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In This Issue

Last January the Orlando campus of Reformed Theological Seminary hosted the first annual conference of the Paideia Center for Theological Discipleship. In this issue we are pleased to include the three plenary addresses from that conference, by Blair Smith, Scott Swain, and Carl Trueman. The Paideia Center was established in 2018 to provide leaders and lay people in the church with resources to grow in their understanding of theology, through the reading and discussion of classic texts. More information about the Paideia Center, including regional reading groups and the 2020 annual conference (January 9-10 at RTS Orlando), can be found on the Paideia website: www.paideiacenter.org.

JRM

“To Him Who Sits on the Throne and to the Lamb”: Hymning God’s Triune Name in Revelation 4-5

Scott R. Swain
Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando

Introduction

We are gathered together at this conference because we care about the doctrine of the Trinity. We have studied the doctrine over the past several months because we hope to see a retrieval of the doctrine in the life of the church, because we long to see a renewal in the church’s prayer, proclamation, and praise of the Holy Trinity. I have been given the task of kicking things off with a reflection on the relationship between Holy Scripture and the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. And this is indeed a fitting way to begin a conference devoted to the retrieval of trinitarian theology in the life of the church. If we care about retrieving trinitarian teaching within the church, we must also care about retrieving the status of trinitarian teaching as *scriptural* teaching. As David Yeago states, “No theory of the development of doctrine which attempts to save the classical doctrines without accounting for the unanimous conviction of the Christian tradition that they are the teaching of Scripture can overcome the marginalization of the doctrines which is so evident in the contemporary western church and theology.”[1]

The relationship between Holy Scripture and the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not self-evident. For some, content with the so-called assured results of historical criticism or else absorbed with the narcissistic biblicism of certain forms of popular piety, it does not occur to bring the Bible and the Trinity into the same conversation. For still others, who see a positive relationship between the Bible and the Trinity, there is disagreement about how to construe their relationship. Some view the Bible as the yet unformed data of trinitarian theology that later ecclesiastical reflection must process, clarify, and develop before we arrive at trinitarian faith in the full-blooded sense. Others view the Bible as the expression of the early church’s inchoate experience

[1] David S. Yeago, “The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis,” *Pro Ecclesia* 3 (1994): 153.

of the Trinity for which, once again, later ecclesiastical reflection must provide deeper ontological determination and sharper terminological clarification.

Both views, I believe, err in misconstruing the relationship between scriptural trinitarianism and ecclesiastical trinitarianism. Scriptural trinitarianism is not unformed, inchoate trinitarianism. As the self-revelation of the triune God through his authorized and anointed prophets and apostles, scriptural trinitarianism is the "primary discourse" of trinitarian theology: normative, fluent, and eloquent. Ecclesiastical trinitarianism, the trinitarian theology of the church's sermons, hymns, confessions, and creeds, is the "secondary discourse" of trinitarian theology. Ecclesiastical trinitarianism, at its best, is the attempt to represent the "grammar" of Scripture's primary trinitarian discourse in new settings and on new occasions, not to refine or develop what would otherwise be unrefined and undeveloped without it but to promote the church's greater fluency in reading Scripture's primary trinitarian discourse and in responding to that discourse in its own eloquent expressions of prayer, proclamation, and praise of the triune God.

This evening, I would like to focus our attention on one particular scriptural text in considering the relationship between the Bible and the doctrine of the Trinity. That text is Revelation 4-5. I believe Revelation 4-5 is an instructive text for consideration as we seek to gain greater fluency in Scripture's primary trinitarian discourse, and that for three reasons.

First, Revelation 4-5 is one of Scripture's fullest presentations of trinitarian theology. Revelation 4-5 presents all three persons of the Trinity. It presents the Trinity as the agent of creation, redemption, and consummation. And it presents well-ordered, indeed normative, worship of the triune God.

Second, Revelation 4-5 presents its teaching on the Trinity in a manner with which we are less likely to be familiar. It does not use the standard terminology of "Father" and "Son" and "Holy Spirit" to identify the three persons of the Trinity. It does not say, "Jesus is Lord." Instead, it presents its teaching on the Trinity in the highly figurative language of apocalyptic literature: there is the throne, there is the Lamb, there are the seven Spirits of God. But it is precisely this factor that makes Revelation 4-5 so instructive regarding the character of the Bible's primary trinitarian discourse. Sometimes, we are lulled into thinking that we understand all too well what the Bible's trinitarian language means. Revelation 4-5 does not allow this. It awakens us from the slumbers of our familiar miscomprehension of biblical language and forces us to pay attention more closely to the actual shape of the Bible's trinitarian discourse. As we are drawn to contemplate more deeply the unfamiliar

language and imagery of Revelation 4-5, we will discover its capacity "to evoke divine transcendence" and thereby to help us distinguish "true worship from idolatry, the true God from the false."[2]

Third, Revelation 4-5 presents what, from the vantage point of classical Reformed theology, is the consummate expression of human trinitarian theology, the trinitarian theology of the saints in heaven. In opening the door to God's heavenly court, Revelation 4-5 opens the door to the chorus of heavenly creatures and redeemed saints who have learned, in the Spirit, and by virtue of the triumph of the Lamb, to praise with perfect eloquence the name of the Holy Trinity. By showing us human theology in this consummate form, Revelation 4-5 thus sets the standard and goal for our trinitarian theology as pilgrims who are still on the way to our everlasting rest: to gain, by the same Spirit, and by virtue of the same triumph of the Lamb, the fluency required to make us fitting participants in that heavenly chorus.

In looking at the presentation of the Trinity in Revelation 4-5, we will look primarily to the ways this text "names" the Trinity. The triune God who presents himself to us in Holy Scripture presents himself to us by means of divine names.[3] These divine names are the primary mode of divine self-revelation within Scripture's primary trinitarian discourse. Consequently, as Basil affirms, when it comes to the manifold ways Scripture names God, "not one of the words that are applied to God in every use of speech should be left uninvestigated."[4]

Our "investigation" will proceed in three steps. First, we will discuss briefly the grammar of divine naming, considering how God conveys his transcendent being, agency, and worth by means of ordinary patterns of creaturely naming. Second, we will discuss at greater length how Revelation 4-5 in particular names the triune God, considering not only how each person is distinctly identified and glorified in these chapters, but also how they are related within God's undivided being, agency, and worship. Finally, we will conclude our discussion by considering, once again, the relationship between scriptural trinitarianism and ecclesiastical trinitarianism.

[2] Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 45-46.

[3] Scott R. Swain, "On Divine Naming," in *Aquinas Among the Protestants,* eds. Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 207-228.

[4] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 1.1 (p. 27).

The grammar of divine naming

In order to appreciate how Revelation 4-5 names the Trinity, we must consider for a moment the nature of naming more generally. This is not, as we will see, because divine naming is a species of naming in general. This is because God in his acts of naming himself for us in Holy Scripture speaks to us in our language, making use of general patterns of naming to convey something of his transcendent being and glory.

The grammar of naming in general

In considering the grammar of naming in general, we begin by distinguishing *three paradigmatic acts of naming*. (1) First, in naming we i*dentify* things—*this* tree, *this* cheeseburger, *this* human being. (2) Second, in naming, we *predicate* certain things of the things we identify—this tree is tall, this tree grew three feet over the past year. This cheeseburger is fresh, this cheeseburger became stale over the course of three hours. This human being is my husband. This human being was born on March 10, 1972. (3) Third, along with identification and predication, evaluation is a paradigmatic act of naming. In naming, we *evaluate* the things we identify, we make judgments—this tree looks nice in our back yard, this tree is good for shade, this tree is good for climbing. This cheeseburger is the best cheeseburger I have ever eaten, a judgment we might make after eating at Culver's. This human being is reliable, honest, and bad at hanging towel rods.

These paradigmatic acts of naming, in turn, are performed in different ways. We may *identify* objects by means of definite descriptions, "the first man to walk on the moon," by means of proper names, "Neil Armstrong," and by means of various indicators, such as personal pronouns, "I," "you," deictic terms, "this," "that," along with adverbs of place, adverbs of time, and tensed verbs.[5] Likewise, we *predicate* different sorts of things of objects by means of different kinds of predications. We predicate attributes—he is kind. We predicate actions—he bought me a cheeseburger. We predicate changes—his hair is growing grey (or falling out!), and so forth. In similar fashion, we *evaluate* objects by means of various hierarchies of value.[6] When

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[5] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another,* trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 28-30. The specific examples are Ricoeur's.

[6] Paul J. Griffiths, *Intellectual Appetite: A Theological Grammar* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 24-28.

facing limited luggage space for travel, we must decide which is more important to us, our heavy coat or an extra pair of shoes. When determining which football teams will make it into the playoffs, we must weigh what matters more: number of wins, conference championships, strength of schedule, etc. More significantly, when we distinguish objects across categories, say, distinguishing a "someone" from a "something," we make different evaluations of an object's status, along with different determinations of the obligations we owe an object.[7] We may "use" a hammer, but a person we may not.

It is important to observe that, in each of these cases, acts of identification, predication, and evaluation involve judgments about an object's *relation to* and *distinction from* some larger category or family of which it is an instance or a member. As Robert Spaemann observes, "nothing can be identified except *as a such-and-such*, which is to say, by virtue of a description that accommodates it alongside other things."[8] In identifying Neil Armstrong as "the first man to walk on the moon," we draw upon a common class of beings ("man"), a common class of actions ("walk"), and a common class of settings in which such actions are capable of being performed (in this case, "moon"). But, in identifying Neil Armstrong as such-and-such an object who performed such-and-such an action in such-and-such a setting, we do so in order to *set this particular object apart* from other members of the common class.[9] We are not talking about men in general, walking in general, or planets in general. We are talking about *him*. He is "the first man to walk on the moon." This identification is true of *this human being* alone and not of any other human being.

The same is true when it comes to acts of evaluation. When we call Neil Armstrong "the *first* man to walk on the moon," we are singling him out, acknowledging his pride of place within the pantheon of astronauts that we have sent into outer space. But even then, we are singling him out *as* the first in a series of astronauts (and this is true even when the series of human beings to walk on the moon is only potential). The *best* football team in the country is still *one* football team among *many*. Evaluating the individual—whether it is a tree, a cheeseburger, or a

[7] Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference between 'Someone' and 'Something'* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 5-15.

[8] Spaemann, *Persons,* 124.

[9] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another,* 28.

human being, presupposes the existence of the larger class of which it or he is an instance or a member.

The grammar of divine naming in Revelation 4-5

What does any of this have to do with divine naming in Revelation 4-5? In John's vision, he sees and hears various things regarding the triune God, which he reports to us by means of the ordinary grammar of naming. Revelation 4-5 *identifies* God by means of definite descriptions, as the "one seated on the throne" (Rev 4:2), by means of proper names and titles, as "the Lord God Almighty" (Rev 4:8), and by means of indicators, as the one "who was and is and is to come" (Rev 4:8). Moreover, Revelation 4-5 *predicates* certain actions of God. The heavenly host declares, "you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created" (Rev 4:8). Finally, Revelation 4-5 reports various acts of *evaluation* with reference to God: "Holy, holy, holy," the four living creatures proclaim day and night (Rev 4:8). And, because he is the supreme benefactor of all creaturely being and wellbeing, God is acknowledged as "Worthy . . . to receive glory and honor and power" (Rev 4:11).

While Revelation 4-5 draws upon the *ordinary grammar* of naming to proclaim God's supreme excellence and worth, we should also observe that Revelation 4-5, following broader scriptural patterns, deploys that grammar in an *extraordinary way*. As we will see more fully below, when Revelation 4-5 *identifies* God, it does not identify him as a particular member of a larger class. When Revelation 4-5 *predicates* certain actions of God, it does not draw upon a broader category of actions common to other agents. When Revelation 4-5 *evaluates* God's worth, it does not locate his worth on a larger scale of meaning and value. Revelation 4-5 takes up the ordinary grammar of naming to convey God's transcendent oneness, God's transcendent uniqueness in his being, action, and worth. The grammar of divine naming in Revelation 4-5 conveys that he *alone* is this one, that he *alone* does these things, that he *alone* is worthy of the worship he receives, that God is not in a class with creatures.

Revelation 4-5, moreover, engages in divine naming in a manner that is both *triadic* and *doxological*. All three persons of the Trinity are named in various ways in Revelation 4-5. There is the one who sits on the throne, there is the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne, and there is the Spirit who is before the throne, who is identified as the Spirit of God and as the Spirit of the Lamb. Furthermore, John's vision of the Holy Trinity comes by means of both sights and sounds that communicate divine glory. John *sees* God seated on a throne and apprehends his

transcendent glory. John *sees* the Lamb standing as though it had been slain. And John *sees* a multitude of angelic hosts praising the Lamb. However, the primary mode of divine naming in Revelation 4-5 is not visual but aural. John *hears* one of the twenty-four elders proclaim the good news that the Lion of the tribe of Judah has overcome. And, more extensively, John hears the various hymns that various creatures in heaven, on earth, and in the sea raise to the triune God in declaring his matchless worth. Among the variety of hymns John hears in Revelation 4-5 are the Trisagion, various acclamations of divine worth, a "new song" that celebrates the triumph of the Lamb, and a doxology.[10] In Revelation 4-5, *divine hymning* is the primary mode of *divine naming*.

The fundamental task of biblical interpretation in general and of trinitarian theology in particular is thus to *pay attention to* the extraordinary ways in which Scripture deploys the ordinary grammar of naming to convey the transcendent being, activity, and worth of the triune God. Doing so requires that we resist the temptation of allowing our preconceived notions about how things exist and act, and about how things should be regarded, to shape the way we interpret divine naming in Holy Scripture. Rather, we must allow our minds, our judgments, and our speech to be trained and habituated in accordance with Scripture's unique way of revealing God's unique identity and worth.[11] Moreover, as Revelation 4-5 in particular emphasizes, because divine hymning is the ultimate form of divine naming which Holy Scripture calls us to perform, being trained to follow scriptural patterns of divine naming ultimately involves being trained to follow scriptural patterns of divine praise. Only then can we begin to acknowledge the Holy Trinity as he deserves to be acknowledged. Only then can we begin to worship the Holy Trinity as he deserves to be worshipped.

Patterns of Trinitarian Naming in Revelation 4-5

In order that we may appreciate more fully how Revelation 4-5 conveys God's transcendent, triune identity, activity, and worth by means of the ordinary grammar of naming, let us look at the specific ways it names the three persons of the Trinity. We will consider, first, the one who sits on the throne, second, the Lamb who stands

[10] Matthew E. Gordley, *New Testament Christological Hymns: Exploring Texts, Contexts, and Significance* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2018), 211.

[11] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 4.6 (p. 32).

in the midst of the throne and, third, the Spirit who is before the throne, the Spirit of God and of the Lamb.

The one who sits on the throne

John's heavenly vision of God in Revelation 4-5 may be described as a vision of "monarchical monotheism," a vision in which "God is seen as presiding over the heavenly court, in the celebration of the heavenly liturgy."[12] "At once," John says, "I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne" (Rev 4:2). John's description of the visible glory of the one seated on the throne is notably reticent in comparison to the visions upon which he draws in Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1, and Daniel 7 to articulate what he sees: "he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian" (Rev 4:3). As Craig Koester notes, "John's reserve" in describing God's appearance "maintains a sense of God's transcendence so that he is not construed as a human being writ large."[13]

The one seated on the throne is encircled by three concentric circles "made up of first a rainbow, then a circle of the four cherubim," whose job it is to lead the heavenly liturgy, "then a circle of the twenty-four thrones upon which the twenty-four elders sit" (Rev 4:3, 5, 6-8).[14] From the throne "flashes of lightning," "rumblings and peals of thunder" come forth, redolent of the Lord's theophanic appearance at Mount Sinai (4:5). Also before the throne are "seven torches of fire," which are identified as "the seven Spirits of God" (Rev 4:5), and "a sea of glass, like crystal" (Rev 4:6).

This initial way of "locating" God in Revelation 4-5 functions according to the grammar of divine naming described above. While Revelation 4-5 employs the ordinary grammar of naming to identify God, locating him within the heavenly court, it does so in an extraordinary manner that precludes us from envisioning God as the member of a larger class of beings, or even as the biggest being around. As the one who is seated on his heavenly throne, he is portrayed as *supreme* above all creation.[15]

[12] John Behr, "Introduction," in *Origen*: *On First Principles,* ed. and trans. John Behr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), xlv.

[13] Craig Koester, *Revelation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 368.

[14] David Aune, *Revelation 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 286.

[15] In Second Temple Judaism, the throne of God is one of the preeminent symbols of God's unique and unrivalled deity, signifying his status as the "*only* Sovereign" (1 Tim 6:15). See Richard Bauckham, "Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus," in *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other*

As the one whose throne is encircled by a rainbow, the four living creatures, and the twenty four elders, he is portrayed as the *center* of all creation.[16] And, to recall an earlier identification of God in Revelation 1:8, as the one who is "the Alpha and Omega," he is portrayed as *the beginning and the end* of all creation. According to John's vision, the one who sits upon the throne is not distinguished from creatures as the member of a broader class of creatures. John's vision names God as supremely transcendent and supremely unique. The one who sits upon the throne is the transcendent Lord above all, the transcendent center of all, the transcendent beginning and end of all.

As John's vision proceeds from sight to sound, the various hymns of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders further confirm the transcendent uniqueness of God. "Day and night," John tells us, the four living creatures "never cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come" (Rev 4:8). Here God is praised by his proper name and title, "the Lord God Almighty," a Greek way of representing the Hebrew proper name and title, "YHWH of hosts." Unlike other names and titles which are commonly ascribed to both God and creatures in Holy Scripture, this name and title is never ascribed to any creature. It is only ever ascribed to God alone. God is further praised by means of an expanded version of his self-identification in Exodus 3:14. He is "the one who was and is and is to come," a name called upon especially in circumstances where God's people suffer the mismatch between present realities and promised blessings, circumstances much like those of the seven churches which Jesus has addressed in the preceding chapters. This manner of naming God indicates God's eternal and unchanging being, which is the ground of God's faithfulness to his people and to his covenant promises throughout all the changes of history. Identifying God by his proper name and title, and by his eternal and unchanging being, the heavenly creatures honor God as thrice-holy, an acclamation also reserved for God alone throughout Scripture, acknowledging that he is "set apart" from all creatures in his transcendent being, beauty, and worth.

According to John, the singing of the Trisagion by the four living creatures prompts the twenty-four elders to prostrate themselves before "him who is seated on the throne" and to worship "him who lives forever and ever" (Rev 4:9-10). Their

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Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 152-181.

[16] Koester, *Revelation,* 382.

worship consists in "a second-person acclamation of God's worthiness."[17] "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created" (Rev 4:11). Speaking now not *of* him but *to* him, the heavenly creatures acknowledge God's absolute right to receive glory and honor and power. This right is rooted in his work of creation and providence.[18] As the sole benefactor of the world's coming to be and continuing to be, he alone is worthy of such praise. As all things are from him, so all praise is due him (2 Chron 29:11ff).

Once again, Revelation 4-5 employs the ordinary grammar of naming to extraordinary ends. The ordinary pattern of predicating and evaluating the action of a subject is here employed. Subject A performed action X, and subject A's performance of action X makes him worthy of receiving honor Y. But, once again, the action predicated and the evaluation rendered are anything but ordinary. God is not identified as an ordinary agent who performs ordinary actions within the ordinary network of action and interaction that characterizes all creaturely action. God is identified as the intelligent cause of all creatures, of all creaturely action, and of the entire network of action and interaction within which creaturely action takes place: "by your will they exist and were created" (Rev 4:11). And this unique divine action of creation and providence, in turn, is the ground of his absolute regard. Worship, Revelation is keen to emphasize, as an evaluative stance and activity, is to be rendered to God alone because he alone and his actions alone make him alone worthy. Though John is tempted on more than one occasion to worship one of the glorious heavenly envoys he runs into in the course of his vision, he is repeatedly rebuked and ordered to "Worship God" (Rev 19:10; 22:9).

Which leads us to the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne.

The Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne

Revelation chapter five begins with John's sight of a scroll in the right hand of him who is seated on the throne (Rev 5:1). This scroll, which is "written within and on the back" and "sealed with seven seals," in all likelihood represents God's hidden

[17] Gordley, *New Testament Christological Hymns,* 211.

[18] Koester, *Revelation,* 365.

purpose for the world that he has made and that he providentially governs.[19] John then hears "a mighty angel" who asks "with a loud voice" the question, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" (Rev 5:2). Who is able to understand God's sovereign purpose for creation? Who is able to bring God's sovereign purpose into effect?[20] The response causes John to "weep loudly" (Rev 5:4). "No one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it" (Rev 5:3).

We should not pass too quickly by this response. Though we as readers know that the Lion and the Lamb will soon be identified as the one who is worthy to understand and effect God's sovereign purpose for creation, it is worth noting how he is identified even before he appears center stage in John's vision. He is *not* one of the things "in heaven or on earth or under the earth." In other words, whoever it is who will be found worthy to open the scroll in God's right hand, he is not a creature. Before he is identified by his messianic names and titles, before majestic acts of deliverance are predicated of him, before he is acclaimed as worthy by all creatures in heaven and earth, he is distinguished from all creatures in heaven and earth. This one is not a member of that category. He too is identified by means of his transcendent oneness.

John then hears one of the twenty-four elders proclaim the good news: "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals" (Rev 5:5). After hearing these glad tidings, John then sees "in the midst of the throne . . . a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (Rev 5:6). In light of the previous determination in verse 5, this is quite an identification. The one who is not among the creatures that may be found in heaven, on earth, or under the earth is nevertheless identified by the most creaturely of creaturely descriptions, by a biographical description that is bracketed by "womb and tomb."[21] He is the Lion, born of the tribe of Judah. He is the Lamb who was slain.

Though space forbids exploring this theme at length, it is precisely this pattern of Christological naming that eventually led to the orthodox Christological

[19] G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 340-42.

[20] Koester, *Revelation,* 384.

[21] Robert W. Jenson, "For Us...He Was Made Man," in *Nicene Christianity: The Future for a New Ecumenism,* ed. Christopher R. Seitz (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001), 75-86.

confessions of Nicaea and beyond. The one who is worthy to open the scroll and to effect God's purpose for creation is on the divine side of the Creator-creature distinction. And yet this same one has the biography of a particular creature as well. Who can this be? How can this be? As Rowan Williams has recently argued, the church soon realized that both Judaism, with its array of heavenly angelic emissaries, and Greco-Roman culture, with its array of divinized human kings, lacked categories to account for the being and activity of the one identified in scriptural texts like Revelation 4-5. Attending to Scripture's unique patterns of Christological naming eventually led the church to confess that this one is not a heavenly angelic emissary or a divinized human king but "one of the Trinity" who, for us and our salvation, came down from heaven, was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried, Jesus Christ our Lord.[22]

After the Lamb had taken the scroll from God's right hand, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders again fall down in worship, this time "before the Lamb" (Rev 5:8). In offering their worship, they hold not only harps but also "golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Rev 5:8). The Lamb who has the seven horns, signifying divine power, and the seven eyes, signifying divine knowledge (Rev 5:6),[23] stands ready and able to receive the prayers of his suffering people, ready and able to respond to their pleas for deliverance.

And so the heavenly creatures sing a "new song," again a "second-person acclamation,"[24] echoing themes from the first exodus, to celebrate the second exodus effected by the Lion and the Lamb in his death, resurrection, and ascension to God's right hand: "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (Rev 5:9-10). Again note the sheer marvel of what is predicated of the one who stands in the midst of the throne. By means of the events of his very *human* biography, the Lamb has effected a uniquely *divine* act of redemption, ransoming God's people by his blood, making them a kingdom of priests to God. And because of his uniquely divine act of redemption, he is regarded by the heavenly chorus as worthy of the worship that is due to God alone.

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[22] Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018), 43-56.

[23] Bauckham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation,* 112-13.

[24] Gordley, *New Testament Christological Hymns,* 211.

John then sees and hears "the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands" joining the heavenly chorus of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (Rev 5:11), "saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev 5:12). As the one who sits on the throne has been acknowledged as worthy because of his work of creation and providence, receiving the threefold acclamation of "glory and honor and power" (Rev 4:11), now the lamb who is in the midst of the throne is acknowledged as worthy because of his work of redemption to receive the sevenfold acclamation of "power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev 5:12).

Perhaps because the sevenfold praise of the Lamb corresponds to his work of "completing" or "perfecting" God's purpose for creation, the expanding chorus of praise then extends from "heaven" to include "every creature . . . on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them" (Rev 5:13). This time God and the Lamb are hymned together, and this time by means of a doxology:[25] "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever" (Rev 5:13). This doxology is met, in turn, with the "Amen!" of the four living creatures, which prompts the twenty-four elders, once again, to fall down and worship (Rev 5:14).

To summarize the preceding discussion, according to Revelation 5, the one who stands in the midst of the throne is not numbered among God's creatures in heaven or on earth or under the earth. He is identified by his transcendent oneness. Nevertheless, this transcendent one has a human biography, being born of the tribe of Judah, having suffered a violent death. Moreover, by his means of the events of his human biography, this one has effected divine redemption on behalf of his people, ransoming them by his blood and making them a kingdom of priests to God, thereby completing and perfecting God's purpose for creation, as he alone is qualified to do. For this reason, the one who stands in the midst of the throne receives glory and honor from all creatures, not as "a second object of worship alongside God," but as one who is "included in the worship due the one God."[26]

[25] Gordley, *New Testament Christological Hymns,* 211.

[26] Koester, *Revelation,* 392.

The Spirit who is before the throne

The focus of divine naming and divine hymning in Revelation 4-5 falls upon the first and second persons of the Trinity, on the one who sits on the throne and on the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne. However, Revelation 4-5 is not silent when it comes to the third person of the Trinity, the Spirit who is before the throne. The ways these chapters name him therefore repays our careful attention as well.

The vision that Jesus "shows" John in Revelation 4-5 (Rev 4:1) is a vision that John receives "in the Spirit" (Rev 4:2). This is in keeping with the broader pattern of divine communication on display across Revelation as a whole. God has given to Jesus a revelation to deliver to John (Rev 1:1). This revelation, in turn, is received by John, and by the seven churches, by means of the Spirit's agency. All that John sees and all that John hears regarding the one who sits on the throne and regarding the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne, and all that he passes on to the seven churches, comes about "in the Spirit."

"The testimony of Jesus" is given by "the Spirit of prophecy." And the Spirit of prophecy is clear: "Worship God" (Rev 19:10), which according to Revelation 4-5 means, "Worship God and the Lamb." But what about the Spirit? Where does Revelation locate him, how is he identified, what is predicated of him, and how is his person evaluated? Though some commentators identify "the seven Spirits of God" in Revelation 4:5 as angelic beings, closer analysis leads to the conclusion that this is a misidentification and a misevaluation[27].

The Spirit's location "before the throne" (Rev 4:5) is admittedly an ambiguous identification. This location is also ascribed to creatures, such as the sea of glass (Rev 4:6) as well as those who appear in God's presence for judgment (Rev 20:12). However, among those who are located *before* the throne, he alone is described as "belonging" to the one who sits *on* the throne and to the one who stands *in the midst of* the throne (Rev 4:5; 5:6). "The seven Spirits of God" in Revelation 4:5, taken along with the "seven horns" and the "seven eyes" in Revelation 5:6, is undoubtedly a reference to Zechariah 4:1-14. In the latter text, "the seven eyes of the Lord" are identified by the Lord as "my Spirit."[28] The identity of the Spirit is therefore clear. The Spirit *before* the throne is the Spirit *of* the two who are *on* the throne. The Spirit *before* the throne is the Spirit who proceeds *"from* the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev 22:1).

[27] Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *God the Trinity,* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 211-217.

[28] Bauckham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 110-11.

By identifying the Spirit with the "seven horns" and the "seven eyes" possessed by the Lamb, John further identifies the Spirit with God's transcendent power and God's transcendent knowledge, as one who is therefore able to bring God's creative and redemptive purpose, accomplished by Jesus, to its goal by empowering the prophecy, prayer, and praise of God's people in the midst of an idolatrous world.[29] In the Spirit, the redemptive purpose of God for creation, the purpose unveiled and enacted by the Son, is brought to completion.

This identification is confirmed when we look more broadly at John's letter as a whole. In the opening salutation, John does not offer the typical dyadic Christian greeting, wishing grace and peace to the seven churches from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead he offers a unique triadic greeting: "Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:4-5). In other words, John locates the Spirit, along with God and Jesus, on the divine side of the Creator-creature distinction, characterizing him as an agent of divine blessing.[30] Moreover, in Jesus' address to the seven churches, the churches are repeatedly urged to "hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). This is a noteworthy repetition. In enjoining the churches to listen to the Spirit of God, Revelation enjoins the churches to perform the first and fundamental act of worship they owe to the one true God: "*Hear*, O Israel . . ." (Deut 6:4).

With the one who sits on the throne, and with the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne, John thus locates the Spirit who is before the throne on the divine side of the distinction between Creator and creature, as the source of all divine blessing, as one who is worthy of all divine honor. According to the revelation given by Jesus to John, we honor the third person of the Trinity by heeding the Spirit of prophecy, who enjoins and empowers us to render "blessing and honor and glory and power forever and ever . . . to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb" (Rev 5:13).

The indivisible, internally ordered being, agency, and worship of the Trinity according to Revelation 4-5

[29] Bauckham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 112-15.

[30] Bauckham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 23-24.

Though Revelation 4-5 names the one who sits on the throne, the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne, and the Spirit who is before the throne in three distinct ways, it does so without compromising scriptural monotheism, without suggesting the existence of three gods. Revelation 4-5 characterizes the Holy Trinity as indivisible and internally ordered in his being, agency, and worship. How so?

First, while Revelation 4-5 recognizes the presence of many thrones in heaven, the three persons of the Trinity share one throne. As we have seen, the throne of God symbolizes God's transcendent oneness, indicating his supremacy over all creatures, his centrality to all creatures, and his status as the beginning and end of all creatures. From this we may conclude that, although the three persons are distinguished by various means of identification and predication in Revelation 4-5, because they share one divine throne they share God's transcendent oneness. Moreover, the fact that both God and the Lamb share the seven Spirits of God also indicates their transcendent oneness.[31]

Second, although Revelation 4-5 appropriates the work of creation and providence to the one who sits on the throne, the work of redemption to the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne, and the work of sanctification to the Spirit who is before the throne, the identification of the three persons with these three distinct moments of God's unfolding kingdom should not be taken to suggest that they act *serially* within that unfolding kingdom: first the Father, then the Son, and finally the Spirit. For one thing, Revelation elsewhere ascribes the works of creation and consummation to the second person of the Trinity (Rev 1:17; 3:14; 22:13).[32] For another thing, Revelation elsewhere exhibits the Greek grammatical oddity of using a singular verb to describe the reign of God and of the Lamb, thus violating the basic rule of subject-verb agreement (Rev 11:15; 22:3).[33] From this we may conclude that the distinction between the first, second, and third persons of the Trinity in enacting the unfolding kingdom of God is not a distinction between three agencies. It is rather a distinction within one divine agency. The three persons who share one divine throne enact one divine agency.

Third, though Revelation 4-5 progresses from the worship of the one who sits on the throne to the worship of the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne, these

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[31] Koester, *Revelation,* 387.

[32] Bauckham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 54-58.

[33] Bauckham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 60-61.

chapters conclude with the worship of the one who sits on the throne and of the Lamb. That this is the climactic expression of worship in Revelation 4-5 indicates that Revelation does not envision the worship of two or three gods. Instead it envisions the worship of one God in three persons. In the Spirit, Revelation calls us to worship God and the Lamb.

Fourth, though it does not receive the same degree of emphasis in these chapters as it does elsewhere in John's writings, Revelation 4-5 does indicate something about the character of the distinction that obtains between the three persons of the Trinity within the transcendent oneness of God's being and agency. According to these chapters, the revelation that John receives comes from God by Jesus in the Spirit. In similar fashion, God's hidden purpose for creation is accomplished by Jesus and applied by the Spirit sent out into all the earth. Here, as we have already seen, we are not dealing with a distinction between three divine agencies. We are dealing with distinctions within one divine agency. What is the character of that distinction? According to Revelation 4-5, the singular agency of God proceeds from the one who sits on the throne, through the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne, in the Spirit who is before the throne.

Is there anything more that can be said regarding the relation between the persons, not only within God's undivided agency but also within God's undivided being? I believe there is. Though we have to look elsewhere in Revelation to find the distinction between the first and the second persons of the Trinity described as the relation between the Father and the Son (e.g., Rev 3:21), Revelation 4-5 identifies the Spirit in such a way that indicates something fascinating about his personal identity as the third person of the Trinity. Specifically, the Spirit is described, in rather symmetrical fashion, as belonging to both the one who sits on the throne and the one who stands in the midst of the throne. He is the Spirit of God and of the Lamb. While this is not exactly a full-blooded statement of the Spirit's eternal procession from the Father and the Son, it is a striking image of his relation to the Father and the Son nonetheless.

Conclusion

In concluding our discussion of the Trinity in Revelation 4-5, I would like to return to the question of the relationship between scriptural trinitarianism and

ecclesiastical trinitarianism. How does this text address that question? I have three brief thoughts.

First, though the specific *language* of Revelation 4-5 does not make much of an appearance in later creeds of the church (but cf. "Almighty"), the *grammar* of Revelation 4-5 is notably present. Not only does Revelation 4-5 explicitly identify the three persons of the Trinity, it also explicitly mentions the three foundational moments of God's unfolding kingdom. It speaks of God's work of creation. It speaks of God's work of redemption. And it speaks of God's work of sanctification. Revelation 4-5's triadic pattern of identifying the three persons of the Trinity and of appropriating to them the three foundational moments of God's unfolding kingdom is later reflected in three article creeds such as the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. Though these later creeds do not, for the most part, employ the *language* of Revelation 4-5, they do exhibit its *grammar*.

Second, by making *divine hymning* the primary mode of *divine naming*, Revelation 4-5 also suggests something about how the church might gain greater fluency in appropriating and expressing the Bible's fundamental trinitarian grammar. In addition to the reading and praying of Holy Scripture, *singing* trinitarian hymns is one of the best ways of habituating ourselves to the patterns of the Bible's primary trinitarian discourse. As a child can "catch" a tune before she ever learns what a whole note is, so we can "catch" the scriptural grammar of the Trinity by learning to sing the Trisagion, the doxology, and the "new song" of the Lamb. Theology, in its most sophisticated academic expressions, is only ultimately about helping us sing these hymns in greater harmony with the scriptural score.

Third, Revelation 4-5 also says something about the ultimate end of human beings, and indeed of all creatures, in relation to the Holy Trinity. According to Revelation 4-5, the revelation of the mystery of God's purpose for creation comes by means of the revelation of the mystery of the person and work of the Lamb. The revelation of this mystery, in turn, leads to the worship of God and the Lamb by means of the person and work of the Spirit who is sent out into all the earth. This suggests that God's ultimate purpose for all creatures in heaven and on earth, in the sea and all its depths, is that they would know and adore the Holy Trinity, with human beings ransomed from every tribe and language and people and nation leading the cosmic chorus as a kingdom of priests.

This suggests, in other words, that devoting our attention to the triune God as he presents himself to us in Holy Scripture is not a matter of vain curiosity or arcane interest. In seeking to gain fluency in praising God and the Lamb in the Spirit we are

participating in what is the deepest reality of the cosmos, as well as its ultimate end. In doing so, we are also beginning to realize our nature as creatures designed to recognize, receive, and respond to the thrice-holy Trinity. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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The Trinity and the Fourth Century

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Introduction

This year's Paideia Center's reading group made its way through Gregory of Nazianzus's (hereafter Nazianzen) *Theological Orations*. Consequently, I will use his writings, and later his friend Basil's, as a guide for looking at the Trinity and the Fourth Century. In reading Nazianzen, a beautiful, though maybe a little spooky, yet still enchanting world opens to the reader.

An Eloquent Guide

In reading Nazianzen's *Theological Orations* one is immediately struck by two things:

One: Nazianzen would have been *amazing* on Twitter. This man could turn a phrase quicker than an Allen Iverson cross-over. Listen to a few of these lines when he was giving expression to the depth and beauty of nature. In its own way, nature – a created reality – startles us in its incomprehensibility. Yet it, of course, is far surpassed by its Creator:

Who puts a sounding-board in the cicada's chest with the chirping songs it makes in the branches? Whenever the Sun sets them going they make mid-day music, stirring the groves and giving the traveler an escort of sound. Who wove the web of song for the swan, when it spreads out its wings to the breeze, turning its hissing into melody? (*Oration* 28.24)

His words are reflective of the beauty of his subject yet skillfully modulated to bring great effect to his audience. *He was a masterful rhetorician.*

But perhaps if you were tempted to tweet a Nazianzen quote you paused like I often have with a sense of guilt: Nazianzen would have *hated* Twitter. All this theological chit-chat would have taken him back to the streets and public gatherings of Constantinople where the people of the day all-too-readily spoke of the mystery of God. The deep resources of theology should not be aired like yesterday's or today's

news. The nature of the object should govern the where and the when and then manner of our speaking, which leads to the second initial observation.

Second: *In contrast to reading Twitter*, in reading Nazianzen one is frequently drawn into prayer, and worship, and contemplation of the mystery that is the Triune God.

If you go away with nothing else from this talk I hope it will be that fourth-century Trinitarian thought was, yes, concerned with giving a faithful expression to who the Triune God is, but this was in service of a more fundamental desire. That is, a desire to protect the "simple faith" of the church that is expressed in something as basic as the baptismal formula. Basil (of Caesarea or "the Great"), who I will introduce later in the talk, said he would rather confess the "simple faith" of the church than write volumes on the Trinity; yet, he felt pressed to engage and refute those threats he discerned to the faith which the church confessed in its worship. And if one is going to engage in theological battle, which will mean theological refinement, one must not be only motivated to protect the Church's worship of the Triune God, but also deepen that worship. That is, draw the people of God deeper into the mystery of the Trinity through theological reflection.

To quote Scott Swain from his talk last night: "Theology, in its most sophisticated academic expressions, is only ultimately about helping us sing…hymns in greater harmony with the scriptural score."

Basil would say, as would Nazianen, what is confessed simply at baptism (and we could add the Creed) and marks the distinctive character of Christian worship becomes, for the Christian, the outline for one's faith and, consequently, for one's own spiritual growth in that faith. In short, engaging in Trinitarian theology is engaging in spirituality. This is the note I want to strike here at the beginning, and it is the note we will return to at the end.

It is the note Nazianzen struck in the *First Theological Oration* (*Oration* 27). He's vexed that his opponents have advanced their leaders too quickly. They do not understand how important it is to live by the sense that theological study engaging the mind goes together with devotional meditation. They are inseparable. This is what Nazianzen would call *theoria* or contemplation.

Theological "Mood Lighting:" Oration 40.41

To start off I want to quote a paragraph from one of Nazianzen's other writings, from an Oration on Baptism (*Oration* 40) that he gave when he was bishop

in Constantinople. While it was on Baptism, its setting is Epiphany, the Feast of Lights. Light is a prominent theme in the Oration. He specifically wants his audience to understand the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit.

It's a dense quote but it sets the theological mood for us in looking at pro-Nicene trinitarianism in the fourth century. Now, if you listen carefully to this quote you will most likely recognize lines you have heard before—lines that that left an indelible mark on one of the great Reformers.

Above all, guard for me the good deposit…, the confession of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. I entrust this to you today. With this I will both submerge you and raise you up. This I give you as a partner and protector for all your life, the one divinity and power, found in unity in the three, and gathering together the three as distinct; neither uneven in substances or nature, nor increased or decreased by superiorities or inferiorities; from every perspective equal, from every perspective the same, as the beauty and greatness of heaven is one; an infinite coalescence of three infinities; each God when considered in himself; as the Father so the Son, as the Son so the Holy Spirit; each preserving his properties. The three are God when known together, each God because of the consubstantiality, one God because of the monarchy. When I first know the one I am also illumined from all sides by the three; when I first distinguish the three I am also carried back to the one. When I picture one of the three I consider the whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part has escaped me. I cannot grasp the greatness of that one in order to grant something greater to the rest. When I bring the three together in contemplation, I see one torch and am unable to divide or measure the united light (*Oration* 40.41) (Found in Calvin's *Institutes* I.13.17).

Within this passage – you'll notice it is just as packed with evocative rhetoric as with theological content – we perceive Nazianzen's characteristic connection between the knowledge and experience of God as with who God is himself. That is to say, God is not approached as a neutral object from which we can glean certain facts or characteristics; he is one upon whom we affectionately gaze, who progressively reveals himself to those who pursue that vision with their whole lives. For Nazianzen, the vision of God is synonymous with the knowledge of God. The "greater part" always escapes view. Light, even a three-fold light, dawns upon the theologian through a contemplative vision—the theologian is not left in darkness. Yet, while what is gained in Trinitarian knowledge is real, it is also mysterious; as soon as the spiritual eye is "filled" it is overwhelmed, for it cannot survey – "divide or measure" – the whole. What it attempts to take in will always lead it to what is beyond limit.

Indeed, the drumbeat of divine incomprehensibility accompanies any Trinitarian inquiry within Nazianzen (He has a "Big God theology!"). As much as divine incomprehensibility cautions us as we endeavor to know God, all hope is not lost. There is light. And that light coupled with God's incomprehensibility is an invitation to pursue a more penetrating vision of God.

My talk has 3 main points:

1. A contemplative vision leads one to consider a "dizzying" manifestation of three and one.
2. The Trinity's "Timeless" Beginning
3. The Holy Spirit and Inseparable Operations

As I fill out these points it is my intent for the conclusions to actually point to something more expansive within the fourth century than just understanding a bit of Nazianzen and a bit of Basil. It is my purpose for this outline to point to something wider, to guide us to the central principles of pro-Nicene Trinitarian theology, and so you will see that as a point of conclusion within each of these three points.

A contemplative vision leads one to consider a "dizzying" manifestation of three and one.

Three and One Simultaneously

In the contemplative vision of God brought about by the Spirit one is led to a "dizzying" manifestation of the threeness and oneness of God, his unity and diversity. Nazianzen pictures himself as a seeker who is continuously led in his contemplation from one to three and from three back to one: Again, "When I first know the one I am also illumined from all sides by the three; when I first distinguish the three I am also carried back to the one."

There is much to unpack here, both in theological content and rhetorical framing. In fact, in Nazianzen's rhetorical framing of the theological question at hand he is suggesting something of the reality to which he speaks. Take Nazianzen's description of light that portrays the three and one dynamically and at the same time. For example, in *Oration* 39.11 Nazianzen says,

When I speak of God, let yourselves be surrounded with a lightening flash of light that is both one and three: three in properties, or indeed in hypostases, if one

wants to call them that, or persons—for we will not become involved in a battle over names, as long as the syllables point towards the same notions—and one with regard to the concept of substance, or indeed divinity. It is divided without division, if I may speak in this way, and is joined together in the midst of distinction. The divinity is one in three, and the three are one—in whom the divinity exists, or, to speak more accurately, who are the divinity.

After this Nazianzus goes on to situate this description between two extremes: on the one side, the Sabellians who aggregate the three into an "unholy mass" and, on the other side, the Arians and their "alienation" of the one which cuts God into "inequalities." Rather than Nazianzen giving description to the Trinity in a way that moves from the three to the one, or the one to the three, he upholds both simultaneously, characterizing his perception of this simultaneity as being somehow "surrounded" on "all sides". Thus, within his vision he holds together that the divinity is simultaneously three in one and one in three. Bringing these two together is a rhetorical construction where two things that appear in tension are actually complementary, and given the nature of what is under consideration such rhetorical description is appropriate. That is to say, the mysterious nature of the divine requires certain tensions in speech concerning it. And this "both/and" concerning the nature of God stands in contrast with the "neither/nor" vis-à-vis heretical constructions of the divine. It is as if after ascending the mount and attempting to reveal the fullness of his theological vision which demands rhetorical "both/ands", he descends back to earth and clearly marks off its false theological attempts with "neither/nors". This gives him a certain vigor in the key of mystery, while rejecting clear positions to his "right" and "left". Carving a "golden mean", he then makes positive assertions that sit in tension. A case in point of Nazianzen juxtaposing his rhetorical "both/and" with his "neither/nor" is found in *Oration* 20.5-6:

We worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, dividing their properties but uniting their Godhead; and we neither blend the three into one, lest we be sick with Sabellius's disease, nor do we divide them into three alien and unrelated things, lest we share Arius's madness. For why should we act like those who try to straighten a plant bent over completely in one direction by forcibly training it the opposite way, correcting one deviation by another? Rather, we should straighten it midway between the two, and so take our position within the bounds of reverence. When I speak of such a middle position, I mean the truth, which we do well to have sight of alone, and rejecting both a bad approach to unity and even as fouler version of distinction.

What Nazianzen is not saying is that simply navigating a "middle way" will lead one to the truth. Rather, the two "rival" positions on each side emphasize either "one" or "three" to an extent unworthy of God's Triune character. In Nazianzen's understanding, both unity and diversity must be mysteriously held together in order to account for the richness of his vision.

The Three are equally known because the Three are equally God.

In probing that vision further, I first take into account Nazianzen's assertion that each of the three "lights" or divine persons can be known and is directly present to him. The picture provided by *Oration* 40.41 is of three lights – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – surrounding him, each God when considered in himself and, therefore, each an object of worship. Earlier within the same oration, Nazianzen introduced this image of light within the Trinity in apophatic terms initially by saying there is a "highest light" that is "unapproachable" and "ineffable." Yet, through a purified contemplation it is able to be known, and is equally evident in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. While Nazianzen again upholds the knowability of each of the divine persons, and utilizes evocative light imagery to picture his direct knowledge of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, there is also the suggestion of the singularity of the light which provides the "wealth" that, so to speak, manifests the divinity of each of the Trinitarian persons. Consequently, as Nazianzen speaks of the three divine persons he is brought back to what holds them together, to what, as it were, "funds" their shared character. This move is not, therefore, a mere assertion of the mutual presence of the three and one or of the diversity and unity. It is, rather, a suggestion of underlying patterns that contribute to an understanding of their complementarity.

In his *Fifth Theological Oration*, when addressing the unity and diversity of the Godhead, Nazianzen again utilizes the image of light and connects it to suns:

To us there is one God because there is a single Godhead, and what proceeds from him is referred to one, though we believe in three.... To express it succinctly, the Godhead exists undivided in beings divided, and there is a single intermingling of light, as it were, existing in three mutually connected suns. When then we look at the Godhead, the first cause, the monarchy, what we have a mental picture of is one. But when we look at the three in whom the Godhead exists, and at those who derive their timeless and equally glorious being from the first cause, there are three whom we worship (*Oration* 31.14).

In our integrating text, Oration 40.41, Nazianzen uses the phrase "infinite coalescence of three infinities" to vaguely describe how the persons of the Godhead are three and yet are united. This gives way to his perception of the dynamic simultaneity of one light yet three lights. Here, in Or. 31.14, the image provides more description for the relationship between the one and three. For you do not simply have a whirling perception of the three and one; there is, rather, the image of one "intermingling of light" existing in "three mutually connected suns."

Pro-Nicene principle 1: the person and nature distinction

Now, as I said in giving this outline through these points I want to highlight what are the central principles of pro-Nicene theology as given in Lewis Ayres' *Nicaea and its Legacy*. The first principle is a clear version of the person and nature distinction. Within this it is understood that whatever is said of the divine nature is said of the three persons equally and understood to be one. Well, in these texts from Nazianzen we see highly mature and refined expressions of what is three and what is one in God. The language is not always consistent (using person or hypostases for the 3 and nature or substance for the 1), but the grammar is there and that grammar is controlling his evocative expressions of three-in-oneness.

The Trinity's "Timeless" Beginning

Our second point returns to Nazianzen's light imagery and whether it speaks to something more than just what is Three and what is One. There are three mutually connected lights yet one intermingling light. This suggests an underlying relationship that is further clarified when Nazianzen speaks of the "Godhead" which is also the "first cause." While this text has a certain logic within it, it is not entirely clear on its own whose is the Godhead and who is the primal cause. It would seem, then, that if we can identify the single light with the Godhead or primal cause, we can begin to understand how the three and the one complement, or "fit together" within the Trinity according to Nazianzen.

Relations of origin

This is my shortest point, which addresses the Father as the one whose dynamic relationship with the Son and Spirit accounts for their unity in diversity and

diversity in unity. To return again to our integrating text, *Or.* 40.41. Within it, Nazianzen begins a long sentence on the Triune God by asserting "the one divinity and power, found in unity in the three, and gathering together the three as distinct" and then closes that same sentence by saying each divine person is "God because of the consubstantiality, one God because of the monarchy." Like the ambiguity in *Or.* 31.14, it is not abundantly clear within this section if the Father is equated with "one divinity" or has "the monarchy." But, if he is, then it is clear that he provides a coherence to Nazianzen's account of "dynamic simultaneity" between the three and one.

To give brief evidence for this, I turn to two theological poems that Nazianzen wrote late in his life when in a reflective state. They mirror the content of the *Theological Orations*, and provide a clarity on Nazianzen's understanding of the Father as he gives poetic attention to the Son and then the Spirit. In his Theological Poem "On the Son" he writes of the eternal birth of the Son from the Father:

Nothing ever existed before the great Father. For he who contains the universe and is dependent on the Father knows this, the one who is sprung from the great Father, the Word of God, the timeless Son, the image of the original, a nature equal to his who begot him. For the Father's glory is his great Son and he was manifested in a way known only to the Father and to the Son made known by him (*Poems* 1.1.2).

The eternal birth or generation of the Son necessitates an eternal equality, which Nazianzen briefly translates in terms of image and shared glory. Distinction between Father and Son is held up by the order demonstrated through begetting, but equal nature means that, despite having an ordered "beginning", the Son is as eternal as the Father: the Father is the Son's "timeless beginning." Nazianzen goes on within this poem to note the distinctiveness of the Father: "As God, as progenitor, he is a mighty progenitor. But if it is a great thing for the Father to have no point of origin for his noble Godhead, it is no lesser glory for the revered offspring of the great Father to come from such a root." Nazianzen is arguing for two things at the same time here: on the one hand, he is upholding the full divinity of the Son through his origin and "root" in the Father and, on the other hand, he is arguing for the uniqueness of the Father's divinity as having no origin. What the Son has he has by way of relation with the Father. Lest the Spirit be left out, Nazianzen in his Theological Poem "On the Spirit" describes the Spirit's divinity "coming from the Father," the "unoriginate root." What the Father has is the origin-less "divinity": he is the "endless beginning" of the Trinity. He is the timeless "starting point" of the Trinity, even if that starting

point must be discerned from the vantage point of the Son and Spirit who provide the vision of the Father.

What is being described here is what is known as the relations of origin where the Father is the eternal origin of the Son (by begetting) and Spirit (by procession). You perhaps recall these are clearly upheld in a similar way in the *Third Theological Oration*: The Son and Spirit "are from him, though not after him. For "Being unoriginate" necessarily implies "being eternal" but "being eternal" does not entail "being unoriginate," so long as the Father is referred to as origin. So because they have a cause they are not unoriginate" (*Oration* 29.3).

Pro-Nicene principle 2: the eternal generation of the Son

This brings us to the second principle of pro-Nicene Trinitarianism within the fourth century: eternal generation, a generation which, along with the procession of the Spirit, in arguing through the relations of origin for the Son's relationship to the Father and the Spirit's relationship to the Father a common thread is seen that establishes both the unity and diversity of God. The unity is founded in the reality that the Father causes, or is the origin of those who share his being. It brings only a "false honor" to the Father to argue that he causes, within begetting or procession, lesser beings. Genuine dignity is accorded to him when it is acknowledged that the one he begets, or causes to proceed, fully shares his Godhead. Likewise, the diversity is founded through the unique relations each divine person shares with the other—relations established out of the origin of the Father.

The Holy Spirit and Inseparable Operations

In our last main point we turn from Gregory of Nazianzus to his friend, Basil. They were college roommates together in Athens and enjoyed a lifetime relationship that oscillated between true friendship and frustrated estrangement. Theologically, however, they are both firmly pro-Nicene even if they differed in their expressions and, at times, clarity (For example, I think Basil gives a much clearer articulation of inseparable operations than does Nazianzen.).

Basil was in agreement with Nazianzen that Trinitarian theology is engaged through a contemplative vision, a vision inaugurated through the Spirit's work in the believer, the Spirit who opens eyes, and brings light to dark souls. In the knowledge of God, he has a certain epistemological priority.

The Spirit "casts" the vision

According to Basil's work *On the Holy Spirit,* it is only "in" the Spirit that Christians make way through the Son to the Father. The preposition "in", however, directly relates to the Spirit's relationship to those of faith, to "the grace given to us" and "the grace that works in those who share it." Basil says that as a "giver of grace" the Spirit gives of his own authority as one "contemplated in the Trinity" (*Homily* 15.3). He gives without any personal diminishment because, as divine, he can ever give without losing anything of himself. His gracious presence is one interior to the soul. The gifts he brings include rebirth and adoption, which begin the purification process necessary to see God while also placing one into a real relationship with God where we call upon him as "Father". Thus, the Spirit is the one who by grace enables worship from a familial place of "sonship".

Just as it is proper to say the Spirit resides in human souls, so, according to Basil, should we speak of our "place" in the Spirit. He grants purification and knowledge of God by being "in" us, but it is our place "in" him that speaks to our adoption and ascent to the Father in worship. Basil elaborates on how "knowledgeable worship" in the Spirit proceeds:

Just as the Father is in the Son, so the Son is seen in the Spirit. Therefore, worship in the Spirit suggests that the activity of our thought is like light.... We speak of worship in the Son as worship in the image of God the Father, so also we speak of worship in the Spirit as worship in him who manifests the divinity of the Lord. Therefore, in worship the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the Father and the Son, for if you are outside of him, you will not worship at all; but if you are in him, you will in no way separate him from God – at least no more than you will remove light from objects of sight. For it is impossible to see the image of the invisible God, except in the illumination of the Spirit, and it is impossible for him who fixes his eyes on the image to separate the light from the image. For the cause of seeing must be seen together with the things seen. And so fittingly and consequently, through the illumination of the Spirit we behold the radiance of the glory of God; and, then, we are led up through the character to him of whom he is the character and duplicate seal (*On the Holy Spirit* 26.64).

In this wonderful quote Basil teaches it is the Spirit's role in human knowledge of the divine is to bring illumination, an illumination that comes from his very self. The Spirit brings illumination by making believers like himself – *spiritual* – through

communion with himself. In an earlier passage in *On the Holy Spirit.* Basil illustrates this spiritual reality by comparing the Spirit to a ray of light that "falls upon clear and translucent bodies" which are consequently "filled with light and gleam with a light from themselves. Just so are the Spirit-bearing souls that are illuminated by the Holy Spirit: they are themselves rendered spiritual."

When speaking about the Spirit, then, Basil on the one hand sees it as proper to understand him as interior to the soul, as "in" believing humanity. On the other hand, as the Spirit makes a home in us, it is appropriate to see human beings as "in" the Spirit. From this place – "in the Spirit" – believers are able to contemplate and see God.

The course of contemplation: the "texture" of divine relations

Now, the "journey" of this contemplation follows the texture of the divine relations that we considered in the previous point. Therefore, the one "seen" in the Spirit is the Son, and "the must be seen together with the things seen." In this language Basil highlights the inseparability of the Spirit and Son, an inseparability experienced by the illuminated worshipper who, through the light, is inevitably brought to the image that is seen with the light. It is the Spirit who grants illuminating power for the eyes to be fixed "on the beauty of the image of the unseen God." Yet, even as the Spirit moves the eyes to see "another" (the Son, who is the image), that vision takes place "in himself". Basil connects Psalm 36:9 ("in his light we will see light"), which he sees as speaking of the illumination of the Spirit, with John 1:9 ("the true light that enlightens every man coming into the world"), in order to demonstrate the Spirit's work of illumination as a revelation in himself of the glory of the Only-begotten. Worship in the Spirit, then, is illuminated worship where the divinity and glory of the Image are made manifest.

We have followed Basil in this initial move in divine knowledge "in the Spirit" that is according to the logic he has adopted where "light" and "image" are interrelated. For a worshipper to be illumined by the Spirit means a beholding of the image, because an image cannot be "seen" without light. This is an epistemological move – from light to the image – while also being a Trinitarian one. By that I mean while the worshipper is growing in divine knowledge by beholding the image, he or she is also understanding the relationship obtaining between the divine persons. The next "step" in human knowing of the divine keeps with the Trinitarian texture outlined above and moves to the image, the Son.

To speak of the "image" leads to the question "of what?". Just as to see an image one needs illumination, so for there to be an image there needs to be an "original". In this metaphor each of its elements in the order of knowing suggests the other, making it especially suitable to express the interrelationships of the divine persons. In expressing those interrelationships it "moves" quickly from one to the other, meaning the light is about the image and the image is about the "original". That is, in the image what is seen is an expression of the archetype: "in the blessed vision of the image you will see the unspeakable beauty of the archetype." As this metaphor is used in the context of "worshipful knowledge" that "ascends" the divine persons, Basil uses "archetype" in order to show how the honor brought to the image "passes over" to the archetype. Indeed, Basil presents this movement as an inevitable one that moves when with illuminating power worshippers "fix their eyes on the beauty of the image of the unseen God, and through the image are led up to the more than beautiful vision of the archetype" (*On the Holy Spirit* 18.47). The beauty of the archetype seen in the image that Basil has in mind here is the "radiance of glory" (Hebrews 1:3). Perfect radiance – the image – proceeds from the perfect glory, and through that radiance we are led to the beauty of the glory.

Light-image-archetype

What Basil presents in this metaphor of light-image-archetype is a fully Trinitarian vision that moves for the worshipper from the light through the image to the archetype. The metaphor draws out the connections between elements that then correspond to the divine persons. The texture presented is a spiritual vision of "ascent" or "progress" that moves up or to the archetype, that is, the Father. Yet, because of the interrelationships displayed in the metaphor, the presence of each of the divine persons is never "left behind". When beholding the image, the illumination (Spirit) is present. One is drawn to the archetype (Father) through the image, and so the image (Son) is always present to those beholding the vision of the archetype. This must be so, according to the logic of the metaphor as laid out by Basil, for one "needs" the illumination of the Spirit to see the image and through that image one has vision of the archetype. Thus, Basil's metaphor not only teaches the order of knowing that proceeds "up" the Trinitarian persons to the Father; it also draws out, at the same time, the inseparability of the divine persons and their work. Following John 14:23 ("If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.") Basil connects this inseparability to the

previously mentioned presence of the Spirit within the soul of the worshipper: "When sanctified by the Holy Spirit, we receive Christ who dwells in our inner person [Ephesians 3:16], and along with Christ we also receive the Father who makes a common home in those who are worthy" (*Homily* 24.5).

Many of you are probably aware that an element of the growth of pro-Nicene thought in the latter half of the fourth century is a growing pneumatology, which translates, at least in Nazianzen and Basil, into a penetrating vision of God. In both of these Cappadocians the Spirit is a sanctifying personal light who in himself and his unmediated presence brings worshippers into the "contours" of the Trinity. This move of "spirituality" has "theological" consequence because in its articulation Trinitarian dynamics were opened for greater depth of understanding. As the Spirit's work was highlighted in redemption (and creation) attention was brought to the reality of a divine action that was inseparable among the Trinity. While the Spirit himself is a divine person sanctifying human beings, looking at his work inevitably drew theological attention to the "course" of his redemption leading from the Father, through the Son, in himself, and, in turn, in himself, through the Son, to the Father. At the same time that it reveals a distinct shape to the Godhead, this course entails a co-presence of the persons leading from and to the Father.

Pro-Nicene principle 3: the divine persons work inseparably

And so we have our third principle of pro-Nicene trinitarianism. Once it is established that each of the persons share one nature with one power, every work done by a person of the Trinity is done out of that shared name or power. Thus each person is present and working inseparably.

Conclusion

I want to draw out three points for reflective application.

I began commenting upon how well Nazianzen could turn a phrase. There's a danger in merely being impressed by him or other skilled wordsmiths. But his love of well-placed words came out of, first and foremost, his love of the Word. To give you a feel for the levels of culture he and Basil conversed in, they were at Athens when the future emperor, Julian, was there. When he rose to power and began a program of soft persecution of Christians, they would have nothing of it. Gregory wrote what are called invectives against him. In his first invective against Julian Nazianzen wrote, "I

cleave to the word alone and make no complaints about the labors I have undergone, on land and sea, that procured me the chance to make it mine!"

Nazianzen is talking here about his love of the Word, obviously. But he's also talking about the rigors of his education which have enabled him to hold that word deep within him and, then, be able to communicate it effectively in his theology. We all have been afforded different opportunities of education. Whatever those might be, Nazianzen and Basil hold before us an inspiring examples of men who didn't waste theirs. And because they pursued theirs with vigor and excellence (formally and informally) it was not wasted. Rather, God used it in ways that still startle and inspire 21st century Paideia reading groups.

Secondly, in that pursuit of learning, both broad and theological, they developed a deep passion for fitting words: appropriate words about God as well as those fitting to the occasion. This starts, of course, with the reality that God cared enough to reveal himself through words. Therefore, we should love words and attend to them carefully. We should especially attend to our words that seek to express the Trinitarian mystery. Think of the care these men took that their words reflected that basic Trinitarian grammar.

I often wonder, what would these great Cappadocian men say to us about our care for our words about God? Especially for those of us who might be teachers or pastors or writers, do we endeavor to speak rightly of God, to avoid the danger of self-promoting babble, or vacuous theological chit-chat?

But also, in Nazianzen and Basil there is a care for where and how words are spoken that is medicinal in its specificity. These men were physicians of souls and through their ability to discern symptoms could wisely apply, yes, a word true about God but also a word needed.

And, finally, when we do theology: when we preach, teach, write on divine matters, is it zealous to guard Trinitarian grammar? And more, does it lead people into a posture of worship.

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Reforming God?

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Let me begin with a couple of anecdotes on how I became involved in this broad topic. The first takes place after I finished my PhD on the impact of Luther on the early English Reformation. I was looking for another project on which to engage, and I read a book with which I profoundly disagreed, on the understanding of the atonement in John Owen. So I decided my next project would be Owen on atonement. Yet what started as an attempt to address what I thought was a misreading of Owen's doctrine of the atonement became in the end a study of Owen's doctrine of the atonement in the context of his doctrine of the Trinity. This brought home to me the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity for basic soteriological doctrine. That was an intellectual side of what made me interested in this topic.

The second personal anecdote involved my early years at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. I was asked to teach the medieval course when a colleague was away, and I did a section of that course on Eastern Orthodoxy. I became aware that a number of students in the class were contemplating converting to Eastern Orthodoxy. I wondered about how to approach this. I could have given arguments as to why that was a bad idea but I decided to opt for a more practical approach. I thought that it might be instructive to experience an Eastern Orthodox service together – after all, there is nothing like standing up for two hours during an ancient Greek liturgy to make people think twice about converting to Eastern Orthodoxy. After the service I took the students out to lunch. We had a roundtable discussion and I opened it up by asking, what do you think was good and what do you think was bad about the service? What struck me was the recurring assessment that the service was so distinctly Christian, because of its emphasis on the Trinity, especially at the end, when the priest raised his arms and said, "Go in peace, for the Trinity has saved you." The student reaction really provoked me to thinking about the lack of the role of the Trinity in practical everyday church life in Protestantism.

In the years since, I have spent much time reflecting on the doctrine of God and its place in Christianity. As a result, I have become convinced that the doctrine of God as Trinity is central to Protestantism, both for our historical orthodoxy and as a major source of error within our communions. Quite often as conservative Reformed

Protestants we instinctively think about doctrine of Scripture as the "mother of all errors," and there is a lot of truth to that, but historically, the doctrine of God flowing from the Reformation has also proved to be just as – maybe even more – problematic.

It is, in fact, arguable that the Protestant heresy *par excellence* is Unitarianism, an error on the doctrine of God which can co-exist with a very high view of scripture. Many of the early Unitarians, the Socinians exhibit this. Thus, when John Owen engages with the Socinians, he really doesn't have much to say about their doctrine of Scripture. He and his opponents are in fundamental agreement on the idea that Scripture is true and authoritative, and that it norms their doctrinal formulations. The big area that Owen focuses on is the doctrine of God.

The Socinians were anti-Trinitarians and this is significant: The Trinity is probably the key problematic area for Protestants because it raises in an acute form a number of questions that they are often uncomfortable handling. Consider, for example, the status of nonbiblical language, particularly the nonbiblical language of metaphysics. That's something of which a lot of Protestants are instinctively suspicious. Such language raises questions of *being* as well of questions about *economy* and we are often happier thinking of God's actions than about what must be ontologically true of him for to act in particular ways. This lay behind the question I posed last night at the discussion about the redemptive-historical method. Redemptive history tends to focus on the developing narrative of the Bible, the acts of God in space and time. With this tilt towards the economy, we may neglect to ask important non-economic questions, such as, "Who does God have to be in eternity for these acts to make sense?"

That also then raises the question of authority. Why do we as Protestants accept the doctrine of the Trinity? The great example of raising this question in an acute form would be John Henry Newman in the nineteenth-century. It's his study of the fourth century that ultimately takes him to Rome. I have a coffee cup at home with a quotation from a later edition of his famous essay on the development of Christian doctrine, "to be deep in history is to cease to be Protestant." Newman's point is that when you start getting into the thick of the key debates, the dense weeds of the creedal discussions of the early church, the question of "who decides who's getting it right?" rises in an acute form, particularly in doctrinal matters as subtlel and complicated as those clustered around the doctrine of God. So, the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of God, is of central importance to the matter of authority.

Before we consider some pressure points and offer some examples of how the Reformers responded to these things, I want to make a few comments about the

Reformation in general. First of all, we must raise the issue of the Reformation's relationship to tradition. Often part of the Protestant problem with the Trinity and like doctrines, is that it seems to derive its life, its significance, and its language, from tradition – and there is a long-standing, and not entirely bad, tradition of Protestant polemic against tradition. Weren't the Reformers those who polemicized against tradition? Didn't they want to bring us back just to the Bible alone?

The twentieth-century Reformation scholar Heiko Oberman makes a very helpful distinction between what he calls "Tradition One" and "Tradition Two." He claims that you cannot read the Reformation as a blanket rejection of tradition, because there are different kinds of tradition. Tradition one (T1), Oberman says, is the tradition of doctrinal formulation that is closely tied to, and justified by, reflection on the exegesis of Scripture. The traditional teaching of the church on the virgin birth, for example, would represent what Oberman describes as T1. This is what Paul was talking about when he told Timothy to pass on, or hold fast to, the form of sound words: it is passing on the tradition of teaching derived from the Bible. So there is good tradition and, in fact, most pastors operate with some form of tradition (T1). If you are preparing a sermon on a Sunday, typically speaking you won't just stare at the page of the Bible and hope for enlightenment, you will pull your commentaries and maybe a systematic theology or two off the shelves in your study to help you better understand what the passage means.

The Reformers were comfortable with T1. When they attacked "church tradition," they were referring to what Oberman would call tradition two (T2). That's the tradition of dogmatic or doctrinal formulation which stands somewhat independent of biblical exegesis and rests its authority on the magisterial, direct teaching of the church herself. If the virgin birth is an example of T1 kind of teaching, we might say that the immaculate conception of the virgin, the idea that she was conceived without original sin, would be a T2 doctrine. (Now I know a very good Roman Catholic theologian, like Matt Levering, would try to make a case that you could justify the immaculate conception on the basis of Scripture, but I am not persuaded.)

In sum, there are two kinds of traditional teaching, that which rests closely on reflection of exegesis of Scripture and that which rests more directly on the magisterial claims of the church. Hold that in mind.

Oberman is correct in his analysis of tradition in the Reformation but we need to add one further dimension to it. The Reformers operated with what I would call a *hermeneutic of trust* regarding the past. One of the things that characterizes our

present age is suspicion, particularly suspicion of authority and suspicion of tradition. Cynicism and suspicion are in the very air we breathe. For the Reformers that was not the case. How did that affect their view of tradition? Well, we might fairly characterize them as accepting church tradition as being T1 unless it was self-evidently T2. To put this another way, they accepted the historic teaching of the church on any given topic unless it became very clear that it wasn't justifiable by reflection on biblical exegesis. That is quite a significant way of *thinking about* (and not simply *doing*) theology. I remember during the heat of the 2016 Trinity controversy, somebody asked me, "well, how do you justify eternal generation?" I said, "In my world I don't have to justify it, that is the traditional teaching of the church. If you reject it, the burden is on you to prove that the church is wrong." You see the difference in cultural mindset? The basic assumption of the Reformers is that the doctrine of the Trinity is part of T1. It is taken as a given that should only be modified as and when it is demonstrably incorrect or inadequate.

Now I want to refer to a few pressure points or areas of acute polemical concern. Some of these I will not pick up on later, but they will hopefully set synapses firing as you start thinking about these things yourselves. There are a number of issues in the sixteenth century that shape the Reformers' approach to God. First of all, there's the very material one, the impact of the rise of literacy. We all know that the printing press brings about a technological revolution. But it also brings about a cultural revolution in terms of the rise of literacy. Why do I raise that? Not all things that present themselves in history as doctrinal issues necessarily have exclusively doctrinal explanations. Work done in the 1960's in South America has indicated that, as literacy rates rise, radical thinking within society increases. In the context of this lecture, we might rephrase that to say that, as literacy rates rise, tradition comes to have less of a hold on the popular imagination and intellectual iconoclasm begins to flourish. Having just noted that there was a hermeneutic of trust in the Reformation, we should also note, therefore, that the sixteenth century witnessed the rise of other groups such as the Socinians which were much more radical in their mentality. That is in part the result of having the material means of learning – the printing press.

Secondly, there is an attraction in such a context towards biblicism. Biblicism seems to make things easy. One reason why debates about the doctrine of God are so difficult to pursue with evangelicals is that to say God is three and God is one is profoundly counterintuitive and cannot be justified by simply quoting a few Bible verses. Compared to the theological and historical work that must be done to

understand why the church formulated the Trinity in the way she did, it is a much simpler task just to quote plain old Bible verses as if their meaning is self-evident.

Further, and this is important for the story, in the late seventeenth century we witness the collapse of classical metaphysics. When classical metaphysics collapses so does the doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity is challenged in different ways in different places, but one thing that Unitarian theologies all have in common by the end of the seventeenth century is an anticlassical metaphysical aspect. I have ambiguous feelings about some of the theology of Jonathan Edwards but what he was trying to do is something he could hardly avoid. He was trying to recast classic Reformed orthodoxy in a context where the metaphysics which Reformed orthodoxy had assumed was no longer plausible in the wider culture. So, to give Edwards credit, I think he was attempting a heroic task – saving the faith at a time of philosophical flux. Whether he was successful or not I leave for others more clever than I to decide. But that was the metaphysical challenge he faced.

It's worth noting at this point that it is often said that the doctrine of God is not a subject of significant revision in the Reformation. I call that a most mischievous truth. It's a truth, but it's mischievous because of the way that it is sometimes used. Yes, the doctrine of God is not significantly revised. Calvin raised some questions about the aseity of the Son and there are certain very serious matters that surround that discussion. But, on the whole, the doctrine of God is not subject to significant revision by the Reformers. I am going to argue that relative to Luther in just a few moments.

Still, the way that this claims that the Reformers did not revise the doctrine of God, has come to function is important. In some narratives, it is used to argue that the Reformation was only half-done. Soteriology was subject to Scriptural scrutiny, the doctrine of justification by grace through faith emerged, imputation, etc., but the Reformers should have been more thorough in their revision of the doctrine of God. That is a serious misrepresentation of what's going on. It is so because, even in Reformed circles today, that kind of argument is being used in order to advocate for things like passibility and mutability – things which that would have been anathema to, say, the Westminster Divines. What is happening to the doctrine of God is this: the alleged *methods* of the Reformers are being set against the *conclusions* of the Reformers. We often hear that phrase, "the Reformed church must always be reforming," and, while there's a true sense to that, there's also a very mischievous sense to that expression. It can be used to justify a kind of doctrinal relativism at

times. I want to argue that the Reformers didn't revise the doctrine of God because they didn't think it needed revising.

One other pressure point – an area where the Reformers, we might say, innovate – which is very important to them is Christology. In a couple of ways, the Christological modifications and arguments that the Reformers put forward do raise challenging questions to the doctrine of God. Do they compromise the classical doctrine of God in order to accommodate their Christological changes? We will come to that a little bit later.

Having laid the groundwork, let us now move to thinking more specifically about the Reformers themselves. The lion's share of my focus today is going to be on Martin Luther, the Reformer with whom I have most familiarity and about whom I am most comfortable talking. He is famous, of course, for his notion of justification by grace through faith, through the emergence in his writings of the Scripture principle. Arguably, the five-hundredth year anniversary of the Reformation is not 2017 but this year. In 1519, you have the Leipzig Disputation, and in the process of that disputation Luther comes to realize that the debate about justification is really a debate about authority. His opponent in that debate, Johannes Eck of Ingolstadt, pushes Luther to realize that something like the Scripture principle is necessary in order to justify his theology.

Luther was an occasional theologian. When you go to Luther, you don't find a systematic theology. Luther writes polemical works, pastoral works, political works, and commentaries but he never has the luxury of sitting down and writing a dogmatics. We don't find that in Luther. So we must keep bringing back this discussion to the confessional documents. The best guide to what the Reformers believed are the confessions they formulated. That's the same for Luther, as for Calvin and for Bullinger. The confessional documents have to be regarded ultimately as normative. The other writings can be interpreted in light of them and can provide helpful light to the background of them, but it is the confessional documents that are normative.

Now, let us return to this idea that the Reformers never really bothered to address the doctrine of God and that they simply assumed it and weren't critical enough. It is very interesting to see in early Luther, early Calvin, and especially in early Melanchthon, how hesitant they were in the early parts of their careers about using traditional trinitarian terminology. You might ask, well Trueman, how is that going to help you make the case, that the Reformers did look at the classical doctrine of God and found it to be consistent with T1, with the scripture principle, and vital to the

church? Melanchthon in 1521 avoids using traditional patristic language relative to the doctrine of the Trinity. And you find the same thing in early Zwingli, a great hesitancy to use the metaphysical language which is actually so essential to defending the doctrine of the Trinity.

I think we can explain this in a number of ways. Certainly, in Calvin's case, we have to remember that he has no real, formal theological education. As you read Calvin throughout his career, he clearly develops in sophistication as a theologian, gaining ground in the way he thinks theologically over time. For example, there's a great leap in sophistication between the 1536 *Institutes* and the 1539 edition, part of which is generated by the controversies in which he finds himself, where he realizes he's not up to snuff and he needs to learn more theology. So, one of the reasons might simply be the background of the Reformers in terms of their theological training.

Another reason is that there is certainly in Lutheran circles, and maybe even in Reformed as well, a tremendous confidence in the early years of the Reformation that all you need to do is preach and expound the Word. For Luther, this is crucial for understanding why he changed his mind on the Jews. Luther thinks he is living at the end of time. Jesus is coming back soon. As he said in a 1522 sermon, "I sat around drinking beer or I was asleep, and God's Word was out there doing it." One should not underestimate the importance of confidence for how people think theologically.

There is also this sense of rebelling against the Middle Ages and the scholastics. Luther is reacting against the *via moderna*, the theological approach in which he was trained. Calvin is reacting against the men of the Sorbonne school. Both have a desire to get rid of that gobbledygook metaphysical language and the confidence that simply laying out the Bible will be sufficient to carry orthodoxy forward. But that proves a false hope and eventually metaphysical language reappears in their corpus within their lifetime because they realize that such language does something important. That is, the doctrine of the Trinity depends upon the kind of finely tuned language developed by the Cappadocian Fathers and the scholastics of the Middle Ages in order for it to be stable and coherent.

Thus, to those who ask, "why is it that we have this hesitancy with traditional trinitarian formulation in the early Reformers?" My answer is this: because they had to learn that biblicism is not sufficient and merely citing bible verses is a problem. As in that old Dutch proverb, "every heretic has his text" -- and the Reformers had to learn that the hard way.

We could go on beyond the Reformers to draw a much broader historical schema out of this. We could say that the rise of metaphysical language is one of the

most significant developments in the latter part of the sixteenth and on into the seventeenth century. But it has nothing to do with a move towards the Enlightenment and everything to do with the desire to defend the catholic faith by appropriating the terms that had been shown over the centuries to be good and indeed necessary for precisely that purpose.

There's a pedagogical dimension to this. When theology moves into the university in the latter part of the sixteenth century, theology has to define itself over, against, and in relation to other fields of human knowledge. That also raises metaphysical questions. Polemics play their part too. The traditional metaphysical language emerges rapidly under polemical pressure as the Reformers felt both the need to combat the rising tide of radicalism on their left (where the Anabaptists were throwing out traditional Christian orthodoxy for the sake of just being led by the Spirit) and on their right (where Catholics were challenging their justification of doctrine merely on the basis of the Scriptural principle). Reflection upon the teaching of the church over past centuries becomes necessary.

For Calvin, in his big leap between 1536 and 1539, it is his clash with Peter Caroli that is most significant. Caroli is goading Calvin by asking, "why won't you sign the Athanasian creed?" Part of Calvin's reason is not theological – it is because he is "bloody-minded," as we say in Britain. He's not going to do it because Caroli whom he despises is telling him he's supposed to. But the controversy also forces him to ask, "how can I justify my basic argument about the Reformation, that we have the true tradition and our opponents are the deviants?" The only way to do so is not merely to pick up the bare theistic bones of Trinitarianism but also to appropriate the metaphysics and the arguments that lie behind it.

This is clear from the gradual expansion of Calvin's patristic knowledge. It is commonplace now in Calvin studies to note that his patristic learning and teaching, muted in his early writings, becomes foundational in his later works. You read the 1559 *Institutes*, and they are pervaded by discussions involving the writings and ideas of the Fathers. Calvin is a work in progress not simply because he thinks it's fun to read the ancient fathers but because as he matures as a theologian. He comes to realize that appropriating the early church fathers is going to be vital to doing that which he considers necessary for a faithful reformation.

We can also see the change in excerpts from some classic Reformation documents. The Augsburg Confession was written in 1530 when the Holy Roman Empire and its emperor, Charles V, could have committed to either Catholicism or

Protestantism. Had the decision been for Protestantism, western history would've been very different.

At the time, Luther is too controversial to risk attending and so he doesn't go to the diet, but stays at Coburg Castle. Instead, Melanchthon, his brilliant associate, presents this Lutheran confession. Here we have a great example of how Melanchthon, who in 1521 is very hesitant about traditional ways of talking about God, has by 1530 clearly appropriated metaphysical language to talk about God.

We unanimously hold and teach, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Nicaea, that there is one divine essence, which is called and which is truly God, and that there are three persons in this one divine essence, equal in power and alike eternal: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. All three are one divine essence, eternal, without division, without end, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, one creator and preserver of all things visible and invisible. (Article 1)

Divine simplicity, among other things, is being taught here. Then he goes on to say, also in Article 1:

The word "person" is to be understood as the Fathers employed the term in this connection, not as a part or a property of another but as that which exists of itself. Therefore, all the heresies which are contrary to this article are rejected. Among these are the heresy of the Manichaeans, who assert that there are two gods, one good and one evil; also that of the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mohammedans, and others like them; also that of the Samosatenes, old and new, who hold that there is only one person and sophistically assert that the other two, the Word and the Holy Spirit, are not necessarily distinct persons but that the Word signifies a physical word or voice and that the Holy Spirit is a movement induced in creatures.

Melanchthon is here outlining a patristic hall of shame in a manner typical of the Reformers who, lacking our modern historical consciousness, saw history as one endless round of the same. Arius is the same as the people they're facing in their own day. They live in the same world, polemically, as the patristic authors did. Thus, they framed their doctrine in relation to ancient archetypal heretics and heresies which they saw recapitulated in their own day.

Notice a couple of things in the Augsburg Confession which reflect classic patristic points of concern: unity of essence, simplicity, infinitude, carefully qualified use of the language of personhood. One of the most problematic areas of modern trinitarianism has been the unconscious appropriation of the modern notion of personhood as a sort of sphere or center of consciousness. That's a problem, carrying connotations which should not be read back into the patristic consensus. Notice also

the basic framing of the doctrine against the background of patristic heresies. In so doing it's asserting the basic catholicity of the Lutheran doctrine and the importance of the patristic conflicts to an appropriate understanding of the trinity. And it is noteworthy that the Apology for the Augsburg Confession spends almost no time whatsoever defending the details of its arguments.

Our opponents approve the first article of our Confession. This asserts our faith and teaching that there is one undivided essence, that there are nevertheless three distinct and coeternal persons of the same divine essence, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Article 1)

This is rhetorically and theologically important, for one of the things Melanchthon knows he has to do at Augsburg in 1530 is persuade the emperor that "we, the Reformers, are not innovating, we hold to the true tradition. T1 is where it's at and that's where we stand."

Melanchthon is obviously acting with Luther's approval but he's not Luther. So where does Luther stand relative to patristic language? If we doubted if Luther too is on board with this, we could jump forward to 1537, the Smalcald Articles, that are authored by the great man himself.

That Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons in one divine essence and nature, are one God, who created heaven and earth.

That the Father is begotten by no one; the Son is begotten by the Father; the Holy Ghost proceeded from Father and Son.

That only the Son became man and neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit.

That the Son became man in this manner, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, without the cooperation of man... (Part 1, articles 1-4)

Again, by the time we are in the 1530's, that initial marginalization of the sophisticated metaphysics that undergirded the patristic and medieval doctrine of God has gone and the traditional language is coming back.

I mentioned earlier though, that I think there is one area in the Reformation where the Reformers' emphases and modifications of theology raise questions for the classical doctrine of God. One of them is the issue of passibilism. This is particularly acute for those who look to Luther. One can look at the reformed tradition and see that the Reformed are not by and large, changing much if anything in the classic doctrine of God. But what about Luther? Passibility and immutability have been something of an issue relative to his thinking because of his radical focus on the cross and his audacious language about the incarnation. Yet it is clear that if we are to allow that the second person of the Trinity changes or suffers, this would mean that

simplicity collapses and the Trinity effectively implodes. So, it would be very serious if Luther was guilty of this issue. And this is the typical understanding of Luther, popularized most influentially by the great German theologian Jürgen Moltmann in his classic 1972 work, *The Crucified God*.

Before looking specifically at Luther, it is important to understand that passibility and mutability are where the battle over the doctrine of God is going to be engaged most severely in the next few years within the ranks of those who profess to be confessional Protestants. Passibility and mutability are very attractive doctrines in this day and age, because the way they connect to things that exist in the popular imagination. Passibility, the suffering of God, connects directly to issues of victimhood, suffering, and empathy, all things that resonate deeply in our culture. These doctrines also have a great intuitive advantage in that they seem to rest directly on the straightforward teaching of Scripture where God repents, God grows angry etc. The Bible applies the language of change to God; it therefore seems reasonable to assume that God does really change.

For all of the enthusiasm in some quarters for divine possibility, it always seems to promises more than it actually delivers. Divine empathy is not the answer to the human condition because victimhood and suffering are not the problem at the heart of the human condition. The problem is guilt. If I go to my doctor and say "Doc, I've got cancer," and my doctor says, "Well, don't worry, I have cancer too," that doesn't help me a lot. It might make my doctor more empathetic to my situation, but it doesn't actually solve my real problem. Yet I suspect that a lot of those who advocate a passibilist position for what I might call ethical reasons, think that it can deliver more than it actually does.

When he writes *The Crucified God,* Moltmann is working against the background of post-Hegelian Protestant thought, which tends to regard immutability as a problem. The metaphysical framework within which Moltmann is working regards impassibility and immutability as at worst totally incoherent and at best neither a strength nor an advantage when thinking of God. Secondly, Moltmann is addressing a very specific question that would not have crossed Martin Luther's mind. Moltmann is very explicitly trying to justify God in a post-Auschwitz context.

One can certainly understand why a German theologian would be preoccupied with that issue, certainly a German theologian who as a very young man was drafted into the *Wehrmacht* and taken captive. (I had the privilege nearly 30 years ago to be riding in the back of a taxi with Jürgen Moltmann when he was a guest lecturer at the University of Nottingham. Not know what to say as a very junior academic to this

great theologian, I asked him, "Have you been to Nottingham before?"And he said, "Yes." And I said, "Did you enjoy it?" And he said, "No, I was a prisoner of war". The conversation rather died out shortly thereafter.)

Now, Moltmann sees precedent for his own passibilism in Martin Luther's understanding of Christ on the cross. Certainly there are elements of Luther's thinking about Christ that might lend support to that. The emphasis on the crucified Christ both kerygmatically in the proclamation of Lutheranism but also aesthetically in the art work that is typically associated with Lutheranism places great focus on the crucifixion of Christ, the suffering of Christ.

To take Luther's preaching, when you read him on the crucifixion, his language is frequently very dramatic and daring. For example, he does not hesitate at times to talk about God dying on the cross. We might also add, at a subtler level, that Luther's understanding of the communication of the properties between the divine and the human in the incarnation might lend itself to understanding such language in a straightforward, passibilist sense. Remember, one of Luther's major concerns is that the whole Christ, human and divine, is truly present in the elements of the Eucharist. That requires a kind of extension of Christ's humanity in some way beyond its normal physical limits. How is that achieved? By his notion of the ubiquity of God, the ubiquity of the second Person, communicated directly to the flesh of Christ. Given this, it becomes plausible and coherent to think that the bread on this altar here and the bread on that altar over there both contain the whole Christ, divine and human, united together. The human nature is transformed through its union with the divine such that its normal geographical or spatial limitations no longer apply.

Now if properties are being directly communicated in this manner between the natures, could the passibility of the human nature be directly communicated to the divine? In the incarnation does God therefore essentially make himself vulnerable to suffering? If this is so, simplicity goes out the window. Furthermore, given that simplicity is the doctrine which underpins that of the Trinity, as far as I can see the doctrine of the Trinity needs to be radically revised in a way that makes it look nothing like the Nicene formulation.

The evidence seems pretty strong and yet the implications – that Luther was not Nicene in his theology – seem devastating. Yet there are a couple of things one might say prior to developing a response. First of all, in this language about God dying and God suffering on the cross, Luther is arguably only employing language that is increasingly commonplace in the late Middle Ages, and it is reflected in art work. For example, if you go to St. Peter's in Rome, you will see there what is maybe

the most powerful statue ever carved, the *Pieta* by Michelangelo. It's emblematic of a theology and culture of piety that focuses upon the suffering of the whole Christ. And we find this in Luther's writings, such as his 1538 treatise, *On the Councils of the Church*. There, he even critiques the Council of Ephesus in 431 for not offering a more a comprehensive rejection of Nestorius in its quest to emphasize the unity of the whole Christ. Now, most of us would think that Ephesus was a pretty comprehensive rejection of Nestorius. But Luther doesn't think it goes far enough because it doesn't hammer the fact that Nestorius denies that God suffers in Christ.

Second, there is the late medieval emphasis on a voluntarist understanding of God which accents the will of God and his (from a human perspective) unpredictability in the service of guarding his mystery. Luther picks up on this and often emphasizes that God could be whoever and whatever He wants to be. This would seem to mean that we can't allow metaphysics to limit the possibilities of God. We have to look at what God has done in order to understand who He is and how he can and does act.

Given this background, how might we respond. First of all, in terms of voluntarism, one of the things often forgotten about late medieval voluntarism is that it is really an epistemological point. Essentially, what the late medieval theologians are doing by emphasizing that God could be whoever He wants to be is pointing to the limitation of human knowledge. In other words, they are not so much making a positive statement about God's being as they are making a statement about the limitations of human knowledge of God: we have to be very careful about what we predicate of God, and we need to look to His revelation.

Secondly, here I am very grateful to and dependent upon the work of David Luy of Trinity Divinity Evangelical School. In his excellent book on Luther and divine passibility, *Dominus Mortis*, he makes a very good case for saying that the communication of attributes in Luther is fundamentally one way. There isn't a communication of the human to the divine even if there is a communication of the divine to the human. Now, I disagree with Luther's understanding of the communication of properties from the divine to the human, but I don't think that such a communication compromises Nicene orthodoxy in the way that two-way communication would.

The key to the case that Luy makes is that if you're going to examine Luther's language of God dying on the cross, you've got to look at the understanding of predication of that point in time. So, what is the linguistic and logical background of what Luther is doing there? Luy points compellingly to the role of Gabriel Biel. Now,

Luther never met Biel but he's without doubt Luther's late medieval intellectual mentor for good and for ill. There are parts of Biel that Luther takes and parts Luther rejects, but there's no doubt of theologians from the medieval period Gabriel Biel is the key influence upon Luther.

Now, when Biel talks about predication relative to God, he makes a distinction between *abstract predication of the nature considered in itself* and *concrete predication of the nature considered in relation to the subject which possesses the nature*. The important thing to grasp here is that the flow from the abstract to the concrete doesn't necessarily flow in reverse from the concrete to the abstract. To put this in layman's terms: when Luther says, "God dies on the cross," we might recast that as "God dies incarnate in Jesus on the cross according to the human nature of the incarnation." God suffers on the cross in the human nature of the incarnation. It does not require an abstract predication of suffering to the divine nature. The person is suffering, not necessarily both the natures. And this is (perhaps ironically from Luther's perspective) very close, if not the same as the kind of predication that the Reformed would use about Christ suffering on the cross.

Here is a key passage from Luther's 1540 disputation on the Divinity and Humanity of Christ:

Question: It is asked, whether this proposition is true: The Son of God, the creator of heaven and earth, the eternal Word, cries out from the cross and is a man?

Response: This is true because what the man cries, God also cries out, and to crucify the Lord of glory is impossible according to the divinity, but it is possible according to the humanity; but because of the unity of the person, this being crucified is attributed to the divinity as well. (Argument V)

The attribution is a verbal one not an ontological one at this particular point. Luy concludes, "in Luther, divine nature can denote either divinity itself or Christ the divine person depending upon this descriptive phrase is considered in the abstract or the concrete." Luther's volatility, the ferocious nature of the debates in which he's engaged, the occasional nature of his writings, and his massive tendency to overstatement and exaggeration all mean that we should be very careful about interpreting occasional statements – statements thrown out in a non-systematic context in sermons and homiletic material – in a way that would lead him into fundamental conflict with Nicene orthodoxy as owned and expressed in the confessional documents which he affirms.

Another area where the Reformers feel pressure on the traditional doctrine of God is that the Reformers, as opposed to Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages, argue

that Christ is mediator according to both natures. He is mediator according to both his human and divine natures because he's mediator according to his person. That raises serious questions, as Cardinal Bellarmine is not slow to point out: for example, how can God be the midpoint between God and creation? Or, to put the question another way, how can God be subordinate to God? And it provides the dynamic for the development of the covenant of redemption. It certainly puts pressure on Nicene orthodoxy and requires very careful nuance of language in that context to avoid the implications that there is a multiplicity of wills in God. This is where discussion of a concept such as the covenant of redemption becomes simultaneously both very necessary and very complicated.

In conclusion, I have a few proposals. First of all, we need to understand that the doctrine of God is more important historically, and possibly dogmatically, than the doctrine of Scripture. But it can be hard to persuade others of this basic fact because the doctrine is complicated and, unlike the doctrine of Scripture, counterintuitive. Through its deployment of complicated metaphysical terminology it also seems at first glance not commensurable to the Protestant principle of Scripture, and evangelical Protestants therefore are often nervous about metaphysical language and about creeds and confessions. The suspicion can be that this a supplementary T2 thing that is starting to bleed over our T1 commitments.

In light of this, we need to realize that historically, ever since Nicaea, every alternative to the doctrine of God articulated at that council that has ever been proposed to it has ended in disaster. It may not be a completely watertight argument to say the history of the alternatives proves that Nicaea is true, but it might be a 99% watertight argument. During the height of the 2016 Trinitarian controversy, I emailed a prominent scholar of Reformed Orthodoxy asking for some advice, and he replied that I shouldn't even bother engaging it because as soon as this doctrinal debate is resolved is sorted out, they [the evangelical theological establishment] will be off "screwing up some other classic orthodox doctrine". The point is that these errors on the doctrine of God arise of a whole cultural way of thinking theologically – one that is biblicist, unconfessional, and detached from history.

Secondly, we need to understand that doctrine does not drop off the page of Scripture, in a way that, say, Wayne Grudem seems to think, nor does it develop in a linear seed-tree fashion as suggested by John Henry Newman. If you read Newman's *Development of Doctrine*, he says the formulation of doctrine emerges over time like a seed growing into a tree. Newman is uncharacteristically naïve on this point. By contrast, Bernard Lonergan, the Catholic theologian, has observed that grammars of

theological language and metaphysical frameworks which theologians use develop dialectically over time in tandem with doctrinal development takes place.

What does that mean? To illustrate, let me use an example from my classroom. I typically start my patristics classes by asking the students, "How many wills does Jesus have?" Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, students give me the wrong – though intuitive -- answer: "He has one." No, I would tell them, he has two. Then the students would demand, "Where is that found in Scripture?" I would then say, "We can't read it with ease off the pages of Scripture but, trust me, as we work through the debates of the ancient church, it will become clear that, as weird as that answer is, it's the best way of making sense of the Scriptural record we have." I don't want to sound Hegelian, nor do I wish to sound like a historical relativist, but what happens in the ancient church is this: People propose models of God; Those models are then tested by Scripture and found to be good or wanting; Then they are adopted and they change the ley of the land, the language being used and the way doctrinal debate subsequently moves forward. So, to return to the example: Once you have the Nicene-Chalcedonian resolution of the Trinitarian-Christological issue, the two wills in Christ becomes the next theological step to take and, as odd as it at first appears, it makes sense in that historical context. That is why teaching *how* and *why* doctrine develops, and *why* the understanding and the formulation of doctrine develop, should be an important part of the theological curriculum.

That brings me to my final point. The redemptive-historical approach of biblical theology becomes at best problematic, at worst positively inimical, to the preservation of the tradition of true Christian teaching and orthodoxy when it is detached from the metaphysical and dialectical concerns of systematic and historical theology. We are witnessing in Reformed circles precisely that problem today relative to the doctrine of God. Doctrinal history not only teaches that, on the doctrine of God, there really are no new error under the sun, it also explains the necessity of the way the church speaks about God, even when such speech seems counterintuitive. It may sound self-serving for a church historian to say church history is important, but it is also true. The way the church speaks is historical, and therefore understanding the history of that way of speaking is absolutely critical to the preservation of the faith as we pass it from generation to generation.

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Booknote: Neglected Voices from Evangelical Pulpits

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One of my goals at RTS Jackson is to introduce students to the "neglected voices" of the evangelical church. I am not the best qualified to remedy this neglect, but have made it my habit to assign readings that will help. One such book is Thabiti Anyabwile's *The Faithful Preacher: Recapturing the Vision of Three Pioneering African-American Pastors* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007). The book presents biographical sketches of Lemuel Haynes, Daniel Payne, and Francis Grimké, along with selected writings.

First, Lemuel Haynes. Born in 1753, he was abandoned by his parents when only a few months old. He became an indentured servant to a Connecticut family who treated him as their own child, and where he was to receive the blessings of family worship and biblical education. During the Revolutionary War, he served in the Continental Army. He esteemed George Washington; his political views were federalist (18.)

Haynes became a staunch Calvinist whose thinking was shaped by the writings of Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and Phillip Dodderidge. He married a white school teacher, Elizabeth Babbot, and their union produced ten children. For 33 years Haynes pastored an all-white Congregational church in Rutland, Vermont. Under his faithful pastoral ministry, the church grew from 42 to about 350 members. He estimates that he preached to this congregation 5,500 discourses, 400 of them funeral sermons (66). Sadly, amidst conflict with one of the church's deacons and fallout from several disciplinary cases, the pastoral relationship ended in 1818. An undaunted Haynes continued in ministry, serving two other churches prior to his death in 1833.

In the "Character and Work of a Spiritual Watchman Described," he expounds on Hebrews 13:17: "For they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." He reminds ministers that "courage and fortitude must constitute part of the character of a gospel minister. A sentinel who is worthy of that station will not fear the formidable appearance of the enemies, nor tremble at their menaces. None of these things will move him, neither will he count his life dear unto him as he defends a cause so important" (28-29). The minister must approach preaching with appropriate solemnity because "he views eternity as just before him, and a congregation on the

frontiers of it. . . . He will study and preach with reference to a judgment to come and will deliver every sermon in some respects as if it were his last, not knowing when his Lord will call him or his hearers to account" (33).

Daniel Payne (1811-1892) was born in Charleston, South Carolina, the son of free blacks and pious members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Overcoming many obstacles, including the death of his parents at a tender age, he obtained a classical education, learning Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. That he obtained much of his education while an apprentice shoe merchant, tailor, and carpenter, makes his achievement all the more impressive. A model autodidact, he taught himself geography, botany, chemistry, philosophy, astronomy, and French.

In 1829, he opened a school for black children and adults that eventually grew to 60 students, a project that ended abruptly in 1835 when the South Carolina General Assembly enacted monstrous legislation forbidding the teaching of blacks, slave or free.

Payne closed his school and headed north. He soon began studies at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Ordination to Lutheran ministry followed in 1837. In 1841, he joined the AME Church, eventually becoming a bishop.

Passionately committed to high standards, Payne was indefatigable in the pursuit of the reformation of ministerial character and education. In 1844 the AME General Conference, after intense debate, adopted a four-year course of study for young ministers. (78) "In [Payne's] view," Anyabwile writes, "the undereducated and ill-prepared minister was a scandal and affliction upon the black church" (79).

Later Payne was instrumental in the founding of Wilberforce University, the oldest private HBCU in the United States. He would serve as president from 1863-1876.

In "The Christian Ministry: Its Moral and Intellectual Character" (1859), Payne takes 2 Timothy 2:2 as his preaching text: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou unto faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Ministers "are heaven-called, heaven-appointed, heaven-ordained. They are called ministers and are responsible first to God, secondarily to man" (90). Both in and out of the pulpit, God's truth must be on their lips. (92) Payne calls the minister to a high standard. "He must be holy, studious, instructive, and wise, ever keeping his heart in contact with the Spirit of God, ever drinking from the pure fountains of truth. He teaches himself, that he may be able to teach others also" (101).

Francis Grimké was born in 1850 to a white South Carolina plantation owner and slave mother. He lost his father at an early age and, along with him, the protective care that sheltered him from some of slavery's brutality. After escaping a cruel, white half-brother, he was recaptured and sold to a Confederate officer.

After emancipation, Grimké proved himself a gifted and industrious student, studying medicine at Lincoln University, where he graduated in 1870 as class valedictorian. While studying law at Howard University, he sensed God's call to ministry and enrolled at Princeton Theological Seminary. He was among the last of Charles Hodge's students. Ordained in 1878, he would spend most of the next 50 years serving Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., where he distinguished himself as a vocal advocate for biblical Christianity and racial equality.

Although first and foremost a pastor, his concern for broader social issues – and especially for racial justice – is noteworthy. In 1909, he became one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

In the four addresses and sermons included in this book, Grimké tackles several pressing issues. Among them are the reform of the African American pulpit and the role it must play in the moral and intellectual development of African American Christians, the evil of racial prejudice, and what Grimké calls in one sermon, "Christ's Program for the Saving of the World," a program centered on gospel proclamation and moral reformation based on the word of God.

His position on racism and the church was unambiguous. In 1910 he proclaimed that "every principle of Christianity, every sentiment of true religion, is totally, absolutely opposed to race prejudice in every shape and form" (135). He decried that "colored people are not wanted in white churches, in white Sabbath schools, in white Endeavor Societies, in white religious societies of any kind" (137). His criticism is withering: "The church today is the great bulwark of race prejudice in this country. It is doing more than any other single agency to uphold it, to make it respectable, to encourage people to continue in it" (141).

As grave as racism and other societal evils are, the Christian preacher's responsibility is more than just exposing their foulness and declaiming against them. In a sermon on Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15, Grimké argues that "the reason there has not been more progress in saving the world is because we have not been doing what we have been directed to do. We have not been preaching the gospel and teaching people out of the word of God as we ought to have been doing. And things will never be any better until we swing in line with the plan as here laid down by Jesus Christ. Under his plan every evil now afflicting both old and young will be reached, and effectively reached" (179-80).

First and foremost, Grimké was a preacher. He reminds ministers that "if we are not going to preach the gospel, and teach the Word of God faithfully we have no business in the ministry. And the sooner we get out of it, the better." (121, 181)

Haynes, Payne, and Grimké are wholly committed to an educated gospel ministry, one that requires ministers to be vigilant over their morals and manners. From their feedback, I gather that RTS Jackson students have read this book with

profit. Some have commented that these three preachers have set an impossibly high standard for Christian ministers. If true, so be it. After all, who is sufficient for these things?

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— Book Reviews —

Craig A. Carter. ***Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis.*** **Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. Pp. xxiv + 279. $27.99 paperback.**

Craig Carter boldly claims that God wrote the Bible. Further, God wrote it so that both the original and *modern* readers who are "spiritually receptive" would be brought "into a direct relationship with the living Lord Jesus Christ, who is not only seen in the text but also speaks in and through it" (p. 192). This assertion about seeing Christ in the biblical text is not simply related to the New Testament but is also true of the Old Testament. Hence, any hermeneutical method that denies that Christ is properly "in" the Old Testament or denies that Christ speaks today to readers of the Old Testament is significantly flawed.

Given the above, Carter sees the vast majority of critical/liberal biblical scholarship in the academy as a disaster, which he attributes to Enlightenment metaphysics and unbelieving hearts. In addition, he is concerned that evangelical biblical scholarship has unwittingly adopted Enlightenment assumptions. As evidence, he notes that many evangelical biblical scholars claim that (1) the Bible should be interpreted like any other book; (2) a biblical text has only one meaning that is tied to the original *human* author's intention relative to the original historical audience and situation; (3) it is not the responsibility of the scholar to determine the meaning of the text for today, that is "application," not meaning (p. ix); and (4) the allegorical method of the church fathers is "childishly inept" and neither we nor the church fathers should see the Old Testament texts as having "multiple levels of meaning," i.e., *sensus plenior* (p. xvi).

Carter, who is a Professor of Theology at the evangelical Tyndale University College and Seminary, mentions two burdens that he has related to this book. One is

that his seminary training left him bereft of tools to preach Christ from the Old Testament. He wants to rectify this and he uses texts in Isaiah as examples. The second is that Carter wants to promote a robust Nicene Trinitarian theology, which he terms, the "Great Tradition." However, he notes that the church fathers justified their Nicene theology at least partially by reading Christ *out of* (not *into*) the Old Testament using a *sensus plenior* hermeneutic, a hermeneutic that many evangelicals reject. Will not this rejection ultimately lead to a denial of the Trinity?

Carter defines the Great Tradition as "Christian orthodoxy [that] begins with the Old and New Testaments, crystalizes in the fourth-century Trinitarian debates, and then continues through Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, the leading Protestant Reformers, post-Reformation scholasticism, and contemporary conservative Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant confessional theology" (p. xi). Here Carter is emphasizing that the above groups have the same doctrine of God, that is, "classical theism." Why the emphasis on the doctrine of God in a hermeneutics book? If God really wrote the Bible, it is good to know about the author when one interprets his book! (Carter does briefly mention that he is Reformed Baptist, committed to the Second London Confession [1689], and is "not in communion with Rome for doctrinal reasons other than the doctrine of God itself" [p. 52]).

For Carter, the Great Tradition is a "three-legged stool made up of spiritual exegesis, Nicene dogma, and Christian Platonist metaphysics" (p. 111). That is, there is a strong relationship between (1) one's hermeneutics that must incorporate both a "literal" and "spiritual" method (*sensus plenior*), (2) classical Trinitarian theology, and (3) a metaphysics that has a strong doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, the reality of the spiritual realm, and the reality of universals (anti-nominalism). Carter admits that the term "Christian Platonism" and his use of the terms "sacramental ontology" and "participatory" universalism may be off-putting to some, but he primarily justifies this with an appeal to Augustine. Here he also notes his indebtedness to Milbank, Levering, and Boersma.

Concerning hermeneutics of the Old Testament more directly, Carter believes that we should follow the same hermeneutic as the Bible. His two key verses are Luke 24:25–27 (Christ is "in" the Old Testament) and 1 Corinthians 2:14 (must have spiritual discernment to understand the things of God). However, he spends minimal time on actual biblical texts. Instead the majority of emphasis relates to how "pre-modern" Christians handle the "literal" and "spiritual" (allegorical/typological/*sensus plenior*) aspects of exegesis. He complains that many critical scholars dismiss any aspect of "spiritual" exegesis and exaggerate the dichotomy between "literal" and

"spiritual" in pre-modern exegesis. Carter, following scholars in the vein of Steinmetz, emphasizes instead that much, although not all, of pre-modern exegesis reasonably matches what the New Testament authors were doing with Old Testament texts. He especially emphasizes Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin. Concerning Calvin, he notes that although the Reformers were explicitly against the traditional medieval four-fold hermeneutical method, they matched the best of the medieval hermeneutics in that they had an expanded sense of the meaning of the text that *organically* connected the "literal" sense to the "spiritual." Here Carter relies on Richard Muller to show aspects of continuity between medieval exegesis and the Reformers.

Concerning modern theological trends, Carter sees much promise in Reformed scholars who advocate a redemptive-historical approach influenced by Vos and explicitly mentions Beale, Hamilton, and Schreiner. However, he respectfully notes two flaws: (1) they "fail to perceive clearly enough the nature of its own kinship to the Great Tradition and to writers like Irenaeus and Augustine," and (2) "Vosian biblical theology often lacks the philosophical sophistication to perceive its own affinity to the Christian Platonism . . . [and] is not able to critique Enlightenment philosophy in light of that Christian Platonism" (p. 156).

There is definitely a close kinship between Carter and me. We significantly agree that the Bible's own hermeneutic is an infallible guide to hermeneutics. Hence, it is a hermeneutical problem to restrict meaning to the human biblical author, because ultimate meaning is in the divine author. Since ultimate meaning is in the divine author, having an adequate understanding of this ultimate author is essential for hermeneutics.

As to the supposed "literal" and "spiritual" dichotomy, I like to use the metaphors of a "dot" and a "circle." Literal-only (i.e., human-author-only) meaning is a dot. I see the worst of the medieval four-fold exegesis as four *unrelated* dots. To match the Bible's hermeneutic, the appropriate *organic* connections between the literal and spiritual is one broad meaning represented by a circle. Hence, using different terms, Carter and I wholeheartedly agree. As a New Testament professor, I would have preferred that he give more time to examples and patterns found in the Bible itself to illuminate proper organic connections between the literal and spiritual, but his discussions of numerous pre-modern authors were illuminating.

Concerning his use of "Christian Platonism," I am not a fan. As my colleague James Anderson remarked to me the other day, "You don't need Plato to get to universals." A robust distinction between the triune-creator and his creation

adequately grounds a biblical metaphysic. Although, I am guessing that much of my complaint here is semantic.

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Haley Goranson Jacob, *Conformed to the Image of His Son: Reconsidering Paul's Theology of Glory in Romans*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018. xvi + 328 pages. $32.00, paperback.

One can only thank Haley Goranson Jacob for her recent book *Conformed to the Image of His Son*. This book helps us rethink Romans. It helps us explore the topic of union with Christ in Paul in deeper ways. It helps us gain a clearer sense of the meaning of "glory." And in so far as it explores this last topic with modern linguistics in mind, it represents a serious attempt to apply this field to New Testament studies.

The focus of Jacob's book is Romans 8:29: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be *conformed to the image of his Son*, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (ESV). Her conclusion is that "conformed to the image of his son" expresses "vocational participation." Christians presently share Christ's vice-regency over the world, and this ought to provoke them to see their current responsibility in the world. In Jacob's own words:

What I have argued here in Romans 8:29-30 is that Paul sees that those conformed to the image of the Son are those who, though once participants in the Adamic submission to powers of sin and death, now participate in the reign of the new Adam over creation. Mankind's position on earth as God's vicegerents to his creation is now restored, though now through the image of the Son of God, who reigns as God's preeminent vicegerent. The depiction of humanity being crowned with glory and honor and established with dominion over creation in Psalm 8 is now again a realty. (226)

To arrive at this conclusions Jacob pays close attention to the theme of "glory" (δόξα, δοξάζω), since this word-group is strategic throughout Romans, and especially because it occurs climactically in the next verse: "And those whom he

predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified (ἐδόξασεν)" (ESV). Jacob takes seriously the aorist as implying past tense (aspect?), and uses this to argue that already Christians are to some extent honored as the head of creation, albeit in a nuanced way:

We must now ask, "At what point are believers conformed to the image of the Son?" Or, "When are God's children glorified?" The answer to this question is not easy to secure, particularly in Romans 8, where Paul's articulation of the redemptive narrative is decidedly *inter tempora*. In Romans 8:17-18, the glory of believers is yet to come; according to Romans 8:30, believers are already glorified. (233)

And so this book is as much an exploration of the meaning of glory as anything else.

Yet further, Jacob makes an important contribution to the subject of union with Christ. Could Paul's overall language of union be as much about Christians embodying Christ's stewardship as anything else? To the extent we decide "yes" is the extent to which Jacob's work may reshape our thinking about this important topic. On this point, note that Jacob's PhD (on which this book is based) was done at St. Andrews, where Grant Macaskill teaches. Jacob rightly lauds Macaskill's 2013 book on union with Christ as one of the most important contributions on the subject (130). It is unsurprising therefore that her own review of this topic is crisp and penetrating (123-30). This is a section not be missed.

There are also some very provocative gems. At one point Jacob broaches the subject of whether we should still think in terms of a "now but not yet" eschatology. She then draws on the important discussion by Philip Esler. This is entirely correct, because if "vocational participation" sums up Paul's union with Christ perspective, perhaps realized eschatology is "an unnecessary modern intrusion on Paul's thought" (234). Jacob is quoting Esler here, and does not draw this conclusion. But in at least broaching this subject (as she must), Jacob raises an important question worthy of further consideration.

Among other notable elements, I found her comments on the role of Romans 5:12-21 helpful. As she says, in quoting someone else, this section is often "treated as the ugly stepsister of the family of major sections in the letter to the Romans." Jacob suggests that to understand it properly, we must read it in light of Paul's use of glory in 5:2: "Often overlooked, however, is that Paul primarily addresses [in 5:12-21] the reason why God's people have hope in the glory of God" (117).

I have referred already to Jacob's contribution to the study of glory (δόξα, δοξάζω). But now I wish to say something more about how her contribution in

applying modern linguistics.

In looking at "glory", Jacob has been willing to do what few New Testament exegetes have done. She has been willingness to considering modern linguistics. It is not that others have been against doing this. Indeed specialists of Koine Greek like Con Campbell, Murray Harris and Stanley Porter, have all recently commended cognitive linguistics. But while they have dipped their toe in the water, none have taken a plunge. Jacob carefully takes a plunge into applying modern linguistics (22-29), which is commendable.

There are some elements in this book that give reason for pause. In particularly, I think of Jacob's application of the Adam tradition to Romans and specifically her suggestion that Psalm 8 is being echoed. She admits that this is somewhat precarious (75-84), which is admirable. But is it wise to rest so much on something so precarious? Also, much seems to rest on "glorified" being past tense in Romans 8:30. But what of modern discussions of aspect, which tend to challenge wholesale temporal readings?

Also, while Jacob is very willing to interact with a swath of literature, both conservative and non-conservative, one might have hoped for more. I am thinking particularly of the important recent work of Crispin Fletcher-Louis on Adam as God's idol. Jacob refers to his earlier work, but only in two footnotes, and only by noting other's critiques (110-11). As one is reading Jacob, Fletcher-Louis's work comes often to mind, especially because "image" is a major theme alongside "glory" in both Romans 1:23 and 8:29. One would have hoped for closer dialogue, even if to explain where she sees Fletcher-Louis lacking.

Also, going back to the topic of language studies, Jacob makes no reference to the vital recent study of Marilyn Burton, *The Semantics of Glory: A Cognitive, Corpus-Based Approach to Hebrew Word Meaning* (2017). This work parallels her own, not only in dealing with the topic of "glory" but also in doing so in light of modern linguistic. Of course we can forgive Jacob for not including this work. It was published too close to her own book, and clearly after Jacob finished writing (xv). Yet knowing that Burton's work was available as an electronic dissertation as early as 2014, and that her work was also done at a nearby Scottish university, makes it all the more regrettable that Burton was not a serious dialogue partner.

What is particularly notable about Burton's work, but in a way that also illustrates that more work is needed (see van der Merwe's 2018 review of Burton), is her willingness to contemplate *metaphors* as potential unifiers of language. While the work of Lakoff and Johnson on metaphors has been criticized, the more recent

discussion of Kövecses alleviates fear. The study of metaphors, sensibly considered, suggests that unifying *stories* lie behind many words. It is particularly interesting that Jacob neglects to explore this approach to metaphors, given that her doctoral supervisor was N. T. Wright. It would have been intriguing to see Jacob interact with Burton, particularly because this may have forced her to more fully consider the importance of story/metaphor in terms of "glory."

This leads naturally to a final comment. While it is thoroughly understandable that Jacob would want her book to stand out on the subject of "vocational participation", in contrast to other theories of union with Christ, one wonders if such a sharp distinction needed to be made. This is particularly so when it comes to *relational* elements being wholly excluded by Jacob from how Paul might have understood 'glory' in Romans. On page 216 she asks, "What does it mean to inherit 'the world'?" This is a good question. She then proceeds to emphasize is that it means a real inheritance of the real world. This fits with her "vocational participation" with Christ. But in doing this she feels the need to deemphasize relationality. Speaking of Romans 4:13 and what it meant for Abraham to be promised "the world," Robert Jewett in his Romans commentary notes that as with the Sermon on the Mount it is "a nonpolitical and at any event nonmilitary form of imperialism" (Jewett, 325-26). He goes on to say that this cannot be spiritualized "by reference to the eschatological future" but should be seen as "current experience among converts". So far so good, in terms of Jewett aligning with Jordan. What this means according to Jewett then is that "Their inheritance of the world had ready (*sic*) begun, 'but through righteousness of faith'" (326). One cannot help but think here of the much-overlooked work of W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land* (1974). Davies is willing to emphasis how participation with Christ may actually fulfill the land promise to Abraham: "it was "located" not in a place, but in persons in whom grace and faith had their writ. By personalizing the promise "in Christ" Paul universalizes it. For Paul, Christ had gathered up the promise into the singularity of his own person. In this way, the "the territory" promised was transformed into and fulfilled by the life "in Christ" (179). What is neat about Jewett's analysis and that of Davies is that both are willing to see the importance of Christians *already* having an important impact in the world. But for both there remains an emphasis on a *relationship* with Christ as an important part of how this happens. Jacob disagrees. She seems quite adamant that any emphasis on relationality when it comes to "glory" in Romans is misguided. Note particularly her pushback from Jewett (216-17). Note also her comments on Carey Newman's famous work on glory: "Paul's use of δόξα in Romans 8:18, 21 implies believers' exalted status

as humans designated to have dominion over creation and not, contra Newman, a restored relationship between humanity and God" (219). One wonders whether a more thorough application of cognitive linguistics by Jacob may have led to a more unifying picture of "glory" as including *both* relationality and honor under some deeper metaphor, which would then allow for relational elements in (for example) Romans 8:15, 31-39 to be seamlessly integrated.

A rather minor criticism is how Jacob (not untypical of New Testament scholars) gives all credit to Albert Schweitzer for modern innovations concerning Paul (124-25), whereas Wilhelm Wrede's 1907 book on Paul ought to be lauded as the true ground-breaking work. Also, while the book includes a fully bibliography and subject index, there is no scripture index, making it hard to cross-reference her discussion of key biblical texts.

These criticisms, in the final analysis, however, are given with an eye to what might have been. It is because Jacob has come as a master chef, with a deliciously provocative feast, that one is inclined to wish for more.

It seems to me that her basic idea that glory in Romans 8:29-30 means "honor" and that to be "conformed to the image of his son" must at least include humanity's current position as ruler over the world, are correct. And so, with appreciation in mind, I suggest this book will be valuable for anyone wanting: (1) to understand Romans better; (2) to gain better insights into "glory"; (3) to be stretched further on New Testament language studies; or (4) to further explore union with Christ. This is an impressive list for a 300-page book in what is a most significant publication from InterVarsity Press.

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Craig G. Bartholomew, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. xiii + 365 pages. $40.00, hardcover.

Craig Bartholomew endeavors in this book to set out the major centers of gravity within the school of theological, political, and educational thought that looks to the extraordinarily prodigious and wide-ranging work of Abraham Kuyper for its headwaters. Bartholomew's project is not a mere historical reconstruction and uncritical repristination of Kuyper's thought. Kuyper would surely take his place as first in line to repudiate such a project as a "false conservatism" (34). Rather, Bartholomew's aim is to take the salient insights of the "Kuyperian tradition" and "scout *our* age and work out how to embody the gospel together in *our context*" (2). The reader of this book will thus find themselves constantly prodded to bridge the theological work of the "Kuyperian tradition" with the issues which loom upon our contemporary horizon. Bartholomew does a fine job throughout the book modeling various ways this might be done.

In the introductory chapter Bartholomew orients his account of the Kuyperian program in the perennial call of Christian discipleship which is "lived in particular historical and cultural contexts" (1). "[I]n one sense" his book is about the need for Christians to attend to two issues: 1. plausibility structures and 2. worldviews (8). By plausibility he means "the personal, communal, and social embodiment of the life of the kingdom so that when Christians do speak they are listened to" (8). In criticism of Kuyper, Bartholomew admits his own ecumenical preference to speak with James Orr of "a *Christian* worldview as opposed to Kuyper's calling it a *Calvinistic* worldview" (10).

This admitted critical preference spotlights one lacuna in the book. Bartholomew never provides a distinct treatment of how the uniquely confessional Calvinistic theology of Kuyper and Bavinck with its emphasis on the sovereignty of God shapes the account of the worldview they developed. The predestinarian concerns which are exemplified in Kuyper's *Particular Grace* and *E Voto Dordraceno* or in Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* are never attended to in any sustained detail.

Chapter 1 narrates a condensed account of Kuyper's early life and conversion out of his modernist theological roots and into his lifelong conflict with that same theological modernism. Bartholomew notes that "Kuyper's conversion contains in seed form all the great themes that will dominate his life" (27). Central to these themes and the "key to the Kuyperian tradition" (27) is the "palingenesis" which is not just about "our personal rebirth" but also "the rebirth of the entire cosmos" (31). This leads into the foundational account given in chapter 2 of Kuyper's way of framing the relationship between "creation and redemption" or "nature and grace." Here he also gives extended attention to the contributions of Herman Bavinck on the topic.

Bartholomew's overview of this most central theme of these two Neo-Calvinist thinkers is quite helpful in its attention to the cosmic sweep of palingenesis, yet it also spotlights another major omission of the book. While he cites Kuyper's insistence on the importance of keeping the questions of individual soteriology "front and center in our thinking and practice" (40), he does not provide a focused account of how the relation of nature and grace were developed in the individual soteriology of Kuyper and Bavinck. Attention to that individual soteriology is especially important against the contemporary backdrop of the excesses of N.T. Wright, whom Bartholomew brings in at places to develop and supplement the "Kuyperian tradition."

Chapter 3 is an account of Scripture as developed in the Kuyperian tradition. Bartholomew sets the groundbreaking insights of Kuyper's and Bavinck's notion of "organic inspiration" helpfully against the backdrop of their deep familiarity with the biblical criticism of their own day. Bartholomew's overview is crisp and accurate. It is tainted only in passing by the dubious claim that Kuyper held to a sort of proto-neoorthodox notion that "Scripture becomes the Word of God only when the Spirit facilitates God's address to one in and through Scripture" (86).

Chapter 4 is a meaty account of the Kuyperian notion of worldview, which closes with some very apt criticisms of the way some have seen the Christian appropriation of the notion of worldview to be decificient, perhaps the most trenchant and needful being that "rather than leading to the transformation of society, a worldview entrenches middle-class Christianity and leads to unhealthy messianic activism" (123).

Chapter 5 takes on the notion of "sphere sovereignty" and does so with a little dose of the post-Kuyper work of Herman Dooyeweerd. Chapter 6 is an overview of the Kuyperian understanding of the church which begins with Kuyper's early comparative work of Calvin and Laski. In chapter 7 Bartholomew gives a summary foray into the political program of Kuyper's Anti-Revolutionary Party and its further systematic

development which again he acknowledges has happened "on the back of Dooyeweerd's work in Christian philosophy" (208).

Chapter 8 is a treatment of the mission of the church which quickly turns from the missiology of Kuyper to an extended and engaging overview of the missiological work of J.H. Bavinck whom Bartholomew sees as supplementing the deficiency of Kuyper who "treats mission mainly as evangelism" (182).

Chapter 9 engages the topic of philosophy providing a treatment of Kuyper's claim in his *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* that the antithesis between the regenerate and unregenerate leads to the production of "two kinds of science" (248). The rest of the chapter summarizes the Reformational Philosophy of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhaven followed by an account of the Reformed Epistemology of Plantinga and Wolterstorff. It ends with the astute challenge that "As Christian scholars we either go our merry ways, ignorant of the philosophical foundations as work in our disciplines, or we explore them and bring them into obedience to Christ." (268).

Chapter 10 provides an overview of the way that Kuyper, Bavinck, and Berkouwer framed theology as "a particular science" (272) and the prolegomena concerns to which they attended. Bartholomew also puts here the project of these Neo-Calvinists in dialogue with the Neo-Orthodoxy of Brunner and Barth. Chapter 11 tackles the distinct and pronounced Neo-Calvinist interest in the subject of education. Bartholomew closes the book in chapter 12 with a vigorous and challenging engagement with "the need for spiritual formation" (316) which among other things draws upon Bavinck's work on the imitation of Christ (317-318).

Bartholomew acknowledges in his preface that "[t]his is not a historical work" (ix). Thus, the term "tradition" is a very appropriate titular descriptor of the book as Bartholomew does not necessarily give a strictly historical reconstruction of Kuyper's individual thought. Rather he gives a synthetic-theological work which brings in many other theologians post-Kuyper to develop various strands of thought which Bartholomew identifies in Kuyper. In this sense Bartholomew is delineating a "tradition." That is to say he is a developing school of thought originating in Kuyper but which moved out and ramified beyond Kuyper. This leads into another key thing which should be noted about the book.

At regular intervals throughout the book, Bartholomew will offer criticisms of what he perceives to be deficiencies or undeveloped points within Kuyper's (and sometimes H. Bavinck's) thought. Bartholomew is forthright about this. "While we should never absolutize Kuyper or Bavinck and should continually reform their work in the light of Scripture, it is important that such reform be done consciously so that

we can see what is at stake in the moves that are made" (264). This of course is an entirely legitimate enterprise for the work of a theologian and many of Bartholomew's critiques are quite percipient and salutary.

However, this should lead to the recognition that we really cannot speak of a current "Kuyperian tradition" in the singular as Bartholomew does in his title, as if such a monolithic entity existed. Rather, there are varying traditions, varying disciples who have divergent opinions about which particular insights of the master were essential and wholesome, and which were accidental accretions of a less wholesome sort. Consequently, what is represented in Bartholomew's book is not "the Kuyperian tradition" per se, but rather one permutation of that tradition which applauds certain aspects of Kuyper's thought, chides others, and even ignores certain contours of Kuyper's theology altogether.

This notwithstanding, Bartholomew has produced a very helpful introductory handbook to the major thematic centers of the thought of Kuyper, Bavinck, and many of their disciples. It will surely stimulate further research, development, and application of the fecundity of Neo-Calvinism in the coming generation of the church and Christian scholars.

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Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics*, volume one: *Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity* (ed. John Bolt; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019). xliii + 564 pp.

The much anticipated release of volume one of Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics* serves as a significant moment in Bavinck studies. The four volume *Reformed Dogmatics* has been available in English translation for over a decade now (since the release of the fourth volume in 2008). In that short time, that publication has become perhaps the most highly regarded Reformed dogmatics of the modern era. Seminary and college professors have assigned it regularly (myself included). Doctoral students have begun writing dissertations on Bavinck in haste (some of which are remarkably

insightful, e.g., by James Eglinton, Brian Mattson, and Gray Sutanto). Monographs and journal articles on his thought have multiplied quickly. Other translations have begun appearing, with several coming from a Bavinck studies group under Dr. Eglinton's supervision in Edinburgh. In theological terms, we are living in the day of Bavinck (probably far more than was ever true in his own time and place). Neither fundamentalist nor modernist, Bavinck has been read and appreciated as a creedally and confessional committed theologian unafraid to engage with rigor across ecclesiastical eras and denominational divides, to be sure, but also with varying secular and scientific alternatives on offer.

Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics* represents the next major investment of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society and researchers at Calvin Theological Seminary in translating Bavinck. In this case, Editor John Bolt and his team of translators – Jessica Joustra, Nelson D. Kloosterman, Antoine Theron, and Dirk van Keulen – have tackled a text which has never been published in any language. In 2008 Dirk van Keulen discovered an 1100 page manuscript in the archives of the Historical Documentation Center for Dutch Protestantism at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. The oversized manuscript gathers lectures given at the Theological School in Kampen from 1883/1884 through fall 1902 (more precise dates are discussed on xxiii). It was found in a number of notebooks, and it ended incompletely (xxii). Two other manuscripts seem to correlate with this material, class notes prepared by Reinder Jan van der Veen and other class notes which remain anonymous and as yet unidentifiable (xxiii). The outline in those two sets of notes matches that of this manuscript with remarkable comprehensiveness, though seemingly off-the-cuff or ancillary comments also find their way (perhaps unsurprisingly) into the class notes (xxiv).

How does this manuscript, *Reformed Ethics*, relate to the four volume *Reformed Dogmatics*? Bavinck himself speaks to the connection of dogmatics and ethics:

> In dogmatics we are concerned with what God does for us and in us. In dogmatics God is everything. Dogmatics is a word from God to us, coming from outside of us, from above us; we are passive, listening, and opening ourselves to being directed by God. In ethics, we are interested in the question of what it is that God now expects of us when he does his work in us. What do we do for him? Here we are active, precisely because of and on the grounds of God's deeds in us; we sing psalms in thanks and praise to God. In dogmatics, God descends to us; in ethics, we ascend to God. In dogmatics, he is ours; in

> ethics, we are his his. In dogmatics, we know we shall see his face; in ethics, his name will be written on our foreheads [Rev. 22:4] Dogmatics proceeds from God; ethics returns to God. In dogmatics, God loves us; in ethics, therefore, we love him (22).

The rhetoric is dialed up here, and the contrasts are in no way pure dichotomies. Still, Bavinck does paint a picture of two intellectual enterprises that ask after different emphases. Even so, reading the manuscript here (and comparing with relevant portions of the *Reformed Dogmatics*) shows that this distinction neither suggests that God fails to function as an agent in the realm of ethics, nor that humans remain passive throughout the totality of a dogmatic account. In disciplinary terms, this is a distinctly *theological* ethics.

Reformed Ethics includes four parts or "books":

1. "Humanity before conversion, in the condition of sin, conscience, morality; this is the realm of natural ethics.
2. "Converted humanity: the new life in its preparation, origin, aspects, circumstances, aids, blessing, marks, sickness and death, fulfillment; this is the realm of practical theology.
3. "Regenerated humanity in the family, vocation, society, state, and church.
4. "The Life-Spheres in Which the Moral Life Is to Be Manifest," which remains unfinished (xxvii).

This first volume includes books 1-2, with books 3-4 to be published later. Book 1 includes six chapters: Essential Human Nature (ch. 1); Humanity Under the Power of Sin (ch. 2); The Self Against the Neighbor and God (ch. 3); The Fallen Image of God (ch. 4); Human Conscience (ch. 5); The Sinner and the Law (ch. 6). Book two follows with six chapters: Life in the Spirit (ch. 7); Life in the Spirit in the Church's History (ch. 8); The Shape and Maturation of the Christian Life (ch. 9); Persevering in the Christian Life (ch. 10); Pathologies of the Christian Life (ch. 11); Restoration and Consummation of the Christian Life (ch. 12).

The Bavinck we know and love appears here. The volume includes nuanced sketches not just of biblical material, but of sensitive awareness of the range and variety of biblical idioms. The Scriptural engagement occurs most frequently through parenthetical citations, though he will regularly linger over the interpretation of particular passages. The editorial team has done significant work in rendering original

language quotations into readable English. Here too is historical survey, sometimes in chapter length form (ch. 8), sometimes in shorter excurses (the surprisingly long discussion of the stigmata on 330-333). One interesting parallel to the *Reformed Dogmatics* occurs at the beginning of chapters: just as the *RD* frequently begins with a discussion of more general parallels (typically from other religions and philosophers) only to turn then toward its more specific Christian manifestation, so here chapters regularly begin by noting pluralistic or secular parallels or counter-points to the themes under examination (e.g. the discussion of spiritual disease begins with the more general struggle of bodily disease on 417-418). Even an occasional rhetorical difficulty – discerning when Bavinck is speaking on behalf of others or in his own voice – occurs as in the *RD*. This text is the Bavinck we love in terms of catholic interest in exegesis and dogmatics, liturgy and ethics, Reformed and ecumenical voices, and so forth. *Tolle lege*.

At the same time, not all is as we have known it. The editors seem to have cleaned and polished, yet the text is still a good bit choppier and emaciated than the *RD*. First, it is choppier and frequently moves forward argumentatively by lurching here and there, often implicitly, without smooth transitions rhetorically and logically (e.g. 159-161, 253-255). Second, its argument often lacks much by way of citation or nuance, especially when talking about historical trends (e.g. the discussion of mysticism on 277-288 is especially abstract and textually non-specific relative to parallel discussions in *RD* 3:353-356 and 4:443-446). Again, this is not a sign of poor editorial work but a manifestation of an unfinished manuscript. This text is not the Bavinck to which we have grown accustomed, wearing his learning lightly by means of countless, specific citations of primary sources and addressing various trajectories and movements with sensitivity to nuance. Here anyone who has spent significant time with *RD* will feel as though they entered into oddly unfamiliar territory: much greater reliance on stereotypes, frequently underdeveloped logical argument, rare and vague references, and so forth. *Caveat emptor*.

What shall we make of this volume? This is Bavinck, and there are frequent judgments that are remarkably perceptive and illuminating. His discussions of the development of self-examination as a focus within post-Reformation Reformed theology (294-403), psychological awareness and its pastoral necessity (410), and of spiritual desertion (458-460) stand out in that regard. The text is shaped by and limited in some respects due to its historical location; for instance, his engagement of "scholasticism" in rather lengthy section pre-dates the massive historiographic revisions found in late 20th century scholarship (e.g. 423-43). The text was not fully

brought to maturity; discussions of asceticism (462-463) and of vows (492) appear remarkably incomplete, left dangling at points. Even so, the text provides a consistently theological and dogmatic approach to studying ethics, attempting to listen to Holy Scripture, to glean from the communion of saints, and endeavoring to engage critically with ancillary movements of thought in the wider modern world. In each respect, it still warrants reading, even if it will not serve as an opus parallel to the great *Reformed Dogmatics*. Two watchwords are important with regard to this much-anticipated publication of the first volume of Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics*: both *caveat emptor* and *tolle lege*.

Michael Allen
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