



# STROMATA

Volume 53 B  
Spring 2012

# Stromata

Σ

Volume 53 B

Spring 2012

Student Body of  
Calvin Theological Seminary  
3233 Burton Street SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546-4387

© Student Body of Calvin Theological Seminary 2012

Executive Committee of the Student Senate  
2011-2012

Phillip Westra, President  
Ashley Stam, Vice-President  
Mark Langenbach, Treasurer  
Jessica Driesenga, Secretary

Edited for the Student Body of  
Calvin Theological Seminary  
by John C. Medendorp



The views expressed in *Stromata* reflect the personal judgments of the individual authors. They do not necessarily represent the position of the Executive Committee, Editor, Student Senate, or the Student Body. Individual authors retain responsibility for accuracy of all references.

Back issues of *Stromata* from 2001 to the present are available online at our new website: [www.calvinseminary.edu/stromata](http://www.calvinseminary.edu/stromata)

All printed issues of *Stromata* are held at the Hekman Library of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

## Table of Contents

<b>Editorial</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Book Reviews</b>	
Richard Bauckham, <i>Jesus and the Eyewitnesses</i> <i>John C. Medendorp</i>	<b>5</b>
John Dickson, <i>The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission</i> <i>Katherine Garvelink Hirschberg</i>	<b>8</b>
Diarmaid MacCullough, <i>Christianity</i> <i>Adrian de Lange</i>	<b>12</b>
Richard J. Mouw, <i>Abraham Kuyper</i> <i>Mark VanderWerf</i>	<b>14</b>
Christian Smith, <i>The Bible Made Impossible</i> <i>Joshua C. Smith</i>	<b>17</b>
Walter Wangerin, Jr., <i>The Book of the Dun Cow</i> <i>Peter Rockhold</i>	<b>19</b>
<b>Sermons</b>	
Seeing as God Sees <i>Kyle Dieleman</i>	<b>21</b>
The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl <i>Darren M. Pollock</i>	<b>28</b>
<b>Essays</b>	
“The Inner Human Logic of Forgiveness” <i>Kyle Brooks</i>	<b>36</b>
Calvin’s Use of Cicero <i>Michael Kornelis</i>	<b>44</b>
The Personhood of the Holy Spirit <i>Sunghoon Lee</i>	<b>70</b>
Children at the Lord’s Table <i>Reita Yazawa</i>	<b>92</b>
<b>Liturgical Reading</b>	
Beloved Sons <i>Jane &amp; Doug Porter</i>	<b>104</b>

## Editorial

It is no small secret that most of our life in school consists of reading and writing. We read books and articles, syllabi and papers, blogs and news. We write sermons and reflections, essays and papers, letters and blogs and poems and stories and prayers. And the two practices often go hand-in-hand. We write about what we read. We read the things we write. Sometimes we love them. Sometimes we hate them. Sometimes we could care less. But whether we like it or not, both disciplines are part of our life.

For this reason, communities like the seminary often develop venues for sharing their readings and writings—like the Stromata and the Kerux. By reading together, and reading each others' writings together, we come to know each other in a different way than eating lunch in the student center, or serving together on a committee. Through writing, we expose something deep inside of us to another. Through reading, we catch a glimpse of the profound inner-thought of our peers, what we care for, and what drives us.

What we read shapes us. It shapes us not only as academics, but as people. Professor Leder has a great article in which he wrote, "Those who read little, learn little about reading; but the little they learn is applied to all they read."<sup>1</sup> And this is a proverb I have found to be true time and time again. Reading forms us. It shapes us. And I think this is exactly what is meant by a sentiment that I have heard (perhaps apocryphally) attributed to C. S. Lewis: that to sit down to read a book is an investment, because it can change you, for better or for worse. A large part of my job as editor is to make sure this journal is a worthy investment for us all to read, together. I hope I have done it justice. And I hope you read much.

This issue is quite exciting. I spent a great deal of time poring over the many excellent submissions I received. We have sermons, essays, a liturgical reading, and for the first time, book reviews. I hope you find it as fruitful to read as I did to edit. Enjoy! —*J.C.M.*

---

<sup>1</sup>Arie Leder, "Reading Exodus to Learn and Learning to Read Exodus," *Calvin Theological Journal* 34 (1999), 11.

## Book Reviews

Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006. 552 pages.

For close to two centuries now, the quest for the historical Jesus has dominated the academic discipline of biblical studies. Despite numerous criticisms from theologians, pastors, and even biblical scholars themselves, a slew of works on the historical Jesus are available from contemporary scholars, including Marcus Borg, N. T. Wright, and many others (Bauckham has a more complete list on p. 3). But as Bauckham points out already on page 2, there is a fundamental problem with the “quest for the historical Jesus”:

We...use the the phrase “the historical Jesus” to mean, not all that Jesus was, but Jesus insofar as his historical reality is accessible to us...[but] this Jesus, the earthly Jesus as we can know him, is the Jesus of the canonical Gospels....Christian faith has trusted that in these texts we encounter the real Jesus, and it is hard to see how Christian faith and theology can work with a radically distrusting attitude to these Gospels.

Richard Bauckham’s 2006 publication on the genre of the Gospels, therefore, is an enormous endeavor. In this work, he sets out to not only establish that the Gospels are eyewitness testimony, but to establish that they are *trustworthy* testimony—faithful eyewitness accounts of the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He formalizes his thesis on page 6:

I shall be arguing in this book that the Gospel texts are much closer to the form in which the eyewitnesses told their stories...than is commonly envisaged in current scholarship. This is what gives the Gospels their character as testimony. They embody the testimony of the eyewitnesses, not of course without editing and interpretation, but in a way that is substantially faithful to how the eyewitnesses themselves told it, since the Evangelists were in more or less direct contact with eyewitnesses, not removed from them by a long process of anonymous transmission of the traditions.

The evangelists, then, some of whom were likely eyewitnesses themselves, collected and organized eyewitness information into a coherent and theologically powerful account of the life of Jesus.

Although this theory does necessitate that the Gospels were written within the lifetimes of the eyewitnesses, it does not necessitate a radically early dating of the Gospels. “We [in contemporary biblical scholarship] imagine the traditions passing through many minds and mouths before they reached the writers of the Gospels. But the period in question is actually that of a relatively (for that period) long lifetime” (7). The widely accepted dates for the writing of the four gospels are well within a believable, albeit long, lifetime for a first-century Palestinian Jew.

Bauckham’s argument explores three major points of interest: the use of named persons, methods of oral tradition, and the nature of eyewitness testimony. In each, he incorporates important new publications and critiques some dominant academic views. He begins in chapters 3-8 with an analysis of named persons in the Gospels. Bauckham argues that the evangelists follow a common historiographic practice of specifically naming persons who are important eyewitnesses and can testify to the events that occurred. Chapter 4 introduces Tal Ilan’s *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity* (2002) as an important new resource for Gospel studies. Thus, chapter 5 discusses the list of the twelve disciples, which (excepting Thaddaeus and Judas, who may be the same person, cf. 99-101), is consistent everywhere it occurs.

In chapter 6, Bauckham introduces a significant literary device: the eyewitness inclusio, a practice in which the primary eyewitness on whose testimony the work relies is the first and last named character (other than the subject of the testimony, i.e. in the Gospels: Jesus) in the work. He identifies this device not only in three of the Gospels (124-32), but also in other ancient biographies (132-45). The following chapters (7-8) carefully and exhaustively apply all of the preceding studies to the Gospel of Mark.

Chapters 9-11 shift from analysis of named persons to the topic of oral tradition. Bauckham begins by analyzing Papias’ fragments on Matthew and Mark, and how they impact our understanding of the Gospels as testimony and history. He then moves on to discuss models of oral tradition, including a thorough and helpful critique of the form critical method (241-9), and explores alternatives (249ff). In the end, Bauckham adopts Kenneth Bailey’s category of “formal controlled tradition” (from *Asia Journal of Theology* 5

[1991]: 34-51), claiming that this category best describes the transmission of the gospel tradition, going all the way back to Jesus' teaching as a rabbi (it ought to be noted that this is in disagreement with Bailey himself, who claims that the Gospels were transmitted by means of *informal* controlled tradition).

The third point of Bauckham's argument (chs. 12-13) is to establish the plausibility that the Gospels are eyewitness testimony, contra the common perspective in current scholarship that the Gospels developed from anonymous and communal Jesus traditions in various communities. Chapter 13, interestingly, surveys contemporary psychological studies on eyewitness memory and applies their findings to the gospel accounts.

The next three chapters (15-17) are dedicated to the particular question of the Gospel of John, in which Bauckham concludes, "very unfashionably, that an eyewitness wrote it" (6). These chapters analyze named persons, eyewitness inclusio, and other important factors Bauckham uses to establish the fourth Gospel as an eyewitness account, beautifully arranged in accordance with the ancient genre of bibliography. The last chapter (18) concludes the work, claiming that the Gospels, as well-ordered accounts of collected eyewitness testimony, present a faithful and trustworthy account of the person of Jesus for the church.

Some may be uncomfortable with the argument that the Gospels involve both historical facts *and* interpretation, but it needs to be understood that this is an important qualification if his argument is to stand. Bauckham is attempting to move away from the "historical Jesus" scholarship that has dominated the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and he does this by arguing, along with ancient historians like Lucian and Papias, that history is not (and has never been) a mere sharing of facts. There is always interpretation and ordering of those facts into a proper narrative, which has both informational as well as artistic value (cf. pp. 25-27).

One critique of the work is that Bauckham spends an inordinate amount of time developing what seem to be pet projects, as they do not contribute substantially to his argument. He spends two whole chapters (ch.16-17) establishing his belief that the Gospel of John was written not by John the son of Zebedee, but by John the Elder. Likewise, his argument that Matthew and Levi cannot be the same

person ends with the conclusion that the author of the Gospel knew Matthew's former occupation but not his conversion story, and simply harmonized the Marcan account into his narrative—which seems unnecessary (108-12). Also, his adoption of Bailey's categories while firmly critiquing Bailey's scholarship has opened him up to criticism on that front.

All in all, Bauckham's work is a refreshing break from the tiresome squabbles of contemporary New Testament studies. He incorporates important new scholarship in a way that forces academics to look at the Gospels in new ways. But perhaps most importantly, his work offers a well-researched argument and a strong academic voice in support of what has always been the core doctrine of the Church universal concerning the Gospels: that in their testimony, we encounter Jesus Christ.

—John C. Medendorp

Dickson, John. *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010. 240 pages.

The title sets the book up for a fall. It's catchy, but can Dickson really deliver "the best kept secret"? The title seems to have been written by a marketing division. The book, however, does deliver a fresh, Biblical perspective on what it means to share one's faith.

John Dickson is the senior minister of an Anglican church in Sydney, director of the Centre for Public Christianity, and a professor at Macquarie University. He holds a degree in theology and a doctorate in ancient history. Although he possesses these impressive credentials, Dickson's writing style is accessible. In support of his points, he uses powerful contemporary examples as well as Biblical scholarship, which he makes accessible to a wide audience. He communicates important truth about sharing the Gospel in a way that is readable and applicable for the general population of adult Christians. In this review I aim to present Dickson's thesis and the supporting points that I found most valuable. I will conclude with my evaluation of the book.

Already in the introduction Dickson gives an apt, casual summary of what sharing one's faith is: "friendly conversations about my

favourite topic [the Gospel]” (19). He also lays out his thesis in the introduction:

But perhaps the best kept secret of Christian mission is that the Bible lists a whole range of activities that promote Christ to the world and draw others toward him. These include prayer, godly behavior, financial assistance, the public praise of God (in church) and, as already mentioned, answering people’s questions. (22)

This range of activities he calls “promoting the gospel,” while evangelism is “proclaiming the gospel” (23). Dickson aims to show the breadth of the mission we are all called to be a part of.

For Dickson, the basis of mission is the doctrine that there is one God (27). From this he concludes that everyone has a responsibility to worship the one God, who is worthy of all of our praise (33). We are all “in the presence of greatness” and it should be just as natural to tell people about this Lord as it might be to point out a celebrity (36-37). He begins with God’s sovereignty, which is then a basis for Jesus saving work and God’s offer of relationship with him and salvation to us.

Four topics that Dickson writes about set this book apart from any other book on evangelism or mission that I have encountered. These topics are: the works of the Church, loving behavior, public praise, and answering for our faith. Although someone must verbally bring the gospel message in order for it to be accepted and received, these are four valuable ways in which Christians, who do not have the gift of evangelism, can promote the gospel.

In his section on the works of the Church, Dickson points to instances in which the kindness of the church or of a particular Christian has revealed God’s love to someone. In one instance a church paid for an expensive operation for a mother in the community, initially bringing the family into the church. Then even after they drifted away, the kindness of the church left them with a positive impression of Christianity. This encouraged a daughter to return with her family years later (86).

Then Dickson presents the larger example of the good deeds of the early Church. These early Christians dramatically impacted the Roman Empire with “food programs, hospitals and orphanages.”

Their impact was significant enough that Emperor Julian “became fearful that Christianity might take over the world forever by the stealth of good works” (92-93)! Through kindness and good deeds this church was the light of the world and attracted many converts from the people of the Roman Empire. Our churches are called to continue providing this light to the world, which promotes the gospel by showing the love of God.

Next Dickson writes about beautiful behavior of individual Christians, demonstrating the importance of Christians connecting with and caring for people in ways society would not generally expect. Groups in the community, which are begun by church members but not focused on evangelism, are a great way to promote friendships between Christians and other people in the community. Among other stories, he gives the example of a woman who is part of a play group run by Christian mothers. When her two-year-old daughter became terribly sick, she and her family experienced incredible, loving care from that church community. This led them to investigate why these people were so different and eventually led to their family coming to faith. Loving behavior, even from Christians who do not give a verbal gospel presentation themselves, motivates people to explore Christianity. It is not unusual for this behavior to be credited for being “100 percent responsible for my faith” by those who experience it (86).

Another interesting point Dickson makes is in on the power of people simply attending a Christian worship service. He demonstrates through contemporary examples and through Biblical scholarship that people can be and often are drawn into the church by attending a regular service. He even traces this back to the Old Testament times when gentiles were supposed to hear the praises of the Jewish people. And he points out examples of Psalms in which the people are to declare God’s glory to the nations (31). Seeing our genuine praise and experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit among us can have a powerful impact. Just attending a baptism can have a major impact on a person, as he illustrates in the story of Nikki Gremmell (155-156). Bringing a friend to church can be an effective way to promote the gospel without

resorting to “seeker services.”

The chapter which impacted me the most, prompting me to immediately give it to my husband for him to read, is Dickson’s chapter on “The Apt Reply” (172-189). We are not all given the gift of evangelism, but all of us can have an answer to questions about our faith, the Church, or God that come up naturally in conversation. Everyone must answer for their faith. Even our casual comments can have a big impact. You don’t have to do a gospel presentation to make a difference.

Dickson illustrates this with a story of a Christian man who is faced with a non-Christian friend’s criticism of hypocritical Christians. The Christian replies to his friend by saying, “C’mon mate. Don’t go worrying about those people. God will look after them. You worry about yourself and God. That’s the important thing.” This comment prompted the non-Christian to seriously consider his lack of a relationship with God. And after he did worry about himself and God, as his friend had suggested, he became a Christian. His Christian friend was stunned that the casual comment, which he had completely forgotten about, had made such an impact (188-189).

Simply being prepared to briefly respond to questions or comments about our faith is a crucial way to promote the gospel. Dickson’s Biblical support of this point has the potential to relieve the guilt of many Christians who do not have the gift of evangelism. Each of us can develop the ability to carry on friendly, casual conversations about the gospel.

Dickson’s book presents a better basis for mission than what I have often heard. For Dickson, mission is rooted in a full Christian worldview, rather than in a narrow desire for the personal, eternal salvation of one individual. This book also shows that all Christians can be involved in mission in a way that fits their personal gifts. He alleviates the guilt often brought on by the implication that every Christian must be an evangelist. However, he has still managed to write a book of encouragement and practical instruction for any Christian. This book has the potential to excite readers about getting involved in mission in a life altering

way through their own individual abilities. Promoting the Gospel is a lifestyle that all believers should aspire to, regardless of whether or not each has the gift of evangelism. Dickson's book leaves readers inspired to do just that.

—*Katherine Garvelink Hirschberg*

MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*. New York: Penguin Books, 2010. 1184 pages.

Diarmaid MacCulloch's history of the first three thousand years of Christianity stretches back 1000 years BCE to the foundations of the Greek empire and, at roughly the same time in a different part of the world, the genesis of the tiny nation of Israel. To the modern reader who protests that the history of Christianity extends a mere two thousand years back in the narrative of human history, MacCulloch's telling opening chapter responds:

Why begin in Greece and not in a stable in Bethlehem of Judea? Because in the beginning was the Word...This *logos* means far more than simply 'word': *logos* is the story itself. *Logos* echoes with significances which give voice to the restlessness and tension embodied in the Christian message. (19)

Such an introduction highlights the greatest strength of MacCulloch's book: he takes the Christian scripture as intentional and formative literature, even if not always as authoritative.

In his introduction, MacCulloch describes himself as a former Anglican, a third-generation son of the church. He reminisces:

I was brought up in the presence of the Bible, and I remember with affection what it was like to hold a dogmatic position on the statements of Christian belief. I would now describe myself as a candid friend of Christianity. (11)

With this background, MacCulloch's aim in writing is not any sort of apologetic for Christianity: as a result, he makes no truth claims about Christian belief except to say that they are full of meaning and significance. Instead, he attempts at a thoroughly rational assessment of three thousand years of cultural narratives in which religion and culture, politics, and economics are forever inseparable. MacCulloch's chapters devote considerably less

energy to theologizing than other, similar works. But instead of getting bogged down in theological jargon and individual disputes, he overviews decades at a time, painting movements with broad strokes and chronicling “punchlines” in the development of western civilizations, all in an attempt to “live with the puzzle of wonderment how something so apparently crazy can be so captivating to millions of other members of my species” (11). While MacCulloch makes clear that his former Christian beliefs have died, his respect for the religion of his ancestors nevertheless lives on. And it is MacCulloch’s obvious and profound respect for the Christian religion—not his personal faith—that makes his tome so worthwhile for understanding Christianity, and the world.

As much as MacCulloch’s work is a study of the history of Christianity (and as such, is also a study of the history of the formation of Western Civilizations), it is equally an examination of the cultural anthropology of Christianity and the world—that is, how humanity has grown and developed over the past three thousand years. Ironically for MacCulloch, the religious and cultural narratives of the millennia immediately behind us find their greatest purpose in addressing developments in the story of a first century CE man born in Bethlehem—from the orthodox “boundaries” of Nicaea and Chalcedon to modern quests for the historical Jesus. In fact, this Jesus and his followers prove so significant that MacCulloch finds one or the other present in every significant “punchline” of the past two thousand years.

Because his work covers three thousand years of history in a mere thousand pages, MacCulloch does not attempt to be comprehensive. Nonetheless, he is immensely helpful in discerning the most important religious and cultural developments in the western world, describing many of Christian history’s key figures, and delineating clear connections between religious developments and their politico-economic and social implications. As a “candid friend,” MacCulloch’s rational depiction of Christian history is not only balanced—admitting faults while also celebrating triumphs—but his testimony supports the Christian against modern writers who want to reinterpret history. As one example, MacCulloch

describes the Rosicrucians as a “fantasy [that] was presented as documented reality;” (773) an invented secret society that never existed and, a decade after its invention, sparked public hysteria and led to anti-Catholic politics. MacCulloch’s belief in the veracity of Christian claims, then, does not influence his accurate retelling of the history; and his narrative falls in line with the classic account of the orthodox believer and, as such, proves a valuable resource for any and every serious student of history.

As MacCulloch closes the book with a summation of modern history, he marks it paradoxical that so many agnostic and atheistic poets, musicians, and artists found their greatest works in the structured Christian faith (cf. 1014ff). MacCulloch concludes that “unlike Jesus Christ, historians in the Western secular tradition stemming from the Enlightenment do not think in terms of punchlines to the human story. This history [one of punchlines] can draw attention to what has gone before: an extraordinary diversity called Christianity” (1015). If Christianity is extraordinary for no other reason than its continued and ever-diversifying influence in world history, then, on MacCulloch’s testimony alone, the Christian religion is the one thing in our world most worthy of study. On the chance that the history of Christianity is extraordinary for reasons beyond its mere influence of societies and civilizations, then those like MacCulloch who study it, and even the most skeptical critic, have the opportunity to find that the Christian narrative is true not only in that it happened historically, but also in that it continues to happen. The *logos*—the Word of God and the person of Christ—continues to drive history: from its beginning, through its middle, and to its end.

—Adrian de Lange

Mouw, Richard J. *Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011. 136 pages.

Richard Mouw has given the church a gift by offering an accessible (136 pages) introduction to a prolific and influential Christian theologian and politician, Abraham Kuyper. Mouw, as

usual, writes with a gracious familiarity of his subject matter—a style that inspires confidence that he writes out of a personal appreciation of Kuyper and his work. Therefore, when he writes with adulation of Kuyper’s thinking, the praise arises out of the personal benefit that Kuyper has had in his own life of living at the intersections of faith and culture. Likewise, when Mouw speaks with hesitation on some point of Kuyperianism, the critique comes out of his personal struggles with applying Kuyper’s thought in changing cultures and contexts.

Abraham Kuyper’s influence has long been felt within Christian communities that arise out of the Dutch Reformed tradition, but his influence has increasingly spilled out, with great benefit, into the broader evangelical church. However, even among theological circles that know the name Kuyper, little is often known about his thought beyond the often quoted maxim: “There is not one square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry ‘Mine!’” (4).

While Kuyper’s work and writings spanned from personal piety to pneumatology, Mouw focuses more narrowly on introducing the reader to Kuyper’s theological thinking on culture and politics. As such, the book is structured in two sections: “Kuyper on Theology and Culture: An Overview” and “Kuyper for the Twenty-First Century.”

Mouw’s section on “Kuyper on Theology and Culture” serves as a concise summary of some familiar Kuyperian terms such as ‘cultural mandate’ and ‘sphere sovereignty’ and succinctly corrects some common misunderstandings about those terms. However, in addition to covering the familiar ground of Kuyperianism, Mouw also introduces a less-known, but equally helpful, Kuyper-ism: pluriformity. According to Kuyper, God has created a diverse creation and therefore delights in that diversity or pluriformity (Mouw’s more user-friendly term is “many-ness”). The fact that God “had deliberately woven many-ness into the very fabric of creation” (17) ought to cause us both to rejoice in the God who holds the many-ness of the universe together and to oppose attempts to squeeze the created world into uniform structures. This

doctrine of pluriformity becomes particularly helpful to us in the twenty-first century as it pertains to the church and the multiplication of the denominations. Quoting Kuyper, Mouw writes that by recognizing God's pleasure in many-ness all the different Christian denominations can be placed "side by side, as differing in degrees of purity, but always remaining in some way or other a manifestation of one holy and catholic Church of Christ in Heaven" (17).

Another especially timely and helpful focus of Mouw's treatment of Kuyper is his discussion of the church, the kingdom of God, and politics (pgs 28-59). In a time of highly charged Christian political rhetoric from the Right and the Left (each, in various ways, seeking to use Kuyper in their favor), Mouw's analysis of Kuyper's political thought is most useful. Kuyper, who served as a member of the Dutch Parliament and later as Prime Minister of the Netherlands, had much to say about politics from a theological perspective and Mouw does a very good job of exegeting Kuyper's late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century political comments and applying them to the political situations of twenty-first century North American political debates. Whether the reader is conservative or liberal, Kuyper's theologically informed political theories will challenge the reader to consider anew the role and reach of the government.

The second half of Mouw's book falls under the heading "Kuyper for the Twenty-First Century" in which Mouw's treatment gets particularly personal as he suggests areas where he thinks Kuyper needs some *aggiornamento*—some "catching-up-to-date." In this section, Mouw suggests that those who follow in Kuyper's theological path would do well to learn from the recent movements of evangelicalism, Pentecostalism, and ecumenicalism. At the same time, Mouw suggests, Kuyper has much to offer the church in her struggle with modern dilemmas of Islamic threats and religious pluralism.

Particularly interesting to those readers who have some familiarity with concepts like worldview and sphere sovereignty will be Mouw's critical examinations of these entrenched tenants of

Kuyperianism. For instance, concerning the Kuyperian catchphrase, “worldview,” he suggests that the traditional language of “having a Christian worldview” wrongly implies that the Christian faith can be neatly packaged into trite theological answers. Instead, Mouw suggests that it would be more helpful—and more faithful to Kuyper—to speak of “*engaging in world-viewing*”—an ongoing practice of humbly “allowing the Bible to shed light on the paths we walk” (93).

Whether the reader is unaware of Kuyper’s thinking or a robust Kuyperian (or neo-Kuyperian), he or she will be challenged to consider anew how theology and culture intersect and inform one another. Readers from all theological tribes will benefit from Mouw’s clear and concise treatment of this great thinker.

—Mark VanderWerf

Smith, Christian. *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not A Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos, 2011. 220 pages.

*The Bible Made Impossible* is a reasonably informed discussion about biblical hermeneutics. It is one of the most unadulterated ventures of author Christian Smith, a Harvard trained professor of Sociology at Notre Dame, into the realm of positive theological discussion. Its overall structure follows Smith’s two-fold purpose. In the first half of the book, Smith defines and condemns the hermeneutical practice he calls “Biblicism.” The latter half of the book suggests an alternative model of interpretation.

Smith identifies the central problem of evangelical interpretation to be pervasive interpretive pluralism. This lack of agreement on what the Bible teaches, as demonstrated by a copious amount of citations, proves that holding to the predominant, evangelical hermeneutic is impossible. That hermeneutic he terms Biblicism: “a particular theory about and style of using the Bible that is defined by a constellation of related assumptions and beliefs about the Bible’s nature, purpose and function” (p. 4). Ten assumptions make up the constellation, including (nuanced understandings of)

such items as scripture's internal harmony, *sola scriptura*, scripture as divine writing, and commonsense hermeneutics.

The rest of the first section comprises Smith's argument against Biblicism in light of its core problem, pervasive interpretive pluralism, and a few other corollary issues. Some specific examples of interpretive pluralism are laid out, as well as the history and psycho/social background of the problem. From there, Smith turns from deconstruction to construction.

The crux of his proposed new hermeneutical framework to displace Biblicism is Christ. Christ should be the controlling factor, the hermeneutic key for understanding the Bible. This means interpreting the Bible so that Christ is its clear subject matter, rather than simply looking for meaningful tidbits that speak to us personally (p. 98). It also means "the doctrine of revelation, scripture, or inspiration must ... be properly located within the doctrine of God and *not* as a foundational prolegomena or epistemological preface" (p. 100, italics original). Full embrace of this hermeneutic will center the church in the true unity of scripture, the Word, and provide it with the means to weigh whether an issue is one of scripture's central points or *adiaphora* ("matters of indifference," p. 112). Full embrace of this (revived) hermeneutic requires allowing space for the ambiguity and vagaries in the text. Traditional foundationalism, fronted doctrines of inspiration, and the predominant view(s) of biblical authority will all have to be left behind. The resulting, robust evangelicalism can then break free of the holds of Biblicism.

Reading Smith's book would benefit anyone serving contemporary Protestant churches. While he clearly intends to address those who explicitly claim the title "evangelical", even those outside that category should consider this work in light of evangelicalism's widespread influence. His criticism, while not without its own issues, is needed in many conservative congregations and institutions. Pervasive interpretive pluralism is a significant, existential issue that promises to grow more acute as the world grows more connected. Smith obviously takes special issue at literalistic and "handbook" (ie. the Bible has something to

say about every aspect of life from fashion to weather to gardening, etc.) modes of interpretation. But in those regards, Smith's annoyance is on target. Encountering his argument and research against Biblicism will cause many to examine and hopefully improve the way they read scripture.

Smith's proposed hermeneutic, which may or may not accomplish his goal of avoiding the "dead end of Protestant liberalism" (p. 171), proves vague and, for the current milieu of Biblical scholarship, problematic. The Christocentric hermeneutic has long been a part of biblical interpretation. Even recently, some are championing a return to it (cf. *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens* by Michael Williams). But in light of the multitude of hermeneutic methodologies, especially those in Old Testament studies, most will not be won over by Smith's proposal. A Christological aspect, even as a central focus to interpretation cannot be questioned. Whether it should proscribe the limits of proper interpretation is another matter. Those who favor Christological interpretation will find much to agree with. Others who utilize different methodologies will at least have an interesting argument to mull over. Regardless, Smith's book is well written, well researched, and well thought out. Especially in light of the current theological climate, it is certainly worth a thoughtful read.

—Joshua C. Smith

Wangerin, Walter, Jr. *The Book of the Dun Cow*. New York: Harper & Row, 1978. 241 pages.

This semester, the seminary community read *Letters from the Land of Cancer* by Walter Wangerin, Jr. As a result of this book, I became very intrigued with the author. I decided to look up his other books, and his most famous fiction book is "The Book of the Dun Cow." Calvin College is also put on the play version of this book this semester.

*The Book of the Dun Cow* came out in 1978 with very positive critical reception. Some of the characters were taken from Middle English literature, mainly the Canterbury Tales, though the story

itself is very original. The main character is a rooster by the name of Chauntecleer. Chauntecleer was an evil rooster who repented of his sins and turned to God. God then placed Chauntecleer in charge of a coop and the land around it. Life becomes difficult for the Chauntecleer because of difficulties around the coop, including constant rain and lack of sunshine. Without the rooster's knowledge, there is an enemy planning an attack against the rooster's land. This enemy is Wurm, who has been placed in the middle of the earth as punishment. Wurm comes up with a decisive plan to escape his prison and take over the earth.

This book has an exciting plot filled with laughs, sorrows, and vivid battle sequences. The strength of the book, however, lies not in the plot, but in the character development. Chauntecleer develops a dependence on God throughout the novel. Mundo Coni, a melancholy dog and friend to Chauntecleer, receives purpose in his depressing life from a prophet of God, the Dun Cow. We see hopelessness at times in all of the characters, but we also see how God gives them hope. We see immense pain throughout this book, but we also see the sovereignty of God behind the pain.

This book is not an allegory, but it is filled with Christian symbolism. This is a fitting book for a seminary student who wants to read fiction with theological underpinnings. As a result of this book I found myself reflecting more on the difficult questions of life. I also found this book refreshing compared with many of the shallow popular fiction novels published recently. The Book of the Dun Cow is deep, thoughtful, engaging, and theologically and spiritually driven.

—*Peter Rockhold*

## Seeing as God Sees

Kyle Dieleman

*1 Samuel 16:1-13*

We typically don't often take note of our eyes until they start to fail us. Most of us take seeing for granted until our vision starts to deteriorate or fails us completely. Some of us can't remember a time when our vision didn't need correcting. Others of us can remember how the teacher's notes looked a little fuzzier each day or the book's print a little harder to make out over the years. Often times we notice our failing eyesight as we get older. As of May 2009, 22 million Americans have cataracts. 2.3 million people suffer from glaucoma. Among people 40 and older, 3.6 million have 20/40 vision or worse. But problems with eyesight aren't just limited to those of us who are older. A recent study by the National Eye Institute found that 21% of preschool-aged children are farsighted. 4% of preschoolers are nearsighted and another 10% have astigmatism. The issue of seeing rightly is something many of us struggle with. Without some sort of assistance, we simply can't see things as they really are; our vision is messed up; we don't see rightly.

Here in 1 Samuel 16, Samuel is dealing with vision problems. We should be clear; in the overall biblical narrative Samuel is a good guy. In fact, Samuel is a bright spot in Israel where light seems to be difficult to find. Yet, in the passage we read, Samuel's usually spot-on vision is failing him. You see, Samuel is seeing things all wrong. It starts already with the Lord's rebuke in verse 1. Samuel is mourning for Saul; mourning because his kingship has tanked. Samuel's grief for Saul and for Israel is all he can see. But Samuel's grief is out of place. "How long will you mourn for Saul?" the Lord wants to know. "Can't you see that I have rejected Saul as king? Can't you see there's no sense mourning for Saul because he has failed as king? Can't you see?"

So, the Lord pulls Samuel up out of his grief and tells him to find Jesse. This Jesse of Bethlehem, one of his sons is to be the new king. But Samuel sees more problems. "God, don't you get it? If

Saul hears that I'm going to anoint a new king, I'm toast! I can't go on this trip to Bethlehem for the new king. Anoint a new king while Saul is still in power? He'll have me killed for sure! No way!" Graciously, the Lord seems to understand Samuel's plea and tells him to take the trip under the pretense of offering a sacrifice. Rather than going to anoint a new king, God tells Samuel to use the sacrifice he must offer as an excuse to go to Bethlehem. Then, once there, he could anoint the new king, all the while avoiding Saul's wrath. "Do you see it now, Samuel?" the Lord, in effect, says. "Do you see that this must happen? You must go to Bethlehem, for I have rejected Saul and am moving on with a new king." Samuel's warped vision, his seeing wrongly, keeps him from seeing how God is at work. All Samuel can see is Saul—Saul's failure, Saul's power, Saul's anger. But Samuel's eyesight is far too near-sighted. It isn't about Saul's kingship, not about Saul's army or might, not even about Samuel's loyalty to Saul.

And so Samuel, using the excuse of needing to offer a sacrifice, goes to Bethlehem. When he arrives, the elders of the town are worried that Samuel has come to raise trouble. But Samuel assures them he has only come to sacrifice, and Jesse and his sons are to be the guests of honor. As Jesse's boys begin to walk in, Samuel is sure he has spotted in Eliab the next king. After all, Eliab is the oldest son, and he was tall too, just like King Saul. In fact, we read just one chapter later, in 1 Samuel 17, that Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah were great warriors. They were the ones who followed Saul into battle against the Philistines. They were the strapping, brave ones the Marines would have featured on their commercials. Who better to take over Israel? But, of course, as the story goes on, all Jesse's sons are brought before Samuel only to be turned away by God. And Samuel wonders what in the world is going on. "Has God led me on a wild goose chase?" Samuel wonders to himself. Samuel no doubt starts to feel a little sheepish—Jesse is getting annoyed at how long this whole thing is taking, and the rejected boys can't see why they aren't good enough for Samuel. From everyone's perspective, not least Samuel's, it seems like this whole thing is going terribly wrong.

Of course, we as readers of the text see what's happening. So, we know that Samuel doesn't get it. Through this whole process, Samuel isn't seeing rightly. He can't get past the way things appear to him. He can't see that Saul was no longer in charge, that God was moving the kingship in a different direction, that it wasn't the oldest, tallest, or wisest of Jesse's sons. It's the problem of not seeing how God is at work. It's the problem of seeing wrongly. It's the problem of having messed up vision.

Of course, the world around us today refuses to even recognize it has a vision problem. Our world shamelessly embraces this view of the world that is so messed up. Our culture's vision props up Charlie Sheen as all that is cool and manly. Victoria Secret models are paraded in front of us as the pinnacle of a woman's sexuality, a vision so badly distorted that God's good intentions for sex are almost completely absent. Movies like *The Hangover* cast a vision for teenagers that glorify a life of drunkenness and partying. The problem of seeing how life is supposed to be, of how God has intended things to be, is so bad one wonders what sort of corrective is needed.

Yet, this blurry vision isn't just an 'out there' problem. Samuel's vision problem is the same vision problem we so often struggle with. It's the same near-sighted vision that plagues us as we try to see our world. When we look all around us, we can't see clearly. In our world, in our lives, in our churches, it so often seems like things are terribly wrong, hopelessly hopeless. We see and experience addictions and see nothing but despair and hopelessness. We find ourselves or those we love in broken, dysfunctional marriages or relationships and see nothing but divorce and separation. We see the decline of our churches in America, perhaps our children or grandchildren wandering from the church, and see nothing but failure and desperation. Our faulty vision shows up when we envy the church with the most members or the biggest budget. Our faulty vision shows up in our high schools when we treat those who are most athletic or smartest or coolest differently than those who are not. Our faulty vision shows up when we put the success of our career ahead of the health of our

spiritual lives. Our seeing wrongly shows up in a thousand different ways in a thousand different places. But the problem is real, and it is devastating.

This problem of seeing wrongly is the problem Pastor Alex DeJong writes about in his book *Dying for a Drink*. DeYoung describes how for years he simply couldn't see that his drinking had developed into a full-blown addiction. He simply didn't have the eyes to see it. It's the problem Dr. Neal Plantinga points to when he writes about how Christians oftentimes manipulate God and religion for our own purposes. It's the problem, Plantinga says, of seeing church as a way to make ourselves feel good and seeing God as way to bigger houses, better jobs, or beefier paychecks.

Yet, back in 1 Samuel 16, just when Samuel is about ready to give up hope, Jesse remembers that David is back with the sheep. And so Samuel instructs Jesse to call for this young shepherd; in fact, they won't sit down and eat until he arrives. And, of course, David arrives and is the Lord's chosen one. But, it's important to note that it isn't Samuel that announces David is the one to be king. No, it is the LORD, Yahweh, who speaks in verse 12. It is the LORD who says, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one!" If you look closely, it's the 4<sup>th</sup> time the LORD has spoken in our text. And each time the LORD speaks he does so to cast a different vision of what is going on. The LORD speaks first to point out to Samuel that Saul has been rejected as king. The LORD speaks again, assuring Samuel that he will protect Samuel from Saul and his jealousy. The LORD speaks a third time, reminding Samuel that he isn't concerned with whether the future king is tall enough to dunk or smart enough for Harvard but is concerned about his heart. And now the LORD speaks, announcing that this young shepherd boy, the trailer of the family, is his chosen one to be the next king of Israel.

The LORD speaks, and each time it is to correct Samuel's vision. Each time the LORD in essence says to Samuel, "Look, I know this is how you see things, but here's what's really going on." The LORD takes Samuel's despair, Samuel's fear, Samuel's vanity and shows Samuel how things really are. The LORD's vision of reality, of how things really are, is so much different than Samuel's. The

LORD is working in unexpected ways that Samuel can't grasp. Where Samuel sees nothing but despair and hopelessness the LORD sees new beginnings and chances for redemption. Where Samuel sees glory and visions of grand leadership, the LORD sees vanity and false power. Where Samuel can't see, the LORD sees clearly. "Samuel, this is how things really are! Saul is in the past; he can't harm you. I'm moving forward with a new king, and it's not about the tallest or the richest or the oldest or whatever you might judge by. It's about the new king's heart, and David's heart is the one I will work with. Samuel, try to see things as I see them!"

The beauty of the story here in 1 Samuel 16 is that it shows us just how near-sighted we are and just how wonderfully clear God sees. God sees in Saul's failure the opportunity to begin a new line of kings—a line that will ultimately bring about the Messiah. God sees Samuel's fear of Saul as a petty, needless fear; after all, God sees just how powerless Saul truly is. God sees past the tallest and the oldest and the likely candidates to be king to the young, insignificant David. In God's vision, no one is too small; the weak are just as useful as the powerful; the unlikely are chosen in place of the likely. In other words, God's vision is one where the least deserving are raised up. It's the vision Jesus cast in the Sermon on the Mount. God's vision is one where the lowly are exalted, where the undeserved are given riches beyond measure. In short, God's vision is a vision of grace.

God casts the same type of reality-challenging vision for us today. It's crucial for us to note that this new way of seeing isn't something we can do on our own. Samuel was hopelessly stuck in his own way of seeing until God gifted him with a new way of seeing. We can't perform some laser-eye surgery on ourselves to fix our faulty vision. We'll continue to see reality in the same distorted, false ways we always have until God begins to give us new vision. And when God begins this work of restoring our vision we begin to see things in a whole new way, just like a pair of glasses makes fuzzy road signs wonderfully clear. When we begin to see as God sees we see things in radically different ways. Seeing as God sees brings us out of our fear, out of our mourning, out of

our vanity. Seeing as God sees ushers us into this new way of seeing, a way of seeing that is vastly different. When we begin to see things as God sees them we see hope where we only saw despair. We begin to see opportunities where we only saw dead-ends. We see joy where we saw only grief.

This seeing as God sees is wonderfully refreshing. When we start to see that God moves in unexpected ways and in unexpected people our point of view shifts radically. Our failed attempts at evangelism suddenly look a lot less like failure and more like seed planting. Rather than envying the biggest churches or the most dynamic preachers, we begin to see how God is working in our midst. Our eyes are opened to ways God is working in churches nearby and around the world. Instead of seeing that person down the pew as lazy or annoying or arrogant, we see him or her as a child of God. We no longer see our pocketbooks as the measure of our success and worth. We begin to see people of different color or background not with fear and mistrust but with love and compassion. We begin to see things in freeing, fulfilling new ways.

God's way of seeing was displayed ever so clearly in West Nickel Mines School in Lancaster, Pennsylvania on October 2, 2006. When Charles Roberts opened fire on the young Amish schoolgirls that Monday morning, killing five of the girls, the world saw death and evil at its worst. But with a vision so God-like it shocks us, the Amish community spoke words of forgiveness, reconciliation, and comfort. These families reached out to the killer's family with love and compassion and grace. In words and acts that shocked the nation, the Amish families affected by the tragedy saw opportunities for God's grace and God's love to shine through even in the darkest hour of evil. Where the world would automatically respond with outrage and hatred, the Amish community took on God's eyes and saw the need for grace in the midst of it all. That is seeing how God sees; that is putting forth a new way of life, a new reality that only God can call into existence.

In 1 Samuel 16 God spoke and acted in the anointing of David to cast a radically different vision. This new way of seeing began in Bethlehem, in the shepherd boy, David. But God's new vision

became even clearer years later in that same town of Bethlehem. The shepherd boy David gives us a picture of God's way of seeing, but this picture is made even clearer in the coming of the Great Shepherd. In the coming of Jesus Christ we get a full vision of how God sees. As God himself entered our world, God's vision was made clear for us as Jesus spoke about and lived out what it means to see as God sees. And in this new way of seeing our vision begins to become clearer and clearer. We begin to see things not as the world sees them but as God see them.

Samuel could only see things through his faulty vision, not as they really were. And we struggle with that same nearsightedness. But God has a radically different, wonderfully fuller vision of how things really are. It's the type of vision where shepherd boys are made into kings. It's the type of vision where killings are surrounded with hope and forgiveness rather than hatred and despair. It's the type of vision where God himself comes to us in a stable as a baby boy to show us clearly what his kingdom and his vision is like. It's the vision of grace, and it's ours to see. Thanks be to God—**Amen!**

## The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

Darren M. Pollock

*Jeremiah 2:9-13, Matthew 13:44-46*

We have here a pretty straight-forward pair of parables in the middle of Matthew’s gospel—an important lesson about the need to sacrifice earthly treasure to gain heavenly treasure. We hear the message *once*, and then *again* in slightly revised form, a double-dose of a difficult message to increase the odds of it penetrating our stubborn hearts and sometimes dense minds. The kingdom of heaven, we have heard, is so beyond valuable that it would be foolish not to trade in everything we have to purchase just a small share in it. It’s like going back to 2004 and trading all of your Blockbuster stock for one share of Google—we sacrifice something that is ultimately worthless for something that is eternally valuable.

We tend to read these two parables through the lens of the story of the “rich young ruler”:

*If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.*

And this is certainly a *possible* framework to guide us in our reading, but I’m not convinced that this is the only—or even the *best*—possible interpretation. When we look closely at these two parables, we notice some important differences between them, and we find some troubling aspects with our traditional reading.

Our first clue that this might not be simply two parables about the need for Christ’s followers to sacrifice in order to possess the kingdom is the switch in subject from the first to the second parable.

*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field....again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.*

In the first, the kingdom of heaven is likened to hidden treasure. In

the second, the kingdom is not represented by the *pearl*, but by the *merchant*. So in one, the kingdom is the *object* of a great discovery, and in the other, it is the *subject* of a great search—a point that we'll return to later.

Secondly, we run into some murky legal waters in the first parable. According to Jewish law, if you agreed to buy a field, you came into possession of the *field*—and not items hidden in that field. If the owner of the field was unaware of the hidden treasure, then it wouldn't have been included in the sale contract and, thus, would no more belong to the man who found it *after* he purchased the surrounding field than it did *before* he bought the field. To someone in that culture, familiar with the laws about buying property, the parable might sound something like:

*The kingdom of heaven is like a bank that was about to make a lot of money. Upon receiving a text message with some insider information about that bank's inner dealings, a man sold all he had and bought stock in the bank.*

Hearing that parable, we might briefly envy the man's luck, but we're more likely to wonder whether the SEC might pick up on what he was doing. Before he could begin to enjoy his newfound wealth, he would likely have some investigators knocking at his door.

Likewise, a first century hearer of Jesus' parable would probably pick up pretty quickly on the fact that the man still didn't have legal ownership of the hidden treasure. Sure, no one but he would know that the treasure was there so he could fawn over it all he wanted, but as soon as he'd try to trade it in for cash, red flags would be raised. Was he really so wise to try to purchase something that he couldn't actually possess?

Imagine with me if we were to read this parable through a different lens—not within the framework of the “rich young ruler” narrative, but of the account in Acts of Simon the Sorcerer. Simon, you'll remember, was a magician living in Samaria, wowing people with his ability to pull quarters out of their ears and to separate and reattach his thumb without even leaving a mark. His

magic is so amazing that people begin to call him the *Great Power*. But one day he encounters real power—the power of God, as preached by Philip. And Simon believes in Christ and is baptized. Later he witnesses Peter and John praying for people to receive the Holy Spirit, and again Simon is enticed by this supernatural power. And Luke tells us (Acts 8:18-22):

*When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money and said, 'Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.'*

*Peter answered: 'May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.'*

Reading the hidden treasure parable through the lens of Simon the Sorcerer highlights the *theological* problems with its traditional interpretation. In addition to the legal conundrum of the man not truly gaining legal possession of the treasure, we find theological issues with an attempt to *purchase* something from God and the attempt to *possess* the kingdom of heaven.

Scripture is quite clear that sacrifice is an expected part of the life of a disciple of Christ. But the sacrifices we are called to make are never presented as a way of buying something from God or of taking full possession of one of God's gifts, apart from God. Rather, sacrifice is prescribed in order to free our hands from our earthly concerns and treasures so that we can receive our daily bread from God, and to break the chains that bind us to our possessions so that we are free to be fully grasped by God.

We are called to sacrifice in unselfish acts of mercy in order to bring our hearts into closer alignment with Christ's and to work to fulfill the purpose for which God made us.

We are called to sacrifice as a sign of our whole-hearted response to God's gracious activity in our lives, bringing us eventually to a

place where we can, with Paul, consider all things apart from God as rubbish.

But the broad witness of scripture does not present these sacrifices as a means for generating some sort of heavenly capital with which we can purchase God's blessings.

Yet we are tempted by these very things—to purchase and to possess God's gifts. I think that the parable of the hidden treasure highlights the futile human desire to be worthy of God's gifts and to have control over God's blessings. In the life of the church, these tendencies have played out in the forms of works-righteousness and the domestication of the gospel. And both of these patterns lead us to a diminished dependence on God, and a greater focus on what we can *get* from God than on God Himself.

Many of us have a hard time with grace—with receiving unmerited gifts. We feel unworthy, we feel indebted. Perhaps we don't quite trust the motive behind the gift. Will something huge be expected of me later? Something that I am not equipped to give in return?

I am reminded of Abraham after Sarah died, when he was looking to buy a piece of land in Hebron so that he could bury her there (Genesis 23). The Hittites generously offer him any land he desires: *“Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead.”*

But Abraham insists on paying for the land, and he and Ephron the Hittite go back and forth several times before Abraham insists, *“Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there.”*

There are a number of complex power dynamics going on in their conversation, but one gets the sense that Abraham really wants to pay a fair price for the land—otherwise, he would be forever indebted to the Hittites, and they might change their mind some day and take back the land where Sarah was buried. So Abraham pays for the land, gets the deed, and the matter is settled.

I think that sometimes we have a similar dynamic in how we relate to God. Whenever we compare our righteousness to others',

whenever our prayers start to feel like “negotiations,” whenever we feel like our faithfulness and our sacrifices have merited us something from God, we are falling into a pattern of trying to purchase God’s blessings. We’re viewing God in a similar way to how Abraham viewed the Hittites: we don’t want to be indebted to Him, and we don’t fully trust Him to continue being gracious to us.

This lack of trust is at the core of our desire to control and possess God’s blessings. God promises to provide us with our daily bread, and we want a silo of grain. God promises to shower spiritual gifts down on his church in order to empower the church’s witness in the world, and we grouse if other individuals seem to have more than we have. God promises a place in the kingdom of heaven, and we want a majority share in running the place.

I was driving through the Midwest somewhere during my last drive home to California from New Jersey after graduating from seminary eight years ago, and ahead of me along the horizon was one of the most glorious sunsets I had ever witnessed. Such a marvelous gift given to me to adorn my drive, and yet I didn’t enjoy it. In fact, it more nearly made me miserable because, try as I might, I couldn’t begin to capture its magnificence. My camera missed the magnitude of it, my video camera dulled its radiant hues. But I wanted to capture it! I wanted to own it! I wanted to be able to reproduce it at my whim! What if no one believed me when I told them how beautiful it was? How would I be able to prove my experience?

Karl Barth describes God’s self-revelation in terms that remind me of my impossible attempt to freeze a sunset in time. Barth emphasizes that God’s decision to reveal Himself does not place the knowledge of God in our custody, the way that if a friend told me a secret, that secret would become, in a sense, my possession. God’s revelation is more like a dream that is sharp and vivid when you’re in it, and then vanishes without a trace the moment your consciousness shifts. God is revealed to us only when God is revealing Himself to us. Barth explains:

The fact that God takes form does not give rise to a medium, a third thing between God and man, a reality distinct from God that is as such the

subject of revelation. This would imply that God would be unavailible for men, that God Himself would no longer need His revelation, or rather that God would be given up into the hands of man, who, God's form being given him, could more or less control God as he does other realities. The fact that God takes form means that God Himself controls not only man but also the form in which He encounters man. God's presence is always God's decision to be present. *(Church Dogmatics 1/1, p. 321)*

Again, with our desire to control things and to keep a degree of our security within our reach, the temptation is to cease to depend on God every moment for His revelation, guidance, and presence; to objectify God, and to calcify our knowledge of God into wooden doctrines, legalistic rules, unbending ideologies, and syncretistic blends of our faith and our culture.

The real danger of this is that when we separate the good things of God from God Himself as the Giver, we turn God's good gifts into worthless idols. God's blessings are good because they connect us to God. When we treat God's blessings as our own possession, apart from God, they mold and rot and start to poison us with a toxic impression of self-reliance.

While Jeremiah's image of broken cisterns refers in its immediate context to Israelites who had turned to Baal worship, the image works just as well to describe a "cultural Christianity" that attempts to mine the gospel message for "useful" elements while refusing to submit to Christ's sovereign Lordship expressed in the gospel and to remain connected to God, the source of all good things.

*"My people have committed two sins," God says through the prophet, "They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."*

When we focus on God's gifts over God Himself, when we stress about following God's laws but neglect to spend time humbly and patiently sitting with God in prayer, when we attempt to possess the kingdom of heaven and to control it as our own commodity—we are simply digging holes that cannot contain God's blessings. His good gifts will seep down through the dirt and disappear. God

doesn't give us our blessings in monthly, or weekly rations.

But when we recognize God's gifts, His laws, His promises, His invitation into the kingdom, as tools that connect us—that bind us to our Lord, then we have discovered the spring of living water.

The great 20<sup>th</sup> century missiologist Lesslie Newbigin spent a good portion of his life as a missionary in India. While he was ministering there, he became increasingly aware of how mixed his presentation of the gospel was with modern western culture. He came to recognize ways that we in the West had merely incorporated the gospel message into our culture, rather than being continually addressed and challenged by the gospel as a prophetic voice coming to us from without. We had treated God's rule as our possession. And so, having some distance from his native culture, he spent some of his later years back in the UK considering what a new missionary encounter with the modern western world might look like. In his book *Foolishness to the Greeks*, he wonders (p. 41):

What would be involved in both theory and practice in...a direct challenge to the very foundations of the culture of which we ourselves are a part. What would it mean if, instead of trying to explain the gospel in terms of our modern scientific culture, we tried to explain our culture in terms of the gospel?

What would it look like, in other words, if we were to stop trying to possess the kingdom of heaven, and allow ourselves to be possessed by the kingdom? To stop trying to fit the kingdom of heaven into our understandings of the world and our expectations for our own lives, and allow God to show us our place within the kingdom?

I mentioned earlier the switch in the subject from the first to the second parable in Matthew, with the kingdom of heaven first being the object and then the subject, and I think that this subject swap is very significant.

The kingdom of heaven is an invaluable treasure that we try in vain to purchase—something that, when we try to earn or to buy it, proves elusive. It's something that cannot be bought or owned, only invited into and lived in.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a *merchant* looking for fine pearls. When He found one of great value, He went away and sold everything He had and bought it. When He found one of great value—when He found one that He loved too much not to possess—He gave his only-begotten Son that whoever believes in him might not perish, but have eternal life. When He found His beloved, His Church, He gave His very life as a ransom for many.

The gospel is not primarily good news about possessions that we come to own, but a promise that *we* are the cherished possession of a good and faithful God who takes joy in caring for us, meeting our needs, and especially in filling us with His living water through our ceaseless fellowship with Him.

*Lord, we thank You for Your good gifts, and for Your making a place for us within the kingdom of heaven. We thank You that we are called to be co-heirs with Christ of all of Your blessings. Grant us the humility to accept Your grace, which we could never earn, and the faith to surrender control to You and to trust that You will provide us with all that we need. Remind us often that our hope is not in the good gifts that You give to us, but in You Yourself, the Faithful One who promises never to let us go. Amen.*

# “The Inner Human Logic of Forgiveness”: If You Don’t Forgive, You Won’t Be Forgiven<sup>1</sup>

By Kyle Brooks

*“So he says: if you want forgiving from God and you cannot forgive someone who needs a little forgiving from you, forget about the forgiveness you want. Take away the eloquence of King James English and you get Jesus saying something like this: if you refuse to forgive other people when you expect to be forgiven, you can go to hell.”*  
—Lewis Smedes<sup>2</sup>

The above quotation from Lewis Smedes adds an emotional bite to a biblical principle that has troubled many Christians for centuries. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus repeatedly says that God will forgive us *only if* we forgive others. In Matthew 6:14-15 he claims, “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”<sup>3</sup> Especially for heirs of the Reformed emphasis on the soteriological principle of *sola gratia*, Jesus’ statements to this effect seem wholly graceless. Is he laying on us a condition for our salvation? Do we have to deserve forgiveness?

In this paper I will attempt to dwell strictly on the *causal* relationship of our unforgiveness and God’s. Is there such a causal relationship at all? Does our unforgiveness of others cause God’s unforgiveness of us, or vice versa? I will argue that what Jesus says about forgiveness cannot be chalked up to a command to earn salvation, a figure of speech, or even primarily a clever way of giving us criteria for self-evaluation, but rather it is a spiritual certainty based on profound insight into the nature of forgiveness and the human heart.

---

<sup>1</sup>Originally submitted to Professor Ronald Feenstra in April, 2011 for Systematic Theology II. “The inner human logic of forgiveness” is a phrase used by N.T. Wright, and will be addressed later in the paper.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis B. Smedes, *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don’t Deserve* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 150.

<sup>3</sup>NIV. This sentiment is also stated in several other passages by Jesus. Cf. Matt 6:12-15; Matt 18:21-35; Mk 11:25; Lk 6:37; Lk 11:4.

## Cause and Effect?

Let me begin my following in the footsteps of Miroslav Volf. In his book, *Free of Charge*, Volf expounds two problematic understandings of Jesus' words in Matthew 6 before advocating a third.<sup>4</sup> The first potential reading of Jesus' statement in Matthew 6 and elsewhere is that our forgiveness of others is a prior condition to God's forgiveness of us. That is, taken at face value, the text seems to be saying God is waiting to see if we forgive others. If we do, he says, "Okay, good. I can forgive them now." On this reading, the individual's actions condition her salvation as opposed to her being given a free gift of God's grace.

The second possible scenario is the one that seems the most literal interpretation of Jesus' claims in Matthew 18:21-35. In this passage Jesus tells a story about a king who has forgiven the enormous debt of a particular servant. This servant immediately goes out and demands payment of a tiny debt from a fellow servant. Upon hearing about this outrageous lack of forgiveness, the king revokes his forgiveness and throws the first servant into prison. Jesus concludes the story with these daunting words, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." This passage could easily be interpreted to mean that God gives the gift of salvation freely, but is rather disgruntled when we are not motivated and inspired by his gift enough to give it to others in smaller measure. Therefore, he takes back his gift like a grade-schooler whose valentine has been spurned, "If you don't want it...FINE!" Gratitude must be shown or the gift is revoked.

Both of these readings, however, violate a primary doctrine of the church and numerous other scriptural passages by making God's forgiveness of us, and thus our salvation, conditioned by our actions. Paul's letter to the Ephesians (among others) rejects such a conditional foundation, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God

---

<sup>4</sup>Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 154-6.

—not by works, so that no one can boast.”<sup>5</sup> In the first reading of Jesus’ forgiveness-statements, our forgiveness is a straightforward cause and effect of God’s forgiveness in chronological and logical order, and in the second it is cause and effect in logical order only. Either way, God does not genuinely and unalterably extend forgiveness to us without our good deeds.

What makes this worse is that this particular good deed of forgiving others is quite possibly the most difficult thing any of us ever have to do. Consider Simon Wiesenthal’s autobiographical account in *The Sunflower*. A Jewish prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp, Wiesenthal is asked for forgiveness by a dying SS soldier for the soldier’s heinous murder of dozens of Jewish prisoners. His friend Arthur sums up eloquently how most of us respond to such a request, “A superman has asked a subhuman to do something which is superhuman.”<sup>6</sup> Perhaps feeling merely human, Wiesenthal does not forgive the man at that time, and most of the respondents to his moral dilemma agree with his decision. Cynthia Ozick’s comments give voice to the difficulty of forgiveness in this situation and others like it, “Let the SS man die unshriven. Let him go to hell.”<sup>7</sup> Forgiveness is perhaps the most difficult thing that any of us can be asked to do. What a terror to think that it is the condition of God’s forgiveness of us!

Volf and others suggest a possible solution to this dilemma, an alternate reading of Jesus’ intimidating words. He begins by noting that the above parable in Matthew 18 should not be read allegorically, but rather with this simple message: Our forgiveness and God’s forgiveness go together. Our unforgiveness and God’s unforgiveness go together. So far so good. However, Volf goes a step further in suggesting exactly *how* they go together when he

---

<sup>5</sup>Eph 2:8-9. Cf. also Rom 3:28; Gal 2:15-16; Heidelberg Catechism, LD 5; Belgic Confession, Art 21; Canons of Dort, I.5.

<sup>6</sup>Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*, ed. Harry James Cargas & Bonny V. Fetterman (New York: Schocken Books, 1997), 66.

<sup>7</sup>*The Sunflower*, 220.

says, “Jesus may not have been suggesting that our unforgiveness *causes* God’s unforgiveness. Rather than triggering a loss of God’s forgiveness, our unforgiveness may just *make manifest* that in fact we haven’t allowed ourselves to receive God’s pardon.”<sup>8</sup> So too, Andrew Murray writes with regard to the forgiveness section of the Lord’s prayer, “Our forgiving love to men is the evidence of the reality of God’s forgiving love in us.”<sup>9</sup> I suggest that this reading of Christ’s words is also inadequate, not because it is false, but rather because it does not take seriously the arrangement and consistency of Christ’s remarks.

### **The Inner Human Logic of Forgiveness**

Jesus’ statements relating our forgiveness of others to God’s forgiveness of us in this way are not few and far between. On at least five separate occasions Jesus says roughly the same thing: If you forgive, you will be forgiven. If you don’t forgive, you will not be forgiven.<sup>10</sup> In each and every scenario the explicit or implicit hypothetical syllogism works in one direction.<sup>11</sup>

Notice that Volf’s re-interpretation (on the shoulders of Luther) actually reverses the logic. If you have been forgiven, then you will forgive. If you have not been forgiven, you will not forgive. This is the clear implication of unforgiveness simply “making manifest” the fact of our unredeemed state. This reading of Jesus does not take Jesus’ many and unvaried statements seriously

---

<sup>8</sup>*Free of Charge*, 156.

<sup>9</sup>Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer: Thoughts on Our Training for the Ministry of Intercession* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 87.

<sup>10</sup>Matt 6:12-15; Matt 18:21-35; Mk 11:25; Lk 6:37; Lk 11:4

<sup>11</sup>C.S. Lewis notes with his characteristic conviction and clarity: “I am telling you what Christianity is. I did not invent it. And there, right in the middle of it, I find 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those that sin against us.' There is no slightest suggestion that we are offered forgiveness on any other terms. It is made perfectly clear that if we do not forgive we shall not be forgiven. There are no two ways about it.” *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001), 115-116.

enough. Instead it reverses them.<sup>12</sup>

N.T. Wright, himself drawing on the rich insights of Volf's work in *Exclusion and Embrace*, takes a different approach at responding to the first two readings of Jesus (simple cause/effect and God revoking forgiveness). It is too erudite to attempt to restate, so here is the quotation in full:

This objection fails to realize how the inner human logic of forgiveness actually works. Jesus is not giving a kind of arbitrary, abstract commandment and then saying that if you fail to meet the test God will not forgive you....He is drawing attention to a fact about the moral universe and human nature. He is telling us, in effect, that the faculty we have for receiving forgiveness and the faculty we have for granting forgiveness are one and the same thing. If we open the one we shall open the other. If we slam the door on one, we slam the door on the other.<sup>13</sup>

In identifying this "inner human logic of forgiveness" Wright does not attempt to parse out exactly how this works. He simply states that the type of person to hold a grudge is not the type of person who can *receive* forgiveness. Here we have our first clue to the inner logic of forgiveness: it must be both given and received.

Volf explains forgiveness as a social phenomenon.<sup>14</sup> It cannot be done in isolation just as the wrong that needs forgiveness is not done in isolation. Like any gift, to be fully effective it must be received. But to know how to receive forgiveness we must know what forgiveness is. Volf's simple, two-part definition is instructive, "To forgive is to condemn the fault but spare the doer."<sup>15</sup> He asks us to notice what an affront it is to be forgiven of something you claim is not wrong. It feels this way because

---

<sup>12</sup>Not to say that Volf's statement is false on its own. Clearly, having been changed by God ought to be displayed in one's actions, the topic of forgiveness notwithstanding. Calvin too notes that truly forgiving can be a sign of having been forgiven by God (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.20.45). But this is not what Jesus is saying *here*, and if we tidy up this statement of Jesus we lose some of the deep implications about forgiveness and the human heart that Volf himself expounds so elegantly later in his book.

<sup>13</sup>N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2006), 158.

<sup>14</sup>*Free of Charge*, 181

<sup>15</sup>*Free of Charge*, 141.

forgiveness inherently condemns the act. The forgiver does not pretend that nothing happened or that nothing is wrong. Wright puts it this way, “To begin with, it [forgiveness] means a settled determination to name evil and to shame it; without that there is, after all, nothing to forgive.”<sup>16</sup> Part of receiving forgiveness then, is receiving the condemnation that rightfully applies to us. Volf calls this repentance.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, this need for repentance is confirmed in the biblical witness. Throughout the book of Acts, people are enjoined to repent and receive their forgiveness.<sup>18</sup> For crowds gathered to hear the gospel, for the people of Israel, and for Simon the sorcerer, the apostles deem repentance essential for forgiveness to take place. At the very least, genuine admission of wrongdoing by the wrongdoer is a necessary counterpart to forgiveness. As Volf states, “The unrepentant will remain unforgiven.”<sup>19</sup> Elsewhere, he expands this notion more clearly, “Without confession I will remain unforgiven -- not because God doesn't forgive, but because a refusal to confess is a rejection of forgiveness.”<sup>20</sup> Forgiveness, to be complete, must

---

<sup>16</sup>*Evil and Justice*, 152.

<sup>17</sup>*Free of Charge*, 152-3. Of course, there is another piece to receiving forgiveness. This is the receipt of the “sparing” portion of forgiveness which Volf calls faith. As this is not directly pertinent to the overall flow of the argument constructed here, I will focus exclusively on this first part of receiving forgiveness.

<sup>18</sup>Acts 2:38, 5:31, 8:22

<sup>19</sup>*Against the Tide: Love in a Time of Petty Dreams and Persisting Enmities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 172.

<sup>20</sup>*Free of Charge*, 154.

be received, and to be received the wrongdoer must repent.<sup>21</sup>

Herein we find the connection between, or the inner logic of, our forgiveness and God's forgiveness. An unforgiving heart is very likely, if not unfailingly, an unrepentant heart. When we hesitate to forgive, our reason often echoes that of Sidney Shachnow in response to the Nazi soldier's cry to Wiesenthal for forgiveness, "this savage did not deserve it. He stepped over the boundary where forgiveness is possible."<sup>22</sup> When we hedge our forgiveness according to criteria of deservingness, not only do we completely lose the essence of forgiveness, but we also implicitly pride ourselves on being better than "this savage" and count ourselves as deserving forgiveness for our relatively small misdeeds.<sup>23</sup> However, forgiveness is undeserved by definition. No matter what the offense, the offender deserves just punishment not forgiveness. When one thinks that she *does* deserve forgiveness, she clearly lacks the sorrow over the offense which is characteristic of repentance (which is required for receiving forgiveness). Thus, the person with the unforgiving heart will remain unforgiven *not* because God does not offer her forgiveness (as he does to all) through Jesus Christ, but rather because they reject it out of hand.

---

<sup>21</sup>At this stage, one might object: "Is this not just another way of saying we have to *do* something to earn God's forgiveness?" F.F. Bruce's statement is appropriate here: "The repentant sinner is in the proper condition to accept divine forgiveness" (Quoted in Andrew Kuyvenhoven & Leonard Kuyvenhoven, *Forgiveness: What the Bible Teaches, What You Need to Know* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive, 2004), 58.). Repentance does not condition one's forgiveness; it puts them in the right condition to receive forgiveness. The Reformed tradition insists that God by his Holy Spirit gives us the repentant spirit required to receive forgiveness. He "removes from them their heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh" (Ez 36:26). Only by God's free gift are we able to truly repent and have true faith to receive his forgiveness.

<sup>22</sup>*The Sunflower*, 243.

<sup>23</sup>Hence Piper, "What gives so much force to the impulse of anger in such cases is the overwhelming sense that the offender does not *deserve* forgiveness. That is, the grievance is so deep and so justifiable that not only does self-righteousness strengthen our indignation, but so does a legitimate sense of moral outrage. It's the deep sense of legitimacy that gives our bitterness its unbending compulsion." John Piper, *Future Grace* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1995), 265.

### **Conclusion: Brent's Story**

I met a man I will call Brent during a church potluck after giving a sermon as a guest preacher. It did not take much prodding for him to launch headlong into the plethora of nearly unbelievable stories about his brother, sister, and brother-in-law. These three, says Brent, are drug addicts and he tries to stay away from them. Shaking his head in near disbelief, Brent told me how he served in the army, but the three bullet wounds he sustained and the car explosion he survived came at the hands of his own family. Then, with a glint in his eye and a half-cocked smirk he looked up at me and said, "I would like to see their carcasses rot!" The combination of seething hatred and bitter pride was unforgettable. While I have no idea how God may be working in his life and how he may change in the future, it struck me that Brent did not feel *himself* to be worthy of such hatred. His bitterness toward his brothers and sisters so blinded him that he could not see his own need for forgiveness in a real, heart-rending way. This is the inner logic of unforgiveness in action. Lacking a forgiving heart, we will lack repentance. Lacking repentance, we reject forgiveness. Jesus' logic remains intact, and his daunting statements give us penetrating insight into the human heart and the inner logic of forgiveness.

**Calvin's Use of Cicero's *de Natura Deorum*  
Compared with that of Melancthon, Bullinger, and Bucer<sup>1</sup>**  
Michael Kornelis

Calvin was well trained in the humanist tradition. This is made apparent not only by his rhetorical prowess and his explicit references to classical authors, but also by his own testimony. This point is beyond controversy. However, the discussion concerning both the extent of his humanistic leanings and the extent to which they influenced and shaped his theological system is inundated by a crowd of scholars all holding various opinions. A good portion of this discussion has honed in on the programmatic opening chapters of Calvin's *Institutio Christianae Religionis* in which he effectively reiterates theistic arguments Cicero had put forth well over a millennia before in his *de Natura Deorum*. Citing him plainly and using his terminology verbatim, Calvin employs Cicero so overtly that the fact that he does so is another point with which one cannot viably contend.<sup>2</sup> Egil Grislis neatly demonstrates all this in his article "Calvin's use of Cicero in the Institutes I:1-5" by clearly enumerating the terminological and epistemological parallels between Calvin's Institutes and Cicero's *de Natura Deorum*.<sup>3</sup> And so, just as the question of Calvin's humanistic education is a question of prevalence and relevance, the discussion surrounding the particular instance in Institutes I.i-v of his humanistic tendencies immediately shifts from the question of whether Calvin is employing Ciceronian thought and vocabulary to questions concerning the extent to which he uses Cicero, to what effect, and with what result.

As noted, Grislis convincingly demonstrates that the extent to

---

<sup>1</sup>Originally submitted to Professor Richard Muller on May 23, 2011 for 851BA: The Theology of John Calvin.

<sup>2</sup>In the earlier Latin editions of the *Institutio* (1539, 1543, and 1550) Calvin even marginally cites not just Cicero but the actual work, *de Natura Deorum*, from which he is extracting Cicero's ideas and arguments.

<sup>3</sup>Egil Grislis, "Calvin's Use of Cicero in the Institutes I:1-5 - A Case Study in Theological Method." *Arciv für Reformationsgeschichte* 62 (1971): 5-37

which Calvin employs Cicero in the opening chapters of the Institutes is extensive.<sup>4</sup> He concludes that on the matter of natural theology (namely, whether or not natural theology is reliable), Calvin is in general agreement with Cicero that it is not, hence his appeal to the *ethnicus* rhetor.

The ironic effect of this appeal to Ciceronian authority, concludes Grislis, is that Calvin ends up demonstrating how paltry and elementary the results of Cicero's natural theology are. In this way, Calvin creates a burden for a more reliable and profitable source of revelation (scripture) with which to corroborate the petty evidence procured by natural theology. The payoff then is the result that "what had been a distinctive liability for Cicero now becomes a clear asset for Calvin."<sup>5</sup> Where Cicero's natural theology stalls, Calvin is able to jump-start it with the revelation of scripture, an infinitely more reliable source of revelation which both affirms and is affirmed by natural theology.

More interested in the theological results of Calvin's method than the method itself, Peter J. Leithart argues that Calvin adopts the theological imagery of Cicero's *de Natura Deorum* and then reinterprets it in a Pauline framework. Leithart is wary that Calvin superimposes this imagery at the peril of biblical accuracy. In particular, he fears "Cicero's imagery of the seed, and indeed his entire natural law doctrine, may have functioned like blinders that prevented Calvin from seeing the full implications of the biblical

---

<sup>4</sup>Regarding Grislis' case, Charles Partee is a minority dissenter and restricts his doubts to a footnote. Cf. Charles Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 43n

<sup>5</sup>Grislis, p. 29

data.”<sup>6</sup> Victor Nuovo, in his thesis, argues along the same line as Leithart: that Calvin commandeers the theological agenda of *de Natura Deorum* and then steers it toward Pauline conclusions. Nuovo argues convincingly that Calvin deals critically with antiquity citing endorsements when they are there and polemicizing when they are not.<sup>7</sup>

In all these questions concerning the extent, effect, and result of Calvin’s dependence on Cicero the common underlying curiosity emerges: how does Calvin, as a humanist theologian, nuance Cicero’s theistic arguments? This question has received much attention and this attention has in turn yielded fruitful results. Grislis, Leithart, and Nuovo, for instance, all more or less agree that by channelling and then reorienting the import of Cicero’s *de Natura Deorum* Calvin skillfully sets the unique tone of the Institutes by asserting the question “*qualis sit (Deus)*” over and above the question “*quid sit Deus.*”<sup>8</sup> All agree that by recalibrating the results of Cicero’s natural theology with Paul’s scriptural theology, Calvin is able to procure theological results infinitely more reliable and relevant than those of Cicero. However, concerned predominantly with how Calvin nuances the language and content of *de Natura Deorum*, the discussion seems

---

<sup>6</sup>Peter J. Leithart, “That Eminent Pagan: Calvin’s use of Cicero in Institutes 1.1-5” *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990), 12. Leithart seems to draw conclusions from Grislis’ article that are far from Grislis’ purpose. He seems to believe Calvin relies completely on Cicero, and insinuates that he himself is the first to explore the theological repercussions of Calvin’s use of Cicero. But Leithart glosses over Grislis’ clear statement: “The contention of this study is that in his use of classical sources Calvin’s own theological perspective emerges more clearly. He exhibits an impressive agreement with classical sources though, as represented by Cicero, and at the same time undertakes a basic reinterpretation of it from the standpoint of biblical revelation.” Grislis, 5

<sup>7</sup>Victor Nuovo, *Calvin’s Theology: A Study of its Sources in Classical Antiquity*, (Thesis, Columbia University, 1964).

<sup>8</sup>*Institutio* (1559) I.ii. All translations of Calvin, Cicero, Melancthon, Bucer, and Bullinger are my own, using manuscripts that can be accessed through the Post-Reformation Digital Library (PRDL.org). For Cicero I used Cicero, *De Natura Deorum: Libri Tres.* edited by Joseph B. Mayor. 3 vols. London: Cambridge University Press, 1891.

to lack both an appropriate recognition of the fact that Calvin's predecessors cited the same passages of *de Natura Deorum* before him, and also that Calvin's use of these passages is notably different from theirs. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to investigate first how Calvin as a humanist is to be distinguished from his Lutheran and Reformed peers (Melancthon, Bucer, and Bullinger in particular); and second how his particular use of Cicero is also to be distinguished from these peers. Our question is not so much "What does Calvin do differently than Cicero?" as it is "How does Calvin use Cicero differently than his peers?" By examining what Calvin does similarly and what he does differently, it will come to light that Calvin's contribution is, more than anything, methodological. He improves upon the method of his predecessors by rhetorically fleshing out Cicero's *de Natura Deorum* more than Melancthon, Bucer, and Bullinger did. Naturally then, Calvin does not achieve *new* results; rather, he produces meatier, more effective results.

### **Calvin and His Peers**

Now, this paper bears no burden of proof to demonstrate that Calvin was in fact a humanist. That point is so self-evident that, as said earlier, the case is hardly worth making here, especially considering that Calvin in his 16th c. Reformation context is not at all unique in being humanistically erudite. However, it is worthy to note that Calvin was unique in having received a formally humanistic education, and even aspired to establish himself as a humanist literary scholar.<sup>9</sup> As a result of this education and the aspirations that motivated it, Calvin gained a rhetorical edge over his Reformed peers that would set him apart, especially posthumously. Quirinus Breen aptly tags the young Calvin as "a

---

<sup>9</sup>For an authoritative biographical survey of the Reformer's young life as a humanist student see Francois Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Collins, 1963), Chapter 1. It should likewise be noted that Melancthon is an exception here. He too received a very broad humanistic education.

rhetor in search of a subject matter.”<sup>10</sup> That Calvin, properly speaking, was a rhetorician who practiced theology, and not the other way around, is a crucial point if we are to understand what was significant about his contribution to the Reformation, and more specifically how, why, and to what effect he used Cicero in the opening chapters of his *Institutes*.

It ought to be pointed out here that there are striking similarities both between Calvin and Cicero biographically, and between the *Institutes* and *de Natura Deorum* literarily. Both men were formally trained in law and rhetoric and then subsequently applied that training to a less formal study of theology, Calvin prompted by a ‘*subito conversio*,’<sup>11</sup> Cicero by a ‘*subito studium*.’<sup>12</sup> Neither work advanced much, if any, novel ideas. Rather, both recounted or codified old ideas. That is to say, Cicero’s *de Natura Deorum* recounts the theologies and cosmologies of Epicureanism and Stoicism while Calvin’s *Institutes* more or less codifies the theologies of the first generation Reformers. It is no wonder then that Calvin would have felt such an affinity with the Roman Statesman; no wonder that, as Breen puts it, “the Ciceronian doctrine that philosophy must not be divorced from eloquence or rhetoric” resonated so strongly within him.<sup>13</sup> Finally, Cicero’s *de Natura Deorum* was for Calvin the point of contact with Classical Epicureanism and Stoicism in the way that, for his posterity, Calvin’s *Institutes* has become the most significant point of contact with Classical Reformed thought.

This is a major reason for the popularity Calvin enjoyed both in his life and well beyond. In his *Institutes* he wrote theology in a way that was rhetorically palpable for the unlearned reader but at the same time logically satisfying for the learned reader. Breen, in

---

<sup>10</sup>Quirinus Breen, *Christianity and Humanism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 7.

<sup>11</sup>Calvin, John. *Commentary on the Book of Psalms: The Author’s Preface*, ed. and trans. John Owens. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2005.

<sup>12</sup>*De Natura Deorum* I.iii.6

<sup>13</sup>Breen, 7.

his essay “John Calvin and the Rhetorical Tradition,” demonstrates how Calvin, discontent with the bare-bones syllogistic style of the scholastics, reactively dressed up the syllogism in the colorful garb of rhetoric so as to make it more attractive to the common man. After all, one major criticism the Reformers made against the Roman Catholic Church was that it provided the laity no access to biblical or theological texts. And so, although Melanchthon, Bucer, and Bullinger also improved on the scholastic tradition in this regard, though they were by no means ‘cold’ in the way of the scholastic’s syllogistic style, they were nevertheless as kindling to Calvin’s fire. Their material was the same, but Calvin’s was rhetorically “warmer,” a bonfire even.

Now, it is Melanchthon, Bucer, and Bullinger who warrant mention because it is with them that we will compare and contrast Calvin’s rhetorical reference and use of Cicero’s *de Natura Deorum*. Furthermore, the reason these three have been selected for comparison to the exclusion of equally notable reformers such as Vermigli, Musculus, or Zwingli is that it is Melanchthon, Bucer, and Bullinger to whom Calvin, in his dedicatory epistle to his Romans Commentary, admits that his own understanding of the epistle is deeply indebted. Melanchthon draws Calvin’s praise in that it was he who “by his singular learning and industry, and by that readiness in all kinds of knowledge, in which he excels, has introduced more light than those who preceded him.”<sup>14</sup> Bullinger, adds Calvin, “has justly attained no small praise; for with learning he has connected plainness, for which he has been highly commended.”<sup>15</sup> And finally, Bucer, says Calvin, “by publishing his works, has given as it were the finishing stroke.”<sup>16</sup> Calvin applauds that quality in each work that compliments its chronological predecessor. Melanchthon is praised for improving on the work of his forebears in general and Bucer is in turn praised for examining

---

<sup>14</sup>John Calvin, *The Epistle Dedicatory, John Calvin to Simon Grynaeus*, ed. and trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2005) xxv

<sup>15</sup>Calvin, *The Epistle Dedicatory*, xxv

<sup>16</sup>Calvin, *The Epistle Dedicatory*, xxv

the epistle exhaustively to the improvement of Melancthon who merely examined it topically; Bucer contributes the “finishing strokes.” Finally, Calvin in his turn professes that he will seek to improve on the both of them explaining, “the first has not explained every passage, and the other has handled every point more at large than it can be read in a short time.”<sup>17</sup> Herein lies Calvin’s opportunity to make his contribution to the great exegetical effort. He makes it very clear that rather than advancing new theological insight, his commentary, by “pointing out the best explanation” amongst Melancthon, Bullinger, and Bucer’s, will serve as a sort of a critical text.<sup>18</sup> Taking the best of what Melancthon, Bullinger, and Bucer have to say, Calvin will say it with more appropriate brevity, order, and style.

As though Calvin’s own admission isn’t enough, that his own handling of Romans is heavily influenced by these three Reformers, in this case Bucer in particular, is historically demonstrable as well. In 1538, having been expelled from his office in Geneva, Calvin, persuaded by Bucer, took up the chair of exegesis at the College of Sturm in Strausbourg. Finally operating in the scholarly dimension he had always intended for himself he began to exegete, among other texts, the Pauline epistles; and sometime between 1539-1540 published his first commentary, a commentary on Paul’s Epistle to the Romans.<sup>19</sup> During this brief but profoundly theologically formative season of his life Calvin was free to study and write unbridled by the civic responsibilities that had and would again demand his attention in Geneva. It was presumably during this time that he, under Bucer’s guidance, studied Melancthon, Bullinger, and Bucer’s Commentaries on Romans all recently published: Melancthon’s most recent edition

---

<sup>17</sup>Calvin, *The Epistle Dedicatory*, xxvi

<sup>18</sup>Calvin, *The Epistle Dedicatory*, xxvi

<sup>19</sup>Wendel, *Calvin*, 59-61.

in 1535,<sup>20</sup> Bullinger's in 1533, and Bucer's in 1536.<sup>21</sup> That these commentaries drastically impacted Calvin's own commentary on the Roman epistle and his second edition of the *Institutes*, both published in early 1539, is no small point.

### Calvin's Method

In these commentaries, the disparities between Calvin's expositional method and the methods of Melancthon, Bullinger, and Bucer will prove to be a crucial factor in serving this paper's primary interest: Calvin's use of Cicero in the opening chapters of his *Institutes*. The methodological approach Calvin takes to his commentaries is intimately related to the methodological approach he takes to his *Institutes*. Richard Muller points out, "Calvin's prefaces to the 1539 *Institutes* and the 1540 *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans* not only were written in close temporal proximity to each other but also reflect similar concerns."<sup>22</sup> In spite of his laudatory commendations Calvin nevertheless expresses serious reservations about the expository methods both Melancthon and Bucer employed in their *Romans Commentaries*. Melancthon, by diverging from the text into *loci communes*, "passed by many things which deserve attention," notes Calvin.<sup>23</sup> Bucer on the other hand Calvin criticizes for being "too diffuse for men in business to read, and too profound to be understood by such as are simple."<sup>24</sup>

Then again, in the *Institutes'* prefatory letter to the reader Calvin reiterates these concerns.

"If, after this road has, as it were, been paved," explains Calvin about

---

<sup>20</sup>This paper will utilize Melancthon's 1532 edition and Bucer's reprinted 1562 edition both accessed through PRDL.org.

<sup>21</sup>T. H. L. Parker, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans 1532-1542* (Edinburgh, United Kingdom: T.&T. Clark LTD, 1986)

<sup>22</sup>Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 28.

<sup>23</sup>Calvin, *The Epistle Dedicatory*. xvvi

<sup>24</sup>Calvin, *The Epistle Dedicatory*. xxvi

his *Institutes*, “should I publish any interpretations of Scripture, I shall always condense them, because I shall have no need to undertake long doctrinal discussions, and to digress into common topics.”<sup>25</sup>

Here Calvin is explaining that by dealing with theological commonplaces in his *Institutes*, and dealing with them at length, he frees himself up in his commentaries to exposit scripture simply, concisely, and in a program that follows the natural flow of the biblical text, or rather the program the text itself has established. In short, those common topics which Melanchthon superimposes on the text and those excessively lengthy points which Bucer drags out of the text Calvin delegates to his *Institutes*, intending to deal with them there. As the interrelation between Calvin’s commentaries and his *Institutes* becomes clearer, what topics he does and doesn’t address in one becomes increasingly relevant to the understanding of the other. And so, although our inquiry into Calvin’s use of Cicero is set in the parameters of the introductory chapters of his *Institutes*, our understanding of these chapters, namely the method and force of their arrangement, improves with consideration of where that material would have landed if in his commentaries Calvin had followed Melanchthon’s expositional method. That is to ask: why does Calvin cite Cicero’s *de Natura Deorum* in his *Institutes* and not in his commentaries, and if he were to cite it in his commentaries where would we expect him to have done so? To answer these questions we must bear in mind the content of these chapters, the context in which Calvin so thoroughly uses Cicero.

To identify the subject matter of those chapters of Calvin’s *Institutes* with which this paper will concern itself, chapters two, three, and a bit of four, it will suffice here to simply enumerate their headings. The heading of chapter II reads: “What it should be to know God, and to what end that knowledge of him tends,” chapter III: “That the knowledge of God is naturally implanted in the minds of men,” and chapter IV: “That this same knowledge is

---

<sup>25</sup>Calvin, *Institutio* (1550) Letter to the Reader.

stifled and tainted in part by ignorance, in part by malice.”<sup>26</sup> Evidently these chapters are concerned with the epistemological question, ‘how do we know God?’ However, Calvin himself clarifies that in these opening chapters he is not yet discussing that knowledge by which we conceive of God the redeemer in Christ the Mediator, “but rather,” he says, “I speak only about that base and simple knowledge to which the natural order of creation would have led us if Adam had remained blameless.”<sup>27</sup> Calvin is discussing here that knowledge of God common to all, that knowledge of God to which even the pagans have access according to Paul in the programmatic first chapter of his epistle to the Romans. Nowhere else in scripture is this topic, the natural knowledge of God, so plainly addressed as in Romans 1-2.

It is more than reasonable then to presume that had Calvin followed Melancthon’s expositional method he would have been inclined to cite Cicero’s *de Natura Deorum* in his exposition of Romans chapters 1-2. This is after all exactly what Melancthon, Bullinger, and Bucer do—employ Cicero’s *de Natura Deorum* to help explicate these chapters of Romans. Notice then that, as will be shown, those very exegetes to whom Calvin himself confesses a deep indebtedness for his own understanding of this Pauline epistle set a clear precedence for supplementing Romans 1-2 with Cicero’s *de Natura Deorum*; but, in spite of his admiration, Calvin does not follow it. In contrast, Calvin excludes all reference to *de Natura Deorum* from his exposition of these chapters, not because he deems it irrelevant or uninformative to the Pauline subject matter at hand; but rather because he deems it to be categorically out of place in his commentary.

In his *Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Romans* Calvin mentions Cicero only twice; and in each case he merely hires the

---

<sup>26</sup>*Institutio*, I.ii-iv Though we will not examine chapter v closely it is of significance to be mentioned here, it reads: “Dei notitiam in mundi fabrica et continua eius gubernatione lucere,” or, “That the knowledge of God shows forth in His continual craft and governance of the world.” *Institutio*, I.v

<sup>27</sup>*Institutio*, I.ii

rhetor as a linguistic consultant.<sup>28</sup> Not once though does he use any theological or philosophical content of Cicero's works to supplement Paul. Because, as opposed to Melancthon and Bucer who do so with little to no reservation, Calvin refuses to stray even in the slightest from the purview of the biblical text. But, as it is, Calvin feels no temptation to wander from the text; at those junctures where he would otherwise be inclined to meander down deviant paths into common topics, at Romans 1-2, for instance, he diligently stays on course remembering those paths have already been paved and traveled in his *Institutes*.<sup>29</sup> And so, where Melancthon and Bucer, in their Romans commentaries, digress into commonplaces, taking points from Cicero's *de Natura Deorum* when pertinent, Calvin, obedient to his method, stays the Pauline course. Nevertheless, he recognizes the relevance of Cicero's *de Natura Deorum* to Romans 1-2 and consequently in the opening chapters of the *Institutes* where he deals topically with the subject matter of those Romans chapters, emulating Melancthon and Bucer (though still rejecting their method) Calvin likewise puts Cicero to work endorsing Paul's natural theology.

Paul's Epistle to the Romans, dealing as systematically as it does with the topics of sin, faith, and grace, naturally attracted a great portion of Reformer's attention. Melancthon, in his commentary, admiring the brilliant topical order Paul sets forth in Romans, utilizes the epistle as a springboard for disputations on commonplaces. Effectively, his Romans commentary was something of a prototype for his *Loci Communes* in which he more liberally discussed common theological topics though still ordering them after the theological program Paul had established in Romans. Melancthon leading the way, Richard Muller puts forth that "the order of *loci* identified by Melancthon in Paul's Epistle

---

<sup>28</sup>Calvin cites Cicero's Tusculan Disputations Book 4 to validate his rendering of θυμὸς in Romans 2:8 as *excandescencia* (indignation). Then a second time, he looks to Cicero to substantiate his assertion that the verb αἰτιασθα, used by Paul in Romans 3:9, is forensic in nature.

<sup>29</sup>Calvin, *Institutio*, Letter to the Reader

to the Romans thus established a standard for the organization of Protestant theology.”<sup>30</sup> Calvin then, following Melancthon’s lead, likewise discovered in Paul’s Epistle an *ordo recte docendi* for his *Institutes*. Consequently then, mimicking the Apostle’s ordering of Romans, in his *Institutes* Calvin commences with an examination of that natural knowledge of God accessible to all humankind, so that by establishing the soteriological inadequacy of this *Cognitio Dei Creatoris* he may shift as Paul does to an examination of the *Cognitio Dei Redemptoris*, a knowledge adequate for our salvation. It is here in the *Institutes* that Calvin, though following the Pauline *ordo docendi*, takes for himself the prerogative to trespass the limits he set for himself in his commentaries. Finally, Calvin is able to unfetter the humanist rhetor and corroborate Paul’s Romans chapters 1-2 with Cicero *de Natura Deorum* after the example of Melancthon, Bullinger, and Bucer before him.

### **Calvin’s Use of Cicero Compared to His Peers**

Calvin’s reception of the diametrically opposed schools of Stoicism and Epicureanism has been the fodder of much scholarly debate. It is generally agreed that the Stoic’s doctrine of *fatalistic* providence to some degree informed Calvin’s own doctrine of *divine* providence and that likewise Calvin used the Epicurean doctrine of the *deus otiosus* as polemical ammunition against Renaissance Epicureans.<sup>31</sup> On the one hand Calvin can appreciate the Stoic recognition of a created order in the universe, even to the extent that he utilizes Stoic rhetoric to condemn the Renaissance resurgence of Epicureanism; on the other hand he rejects the Stoic conception of fate and of course rejects Epicurean cosmology all together. So while some have argued that Calvin’s theology is tainted by his profuse importation of Stoic concepts and still others that he relies too heavily on Cicero, Victor Nuovo’s point, that

---

<sup>30</sup>Muller, 129.

<sup>31</sup>Nicolaas H. Gootjes, “Calvin on Epicurus and the Epicureans: Background to a Remark in Article 13 of the Belgic Confession” *Calvin Theological Journal* 40 (2005), 33-48.

Calvin is both dependent upon and repudiates classical philosophy, should not be understated. Calvin, like Cicero, though favoring Stoicism does not buy into the philosophy wholesale; far from it!<sup>32</sup> In some cases, Calvin even adopts Epicurean sentiments. In chapters 2-4 of his *Institutes*, for example, Calvin without censure cites an epistemological point upon which both Stoics and Epicureans agree, a point that being a *consensus gentium* is effectively a *consensus Stoicorum et Epicureorum*, namely that all men have a rudimentary knowledge of god imprinted on the mind.

### *Compared to Melanchthon*

In book I of *de Natura Deorum* Cicero, through the mouth of Velleius, relays Epicurus' teaching that though we do not perceive the gods in the natural world order (as the world is in fact disordered) we do perceive traces of them that nature has left within our minds. Cicero reports Velleius saying:

Epicurus was first to see that the gods exist because nature itself has engraved the conception of them on the minds of all. For what nation, what race of men is there that does not possess, without learning mind you, a certain preconception of the gods, which Epicurus terms *προληψις*: a preconceived idea in the mind without which it is impossible to understand, investigate, and examine anything.<sup>33</sup>

Here Cicero, or Velleius at least, makes two epistemological cases for the existence of the gods. He points out first that this preconceived idea (*προληψις*, *prolepsis*) we have of the gods is innate, not learned, and second that it is an idea agreed upon by all mankind (*consensus gentium*). From these points, Velleius asserts that the existence of the gods is logically inferred. In his comment

---

<sup>32</sup>It must be kept in mind that Cicero's *de Natura Deorum* is a dialogue with multiple characters all with varying opinions. It is dangerous therefore to assert with much confidence that any given opinion of Balbus, Velleius, or Cotta is Cicero's own. Cicero does however report himself to be, like Cotta, a member of the Academic School. Even still, though having criticisms for the Stoics and Epicureans alike he confesses that Stoics seem to him closer to the truth. "*Mihi Balbi ad veritatis similitudinem videretur esse propensior*," he says (*de Natura Deorum III.XL.95*). The point remains that Calvin himself receives these schools critically and examines them in a text that likewise receives them critically.

<sup>33</sup>*de Natura Deorum*, I.43

on Romans 1:19 Melanchthon echoes these same arguments, though nuancing them a bit. He writes:

“In the human mind God intimates these divinely ingrafted notions: God exists, God is good, God is just, God punishes the wicked, God protects the righteous. Nevertheless (it says), afterward the mind deliberates what it does about God through the meditation of his wondrous works in the natural universe, however the logic of this syllogism wouldn’t hold if God hadn’t implanted through *prolepsis* a certain notion in our minds. And, those wondrous spectacles of things in nature are signs which impress upon our minds, so that they might reflect upon god and rouse that *prolepsis*.”<sup>34</sup>

Melanchthon hijacks the Epicurean notion of *prolepsis*, then turns what was an enthymeme into a Stoic syllogism by using it to fill that missing premiss. In so doing, he fortifies the deduction of God’s existence from the marvelous ordering of the natural world. Moreover, the information about God Melanchthon procures from these divinely implanted ideas is quite different from the information Velleius procures. Melanchthon concludes that God is good and just, that he punishes the wicked, and that he protects the righteous. Whereas Velleius earlier had only come to very basic conclusions explaining that “nature etches these things into our minds so that we may be of the opinion that the gods are eternal and blessed.”<sup>35</sup> From this conclusion Velleius infers that they must be *dei otiosi* since, as Epicurus teaches:

“That which is blessed and eternal has neither troubles (*negotium*)<sup>36</sup> itself nor presents troubles for anyone else; and it is controlled neither by anger nor kindness because those things that are of such a sort, are all weak.”<sup>37</sup>

It is significant that in contrast to Velleius, who holds a very

---

<sup>34</sup>Melanchthon, *Commentarii in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* (1532), 75-76

<sup>35</sup>*de Natura Deorum*, I.45

<sup>36</sup>The most basic meaning of *negotium* is ‘business’ however it is translated here as ‘trouble’ because Epicurus is speaking of a mischievous or malevolent sort of business. In any case though Epicurus’ gods have no business at all with men, neither good nor bad business. Calvin though will uses this term too but in the more general sense, just ‘business’.

<sup>37</sup>*de Natura Deorum*, I.45

primitive knowledge about impersonal gods with whom we have nothing to do, Melanchthon possesses a much more involved knowledge about a personal God who is good and just, punishing the wicked and protecting the righteous, in short, a God with whom we do have to deal. Melanchthon is very aware of this distinction and makes it very deliberately after having polemically slurred all those who disregard God's involvement in human affairs as Epicureans:

“They part ways with this natural knowledge because they do not think that God cares about these offenses nor looks upon mankind at all. In this way the human mind sinks down in Epicurean fancies”<sup>38</sup>

Calvin follows Melanchthon in this respect: he is not as concerned with the question ‘*quid sit Deus*’ as much as the question ‘*qualis sit.*’ Insisting that unless we can acknowledge that God is intimately involved in our world and affairs the inquiry into his existence is not worth making Calvin says:

“What purpose does it serve to acknowledge with Epicurus a God who is aloof from the management of the world, who delights himself in idleness, in short, what is the benefit to know a God with whom we have no business (*negotium*)?”<sup>39</sup>

Calvin, like Melanchthon before him, and Cicero before him, insists that the only knowledge of God worth ascertaining is the sort of knowledge that benefits us. All three thinkers could not be more emphatic on the point that unless we have some economy with God we should have no interest in whether or not he exists. In retort to the Epicurean proposition that the gods are as distant as they are disinterested in us, Cicero replies with his programatic question, “if their opinion is right, what piety (*pietas*) can there possibly be, what virtue (*sanctitas*), what reverence (*religio*)?”<sup>40</sup> Calvin repeats this sentiment, commenting, “we do not, properly speaking, say that God is known where there is neither religion (*religio*) nor piety (*peitas*).” But where Cicero only means to hint

---

<sup>38</sup>Melanchthon, *Commentarii in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* (1532), p. 75

<sup>39</sup>*Institutio* (1559), I.ii

<sup>40</sup>*de Natura Deorum*, I.3

at the civic necessity for a doctrine of providence Calvin means to hint at the human burden for an even more relevant, more certifiable knowledge of God; that is, a scriptural knowledge of God. But he goes on to clarify that he is not yet discussing that knowledge by which we learn of Christ our redeemer but rather that elementary knowledge which we acquire through observation of the natural world. Melanchthon before him made the same point and to the same effect, only in a more Pauline vein. Calvin's senior colleague writes:

“For men naturally possess this knowledge about God which is indeed a certain knowledge of the law, not the gospel. For men are incapable to infer through natural reason alone that God should desire the repentance of sins, that he should desire for the unworthy and impure to be reconciled, that he should by grace reckon the impure to be righteous. This is not naturally known but is revealed in the Gospel.”<sup>41</sup>

Both Calvin and Melanchthon agree with the Epicurean theory of *prolepsis*, recognizing it as a dialectical key to ascertaining whether or not God exists. However, they vehemently disagree with the conclusions that the Epicureans draw from their proleptic information, namely that God is a *deus otiosus*. And so, merging Pauline and Ciceronian rhetoric they combat this error and incite in their reader a craving not just for a god actively involved in our world but also for an altogether more profitable knowledge of that god, a demand for a *cognito Dei Redemptoris* in addition to this *cognitio Dei Creatoris*. Nevertheless, though both conflate Romans and *de Natura Deorum*, Melanchthon, in his Romans commentary, even in spite of his freer program, gravitates more toward Pauline language and themes while Calvin in his *Institutes*, not strictly bound by such tight parameters, gravitates more toward Ciceronian language and themes.<sup>42</sup> It is his unique method of dealing with biblical exegesis and theological topics separately that affords him this luxury. The result is that he is able to use Cicero with more

---

<sup>41</sup>Melanchthon, *Commentarii in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* (1532), p. 74

<sup>42</sup>Melanchthon establishes the Pauline dichotomy between law and gospel whereas Calvin establishes the Ciceronian dichotomy between a more aloof Epicurean god and a more providentially involved Stoic god.

scholarly integrity and ultimately with greater rhetorical effect; how he does this will be shown below. Ironically, though Calvin uses Cicero more thoroughly and with less edit than Melancthon; because he does so in his Institutes and not his commentaries he avoids the suspicion that surrounds Melancthon, that he unduly superimposes Cicero onto the biblical text. Calvin's achievement then is that when he corroborates Paul with Cicero, not confusing of one with the other, he accurately represents the two respectively.

### *Compared to Bullinger*

Of all those Romans commentators with whom this paper is concerned Bullinger makes the least use of Cicero's *de Natura Deorum*, citing the work explicitly but briefly. At the same time, in his *Letter to Grynaeus* (which served as the preface to his Romans commentary) Calvin makes the least mention of the Swiss Reformer and as far as method is concerned he doesn't refer to him at all. It is to be expected then that Calvin's use of Cicero seems to be influenced by Bullinger least of all. Nevertheless, Bullinger does reference a particular passage of *de Natura Deorum* which all others forego, in which Balbus explains the phenomena by which different parts of nature are deified. Bullinger uses this passage to augment and reinforce Paul's assessment in Romans 1:22-23 of pagan religion in which he (Paul) declares:

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

Antecedently, Balbus verifies Paul's account saying:

After the benefits they offer, the many disparate natures of the gods were named and construed both by the wisest of the Greeks and our own ancestors, and not without good reason. For these men judged whatever yields a great service to mankind not to have rendered it unto us without divine benevolence. And so, that which was brought about by the god they titled after the name of the god himself with the result that we now call crops *Ceres* and wine *Liber*.<sup>43</sup>

Drafting behind Cicero, Bullinger makes essentially the same

---

<sup>43</sup>*de Natura Deorum* II.60

comment though subtly criticizes that the consequence of this practice of naming the gods after the benefits they allegedly provide is that we produce as many gods as we have benefits, that is, innumerable.<sup>44</sup>

This custom, it is said, being carried over and well reputed is highly esteemed, with the result that they attribute much to the gods. Indeed all the names of the gods are born out of human purchasing. Many of these origins are looked at by Cicero in his book *de Natura Deorum*.<sup>45</sup>

After having himself enumerated many such origins of the gods, mythologically and etymologically, after the example of Cicero, Bullinger affirms that these origins are rooted in the association of the gods with the benefits they presumably deliver. However, where Balbus as a Stoic pantheist is perfectly comfortable ascribing divine names to the particular administrations of nature, Bullinger turns polemically against this line of thought. It is nowhere near enough for him to affirm that the world is divinely ordered and governed, we must additionally credit this ordinance and governance to that single Deity to whom it is due. It is imperative for Bullinger that God's glory not be divided up and redistributed amongst a pantheon of pseudo-gods. For when this is done, though acknowledging God's gifts, the pagans nevertheless fail to acknowledge God. Bucer writes:

Up to this point I reported the opinion of the nations concerning God and from where so many gods come from, indeed from benefits and duties. Now consequently the wisdom, omnipotence, and providence of God come to be forgotten, forthwith the divine administration begins to be divvied up amongst many gods. To this one is assigned the care of fire, to that one the care of the sea, still to another the care of the land.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup>Though entirely speculative, it is not implausible that Calvin had these passages from Cicero and Bullinger in mind when in *Institutio* I.xi.8 he describes the human mind as a *fabrica idolorum*, which Battles nicely translates as 'a factory of idols'.

<sup>45</sup>Bullinger, *In sanctissimam Pauli ad Romanos epistolam Henrychi Bullingeri commentarius* (1533), p. 21

<sup>46</sup>Bullinger, *In sanctissimam Pauli ad Romanos epistolam Henrychi Bullingeri commentarius* (1533), p. 21

Here Bullinger draws out the same old theme: the natural knowledge we have of God tells us very little about who he is in relation to us (*qualis sit*). Consequently, though recognizing these basic attributes of wisdom (*sapientia*), omnipotence (*omnipotentia*) and providence (*providentia*), adds Bullinger, we misappropriate them.

Calvin, in turn, runs with this same sentiment, that we know God through those benefits he extends to us. However Calvin takes Bullinger's point yet a step further. Bullinger applauds that aspect of pagan religion that gratefully recognizes good gifts as being divinely issued but then ridicules that pantheistic aspect of pagan religion insofar as it misappropriates this gratitude to a vast host of gods. Calvin then drives Bullinger's point home agreeing that two things about God must be acknowledged, first that he is one, and second that he is the sole source of every good thing:

Although our mind is not able to apprehend God without conceding to him some sort of worship, it will not be sufficient merely to hold that he is the one who ought to be revered and extolled by all, unless we should be convinced that he is the font of every good thing and that we should not seek anything other than that which is in him.<sup>47</sup>

Whereas Bullinger emphasizes that it is essential that we acknowledge that there is only one God, Calvin complementarily emphasizes that it is essential that we acknowledge this one God as the sole source of every good thing. Bullinger builds on Cicero, and Calvin builds on Bullinger. Where Bullinger laments those basic attributes of God being forgotten (*sapientia*, *omnipotentia*, *providentia*), Calvin takes the criticism even further, adding to Bullinger's list of what is imperative to know about God:

This I understand to mean that not only does God support this world by his boundless power (*potentia*), manage it by wisdom (*sapientia*), and preserve it by his kindness... but also that not a single drop of wisdom, light, righteousness, power, rectitude, or actual truth is acquired that does not flow from him, and of which he himself is not the cause.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup>*Institutio* (1559), I.ii

<sup>48</sup>*Institutio* (1559) I.ii

It comes to light that Calvin's primary objective here is a criticism of the Epicurean *deus otiosus*. He indicts them with a charge heavier than Cicero, as a reserved Stoic, would be able to file: the charge that not only do they fail to acknowledge God's basic cosmic providence, they moreover fail to acknowledge that he is benevolent. In his exposition of Romans 1:22-23 Bullinger adapts Balbus' comment very aptly to Paul's discourse; he does no harm to Paul by making him to consort with Cicero. That is to say that this is not another instance, as it was with Melancthon, where Calvin's method *uniquely* affords him the ability to use both Paul and Cicero without confusing the two; for we see Bullinger here successfully do the same. Nevertheless, Calvin's method, yet again, gains him a certain latitude in his *Institutes* to cite Cicero more liberally. In this case he makes subtle reference to Balbus' explanation of the origin of the names of the gods and then, unlike Bullinger who at least credits the pagans for recognizing that our benefits are divinely sent, Calvin, almost belligerently, turns the discussion back into a condemnation of Epicureanism, criticizing that, not knowing his benefits, they do not truly know God.

#### *Compared to Bucer*

Finally onto Bucer, who arguably had the most significant impact on Calvin as far as his understanding of Romans is concerned. After all, it was under Bucer in Strasbourg that Calvin wrote his Romans commentary while simultaneously reorganizing his *Institutes* into the program that would generally prevail unto the final edition in 1559. To examine Bucer's contribution to all of this we must return to that fundamental point of agreement, that *consensus gentium*, namely that every individual has a basic knowledge of God implanted in the mind. Representing the Epicurean camp, so as to articulate how compelling his case is, Velleius insists that without qualification this knowledge of the gods is inscribed on the human mind, and what's more is that this phenomenon is without exception universal. He says:

When this opinion is established by neither instruction, custom, or law and the firm agreement of everyone endures in unanimity, it necessarily must be observed that the gods exist; because we have an

ingrafted (*insitus*), or if you prefer an innate (*innatus*) knowledge of them, moreover the natural inclinations of all people agree upon this and so necessarily it must be true, and in turn it must be acknowledged that the gods exist.<sup>49</sup>

Since it is such a rare occurrence (if not the only) it can't be overstated that on this point the Stoics agree; it truly is a *consensus gentium*! Representing their camp, Balbus repeats these points precisely: that this knowledge is engraved and that it is universal. He says:

There is a great consensus amongst all people of every nation, for the idea that the gods exist is innate (*innatus*) in everyone, as though it were engraved (*insculptus*) in the mind; and though concerning what sort they may be (*quales sint*) there are a variety of opinions, no one denies that they exist.<sup>50</sup>

Bucer, like Melanchthon and Bullinger, is compelled by his own method to nuance his citations of Cicero toward a Pauline reading. That is to say that he is compelled to make Cicero sound like Paul more than Paul like Cicero. So, following Melanchthon and Bullinger, in his commentary on Romans 1 Bucer adds a legal shade to his use of Ciceronian vocabulary. Whereas the characters of Cicero's dialogue are more interested to discover if this seemingly universal knowledge of the gods can settle their argument over divine providence (or lack thereof), Bucer—true to Paul's epistolary program—is interested to discover what implication this knowledge of God has in the divine courtroom. His conclusion is, of course, the conclusion of Paul: this knowledge is impotent to save us, potent to condemn us. But that is somewhat beside the point. Satisfying his own interests (and Paul's interests), Bucer asserts that not only is the base knowledge that God exists irrevocably resident in the human mind, his laws too are irrevocably resident in the human mind. Bucer writes:

When God reveals himself to men, those things about him are divine dictates men understand and are not able to conceal. And so, this knowledge of God, that he has power over all and is the highest good,

---

<sup>49</sup>*de Natura Deorum*, I.44

<sup>50</sup>*de Natura Deorum* II.12

is imprinted (*impressus*) and infixed (*infixus*) in the minds of all men.<sup>51</sup>

Next, in order to fortify his case, after the example of the Epicureans and Stoics alike, Bucer proceeds with the well attested formula by adding to the fact that the knowledge of God is innate that moreover it is universally agreed upon.

These same notions are common to all; and [the idea] that there is a god, is inborn (*innatus*) in all and likewise is etched (*insculptus*) into the mind. Moreover, it did not endure in isolation amongst a single race or a single generation of men, but thus far has always been strengthened and growing.<sup>52</sup>

Calvin, once again, follows in his turn iterating his predecessors' iteration of Cicero. Of course, he generally agrees (it is a *consensus* after all) that the knowledge of God is implanted in the mind not just of some, but of all men. He does, however, seem to very subtly qualify both how this knowledge is implanted and in whom it is implanted. But in any case, he consents, saying, "Indeed, that there is resident in the mind of every man, a natural intuition, a sense of divinity, we hold to be beyond contention."<sup>53</sup> And also, "God himself inserted (*indo*) into every single mind a certain understanding of his divinity."<sup>54</sup> Calvin seems to be in general agreement with all those who had gone before him in affirming that the long held theory is *extra controversia*. However Calvin seems to notice the irony that something universally and innately agreed upon would be argued about in the first place. It seems that any dissenter, by dint of dissenting, would disprove the theory. Calvin however, noticing this gapping irony, capably trumps it by arguing that even atheists (Dionysius is Calvin's example) are convicted by a dreadful fear of God; as Battles well translates, "the worm of conscience, sharper than any cauterizing

---

<sup>51</sup>Bucer, *Metaphrasis Et Enarratio, In Epist. D. Pauli, Apostoli Ad Romanos* (1562), p.110

<sup>52</sup>Bucer, *Metaphrasis Et Enarratio, In Epist. D. Pauli, Apostoli Ad Romanos* (1562), p.110

<sup>53</sup>*Institutio* (1559) I.iii

<sup>54</sup>*Institutio* (1559), I.iii

iron, gnaws away within them.”<sup>55</sup> That is to say, those who insist they don’t believe in God are lying to themselves.<sup>56</sup> In this next instance then Calvin seems to slightly qualify the *consensus gentium* as a *consensus recte iudicantium*.<sup>57</sup> He writes:

Indeed this will always be agreed upon by those *who deliberate soundly*, that there is a sense of divinity etched (*insculptus*) into the minds of men which can never be eradicated. On the contrary, that God exists is a naturally implanted (*ingenitum*) conviction, infixed (*infixus*) inwardly, so to speak, in the very marrow itself.<sup>58</sup>

Here Calvin agrees with Bucer that not only is this knowledge of God placed in the minds of men as Cicero reports, it moreover is tightly fastened there and cannot be loosed. To articulate this idea, both Bucer and Calvin describe that basic knowledge we have of God as ‘*infixus*’ (fastened in, infixed, impressed), a term alien to Cicero’s vocabulary on the subject. In doing this they discreetly add to Cicero’s account that the knowledge of God the Creator is *irrevocably* inserted in the mind.

Instead of *infixus*, the interlocutors of Cicero’s *de Natura Deorum* most prevalently describe that basic knowledge we have of the gods as being *insitus* (implanted, ingrafted), *innatus* (inborn, innate), or *insculptum* (engraved, imprinted) in the human mind. Melancthon, Bullinger, and Bucer use these same terms interchangeably, as does Calvin, but with one exception: Calvin never calls our knowledge of God the Creator *innatus*. Why exactly he shies away from this term is beyond the scope of this paper to examine in depth, but it is our tentative hypothesis that he wants to emphasize God’s agency in terms of how this knowledge

---

<sup>55</sup>*Institutio* (1559), I.iii

<sup>56</sup>The furthest toward atheism proper that one can land on Velleius’ scale is agnostic or deist. Diagoras, for example, was pegged an atheist for confessing his agnosticism, not atheism. He ends up painting Diagoras as an Epicurean. *de Natura Deorum*, I.63

<sup>57</sup>Not to say that Calvin doesn’t find the *consensus gentium* compelling. He does, after all, cite Cicero on the matter (as Battles translates), “There is, as that eminent pagan says, no nation so barbarous, no people so savage, that they have not a deep-seated conviction that there is a God.” *Institutio* I.iii

<sup>58</sup>*Institutio*, I.ii

comes to occupy the mind. This may explain why, when Calvin does select terminology from the Ciceronean deposit, he prefers to describe the knowledge of God as being inserted (*inditus*). More significantly it is a favorite of Calvin to refer to this knowledge of God as a seed (*semen*) implanted in the mind.<sup>59</sup> Whereas Cicero, Melanchthon, Bullinger, and Bucer, all use generic terms such as *cognitio*, *notio*, *notus*, and *notitia* for “knowledge,” though Calvin uses these terms likewise, he nevertheless is the only one to venture to use more metaphoric terms like *semen religionis*, for instance. “Just as experience demonstrates,” writes Calvin, “a seed of religion has been in planted in all men.”<sup>60</sup> In his Romans commentary, however, Calvin restricts himself to vocabulary that is more typical and bland. Here, like Melanchthon, Bullinger, and Bucer, he primarily reserves himself to the phrase ‘*notio Dei*’ when discussing our knowledge of God the Creator; but in his *Institutes* he is privileged to use the more flowery phrase ‘*semen religionis*’. Again this privilege is afforded by his method of dealing with the exposition of scripture and disputation of common topics respectively.

### Conclusion

In closing we find that Calvin is not unique in having used Cicero’s *de Natura Deorum* to substantiate Paul’s declaration in Romans 1-2 that “the pagans know God in part.” In their Romans commentaries Melanchthon, Bullinger, and Bucer had all done the same and done it before the French reformer. What’s more is that Calvin explicitly tells us in his *Letter to Grynaeus*, his preface to his Romans commentary, that materially he is indebted to these three for his own understanding of Romans. Nevertheless, methodologically, he supposes that he can do better. In both his *Letter to Grynaeus* prefacing his Romans commentary (1540) and his *Letter to the Reader* prefacing his *Institutes* (1539) he tells us how he does this, namely by keeping scriptural exposition and

---

<sup>59</sup>*Institutio*, I.iii-iv

<sup>60</sup>*Institutio* I.iv, See also *Institutio* I.iii

common topics separate. This method advantages him as both a theologian and a humanist scholar in so far as it affords him the ability to integrally return to the *fontes argumentorum* without muddying the waters. That is to say that in his commentaries he is able to discuss Pauline theology on Paul's terms and in his *Institutes* he is able to topically (*loci*) reference *de Natura Deorum* on Cicero's terms. Examining the actual 1559 edition of the *Institutes*, for example, one will notice that the first three and half chapters are scripturally naked, that is there isn't a single scriptural reference.<sup>61</sup> But, this is no wonder. Calvin makes it clear that he is not yet dealing with scripture. In chapter II he explains, "I do not yet make mention of that special sort of knowledge by which men comprehend God the Redeemer in Christ the Mediator."<sup>62</sup> Naturally then, in his opening chapters, since he is not yet dealing with scripture he leaves the text naked, not dressed with any scriptural reference (though there are references he could make). Rhetorically this makes for a powerful effect, an effect that only Calvin could methodologically afford. Leaving the text scripturally bare Calvin makes it clear that he is here examining through pagan's eyes our natural knowledge of God strictly. Moreover he renders Cicero not only an intellectual authority but a theological demonstration. That is, Cicero demonstrates Paul's teaching that, having the law chiseled into their hearts, "the pagans know God in part." Finally moving to chapter IV in which Calvin examines how puny and worthless this natural knowledge of God is the first scriptural reference made is notably Romans 1:22, "professing to be wise they became fools." By not just explaining natural theology but actually demonstrating it, what Calvin in effect does is take his reader on an experiential journey from natural to special revelation. This is the same effect that Melancthon, Bullinger, and Bucer had attempted: to dissatisfy the reader with the rudimentary

---

<sup>61</sup>In his edit of the *Institutes*, McNeill ascribes verse citations that Calvin himself never intended. By doing this he unfortunately compromised the rhetorical effect Calvin had intended in leaving the text scripturally bare.

<sup>62</sup>*Institutio*, I.ii

knowledge of the law and of God the Creator so as to prod them to make the epistemological jump that Cicero could not himself make, a jump to scripture. Not to say they didn't achieve this effect, but they certainly didn't achieve the quality results that Calvin did. This then is Calvin's contribution, the contribution he himself professedly intended all along, not to say anything new, but methodologically and rhetorically to say it better.

**The Personhood of the Holy Spirit: Augustine's *Filioque*  
Formula in *De Trinitate*<sup>1</sup>**  
Sunghoon Lee

Does Augustine undermine the personhood of the Holy Spirit when he articulates the *Filioque* (i.e., and from the Son) formula? Many modern systematic theologians give an affirmative answer to this question. This perspective, nevertheless, needs to be examined by a precise reading of Augustine's texts. This paper will show how Augustine establishes the personhood of the Holy Spirit with his double procession doctrine.

The problem of the Holy Spirit's double procession is one of the most continually debated issues in the history of theology. The Eastern and the Western churches have disputed the issue since the *Filioque* clause was added to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed at the end of the sixth century.<sup>2</sup> The political and cultural conflicts between them have exacerbated the controversy,<sup>3</sup> but the decisive disagreement is still a theological one: how to describe the relation

---

<sup>1</sup>Originally submitted to Professor Susan Carole on December 14, 2011 for 801B: Research Methodology.

<sup>2</sup>A consensus among scholars is that the third council of Toledo in 589 decided to add the "*et filio (filioque)*" clause to the third article of the Creed. See, Declan Marmion and Rik Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 189; A. Edward Sicienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 68-69, 87-88; Gerald Bray, "The *Filioque* Clause in History and Theology," *Tyndale Bulletin* 34 (1983): 91, 118-119; James F. Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine: To the Time of the Council of Chalcedon* (London: Methuen & Co., 1903), 216; Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1881), 1:26; H. B. Swete, *On the History of the Doctrine of the Procession of the Holy Spirit: From the Apostolic Age to the Death of Charlemagne* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1876), 164-172.

<sup>3</sup>On the political and cultural factors that affected the *Filioque* controversy, see, Sicienski, *The Filioque*, 100-104, 111-115; Bray, "The *Filioque* Clause," 120-122; Dietrich Ritschl, "Historical Development and Implications of the *Filioque* Controversy," in *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque Controversy*, ed. Lukas Vischer (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981), 51-52.

between divine Persons without falling into subordinationism or modalism. This theological controversy originated from the different perspectives of the Latin and the Greek theologians in approaching the mystery of the Trinity and gradually deteriorated throughout its history.<sup>4</sup> It still continues even today despite their continual endeavor to mend the rift.<sup>5</sup>

Some modern scholars in the Western tradition have tried to harmonize the oppositions by reassessing both of them.<sup>6</sup> Their viewpoints, however, tend to be critical of the Western doctrine more than of the Eastern teaching. They criticize the Western

---

<sup>4</sup>On the brief summaries of the difference between the Eastern and the Western approaches to the issue, see, Joel C. Elowsky, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Ancient Christian Doctrine 4 (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 217-222; F. LeRon Shults and Andrea Hollingsworth, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 30-37; Aristeidis Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium: The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus (183-1289)*, rev. ed. (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 86-87; Nick Needham, "The Filioque Clause: East or West?" *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 15, n. 2 (1997): 147-148; Mary Ann Fatula, "A Problematic Western Formula," *One in Christ* 17, no. 4 (1981): 324-325.

<sup>5</sup>A recent effort to reconcile the controversy is the "Clarification on the meaning of the Filioque" (quoted from Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 266) in 1995. See, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, "The Greek and Latin Traditions regarding the Procession of the Holy Spirit," Eternal Word Television Network, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/PCCUFILQ.HTM> (accessed October 20, 2011). On an Eastern critical response, see, John Zizioulas, "One Single Source: An Orthodox Response to the Clarification on the Filioque," Orthodox Research Institute, [http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/dogmatics/john\\_zizioulas\\_single\\_source.htm](http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/dogmatics/john_zizioulas_single_source.htm) (accessed October 20, 2011).

<sup>6</sup>For instance, Karl Rahner, Jürgen Moltmann, Colin Gunton, Catherine Mowry LaCugna, and David Coffey. Although they have different perspectives each other, their evaluations are basically critical. See, Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 15-24; Jürgen Moltmann, *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, trans. John Bowden (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 58-60; Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1981), 178-187; Colin Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 3-11, 53-56; Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 10, 81, 97-99; David Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3-5, 52-58, 155; Coffey, "Spirit Christology and the Trinity," 328-329.

explanations for being confined to the abstract speculation of the intra-Trinitarian relations at the expense of the comprehensive understanding of the extra-Trinitarian economy.<sup>7</sup> The Latin theologians seem to them to assume the transcendental divine essence behind the three Persons in order to explain the inter-Personal relationship without making any Person subordinate to the other Persons.<sup>8</sup> The critics judge that this assumption also becomes a basis for the double procession of the Holy Spirit because the Spirit's relations with the Father and the Son are the same in the common essence behind the Persons.<sup>9</sup> According to them, this description is not about the Triune God revealed in the Bible but about a Neo-Platonic divine being.

In this criticism, Augustine is blamed as the originator of the problematic Western formulation.<sup>10</sup> The main issue among the

---

<sup>7</sup>Michel René Barnes shows that this contrasting understanding stems from Théodore de Régnon and becomes a dominant perspective. He raises doubts about its validity and provides a persuasive argument to refute it. Michel René Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 237-250.

<sup>8</sup>Ritschl, "Historical Development," 61; Colin E. Gunton, "Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43, no. 1 (1990): 45; Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 55-56; LaCugna, *God for Us*, 10; Rahner, *The Trinity*, 17.

<sup>9</sup>Needham, "The *Filioque* Clause," 147; Thomas Smail, "The Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity," in *Nicene Christianity: The Future for a New Ecumenism*, ed. Christopher Seitz (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001), 160.

<sup>10</sup>Needham, "The *Filioque* Clause," 142; Fatula, "A Problematic Western Formula," 324; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 1:318-319; Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. E. B. Speirs and J. Millar (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), 4:129; Michael Azkoul, *The Influence of Augustine of Hippo on the Orthodox Church* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 142-149; Siecienski, *The Filioque*, 63; William G. Rusch, ed. and trans., *The Trinitarian Controversy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 26; Dunham, *The Trinity and Creation in Augustine*, 18-21.

diverse points of criticism is the personhood of the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup> Jürgen Moltmann argues that the *Filioque* formula does not attribute “full divine personhood to the Holy Spirit”<sup>12</sup> because it effaces the difference between the Father-Spirit relation and the Son-Spirit relation. For him, the difference is essential to make the Holy Spirit an equally distinct Person from the others, but the *Filioque* formula weakens the Holy Spirit’s personhood by breaking the ontological balance between the two relations.<sup>13</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg also, disagreeing with the *Filioque* doctrine, points out that the formulation neglects the “reciprocity” of the inter-Personal relations.<sup>14</sup> He claims that the *Filioque* formula renders the Holy Spirit inferior to the other Persons because it does not consider the active role of the Spirit in the intra-Trinitarian relations.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Colin E. Gunton contends that the double procession doctrine results in the Holy Spirit’s subordination to the Son and makes Him “reduced to the margins”<sup>16</sup> in the Trinity. His point is that the Holy Spirit as the unifying love of the Father and the Son does not have equal “hypostatic weight” as the other

---

<sup>11</sup>For instance: 1) assuming the fourth divine source behind the three Persons (Rahner, Gunton, Ritschl, LaCugna); 2) lacking the Trinitarian awareness (Coffey); 3) contaminating the theology by the Greek philosophy (Gunton, Ritschl); 4) subordinating the Spirit to the Son (Gunton, Pannenberg); 5) failing to consider the reciprocal relations in the Trinity (Pannenberg); 6) neglecting the economy of the Trinity (Gunton, LaCugna); 7) having difficulty in attributing the full divine personhood to the Holy Spirit (Moltmann); 8) making two divine sources (Zizioulas).

<sup>12</sup>Jürgen Moltmann, “The Trinitarian Personhood of the Holy Spirit,” in *Advent of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology*, ed. Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), 302.

<sup>13</sup>Moltmann, “The Trinitarian Personhood,” 313; Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, 88.

<sup>14</sup>Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 317-319.

<sup>15</sup>Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 121.

<sup>16</sup>Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 53.

Persons.<sup>17</sup> All these critics have Augustine's formula in mind when they criticize the doctrine for downgrading the personhood of the Holy Spirit.

These charges, however, mainly come from misunderstandings of Augustine's own explanation in his texts as Michel René Barnes and Lewis Ayres point out.<sup>18</sup> Most of the critics are merely using Augustine's ideas to support their own arguments without closer interpretation of his texts. In this paper, I will argue that Augustine firmly establishes the personhood of the Holy Spirit with his three versions of the *Filioque* formula in his *De Trinitate*.<sup>19</sup>

At this point, I should make clear an equivocal but crucial concept, personhood. By personhood I mean 'the ontological status of the divine Person'. In the orthodox Christian faith, the ontological status of a Person has been recognized when a Person was professed to be equal to the other Persons in his being and, at the same time, distinguished from the other Persons not in thought but in reality. In this sense, the substantial equality (*i.e.*, consubstantiality) and the hypostatic distinctiveness (*i.e.*, peculiarity) are the two aspects of the personhood. I will use this concept to mean those two aspects.

To prove my thesis, first, I will examine the polemical context of Augustine's *Filioque* formulation in *De Trinitate*. This will provide a sound basis for exact understanding of the text. In the next two

---

<sup>17</sup>Gunton, "Augustine, the Trinity," 52-55.

<sup>18</sup>Michel René Barnes, "Reading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 145; Lewis Ayres, "The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine's Trinitarian Theology," in *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner*, eds. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (London: Routledge, 2000), 51-52.

<sup>19</sup>W. J. Mountain, ed., *Santi Aurelli Augustini De Trinitate Libri XV*, Vols. 50 and 50a of *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1968); Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol.3, 1-228 (1887; repr., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993); Edmund Hill, trans., *The Trinity*, Pt. 1, Vol. 5 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed., John E. Rotelle (Brooklyn, New York: New City Press, 1991).

sections, I will reconstruct three versions of Augustine's *Filioque* formula and show how each formula strengthens the personhood of the Holy Spirit. This will be elaborated by two concepts, substantial equality and hypostatic distinctiveness, which consist of the meaning of personhood. The first and the second versions will be examined with relation to consubstantiality, and the third version will be analyzed from the perspective of peculiarity. In a word, this paper is a historical investigation into specific passages of *De Trinitate* that formalize the doctrine of the double procession of the Holy Spirit.

### **Polemical Context of the *Filioque* Formulation in *De Trinitate***

To avoid misconstruing Augustine's idea, it is important to understand the context in which Augustine introduces the double procession of the Holy Spirit. The polemical context of *De Trinitate* shows that Augustine rebuts two specific heretics: the Arians who deny the consubstantiality between the Persons and the Pneumatomachians who cannot understand the Personal peculiarity of the Holy Spirit. It is in the context of this anti-heretic impetus that Augustine devises the *Filioque* formula establishing the Holy Spirit's personhood.

#### *Polemical character of De Trinitate*

Many scholars, including most English translators of the text, regard *De Trinitate* as an uncontroversial speculation.<sup>20</sup> Admittedly, it has deep contemplation in many parts, but its polemical character must not be overlooked. Throughout the entire book, Augustine has in mind particular opponents who disagree

---

<sup>20</sup>Arthur West Haddan, "Translator's Preface," in vol. 3 of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, iii; Edmund Hill, "Introduction," in *The Trinity*, 20; Roland Kany presents two "commonplace assumptions" in scholarly assessments of *De Trinitate*: 1) it is "unpolemical and wholly dedicated to speculative thinking"; 2) it "formulates the dogma and offers its speculative justification." See, Roland Kany, "Fidei contemnentis initium": On Certain Positions Opposed by Augustine in *De Trinitate*," *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993): 322. Also see, John Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *DeTrinitate*," *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 103.

with the Nicene Trinitarian theology. At least three groups of opponents can be traced in *De Trinitate*, whom Augustine refutes in his arguments.

The first group is presented in Books I-IV. In the first sentence of Book I, Augustine mentions “the sophistries of those who disdain the starting point of faith by immature and perverse love for reason”<sup>21</sup> as his opponents.<sup>22</sup> These heretics assert the Son’s inferiority to the Father, depending on a naive dichotomy between the divine attribute of the Father and the human nature of the Son. In Books II-IV, Augustine, correcting the heretical readings of the Scriptures, demonstrates the consubstantiality between the Persons.

The second group is “Arians”<sup>23</sup> in Books V-VII. The main assumption of the Arian argument is that “whatever is said or understood about God is said not according to accident but according to substance.”<sup>24</sup> From this premise, they infer that the Father’s being unbegotten (*ingenitum*) and the Son’s being begotten (*genitum*) guarantee the substantial difference between them. In opposition to this argument, Augustine designs a new language to describe the oneness and threeness of the Trinity without falling into the Arian subordinationism.

---

<sup>21</sup>Augustine, *De Trinitate* (hereafter *Trin.*) I.1.1. “eorum ... calumnias qui fidei contemnentes initium immature et peruerso rationis amore falluntur.”

<sup>22</sup>On a tentative identification of these opponents, see, Kany, “‘Fidei contemnentes initium’,” 322-336. Barnes and Ayres identify this opponent with Latin Homoians. See, Michel René Barnes, “The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology of 400,” *Modern Theology* 19, no. 3 (July, 2003): 330; Barnes, “Exegesis and Polemic in Augustine’s *De Trinitate* I,” *Augustinian Studies* 30, no. 1 (1999): 45-48, 51-52; Barnes, “Reading Augustine’s Theology,” 166-168; Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 171-173.

<sup>23</sup>*Trin.* V.3.4.

<sup>24</sup>*Trin.* V.3.4. “quidquid de deo dicitur uel intelligitur, non secundum accidens, sed secundum substantiam dicitur.”

The third group is “Eunomius” and “the Eunomian heretics”<sup>25</sup> in Book XV. They deny the Son’s substantial equality with the Father, claiming that the Son is the Son of God’s will, which is accidental to God.<sup>26</sup> Although Augustine does not offer a detailed description of their argument, it is evident that their conclusion is the substantial dissimilarity between the Father and the Son. Augustine’s concern for consubstantiality continues in the last book of *De Trinitate*, too.

Although these groups are not to be easily identified, they have two typical claims in common. First, they insist that separate works indicate separate beings. For example, the Incarnation of the Son shows that He is a different being from the other Persons. According to them, the three Persons cannot be the same inasmuch as they do different works.<sup>27</sup> This claim results in their second claim that the Son and the Spirit are not “true God” (*verus Deus*)<sup>28</sup> because they are different from the Father, the only true God. Thus, they reject the decision of the consubstantiality between the Persons in the first council of Nicaea.

From these considerations, it is concluded that Augustine sets forth his Trinitarian arguments in *De Trinitate* to prove the divine consubstantiality by refuting the specific anti-Nicene challenges. This is the basic context in which the whole argument in the text can be better interpreted.

---

<sup>25</sup>*Trin.* XV.20.38. About Eunomius and Eunomianism, see, Michel René Barnes, “Arius, Arianism,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 60; William A. Sumruld, *Augustine and the Arians: The Bishop of Hippo’s Encounters with Ulfilan Arianism* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1994), 36, 51-52, 67-71.

<sup>26</sup>*Trin.* XV.20.38.

<sup>27</sup>The pro-Nicene theologians develop the “doctrine of inseparable operation” against this charge. See, Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 67-71. Augustine also follows this pro-Nicene tradition. On his presentation of this doctrine, see, *Trin.* I.5.8. On his use of this doctrine, see, Ayres, “Fundamental Grammar,” 62.

<sup>28</sup>*Trin.* I.6.9.

*Anti-Arianism and anti-Pneumatomachianism in De Trinitate*

Augustine's pneumatology in *De Trinitate* develops within this polemical context. The decisive evidence is that the pneumatological discussions follow the discussions about the Father and the Son in their topic and logic. This means that the discussions on the Holy Spirit also target the opponents who repudiate the consubstantiality of the Persons.<sup>29</sup>

In this context, Augustine elaborates his pneumatology with two points to defend the "orthodox faith" (*catholica fides*) against the heretics.<sup>30</sup> First, he argues that the Holy Spirit is not a creature but true God.<sup>31</sup> This is substantiated by the biblical statements that the Holy Spirit also has the same divine attributes as the Father and the Son. The second point is that the Holy Spirit's work is also an inseparable operation (*inseparabilis operatio*) of the Trinity.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the Holy Spirit is not excluded from the work of the other Persons. These points are the exact opposites of the two main claims of Augustine's opponents, revealing his anti-Arian drive.

In addition to these two points, Augustine emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is "a kind of ineffable communion of the Father and the Son" (*ineffabilis quaedam Patris Filiique communio*).<sup>33</sup> He gives multi-layered explanations on this idea: 1) the Holy Spirit is common to both (*communis ambobus*) because both the Father and the Son are Spirit and holy;<sup>34</sup> 2) the Holy Spirit is "something common" (*commune aliquid*) because He is not only of the Father but also of the Son;<sup>35</sup> 3) the Holy Spirit is the common gift (*donum*

---

<sup>29</sup>For example, *Trin.* I.6.13, I.8.18-9.19, I.12.25, II.3.5, II.5.9-6.11, IV.20.29-21.30, V.11.12-15.16, VI.5.7, VII.3.6, XV.17.27-31, XV.19.37, XV.25.45-26.47.

<sup>30</sup>*Trin.* I.4.7.

<sup>31</sup>*Trin.* I.6.13, I.8.18, IV.21.30, VI.5.7.

<sup>32</sup>*Trin.* I.9.19, II.5.9, IV.21.30.

<sup>33</sup>*Trin.* V.11.12, VI.5.7, XV.19.37, XV.26.45.

<sup>34</sup>*Trin.* V.11.12, XV.19.37.

<sup>35</sup>*Trin.* VI.5.7, XV.26.45. This is based on Matthew 10:20, John 14:26, 15:26, Romans 8:9, and Galatians 4:6.

*commune*) of both for us;<sup>36</sup> and 4) the Holy Spirit “introduces to us the mutual love (*communis caritas*) by which the Father and the Son love each other.”<sup>37</sup> Each of these explanations shows the Holy Spirit’s unique character that can render Him distinguished from the Son as well as from the Father. Here the emphasis is not on the consubstantiality but on the distinctiveness of the Spirit.

This third point has its polemical background, too. The Pneumatomachians in the fourth century refused the divinity of the Holy Spirit because they could not find other way to differentiate the Spirit from the Son than subordinating Him to the Son lest they are brothers.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the pro-Nicene theologians were charged with a new task: to find a way to distinguish the Holy Spirit from the Son without depriving him of his deity. Augustine seems to know of this heresy because he mentions the same question: “Why are both the Son and the Holy Spirit not called sons?”<sup>39</sup> He tries to reply to this question three times in *De Trinitate*, and the answers play a significant role in his argument for the double procession of the Holy Spirit.

To conclude, Augustine has two opposing positions against which he develops his pneumatology. One is the Arians in a broad sense who deny the consubstantiality of the Persons, and the other is the Pneumatomachians who cannot distinguish the Holy Spirit from the Son. Both denigrate the personhood of the Holy Spirit. Augustine intends to establish His consubstantiality and peculiarity in opposition to them.

---

<sup>36</sup>*Trin.* V.11.12, XV.26.45-47. This is based on John 4:10, 14:26, 15:26, Acts 2:38, 8:20, and Ephesians 2:7-8.

<sup>37</sup>*Trin.* XV.17.27. “commune qua inuicem se diligent pater et filius, nobis insinuat caritatem.”

<sup>38</sup>Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 212-214; Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction*, 213, 260; Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 24-25; Lewis Ayres, “Innovation and *Ressourcement* in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology,” *Augustinian Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 189-191.

<sup>39</sup>*Trin.* II.3.5, V.14.15, XV.25.45-27.48.

### *The Filioque formula in the polemical context*

In *De Trinitate*, there are four passages in which Augustine sets forth the doctrine of double procession. The first one comes directly after a long discussion of ‘sending’ (*mittens*) and ‘being sent’ (*missum*).<sup>40</sup> The argument makes solid the consubstantiality between the Persons.<sup>41</sup> The second passage introduces the *Filioque* formula from the perspective of the origination of the Son and the Spirit.<sup>42</sup> Here Augustine deals with both the consubstantiality and the distinctiveness of the Holy Spirit. In the third passage he emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is given as God’s best gift for us.<sup>43</sup> Here the relation between the Son and the Spirit is examined to find the distinctiveness of the Spirit. The last passage immediately follows it and reveals the peculiarity of the Holy Spirit in the intra-Trinitarian relationships between the three Persons.<sup>44</sup>

This brief summary shows that Augustine formulates the *Filioque* formula not on account of the formula itself but on account of the personhood of the Holy Spirit: His consubstantiality and distinctiveness. Therefore, the formula should be interpreted within this polemical context in which Augustine develops it. Now it is the time to reconstruct Augustine’s *Filioque* formula to examine how he achieves the purpose of his formulation.

### **Augustine’s *Filioque* Formula and the Consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit**

The first and the second versions of Augustine’s *Filioque* formula substantiate the personhood of the Holy Spirit by strengthening His consubstantiality with the Father and the Son. The first one shows that the Holy Spirit is true God by interpreting the meaning of ‘being sent’. The second version proves that the

---

<sup>40</sup>*Trin.* II.5.7-IV.20.29.

<sup>41</sup>*Trin.* IV.21.30.

<sup>42</sup>*Trin.* V.13.14-15.16

<sup>43</sup>*Trin.* XV.26.45-46.

<sup>44</sup>*Trin.* XV.26.47.

Holy Spirit is the same essence as the Father and the Son, depending on the argument that the Father and the Son are the one origin of the Holy Spirit's essence. Before elaborating on these formulations, their basic premises should be presented.

*Basic premises of the formula*

As I mentioned above, Augustine develops his pneumatology based on his discussions about the Father and the Son. Consequently, the basic premises of the *Filioque* formula come from the argument for the consubstantiality between the Father and the Son. These are as follows:

- (1) The Son is consubstantial with the Father.
- (2) The Son does with the Father everything that the Father does.

And biblical verses bring forth the third and the fourth premises:

- (3) The Holy Spirit is not only the Spirit of the Father but also the Spirit of the Son (Matthew 10:20, Romans 8:9, and Galatians 4:6).<sup>45</sup>
- (4) The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father (John 15:26).<sup>46</sup>

These four premises are the point of departure for Augustine's *Filioque* formulation.

*First version: Consubstantiality as God from God*

From a passage in Book IV,<sup>47</sup> the first version of the formula can be formulated like this:

- 1-(5) The Father sends the Holy Spirit, and so does the Son (John 14:26, 15:26).
- 1-(6) Being sent reflects proceeding because the former is a

---

<sup>45</sup>*Trin.* IV.20.29, XV.26.45.

<sup>46</sup>*Trin.* II.3.5.

<sup>47</sup>*Trin.* IV.20.29.

revelation of the latter.<sup>48</sup>

1-(7) His being sent by the Son reflects His proceeding from the Son.

1-(8) Therefore, the Holy Spirit proceeds both from the Father and from the Son.

In its broader setting, this formulation is a part of the argument for the consubstantiality between the Father and the Son. It supports their substantial sameness on the basis of their inseparable operation in sending the Spirit. However, it should be noticed that the Holy Spirit's 'being sent' has the same weight as the Son's 'being sent'. This means that the Holy Spirit is also God from God (*Deus de Deo*) as the Son is. For Augustine, God from God has the same ontological status as the God from whom the God is.<sup>49</sup> This is a fundamental axiom for claiming the Son's consubstantiality with the Father. Thus, the Holy Spirit's consubstantiality is highly emphasized by making Him to be God not only from the Father but also from the Son.

On the contrary, this formula is open to the criticism that it posits

---

<sup>48</sup>Some scholars point out that Augustine confuses the extra-Trinitarian sending with the intra-Trinitarian proceeding. See, Joseph T. Lienhard, "Augustine and the *Filioque*," in *Tolle Lege: Essays on Augustine and on Medieval Philosophy in Honor of Roland J. Teske, SJ*, eds., Richard C. Taylor et al (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2011), 146; Alexei Fokin, "St Augustine's Doctrine of the Trinity in the Light of Orthodox Triadology of the Fourth Century," in *The Trinity: East/West Dialogue*, edited by Melville Y. Stewart, translated by Eugene Grushetsky and Xenia Grushetsky (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 144-146; Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 194; Jaroslav Pelikan, "*Canonica regula*: The Trinitarian Hermeneutics of Augustine," in *Collectanea Augustiniana: Augustine: "Second Founder of the Faith"*, edited by Joseph C. Schnaubelt and Frederick Van Fleteren (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 333-334. On the contrary, some other scholars interpret his understanding of the relation between sending and proceeding positively. See, Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's De Trinitate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 32-34, 106-124; Lewis Ayres, "*Spiritus Amborum*: Augustine and Pro-Nicene Pneumatology," *Augustinian Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 214-215. I think that the former scholars overly simplify Augustine's understanding of the relation between them, but I do not elaborate on it here.

<sup>49</sup>*Trin.* II.1.2-3, VI.2.3, XV.14.23, 27.48. Gioia provides insightful explanation on this hermeneutical principle. See, Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology*, 120-123.

two divine origins instead of one unique origin, the Father.<sup>50</sup> This charge accuses the formula of a modalistic understanding that there is a ‘real’ divine essence behind the Father and the Son.<sup>51</sup> This ontological crisis in the personhood of the Father and the Son results in the same crisis in the personhood of the Holy Spirit. To reply to this criticism, we need another version.

*Second version: Consubstantiality as fully divine essence*

Augustine proposes another version of the *Filioque* formula in Book V.<sup>52</sup> The main concept is ‘origin’ (*principium*). He again employs the doctrine of inseparable operation to avoid making two origins. Here is the first part of his argument:

- 2-(5) Whatever remains in itself and begets, works, or gives something is the origin.
- 2-(6) The Father gives the Holy Spirit, so He is the origin of the Holy Spirit.
- 2-(7) The Son also gives the Holy Spirit (John 20:22), so He is the origin of the Holy Spirit, too.
- 2-(8) When the Father and the Son do something, they do it ‘together and at the same time’.<sup>53</sup>
- 2-(9) Thus, the Father and the Son give the Holy Spirit ‘together and at the same time’.
- 2-(10) This means that their actions of giving the Spirit are not two but one.
- 2-(11) Therefore, they are one origin of the Spirit.

This argument explains how the Father and the Son become one origin of the Spirit. The point is that they give the Holy Spirit ‘in one action’. Their actions are single because they occur in eternity without reference to time and place. Thus, even though the agent of giving is numerically two, the Father and the Son, the giving action itself, the eternal giving, is one. In this sense, the Father and the Son are the one origin of the Holy Spirit.

---

<sup>50</sup>Zizioulas, “One Single Source.”

<sup>51</sup>This is a kind of ‘the third man argument’ in Plato’s theory of Idea. See, Plato, *Parmenides* 131e8~132b2 (Ioannes Burnet ed., *Platonis Opera*, vol. 2 [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910]).

<sup>52</sup>*Trin.* V.13.14-14.15.

<sup>53</sup>In Latin, ‘*simul*’.

Nevertheless, it does not demonstrate that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both. The two concepts, origin and proceeding, should be connected.

For Augustine ‘to proceed’ (*procedere*) is one of the two aspects of divine being’s coming forth from the divine origin. Augustine states, “[The Holy Spirit] comes forth (*exit*) [from the Father] not as being born but as being given, so He is not called son.”<sup>54</sup> Both the Son and the Holy Spirit come forth from the Father, but the ways are different. The Son comes forth by being born (*natus*), but the Spirit comes forth by being given (*datus*). Augustine substitutes ‘being given’ with ‘proceeding’ because he realizes that ‘being given’ is also used to indicate the economic sending of the Spirit.<sup>55</sup> Accordingly, a special usage is assigned to the word ‘proceeding’ to indicate the Spirit’s having His origin from the Father.<sup>56</sup>

From this analysis, we can obtain the rest of the second version as follows:

2-(12) In the case of the Holy Spirit, to have His origin from the Father and the Son means to proceed from them.

2-(13) Therefore, the Holy Spirit proceeds from both of them as from one origin.

Thus, the second version argues the *Filioque* formulation without making two divine sources.

There remains, however, one more question: what does the Holy Spirit receive from the Father and the Son? In Book XV, Augustine answers, “the procession from both provides (*praestet*) essence for

---

<sup>54</sup>*Trin.* V.14.15. “Exit enim non quomodo natus sed quomodo datus, et ideo non dicitur filius”

<sup>55</sup>Thus, Augustine distinguishes ‘to be the gift’ (*esse donum*) from ‘to be a given thing’ (*esse donatum*) because a gift is still a gift even before it is given to someone as a given thing. See, *Trin.* V.15.16. Of course, ‘to proceed’ is the biblical word to indicate the Holy Spirit’s origination from the Father (John 15:26), so Augustine uses it.

<sup>56</sup>The meaning of the word is not fully described in this argument. It seems to be a device to distinguish the Spirit’s relation with the Father from the Son’s. See, Ayres, “*Spiritus Amborum*: Augustine and Pro-Nicene Pneumatology,” 217. We can find the same distinction between the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit in the analogical explanations of the Trinity in this work (e.g., IX.11.18, XI.2.3-11.17), but I will not include them in this paper.

the Holy Spirit without any beginning of time, without any change of nature.”<sup>57</sup> Then, for Augustine, the Holy Spirit’s procession from the Father and the Son means His receiving essence from both as from one origin.

The fact that the Holy Spirit receives his essence both from the Father and from the Son effectively strengthens His consubstantiality with them. Since the divine essence is neither changed nor divided, the essence of the essence-giver (the Father and the Son) and the essence of the essence-receiver (the Holy Spirit) is exactly the same. Furthermore, the stronger the consubstantiality between the Father and the Son becomes by proving their unity in being the origin, the stronger the consubstantiality of the Spirit with them becomes. Therefore, the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son is none other than true God.

To sum up this chapter, the first two versions of the *Filioque* formula reinforce the substantial oneness between the Holy Spirit and the other Persons. This consubstantiality is demonstrated by presenting the Holy Spirit as God from God and as a fully divine essence from the Father and the Son. In the succeeding chapter, we will find how the other version of the formula corroborates the hypostatic distinction of the Holy Spirit.

### **Augustine’s *Filioque* Formula and the Personal Distinctiveness of the Holy Spirit**

The third version provides a strong identification of the person of the Holy Spirit in His relations with the Father and the Son. It demonstrates that the Holy Spirit is the mutual (*communis*) love between the Father and the Son. It is this hypostatic identity that makes Him to proceed both from the Father and from the Son. Augustine’s *Filioque* formula is the result of the distinct personhood of the Holy Spirit, so it cannot weaken His hypostatic distinctiveness.

---

<sup>57</sup>*Trin.* XV.26.47. “spiritui sancto praestet essentiam sine ullo initio temporis, sine ulla mutabilitate naturae de utroque processio.”

### *The Holy Spirit as the common gift from the Father and the Son*

Augustine sees the gift (*donum*) as a special title of the Holy Spirit.<sup>58</sup> Based on John 4:7-14 and Acts 8:20,<sup>59</sup> he infers that ‘to be the gift of God’ is a peculiarity of the Holy Spirit.<sup>60</sup> This observation is the point of departure for the third version like this:<sup>61</sup>

3-(5) The Holy Spirit is the gift of God.

3-(6) The Father and the Son together give us the Holy Spirit.

3-(7) Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the common gift from the Father and the Son.

The focus of the argument is on the gift itself whereas the second version accentuates its givers. Here the sameness of the Father and the Son is not important. What is more significant is the sameness of the gifts from the Father and from the Son. Even if the Father and the Son were different from each other, the gifts from them would be the same, the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the common gift from them.

Here we can detect a change of emphasis of the *Filioque* formula. The previous versions unfold their arguments based on the actions (*i.e.*, sending and giving) of the Father and the Son. On the contrary, the third version begins with focusing on the Holy Spirit Himself (*i.e.*, God’s gift). This shows that this version spotlights the Holy Spirit to show who He is.

### *The Holy Spirit as mutual love between the Father and the Son*

The subsequent part of the third version elucidates what the common gift is. He proves that the Holy Spirit is particularly (*proprie*) called love as the Son is called wisdom. He argues this by interpreting 1 John 4:7-16 as follows:<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup>*Trin.* IV.20.29, V.9.10, 11.12, 12.13, 15.16, 16.17, VII.4.7, 6.12, VIII.1.1, XV.17.28, 29, 18.32-19.37.

<sup>59</sup>*Trin.* V.9.10, 11.12, XV.19.33.

<sup>60</sup>*Trin.* IV.20.29.

<sup>61</sup>*Trin.* VI.20.29, XV.17.29.

<sup>62</sup>*Trin.* XV.17.31, 19.37.

- 3-(8) Love is not only from God (*ex Deo*) but also God (1 John 4:7-8).
- 3-(9) Thus, love is God from God (*Deus ex Deo*).
- 3-(10) Both the Son and the Holy Spirit are God from God because the Son is born from God and the Spirit proceeds from God.
- 3-(11) The Holy Spirit makes us abide in God and Him in us (1 John 4:13).
- 3-(12) The one who abides in love abides in God and God abides in us (1 John 4:16).
- 3-(13) Therefore, the Holy Spirit is love.

Depending on the fact that the works of the Holy Spirit and of love are the same, Augustine arrives in the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is especially named as the love of God.

Next, he identifies the Holy Spirit as love with the best gift of God through a simple syllogism that:<sup>63</sup>

- 3-(14) No gift of God is more excellent than the love of God (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).
- 3-(15) Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the best gift of God.

This argument seems to be trivial, but it is vital for the next step. It makes the Holy Spirit the unique gift which is so special as to reveal something more special. His excellence is this:

- 3-(16) The Holy Spirit as the most excellent gift of God introduces to us the mutual love (*communis caritas*) between the Father and the Son.<sup>64</sup>

I translate ‘*insinuat*’ as ‘introduces’.<sup>65</sup> The word means to make someone think and know about something that it implies. If A ‘*insinuat*’ B to C, it means that A helps C to find B that A implies. Thus, it has a connotation of revelation. In this sense, the Holy Spirit as the common gift (*commune donum*) of God reveals us the mutual love (*communis caritas*) between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit as the love that we receive from the Father and the Son is the introduction to the intra-Trinitarian love that eternally

---

<sup>63</sup>*Trin.* XV.18.32.

<sup>64</sup>*Trin.* XV.17.27.

<sup>65</sup>Haddan translates it as “intimates”, McKenna as “insinuates”, and Hill as “suggests.” Gioia comments that the word “has the connotation of ‘introducing into something else,’ hence ‘explain’, ‘teach.’” See, Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology*, 140 n.53.

binds the Father and the Son.

It should be noted that Augustine does not intend to divide the Holy Spirit given to us from the Holy Spirit in the Trinity. Admittedly, it is not an easy question, but, instead of expanding on this issue here, Augustine clarifies his understanding in Book VI as follows:

3-(17) The Holy Spirit is the love by which the Father and the Son love each other.<sup>66</sup>

Even though the love in us and the love in God can be perceived by us separately, their essence is the same. Both come from, or rather, just are the Holy Spirit, so they are ontologically identical. This is why the one can reveal the other.

### *Personal distinctiveness of the Holy Spirit in the third version*

In the last part of the third version, Augustine shows how the relation between the Holy Spirit and the Father (procession) is distinguished from the relation between the Son and the Father (generation). The unique character of the procession substantiates the hypostatic peculiarity of the Holy Spirit. Here focusing on the Father's giving to the Son, he reasons as follows:<sup>67</sup>

3-(18) The Father gives everything that He has to the Son when He begets Him.

3-(19) The Father gives it to the Son that the Holy Spirit proceeds from Him.

3-(20) Therefore, the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father but also from the Son.

What makes the Holy Spirit proceed from the Son is the Father's giving the Son the 'special status', so to speak, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from Him. Nonetheless, there is no lapse of time between the Father's giving it to the Son and the Holy Spirit's proceeding from the Son. They are eternal events that occur within the Trinity without time.

Thus, Augustine says, "the Holy Spirit originally (*principaliter*) proceeds from the Father, and by the Father's giving without any

---

<sup>66</sup>*Trin.* VI.5.7.

<sup>67</sup>*Trin.* I.11.22, 23, XV.26.47.

interval of time, He jointly (*communiter*) proceeds from [the Father and the Son].”<sup>68</sup> On the one hand, from the perspective of the Father’s giving to the Son, the procession of the Holy Spirit is originally from the Father. On the other hand, from the perspective of the Spirit’s procession from both, it is from the Father and the Son. Therefore, we can acquire the last proposition of the third version as follows:

3-(21) The procession is originally from the Father in respect of the relation between the Father and the Son, but it is jointly from the Father and the Son in respect of the relation between the Holy Spirit and the other Persons.

From this version, we can draw a point of comparison of the Holy Spirit’s procession with the Son’s generation. The generation of the Son from the Father is a one-sided and exclusive relationship between the two. In the generation, the Father begets (*gignit*) the Son, so the Son is born (*natus*) of the Father. On the contrary, the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father is an inclusive relationship between the three. It includes the Son because the Holy Spirit is the mutual (or more literally, common) love between them.

From this point of view, I think that Moltmann’s objection to the double procession neglects an essential factor of Augustine’s *Filioque* formula: that the Holy Spirit’s personal peculiarity is his being common (*commune*) to the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is the common (*commune*) gift that shows the mutual (*communis*) love between them. Thus, His relations with the Father and with the Son cannot be different. He proceeds from the Son just as He proceeds from the Father. It should be noted that the *Filioque* formula is a necessary consequence of the personal peculiarity of the Holy Spirit as something common.

Likewise, Pannenberg’s criticism does not apply to Augustine’s formula either. Augustine’s formula emphasizes the active role of the Holy Spirit in intra-Trinitarian relations. Compared with the Son’s passiveness in His generation, the Holy Spirit is not made to

---

<sup>68</sup>Trin. XV.26.47. “et spiritus sanctus de patre principaliter, et ipso sine ullo intervallo temporis dante communiter de utroque procedit.”

proceed from the Father and the Son in His procession. Instead, the Holy Spirit Himself actively proceeds from both. Especially in the third version, the Holy Spirit is presented as the mutual love by which the Father and the Son are bound together. He is the active principle of love of them. In this sense, He is the communion of them. Therefore, Augustine's *Filioque* formula sufficiently reflects the mutual relation between the Persons, so it accentuates the distinguished status of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, as for Gunton's diagnosis of subordinationism in the *Filioque* formula, I answer that Augustine's *Filioque* formula provides a basis for dispelling the accusation of subordinationism. As the generation of the Son does not imply His subordination to the Father, neither does the procession of the Spirit from both. Moreover, the double procession results not from His hypostatic unstableness but from His firm peculiarity as the shared mutual love. Even the Father's giving to the Son occurs in the Holy Spirit as their mutual love. Thus, there is no room for subordination of the Holy Spirit in Augustine's *Filioque* formula.

In sum, the third version proves that the Holy Spirit has His Personal distinctiveness as the mutual love between the Father and the Son. It is this peculiarity that makes Him proceed from both. Therefore, Augustine's *Filioque* formula cannot be the reason for degrading the Personal distinctiveness of the Holy Spirit.

### **Conclusion**

I have demonstrated that Augustine strengthens the personhood of the Holy Spirit with his *Filioque* formula by proving His consubstantiality with the Father and the Son and by clarifying His Personal distinctiveness as their mutual love. Among the three versions of the formula that I have reconstructed on the basis of a closer interpretation of his text, the first two versions effectively support the substantial equality of the Holy Spirit by emphasizing the sameness of the divine essence of the Persons. The third version highlights the hypostatic peculiarity of the Holy Spirit by presenting Him as the common gift and the mutual love. For Augustine, the *Filioque* formula is a strong device to establish the

personhood of the Holy Spirit against the attack of the anti-Nicene heretics.

This paper is a starting point for further research on Augustine's and his contemporaries' pneumatology. The understanding of the pro-Nicene pneumatology will provide a sound historical and traditional basis for our understanding of the Holy Spirit whom we need now more than ever before.

# Children at the Lord's Supper: A Case Study in the CRC<sup>1</sup>

Reita Yazawa

Recently a growing number of churches have begun wrestling with the question of children at the Lord's Supper.<sup>2</sup> Twentieth century developments in child psychology, exegesis, theology, and historical studies has led to many publications on the topic.<sup>3</sup>

Over twenty-five years, the Christian Reformed Church (CRC)

---

<sup>1</sup>Originally submitted to Professor Howard Vanderwell on March 5, 2012 for 477: Planning Intergenerational Worship.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. the actions and reports in the official proceedings of the synod or general assembly of the following denominations: The Reformed Church in America (1988, 1989, 1990, 1995), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (1987), the Presbyterian Church in America (1988), the Presbyterian Church of Canada (1985), the Reformed Church of Australia (1994), the Presbyterian Church of Ireland (2009), and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (1996). The Christian Reformed Church, *Agenda for Synod 2011*, 609.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Crawford, "Infant Communion: Past Tradition and Present Practice," *Theological Studies* 31, no. 3 (1970): 523-536; Nathan D. Mitchell, "Dissolution of the Rite of Christian Initiation," in *Made, Not Born: New Perspectives on Christian Initiation and the Catechumenate*, ed. The Murphy Center for Liturgical Research (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 50-82; Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); David Ng, "The Case For... The Lord's Supper and Children," *Austin Seminary Bulletin*, 95, no. 3 (1979): 11-15; Robert S. Paul, "The Case Against... Children and the Lord's Supper," *Austin Seminary Bulletin*, 95, no. 3 (1979): 16-28; David Holeyton, *Infant Communion-Then and Now*, Grove Liturgical Study 27 (Bramcote Nottingham: Grove Books, 1981); British Council of Churches and Free Church Federal Council, *Children and Holy Communion: An Ecumenical Consideration amongst Churches in Britain and Ireland* (Design & Print, Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex, 1989); Doris A. Blazer ed., *Faith Development in Early Childhood* (Kansas City: Sheed & Word, 1989); Christian L. Keidel, "Is the Lord's Supper for Children?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 37, no. 3 (1975): 301-341; Urban T. Holmes III, *Young Children and the Eucharist* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1982); Susan Ridgley Bales, *When I was a Child: Children's Interpretations of First Communion* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Cornelius P. Venema, *Children at the Lord's Table?: Assessing the Case for Paedocommunion* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009); Tim Gallant, *Feed My Lambs: Why the Lord's Table Should Be Restored to Covenant Children* (Grande Prairie, Canada: Pactum Reformanda Publishing, 2002); Donald Ratcliff, ed., *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2004).

has also been engaging this question with major studies submitted to Synods in 1986, 1988, 1995, 2006, and 2010.<sup>4</sup> As the latest report and the subsequent decision made by the Synod points the denomination in a new direction, it is pertinent to summarize the major themes of its discussion and assess implications for the faith formation of the child, the life of the congregation, and the leadership of elders. I will first review the current discussion in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Then I will present a summary of a report to the Synod 2010, followed by exegetical study of a key passage: First Corinthians 11:17-34 and historical theological analysis of this question on children at the table. Finally, I will present my own personal position on this matter.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Current Discussion in the CRCNA**

On the subject of children at the table, two basic positions can be readily found within the Christian Reformed Church. First, those who endorse children to be welcomed at the Lord's Supper employ several of the following arguments:

- 1) the Bible nowhere explicitly bars children from participation at the table,
- 2) children are clearly part of the covenant community,
- 3) children participated in the Passover (Ex. 12:26), the covenant feast that was transformed by Jesus into the Lord's Supper, and
- 4) evidence suggests that children participated in the Lord's Supper in the early church.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>Lyle D. Bierma, "Children at the Lord's Supper and Reformed Theology," in *Calvin Theological Seminary Forum* (Spring 2007), 3.

<sup>5</sup>The author belongs to the United Churches of Christ in Japan. This is a denomination formed by more than 30 different denominations united together in 1941. Accordingly, each church in this denomination has a different historical and denominational background. The author is from a church originally planted by a German Reformed missionary. The author then served as an assistant Pastor in a church planted by an American Presbyterian missionary in 1874. The author believes that the report submitted to the Christian Reformed Church offers a valuable case study for other Protestant denominations too.

<sup>6</sup>"Children at the Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord's Supper" (A Summary of the Report to Synod 2010), 3. ([http://www.crcna.org/pages/ffc\\_lordssupper.cfm](http://www.crcna.org/pages/ffc_lordssupper.cfm); accessed on February 16, 2012)

Second, those who argue that baptized children should not partake typically make several of the following points:

- 1) that there is no biblical text that explicitly warrants the inclusion of children at the table,
- 2) that there is no proof that children participated in the Passover,
- 3) that I Cor. 11 clearly requires each participant to engage in certain actions, and
- 4) that baptism and the Lord's Supper are two quite different sacraments, with baptism being more passive, and the Lord's Supper being more active.<sup>7</sup>

Reports to Synod 1988 (Report 26, Agenda for Synod 1988, 260-316) and 1995 (Clarification for Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children, Reports A and B, Agenda for Synod 1995, 265-303) show that the study committees did not reach full consensus. In 2006 Classis Holland submitted overture 16 to Synod 2006, requesting to “appoint a study committee to examine the admission of all baptized members to the Lord's Supper and to consider the nature and practice of profession of faith both in the life of individuals and the church.”<sup>8</sup> Synod 2007 established a Faith Formation Committee to “deepen the integration of biblical teaching; confessional norms; church polity; and liturgical, educational, and pastoral practices in the CRC with respect to (1) participation in the Lord's Supper and (2) public profession of faith.”<sup>9</sup> During its five years of mandate, productive conversations

---

<sup>7</sup>“Children at the Table” (A summary version), 3.

<sup>8</sup>“Overture 16 to Synod 2006 – Christian Reformed Church.” ([http://crcna.org/pages/ffc\\_lordssupper\\_syn2006ov.cfm](http://crcna.org/pages/ffc_lordssupper_syn2006ov.cfm); accessed on February 16, 2012).

<sup>9</sup>“Synodical Decisions of 2007 – Christian Reformed Church.” ([http://crcna.org/pages/ffc\\_lordssupper\\_syn2007de.cfm](http://crcna.org/pages/ffc_lordssupper_syn2007de.cfm); accessed on February 16, 2012).

and discussions have been continuing.<sup>10</sup>

### **Children at the Table: A Report to Synod 2011**

In 2010, the Faith Formation Committee submitted a report to Synod. At the same time, the committee publicized a summary of the report: “Children at the Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>11</sup>

All baptized members are welcome to the Lord’s Supper for age- and ability- appropriate obedience to biblical commands about participation, under the supervision of the elders. The elders have responsibility to nurture grateful and obedient participation by providing encouragement, instruction, and accountability in the congregation. Requiring a formal public profession of faith prior to participation in the Lord’s Supper is one pastoral approach to consider, but is not required by Scripture or the confessions.<sup>12</sup>

Following this report, Synod 2010 approved the following recommendation:

All baptized members who come with age- and ability-appropriate faith in Jesus Christ are welcome to the Lord’s Table and called to obey the scriptural commands about participation (e.g., to “examine themselves,”

---

<sup>10</sup>“Summary of Comments from the 2007 Survey.” ([http://crcna.org/pages/ffc\\_lordssupper\\_surveysum.cfm](http://crcna.org/pages/ffc_lordssupper_surveysum.cfm); accessed February 16, 2012); Sid Hielema, “A Precious Feast, a Tangled Web: A Case for Welcoming Children at the Table,” *Reformed Worship* 76 (June 2005): 25-27 (<http://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/a-precious-feast-a-tangled-web-a-case-for-welcoming-children-at-the-table>; accessed on February 17, 2012); Hielema, “Deep-in-the-bones Belonging,” *The Banner* (June 2007) (<http://www.thebanner.org/news/article/?id=1030>; accessed on March 5, 2012); James I. Cook, “The Toughest Issue,” *Reformed Worship* 12 (June 1989) (<http://www.reformedworship.org/article/june-1989/toughest-issue>; accessed on February 24, 2012); Michael F. Abma, “A New Order of Christian Nurture,” *Reformed Worship* 91 (March 2009) (<http://www.reformedworship.org/article/march-2009/new-order-christian-nurture>; accessed on February 24, 2012); Stanley Mast, “Table Fellowship,” *Reformed Worship* 92 (June 2009) (<http://reformedworship.org/article/june-2009/table-fellowship>; accessed on February 17, 2012).

<sup>11</sup>“Children at the Table” (A summary version). A revised full report was submitted to Synod 2011 as “Children at the Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord’s Supper.” ([http://www.crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/faithformationcomm/2011agenda\\_appendixC.pdf](http://www.crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/faithformationcomm/2011agenda_appendixC.pdf); accessed on February 16, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> “Children at the Table” (A summary version), 1.

to “discern the body,” to “proclaim the Lord’s death,” to “wait for others”) in an age- and ability-appropriate way, under the supervision of the elders. The elders have responsibility to nurture in the congregation grateful and obedient participation through encouragement, instruction, and accountability.<sup>13</sup>

A key phrase in this guiding principle is “age- and ability-appropriate obedience.” The summary report says: “When we are invited, each participant is called to age- and ability-appropriate obedience of biblical commands about participation at the Lord’s Supper.” While a prevalent assumption in the past was children cannot examine themselves and discern the body of Christ properly, this report emphasizes that all believers are, according to each age and ability level, able to examine themselves and discern the body of Christ. “Even very young children engage in the practices commended in I Cor. 11, as they express with heartfelt sincerity ‘I’m sorry,’ ‘I love Jesus,’ ‘this is God’s family,’ ‘this is God’s feast.’”<sup>14</sup>

One strength of this report is that on this guiding principle it avoids two opposing errors and delineates the middle ground at the same time biblically faithful, theologically sound, and pastorally helpful. One error is “focusing too much on achieving a level of cognitive understanding prior to participation,” and the other is “minimizing the importance of theological reflection and learning about deeper participation.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, the report resists both “the idea that children need to arrive at a certain level of comprehension before partaking” and “the kind of unthinking participation that can set in over time for any worshiper.”<sup>16</sup>

The recommendation presented in this report is based on two points of agreement and consensus widely embraced in the Christian Reformed Church.

1. Baptized children are members of the church, the body of

---

<sup>13</sup>Christian Reformed Church, *Acts of Synod 2012*, 810-811. See also Appendix B “Recommended Church Order Changes,” in *Agenda for Synod 2011*, 570.

<sup>14</sup>“Children at the Table” (A summary version), 5.

<sup>15</sup>“Children at the Table” (A summary version), 2.

<sup>16</sup>“Children at the Table” (A summary version), 2.

Christ who are welcomed to the table on the basis not of their comprehension or profession but on the basis of God's gracious invitation to the covenant community.

2. Each participant in the Lord's Supper should participate actively, in obedience to each biblical narratives.<sup>17</sup>

Based on these points of agreement and consensus, the report recommends inviting all baptized members including children to the Lord's Supper, while encourages and promotes efforts by the church leadership to nurture within the congregation age- and ability-appropriate understanding of and obedient participation in the Lord's Supper. In this context, profession of faith is reconceived as a significant milestone of a believer's faith journey, as the report states: "In sum, promoting discipleship and nurturing obedient participation at the table is the task of every congregation under the supervision of the elders. Requiring public profession of faith may be one strategy for accomplishing this."<sup>18</sup>

Approval of the recommendation by the synod this time will promote invitation of all baptized members including children to the Lord's Supper and at the same time endeavors by the entire church to educate and guide believers of all generations. However, given that many of those who oppose children's participation in the Lord's Supper argue based on "self-examination" and "discerning the body" in the First Corinthians 11:17-34, exegetical study of this scripture passage is indispensable.

### **An Exegetical Study of I Corinthians 11:17-34**

While the First Corinthians 11:17-34 has been interpreted for individual, reflective self-examination before partaking the Lord's Supper, a growing number of recent New Testament studies

---

<sup>17</sup>"Children at the Table" (A summary version), 4.

<sup>18</sup>Appendix C "Children at the Lord's Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord's Supper, Revised Edition," in Christian Reformed Church, *Agenda for Synod 2011*, 598.

emphasizes the social and historical context of this passage.<sup>19</sup> A strong consensus among biblical scholars indicates that the main theme of this key passage is “confronting inhospitality and favoritism in the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>20</sup> Jeffrey A. D. Weima explains:

The church in Corinth, like other congregations well into the second century, celebrated the Lord’s Supper as part of a dinner or full meal. The whole church would first break bread at the beginning of the meal to remember Christ’s death, then they would eat their main course, and finally at the end of the meal they would drink wine also to remember Christ’s death .... The problem was the main course that took place between these two acts of remembrance: the Corinthians were celebrating the Supper in a way that celebrated divisions (v. 18). The guilty were the wealthy (“those who have homes”), whose conduct at these meals involved “despising the church of God and humiliating those who have nothing” (v. 22). In fact, things got so out of hand that poor church members left the worship services hungry while the rich members staggered home drunk (v. 21)!<sup>21</sup>

It was this social stratification and division as a significant threat to the church unity that Paul vehemently attacked.<sup>22</sup>

It is not entirely clear what exactly these wealthy members did that unwittingly humiliated the poor “have-nots.” It might be that wealthy people arrive at a meeting place earlier due to their flexible schedule and “pig out” on the meal, leaving little for the poor members who could come only later after their work. It might be the discrimination in amounts and quality of the food based on each member’s social status. Or perhaps it might be that the

---

<sup>19</sup>Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 532; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, eds. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 533; Anthony C. Thiselton, *First Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 182; Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2010), 541; Gallant, *Feed My Lambs*, 72-105.

<sup>20</sup>“Children at the Lord’s Table” in *Agenda for Synod 2011*, 582.

<sup>21</sup>Jeffrey A. D. Weima, “Children at the Lord’s Supper and the Key Text of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34,” in *Calvin Theological Seminary Forum* (Spring 2007): 7.

<sup>22</sup>Ciampa and Rosner, *First Letter to the Corinthians*, 541.

“haves” occupied privileged rooms while “have-nots” were relegated to less prestigious spaces in a house where a meeting took place.<sup>23</sup> Whatever the exact behavior might be, it is certain that “the problem involved social discrimination: the wealthy Christians celebrated the Lord’s Supper in a way that ‘despised and humiliated’ their poorer fellow Christians.”<sup>24</sup>

Accordingly, Paul’s appeal to “self-examination” and “discerning the body” is meant to “examine carefully their relationship to the rest of the church, the body of Christ.”<sup>25</sup> As Tim Gallant notes, “[t]he issue is not one of identity (who ought to be included or excluded), but whether the eating is done in a faithful *manner* ..., and the goal of the verse (and indeed the whole passage) is universal participation by the church body.”<sup>26</sup> While this passage is cited before the partaking of the Lord’s Supper out of its context, historical contextual analysis shows that “the concern is not simply personal or introspective.”<sup>27</sup> Gordon Fee notes: “Salvation through Christ’s death has created a new community of people who bear his name. We ourselves rather miss the point of this paragraph if we think of the Table only in terms of our needs and not also in terms of those of others.”<sup>28</sup> Thiselton presents the implication of this exegesis pointedly.

Any grouping that invites some Christians to feel that a segment within the community of believers divides the church between ‘us’ and ‘them’ starts down the slope that damaged Corinth. Are there physical, geographical, sociological, or educational factors that, while innocent in themselves, unwittingly minister to a Christian class system? Might this supposedly ‘second class’ Christians to say, ‘I do not belong here’<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup>Weima, “The Key Text of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34,” 8.

<sup>24</sup>Weima, “The Key Text of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34,” 8. See also Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 533; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 182.

<sup>25</sup>Weima, “The Key Text of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34,” 8.

<sup>26</sup>Gallant, *Feed My Lambs*, 96.

<sup>27</sup>Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 558.

<sup>28</sup>Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 558.

<sup>29</sup>Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 190. See also Ciampa and Rosner, *First Letter to the Corinthians*, 559.

The issue is the unity of the church that was threatened by divisions among the congregation based on their differences of social statuses.

### **Historical and Theological Analysis**

It seems that historically the two sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper were united together. Earliest evidences that show baptized children's partaking at the Lord's Supper can be found in church fathers such as Cyprian and Augustine.<sup>30</sup> However, as time passes by, due to several combined reasons, the two sacraments began to be separated in time.

First, due to the principle of "No bishop, no confirmation," the time of confirmation tended to be delayed as in the rapid geographical spread of Christianity a bishop was not always available immediately after infant baptism. Second, the doctrine of transubstantiation formulated in the thirteenth century fostered fear that children might profane consecrated elements. Third, in late Middle Ages the communion cup was withheld from the laity due to the fear of spilling the blood of Christ. Fourth, as the piety of the Lord's Supper was largely penitential, children were not considered to be worthy to participate in the Lord's Supper. Fifth, councils reinforced the sacrament of confirmation as the augmentation of the grace of baptism when parents were

---

<sup>30</sup>Cyprian, *Epistle 64* in *Ante-Nicene Fathers 5*, eds., Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1886), 354, revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050664.htm>; accessed on March 5, 2012); Augustine, *Sermones*, 272, 227, 229, 229A. (For sermon 272; [http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/augustine\\_sermon\\_272\\_eucharist.htm](http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/augustine_sermon_272_eucharist.htm); accessed on March 5, 2012); Rylaarsdam, "United, Separated, Re-united: The Story of Baptism and the Lord's Supper," in *Calvin Theological Seminary Forum* (Spring 2007): 5.

increasingly disrespectful for confirmation as a sacrament.<sup>31</sup> Calvin, without serious scrutiny, basically inherited the custom of confirmation at an age of discretion before partaking the Lord's Supper.<sup>32</sup> There seems to be no inherently necessary reasons for the Protestant churches to discourage children from participating in the Lord's Supper.

Hence, Paul K. Jewett argues that if we repudiate infants at the Lord's Table in the early church as a post-apostolic superstition, it can also have a self-defeating repercussion to infant baptism:

Early Christian sources from the Didache onward reflect the unity of the sacraments; they were always celebrated together. Hence the first act of the baptized, following his baptism, was to partake of the Eucharist. If, then, evidence for infant communion appears only a short time after the first clear evidence for infant baptism, to repudiate the former as a post-apostolic superstition, as most Paedobaptists do, is to threaten the latter with the same odious pedigree.<sup>33</sup>

In other words, there is inconsistency between what the Reformed theology argues for infant baptism and what it discourages infant to come to the Lord's Supper. When it supports infant baptism, the Reformed theology argues that believing children and adults are all in the covenant community in which baptism stands in continuity with circumcision in the Old Testament. Yet when it comes to the Lord's Supper, hitherto the Reformed theology tends to hesitate to acknowledge the same continuity between the Passover (Exodus 12:3-4, 21-26) and the Lord's Supper.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, in light of confessional standards, given that Christ

---

<sup>31</sup>Rylaarsdam, "United, Separated, Re-united," 5-6. See also J. D. C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation-Baptism in the Medieval West: A Study in the Disintegration of the Primitive Rite of Initiation* (Chicago/Mundelein, IL: Hillenbrand Books, 2004; London: SPCK, 1965), 114-122; 135-158; Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 177-225.

<sup>32</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960): IV.xvi.30; Rylaarsdam, "United, Separated, Re-united," 6.

<sup>33</sup>Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*, 41-42.

<sup>34</sup>Lyle D. Bierma, "Children at the Lord's Supper and Reformed Theology," *Calvin Theological Seminary Forum* (Spring 2007): 3-4.

has commanded “all believers” to partake of the Lord’s Supper “to nourish and sustain those who are already born again and ingrafted into his family: his church,”<sup>35</sup> and through this sacrament “so surely he nourishes and refreshes [their] soul for eternal life with his crucified body and poured-out blood,”<sup>36</sup> it seems natural that children are also welcomed to the table because “[i]nfants as well as adults are in God’s covenant and are his people.”<sup>37</sup>

### **My Personal Position**

Based on these analyses above, I argue that children should also be welcomed to the Lord’s Table. I agree and support the decision made by the Synod 2010 with the principle of “age- and ability-appropriate obedience.” Welcoming children to the Lord’s Supper will nurture the conviction that regardless of our age and ability, according to each level and circumstances, we grow in God’s grace as the People of God, together as the faith community. It is more consistent with the Reformed theology of the church as the covenant community. It also reinforces the conviction that the covenant people are saved and nurtured by sheer grace of God.<sup>38</sup>

I think it desirable to welcome children to the Lord’s Supper as soon as children start to express their faith in an appropriate way according to their age and ability, probably sometime between the ages of three and eight. Once parents or guardians confirm faith of their children, they may talk with a pastor followed by a decision of a session. During worship, the children stand with their parents (guardians) and express their faith in both age- and ability-

---

<sup>35</sup>*The Belgic Confession*, in *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions*, Article 35 (p. 114).

<sup>36</sup>*The Heidelberg Catechism*, in *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1988), Q&A 75 (p. 45).

<sup>37</sup>*The Heidelberg Catechism*, Q&A 74 (p. 44).

<sup>38</sup>It will correct a misdirected notion of crypto works-righteousness, if there is, that we meet up with criteria by our works of intellectual and cognitive efforts to achieve license for the participation in the Lord’s Supper.

appropriate ways, beginning to participate in the Lord's Supper.<sup>39</sup>

I would take at least one to two years to prepare my congregation for this transition. We may use Bible study resources to study First Corinthians 11 together.<sup>40</sup> We may also have a monthly inter-generational conversation at a church town hall meeting, inviting church consultants, listening to each other, and cultivating our consensus. Elders and parents may have study workshops to be equipped with vocabularies to testify their faith and guide children.<sup>41</sup> In the long run, church leaders make efforts to cultivate ethos in which intergenerational conversation and mutual mentoring vibrantly take place. Leaders will also foster opportunities for sharing testimonials of personal stories and for equipping the congregation with vocabularies and art of sharing personal faith journey. We will celebrate the first communion service with children by singing "My Friends May You (We) Grow in Grace" and by reading the following Bible passage:

Then Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. "Go, worship the LORD your God," he said. "But just who will be going?" Moses answered, "We will go with our young and old, with our sons and daughters, and with our flocks and herds, because we are to celebrate a festival to the LORD. (Exodus 10:8-9 NIV)

---

<sup>39</sup>I think it is pertinent to close the communion service by singing "Benediction/ My Friends, May You Grow in Grace" (*Sing! A New Creation* #288), replacing the word "you" with "we."

<sup>40</sup>One helpful resource: The Christian Reformed Church Faith Formation Committee with Irene Bakker and Syd Hielema, "A Practice of Christian Unity" (A Bible Study on 1 Corinthians 11) ([http://www.crcna.org/site\\_uploads/uploads/faithformationcomm/Faith%20Formation\\_bible%20study.pdf](http://www.crcna.org/site_uploads/uploads/faithformationcomm/Faith%20Formation_bible%20study.pdf).; accessed on February 16, 2012).

<sup>41</sup>I hope and expect that resources will become available from Faith Alive Christian Resources that will assist parents to engage this noble task of teaching, learning, and growing in faith together with children.

## Beloved Sons

Jane Porter & Doug Porter

A dramatic reading appropriate for Lent or Passion Week. You can download a pdf file of this reading from <http://www.dramaticreadingsforworship.com/htm/BELOVED.htm>.

Genesis chapter 22 gives the account of the ‘Binding of Isaac’ where God asks Abraham to make a ritual sacrifice of his only son, Isaac. The conventional understanding of this event is that God is testing the faith of Abraham, and once Abraham proves his obedience, God rewards Abraham by sparing his son.

During the Second Temple period [which included the time of Jesus], the figure of Isaac was portrayed as taking an active role in the event, a role as critical as that of Abraham. Isaac was seen as a fully obedient son, a willing sacrifice compliant to God’s will. The ‘Binding’ was as much a test of the faith of Isaac as it was a test of his father. The resistance or disobedience of either would have had disastrous consequences for the Jewish people. But their obedience assured God’s blessing for generations to come

There are many indications that Jesus was understood as a ‘new Isaac.’ These points of comparison are most evident in Matthew’s Gospel, and there are also hints throughout the Pauline Letters.

The following are the main comparisons:

- Both Jesus and Isaac were promised sons conceived outside the normal course of nature.
- At Jesus’ baptism and at the Transfiguration, the Heavenly Voice spoke of Jesus as ‘my beloved son’, a direct reference to Genesis 22.
- Jesus was portrayed as resolutely obedient to God’s will. His willing sacrifice initiated the New Covenant, in the same way that Isaac’s obedience assured the Old Covenant.
- The ‘Binding of Isaac’ and Jesus’ passion both took place during the Passover season.
- The willing and active obedience of Jesus and Isaac had salvation consequences for the world.
- Two sons laid down their lives, only to have them given

back to them — just as two fathers, who gave up their sons, had them restored.

The most enduring insight I think comes from the first verse of Matthew where the genealogy of Jesus named him as ‘Messiah, Son of David, Son of Abraham.’ For those Jews hoping for the appearance of a victorious Messiah who would rescue God’s chosen people, naming Jesus as ‘Son of David,’ the great king, makes good sense. But to also call Jesus ‘Son of Abraham’ modifies this kingly image. Jesus would be a king, but a king who would be tested and would suffer. To call Jesus ‘Son of Abraham’ also linked him to God’s larger covenant promises to Abraham to form a great people that would bless all nations. The comparison to Isaac was a re-acknowledgement that, even as God’s chosen, the way is through submission to God.

And we can wonder, how much did Jesus have Isaac in mind as he approached Jerusalem for a final time, as he broke bread at the Last Supper, as he prayed in Gethsemane?

There are four sections to this reading and I suggest they be marked by a two or three minute silence or the singing of a verse from a hymn.

‘Beloved Sons’ was first presented at the Calvin Seminary Chapel during Lent 2011.

Other dramatic readings are available at: <http://www.dramaticreadingsforworship.com>

### **Beloved Sons:**

For three voices

#### **Section One**

A Beloved sons

B Isaac and Jesus

A Children of promise

Born of miraculous birth

C Beloved sons

B Both tested

and marked for death

C Both fully obedient

A Given up

Given over by their fathers

B Restored to their fathers

C Beloved sons

born to be a blessing to all nations

- A Beloved Isaac  
Child of promise
- B God spoke to Abraham
- C “I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. You will be the father of a multitude of nations. Through your offspring, all nations on earth will be blessed”
- A And the promise was a covenant
- C Child of Promise
- B “an everlasting covenant between God and Abraham and his descendants after him”
- C Beloved Jesus
- B Child of promise
- A Matthew called him Messiah
- B son of David
- C son of Abraham
- A An angel visited Joseph, engaged to a young maiden
- B “Your wife shall bear a son and you will call his name Jesus  
Emmanuel
- C God with us
- B for he will save his people from their sins
- C Child of promise
- B He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.
- C His kingdom will never end”
- [pause]
- C Two sons  
Born of miraculous birth
- A Beloved Isaac
- B Beloved Jesus
- C Isaac  
Beloved Son of the Father
- A Abraham was a hundred years old when his son was born to him. The beloved son’s name was Isaac.
- B His mother had been barren
- C without child
- A up to her ninetieth year
- C “Who would have said that Sarah would nurse children?”
- B Barren mother
- A Isaac was born to her in her ninetieth year
- [pause]
- B Beloved Jesus  
Born of miraculous birth
- A The angel Gabriel came to Mary and said
- C “You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus”
- A Mary asked the angel
- B “How will this be, since I

am a virgin?"

C "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God

B Jesus  
Beloved Son of the Father

C John declared

B "Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world"

A As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water.

At that moment heaven was opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said

C "This is my beloved son

B my Isaac

C my son whom I love

B This is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights. I will put my spirit upon him, and he will bring justice to the nations"

B Jesus  
Beloved Son of the Father

A After six days Jesus took

with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

There he was transfigured before them.

His face shone like the sun , and his clothes became as white as the light

B Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. And a voice from the cloud said

C "This is my Son,

B my beloved Son

C with him I am well pleased"

## Section Two

C Isaac and Jesus  
Beloved Sons of God

A Both tested  
and marked for death

B Both fully obedient

A The Binding of Isaac  
Beloved Son

B Given over by the father

A It was at the coming time of the Passover, and God tested Abraham

B "Abraham! Take your son, your only son, whom you love

C Isaac

B and go to the region of

Moriah, to the mountain where Solomon will build the Holy Temple. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering”

C It is written in the Book of Numbers

“You shall give to the Lord the first-born among your sons”

A Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac.

Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham

C “Father, the fire and wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

A Abraham answered

B “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son”

A When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar

C “He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth”

A Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son

B Beloved Son

Restored to the father

A But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven

B “Abraham! Abraham! Do not lay a hand on the boy!

Now I know that you fear God, because you have done this and have not withheld your son

C your only son

B I will surely bless you

and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore

C Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles”

A Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram behind him caught by its horns

He went over and took the ram

and sacrificed it as a burnt

offering

- C instead of his son
- A By faith Abraham, when God tested him,
- B offered Isaac as a sacrifice.
- A Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead and so in a manner of speaking
- C he did receive Isaac back from death

### Section Three

- A In the time of the Second Temple, Isaac was well known in the understanding of the Jewish people
- B And the testing of Abraham was also seen as the testing of Isaac
- A As it is written in the Antiquities of Josephus
- C “Now Isaac was of such generous disposition that suited the son of such a father that he was pleased with what his father told him. So he went immediately to the altar to be sacrificed”
- A As it is written in a Qumran text
- B “‘Bind my hands’ he cried ‘Tie me well, so that I may not struggle in the anguish of my soul and be thrown

into the pit of destruction and cause a blemish to be found in your offering”

- A As it is written in the First Letter of Clement
- C “Isaac gladly allowed himself to be brought forward as a sacrifice confident in the knowledge of what was about to happen”
- A The testing of Abraham was also the testing of Isaac
- C And both proved obedient for the salvation of those who came after them
- [pause]
- B Jesus
- C Tested and marked for death
- B And fully obedient
- A Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said
- B “If you are the Son of God tell these stones to become bread.”
- C “If you are the Son of God throw yourself down from the temple.”
- B “I will give you all the

kingdoms of the world if you will bow down and worship me.”

A Jesus said to him

C “Away from me, Satan!”

A Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him

B Jesus, Beloved Son

Delivered up by the father

A From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law

C “As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified and the third day he will be raised”

B Then the chief priests and the elders of the people schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him

B Jesus

C Tested  
and marked for death

B And fully obedient

A Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane

He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee further

along with him and he began to be sorrowful and troubled

Then he said to them

C “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death”

B Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed

C “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me

Yet not as I will,  
but as you will.”

A Then he returned to the disciples and said to them

C “Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners

Rise! Let us go!

Here comes my betrayer!”

[pause]

B The Binding of Jesus

A It is written in the book of Numbers

“You shall give to the Lord the first-born among your sons”

C When they came to the place that is called Golgotha, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals. Those who

passed by hurled insults at him

A “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself!

Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!”

C “He saved others, but he can’t save himself!”

B “He trusts in God  
Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God’”

#### Section Four

A Beloved sons

B Isaac and Jesus

A Children of promise

C Born of miraculous birth

A Beloved sons

B Both tested  
and marked for death

C Both fully obedient

A Given up

C Given over by their fathers

B Restored to their fathers

C Beloved sons

A Both a light to the Gentiles

C Through whom all nations on earth are blessed

B After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous

servant will justify many

C He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted, because he poured out his life unto death

A What, then, shall we say in response to these things?

B If God is for us, who can be against us?

He who did not spare his own Son,

C For God so loved the world

B but delivered him  
gave him up for us all

C that he gave  
delivered up his only begotten son

B how will he not also  
along with him graciously give us all things?

C so that whoever believes on him will not perish  
but have everlasting life

A For Christ

C Messiah, our Passover lamb

A has been sacrificed

A Understand, then  
that those who have faith are children of Abraham

B Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to

Abraham

C “All nations will be blessed through you”

A So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham,  
the man of faith

B Christ ransomed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us

C He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might be extended to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus

A so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit

**ABC Thanks be to God.**



Student Body of Calvin Theological Seminary  
Spring 2012