essenes and the Sadducees. However, the existence and the importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls is due in large part to the expulsion of the Zadokite priests from the Temple cult, so in a certain way, the Sadducees and the Maccabees enabled the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Essenes to survive, in literary form at least, for thousands of years.

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End Notes

1. i.e. the *Miqsat Ma'aseh ha-Torah*, 4QMMT, "Some Rulings Pertaining to the Torah." See Lawrence H. Schiffman, "The Sadducean Origins of the Dead Sea Scroll Sect" in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. H. Shanks (New York: Random House, 1992), 41.
2. John Marco Allegro, *The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1958), 37.
3. Ibid.
4. Norman Golb, "The Qumran-Essene Hypothesis: A Fiction of Scholarship," *The Christian Century*, 9 December 1992, 1141.
5. Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Sectarian Law in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 1.
6. Schiffman in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 42.
7. Frank Moore Cross, "The Historical Context of the Scrolls" in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. H. Shanks (New York: Random House, 1992), 25.
8. James H. Charlesworth, "Christians and Jews in the First Six Centuries" in *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism*, ed. H. Shanks (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992), 306.
9. Devorah Dimant, "Qumran Sectarian Literature" in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, ed. M. E. Stone (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 545.
10. Steve Weitzman, "Why did the Qumran Community write in Hebrew?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Jan-Mar 1999, 37.
11. Ibid., 40.
12. Dimant in *Jewish Writings*, 528.
13. Martin Hengel, "Qumran and Hellenism" in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. J. J. Collins and R. A. Kugler (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 46.
14. Ibid.
15. Florentino García Martínez and Julio Tebolle Barrera, *The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson (New York: Brill, 1995), 32.
16. Weitzman, 44.

17. Golb, 1143.

18. Ibid., 1138.

19. James C. VanderKam, "The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Essenes or Sadducees?" in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. H. Shanks (New York: Random House, 1992), 54.

20. Ibid., 56.

21. Ibid., 59.

22. Thomas Hobbes in his work *Leviathan* picks up on this theme. In a section concerning madmen and demon-possession, Hobbes writes, "the Sadduces, [are ones] who erred so farre on the other hand as not to believe there were at all any spirits, (which is very neere to direct Atheisme;)." This is an interesting example of a tradition regarding an ancient Jewish sect surviving and being referenced in more modern contexts. See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C.B. Macpherson (New York: Penguin, 1985), 145.

23. Mark 12:18 NRSV.

24. VanderKam in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 54-55, quoting Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.5, 9, 171-173.

25. Ibid., 55, quoting Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Sheffield, UK: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Press, 3rd ed., 1987), 3.15-16.

26. Ibid.

27. Hengel in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 17.

28. Dimant in *Jewish Writings*, 515.

29. Weitzman, 44.

30. Emile Puech, "The Necropolises of *Khirbet* Qumrân and ⁽Ain el-Ghuiweir and the Essene Belief in Afterlife," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, Nov 1998, 25.

31. Ibid., 29.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., 30.

34. Jodi Magness, "Two Notes on the Archaeology of Qumran," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, Nov 1998, 40.

35. Ibid., quoting J. Liver, "The Half-Shekel Offering in Biblical and Post-Biblical Literature," *Harvard Theological Review* 56:191.

36. Ibid., 42.

37. Dimant in *Jewish Writings*, 528.

38. Ibid. The footnote in Stone reads, "Such a halakhic prescription may explain the size of the Qumran cemetery, which may have served the entire area." If such is the case, the women and children may not have been inhabitants of the community itself, but rather after their deaths they were moved into their resting places at Qumran.

39. E. Puech reckons that 53 tombs have been opened out of about 1200. Of these 53, however, the majority are male (30-38), and none of the female remains were found in the main cemetery area.

40. Martínez and Barrera, 33.

A Reformed Perspective on Humor
By Douglas E. Pruim

Introduction

Humor is one of the most beautiful gifts that God gave to humanity; unfortunately, Christians have all too often misunderstood, ignored, or denied this truth. Humor, like all created reality, has been infected by sin, so it should never be doubted that humor can be redeemed. Furthermore, if humor had a place in created reality, then humor will be a part of consummated reality, as well.

In this paper, I hope to come to a working definition of humor, which reveals God's good intent and purpose. I will come to this conclusion by comparing and evaluating other traditional views until I find a suitable definition and theory. With this definition I will develop a Reformed perspective of humor by placing it in the schema of "Creation, Fall, and Redemption."

What is humor?

This seemingly simple question requires a very difficult answer. To begin to understand this term, we should first look at its etymology. In an article entitled "Medicus: Prescription Laughter," John Grauke explains, "The word humor itself comes from the Latin root *umor* meaning moisture. In the Middle Ages, humor referred to an energy that was thought to relate to a body fluid and an emotional state. This energy was believed to determine health and disposition."[1]

As medicine and human biology advanced, this usage of the term began to wane; however, its connection to one's disposition remained. Since the term has Latin origins, it has no direct Classical synonyms in Greek, but some have suggested that Latin *umor* shares connotation with mirth, gaiety, joy or amusement. All of these come to expression in laughter, so *humor* and *laughter* often are conceptually used interchangeably in Ancient writings.

Philosophers of humanity have always recognized "that humor is," but they have not always agreed on "what humor is." Because of this, many theories have been postulated to define and describe *humor*. Jim Lyttle furthers this point by writing that "more than 100 'theories' of humor have been identified."[2] Currently the most widely held and influential view of all the various theories of humor is that there are eight basic categories: Superiority, Biological, Release, Psychoanalytic, Configuration, Surprise, Ambivalence, and Incongruity.[3]

For sake of brevity, I will discuss at length only three of these major theories: Superiority, Release, and Incongruity. So first, let us look at the "Superiority Theory." The Superiority Theory is the oldest recorded theory of humor, and it began with the Greeks. John Morreall, in his magnum opus, *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*, gives an account of Plato's Philebus in which Plato compares laughter and malice and finds little difference.[4] Plato regarded laughter as an act of subversion. Aristotle held this view, as well. We see this in his Poetics as he writes, "Comedy, as we have said, is an imitation of people who are worse than average."[5]

This theory can also be seen in other great thinkers such as Cicero, Quintillion, and Hobbes. Obviously for these thinkers humor was a lower form of communication, and it had no place in higher reality, whatever that may be. For them, laughter flows from oppression and suffering, and laughter can cease when these sins are no more. This theory can still be found in contemporary thinking. An illustration of this is a recent book by Barry Sanders entitled *Sudden Glory: Laughter as Subversive History*. Ironically and humorously, the Superiority Theory of humor, which was first espoused by men in a highly patristic age, would find much sympathy in the ears of modern feminists.

This theory is intriguing at first, but it has a difficult time explaining the whole scope of humor. Surely, racist, sexist, and bigoted jokes support this theory, but then what shall we do with slapstick, child's play, or even puns. Perhaps irony could be used to demarcate class levels between, but it could also be used as a teaching tool to uplift someone. This theory begins to explain the "why" of humor, but it falls short in the end. Ultimately, it also does not uphold the creational goodness of humor, which I believe is its most inherent flaw.

The next theory is the Release or Relief theory. This theory defines humor basically as an emotional pressure valve. Life is filled with stresses and tensions; human beings store these up until they eventually can no longer sustain the build-up. There are several ways to release this tension; however, most of these ways are socially or legally unacceptable, so the

mind releases this tension and stress in the form of laughter.

       Biologically speaking, it would seem that if this is the basis for laughter, then it physiologically does its job. Laughter raises the heart rate, breathing rate, burns calories, and excess energy. Laughter also triggers a response in the brain releasing endorphins, which is the body's version of a sedative/aphrodisiac. This theory has been used to explain why nurses who work with cancer patients tend to laugh more than other nurses do. This theory also supports the modern connotation of "nervous laughter."

       The downfall of this theory is that it fails to deal seriously with mirth born from mirth. Not all laughter is nervous laughter; some laughter is rooted in moments of little to no stress at all. Like any other theory treated in this paper, this theory is much richer and more complex than will be discussed here; nevertheless, when this theory is pressed, it becomes apparent that it is not all-inclusive of what is humorous. Also, like the Superiority Theory, the Relief or Release Theory implies a distance from humor's created goodness.

       The final theory I would like to view is the Incongruity Theory; this theory is definitely the most initially attractive and inclusive. Proponents of this theory suggest that humor relies on incongruities. This view is the most widely held of contemporary gelastologists (gelastology: the study of humor). Some suggest that these incongruities are human's perception of the intersection of incompatible logical matrices.[6] Others define these incongruities as simple absurdities of life. Other variations of this theory focus on emotional ambivalence to the incongruities, violators or normalcy, the resolution of incongruity, or the unexpected surprise of the incongruity.

       This theory definitely casts its net wide, so it would not be charged with not being inclusive enough; however, the fault of this theory is that it is too inclusive. It does not distinguish between humorous incongruities and non-humorous incongruities, and if it does, it does not explain why. In the footnotes on a review of Søren Kierkegaard's book, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, John Morreall makes a very poignant observation about the nature of incongruity in humor; he writes, "A discontinuity in speech may produce a comic effect because there is a contradiction between the discontinuity and the rational conception of human speech as something connected. If it is a madman who speaks thus, we do not laugh."[7]

       John Morreall further elaborates on the deficiency of the Incongruity Theory in his book, *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor.* He notices that for something to be humorous, it "must be felt as pleasant by the person." To illustrate this, he writes, "If I opened my bathroom door to find a large pumpkin in the bathtub, for example, I would probably laugh. But if I found a cougar in the tub, I would not laugh, though this situation would be just as incongruous."[8]

       The point has been made; the Incongruity Theory is too broad to accurately and helpfully define what humor is. This theory needs to be tempered by a lay person's understanding of humor: "humor is what is funny." Ironically, if we think so hard about humor that we forget it is funny, then we have already missed the point. Humor must be recognized as humor by someone, or it is not humor.

       In his introduction to *Holy Laughter*, M. Conrad Hyers writes, "Comedy is not simply a response to the incongruities and absurdities of life, or the lighter side of tragedy – a correlation which some interpreters of the comic never got beyond . . . Comedy in fact plays with both the categories of reason and irrationality, or order and chaos, of meaning and meaninglessness, and in so doing opens up the playfulness at the heart of reality itself – the playfulness which characterizes both Creator and creation alike."[9]

       Despite its inherent flaws, the Incongruity Theory is on the right track. I do not think that anyone would argue that incongruities are at the heart of humor; however, I also know that not all incongruities are humorous. This theory needs to be amended and rounded out. As Michael Clark, a contemporary of Morreall, writes:

> There can be no adequate account of the notion of humor without one of the notion of amusement. For the humorous is so characterized in virtue of the human attitude or response to it: we call something "humorous" if it is apt to, or should, or deserves to, amuse people, or some special sort of person.[10]

       John Morreall offers a solution; he defines humor simply as "enjoying incongruities."[11] This definition is simple and straightforward, but I believe that it captures the essence of what humor is. Not only do I believe that it is denotatively acceptable, but I believe that this definition can provide a proper foundation upon which to develop a biblical, Reformed perspective on humor. Now with this definition, we will view humor in its created reality, its fallen reality, and its redemptive reality.

Creation

In the beginning, God created humor (and God said, it is very funny). The Bible may not say these actual words, but I believe they are true nonetheless. The definition of humor as "enjoying incongruities" assumes several presuppositions, which support Biblical tenets. The first thing this definition presupposes is that the incongruity is enjoyed, which implies there is an individual capable of enjoying incongruity. The second thing this definition presupposes is the overall capacity for enjoyment. The third thing this definition presupposes is subjective enjoyment (i.e. an incongruity is only humorous if it is enjoyed). Finally, this definition presupposes the possibility of incongruities. All four of these presuppositions support biblical tenants.

First, this definition presupposes an individual capable of enjoying incongruity. This individual is a human being, who incidentally is the only being in Creation capable of humor. Human beings are God's special creation; this can be seen formally in Genesis 1, where upon creating man God said it was "very good." From there, God gives humans a special place in his Creation by calling them to "be fruitful and multiply and increase in number: fill the earth and subdue it. (Genesis 1:28ff)

This special place is reiterated in Psalm 8:4-5, "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor." Surely human beings are unique; Genesis 1:27 states, "So God created them in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Human beings are specially created in the image of God; because of this, they are capable of doing things that other animals are not. One of these things is enjoying incongruities.

The second thing Morreall's definition presupposes is this being's capacity for joy. As previously stated, human beings are created in the image of God. Because we are created in the image of God, there are certain characteristics of God that are planted within our being. One of these characteristics is joy because joy is at the heart of God (a proposition which can be seen throughout the book of Psalms). Part of our natural inclination then is to seek joy in our lives.

Knowing that joy is essential to humanity is not a secret limited to special revelation; this fact is apparent in general revelation and noticed by all people. To prove this point, I have sampled various thinkers who support this thesis. Robin Andrew Haig writes in *The Anatomy of Humor*, "Darwin (1890) regarded laughter primarily as an expression of joy or happiness." This may seem like a fairly obvious statement, and it is; however, although Darwin's conclusions as to why humans developed the communicative tool of laughter are very much in conflict with the Christian understanding, even this champion of naturalism could recognize the implicit necessity for the expression of joy, which is at the heart of humor."[12]

Immanuel Kant also recognizes the joy of humor when he writes, "Laughter is an affection arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing. This transformation, which is certainly not enjoyable to the understanding, yet indirectly gives it very active enjoyment for a moment."[13]

Robin Andrew Haig notes, "Ziv drew attention to humor creativity, which is the ability to perceive relationships between people, objects, or ideas in an incongruous way, as well as the ability to communicate this perception to others, and humor appreciation, which is the ability to understand and *enjoy* humorous messages."[14]

Even Renee Descartes notes, "But although it seems as though laughter were one of the principal signs of joy, nevertheless joy cannot cause it except when it is moderate and has some wonder or hate mingled with it." Furthermore, Descartes recognizes joy in the biological function of laughter when he writes, "The first is the surprise of admiration or wonder, which, being united to joy, may open the orifices of the heart." (Incidentally, he later adds, "The other is the admixture of some liquor." Truer words have never been spoken.)[15]

The third presupposition of Morreall's definition is subjective enjoyment. This is to say that human beings are individuals, who are different from each other. God has created different people differently. In speaking of gifts in the Body of Christ, Paul writes, "Now the body is not made up of one part but of many . . . Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Corinthians 12:14,27) Paul certainly was not speaking of humanity in general, but the same principle of plurality in oneness can be applied.

Being created in God's image, we were created to be social and cultural beings. God is a plurality in oneness, as are we. Our differentness will result in subjective enjoyment of incongruities. David Hartly speaks of this subjectivity in "Of Wit and Humor" as he writes, "From hence may be seen, that in different persons the occasions of laughter must be as different as their opinions and dispositions."[16]

The fourth presupposition the definition makes is the possibility of incongruities. There are some in the Christian tradition that would like to believe that incongruities are a fallen reality; therefore, there is no basis

for humor in God's good creation. In an article entitled "Thema: Love, Joy, and Spit Milk" published in *Credenda/Agenda*, Douglas Jones writes, "Not all comedy is pretty. Much certainly violates biblical norms (Ephesians 5:4[17]; Exodus 20:7[18]). Contemporary, sentimental evangelicalism tends to sin in the other direction though, being embarrassed at any Christian laughter."[19]

Søren Kierkegaard rightly delineates between proper and improper understandings of incongruities in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*; he notes that "the tragic is the suffering contradiction, the comical, the painless contradiction."[20] I believe that there is room in God's good creation for the possibility of incongruities, of the painless variety. To assert that human beings were incapable of recognizing incongruities in a pre-fallen or post-consummated world removes our rationality, comprehension, and ultimately image of God.

Leslie Flynn asserts six principles in *Serve Him with Mirth* that should be noted and affirmed here. First, God has created man to enjoy humor. Second, God appreciates humor. Third, God has given man an environment with a touch of the comical. Fourth, God's book contains many examples of humor. Fifth, God's Son used humor during his earthly ministry. Finally, God has given humor a place in redeemed human nature by virtue of its close relationship to joy, praise, and peace.[21]

Just in case there is any doubt over these matters, I shall call upon the witness of Elton Trueblood. Elton Trueblood is a Christian gelastologist. His most interesting, yet sometimes misguided, work is in the area of the humor of Jesus Christ. He has many keen observations of humor that the modern eye does not see, but his attempts at seeing humor leans to the creative side of invention than actual observation. However, I agree with the first line of his essay "The Humor of Christ" when he writes:

> The widespread failure to recognize and to appreciate the humor of Christ is one of the most amazing aspect of the era named Him. Anyone who reads the Synoptic Gospels with a relative freedom from presuppositions might be expected to see that Christ laughed, and that He expected other to laugh, but our capacity to miss this aspect of His life is phenomenal.[22]

One of the most brilliant examples of Jesus Christ using humor is found in John 3. This very familiar passage coined a curious catch phrase for the church: born again. A smart, rich, powerful man named Nicodemus approaches Jesus and wished to know how to get into God's kingdom. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born again. This was not a catch phrase yet; in fact, this was the first time the phrase had been used. Nicodemus had no idea what Jesus was talking about. Jesus could very well have told Nicodemus that he would have to vomit hard enough to turn inside out. (Thankfully Jesus did not institute this as our catch phrase.)

Jesus knew his statement would be an incongruity for Nicodemus. The statement was not a "knock-knock joke," nor was it 'funny-ha-ha.' However, this statement was humorous, and it was used as a teaching tool for Nicodemus. Jesus was a master at this use of humor; he used it often in his parables. He also used it when he gleefully announced, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14)

Humor is used throughout the Bible. Perhaps the best example of it is the entire book of Jonah. The entire book is an exercise in irony, buffoonery, and absurdity. Dr. Clarence Vos notes this in a *Banner* article entitled "Laughter: Divine Gift or Demonic Gimmick?" He writes,

> The book of Jonah is a chain of ironies: a prophet, told to go east, goes west; a prophet of God sleeps in the hold of the ship while pagan sailors fervently pray to their gods; a fish rescues the prophet; the fish becomes nauseated and vomits the prophet on the beach; in mechanical obedience, the prophet preaches the "bad news," but in Nineveh the bad news becomes good news; the prophet is angry because he thinks the good news is bad news; although repentance is rare in Israel, in Nineveh the king tells all humans and animals to repent and put on sackcloth; the prophet is solicitous about the gourd that has died, but he has no concern for the innocents that would die if Nineveh were destroyed.

Let us not forget the words of Ecclesiastes 3:4 "There is a time to laugh."

Fallen

Like all of God's good creation, humor was effected by the Fall. Sin has corrupted both our understanding and our use of humor. One thinker who often reflects a fallen understanding of humor is Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr does have some valid points, such as he writes in *Humor and Faith*, "Humor is, in fact, a

prelude to faith; and laughter is the beginning of prayer."[23]

  This is a true and important point to ponder; unfortunately, Niebuhr does not respect humor as a creational reality, but a consequence of the fall. The only function humor has is to serve as the antithesis by which to judge what is actually good. His position on humor is expressed at the end of his essay, as he writes:

> Insofar as the sense of humor is a recognition of incongruity, it is more profound than any philosophy which seeks to devour incongruity by reason. But the sense of humor remains healthy only when it deals with immediate issues and faces the obvious and surface irrationalities. It must move toward faith or sink into despair when the ultimate issues are raised. That is why there is laughter in the vestibule of the temple, the echo of laughter in the temple itself, but only faith and prayer, and no laughter, in the holy of holies.[24]

  This is view is wrong and does not respect the goodness of humor as created by God. Unfortunately, this view has found its way into other Christian thinkers. While they may begin by affirming humor's goodness, they ultimately can only see its function in light of a fallen world. Nelvin Voss propagates this notion in *For God's Sake Laugh;* he writes, "The fact that man can laugh at all is rooted in his createdness. On the one hand he is given the ability to transcend himself – he can feel a superiority, real or pretended, to other men, and even to God; and on the other hand he is able to recognize his own and other's mortality and finitude."[25]

  Voss is right when he attributes humanity's ability to laugh as rooted in its createdness, but he limits his explication of createdness too much to a fallen reality. It would be wonderful for him to say write what he did, but then go further and explain humor's place in God's creation.

  Joseph Boskin understands that humor is a universal fallen reality for humanity. He does not write about it in those terms, but these claims are implicit in what he writes For Boskin, humor is a phenomenon in all people, but it is used primarily with evil overtones. He writes:

> Humor is a complex arrangement, involving cultural and psychological processes, which moves in external and internal ways: as a means of social control, as an internal fulcrum, as a retaliatory device and as a form of communalism. Humor is clearly ubiquitous. All humans possess a latent sense of humor, meaning a structured way of laughing, and all groups utilize and often institutionalize humor within their social structures.[26]

  Similarly, Thomas Veatch notes in an article the intrinsic fallen nature of humor as he writes:

> The same is true in any instance involving humor and intentional communication. If one wishes to ridicule someone by laughing at them, one must know that they share or at least respect one's views of what is a moral violation; otherwise it will not bother the target of one's ridicule when, by laughing at them, one communicates one's view that they are violating moral norms.[27]

  Veatch believes that the heart of humor lies between the communicative juxtaposition of one who normalizes reality and one who violates it. While his theory his very detailed in its explanation, it is little more than a marriage of the incongruity and ambivalence theories of humor. His explanation, however, does point out the fallen tendency of humor to rely on a violation of the moral norm. If this is noticeable even to a secular academic such as Veatch, how much more should it be apparent to those who affirm God's moral order?

  There are many other ways in which humor has been effected by the Fall. Humor can be rude, offensive, demeaning, manipulative, false, etc. It can be used capriciously, or even be used to take God's name in vain. We are all very familiar with these effects, so for the sake of brevity I will abstain from further elaboration. The question is now: how shall we treat this Fallen humor?

Redemption

  While we strain to answer this question, let us be tempered by the words of Martin Luther: "It is pleasing to the dear God whenever thou rejoicest or laughest from the bottom of thy heart." Humor is a gift from God; he created it good. Sadly, humor was effected by our Fall into sin. Thankfully, God is working to redeem his creation; this redemptive work was manifested in Jesus Christ. Now we wait in eager anticipation for the consummation when the world is fully redeemed, even humor.

So now as we wait in the "already, but not yet," we shall actively work to help bring forth God's kingdom in the area of humor. We can start first by regaining a proper understanding of this gift. Nelvin Voss does think of laughter in a helpful way in the scope of redemption; he writes:

> Laughter, most of all, heals us for it confirms the idea that we are forgiven. We are incongruously accepted in spite of our unacceptableness because the incommensurate chasm between the finite and the infinite has once been completely bridged in the person of Jesus Christ. We are free to laugh therefore at all the finite world around us only if we have first surrendered to the Infinite.[28]

This proper understanding is further explicated by John Morreall as he characterizes laughter in general by writing, "Laughter results from a pleasant psychological shift."[29] A Roy Eckardt continues this in *Sitting in the Earth and Laughing* as he writes, "All in all, John Morreall is contending that humor and laughter are valuable to human life in a way that nothing else is. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that humor is essential to maintaining a healthy outlook on things."[30]

Once we can begin to understand humor in terms of God's good creational scheme, we then can work at using humor to glorify God and usher in his Kingdom. Since humor is based on enjoyment and joy, if we find proper ways of using it, we can unleash surpluses of joy in our own lives and others. In doing so, we will build up community, fellowship, and brotherly love.

Susan V. Gallagher in *Literature through the Eyes of Faith* even expresses this hope that follows from humor in the scope of literature. She writes, "When we look at the earthly reconciliation inevitable in the comic from the eternal perspective, we see it as analogous to our belief in ultimate reconciliation. Things will work out; we will live happily ever after."[31]

We can use humor to illustrate the antithesis of the world with God's Kingdom. We can use it to strengthen our witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ. We can use it to teach the wonderful truths of the faith. We can use it to experience the joy of God, and then use it to express the joy of God to others. We can use humor to glorify God, each in our own way, but do please know and believe that we can use it.

Conclusion

I hope that you have found John Morreall's definition of humor as "enjoying incongruities" to be a satisfying concept from which to build a biblical, Reformed perspective of humor. I hope that you agreed that upon evaluation of various humor theories, Morreall's definition supplies us with a helpful alternative. With this definition, I hope that you were able to view humor from the perspective of its good created reality, its sinful qualities because of the Fall, and its place in God's redemptive plan.

I apologize that this paper was not a "laugh riot." One might expect a paper on "humor" to be filled with jokes, puns, and witticisms; however, despite this paper's seriousness, I hope upon reading it you will be better able to appreciate God's wonderful gift of humor.

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End Notes

1. John Grauke, "Medicus: Prescription Laughter" in *Credenda/Agenda, Vol 9, no. 2*.
2. et al, by Jim Lyttle at http://webp024d.ntx.net/Theories.html, 1999.
3. et al, Jim Lyttle. This review is written by Patricia Keith-Spiegel.

Lyttle briefly explains each of these theories by writing, "The first category consisted of biological theories (e.g. Darwin), which suggest that humor is an adaptive disposition. The second category consisted of superiority theories (e.g. Hobbes), which suggest that people laugh at others to whom they feel superior. The third category consisted of incongruity theories (e.g. Kant), which suggest that humor consist of incongruitous events and situations. The fourth category consisted of surprise theories (e.g. Descartes), which suggest that humor requires suddenness and therefore weakens with repeated exposure. The fifth category consisted of ambivalence theories (e.g. Joubert), which suggest that humor is the result of opposing emotions within an appreciator. The sixth category consisted of release theories (e.g. Spencer), which suggest that humor is experienced when people are relieved from strain or stress. The seventh category consisted of configuration theories (e.g. Maier), which suggest that humor depends directly on the resolution of incongruities. The eighth category consisted of psychoanalytic theories (e.g. Freud), which suggest that humor results from economies of the psychic energy that has been built up by and for repression.

It is proposed here that these can be sorted even further, into just three categories . . . First, there are theories that speculate about the overall function of the phenomenon of humor (biological, psychoanalytic, and

release). Second, there are theories about what makes an object funny (incongruity, surprise, and configuration theories). Third, there are theories about the circumstances in which appreciators will be amused (superiority, and the newer cognitive theories)."

4. et al, John Morreall, ed. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (Albany: State University of New York, 1987), 13.

5. Aristotle, *Poetics, ch. 5 1449a in* John Morreall, ed. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (Albany: State University of New York, 1987), 14.

6. This view is exposited by Alfred Koestler in his book *The Act of Creation: A study of the conscious and unconscious progresses of humor, scientific discovery and art.* (London, Hutchinson Press, 1964).

7. John Morreall's footnote 3 on Søren Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* in John Morreall, ed. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (Albany: State University of New York, 1987), 86.

8. Morreall, 130.

9. M. Conrad Hyers, ed. Holy Laughter (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), 7. Written by Hyers in his introduction to the book.

10. Michael Clark in John Morreall, ed. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (Albany: State University of New York, 1987), 142.

11. et al, Morreall, 133.

12. Robin Andrew Haig, *The Anatomy of Humor* (Springfield: Charles C Thomas, 1988), 17.

13. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, translated by J. H. Bernard (London: Macmillian, 1892), Part I, Div. 1, 54. in John Morreall, ed. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (Albany: State University of New York, 1987), 13.

14. Haig, 3.

15. Renee Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*; translated by Elizabeth Haldane and G. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911). in John Morreall, ed. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (Albany: State University of New York, 1987), 22.

16. David Hartly, "Of Wit and Humor," from *Observations on Man*, 5th edition (London, 1810), Part I, ch. 4, 1. in John Morreall, ed. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (Albany: State University of New York, 1987), 43.

17. Ephesians 5:4 "Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving."

18. Exodus 20:7 "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord with not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."

19. Douglas Jones "Thema: Love, Joy and Spit Milk" in Credenda/Agenda, Vol 9, no. 2.

20. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, translated by David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), 459-468. in John Morreall, ed. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (Albany: State University of New York, 1987), 83.

21. et al. Leslie Flynn, *Serve Him with Mirth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 19-26.

22. Elton Trueblood, "The Humor of Christ" in M. Conrad Hyers, ed. Holy Laughter (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), 166.

23. Reinhold Niebuhr in "Humor and faith" in M. Conrad Hyers, ed. Holy Laughter (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), 134.

24. Reinhold Niebuhr, 149.

25. Nelvin Voss, *For God's Sake Laugh!* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1967), 19.

26. Joseph Boskin, "The Complicity of Humor: The Life and Death of Sambo" in John Morreall, ed. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (Albany: State University of New York, 1987), 253,

27. Thomas C. Veatch, "A Theory of Humor" at http://www.sprex.com/else/humor/paper/humor.html also found in *Humor: the International Journal of Humor*, May 1998.

28. Nelvin Voss, 69.

29. Morreall, 133.

30. A. Roy Eckardt, *Sitting in the Earth and Laughing* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 72.

31. Susan V. Gallagher and Roger Lundin, *Literature through the Eyes of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 176.

The Wonder of Human Sexuality: Or the Importance of Being Male and Female
By Amanda Black

In the beginning God created them in His image...male and female. The first words in the delivery room are "It's a boy," or "It's a girl." The boys stand on one side of the gym and the girls on the other during the junior high dances. There is a difference between the genders, the full extent of which we are not fully aware. It is important to affirm the difference of the genders and yet celebrate the diversity among the united human race. Attention paid to gender needs to be see in its proper light as a component of the creation order and also as something that was tainted by sin. As we look at the relationship between gender and image-bearing, some other topics are appropriate to discuss: the analogy of the Trinity using gender, ascripitivism based on gender, the effect of sin on gender relations, and the revolutions of feminism and homosexuality. This is a full slate to discuss and it could be discussed for a lifetime, but this paper will take a short time to reflect what it means to human, and what it means to be male and female.

While the duality of male and female is not fully essential to the biblical notion of humanity's image bearing, it is a vital and original component of it. As Mary Van Leeuwen says in many pages, there is not as a great of a gulf between male and female as some would like us to believe. It is a myth to say that boys perform better at science-type tasks and girls better excel with the verbal arts. Certainly we can all think of a female scientist or a male writer who breaks the stereotypes. But there is a distinction. When God created, he created two genders. It is part of the creation order, so it must be important. We affirm, as God did, that the creation before the fall was good, and the distinction between the two genders is part of the original intent for humanity. We have a responsibility to respect all people, regardless of how gender affects their lives. We must loudly affirm that everyone who is broken in terms of gender (the homosexual, someone born without the correct chromosomes, for example) still bears the image of God. Those broken ones clearly carry thion from the creation order. The duality between male and female, while part of the original creation order, is not essential to being image bearers.

The second point on the table is Barth's claim that we can take this duality of man and women as analogous to the divine Trinity. This claim is difficult to take on many levels, while it may not be a wholly useless analogy. While no analogy perfectly describes the Trinity, this one carries with it many dangerous connotations. The chief of which is its being a social analogy of the Trinity. The creeds and the traditions of the West do not say the Trinity is a loosely associated group of related members who are called a family. Looking at the Trinity in terms of marriage (as is best to do with the duality of male and female) brings us to the same place. The Trinity is grander than that and even more intimately connected than a family. There is much more mystery in the Trinity than is present in a marriage or a family.

Secondly, this analogy is disturbing because of its possible sexual connotations. Sexual activity is an important part of the duality between male and female, and the intimacy of the Trinity is constant and deeper than that of sexual activity. The Bible is clear that God is impassioned towards sexual activity unlike all other gods. Thirdly, this analogy is difficult because it makes it too easy to anthropomorphize the Trinity by ascribing gender to the members of the Godhead. If we try, we can assign feminine qualities to the Holy Spirit and masculine qualities to the Son, but they clearly are beyond gender and all of those human characteristics. To be fair, this analogy does help us to think about the differentiation of the members of the Godhead within their roles and their connection within their collective work. But this is not an analogy I would use with today's people who are so confused when it comes to uses of gender.

The next difficult topic contained within this discussion about the "wonder of human sexuality" is the role ascripitivism we assign to people based on gender. I do think, perhaps, this is easier to discuss than other topics because this is not as much matter of the creation order. (Sure, Eve was created to be a helper, but that does not mean women cannot be astronauts). Ascripitivism is a thoroughly culturally conditioned notion. We are unified in Christ and all of us, male and fe-

male, bear the image of God. But being male does not make one the designated driver more than being female makes one the baker of cookies for birthday treats. All humans have different gifts and abilities and each one needs to use his or her gifts and God calls in traditional or nontraditional roles.

I am not willing, however, to open this up in a way that ruins the basic family unit. Men still need to marry women, but the exact designation of roles can left up to prayerful and wise discussions. It is important to add that for some, purposeful singleness and friendships are their vocation. What I am not willing to grant is clear sinfulness taking the place of family units. Van Leeuwen also does not tear down the traditional family roles, nor does she disallow other godly vocations. She calls for us "in this vocation [marriage] and others, [to] be prepared to exercise responsible Christian freedom and to allow others to do likewise" (185). We need to let each man and each woman live a life worthy of his or her calling and leave behind ascripitivism of roles for its own or tradition's sake.

Ascribing roles without thought or out of chauvinism is clearly a result of our brokenness. Sin and redemption have radically affected human sexuality, so this will be the next topic on the docket. There is a clear creation order which involves sexuality. There is male and female, who in tandem, are blessed with the task to "be fruitful and multiply." Sexual intercourse, intimacy, marriage and sexual identity are all part of this original, good creation order. When Adam and Eve fell, so also was this good creation order spoiled. Sexual intercourse gave way to deviancy; intimacy gave way to pornography; marriage gave way to fornication; and sexual identity gave way to confusion about sexual orientation. Surely, not every component of sex is evil, the whole fabric of human sexuality has changed. We still have vestiges of the good creation, but on the whole, we live in a sinful world. Our redemption begins the process of making all things new and the restoration of the creation. While it will not be complete in our lifetimes, the redemption makes it possible for humanity to live in a good and right way. Those who have been redeemed need to seek healing for their sexual brokenness and live lives most excellent--lives worthy of their calling. Because of redemption, human sexuality can regain what it lost when it fell.

In a real and sometimes valid way, feminism is a response to this broken sexuality and the general brokenness that humanity suffers. It is important to define responsible feminism before one can say that it is a valid component of redemption. *The Christian Women's Declaration* gives a balanced and biblical view of feminism. It deposes the radical feminists, the kind that bashes men and destroys the creation order. Women have freedom as Christians as much as men do and that allows them to live liberated lives rather than the lives of victims. Too often they are weak and helpless at the hands of stronger men, but that is a result of sinfulness rather than the true biblical reality of freedom in Jesus Christ. But the radical feminists also make women weak.

The radical feminists' agenda has revolutionary, not reformist goals. This agenda demeans the role of women past and present and seeks to restructure society. Rather than liberating women by providing them equal opportunity to develop their fullest God-given talents...this agenda, in fact, leads to women being demanded, their lives destroyed and their spirits enslaved. (3-4).

Both radical feminism and chauvinism destroy the creation order and women's lives. Neither one allow women to stand firm in the freedom that comes from Christ.

A feminism that affirms the gifts of women and their status as human beings full of worth and dignity is surely in line with the Biblical witness. Jesus Christ is the Lord of these feminists. This definition of freedom falls well within the biblical parameters and the lordship of Jesus Christ. It is his example that we feminists in this vain follow--his example of loving the weak and uniting His people in a world where there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female. If the lordship of Jesus Christ is not recognized, feminism falls prey to humanism and is as equally destructive as chauvinism. When Christ is Lord of all, women and men can all stand in the freedom of redemption.

I have left one of the most challenging issues to last. Like the issues above, we need to affirm the creation order while recognizing our brokenness. We need to affirm the status of all humanity as image bearers of God while recognizing the sin of humanity. Homosexuals have surely been victims of bigotry throughout the centuries, which is a tragedy. They are as human as the person next door, worthy of life and justice. They can and are loved by God and are gifted with good gifts. It needs to be said, however, that homosexuality is a sin. It is not part of the good creation order nor it evidence of the way things are supposed to be. Like its feminists counterparts, the radical homosexual agenda seeks to reorder society, especially in terms of its moral and societal orderings. It is irresponsible and incorrect. There is often an inappropriate use of freedom within the radical homosexuals when they seek an entitlement to everything they want. They also also must use their freedom correctly in Christ

by living responsibly. They need to actively seek redemption and healing from their brokenness. Their lifestyle has strayed from the original creation order. It does not need to be celebrated or trumpeted as the best way to live. The souls behind the homosexuals need to be affirmed as human beings and given all honor due a human creature. The Christian community sorely needs to reach out the homosexuals among us and love them for their status as image bearers. It does not need to ignore their sin. The church needs to love as Jesus loves in a full embrace of the human and with the call for the person to repent and walk away from their sin.

In this post-sexual revolution world, issues of homosexuality and sexuality in general present a challenge to us who care about fellow humans. We are called to live into community and are called as male and female to live in monogamous, intimate marriages. (Not all are called to marriage, but most are). As the people of God, we need to affirm the good creation order and actively seek the one who comes with healing in His Wings for the restoration to that order. We need to recognize that all human sexuality has been tainted with sin, but there is corrective norm we can follow--that of Scripture. The Scripture calls us, as ones created male and female, to uphold and value fellow humans who share that vital role of image bearers. It also calls us to live in freedom in Christ. We are free to love. When we are free to love, we can affirm freedom while reaching out with healing to the broken and hurting world. must use their freedom correctly in Christ by living responsibly. They need to actively seek redemption and healing from their brokenness. Their lifestyle has strayed from the original creation order. It does not need to be celebrated or trumpeted as the best way to live. The souls behind the homosexuals need to be affirmed as human beings and given all honor due a human creature. The Christian community sorely needs to reach out the homosexuals among us and love them for their status as image bearers. It does not need to ignore their sin. The church needs to love as Jesus loves in a full embrace of the human and with the call for the person to repent and walk away from their sin.

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Editorial Remarks

At some due point in time myself or someone else should work on a discourse on the theology of Murphy's Law and the Reformed Perspective. I myself have some where read (though this can only be taken as an urban legend and hearsay) that the concept of Murphy's law, the idea that anything which can possibly go wrong at the wrong moment shall inevitably go wrong, was invented by an Army Corp of Engineers some time during World War II. Now I myself believe in a sovereign Lord who is in control, but sometimes I just imagine him up there and at that one moment in time, grabbing Paul and whistling for Peter to come over saying "Hey, you gotta see this one, been planning it for eons!" And then it happens, either great fortune, or I'm flat on my face, usually the latter. And yet I trudge on.

Despite the Natural Law of Murphy, there is one note I would like to make. Robert Bristol submitted a beautifully articulate piece of work "An Analysis of the Walls of Jericho," with pictures, graphs and all. His research was complete, his thesis strong—yet, due to the afore mentioned law of luck, his paper was not able to make it into this edition of *The Stromata*. Robert, I do apologize.

-Josh!