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RPTS

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REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL



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From Rutherford Hall

Dr. Jerry O'Neill

President of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary

This is my last rendition of *From Rutherford Hall*. A good transition is coming. President-elect Barry York will assume the mantle of the presidency on July 1, 2018, and I am excited about that. To spend twenty-three years in the leadership of an organization and then to hand the baton to a man that can serve the next generation well is an overwhelming joy. Nothing could be as satisfying to me at this point. Hopefully, RPTS is just at the beginning of the good things that God has in store for us.

When Pastor David Reese visited the Seminary recently, he had us reflect on a theme that has become dear to my heart as I face retirement. It's not a new theme, but it has taken on new meaning for me personally. Pastor Reese pointed us to this truth: *My hope of heaven, and my perseverance in the path of righteousness, is not due to my strong faith or the fact that I have it all together*. Much to the contrary! I don't have it all together. But my assurance lies in the fact that Jesus prays for me. How striking that the apostle Peter, on the very day that Judas would betray the Savior, couldn't even stay awake to pray for his own soul on the Mount of Olives (Lk. 22:39-46). But Jesus had prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail (Lk. 22:31). Three times Peter fell asleep; three times he denied his Lord. But Jesus had prayed that when Peter denied him, Peter's faith would not fail and that he would turn and strengthen his brothers (Lk. 22:31). How powerfully God used him in the years following his denial of Jesus.

When I went home that night, my wife was not at home. As I reflected on Peter on the Mount of Olives and Hebrews 7:25 – *“Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them”* – my eyes filled up with tears. I began mumbling to myself and out loud, “I don't deserve it; I don't deserve *His* prayers.” He is able to save to the uttermost since He always lives to intercede for His people. Of course, we don't deserve it. That is the point. But Jesus prays for us anyway!

The answer to the Westminster Shorter Catechism's question 25 reads: *“Christ executeth the office of a priest in His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God—and in making continual intercession for us.”* I have always stressed the first half of the answer, and for good reason. That is the gospel, the once-for-all sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God. However, I hope I never skip lightly over the last half of the answer again. Jesus, as our great high priest, always lives to intercede for His people.

A few weeks ago, I preached at Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Rankin, PA, on Romans 8. Romans 8:26 says, *“the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”* Not only does our Savior intercede for us, the Holy Spirit also intercedes for us, with groanings too deep for words. You and I try to pray consistently, and some of you do better at this than I do. But the Word of God says our hope isn't in our praying, but in the fact that Jesus always lives to make intercession for us. And He has sent the Holy Spirit who prays with those deep groanings.

Our salvation is secure not from any of our own praying or serving, but because of the prayers of Jesus for us – and because of the Holy Spirit's groanings. What a great salvation, and what a great Savior! With that nailed down, I think I am ready for retirement!

Korean Covenanters: J. G. Vos, Bruce Hunt, and a Presbyterian Covenant in Manchuria

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Introduction

The practice of covenanting appears in diverse times and places in the history of the church. One example is found during the Japanese occupation of Korea at the time of World War II. At this time, there was a Korean group which practiced biblical covenanting against Shinto worship. This group, referred to as the “Korean Covenanters,” developed and signed a covenanting statement against Shinto worship. Ministers who subscribed to the covenant led their worship and preached before them. Subscribing lay people could come and participate at the Lord’s table.

The Korean Covenanters worked closely with and were led by Bruce Finley Hunt (1903-1992), a missionary of the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), and later of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Hunt had many fellow workers laboring shoulder-to-shoulder for the advancement of God’s Kingdom in East Asia. Among them was Johannes Geerhardus (J. G.) Vos (1903-1983) who graduated the same year (1928) as Hunt from Princeton Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey. J. G. Vos, served as a missionary of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), whose members were commonly referred to as Covenanters. Vos was engaged in missionary work with a movement of Chinese Covenanters in Manchuria. In support of the act of covenanting of the Korean Christians in Manchuria, Vos offered wise, biblical contributions toward this political but religious protest.

This paper focuses on understanding the largely untold story of the Korean Covenanters, including the missionary cooperation between Bruce F. Hunt and J. G. Vos. Understanding covenanting as a means for Korean Christians to respond biblically and theologically to a context of persecution by the Imperial Japanese Army provides helpful application for 21st-century Christians. To enable both historical understanding and application, this essay considers the origin and practice of the Korean Covenanters, a brief history of this stream of the Korean church, the lives and relationship of Bruce F. Hunt and J. G. Vos, and the theology of covenanting in the setting of hostile civil magistrates.

Background

The starting point: Appearance of the term, “Korean Covenanters”

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The two terms *Korean* and *Covenanters* are usually not linked together. The term *Covenanters* in church history has generally referred to the Presbyterians in Scotland from 1638 to 1690 who fought against the Stuarts of England for “the preservation of the Reformed religion, particularly the spiritual independence of the Church and the sole headship of Jesus Christ within it.”² The era of the Scottish Covenanters was centuries prior to the time when the Gospel reached the Korean people who had long been dominated by superstitious practices for thousands of years. What connects the Korean Covenanters with the Scottish Covenanters, who lived over five thousand miles away and three hundred years earlier?

Evidence suggests that the English usage of the term “Korean Covenanters” first appeared in January and February of 1943 in the *Presbyterian Guardian*, the journal of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Over these months the periodical published two articles by Bruce Hunt entitled “Korean Covenanters.”³ The articles also included the covenanting statements of the young Korean Reformed Presbyterian mission. Besides these two articles, in his book, *The Korean Pentecost and the Sufferings Which Followed*, Hunt referred to the Korean Covenanters recording that

Following the example of the Scottish Covenanters, a statement was drawn up, pointing out the biblical teaching on shrine worship and the necessity of breaking completely from those who condoned idolatry. From then on, no one was baptized who did not give consent to this document, and no one was allowed to lead services who had not subscribed to it ... There were about twenty-five small Korean Christian groups in north Manchuria which subscribed to this covenant, with just a little short of five hundred covenanted baptized members and an average attendance for all the groups of about eight hundred people on each Lord’s Day.⁴

As Hunt stated, there were about five hundred, either adults only or possibly including children, who were involved in these covenant groups. They might have been neither a church nor a denomination, but this networking body consisted of twenty-five small preaching stations or local congregations. Together these Christians drew up and signed a statement that was written to demonstrate the problem of shrine worship which the Japanese Empire forced upon all Koreans, as well as all others under their control. Understanding the overall situation that was occurring in the far eastern part of Asia requires an awareness of the background of the early Korean church history.

Brief History of the Church in Korea

It was not until the year 1832 that Protestant Christianity touched the land of Korea, although Roman Catholicism had come into Korea during the eighteenth century. The first attempt was

² K. M. Brown, “Covenanters,” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 218.

³ Bruce F. Hunt, “Korean Covenanters Part I,” *The Presbyterian Guardian* 12, no. 2 (January 1943): 19-20 and Bruce F. Hunt, “Korean Covenanters Part II,” *The Presbyterian Guardian* 12, no. 3 (February 1943): 37-40.

⁴ William Newton Blair and Bruce F. Hunt, *The Korean Pentecost and the Sufferings Which Followed* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2015), 118.

made by a German missionary, Rev. Carl Friedrich Augustus Gutzlaff (1803-1851), who traveled to the west coast of Korea in the summer of 1832. Gutzlaff tried to share the Chinese Bible with the Korean people and also translated the Lord's Prayer into the Korean language during his one-month sojourn on a small island.⁵ The next endeavor was made in 1866 by Rev. Robert Thomas (1839-1866). This Welshman arrived aboard an American merchant ship and sailed to Pyeong-Yang, currently the capital of North Korea. The ship was "unhappily engaged in the fight against a Korean garrison" which resulted in the massacre of the entire crew and the burning of the ship.⁶ These missions to Korea were unsuccessful because of the strong nationalistic attitude of the Korean government toward foreigners at that time. However, God graciously sent more missionaries to this hidden country in Asia.

The next important event was the arrival of Dr. Horace Allen (1859-1932) in September 1884, "signaling a full-scale opening of Protestant missions in Korea."⁷ Dr. Allen was sent by the Board of the American Northern Presbyterian Mission as a medical missionary, the first western missionary who came to Korea, not just for a short visit, but to stay in that land. Then, in the following year, Horace G. Underwood (1859-1916), the first clerical missionary of the Northern Presbyterian Mission Board, set his foot on Korean soil.⁸ After that, the need for more Korean missions gained attention in Western countries, and more Western missionaries came to this small land. According to *World Atlas of Christian Missions*, published in 1911, there were 307 foreign missionaries—ordained missionaries, physician missionaries, and unmarried female missionaries.⁹ The number of foreign missionaries in Korea was less than ten percent of the number of missionaries in China, but they reaped a greater harvest in a short period of time.¹⁰ Early Western missionaries in Korea made it possible, because they trained native Koreans to accomplish this work of spreading the Gospel. In another record by Presbyterian missionaries, it is similarly stated that,

The mission work in Korea has developed with such extraordinary rapidity that it is hard to give an adequate impression of it. The first convert was baptized in 1886; the first little church was organized in 1887. In 1890, 100 converts were reported. In 1909, including catechumens and adherents, who are only waiting for admission to the Church, there are nearly 200,000 men and women who call themselves by the name of Christ and are striving to do His will. The greater part of these are in the regions covered by our own stations. It is plain that this wonderful result could never have been attained by the

⁵ In-su Kim, *History of Christianity in Korea* (Seoul: Qumran Pub. House, 2011), 91-95. Gutzlaff served the Netherlands Missionary Society until 1828 and relocated to China with a passion for people in the Far East. He was also a friend of Robert Morrison (1782-1834), who was well-known as the first Protestant missionary to China. For the details of his life and journey to East Asia, see his *Journal of Three Voyages Along the Coast of China, in 1831, 1832, & 1833* (F. Westley and A.H. Davis, 1834).

⁶ In-su Kim, *History of Christianity in Korea*, 96-100.

⁷ Ung Kyu Pak, *Millennialism in the Korean Protestant Church* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 89.

⁸ Kim, *History of Christianity in Korea*, 121-131.

⁹ Sung-Deuk Oak, *The Making of Korean Christianity: Protestant Encounters with Korean Religions, 1876-1915* (Studies in World Christianity) (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 329. Quoted in Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, *World Atlas of Christian Missions* (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1911), 83.

¹⁰ In 1910, there were a total of 178,686 adherents of all ages in Korea and 470,184 in China. See *The Making of Korean Christianity*, 329.

handful of foreign missionaries. The work has been done by the Korean Christians themselves, who take quite literally the injunction to “go and tell” the blessings that they have received. So, they have carried the Word to their friends and neighbors all through the land.¹¹

The Word was spread, in particular, during the great revival movement of 1907 in Korea. During this remarkable awakening movement, the gospel was powerfully spread throughout the land of Korea and deeply into the hearts of believers. As *Historical Sketch of the Missions in Korea* recorded, there was “the wonderful increase in believers and enquirers” because of “purifying the hearts and lives of the people and causing them to work more zealously for the conversion of their neighbors.”¹² However, Korean missions did not continue spreading the flames of the gospel. They encountered difficulty due to major political changes. Japan made a protectorate treaty with the Korean empire in 1905 and finally annexed Korea into its own territory in 1910. After that, Korea was occupied by the Japanese Empire for 36 years, until the occupation ended at the conclusion of World War II in 1945.

Japan’s occupation of Korea was the immediate historical context for the Korean Covenanters. Japanese colonization, from the beginning, brought difficult circumstances to early Korean Christians as they contemplated how to react to or resist the Japanese rule, especially when Japan’s rules were opposed to the Scriptures. Tension between the church and civil governments that persecuted Christianity created a significant challenge to the church. Hunt and Vos were the two American ministers who tried to answer this question for the sake of the gospel and the Korean Covenanters. The ensuing sections of this paper examine the lives and ministries of Bruce Hunt and J. G. Vos to provide a more complete understanding of the context of the Korean Covenanters. Why did Hunt and Vos travel across the Pacific Ocean to Korea? What were their theological backgrounds? How were they connected to the Korean Covenanters?

Cooperation for the Kingdom of God

*Bruce F. Hunt*¹³

Bruce Finley Hunt was born of Presbyterian missionary parents William B. Hunt and Bertha Finley on January 4, 1903, in Pyeong-Yang, Korea. Pyeong-Yang was also called the Jerusalem of Asia following the great revival that occurred in 1907, four years after Hunt’s birth. After his mother died when he was two years old, Hunt’s family went on furlough. His father remarried

¹¹ Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., *Historical Sketch of the Missions in Korea* (Philadelphia: Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society, 1909), 17.

¹² Ibid., 18. To provide a taste of the atmosphere of the movement, Rev. Blair, as published in his book, *The Korean Pentecost*, said “Then began a meeting the like of which I had never seen before, nor wish to see again unless in God’s sight it is absolutely necessary. Every sin a human being can commit was publicly confessed that night.” see Hunt and Blair, *The Korean Pentecost*, 83-87.

¹³ The only completed biography of Hunt is available only in Korean. Ung-Kyu Park, *Bruce F. Hunt: Life and Ministry* (Seoul: Grisim, 2006) A brief but useful biography is found on the website of Westminster Theological Seminary which also has the Bruce Hunt archive. See “Bruce Hunt Bio,” Westminster Theological Seminary, <https://students.wts.edu/resources/sarang/brucehunt.html> (accessed January 10, 2017.) This section of the article will rely on an interview with Bruce Hunt, published in the 1998 in *The Banner of Truth*. The interview took place in June 1972, and Don Stephens was the interviewer. See Bruce F. Hunt, “Bruce Hunt: Missionary to Korea,” *The Banner of Truth* (September 1998): 17-27.

during that time and was sent to Chai-Ryung, in another part of Korea, where Bruce lived until he was sixteen years old. Bruce referred to Chai-Ryung as his old home.¹⁴ Because his youth was spent with young native Koreans, he was a very fluent Korean speaker and accomplished his ministry without a language barrier. At home, he grew up with the disciplines of family worship and strict Sabbath-observance. At the same time, Hunt received a great benefit during his youth as he was surrounded by, learned from, and grew to know other Western missionaries.

When he was sixteen years old, he was sent to America for further schooling. There, he stayed with his aunt and her husband, who were formal missionaries in China.¹⁵ After one year of new experience in America, he entered Wheaton College. There, during his second year of studies, the missionary-child experienced a true regeneration and was converted to Jesus Christ. For his senior year of studies, Hunt transferred to a state university in New Jersey and there lived with his parents as they took a year-long furlough. They lived across the street from Princeton Seminary and attended the First Presbyterian Church of Princeton, where Dr. J. Gresham Machen served for a while. More importantly for the story of Hunt's mission work, this church had been the home of J.G. Vos, who was born in New Jersey, baptized at First Presbyterian, and was a former member there. During that final year of studies, Hunt was asked to teach a Sunday School class at the church.¹⁶ After college, Hunt enrolled at Princeton Seminary. While Hunt studied at Princeton, his faith became "greatly deepened and strengthened by the teaching of the professors at what is now called 'Old Princeton.'"¹⁷

Finally, after his nine years' life journey in America, Hunt returned to his Korean homeland to begin his service as a missionary. Hunt was ordained by the Presbytery of New Brunswick of the PCUSA on April 25, 1928, and appointed as a missionary to Korea by the Board of Foreign Missions of the PCUSA.¹⁸ What it meant that he returned to the mission field was reflected in his own testimony. To him,

The call to the mission field is as definite for the Second-Generationer as it was for his father and mother, but it has in it the added attraction of a host of unfulfilled childhood dreams that may be realized in the place where they were dreamed, and a host of recollections that may be lived over again where they first took birth.¹⁹

¹⁴ Bruce Hunt, "A Boy's Reminiscences," *The Korea Mission Field* 15, no.8 (August 1919): 165-167

¹⁵ There is one article written by Bruce Hunt regarding Confucianism. Not only because of his experience living at his aunt's, but also due to his own ministry in Korea later, he had very deep knowledge of Confucianism, a philosophy which had been influenced by both Chinese and Koreans. In the article, Hunt dealt with topics like life after death, God, and sin. Bruce Hunt, "The Best in Man," *The Korea Mission Field* 27, no.9 (September, 1932): 177-182.

¹⁶ Geerhardus Vos and James T. Dennison, *The Letters of Geerhardus Vos* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2005), 42-43.

¹⁷ Hunt, "Bruce Hunt: Missionary to Korea," 23. For these professors, Hunt listed "Davis, Greene, C. W. Hodge, Machen, R. D. Wilson, and Geerhardus Vos." Geerhardus Vos was the father of J. G. Vos.

¹⁸ Princeton Theological Seminary, *Biographical Catalogue of Princeton Theological Seminary 1815-1954: Biographies, 1865-1954* (Princeton, N.J., 1955), 500.

¹⁹ Bruce Hunt, "The Heritage of the Second Generation," *The Korea Mission Field* 15, no.8 (February 1930): 36-37.

Hunt became one of the first second-generation missionaries to carry on the first generation's historic work in Korea.²⁰ He began his first mission work, not in Manchuria, but in Chung-Ju, seventy miles south of Seoul. After four years of ministry in Chung-Ju, he spent his first sabbatical year at Westminster Theological Seminary, which had been founded by his lifelong mentor, Dr. J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937). While he was at Westminster, he faced the upheaval within the PCUSA and became a charter member of the Presbyterian Church of America in 1936.²¹ This denominational change also affected this young missionary in his return to the mission field. No longer under the PCUSA Board of Foreign Missions, Hunt was sent to Harbin, Manchuria (China) by the Independent Board of Presbyterian Foreign Missions.²² This recommissioning took place in 1936, when his seminary classmate, J. G. Vos, was working for Chinese Covenanters in the same region.

*Johannes Geerhardus Vos*²³

Johannes Geerhardus Vos was born on February 4, 1903.²⁴ He was the firstborn of Geerhardus and Catherine Vos.²⁵ Geerhardus Vos married Catherine on September 7, 1894, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, just before his move to New Jersey to fulfill the position of the first Professor of Biblical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. After eight years of marriage, J. G. Vos was born. All their four children, including J. G., were born in New Jersey and baptized at the

²⁰ Ung Kyu Pak, "The Significance of Bruce F. Hunt's Ministry in Korea and Manchuria (1928-1952) with Particular Attention to Shinto Shrine Worship," (ThM thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, 1992), 67.

²¹ Note that the Presbyterian Church of America changed its name to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1939. For more on this history consider Charles G. Dennison, *The History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Coraopolis, PA: The Committee for the Historian, 1994).

²² This was the mission board founded by Machen as an outworking of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy. For more on the controversies pertaining to foreign missions and the forming of the Independent Board of Presbyterian Foreign Missions, see Bradley Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 181-212.

²³ Following are a few resources to study his life and ministry. Alvin W. Smith, *Covenanter Ministers, 1930-1963, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America* ([Pittsburgh, PA: Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 1964], 216-218. Owen F. Thompson, *Sketches of the Ministers of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America from 1888 to 1930* (S.l.: Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 1930), 343-345. There is also a volume of essays on the Scriptures edited by John H. White who, in honor of J. G. Vos, gives more insight about him. See the preface and the last chapter, 'Bibliography of the writings of J.G. Vos' in *The Book of Books: Essays on the Scriptures in Honor of Johannes G. Vos* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co, 1978). The "Blue Banner" website also provides the most updated biography (<http://bluebanner.org/about>, accessed January 15, 2017).

²⁴ Thompson, *Sketches of the Ministers*, 343.

²⁵ For the life of Geerhardus Vos, the recent publication *The Letters of Geerhardus Vos* has an 82-page biography of Vos. Catherine Vos, in her very last years, joined a local congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America in Santa Ana, California. This denomination, also called the Covenanter church, was where Johannes Geerhardus Vos was ordained and sent to Manchuria as a missionary. The author of *The Letters of Geerhardus Vos* also mentioned (p60) that "The family (of Vos) worshiped in a Covenanter church, no doubt because of its proximity and the fact that Johannes, their oldest son, had been ordained a missionary for the RPCNA to Manchuria." Catherine Vos died in Santa Ana, California in 1937 and Geerhardus Vos died in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1949.

First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) in Princeton. J.G. professed his faith in Christ on February 3, 1917, just one day before his fourteenth birthday.²⁶ Young J. G. Vos, who had grown up in Philadelphia, went to Grand Rapids to study at Calvin College. After two years, he returned to New Jersey to finish up his college education at Princeton University. While at Princeton, he became a member of Phi Beta Kappa, a collegiate honor society.²⁷

After college, Vos entered Princeton Seminary where his father was still teaching as a professor of Biblical Theology. There he “learned to understand and to love Calvinism, the Reformed Faith.”²⁸ Much like Hunt, Vos also appreciated and became attached to the Reformed Faith and saw that it is “the purest and most consistent form of Christianity.”²⁹ He confessed that “it became the great aim of my life to propagate the Christian religion in this its most pure and consistent form.”³⁰ However, due to concerns over the decline of his denomination while he considered future ministry, he decided to join the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.³¹ In his personal testimony about this decision, Vos wrote that

I had made up my mind that I wanted to become a foreign missionary. With this in view I entered into correspondence with the candidate department of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. To my astonishment my love for Calvinism was regarded as a liability instead of an asset. One candidate secretary wrote me that Calvinism might be all right for the intellectual framework, but for a persons real faith, something better would be needed.³²

Not only because of changes in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A, but also because of his disappointment with the Board of Foreign Missions of the denomination, he came to the RPCNA and became a student under care in 1926 when he was a sophomore at Princeton Seminary.

In addition, in the book of the *Sketches of the Ministers of the Reformed Presbyterian of North America from 1888 to 1930*, Owen Thompson enumerated four reasons for why J. G. Vos changed to the RPCNA. First, he was convinced about Scriptural worship, particularly Psalmody; the final reason given was his conviction about Calvinistic theology and the Reformed view of life. The second and third reasons prove particularly noteworthy, in particular, in regard to covenanting. He said in the second reason, “I wished to serve in a Church that excluded members of oath-bound societies from its communion.” And in the third, he noted, “I wished to serve in a Church that stood for maintaining strict discipline over its members.”³³ Thus, Vos joined the RPCNA, which identifies in its theology and history as the Covenanter descendent of

²⁶ Vos and Dennison, *The Letters of Geerhardus Vos*, 42–43.

²⁷ Vos, “Why I left the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and Joined the Reformed Presbyterian or Covenantan Church,” 1. Retrieved from Reformed Presbyterian Church Archives, Pittsburgh.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 2-4.

³² *Ibid.*, 3.

³³ Thompson, *Sketches of the Ministers of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America from 1888 to 1930*, 344-345.

the Scottish Covenanters. This decision provides a significant and meaningful connection point between Korean Covenanters and J. G. Vos.

The RPCNA had begun to send their own missionaries to the southern part of China in 1895. Beginning in 1923, with the hope of establishing self-governing and self-propagating Chinese congregations, the southern China mission decided to give more responsibility to the indigenous Chinese church. In addition, the RPCNA mission board was looking for another new mission field. Between two potential fields, Northern Japan and Manchuria, the decision was made to send their missionaries to Manchuria, China.³⁴ Vos volunteered, feeling “strongly the Lord’s leading to volunteer for the proposed new mission field in Manchuria.”³⁵ Along with three other RP missionaries, Vos sailed to East Asia in October 1930. They recognized North Manchuria as a mission field of the “Covenanter Church” and their goal of mission work was to be opened with Tsitsihar, Northern Manchuria and possibly Harbin as centers.³⁶ Vos stayed in Peiping for a year to study Chinese and came to Manchuria in the summer of 1931 to serve Chinese people for his next 10 years of ministry.³⁷ Within that time, like Hunt, Vos spent his one-year furlough at Westminster Theological Seminary to complete his ThM studies in 1937-1938.³⁸ After that, he returned to the city of Yingkou (營口), located in the southwest of Manchuria, and served a Bible school named Newchang Bible College until 1941.³⁹

Vos and Hunt: Friends and Co-Laborers

Both Bruce Hunt and J. G. Vos were born in the same year of 1903 – Hunt on January 4, Vos on February 4. Both were sons of ministers of the church – Hunt had a missionary father, and Vos’s father was a seminary professor. They both were raised in Presbyterian homes and churches (PCUSA). And there is a possibility that they were attending the same church at some point, the First Presbyterian Church in Princeton (later Nassau Presbyterian Church), or at least that they

³⁴ Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, *Minutes of the Synod* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1929), 85-86; Smith, *Covenanter Ministers, 1930-1963, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, 300-302.

³⁵ Smith, *Covenanter Ministers, 1930-1963, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, 217.

³⁶ RPCNA Minutes of Synod recorded, “First, that our Foreign Mission Board recognize North Manchuria as a mission field of the Covenanter Church. Second, that mission work be opened with Tsitsihar and possibly Harbin as centers, as soon as workers now studying have sufficient knowledge of the language, and that areas farther north be invaded as soon as possible.” Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, *Minutes of the Synod* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1931), 54. To look at the early mission (up to 1936) of Covenanters in Manchuria, see Johannes G. Vos, *Our Mission in Manchuria* (Pittsburgh: Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, Board of Foreign Missions, 1936).

³⁷ Smith, *Covenanter Ministers, 1930-1963, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, 217 & 300-301.

³⁸ His ThM thesis was published with the title, *The Scottish Covenanters: Their Origins, History, and Distinctive Doctrines* (Edinburgh: Blue Banner Productions, 1998).

³⁹ The port city of Yingkou is also related to Korean churches in general. Interestingly, even before the first official missionary from America arrived in Korea in 1884, there were Bibles translated into Korean and baptized people in Korea. In 1878, a significant year for Korean Christians, the first baptism took place, involving four Korean persons, and they began to translate the Chinese Bible into Korean. This happened in the city of Yingkou, Manchuria, where Vos served at Newchang Bible College. The name “Newchang” is an old name for Yingkou.

had some common connections through the church.⁴⁰ However, their friendship might have begun in earnest at Princeton Theological Seminary. As stated in the previous section, they graduated from Princeton in 1928. In a class of 44 students, they both graduated with a Bachelor of Theology degree. With the same denominational background and similar doctrinal positions, it is hard to deny that Hunt and Vos would have known each other and spent time together.⁴¹

With some assumptions granted, it is plain enough that Hunt and Vos had shared their missionary zeal for the Far East. Hunt said, “I knew also of the wider overseas fields where there were so many who had not heard the gospel. I found that fewer of my seminary class-mates were thinking of these, to me, more needy fields than that of service in their home country.”⁴² Vos’s name was not mentioned, so it is not clear whether or not they often talked about mission work, but it is certain that Vos was already committed to doing mission work abroad during the time of Princeton Seminary.⁴³ Among a small student body at Princeton, it would be a reasonable assumption that Hunt’s experience and vision to go overseas were an influence on Vos since he also considered the same needs in the world.⁴⁴ Interestingly, in their last year at Princeton, a

⁴⁰ As stated above, the First Presbyterian Church in Princeton was Vos’s home church where he was baptized, grew up, and was converted. Vos, at some point in his early seminary years, transferred his membership to the Second Presbyterian Church (later Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church) from the First Presbyterian Church. It was before he joined the Third Reformed Presbyterian church of Philadelphia in 1926. Hunt began to attend the First Presbyterian Church in 1923. The fact that Catherine Vos, J. G. Vos’s mother, had been a long-time member of First Presbyterian church from 1896 to 1937 also showed their personal connection. Catherine Vos joined the RP Church in Santa Ana in 1937; Geerhardus stayed in the PCUSA until his death. Also see, Vos and Dennison, *The Letters of Geerhardus Vos*, 42-43 and 59-60.

⁴¹ *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 22, no. 1 (1928): 2-3; In terms of their theological positions, both had huge concerns about the theological changes at Princeton related to the downfall of the PCUSA. Following are expressions about it from each of them. Vos stated, “Princeton Seminary was at that very time being taken apart and put together again by the modernistic wing of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. ... I saw this going on while I was there ... It soon became evident that those with a zeal for the orthodox faith were not too welcome, while those with any liberal leanings, and those regarded as ‘co-operative’ were soon given appointments.” Vos, “Why I Left”, 2. Hunt also mentioned the downfall of the denomination, saying “The struggle was reflected in friction among the Directors and Trustees, among members of the faculty and even among the students themselves. At this time (1924), the so-called Auburn Affirmation was signed by 1,200 ministers of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. Its language implied that belief in the verbal inspiration of Scripture and the virgin birth, miracles, substitutionary atonement and bodily resurrection of our Saviour were possible alternative theories, not essential to Christian faith. This controversy caused me to search the Word more carefully and helped to deepen and confirm my faith.” Hunt, “Bruce Hunt: Missionary to Korea,” 21-22.

⁴² Hunt, “Bruce Hunt: Missionary to Korea,” 23.

⁴³ As stated above in the section on the life of Vos, he was already committed to the foreign mission field before his second year at Princeton Seminary.

⁴⁴ In 1928, there were a total seventy-four graduating students at Princeton. Forty-four students, including Hunt and Vos, were conferred the degree of Bachelor of Theology, twenty-eight in Master of Theology and two in diploma of the seminary. The Princeton Seminary Bulletin reported about the plans of those students after their graduation. Among forty-eight students, Hunt and Francis Kinsler were described as “foreign missions, Korea,” I. W. Underhill “Foreign missions, West Africa,” and Paul Woolley, “Traveling Secretary, League of Evangelical Students for a year; then foreign missions, China.” It means that there were not many students planning to be foreign missionaries after seminary training beside those three men, as Hunt stated. Otherwise, Vos was indicated “not yet settled” even though he was

special lecture series was held about Korea and mission to Korea by Rev. George Shannon MacCune, a former missionary to Korea. The title of this course of five lectures was “*Chosen: The Wonder-Working Christ of the Near East Working Wonders in the Far East.*”⁴⁵ It might not be too much of a conjecture to imagine that these two young men who had great passion for foreign missions sat under the same lectures in the same classroom and dreamed of ministering to God’s people around the world.

It is true that there are not many resources to show their personal relationship while they were on the mission field — or before or after. There is no record of correspondence between the two of them. However, there is a substantial clue that hints at their friendship. In a letter dated July 9, 1934, from J. G. Vos to Dr. Scott, written from Sorai Beach, near In-Cheon, Korea, he made reference to Hunt. “We are sharing a tiny cottage with a Seminary classmate of mine who is a missionary in Korea. They have a little girl, eight months old, so we have quite a family here. There is a wonderful beach so we hope to be able to do some swimming before long.”⁴⁶ The crossover references also show that Hunt married Katharine on September 27, 1932, and their first daughter was born in the following year in Chung-Ju, Korea.⁴⁷ It is not too surprising that the two families got together for their vacation in Korea.⁴⁸

In looking at their work on the mission field, it seems their labors likely stemmed from their friendship and relationship as ministers. There are two sources that show their cooperative work for the church of Christ in Manchuria. The first resource in which to find their cooperative work is Hunt’s personal letter written and sent to his parents in 1939, when he was still in Manchuria and the persecution by the Japanese was getting severe. In that letter, Hunt wrote,

Mr. McCameron would like very much to see the school reopened and continued under their growth of americans and desired that in the same way as the Covenanters had loaned Mr. Vos, we should loan Mr. Andrews and the Independent Board’s Mr. Dieffenbacher as a teacher for this institution. I have known and rejoiced of Yingkou school for quite a few years and believe that the addition of Mr. Vos to the faculty had made it even stronger than before. I would like to see such a testimony continued. At present, the school is closed but if it could be reopened as Mr. McCameron hopes and Messers. Vos, Andrews and Dieffenbacher are working for. I still wonder if we as a mission or church should assume any responsibility in the matter.⁴⁹

going to enter the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh. See, *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 22, no. 1 (1928): 2-3.

⁴⁵ *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 22, no. 1 (1928): 2-3.

⁴⁶ J. G. Vos, personal letter to Dr. Scott, Korea, July 9, 1934, Retrieved from Reformed Presbyterian Church Archives, Pittsburgh. In the RPCNA magazine, *The Covenanter Witness*, there is also a reference that the Vos family expected to go to Korea for a summer vacation. *The Covenanter Witness* 13, no.4 (1934): 57.

⁴⁷ Hunt, “Bruce Hunt: Missionary to Korea,” 23-24. Charles G. Dennison and Orthodox Presbyterian Church, eds., *Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1936-1986* (Philadelphia, PA: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986), 339.

⁴⁸ Another classmate, Francis Kinsler, who also served in Korean beginning in 1930, had a son as his first child.

⁴⁹ Bruce F. Hunt, personal letter to his parents, 1939, Retrieved from Westminster Theological Seminary, Glenside, PA.

The Yingkou school was Newchang Bible seminary, where Vos served as a teacher and then principal after his return to Manchuria in 1938. Bruce Hunt also recognized this school and recommended that the Independent Board of Foreign Mission send men to this institute, so that the two Reformed denominations might work together. Despite the school in Yingkou being 470 miles away from Harbin, where Hunt and Vos's Covenanter missionary colleagues worked, Hunt and Vos realized what they needed to do for the mission and thus, worked together.⁵⁰

The second resource that establishes a co-laboring relationship between Hunt and Vos is Hunt's interview about his mission in Manchuria. Hunt's interviewer asked about the difficulty of entering Manchuria because of the hostility of the government regarding shrine worship. In his answer, Hunt mentioned Vos and the statement they drew up together against the hostility of the Japan Empire toward Christians. Hunt said,

But our little group had voted to go ... we got through ...and we praise the Lord that we were allowed into the country. Well, now, later, we did ... several missionaries, Jack. Voss [sic], Dr. Voss [sic] at Geneva College, who's retired now, but he and others, we drew up a statement for the government, telling them that we believed their law was wrong. Now, I'm not sure at that time ... I think when the missionaries went out they hadn't yet formed the law. When we were there, they were forming the law on the control of religions, and we wrote a statement declaring that we believed that law was wrong, and we couldn't submit to it, but they didn't put us out of the country. We tried to make a clear stand on our position.⁵¹

The statement Hunt and Vos drew up, along with others, could not be found in the present author's research. Yet, as Hunt said, the contents of the statement were regarding the law or regulation of the government. As this interview reveals, Hunt and Vos stood together against the government which was in opposition to biblical teachings and the church. They held the same position and acted together regarding this matter.

Having examined the life of these two men and their relationship, the next sections will investigate the Korean Covenanters, their opponents, and their covenanting statements.⁵²

⁵⁰ According to the Foreign Mission Board of the RPCNA during their synod meeting in 1941, it seemed that Mr. Vos traveled to Yingkou and Tsitsihar near Harbin quite often to lead the church ministry where mainly two female RP missionaries worked. It says, "How Miss Huston and Miss McCracken carried such a full program is surprising. Mr. Martin and Mr. Vos conducted communions, performed baptisms, adjudicated cases of discipline, and carried responsibility for the oversight of the growing church. When Mr. Martin left the field, Synod's commission was dissolved." *Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 1941 Minutes of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America* (Pittsburgh, PA, The Synod, 1941), 35.

⁵¹ Note that Jack was a nickname that J.G. went by with many of his friends. In the transcript provided by Wheaton College, it seems they struggled to identify who Hunt referred to in this statement. They typed his name as "Jack Voss [?] Dr. Voss [?] at Geneva College" Bruce F. Hunt, interview by Robert Shuster, 1980, retrieved from Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL. (<http://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/trans/104t04.htm> accessed January 20, 2017). For the audio, see <https://media.wheaton.edu/hapi/v1/contents/permalinks/Rb5x9Y2Z/view>.

⁵² Regarding their relationship, in another place, it seems they recognized the ministry of on another. Hunt talked about an organization and their contribution to the needy of Korean Christians. "One of the pressing needs of the church in this area (Korea) is for good evangelical and Reformed literature. This led to the formation of the Reformation Translation Fellowship which has been responsible for the translation

Covenanting in Manchuria in the Twentieth Century

Against the False Worship Forced by the Japanese Empire

It will help the understanding of the situation to first gain understanding of Shinto worship and the imminent situation in the 1930s in Korea and Manchuria. As a Korean church historian wrote, “One of the worst persecutions of Korean Christianity was related to the enforced Shinto shrine worship and the subsequent persecution of the churches for their disobedience.”⁵³ Shinto shrines or *Jinjas*, places to perform Shinto worship, were erected across the whole Korea peninsula.⁵⁴ So, what is the definition of Shinto and its worship? Hunt explained that “the word *Shinto* means ‘the way of the god’ or ‘the way of the gods.’” He continues to say,

The ceremonies are usually conducted at a *Jinja*, which means a ‘spirit house.’ Shinto priests often officiated even at ‘patriotic Shinto’ [as opposed to ‘religious Shinto’] ceremonies, calling spirits, and addressing words of comfort or prayers of adoration or thanksgiving and petition to them.⁵⁵

From the early 1930s, Japan began forcing Korean Christians to participate in Shinto worship and insisted that this was not so much a religious act, but an act of patriotism. The principle was as follows: “A Japanese out of duty as a citizen must honor the ancestors of the emperor. This cannot be regarded as a religion. It is a ritual. It is the ceremony of gratitude to ancestors.”⁵⁶ They tried to distinguish between “state Shinto” as non-religious patriotism and “religious Shinto.”⁵⁷ Hunt explained that both western missionaries and Korean Christians were not initially concerned about the requirement because this distinction was being made. Later, however, people increasingly recognized that this is “the worship of deified spirits at the shrines,” and “spirits are being worshiped in these ceremonies.”⁵⁸ Vos also raised his voice to say, “It (Shinto worship) is an extreme form of idolatry which robs the true God of the honor

of several of the best known Reformed books, as well as other literature, into Chinese. Most of the educated people in Korea can read Chinese.” Bruce F. Hunt, *For a Testimony* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), Fourth plate. Reformation Translation Fellowship is “One of J. G. Vos’s important contributions to 20th century Christianity.” Vos and Dr. Charles Chao founded this organization and J. G. Vos continued to serve and assist their work during his professorship and retirement years. (<http://bluebanner.org/about> accessed January 15, 2017).

⁵³ Sang Gyoo Lee, “The Church in Korea: Persecution and Subsequent Growth,” *Unio cum Christo* 1 no.1-2 (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Theological Seminary): 282.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 282. In 1935, There were 322 shrines; at the time of the Korean’s independent in 1945, the number had reached 1,141. Those numbers are originally adopted from “*Bulletin of Chosen, 1925-1945* (n.p.: Office of Chosen Governor General, 1945).”

⁵⁵ Blair and Hunt, *The Korean Pentecost*, 104. Compare Johannes G. Vos, *A Christian Introduction to Religions of the World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965) 53-61. In a study of world religions, Vos gives a chapter to “*Shinto, the Deification of Japan.*”

⁵⁶ John T. Kim, *Church Growth and Religious Culture in Korea* (Chicago, Ill: Calvin Institute of World Missions, 1996), 113–114. The citation is originally from Daniel Clarence Holtom, *The National Faith of Japan: A Study in Modern Shinto* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1938), 69.

⁵⁷ Vos, *A Christian Introduction to Religions of the World*, 57.

⁵⁸ Blair and Hunt, *The Korean Pentecost*, 104.

which is His alone.”⁵⁹ Whether Christians, in public or private, should perform “the ceremonies of bowing reverently to the Emperor’s portrait and of bowing reverently in the direction of the imperial palace” was a critical issue that faced the church.⁶⁰ Imperial Japan forced the issue aggressively and sought to control the Christians.⁶¹ The cost was great if people or organizations refused to take part in Shrine worship. Individuals were denounced as unpatriotic and suffered many disadvantages — like losing their jobs or getting expelled from school. Many were put in prison. Pastors were either forced to resign or were ejected from their churches, and churches and Christian institutions were forced to close.⁶² The oppression of Christians was becoming increasingly harsh as World War II intensified. Hunt depicted the situation during that time in this graphic description:

The penalties for non-attendance or opposition to Shinto ceremonies were of varying degrees. In a police state, where almost everything one does depends on permits, there were countless ways in which public officials could slow down, and make almost ineffective, anything attempted by one who was in their “black books” for failing to cooperate in Shinto ceremonies. In the war years of rationing, one’s stomach was touched and life itself threatened by the mere refusal of a ration card to a “non-cooperator.” Children were beaten or expelled from school and even imprisoned for refusing to bow at shrines ... Slapping and kicking were almost the routine treatment for Koreans being interrogated by the police. Prison diets were intended to barely sustain life. Many were tortured and beaten into insensibility. Heatless cells caused much suffering. Lice, fleas, and bedbugs were the prisoners’ constant companions ... jailers’ sadistic delight in making life miserable for prisoners all combined to cause one to prefer a quick martyr’s death to the prolonged living death, no less a martyr’s, which was the daily experience of those who survived.⁶³

Among the churches, there were not only non-conformists, but also conformists, and the conflicts between them increased. In 1938, the Japanese government finally forced the biggest denomination, the Korean Presbyterian Church, to stand on their side. At the 27th General Assembly in September 1938, the church sustained a motion affirming that “obeisance at the Shinto shrines is not a religious act and is not in conflict with Christian teaching and should be performed as a matter of first importance thus manifesting patriotic zeal.”⁶⁴ This decision immediately brought vocal and written protests, including those from Bruce Hunt. But the final result was not in favor of Hunt. He was expelled from his Korean presbytery due to his refusal to cooperate with the civil magistrate’s efforts to control the church. Vos echoed Hunt’s stand when he insisted that “for the civil magistrate to control religion is an infringement of the people’s religious liberty and a usurpation of Christ’s headship over the church.”⁶⁵ The decision of the

⁵⁹ Vos, *A Christian Introduction to Religions of the World*, 58.

⁶⁰ Johannes G. Vos, “Christian Missions and the Civil Magistrate in the Far East,” *Westminster Theological Journal*, no. 3 (1940): 6.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Sang Gyoo Lee, “The Church in Korea”, 282 and Blair and Hunt, *The Korean Pentecost*, 105-107.

⁶³ Blair and Hunt, *The Korean Pentecost*, 107.

⁶⁴ Sang Gyoo Lee, “The Church in Korea”, 282-283. The citation is from Vos, “Christian Missions and the Civil Magistrate in the Far East,” 7-8.

⁶⁵ Vos, “Christian Missions and the Civil Magistrate in the Far East,” 18.

General Assembly was not acceptable to Hunt and Vos, and the sequence of these events launched the birth of the Korean Covenanters in Manchuria.

Against the False Law Forced by the Japanese Empire

Hunt had started his mission work in Harbin, Manchuria in 1936 to serve Korean people in various locations in the area. As Dr. Ung Kyu Pak described, Koreans in Manchuria were a “diaspora.”⁶⁶ They were scattered people who sought land to begin their new life after the Japanese plundered their land and property even before the annexations of 1910 and the following years. There were approximately one million Koreans and thirty million Chinese in Manchuria in the 1930s.⁶⁷ Based on Pak’s research, the Koreans were not welcomed by either the Japanese polices or the Chinese residents. For instance, five Korean churches were torched by bandits in 1935. In terms of Christianity, Korean Christians in Manchuria, then occupied by Japan, were persuaded by Japan’s civil government and practiced Shinto worship without any serious opposition.⁶⁸ Hunt wanted to come to Manchuria and serve the diaspora there. It seems that his ministry began with small meetings, such as Korean worship, and expanded greatly as time went on.⁶⁹

In 1938, after Hunt’s three years of service to Korean Christians, Hunt and his Korean brothers and sisters were confronting difficulties due to their participation in the anti-Shinto shrine worship movement. As stated in the previous chapter, Hunt was expelled by his presbytery in September. In the same month, Manchukuo, a puppet state created by the Japanese in Manchuria, issued the “*Temporary Ordinance for the Control of Religious Temples and Preachers.*” This law allowed that

The civil magistrate may suspend from ecclesiastical office a preacher who opposes local customs, and may cancel a particular church's permission to exist, either because in the magistrate's judgment the existence of such church is contrary to the public welfare, ‘or for other reasons.’⁷⁰

This ordinance recalled the situations faced by 17th-century Scottish Covenanters. In considering the writings of J.G. Vos, one sees how his perspective was colored by his experience in Manchuria. In the preface of *The Scottish Covenanters*, written right after his return to Manchuria in 1939, he said, “Real religious liberty is passing away, and the counterfeit, Erastian toleration, is taking its place. In the face of the present situation, the history of Scottish Covenanters is both illuminating and encouraging.”⁷¹

⁶⁶ Pak, “The Significance of Bruce F. Hunt’s Ministry,” 118.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 118-121.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 121.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 122-123. When Hunt left in Manchuria in 1941, he witnessed that there were 500 covenanted members and the total average attendance of 800 people was spread over 25 little groups or churches under three lay-evangelists.

⁷⁰ Vos, “Christian Missions and the Civil Magistrate in the Far East,” 13.

⁷¹ Vos, *The Scottish Covenanters*, 5. In 1940, Vos wrote: “True religious liberty necessarily includes three elements: (1) freedom of thought and belief; (2) freedom of profession and practice, including freedom to propagate one’s religion among the adherents of other faiths; and (3) freedom to abstain from contrary

In thinking of this analysis in reference to Hunt's situation, it must be realized that a man standing against this Japanese order risked losing his ministry. Most of the foreign missionaries and their denominations wanted to avoid troubles with civil rulers instead of standing against those who forced this unbiblical worship. Vos presented surprising statistics that showed how rarely the church rejected the claims of the Japanese government that they had authority in the religious sphere. He states,

When these claims of the Japanese to supremacy in the sphere of religion came up, about 1938 and in the following years, the missionary body in Manchuria (with which I am best acquainted) was immediately divided on the question of compliance with the demands that the churches apply for *permits to exist*. Perhaps 4 or 5% of the missionaries said, "It is wrong in principle," and refused to sign up or comply with the law in any way. The other 95% were also divided among themselves ... When the deadline came, about 95% of the churches, missionaries and native Christian leaders complied, signed up, and accepted government licenses issued by the Japanese officially "permitting" them to exist and carry on religious work. About 5% or so refused, and hence were regarded by the Japanese as lawbreakers, and, indeed, actually *non-existent* churches, because not licensed by the government. Among those that refused were the Orthodox Presbyterians, the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, the Covenanters, and (for a time) the American Southern Baptists and Canadian Regular Baptists.⁷²

One of the 4 or 5 percent of the missionaries saying "it is wrong in principle" was Hunt. He understood the underlying outcomes of this law. Without permission from the government, people could not be gathered, ministers could not preach, and churches could not hold communion. However, in his later interview, Hunt witnessed that "we had to meet in certain formal places, and we said, 'Jesus has told us to go and preach.' We have that authority. We do not believe that we should ask a government, 'May we preach, may we meet?'"⁷³ Interestingly enough, as Hunt publicly opposed the Japanese government's attempt to control the church and force Shinto worship on Christians, more of the people who fled Korea and were from the broken Korean Presbyterian Church came to him and wanted to join the church in Manchuria. Given this situation, Hunt saw the need of making some "creedal pronouncement" for various opinions among Korean Christians in the matter of the biblical standard of membership, Shinto worship, and the problems with the "patriotic" requirements.⁷⁴

*A Presbyterian Covenant*⁷⁵

practices, not only in the sphere of religion in the strict sense, but in any sphere of life." Vos, "Christian Missions and the Civil Magistrate in the Far East," 2.

⁷² Huston Rose A, and Johannes G. Vos, *The Foreign Missions Conference of North America: A Review of its Fiftieth Annual Report* (Pittsburgh, PA: Evangelical Fellowship, 1944), 30–31. Related to this, the various responses by different denominational bodies in the matter of the shrine issue are presented in Pak's "The Significance of Bruce F. Hunt's Ministry," 105–115.

⁷³ Hunt, Interview by Robert Shuster, 1980.

⁷⁴ Hunt, "Korean Covenanters," 19.

⁷⁵ The story of producing *A Presbyterian Covenant* is relying on Hunt's "Korean Covenanters," 19–20, 37–40.

While Hunt was sensing the need to formulate a creedal pronouncement, God added church members daily to the Korean church.⁷⁶ Setting standards for receiving and disciplining members and for selection church leaders seemed necessary. In particular, the question raised among Korean Christians was framed in this way: “Could Christians who had not formally broken from the compromised church, but who might attend such meetings, be asked to lead?”⁷⁷

For the Chinese Covenanters under Vos, using the standards of church membership, such as covenanting, was mandatory, and its standards were higher than other churches in Manchuria. Their requirements for membership were: (1) complete separation from idolatry; (2) careful observance of the Lord’s Day; (3) evidence of regular church attendance; (4) if unmarried, a solemn promise never to marry an unbeliever; (5) if head of a family, evidence that family worship is held in the home daily. With these obligations, members were asked to profess faith in the doctrines of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.⁷⁸ While this standard provided a good guide for the Korean church, Korean Christians also needed their own unique document reflecting their circumstance and time.

In January 1940, a covenanting statement called *A Presbyterian Covenant* was produced. Male and female male and female Korean lay ministers were involved in producing this document. These lay ministers would include evangelists or women who were non-ordained ministers but worked for and with missionaries. The people gathered at Hunt’s house where they fasted, prayed, discussed issues, and searched for light from the Scriptures on the problem of the requirements of the Japanese government. Finally, after a couple of days, they formulated a statement of covenant based on the first rough draft which Hunt drew up.⁷⁹ According to Hunt, the statement points out “the biblical teaching on shrine worship and the necessity of breaking completely from those who condoned idolatry.”⁸⁰ After they produced the covenant statement, no one who did not consent to this covenant as their own could lead their worship or be employed by the church. Also, non-subscribers of this covenant could not come before the Lord’s Supper or present themselves or their children for baptism. Hunt himself established his pastoral relationship depending on the matter of subscribing to the covenant. Regarding this covenant, *The Independent Board Bulletin* of 1942 reported that “In Manchuria a Covenant was drawn up and agreed to by many individuals binding themselves to refuse obeisance as idolatry and to refuse registration because only god, not the State, is the Head of Church.” The bulletin continued to report a significant fact as related to this paper: “The Covenanters, The Orthodox Presbyterian and The Independent Board of Missions, led in this effort and supported it.”⁸¹ This reveals, once again, that the RPCNA (Covenanter) missionaries, including J.G. Vos, contributed to the producing and exercising of *A Presbyterian Covenant*.

⁷⁶ Hunt, “Korean Covenanters,” 19.

⁷⁷ Blair and Hunt, *The Korean Pentecost*, 116.

⁷⁸ Vos, *Our Mission in Manchuria*, 11. Vos said, “These standards are distinctly higher than those of most churches in Manchuria, and it has been found very difficult to maintain them; but it is better to hold high standards and build solidly than to have a rapid growth with an unconverted, worldly membership.”

⁷⁹ Blair and Hunt, *The Korean Pentecost*, 117. Compare to Hunt, “Korean Covenanters,” 19.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 117–118.

⁸¹ Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, *The Independent Board Bulletin*. (October 1942) cited from Pak, “The Significance of Bruce F. Hunt’s Ministry,” 127.

The next step in this paper will be to analyze the covenant statement made by the Korean Covenanters. There are a total of seven statements or phrases in this declaration, along with the introduction and conclusion. *A Presbyterian Covenant* also includes a total of 82 Scripture proof texts: 16 texts for the first statement, 5 for the second statement, 9 for the third statement, 32 for the fourth statement, 9 for the fifth statement, 6 for the sixth statement, and 5 for the seventh statement. The introduction begins with concern about the difficulty of the current church in Korea due to apostasy and confusion in discipline. Further, it encourages solidarity among non-conformists. Then, seven statements are each introduced with the following words: “We believe the following to be Scriptural teaching on the sin of idolatry which we must flee from.”

The length of each statement varies. The shortest statement, the second, has only one sentence with 44 words; the longest, the last statement, consists of 139 words. The statements emphasize the following subjects:

1. The Christian’s view on the dead
2. Forbidding the inquiring of, seeking, or calling up of the dead
3. Forbidding the putting of trust, glory, and power in any man except the God-Man Jesus Christ
4. Forbidding the serving of any other gods
5. Forbidding the worship of the likeness of any creature
6. Forbidding the building of temples for the worship of any other god
7. Guidelines for discipline in the case of those engaging in idolatry.

As can be seen, all the statements are related to false worship, with a view to the issues pertaining to Shinto worship. The lesson from the statements in their context is that Shinto ceremonies—including “a god house, priesthood, prayer, offerings and a very real recognition of gods and spirits”—should be judged and not participated in by Christians who believe God’s command, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:3)”⁸² In conclusion, the undersigned were to declare and affirm what they believe about church government, the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, and the Westminster Confession of Faith with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as the system of doctrine in accordance with the Scriptures. *A Presbyterian Covenant* concludes with the language of declaration or covenant, “By this subscription we do receive, believe, and do covenant before God, by His help, to keep, preach, and defend them.”⁸³

It must be remembered that there were five hundred baptized members and, on average, eight hundred in attendance at worship every Lord’s day among the twenty-five groups in Manchuria that subscribed to this covenant.⁸⁴ Thus, the signers of the covenant represented a broad base of believers. Nonetheless, much suffering followed the signing of the covenant. Several writers of this covenant and more than seventy subscribers were imprisoned; Hunt was one of them. *A Presbyterian Covenant*, and the organization of groups based on this covenant, became a part of

⁸² Vos, *A Christian Introduction to Religions of the World*, 58–59.

⁸³ Hunt, “Korean Covenanters,” 40.

⁸⁴ Blair and Hunt, *The Korean Pentecost*, 118.

the charges against them. For Hunt, this document became “one of the pieces of evidence” presented in the court against him.⁸⁵

Significance and Implications of the Covenant

In the last section of this paper, readers will see significant implications to be found in the covenanting by Korean Christians in Manchuria.

First, *A Presbyterian Covenant* asserted biblical guidelines for good and evil in Christian practice. This covenant was a doctrinal statement; the writers of the covenant hoped that “the open doctrinal statement of the covenant clarified issues in the minds of our Christians.”⁸⁶

Second, the covenant helped the Christians who entered into this covenant “spiritually and mentally to withstand their enemies.”⁸⁷ Not only for the direction of biblical teachings but also for the direction of the life of the church, “the practice of signing covenants or bands” led to their mutual protection and the defense of Protestantism in the midst of such persecution.⁸⁸

Third, the covenant showed the relationship between the church and the state by standing against forced Shinto worship. As Vos expressed in his book *The Scottish Covenanters*, the church has “independence and intrinsic powers, otherwise the state by implication does not have unlimited functions and authority.”⁸⁹

Fourth, there is one important discrepancy to address regarding the use of the Westminster Confession of Faith in Korea. Beginning with the first national presbytery of the Korean Presbyterian Church at its organization on September 17, 1907, the Korean Presbyterian Church did not adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Westminster Larger Catechism. Instead, it adopted the so-called Twelve Articles derived from the Indian Free Presbyterian Church along with only the Westminster Shorter Catechism.⁹⁰ The first Korean Presbyterian denomination that officially adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith was *Haptong*, in 1963.⁹¹ However, as this study has revealed, it is inaccurate to say that the Westminster Confession of Faith was not adopted anywhere in Korea until 1963. As has been seen, the Korean Covenanters had already adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1941.

Fifth, the covenant, holding to the Westminster Confession as the reformed heritage, became the heritage for the confession of faith of the Korean Church. Several Korean church historians and theologians take a critical view of the fact that the Korean church has not yet created her

⁸⁵ Hunt, “Korean Covenanters,” 19.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Vos, *The Scottish Covenanters*, 184–185.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁰ Chi Mo Hong, “The Influence of the Westminster Confession on the Korean Presbyterian Church” in *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century: Essays in Remembrance of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly*, ed. J. Ligon Duncan and W. Duncan Rankin (Fearn: Mentor, 2004), 2: 399–402.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 406.

own creeds of faith, theology, and Christian culture. The production of *A Presbyterian Covenant* by the Korean Covenanters offers a significant response to that concern.⁹²

Lastly, the covenant not only influenced Korean Christians in Manchuria but also those who were in Korea. The story of these Covenanters and their boldness against Shinto worship and the Japanese government encouraged Korean Christians in other places as well.⁹³ This was also the intention of Hunt and the writers of this covenant. Hunt wrote,

We wish that it had had a chance to be presented to Christians all over Korea and Japan; if the churches in China must also face these issues, we feel that some such covenant—which would bring the matter before every individual rather than leave it only to church courts and officers to decide—would greatly strengthen the church. “For if the trumpet give an uncertain voice, who shall prepare himself for war? (1 Cor. 14:8)”⁹⁴

Conclusion

The exercise of covenanting from the Scriptures and church history, a deeper study on Shintoism, understanding the distinction between the Church and the State, and the comparison of Korean Covenanters and Scottish Covenanters would be important areas for further study. This paper has focused less on the Korean Covenanters themselves and more on exploring the historical background of the Korean Covenanters under two leading figures of the Covenanter churches in Manchuria. The fact that the accessible primary resources for the Korean Covenanters are limited is one reason for the focus taken. Nevertheless, observing their history and the story of their faith in Christ should challenge Christians living in the twenty-first century, especially Christians in Korea.

The world in its economy, science, modern philosophy, and theology has changed. Spiritual warfare is ubiquitous in social and political issues. However, the Word of God, which endures forever, remains the only rule to direct all human beings in how they glorify and enjoy God in faith and life.⁹⁵ With conviction of the truth and power of the Word of God, many faithful Christians have fought against what they could not and should not obey; instead they have faithfully followed the path of Scripture. The Korean Covenanters, along with Bruce Hunt and J. G. Vos, are examples of such unwavering faith as they stood against the persecuting government. The reasons for persecution are different from time to time, and churches and Christians in the present day face another form of persecution as they speak out in truth against homosexuality, abortion, militant Islam, and many other issues common around the world. If necessary and where appropriate, like the Korean Covenanters before them, Christians should gladly engage in covenanting, “confessing Christ and His Lordship” in a particular cultural context.⁹⁶

⁹² Pak, “The Significance of Bruce F. Hunt’s Ministry,” 130–131.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 131–135. Hunt stated that this covenant was later used by other groups throughout Manchuria and Korea. At his later trip to the southern tip of Korea in 1946, he also found this covenant in use in Pusan. See Blair and Hunt, *The Korean Pentecost*, 118.

⁹⁴ Hunt, “Korean Covenanters,” 19.

⁹⁵ See the answer of Westminster Shorter Catechism question 2 and 1 Peter 1:24.

⁹⁶ Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, *The Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, A-69.

How Did We Get Where We Are?: A Cultural and Biblical Analysis of the Sexual Revolution

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The substance of this paper was given at the 2015 Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary Biblical Counseling Institute Conference entitled “Sex, Sin, and Salvation: God’s Grace in a Fallen World”.

God is the great historian. He is the one who has planned history; He is the one who providentially carries out history; He is the only one with full knowledge of history.

Nonetheless, the faithful churches of the present day cannot remain silent in evaluating the present historical moment. Searching questions must be asked: Where is the church today? Where is society today? What has the church contributed to the present societal situation? In the climate of the 21st century, any faithful analysis will present a gloomy answer to these questions. As Robert Bork has observed, society finds itself as a modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah.¹ The tragedy of Sodom and Gomorrah, and in particular the tragedy of straying from Biblical sexual ethics, has forcefully reached modern-day society. Today’s culture is reeling from Satanic opposition on the issue of sexuality and people’s identities.

The evidence for this opposition is endless. The gay 90s at the end of the 1800s led to the roaring 20s and the flappers, which led to the sexual revolution of the 1960s, with its sensuality and free sex. Today, the LGBT agenda has been enforced by the 2015 *Obergefell vs. Hodges* decision of the U.S. Supreme Court that legalizes gay marriage. The years since that decision have only further revealed the onward movement of the progressive LGBT agenda.

What has brought this sexual transformation about? This paper seeks to answer this question in reference to the progression – or regression – in sexual morality in the Western world today.

A Heritage Given

To understand these developments, it is necessary to analyze the religious history of the western world. First of all, one must realize that the likes of the United States and Canada were never Christian nations. They are certainly not like covenanting Scotland of the 1600s. They are not even Zambia of 1991, where inaugurated president Frederick Jacob Titus Chiluba proclaimed, “I declare, today, that I submit myself as president to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I likewise submit the government and the entire nation of Zambia to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.”²

¹ Robert Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* (New York: Reagan Books, 1996).

² “FJT Chiluba,” YouTube video, 3:48, posted by “Gilbert Kamwengo,” August 6, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5A-bxajOBRg>.

Nevertheless, even while these western powers maintain no true Christian identity, Biblical influence on the United States and Canada has been real. There are Bible verses on public buildings. There are paid chaplains in the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States Congress. Moving further back in history, an even more pervasive religious influence can be seen. The national anthem of the United States emerges as a case study here. Francis Scott Key wrote those famous words, initially entitled *The Defense of Fort McHenry*, on September 13, 1814, during the War of 1812, when he saw Fort McHenry under attack.³ Recall the well-known opening lyrics of this anthem:

O say can you see by the dawn's early light
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

These opening words are familiar. But consider how Key's poem ends:

O thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their lov'd home and the war's desolation!
*Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n-rescued land
Praise the power that hath made and preserved us a nation.
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto- "In God is our trust."*
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!⁴

The final stanza offers a significant divine perspective. It speaks of "the heav'n rescued land" and proclaims, "Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation" in this national anthem of the United States. There is no doubt as to the God to which Key was referring.

In case there is any doubt as to Key's theological perspective, another hymn of his, *Lord, with Glowing Heart I'd Praise Thee*, offers fuller perspective:

Lord, with glowing heart I'd praise Thee,
For the bliss Thy love bestows,
For the pard'ning grace that saves me,
And the peace that from it flows.
Help, O God, my weak endeavor;
This dull soul to rapture raise:
Thou must light the flame, or never
Can my love be warmed to praise.

³ Delaplaine, *Francis Scott Key*, 172.

⁴ This version of the lyrics can be found in Edward S. Delaplaine, *Francis Scott Key: Life and Times* (Stuarts Draft, VA: American Foundation Publications), 169-170. Emphasis added.

Praise, my soul, the God that sought thee,
Wretched wanderer, far astray;
Found thee lost, and kindly brought thee
From the paths of death away;
Praise, with love's devoutest feeling,
Him Who saw thy guilt-born fear,
And the light of hope revealing,
Bade the blood-stained cross appear.

Praise thy Savior God that drew thee
To that cross, new life to give,
Held a blood-sealed pardon to thee,
Bade thee look to Him and live.
Praise the grace whose threats alarmed thee,
Roused thee from thy fatal ease;
Praise the grace whose promise warmed thee,
Praise the grace that whispered peace.

Lord, this bosom's ardent feeling
Vainly would my lips express.
Low before Thy footstool kneeling,
Deign Thy sup-pliers' pray'r to bless:
Let Thy grace, my soul's chief treasure,
Love's pure flame within me raise;
And, since words can never measure,
Let my life show forth Thy praise.⁵

Quite simply, the God Francis Scott Key proclaimed was the God of the national anthem, the triune God of the Bible, the God of the Pilgrims and the Puritans.

Official legal statements of the United States spoke with similar confidence. Consider the 1892 unanimous United States Supreme Court decision in the case of *Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States*, written by David Josiah Brewer. Here are some of the excerpts from this case.

If we examine the constitutions of the various States, we find in them constant recognition of religious obligations. Every constitution of every one of the forty-five States contains language which either directly or by clear implication recognizes a profound reverence for religion and an assumption that its influence in all human affairs is essential to the well-being of the community.⁶

Later, in reference to the free exercise clause of the constitution, Brewer says,

⁵ Francis Scott Key, "Lord, with Glowing Heart I'd Praise Thee" (No. 80) in *The Trinity Hymnal* (Philadelphia: Great Commission Publications, 1990).

⁶ *Church of the Holy Trinity vs. United States*, 143 U.S. 457 (1892). Quoted in Richard Cameron Wylie, "This is a Christian Nation: Decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Case of Holy Trinity Church versus The United States with Annotations" (Pittsburgh, National Reform Association), 5.

There is no dissonance in these declarations. There is a universal language pervading them all, having one meaning; they affirm and reaffirm that this is a religious nation. These are not individual sayings, declarations of private persons; They are organic utterances. They speak the voice of the entire people. While because of a general recognition of this truth, the question has seldom been presented to the courts, yet we find that in *Updegraph v. Commonwealth*, 11 S. & R. 394, 400, it was decided that Christianity, general Christianity, is, and always has been, a part of the common law of Pennsylvania; . . . not Christianity with an established church and tithes and spiritual courts, but Christianity with liberty of conscience to all men.⁷

Later, the opinion reads, “[T]he case assumes that we are a Christian people, and the morality of the country is deeply ingrafted upon Christianity and not upon the doctrines of worship of those imposters.”⁸ The opinion continues, “Truly that the Christian religion is part of the common law of Pennsylvania ... These and many other matters which might be noticed, add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a Christian nation.”⁹

From the pen of hymn-writer Francis Scott Key to the pen of the United States Supreme Court, the Christian influence on the nation is undeniable.

A Heritage Lost

With this heritage, why does western culture look more like a modern Sodom and Gomorrah than a culture that reflects the Biblical and Puritan thinking which predominated American life in both religious and political realms? Quite simply, the church has lost its savor. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ has become like tasteless salt and slowly lost its influence in this nation. More specifically, the church's three great enemies, or what has been called "the unholy trinity", stand out as the cause. Looking at the influence of the world, the flesh, and the devil provides the key to understanding how the heritage described above has been lost.

The Devil's Attack

The first enemy is Satan. The real, personal devil, the father of lies, has worked throughout history to distort God's holy Word and confront the church. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Garden of Eve. “Did God really say?” is the tempter's great question. In Genesis 3, he questions the prospect of death, Eve gives in, and Satan is shown a liar as death comes to the world.

Such deceit only began the devil's temptations throughout history. You can imagine Noah's preaching of judgment, and the Satanic responses that would doubt this gloomy prospect. Or consider Abraham, whom the devil could tempt to doubt whether one man could truly bless all the nations of the world. In the law, God promises in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27 death and curse for covenanting with surrounding nations. The Satanic temptation, however, corrupts the people, they sleep with God's enemies, and destruction comes.

⁷ Wylie, *Christian Nation*, 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*

In Psalm 2, God promises to establish His king on Zion's hill (Ps. 2:4-6). The Satanic nations cry out against this (v1-3), but God promises to gain the divine last laugh (v4). Ultimately, who wins? In Ephesians 1, Philippians 2, and Colossians 2, Paul makes the answer clear. Jesus is risen from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:20). Christ not only has seen His people's sins nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14), He has not only been raised for justification (Rom. 4:25), but He has also made public display over his enemies (Col. 2:15), including all the demonic forces that exist in the universe. Every knee must bow before that exalted name (Phil. 2:10). Quite simply, the mediatorial reign of Jesus Christ is a living reality. All history hinges on the fact that Jesus is now risen, glorified in heaven, seated at the Father's right hand and certain to triumph over all His enemies, the last one, of course, being death.

All of this is true. But as is seen in Romans 1:18-32, men and women suppress the truth in unrighteousness. It is this departure from truth that is at the heart of the sexual regression in society. As Peter Jones has argued in *The God of Sex*, truth and sexuality are inextricably bound together.¹⁰

Much of this truth-denial is tied to the historicity of Genesis. Today, in post-Enlightenment, post-Renaissance, post-modern Western culture, Satan has convinced people that Genesis 1 through 11 is mythology. These mythological ideas have arrived via the evolutionary worldview that has crept into the world and the church. Even men like B. B. Warfield struggled with some of the influences and thoughts that come out of deism and evolutionary thinking.¹¹ Disastrously, however, these ideas destroyed the liberal church, and they are destroying evangelicalism today. The church must defend that this Genesis is time and space history.¹²

This Satanic-led theological decline is well analyzed by C. Gregg Singer in his book, *A Theological Interpretation of American History*. In the introduction, Singer writes:

It is not the purpose of these essays to present a history of the United States nor of American Christianity, but rather to portray the influence of theology and the changing doctrines in the life of the church on the pattern of American political, constitutional, social, and economic development. This book is born of the conviction that ideas in general do have consequences, and that theological ideas have tremendous consequences in the life of a nation. *Indeed, it is impossible to understand completely the history of the nation apart from the philosophies and theologies which lie at the heart of its intellectual life.*¹³

Indeed, the philosophies and theologies of the church in the United States and Canada influence the intellectual lives of these nations. Singer's chapter titles are telling:

¹⁰ Peter Jones, *The God of Sex* (Colorado Springs: Victor, 2006).

¹¹ For more on Warfield and evolution, see David Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: The Majestic Testimony: 1869-1929*, volume 2 of David Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 256-259.

¹² As an example of a recent scholarly exploration into this topic, consider William VanDoodewaard, *The Quest for the Historical Adam* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015).

¹³ Charles Gregg Singer, *A Theological Interpretation of American History* (Greenville, SC: A Press, 1994), 1.

- Chapter 1 – Introduction
- Chapter 2 – Deism in Colonial Life
- Chapter 3 – Transcendentalism and the Rise of Modern Democracy
- Chapter 4 – Social Darwinism: Its Theological Background and Political Implications
- Chapter 5 – The Social Gospel and Its Political Effects on American Life
- Chapter 6 – Theological Liberalism after 1920 and Its Political Consequences
- Chapter 7 – The New Deal and Its Consequences
- Chapter 8 – World War Two and After
- Chapter 9 – Conservatism and Liberalism, Theological and Political, Their Ebb and Flow, 1950 to 1980¹⁴

Throughout the book, Singer pinpoints the lies that that have invaded the church and the culture.

In view of this onslaught of lies, one must recall Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 1:20-31. Here, Paul presents the gospel as the truth, a truth revealed in the foolishness of the cross. "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (v22-25). Those not known as wise are chosen by God and "bring to nothing the things that are" (v28).

The church often forgets these glorious truths and gains a distorted view of God. Ultimately, one's view of God and truth dictate one's view of reality and, thus, one's view of the family, the church, and the state – and, of course, sexuality. It truly matters how a society perceives God and God's interaction with creation. Satan wants us to substitute his lies for the truth about God, reality, family, church, state, and sexuality. These lies of the evolutionary mindset are the first enemy, the great lie, the great Screwtape pursuing humanity in the modern, post-modern era.

The World's Seduction

The second enemy, the world, works in great synergy with Satan. Just as with Satan, the work of the world can be seen throughout Biblical history.

God warned His covenant people not to make covenants with pagans (Exod. 23:32). The people failed, they wandered in the wilderness, and He culled out that generation. The promise of entering the land fell to the children (Num. 14:26-36). However, that generation arrived on the edge of the land and there received the second giving of the Law. In that giving, they were given that great Old Covenant confession, the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-9). There, they were required to confess "the Lord, the Lord our God," lay the Word on their hearts, and teach the Word to their children. In Deuteronomy 7, the call is then reiterated: the people were not to make covenants with surrounding pagans (Deut. 7:3).

In one way, Joshua, Judges, and the other historical books, the wisdom literature, and the prophets are basically an exposition of the history of the Jews failing to heed that warning.

¹⁴ Singer, *American History*, table of contents.

In the New Testament, the warning is the same, as God warns the new covenant people not to be unequally yoked with pagans. Consider the exhortation of 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1,

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

‘I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.
Therefore go out from their midst,
and be separate from them, says the Lord,
and touch no unclean thing;
then I will welcome you,
and I will be a father to you,
and you shall be sons and daughters to me,
says the Lord Almighty.’

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

The call is clear: The New Testament saints have the same obligation as the Old Testament saints to walk in holiness and separate themselves from the world.

Other New Testament passages present similar themes. In James 3:13-18, there is a wisdom from above, and there is a wisdom from below. The wisdom from above is “full of good fruits” (v17). The wisdom from below is fleshly, demonic, earthly, and does not accomplish the righteousness that God requires. In James 4, the theme is similar: friendship with the world is spiritual adultery. James writes (v4), “You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

In the church of Pergamum, Revelation 2:12-17 provides another example. There, Christ rebuked the Nicolaitans, the modern, updated Balaam. They embraced pagan practices, and Christ’s rebuke was firm. God never allows His church to be defeated by pagans, unless the church starts doing some of the pagan practices, and then God will remove the church’s lampstand. To commune with the pagans is to participate in the failure of Balaam. Only the power of the Spirit could stop Balaam’s agreement with Barak to curse Israel (Numbers 23-24). The church that makes common cause with unbelievers in religious matters is in deep trouble.

What has Christ done with the world’s opposition? In 1 Corinthians 1, as discussed above, God’s wisdom is unveiled against fleshly wisdom. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul declares, “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.” Every opinion against the God is taken captive to the Savior. In Colossians 2, the incarnate Son of God, through his baptism, through his circumcision, nails His people’s sins on the cross. Hallelujah! Christians are bound for glory, because of the work of Christ. In Colossians 2, there is also a public display at the cross. Above the cross, the words “the King of the Jews” appeared in three languages: Greek, Aramaic, and Latin (John 19:19-21).

Here, the Savior who promised paradise (Luke 23:43) also made public display of all nations of the world and their demonic forces. He is King.

How does the church relate to this truth? How should the Biblical Counseling movement relate to this truth? The question could be posed in this way: What is the relationship of general revelation to special revelation and common grace to saving grace? This issue confronts God's people in science, and especially the social sciences. The Biblical Counseling movement is not a group of obscurantists running around trying to hide from the truth, avoid the world, and ignore unbelievers. No, instead, the Biblical Counseling movement seeks to avoid pagan culture that is trying to destroy the church.

The modern church appears to be in love with power. The power the church sees is often in regard to the physical sciences. Much of science has offered great progress. Indeed, many early scientists were Christians. People see the great progress of science. But they must remember that science, even good science, is small "t" *truth*, to use the language of Francis Schaeffer.¹⁵ It is always tentative, cumulative, and imperfect. It is man's observation of the world apart from Scripture. The Bible, however, is capital "T" *truth*. It is sure, eternal, and complete. It is God's special, infallible, inerrant revelation, given through the Holy Spirit and saving grace to the world. The triune God who sends His Son as the second Adam to save his people is not accessible through general revelation and common grace. Only the Holy Spirit provides such knowledge. The truths of the Trinity, the incarnation, and justification by faith alone through the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ are inherent to special revelation.

The important dichotomy between special and general revelation proves particularly important in the realm of the social sciences. The goal of the social sciences – a pale shadow of the hard sciences – truly is societal restructuring. Many scholars have presented arguments that reveal the religious yet anti-Christian roots of sociology. In the French revolution, really the starting point in the history of sociology, Immanuel Kant and others in France wanted to create a new society. Their sociology was not descriptive, but prescriptive.¹⁶ Christian Smith's book *The Sacred Project of American Sociology* shows that American sociology is literally a religious endeavor.¹⁷ In *Moral Darwinism: How We Became Hedonists*, Benjamin Wiker describes how this concept of evolution, coming out of deism, produces a depersonalized universe.¹⁸

In battling this worldly attack, the church must remember that this universe is not a mechanical universe. The regularity of this universe is because of the Noahic covenant. God made a promise, and this promise is in Christ, that there is going to be regularity. This truth contrasts with the social science which has provided society an evolutionary view of man.

The World and Sexuality

This worldly attack is nowhere clearer than in the realm of sexuality. Sexuality has become satanically twisted. Dr. Judith Reisman has done much research on this issue, largely in

¹⁵ See Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1981), 19-21.

¹⁶ Much of this history can be traced in the appendix of the authors' re-published work: *The Sword and the Shovel: The Battle for the Biblical Family* (Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant Publications, forthcoming).

¹⁷ Christian Smith, *The Sacred Project of American Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁸ Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

response to the event of her daughter being molested by an older boy. Reisman began to wonder, “Where did this trend come from?”

Reisman’s research led her to study the impact of pornography on culture. She published *Images of Children, Crime, and Violence in Playboy, Penthouse, and Hustler*,¹⁹ a scathing depiction of the horror of the culture of pornographic magazines. She also wrote, with Edward Eichel, *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud: The Indoctrination of a People*.²⁰ In *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud*, she unveiled the horrific practices of Kinsey performing sexual experiments – crimes – on children. Dr. Lester Caplan, in correspondence with Reisman, argues, “One person could not do this to so many children – these children had to be held down or subject to strapping down, otherwise they would not respond willingly.”²¹ In 1991, she wrote “*Soft Porn*” *Plays Hardball: Its Tragic Effects on Women, Children and the Family*.²² This work sent a desperate pornographic industry after Reisman. Later, with Charles Johnson, she did a paper called “Partner Solicitation Language as a Reflection of Male Sexual Orientation,”²³ in which she addressed the issue of pornography from her communications background.

In another work, *Kinsey: Crimes & Consequences*, she concludes:

Mothers, fathers, parents and future parents must be aware that through his using “technically” or “scientifically trained observers,” Kinsey, his colleagues and supporters have aggressively removed America’s founding protections and laws for women and children and the men who love them. The time has come to dismantle the elite’s “Grand Scheme” based upon Kinsey’s fraudulent model of human sexuality from our national establishments and from the lives of our children.²⁴

The church and society must realize that Kinsey was a dishonest pan-sexualist²⁵ who knew no bounds of right and wrong. He was a personal deviant who deliberately perverted a people in the name of purportedly objective science. He and his staff committed crimes of molesting children under the guise of research and under the protection of the Indiana University at Bloomington campus. This scam received significant funding from the Rockefeller Foundation.²⁶ Kinsey and his companions pulled off one of the biggest heists in history, one of the most incredible quodlibetical obfuscations of reality in history in general and academic history in particular. However, God is not mocked; Kinsey’s death stemmed from apparent sexual self-abuse.²⁷

¹⁹Judith Reisman, *Images of Children, Crime and Violence in Playboy, Penthouse, and Hustler* (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House, 1997).

²⁰ Lafayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers, 1990.

²¹ See Reisman, *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud*, 36-42. The quotation comes from page 40.

²²Lafayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers, 1991.

²³ Judith A. Reisman, & Charles B. Johnson, *Partner Solicitation Language as a Reflection of Male Sexual Orientation* (1995). Accessed February 2018.
http://www.drjudithreisman.com/archives/Reisman-Johnson_Study.pdf

²⁴ Reisman, *Crimes and Consequences*, 313.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7-13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 29, 200-201.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 76-279.

The context of this major historical development is the whole eugenics movement: breeding people like animals under the vision of Margaret Sanger and Planned Parenthood.²⁸ This movement was connected to Nazism and Communism, as shown in one of its prominent leaders, Hermann J. Muller. After teaching at the University of Texas, Muller left in the early 1930s and went to Germany in spite of having a Jewish mother. He worked with the Nazis and then moved over to Leningrad to work with the communists. He later returned to the University of Indiana at Bloomington, where Kinsey was working. The eugenics movement wanted to get rid of bad people, like southern Europeans, Jews, or other “defective” people. That is the background of how the sexual revolution is tied up with the eugenics movement.²⁹

The same undercurrent of revolution has taken place in reference to the homosexual movement. Social commentator Paul E. Rondeau explores the world’s attack in his 2002 article, “Selling Homosexuality to America.” He writes,

Gay rights is not about the attainment of truth nor social justice but the achievement of power. The battle centers on the control of public discourse through marketing and persuasion to shape what society thinks about and how they think about it. Homosexual activists envision that a decision is ultimately made without society ever realizing that it had been purposely conditioned to arrive at a conclusion that it thinks is its own.³⁰

Unfortunately, the mass marketing has worked. In the early 1900s much of the movement became tied in with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and later with the American Law Institute (ALI). The goal of the ALI was said to be to “clarify and simplify the law to better adapt to social needs”.³¹ Behind this vague expression, however, were advocates who believed in evolutionary law and sociological jurisprudence, that there is no fixed law and that law is whatever society thinks.³² In conjunction with Kinsey, these so-called legal experts began to defend and push the agenda of sexual liberation. What were previously known as sexual crimes began to be normalized.³³

Thus, pushed by the above academic lies, forced down people’s throats by the iron fists of ACLU-manipulated courts, popular opinion in America now is at a Romans 1:32 level – not only do they do such things, but they gave hearty approval to those who do. The sum total of this movement is not a mere changing of a few laws. Instead, it reveals the loss of gospel character. It is this downturn that is expressed in the aptly-titled book by social commentator Charles Sykes: *A Nation of Victims: The Decay of the American Character*.³⁴

²⁸ See *ibid.*, 179-180 for some discussion of Planned Parenthood; See *ibid.*, 259-283 for discussion of the relation of this movement to the eugenics movement.

²⁹ See *ibid.*, 291-305 for the discussion of Muller and Kinsey.

³⁰ Paul Rondeau, “Selling Homosexuality to America,” *Regent University Law Review* (2001-2002): 443-485. The quotation comes from 485.

³¹ Reisman, *Crimes and Consequences*, 188.

³² *Ibid.*, 189-190.

³³ See *ibid.*, 187-199 for a discussion of this entire phenomenon.

³⁴ Charles Sykes, *A Nation of Victims: The Decay of the American Character* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992).

What Kinsey brought, however, was just the beginning of a perverted sexual transformation. Due to pressure from the homosexual community, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM) removed homosexuality as a mental illness in 1973. In 1995, the DSM-5 removed sadism and pedophilia as disorders.³⁵ Such thinking drives people to be comfortable with sadist and pedophilic tendencies – as long as they are not personally bothered by them. In the end, with such thinking, pedophilia is not a crime or a mental illness, let alone a sin.

The modern church inadvertently helps the cause of the world in this way, and makes it worse, by becoming unduly worldly and adopting the standards of the successful pagans next door, whether in methods of church growth or in picking a missionary for the foreign field. Such tendencies reveal that the church begins to view the manipulated data of so-called social science as a new form of revelation on a par with the Bible. The church gladly barter away its birthright of the Word and Spirit for a manmade stew made up of the social sciences, especially psychology and state-licensed sex therapists. Other churches wrongly withdraw from the world, waiting to be raptured out of the suffering, not realizing that God's people must suffer with Christ. Still other churches focus on becoming the moral majority and not existing as Christ's bride.

All of these failures reveal that the mediatorial reign of Christ is being ignored by the church. Instead of staying in the arms of the heavenly bridegroom who alone can produce the fruit of the Spirit, the church sleeps with the enemy and gives birth to deformed churches which look a lot like their father, the devil. In other words, they are synagogues of Satan (cf. Rev. 2:9; 3:9).

One expression of this development is the emergent church. Ultimately, this movement will go the way of the mastodon of liberalism. For J. Gresham Machen proved a long time ago that the liberalism the emergent church represents is not true Christianity.³⁶

The United States is beginning to look more and more like Europe, and what is Europe? The ghost of Christianity past. Empty cathedrals, empty churches, and now it may not have the backbone to face the third great attempt of Islam to overtake Europe. The first two were defeated; the outcome to the third remains uncertain. Matthew 28 is ignored. The church is given the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The church must go into the world and make disciples. Instead of the world looking like the field ripe for the harvest, now the world becomes the church's friend. Instead of praying for more gospel workers, more psychologists and social workers are sought out to rescue the church from its problems. Like King Ahaz of old (cf. 2 Kings 16), the church seeks to imitate the people who are its conquerors. Pagan altars are taken up, the worship of the true God is forsaken, and false worship is the output.

What was the only cure for the people of God during the days of King Ahaz? The answer is seen in Isaiah 7. In verse 8, God promises the destruction of the Northern Kingdom. In verse 11, God tells Ahaz to ask for a sign. Ahaz pretends piety and claims he will not tempt the Lord (v12). In

³⁵ For discussion of changes in the world of psychiatry on the nature of sexual deviation, consider these resources: Paula Caplan, *They Say Your Crazy: How the World's Most Powerful Psychiatrists Decide Whose Normal* (New York: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1995); Tana Dineen, *Manufacturing Victims: What the Psychology Industry is Doing to People* (Montreal, Robert Davies Publishing Company, 1996); Allen Frances, *Saving Normal* (New York: Harper Collins, 2013).

³⁶ See. J Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1924).

response, God promises a sign nonetheless: the virgin birth (v14). The virgin birth of Jesus is the thing that cures unbelief.

The church must look to this Jesus and learn what He says about engaging the world. Recall what Jesus declared in Luke 16:24: “The sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.” The world has become manipulative, and the church goes along with the devil. After World War II, the church began to realize the tragedy of lost culture, lost universities, lost schools, and lost law courts. People sought to return to what was held before. Unfortunately, the people used disastrous methods. Now, pagan sociology, anthropology, and psychology are taught, a Bible verse is placed on it, and this passes for Christian psychology. Thankfully, this whole worldliness of the church has been well documented by the likes of David Wells, Michael Horton, and Peter Jones.³⁷ The church must face the reality of this lost battle.

The Flesh’s Battle

As Pogo famously announced, “We have met the enemy and the enemy is us.” The flesh is the third great arena in which the church must face the sexual revolution. Three areas can be observed where this battle takes place.

Serving God vs. Serving Personal Peace and Affluence

Francis Schaeffer rightly observed,

History indicates that at a certain point of economic breakdown people cease being concerned with individual liberties and are ready to accept regimentation. The danger is obviously even greater when the two main values so many people have are personal peace and affluence.³⁸

Americans live this way: desiring peace and affluence at the expense of faithfulness. The errors of the prosperity gospel proponents spread farther than many realize. How easy it is to love the first 34 verses of Hebrews 11. Who would not want a life of putting foreign armies to flight, receiving back the dead, shutting the mouths of lions, and quenching the flames? Reality, however, strikes at verse 35. Torture, flogging, being sawn in two – these sufferings are the inheritance of those advancing in faith. But they all received far more than a passing grade. Why? Because they believed God and did what God told them to do. The church must come down in the same place and refuse to go the way of personal peace and affluence.

³⁷ David Wells, *No Place for Truth: or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1993); David Wells, *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1994); David Wells, *The Courage to be Protestant: Truth-lovers, Marketers, and Emergents in the Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2008); Michael Horton, *Made in America: The Shaping of Modern American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991); Peter Jones, *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back: An Old Heresy for a New Age* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Co., 1992); Peter Jones, *Spirit Wars: Pagan Revival in Christian America* (Escondido, CA: Main Entry Editions, 1997).

³⁸ Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Thought in Western Culture* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1976), 246.

Advancing the Kingdom vs. Only Seeking Personal Piety

Further, both personal piety and a kingdom view must be pursued, as opposed to simply seeking an individual perspective. What has happened is that those in the LGBT community has come out of the closet, and in turn, they want the church in the closet. They are content with people believing in the triune God and Jesus' mediatorial reign, as long as they keep their mouths shut and definitely do not mention their faith publicly. Culture allows private worship in a private religious corner – a private closet. But the kingdom of Christ must be advanced, and this truth cannot be kept safe in the closet. In short, a new reformation is needed, but not the Robert Schuller kind.³⁹ A Reformation is needed in the spirit of what took place in the Protestant Reformation.

Fear of God vs. Fear of Man

A third battle of the flesh is the fear of God versus the fear of man. The church needs more who follow after Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan. 3). More men like John and Peter (Acts 3-4) must be the goal, not Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) or Simon Magus (Acts 8). The church has always faced the mess of fleshliness and fear of man – there has always been a battle. Unfortunately, the fear of man chokes the life out of many! For some, the Bible is no longer permissible in public discourse. This retreat is foolish. Recall Spurgeon's famous declaration about the lion-like Word of God:

The Word of God can take care of itself, and will do so if we preach it, and cease defending it. See you that lion. They have caged him for his preservation; shut him up behind iron bars to secure him from his foes! See how a band of armed men have gathered together to protect the lion. What a clatter they make with their swords and spears! These mighty men are intent upon defending a lion. O fools, and slow of heart! Open that door! Let the lord of the forest come forth free. Who will dare to encounter him? What does he want with your guardian care? Let the pure gospel go forth in all its lion-like majesty, and it will soon clear its own way and ease itself of its adversaries.⁴⁰

The Word of God has the power needed. The gospel must go forward in its majesty, even against the world's opposition. Choosing to not use the Word to conform to public rules is about as smart as saying to an elephant that if he does not believe in guns you cannot shoot him. How are people going to be converted if they do not hear the Bible? It is the Word of God that the Spirit uses.

A church that believes in the Word and fears God will pursue holiness over happiness, the fruit of the Spirit over feelings, Christ-esteem over self-esteem. Such a church will remove the Kantian mechanistic idea that science on one side presents a mechanical universe and religion on the other side presents a personal universe. The church must embrace the reality of the spiritual battle of Ephesians 6.

Good News at the End of the Battle

³⁹ See Robert Harold Schuller, *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982).

⁴⁰ Charles Spurgeon, "The Lover of God's Law Filled with Peace," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons Preached and Revised* (London: Passmore & Albaster, Paternoster Buildings, [n.d.]), 42.

Where will the church find good news at the end of the day? First, good news is found with repentance. When God comes to judge America, he will not start with the LGBT lobby. Judgment begins with the household of faith (1 Pet. 4:17).

The second mandate is that the church needs to fast and pray. Now is the time for spiritual armor. In Paul's day, he sought spiritual warriors in the Ephesian church who would "keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:18-19). The same battle prayer is needed today. Remember Solomon's prayer, recorded in 2 Chronicles (7:14): "If my people [the church] who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." He will hear if the church will humble itself and pray.

Third, the church must be salt and light. Matthew 28 must be the battle cry. Now is the time for a gospel counterattack. Now is not the time to neglect the culture and go into our Christian ghettos. Individuals need to adopt God's design and identity. Families need to be complementarian and accept God's design. Congregations need to stay away from the weaknesses listed in Revelation 2 and 3 and be godly. Denominations need to be salt and light. Resources must be used and that promote these truths. The works of the likes of Rosaria Butterfield, Heath Lambert, and Peter Jones are helpful to this end.⁴¹ Christians need to enter law and science and be presidents of Christian colleges and other universities, so that the culture can be turned around.

The main salt and light, however, is the foolishness of cross-centered preaching (1 Cor. 1:21). It has always been the main tool, from the garden on. The light of the grace of the gospel is the need – not Gospel-lite with 2% theology and less filling. The church must not be full of weak-willed Hamlets. The church must stop committing corporate suicide.

To close, here is the good news and the bad news: The bad news is that Western culture has never been closer to the Roman Empire than it is today. The good news is that Western culture has never been closer to the Roman Empire than it is today. Why is that good news? The Gospel worked then, and it will work now.

Paul writes in Romans 8,

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or

⁴¹ See Rosaria Butterfield, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey into Christian Faith* (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012); Rosaria Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ* (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2015); Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: the Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016); Peter Jones, *Capturing the Pagan Mind: Paul's Blueprint for Thinking and Living in the New Global Culture* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003).

famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

Culture cannot separate the church from God's love. Political correctness cannot separate the church from God's love. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate the church from the love of God in Christ Jesus. That is the Gospel to take to a dying world.

Finally, remember the resurrection. Remember the resurrection. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15 (v50-58):

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Trusting this resurrection hope and pursuing this steadfast labor will provide the foundation the church needs to proclaim the gospel of Christ as salt and light into a dying world.

N. T. Wright and John Calvin on the Doctrine of Imputation in 2 Corinthians 5:21

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Wright's Exegetical Challenge

Anglican scholar N. T. Wright has suggested that the doctrine of imputation is a Reformation construct having no validity other than its being enshrined in hymns, liturgies, and popular devotionals.¹ Wright's arguments in regard to imputation are not merely *ad hominem* attacks on prominent churchmen and theologians and their exegetical labors. Wright argues his points from Scripture; according to his analysis, 2 Corinthians 5:21² has been traditionally read "as a somewhat detached statement of atonement theology," to wit, as a proof for what Luther dubbed the "wondrous exchange" that takes place between Christ and sinners.³

Wright believes that his conclusions are founded on at least two Biblical arguments. First, for Wright, God's righteousness mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:21 is not something that "the judge imputes, imparts, bequeaths, conveys or otherwise transfers" across a courtroom; rather, this righteousness is God's faithfulness to His covenant.⁴ Embedded in this assertion is Wright's argument that the righteousness mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:21 is God's righteousness and not Christ's. This contention opens the way for his second major assertion, namely, that Paul's ministry "is itself an incarnation of the ministry of the covenant faithfulness of God."⁵ Therefore, Wright eliminates from this text any notion of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, or God's for that matter, to His covenant people.

Looking further, Wright's attack is even more devastating than it first appears. According to the Anglican bishop, 1 Corinthians 1:30, the only place where the righteousness of Christ is mentioned, cannot be used to support the doctrine of imputation unless theologians are

¹ See N. T. Wright, "On Becoming the Righteousness of God," in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 2, ed. D. M. Hay (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 203-204.

² 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV): "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

³ Wright, "Righteousness of God," 203.

⁴ N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 98-99.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 104. Here, Wright argues that Paul is not talking about justification in 2 Corinthians 5:21, but rather about his apostolic ministry. Thus, the point at issue is the fact that apostles are ambassadors for Christ, with God making His appeal through them. They are an incarnation of God's covenant faithfulness. Cf. N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 175-192. Richard B. Hays (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 171]) attempts the same argument by focusing on Paul's use of Isaiah 6:1-2.

“prepared to talk of the imputed wisdom of Christ; the imputed sanctification of Christ; and the imputed redemption of Christ.”⁶ Yet, as Wright points out, such a notion would make nonsense of the technical way in which the righteousness of Christ is discussed.⁷ Thus, according to Wright, the two texts most often used to substantiate the doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s righteous are rendered invalid on the basis of a plain reading of the texts themselves.

Therefore, Wright asserts that the imputed righteousness of Christ, which is “more often found in post-Reformation theology and piety than in the New Testament”, has no textual basis.⁸ As a corrective, Wright instructs would-be expositors to look at the contexts of texts like 1 Corinthians 1:30 and 2 Corinthians 5:21, in order to avoid the mistakes of others.⁹ Interestingly, Wright argues that the phrase “the imputed righteousness of Christ” is “more often found in *post-Reformation theology* and piety than in the New Testament.”¹⁰ Here, the question must be asked: by attributing this error to post-Reformation theology, does Wright mean to exclude reformers like Calvin and Luther from this supposed misuse of the Biblical texts?¹¹ Is he suggesting that the Protestant scholastics misread and hence misinterpreted Calvin on the doctrine of imputation? If so, what does Wright make of Calvin’s comments in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which suggest that 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 is the best passage of all on the matter of justification, the forgiveness of sin, and the imputation of righteousness?¹² Moreover, Calvin not only links the imputation of righteousness to justification, but he also encourages the reader of 2 Corinthians 5 to “carefully ponder the whole passage,” the very action for which Wright is calling.¹³

Therefore, in view of Wright’s attack and in an attempt to heed Calvin’s counsel, the remainder of this paper will take Calvin as an exegetical guide to probing the text of 2 Corinthians. In particular, paying attention to some of the more salient themes in this letter will reveal the differences between Calvin’s orthodoxy and Wright’s innovative and problematic views. Consequently, this paper will, first of all, examine the controlling theme of Calvin’s exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:21: the epistemic failure of man to see the truth of God plainly held forth by God’s ministers in the preaching of the Word. Secondly, this paper will develop Calvin’s understanding of the Spirit’s role in the imputation of this righteousness to the believer’s life. This analysis will lead, finally, to an examination of Calvin’s understanding of the “righteousness of God” in 2

⁶ Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 123.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Wright, “Righteousness of God,” 203-204.

¹⁰ Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 123 (emphasis added).

¹¹ It is interesting that Wright rarely quotes the Reformers. For example, in his *The Climax of the Covenant*, he refers to Calvin only once (see Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 220). In his *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), no mention is made of Calvin. In *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), Calvin is again mentioned but once. In Wright’s article concerning his theological pilgrimage, he makes limited reference to the historic Reformers, though he does mention Charles Simeon and the Reformers in general. See N. T. Wright, “My Pilgrimage in Theology,” *Themelios*, 18, no. 2 (1993): 35.

¹² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) 1:546-547.

¹³ Ibid.

Corinthians 5:21. The coherence of Calvin's argument in contrast to concerning elements of Wright's presentation will affirm the contention that 2 Corinthians 5:21 does not deny the imputation of righteousness to the believer in Christ, but rather confirms it as Biblical truth.

The Controlling Theme in 2 Corinthians 3:1-5:21

The Commendation Problem

It is certainly the case that a central theme circulating at the heart of this Second Epistle to the Corinthians is the notion of commendation.¹⁴ Apparently, false teachers had claimed a position of superiority over that of the Apostle on the grounds of letters of commendation that they had produced upon their arrival in Corinth. They seemed to expect the Corinthians to give them similar letters upon their departure. The question obviously instigated by the false teachers was (cf. 2 Cor. 3:1-3), "Where were Paul's letters? Who was willing to endorse him?" Those questions continually simmer under the surface of the entire second letter to the Corinthians.

However, a parallel theme alongside these questions is the need for such an endorsement. For the false teachers, these letters seem to be something of a meal ticket. According to the Apostle, any need for these commendatory letters stemmed from man's ineptitude. Early in the Epistle, Paul clarifies the fact that he, as a finite man, was inadequate for the task that God had given him. Some laudatory letter could not make up whatever he was lacking (2 Cor. 2:16). His incompetence was greater than what a letter of commendation could overcome; the same was true of the so-called super-apostles. Therefore, with alacrity, the Apostle to the Gentiles announced that his sufficiency did not come from a letter, from the Corinthian church or anyone else. His sufficiency was from God alone.¹⁵

The Epistemological Problem

Yet, a consideration of Calvin's analysis of 2 Corinthians provides insight into issues beyond the debate between Paul and his agitators. The text reveals something that is true for everyone, an insufficiency which exists in all humanity. Paul's concern is epistemological. According to the Apostle, man's insufficiency is not due to lacking a flattering letter. The problem, the insufficiency, is inherent in mankind. The problem is in man's ability to think and know. And for Calvin, this epistemological deficiency provides the conceptual key for the expositor to lay hold of Paul's overall thrust in the pericope of 2 Corinthians 3:1-5:21.

Commenting on 2 Corinthians 3:5, Calvin alleges that the Apostle left man with nothing. The Genevan explains, "For the smallest part, in a manner, of a good work is *thought* ... Paul does not leave them so much as the power of *thinking* ought!"¹⁶ Interpreting Calvin, T. H. L. Parker says that the knowledge of God begets *pietas* and *religio*. He writes,

¹⁴ cf. 2 Corinthians 4:2, 5:11, 6:4, 10:12, 18, 12:11.

¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:5. Cf. John Calvin, *Commentary on II Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 169. Calvin writes, "As it was a magnificent commendation, that Paul had pronounced to the honour of himself and his Apostleship, lest he should seem to speak of himself more confidently than was befitting, he transfers the entire glory to God."

¹⁶ Calvin, *II Corinthians*, 170.

Hence no true *pietas* exists in the world, for, as we have seen, *pietas* and *religio* stem from knowledge of God. But surely superstition is a forgivable fault, the faltering steps of simple minds that know no better? Not so; superstition is a blindness, and is nearly always involved with futility (*vanitas*), pride, and stubbornness. It does not apprehend God as he offers himself, but substitutes in his place a humanly imagined something.¹⁷

Thus, Paul's inadequacy, along with everyone else, according to Calvin, rested primarily in his inability to even think, as he ought to think. Calvin writes,

For they think to get off by acknowledging that man is not qualified to form good purposes, while in the mean time they ascribe to him a right apprehension of the mind, which, with some assistance from God, may effect something of itself. Paul, on the other hand, declares that man is in want, not merely of *sufficiency of himself*, ... but also *competency* ... if such a term were in use among the Latins.¹⁸

Calvin almost certainly has the Roman Church in mind in this part of his exposition. Perhaps especially in view is the nature-grace dualism of Aquinas, who argued for, in the language of Van-Tilian apologetics, a "block-house methodology"¹⁹ for understanding the faith. In other words, according to Rome, in the fall, man lost his original righteousness – the upper level of his so-called block house – but not his faculty of rationality or his ability to reason correctly – the base level of the human block house. Accordingly, in Roman theology, man is able to think with clarity because he has "a right apprehension of the mind," to use Calvin's language. Thus, Rome's view of man's intellectual ability was more positive than that of Calvin who clearly argued for man's insufficiency and incompetence.

Calvin's wording supplies the mind with a plethora of images that might illustrate the distinction that he is drawing between sufficiency and competency. To use a negative example, one might envision an ordinary man carrying a doctor's bag having a complete set of physician's tools. The man's problem is not with the available tools. The problem is that he is unfit – or incompetent – to carry the bag in the first place. Calvin seems to supply his own illustration to differentiate between the concepts when he writes,

Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God.²⁰

Thus, because a man has a book in his hands does not mean he can read it.

Therefore, whether the Genevan had the Roman church in mind or not, he effectively strips bare his opponents, the Corinthian believers, and himself of any and every good thing. All are intellectually insufficient and incompetent before God. Yet, Paul is not concerned to leave the

¹⁷ T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin: An Introduction to His Thought* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 17.

¹⁸ Calvin, *II Corinthians*, 170.

¹⁹ See Greg Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1998), 64, 535f, 708f.

²⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:70.

church with a notion of a vague epistemic problem. According to Calvin, intellectual impotence resides in man's inability to receive the ministry of reconciliation in his own power. But Paul goes even further: he makes plain that human inadequacy is not confined to the ability to receive the ministry of reconciliation. For, in addition, the Apostle highlights the inadequacy of the gospel minister to represent the redemptive ministry of Christ. "For who is adequate for these things?" asks the Apostle (2 Cor. 2:15).

Though the notions of epistemic insufficiency and incompetence undergird the entirety of 2 Corinthians 3:1-5:21, Calvin sees the culmination of Paul's point brought to a climax in the final verses of chapter 3. In the Apostle's discussion of Moses and the veil in 3:12-18, there Calvin makes two epistemological points.

Moses and the Veil

First, Calvin argues that Moses, no doubt struggling against the same epistemic inadequacies, did not intentionally make the law obscure, but was obviously "desirous that its true meaning should be apprehended by all."²¹ Here, Paul highlights the fact that the problem with the ability to understand the law rested in the hearers. It was owing to their blindness that they could not understand the law. They were rationally impotent. Knowing this, Moses was content to faithfully discharge his duty to preach the promises and curses of the covenant to dead men. According to Calvin, this deadness is the epistemic state of every unbeliever.

Therefore, the veil that Moses used to cover his face "was an emblem of a stupidity" that would come upon the people as a result of the hardness of their minds, or as Calvin translates it, "their understandings were blinded."²² In other words, Moses' preaching may have been perfectly intelligible, but it would not have mattered, for the people wore a veil over their understanding. Interestingly, Calvin points out that the Apostle picks up this theme once again in 2 Corinthians 4. There, Calvin interprets the Apostle as saying, the "blindness of unbelievers detracts nothing from the clearness of his gospel."²³ Those who are perishing under the gospel clearly preached are those who are perishing because the god of this world has blinded their minds.²⁴ They wear a veil over their understanding.²⁵ They are incompetent to hear even the most lucid preaching.

Christ and Liberty

Second, commenting on 2 Corinthians 3:16, Calvin asserts that only when the Jews or anyone else "seek Christ in the law, the truth of God will be distinctly seen by them, but so long as they think to be wise without Christ, they will wander in darkness, and will never arrive at a right understanding of the law."²⁶ Thus, according to Calvin, Christ is the spirit of the law (3:17),

²¹ Calvin, *II Corinthians*, 182.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 192.

²⁴ See 2 Corinthians 4:4.

²⁵ 2 Corinthians 4:3.

²⁶ Calvin, *2 Corinthians*, 184.

meaning by this assertion “that it (the law) will be living and life-giving, only if it is breathed into by Christ.”²⁷ Thus, where the Spirit is, there is liberty.

Against Wright’s Epistemological Framework

Calvin’s view of this passage stands in contrast to Wright’s view. Whereas for Calvin, the effect of sin on the *nous* is devastating, for Wright, the epistemological effect is not even mentioned. In fact, Wright rarely deals with sin and its effects on man.²⁸ Wright articulates his view of sin with a bit more clarity in *The Climax of the Covenant* when he writes, “What is envisaged, in other words, is not so much the question of what happens *when this or that individual sins*, but the question of what happens when *the nation as a whole fails to keep the Torah as a whole*.”²⁹ The point for Wright is that whether Deuteronomy 30 or Galatians 3:10-14 are in view, sin should be thought of corporately. There is obviously some truth in such a statement. However, Wright almost continually fails to explain the nature and effects of sin for humanity.

That Wright seems to disregard the epistemic problem of sin is seen to an even greater degree when he articulates his epistemological position in *The New Testament and the People of God*.³⁰ There, Wright argues,

Proposing a new epistemology is, in fact, intrinsically difficult, precisely because of the difficulty with empiricism itself. It is impossible to find solid (“objective”) ground to stand on: such a thing does not exist. All epistemologies have to be, themselves, argued as hypotheses: they are tested not by their coherence with a fixed point agreed in advance, but (like other hypotheses, in fact) by their simplicity and their ability to make sense of a wide scope of experiences and events.³¹

Calvin would certainly be in, at least, partial agreement with such a statement. Even though natural man knows nothing truly, from a relative point of view, he knows some things about all things. He knows things after a fashion, and his fashion is best when he deals with earthly things.³² However, Calvin would be quick to add,

²⁷ Ibid. Obviously, there is a quite a difference between the way Calvin understands the reference to spirit in verse 17 and the way in which Richard Gaffin understands it. See Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1978), 92-97. However, it must be said that Calvin’s understanding is certainly in keeping with and sustains his overall epistemological understanding of the text.

²⁸ A brief scan of the index in a number of Wright’s books bears witness to the fact that he does not deal with sin and its effects on man. In fact, in his *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), Wright is just as ambiguous. Twice he mentions sin’s effect on humanity. On page 41-42, he cautions against thinking of all people as equally evil. His point, however, is not so much their sinfulness. Rather he seems to argue that one cannot simply solve the problem of evil by labeling some people as good and some as bad. Also, on page 76, Wright argues what sin cannot be in relation to human beings, but he does not seem to argue for what it actually is, even though he speaks often of individual incidents of evil.

²⁹ Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 146. The emphasis in the text is original to Wright.

³⁰ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 31-46.

³¹ Ibid., 46.

³² Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1978), 83.

In order that true religion may shine upon us, we ought to hold that it must take its beginning from heavenly doctrine and that no one can get even the slightest taste of right and doctrine unless he be a pupil of Scripture.³³

Thus, according to Calvin, Scripture is like a pair of spectacles. If you have bad eyesight, you cannot read even the most legible print. When spectacles are put on, the blurry image becomes clear.³⁴ Or, to use the metaphor of 2 Corinthians 3, if one wears a veil, one will not be able to make out the most readable print but will remain in darkness. For Calvin, the objective ground upon which to begin is the self-authentication of Scripture, which is attested by the Spirit.

However, this Spirit-dependent aspect of the human situation does not emerge in Wright's epistemology and, therefore, does not figure into his exposition of 2 Corinthians 3:1-5:21. This lack obviously affects Wright's view of the Spirit's work in contrast to Calvin's view of the Spirit's work. It is to this topic that this paper will now turn.

The Activity of the Spirit

Christ and the Spirit in the Gospel

For Calvin, man's epistemological failure informs Paul's teaching of reflected glory in 3:12-18. According to Calvin, the veil, which is symbolic of human stupidity, is lifted from the body of the church when the Spirit enables the church to look into the mirror of the gospel, the location of a clear revelation from God.³⁵ According to Calvin, the mirror of 3:18³⁶ is the gospel unveiled by the Spirit in order that its light might transform the believer into the image of Christ.

Further, Calvin notes an epistemological shift in Paul's speech in 2 Corinthians 4:14 that continues into the following chapter. All talk of darkness, veils, and inadequacy are replaced by the strong epistemic affirmation, "We know" (4:14; 5:1, 6, 11). Calvin leaves no room for speculation on the source of this knowledge. He writes, "This knowledge does not spring from the human intellect, but takes its rise from the revelation of the Holy Spirit."³⁷ Thus, adequacy to minister or receive the ministry of reconciliation is not to be found within self; rather, all adequacy comes from God who makes men adequate by the Spirit who gives life.

Hence, this knowledge is peculiar to believers; they alone can affirm this knowledge of God in the ministry of reconciliation. Thus, the context leading up to the latter part of 2 Corinthians 5 seems to be focused, first of all, on the insufficiency and incompetence of human ability. This inadequacy is primarily characterized by the imagery of veiled understanding. The second contextual theme for 2 Corinthians 5 is the need for the Spirit to unveil the mind during the hearing of the gospel, that men and women might have a clear vision of God in Christ. When the veil is lifted, the believer can affirm true knowledge of the gospel of God.

³³ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:70.

³⁴ Parker, *Calvin: An Introduction*, 21.

³⁵ Calvin, *II Corinthians*, 187.

³⁶ The concept of mirror comes from the participle κατοπτριζόμενοι. The NJKV draws out the sense of the mirror by using the expression "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord".

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 216.

Thus, for Calvin, the mirror to be stared into is the gospel, for, in it is seen “the glory of Christ.”³⁸ Moreover, Calvin does not make a clear distinction between the glory of Christ and the glory of God, for in another place, also speaking of the mirror, he writes that when the gospel is preached “we behold God’s glory.”³⁹ The Son shares the Father’s glory. Further, the Holy Spirit seeks to bring glory to the Father and Son through the ministry of reconciliation, that is, through the faithful preaching of the gospel.

Therefore, gospel preaching must be accompanied by the power of the Spirit, or it will be nothing but incessant noise.⁴⁰ For this reason, Calvin interprets the use of Spirit in 3:17 to mean that Christ is the spirit of the law, or perhaps better put, “Christ is the life of the law.”⁴¹ Thus, for Calvin, Christ is what gives life to the law. Only in and through His work does the law live. Calvin writes, “Let the soul be connected with the body, and then there is a living man, endowed with intelligence and perception, fit for all vital functions.”⁴² Calvin also used negative imagery to express the state of the law without Christ, saying it would be “nothing but a useless carcass.”⁴³

Interestingly, Calvin notes that Paul’s second use of the word “spirit” in 3:17 does not refer to Christ as the spirit of the law.⁴⁴ Rather, Calvin interprets Paul’s second use of “spirit” to refer to the Holy Spirit who Christ confers upon His people. Thus, Calvin writes, “Christ is the Spirit, because he quickens us by the life-giving influence of His Spirit.”⁴⁵ It ought to be noted that Paul’s confidence (3:12) arises from this work of the Spirit, to wit, his understanding that God will accomplish the work of renewal in the lives of his hearers. In other words, in the same way Moses could not renew the minds of his hearers, so it is the case with the Apostle. Thus, his boldness rests in God’s power to accomplish His purposes.

Though Calvin obviously understands the Son and Spirit to have separate offices in the economy of redemption, the reformer often speaks as though the function of Christ and Spirit are interchangeable. Thus, Calvin can write, “Christ, through our instrumentality, illuminates the minds of men, renews their hearts, and, in short, regenerates them wholly.”⁴⁶ However, Calvin also often attributes the work of regeneration to the Spirit, whereby, through the preaching of the gospel, “God promises the Spirit of regeneration under the reign of Christ.”⁴⁷

³⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:89.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.2.20.

⁴⁰ The Spirit and the Word (even the preached word) cannot be separated. One works with the other. Moreover, it is not as though one were subordinate to the other, because the Scriptures are the Spirit’s words and the Spirit’s words are Scripture. In this manner Calvin’s view of v. 17 may be understood.

⁴¹ Calvin, *II Corinthians*, 185.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 184.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Calvin says, “The term Spirit here has a different signification from what it had in the preceding verse.” *Ibid.*, 185.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 173.

Yet, what may be seen in relation to Christ and the Spirit is characteristic of the way in which Paul deals with many aspects of the ministry of reconciliation. For instance, Calvin understands Paul not simply to see an economic overlap in the second and third persons of the Trinity. Moreover, the Apostle can speak of the gospel being “spirit” because the ministry of the Gospel is life-giving, a work of the Spirit. Not surprisingly, the gospel is also understood to be the “full manifestation of God” and the way in which men and women “behold God’s face.”⁴⁸

This brings the discussion back to a criticism of Wright mentioned earlier (page 1). In chiding those who embrace imputation, Wright argues that 2 Corinthians 5:21 speaks of God’s righteousness and not that of Christ. If Wright’s assertion is true, how can one speak of the imputed righteousness of Christ? In this broader analysis of 2 Corinthians, the answer is found. The ministry of redemption and reconciliation is the work of the Triune God. Though the different offices of the Triune Work are often discussed, one must understand the organic nature of the work that God has done on man’s behalf. Thus, to speak of having the righteousness of Christ is to also speak of having a righteousness that is from God, because the righteousness of Christ that comes by imputation is the righteousness of God.⁴⁹ This observation here only anticipates section three of this paper, which will more fully explore the theme of imputation. For now, notice two already-discernible points of difference between Calvin and Wright on the interpretation of 2 Corinthians 3:1-5:21.

Wright vs. Calvin: The Gospel and the Mirror

Wright and Calvin differ greatly on the mirror-imagery of 2 Corinthians 3:18. Calvin understood the mirror to be the gospel, that is, the clear revelation of God. On the contrary, Wright contends,

There is general agreement that linguistic evidence favours the meaning “behold as in a mirror” for κατοπτριζόμενοι. But the question, the lack of satisfactory answers to which has driven scholars to seek less frequent meanings, is – what is the mirror? I suggest that the “mirror” in which Christians see reflected the glory of the Lord is not, in this passage at any rate, the gospel itself, nor even Jesus Christ. *It is one another*. At the climax of Paul’s whole argument, he makes (if I am right) the astonishing claim that those who belong to the new covenant are, by the Spirit, being changed into the glory of the Lord: when they come face to face with one another they are beholding, as in a mirror, the glory itself.⁵⁰

Hence, Wright objects to an interpretation that equates the gospel to the mirror. Wright claims that such a view does not provide satisfactory answers to the questions raised by the rest of the text. For example, Wright claims that his interpretation makes sense “of the otherwise troublesome phrase τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα, ‘the same image.’”⁵¹ But what does Wright mean by describing this phrase as “troublesome”? He notes at least two reasons.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 182, 187.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 242.

⁵⁰ Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 185.

⁵¹ Ibid., 187.

First, he suggests that the word “εἰκόνα” is introduced suddenly and even though Paul used it just a few verses later (4:4), Wright claims that it is insufficient to provide a reason as to why he brings it up here. For Calvin, it is only natural for Paul to bring the idea of image up at this point, for it is quite natural to think of the renewal process in terms of being transformed into the same image that is seen in the gospel. Calvin argues that by employing “image” terminology, Paul is denoting three things:

First, that we have no occasion to fear obscurity, when we approach the gospel, for God there clearly discovers to us His face; secondly, that it is not befitting, that it should be a dead contemplation, but that we should be transformed by means of it into the image of God; and, thirdly, that the one and the other are not accomplished in us in one moment, but we must be constantly making progress both in the knowledge of God, and in conformity to His image, for this is the meaning of the expression – *from glory to glory*.⁵²

In fact, Paul links the phrase τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα (that same image) (3:18) with the following two phrases, namely, εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ (image of God) in 4:4 and ἐν προσώπῳ Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ (in the face of Christ Jesus) in 4:6. According to Calvin, “In the same sense in which he had previously said that Christ is the *image of the Father*, (verse 4th) he now says, that the glory of God is manifested to us *in his face*,” that is, in the face of Christ.⁵³ Calvin maintains that the image reveals that man might see God and not that he might search out the secret essence of God.

Second, Wright contends that τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα (the same image) only makes sense if man is changed into the image of one another and not that of Christ.⁵⁴ In fact, according to Wright, “If this exegesis [of mine] is correct ... it raises a possibility for the interpretation of v. 18 which has not, to my knowledge, so far been explored.”⁵⁵ Picking up on the theme of beholding glory in one another, an exegetical conclusion that Wright has not seen before, Wright says,

4.5-6 explains further just what is involved in the “beholding” of 3:18. The creator God has shone “in our hearts” (4.6, picking up 3.3; in other words, the act referred to is that which brings people into the new covenant), with the result that the knowledge of the glory of God, now seen in the face of Jesus Christ, can shine as a light to all around. This in other words, explains the mutual beholding of 3.18: God shines, with the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, into the hearts of his people, who then reflect his light, becoming mirrors in which others can see God’s glory.⁵⁶

Here, however, is yet another reason why it must be questioned whether Wright has even read Calvin. For, with regard to the interpretation that Wright offers, which, to his knowledge has not been explored, Calvin writes,

I see that this passage may be explained in four different ways. In the first place thus: God has *commanded light to shine forth out of the darkness*: that is, by the ministry of

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 201.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 188.

⁵⁵ Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 185.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 189-190.

men, who are in their own nature darkness, He has brought forward the light of His gospel into the world.⁵⁷

Calvin himself does not develop this understanding beyond this brief comment. However, the seed of Wright's suggestion is certainly there and Wright does not seem to be aware of it. Further, Calvin does not see any inconsistency with his own understanding of the mirror and Wright's (or, more accurately, Calvin's) possible interpretation of 4:6. Thus, for Calvin, as believers gaze into the mirror of the gospel, they see a clear image of God – they behold that which they are becoming by way of the ministry of reconciliation. Further, for Calvin, other believers may see the transformation that is taking place within each believer. The light of the gospel shines out of darkness.⁵⁸

Wright and Calvin: The Role of the Spirit in the Ministry of Reconciliation

There is another point at issue between Calvin and Wright that is more significant than that of the mirror, namely, the role of the Spirit in the ministry of reconciliation. According to Calvin,

We must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us ... To sum up, the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.⁵⁹

Therefore, Calvin argues that without participation in the Spirit “no one can taste either the fatherly favor of God or the beneficence of Christ.”⁶⁰

Moreover, in keeping with his emphasis on man's epistemic failure, the Genevan reformer writes, “Paul shows the Spirit to be the inner teacher by whose effort the promise of salvation penetrates into our minds, a promise that would otherwise only strike the air or beat upon our ears.”⁶¹ Clearly, according to Calvin, the mind is in desperate need of renewal, thus, “He shines forth, indeed, upon us by His gospel, but, as we are blind, that would be in vain, if He did not at the same time enlighten our understandings by His Spirit.”⁶²

Before going further, it is necessary to pause for an examination of Wright's understanding of the Spirit's role in the argument of 2 Corinthians. Here, Wright differs greatly from Calvin, who sees in 2 Corinthians the functional role of the Spirit in the ministry of reconciliation as the Spirit lifts the veil so that the believer can see the truth of the gospel. According to Wright, the New Testament believer possesses the Spirit *because* he is within the new covenant.⁶³ Thus, in

⁵⁷ Calvin, *II Corinthians*, 199.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 200. Calvin does not adopt this option himself. After listing four different ways in which one may understand the text he says, “Let everyone follow his own judgement.”

⁵⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:537-538.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:539.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1:541.

⁶² Calvin, *II Corinthians*, 200.

⁶³ Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 184.

keeping with Wright's broader theology, any notion that the text may be teaching some kind of *ordo salutis* has been seemingly disregarded.⁶⁴

As a result, Wright understands the indwelling Spirit in at least two ways. First, Wright conceives of the indwelling Spirit in terms of evidence that the covenant has been renewed.⁶⁵ Thus, for Wright, references to the Spirit in 2 Corinthians do not allude to a new dimension of religious experience. Instead, they indicate realities of covenantal renewal and inaugurated return from exile.⁶⁶ Thus, from Wright's perspective, the Spirit's indwelling is not about getting into the covenant.⁶⁷

Second, Wright considers the indwelling of the Spirit in a redemptive-historical sense. For instance, he highlights the parallels between the Spirit indwelling His people as the temple of God and the corresponding themes in the Old Testament.⁶⁸ Now, Calvin would certainly not deny this imagery that Wright observes in the Old and New Testament. However, Calvin would argue that Wright has left out the component that is essential to the imagery: the regenerating work of the Spirit which makes him or her a believer. As has been shown, this issue of the Spirit's indwelling reveals a crucial difference between Calvin and Wright. It is at this point that the fundamental difference on the issue of imputation may now be examined more fully.

The Imputation of Christ's Righteousness

According to Wright, it is now generally agreed that an overall theme in 2 Corinthians is "Paul's defence, not of his apostolic ministry in itself, but of the particular style or character of that ministry."⁶⁹ For Wright, these arguments concerning the nature of Paul's ministry form the basic structure of the argument of the book. Again for Wright,

Paul's defence of his style of ministry includes as one important feature the demonstration that the human weaknesses and frailties which characterize it do not undermine its credibility but, on the contrary, reveal precisely its Christlike character (4:7-12, 16-18; 6:3-10). This theme is strengthened further by Paul's emphasis that he is not sufficient of himself to be a minister of Christ, and that his "sufficiency" is from God (2:16, 3:5-6).⁷⁰

⁶⁴ According to Wright, in, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 39, the gospel is not simply to be thought of in terms of an *ordo salutis*.

⁶⁵ Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 154.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Part of the problem with Wright is nailing him down. He will deny an *ordo salutis*, but in other contexts at other times, he will give what appears to be one. In *What Saint Paul Really Said*, he seems to argue that, through the preaching of the gospel, the Spirit works on the hearts of the hearers which leads to the birth of faith. However, in his comments in *Climax of the Covenant*, there is little or no indication of such a thing.

⁶⁸ N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (New York: HarperOne, 2006), 129-133.

⁶⁹ Wright, *Climax of the Covenants*, 176. It is interesting that Wright only mentions two recent commentaries.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

The implication of understanding Paul to be defending his “style or character” of ministry rather than the apostolic nature of it opens the door for Wright to claim that Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, is speaking of his own style of ministry as an incarnation of God’s covenant faithfulness.

In other words, far from being a text teaching the imputation of righteousness to the believer, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 simply teaches that in and through his human frailties, God has made Paul the embodiment of His own covenant faithfulness. Thus, Paul is God’s object lesson in order to encourage other believers. According to Wright,

This in turn should play back into our understanding of chap. 3: the paradoxical boldness which Paul displays in addressing the Corinthians is organically related to his self-understanding as the “minister of the new covenant,” the one who has “become the righteousness of God.” Indeed, we can now suggest that those two phrases are mutually interpretive ways of saying substantially the same thing.⁷¹

Wright argues that such a notion should not be a surprise, especially since God is making his appeal through the apostle as an ambassador, who functions as an agent through whom the sovereign speaks.⁷²

With this last point Calvin agrees. Paul is an ambassador and has said so repeatedly. Calvin writes, “When, therefore, a duly ordained minister proclaims in the gospel, that God has been made propitious to us, he is to be listened to just as an ambassador of God.”⁷³ But what is it that God has committed to his ambassadors? According to Calvin, the answer is the gospel. But what is the gospel?

According to Calvin, Paul says it well in 5:19.⁷⁴ The gospel is God reconciling himself to the world in Christ. Thus, for Calvin, the statement that “God was in Christ” simply expresses the fact that, though God has “withdrawn to a distance from us, he has drawn near to us in Christ, and thus Christ has become to us the true Emanuel, and his coming is God’s drawing near to men.”⁷⁵ However, the second part of the verse – referring to God reconciling the world to Himself – explains more about Christ, namely, the office of Christ.⁷⁶ Christ is the mediator between God and man. Through Christ comes the divine reconciliation.

Moreover, in this same verse, Paul explains the way in which men are reconciled to God in Christ, namely, by God not counting their trespasses against them. Here, the Apostle turns once again to the task committed to him as ambassador. The gospel is the substance of God’s message, and God makes His gospel appeal through Paul, God’s ambassador. Therefore, Paul pleads that all might be reconciled to God.

⁷¹ See Wright, “Righteousness of God,” 205-207.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Calvin, *II Corinthians*, 237.

⁷⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:19 (ESV): “In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

For Calvin, in 5:21, Paul returns to the thought he developed in 5:19, that is, “he now teaches us more clearly what we adverted to above – that God is propitious to us, when he acknowledges us as righteous.”⁷⁷ But how can God not regard men and women as sinners? More than that how can a righteous God not count transgressions against men? In 5:21, Paul answers the question: God made Christ “who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf” (5:21 NASB). Calvin says, “sin here denotes an expiatory sacrifice for sin.” However, the thrust of the statement is “better understood from a comparison of both parts of the antithesis.”⁷⁸ Thus, says Calvin, “Sin is here contrasted with righteousness, when Paul teaches us, that we were made the righteousness of God, on the ground of Christ’s having been made sin.”⁷⁹

But what does Paul mean when he writes “we become the righteousness of God” (5:21)? According to Calvin, “Righteousness, here, is not taken to denote a quality of habit, but by way of imputation, on the ground of Christ’s righteousness being reckoned to have been received by us.” Commenting on Paul’s use of the righteousness of God in the book of Romans, Calvin writes, “Notice further, how extraordinary and valuable a treasure does God bestow on us through the gospel, even the communication of His own righteousness.”⁸⁰

Thus, when Calvin speaks of God’s righteousness reckoned to us, the Reformer is speaking of the forensic act of justification. Thus, the righteousness of God, Christ’s righteousness, is reckoned, or imputed, to man by God’s sovereign judicial declaration. This blessing comes by virtue of union with Christ. Thus, Calvin would argue that union with Christ is the ground of being reckoned righteous. For Calvin, the two happen simultaneously.⁸¹

Wright would strongly differ with this viewpoint, however. He argues that union with Christ makes imputation redundant.⁸² However, Calvin’s exegesis raises a serious question for Wright in regard to verse 21. Wright’s argument has been that “it is misleading [for commentators] to treat 5:19 as though it were the conclusion of the long preceding argument and 5:20 as though it were the start of the new one.”⁸³

Clearly, this bifurcated approach that Wright critiques is not the way Calvin treats this passage. In fact, Calvin argues for an interpretation which sees 5:18-21 as a unit that complements the

⁷⁷ Ibid., 241. Strikingly, Wright argues in “Righteousness of God” (p. 205) that v.18-19 are the “focal point to which the long argument has been building up.” However, he says little or nothing about them. Perhaps he is so focused on Paul being the incarnation of God’s covenant faithfulness that he cannot see the text before him.

⁷⁸ Calvin, *II Corinthians*, 241. It is interesting that Wright claims to have come to a new conclusion in reading sin as a “sin – offering” based on his “context-specific reading” of the text. Here again is proof that Wright is not familiar with Calvin, cf. Wright, “Righteousness of God,” 207-208.

⁷⁹ Calvin, *II Corinthians*, 241-242.

⁸⁰ Calvin, *Romans*, 64.

⁸¹ For insight into the doctrine of union with Christ in Calvin’s theology – and how union relates to justification – consider Mark Garcia, *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin’s Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008).

⁸² The obvious reason for this assertion is that Wright has redefined the doctrine of justification. In other words, he has made justification pertain more to ecclesiology than to soteriology.

⁸³ Wright, “Righteousness of God,” 208.

proceeding section. However, this interpretation is not necessarily the case for Wright, who suggests that 5:21 may be nothing more than a pithy phrase to draw together a complex line of thought.⁸⁴ Thus, it seems that Calvin argues for more than Wright. Rather than treating 5:21 as a pithy phrase, Calvin uses the text to explain the ground for Paul's ambassadorial office.

Conclusion

A study like this one has surely touched on some topics that beg for more consideration. One topic would be Calvin's contemporary situation that gave rise to his exegesis and doctrinal formulations. A more detailed comparison of Calvin's view of the righteousness of God over against contemporary views might also be in order. In addition, a paper on why Wright draws upon Calvin so infrequently might bear some interest. However, the thesis of this paper has been demonstrated, namely, that in opposition to the arguments of N. T. Wright, Calvin's exegesis of 2 Corinthians upholds the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer.

Throughout the paper, it has been shown that Calvin worked with an architectonic theme which enabled an understanding of the renewing work of the Spirit. In addition, the paper has demonstrated the clear differences that exist between Calvin and Wright on issues of soteriology. These differences are crucial and must be carefully considered. May God grant that the church will be able to discern between them that Christ might gain the glory for Himself.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

A Summary Analysis of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's Report on Republication

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The goal of this paper is twofold. First, it seeks to trace the history of debate within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) over the issue of the republication of the covenant of works. Second, it seeks to summarize the recent report of the OPC committee to study republication.¹

A Contentious Debate

All substantive theological debates have a traceable history. The historical roots of the report of the OPC on republication in the covenant of works are found in the early days of Westminster Seminary (Philadelphia). Two OPC professors at the seminary – John Murray (1898-1975) and Meredith Kline (1922-2007) – did not see eye-to-eye on the nature of Old Testament covenants.² Eventually, the more junior professor, Kline, left Westminster in 1965 to teach at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He flourished while there and subsequent to his retirement from Gordon-Conwell he brought his mature teaching to Westminster Seminary (Escondido), where he taught for another twenty years. His book-length publications spanned four decades.

Kline was a controversial figure during his lifetime. His approach to the Old Testament covenants generated much discussion. No small part of this controversy stemmed from his strong objections to Greg Bahnsen's teachings on theonomy, an issue closely related to one's understanding of the covenant.³ Controversy over Kline's theology escalated in 2004 when D. Patrick Ramsey wrote an article for the *Westminster Theological Journal* critiquing Kline's view of the relationship between the Adamic covenant of works and the Mosaic covenant.⁴

¹ "Report of The Committee to Study Republication of the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church" in Minutes of the Eighty-Third General Assembly Meeting at the Sandy Cove Conference Center June 8-14, 2016 and Yearbook of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (Willow Grove, PA: The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, [2016?]), 332-455.

² A discussion of the development of differences between Murray and Kline on the covenants may be found in Andrew M. Elam, Robert C. Van Kooten, and Randall A. Bergquist, *Merit and Moses: A Critique of the Klinean Doctrine of Republication* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014). Another helpful treatment of some of the issues and distinctions between Kline and Murray may be found here: Jeong Koo Jeon, *Covenant Theology: John Murray's and Meredith G. Kline's Response to the Historical Development of Federal Theology in Reformed Thought* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999).

³ See "Republication," 402: "At least two controversies helped Kline sharpen his conception of the unique typological function of Abraham and national Israel ... the covenant theology of Norman Shepherd, on the one hand, and the theonomic ethics of Greg Bahnsen, on the other." "Republication," 424: "He adds nuance and clarity to his views based in part on his polemical engagement with the theology of Norman Shepherd and theonomic ethics of Greg Bahnsen, even if those figures are not always identified."

⁴ D. Patrick Ramsey, "In Defense of Moses: A Confessional Critique of Kline and Karlberg," *Westminster Theological Journal* 66 (2004): 373-400.

Subsequent to Ramsey's article, Kline's students at Escondido, as well as others influenced by his writings, began to come into their own relative to understanding the relationship between the Adamic and Mosaic covenants. In 2009, three Westminster California faculty members published a collection of essays on the topic, *The Law is Not of Faith*.⁵ That volume argued in favor of the Mosaic covenant as "in some sense" a republication of the Adamic covenant of works.⁶ Thus, they advocate the position that the covenant of works is, in some sense, echoed or "republished" in the Mosaic covenant given at Sinai.⁷

This volume revealed that the disconnect between Kline and Murray on the covenants would continue long after their deaths. Murray's position on the covenant was attacked in *The Law is Not of Faith*. Murray had argued that it was a "grave misconception" to view the Mosaic covenant as a repetition of the covenant of works.⁸ In response, republication advocates argue that Murray proposed an unbiblical, *monocovenantal* covenant framework.⁹ They argue, for example, that given his view of the Adamic and Mosaic covenants, Murray could not understand the theology of Galatians.¹⁰ In contrast to Murray's supposed *monocovenantalism*, Brian Lee recalls that Kline taught the interwoven nature of works and grace in the Mosaic economy.¹¹ Other books soon argued for a construct similar to that found in *The Law is Not of Faith*. In 2011, OPC minister and Westminster Seminary (Philadelphia) professor Gregory Beale produced *A New Testament Biblical Theology*¹². Here, Beale also observed a republication of the covenant of works in the Mosaic covenant that furthers the postlapsarian covenant of

⁵ *The Law is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant*, eds., Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009).

⁶ *The Law is Not of Faith*, 6. In a review, Brian Lee ("Reconciling the Two Covenants in the Old Testament: A Review Article," *Ordained Servant Online* [April 2010], Accessed February 14, 2018, http://www.opc.org/os.html?article_id=200) argued: "The authors of this book...all share the conviction that at Sinai the Lord in some sense reestablished the merit-based probation of the Garden of Eden, as a grand and conclusive demonstration of sinful humanity's plight under the curse of the law. All this, while simultaneously holding forth in shadowy form the gracious Abrahamic promise of the coming Messiah who would deliver from the curse of the law. Furthermore, they all believe that this view of works and grace in the Mosaic economy is crucial for a right understanding of the work of Christ and the gospel, and is the mainstream historic view of those that have subscribed to the Reformed confessions."

⁷ "Republication", 333 fn 2.

⁸ "Republication", 334 fn 5.

⁹ *The Law is not of Faith*, 16-17.

¹⁰ In "Reconciling the Two Covenants in the Old Testament," Brian Lee comments on T. David Gordon who, "identifies his opposition early on as John Murray, and engages him in direct argument." Lee later writes, "He articulates the Pauline counter-argument in Galatians against Murray's claim that 'the Mosaic covenant in respect of the condition of obedience is not in a different category from the Abrahamic.'" Speaking of Murray, Gordon writes, "I raise these questions gratefully, rhetorically, and instructively ... grateful that John Murray, to my knowledge, never wrote so much as a paragraph about the Galatian letter. He could have made no sense of the letter, and anything he might have written about it would therefore have been obfuscatory in the highest degree." See T. David Gordon, "Abraham and Sinai Contrasted in Galatians 3:6-14," in *The Law is Not of Faith*, 240-258. This quotation comes from page 253.

¹¹ Lee mentions this in "Reconciling the Two Covenants in the Old Testament," while discussing Bryan D. Estelle, "Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:1-4 in Biblical Theological Development: Entitlement to Heaven Foreclosed and Proffered," in *The Law is Not of Faith*, 109-146.

¹² (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

grace.¹³ The following year yet another book appeared that furthered the debate on the relationship between the Adamic and Mosaic covenants: Michael G. Brown and Zach Keele's *Sacred Bond: Covenant Theology Explored*.¹⁴ They, too, argued for a republication of the covenant of works in the Mosaic economy.¹⁵

At Westminster Seminary California, David VanDrunen, an editor and contributor to *The Law is Not of Faith*, published a large volume entitled *Divine Covenants and Moral Order: A Biblical Theology of Natural Law*.¹⁶ In a review, fellow OPC minister and Westminster Seminary (Philadelphia) professor Carl Trueman argued that VanDrunen's understanding of the Mosaic covenant is a republication of the covenant of creation. In other words, Sinai is reduced to a republication.¹⁷ However, VanDrunen subsequently replied that he heartily rejected the position that Trueman posited that he espoused. In response, Trueman simply conceded that his published analysis of VanDrunen was wrong on those points.¹⁸

Thus, in the fall of 2015, the OPC had two seminary professors who either did not understand each other or did not comprehend the full depth of the nuances of the various arguments on the nature of these covenants. Such a situation called for a thorough and serious study paper on the issue of the republication of the covenant of works. The OPC appointed a study committee to consider the topic, which resulted in a published paper in October 2016.

A Thorough Analysis

The mandate for the study on republication was to advise “whether and in what particular senses the concept of the Mosaic Covenant as a republication of the Adamic Covenant is consistent with the doctrinal system taught” in the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF).¹⁹ The paper is divided into three sections: first, on covenant theology in the WCF; second, on views of republication; and finally, a conclusion.

Covenant Theology and the Westminster Confession

¹³ See analysis in Wayne Forkner, “Biblical Theology,” *Ordained Servant Online* (August/September 2012), Accessed February 14, 2018, https://opc.org/os.html?issue_id=77

¹⁴ (Grandville MI: Reformed Fellowship, 2012).

¹⁵ Andy Wilson, “Sacred Bond: Covenant Theology Explored,” *Ordained Servant Online* (May 2013), accessed February 14, 2018, http://opc.org/os.html?article_id=364. See also Mark A. Collingridge and Brett A. McNeill, “Republication: A Biblical, Confessional and Historical Defense,” Report to the Presbytery of the NorthWest of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, <http://pnwopc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Republication-Paper-Final-Draft.pdf>, accessed February 14, 2018.

¹⁶ (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2014).

¹⁷ Carl Trueman, “Divine Covenants and Moral Order by David VanDrunen,” *Ordained Servant Online* (November 2015), http://opc.org/os.html?article_id=518&issue_id=109, accessed February 15, 2018.

¹⁸ “A Clarification of the Review of *Divine Covenants and Moral Order* by David VanDrunen,” *Ordained Servant Online* (November 2015), http://opc.org/os.html?article_id=519&issue_id=109, accessed February 15, 2018.

¹⁹ “Republication,” 332. Authors of the paper include B. Estelle, B. W. Swinburnson, L. G. Tipton, A. C. Troxel, and C. B. Van Dixhoorn.

In this opening section on covenant theology in the Westminster Standards, the authors examined many important terms. The first term was that of a “works principle”. The works principle is different from “retribution”, which is the notion that God rewards the good and punishes the evil. Rather, a works principle, broadly conceived, connotes the idea of communicating obligations with accompanying sanctions – a principle clearly articulated in the Adamic covenant of works. As so defined, a “works principle”, per the authors, can also be observed in the Mosaic covenant.²⁰ Furthermore, this works principle in the Mosaic law relates to Christ’s work as second Adam, who fulfilled the righteousness of the law.²¹ Thus, “the Apostle Paul sees the obedience of Christ in terms of the fulfillment of the works principle introduced in the Mosaic law.”²²

The authors also defined the idea of the “substance” of the covenant. According to WCF 7.6, the “substance” of the covenant of grace is Christ. That substance was the same in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament. However, some Protestant theologians (for example, Lutherans) have argued that while the Mosaic covenant is different in substance than the covenant of grace, it does not institute a new way of salvation.²³ The paper will later investigate whether one can hold to this position on the substance of the Mosaic covenant and remain within the system of doctrine taught in the WCF.

Having defined terms, the authors then dug into the heart of the question – whether the WCF and its individual authors held to, tolerated, or rejected views of republication. Their first observation was that the WCF heartily rejected the “substantial” republication views of Tobias Crisp.²⁴ A “substantial” republication occurs “when God is said to institute at Sinai a covenant

²⁰ “Republication,” 339: “[S]uch a broadly defined works principle is introduced in many places in the law, in many of the cultic rituals, and in the cultic precepts that God gave Israel to perform.”

²¹ “Republication,” 340 fn 22: “Paul’s point ... teach [*sic*] that our Savior fulfills the conditions introduced through the law in order to merit blessings on behalf of his elect.”

²² “Republication,” 341. There is also a more narrowly considered definition of the works principle, that “in some sense God gave the Mosaic law in part to take Israel through a recapitulation of Adam’s experience under a covenant of works.” This position is included in the paper’s later analysis of Kline.

²³ “Republication,” 369: “It is basic to our confession’s presentation of covenant theology to distinguish between the substance and administration of the covenant of grace – that the accidents of the covenant of grace change while the substance remains the same.”

²⁴ “Republication,” 349. At this place (349-350) the authors questioned John Fesko’s analysis in *The Theology of the Westminster Standards* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014) 155, 158 that by rejecting Crisp the Divines only rejected Crisp’s particular view of republication. Later in the paper the authors touched on this topic again. “Republication,” 389: “It is fairly clear that although the divines do seem to have Tobias Crisp’s unique position in view, it is also the case that divines of the period understood the Confession to reject other positions that made the Mosaic covenant to differ in substance from the covenant of grace. David Dickson’s analysis of the chapter 7 may be helpful here. He argues that the affirmations in WCF 7 constitute a rejection of the Socinian view of the Mosaic covenant as differing in substance from the new covenant: “*ARE there two Covenants of Grace, differing in substance; or but one and the same under various dispensations? ... Well then, do not the Socinians err; who maintain; a Substantial; and not an Accidental difference between the old Covenant and the new?*” David Dickson, *Truth’s Victory Over Error* (1684), 54. The principle undergirding the Confession’s rejection of Crisp’s view is applicable to other positions which also make a substantial and not merely an accidental difference between the Mosaic covenant and the new. Thus, any view that makes the Mosaic covenant

that is essentially characterized as a covenant of works (as in the Garden of Eden) in terms of its principle or constitutive condition.”²⁵

The authors then wrestled with the possibility that Westminster Larger Catechism (WLC) 93 (which address the moral law in the language of “life upon the fulfilling... death upon the breach of it”) may indicate a tolerant attitude toward some variety of a substantial republication in the moral law.²⁶ Added to that possibility is the question of the proof texts appended to WCF 7.2 (Gal. 3:10, 12, Rom. 10:5), which describe the Mosaic covenant in order to explain the prelapsarian covenant of works.²⁷

The authors’ analysis demonstrates a vast knowledge of the theological method and exegetical work of 17th-century divines.²⁸ They pointed out that those writers “commonly qualified their positions with oppositional statements, a practice requiring careful listening and reading” both for their contemporaries and those living today.²⁹ Thus, the Westminster Divines can simply call the Mosaic economy a “covenant of works” but not mean that it is such in substance – but in administration exclusively.³⁰

The authors returned to the proof texts of WCF 7.2 later in the paper and argued that proponents of republication have failed to prove a substantial republication in the Assembly’s use of those texts.³¹ Proponents of republication have also failed to note that the Divines “routinely refer to the ‘covenant of works’ in their writings as though it were a term interchangeable with the ‘moral law’ and the ‘covenant of grace’ as though it were synonymous

differ in substance from the covenant of grace compromises this principle, and thus introduces an element that is inconsistent with the standards’ formulations.”

²⁵ Although the term was not defined early in the paper, Crisp held to a “substantial” republication of a covenant of works. A substantial republication is a covenant of works in the Mosaic economy. “Republication,” 372: “Administrative republication occurs when the covenant of works is declared, materially presented, or redemptively reenacted in the Mosaic administration of the covenant of grace.”

²⁶ “Republication,” 358-359 fn. 61. Addressing whether citations of Lev. 18:5 and Deut. 27:26 connect to the Adamic covenant of works, the authors conclude that citations could mean a covenant of works in some sense while the Mosaic economy is clearly part of the covenant of grace.

²⁷ “Republication,” 363.

²⁸ “Republication,” 352, 359, 3822. For example, their massive study included the works of Cornelius Burges, Cambridge University Library, Additional Manuscript 6164; Anthony Burgess, *CXLV Expository Sermons* (London, 1656); *The True Doctrine of Justification* (London, 1651); Edward Reynolds, *An Explication of the Hundred and Tenth Psalme* (London, 1632); Obadiah Sedgwick, *Bowells of Tender Mercy* (London, 1661); Thomas Gataker, *God’s Eye on His Israel* (London, 1645); Thomas Goodwin, *Aggravation of Sinne and Sinning against Knowledge* (London, 1637); Edward Reynolds, *Three Treatises on the Vanity of the Creature* (London, 1631); *Israel’s Prayer in Time of Trouble* (London, 1649); Samuel Rutherford, *Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners to Himself* (London, 1647). The authors also analyzed Robert Baillie’s 1647 *Anabaptism the True Fountaine of Independency, Brownisme, Antinomy, Familisme, and the Most of the Other Errours, Which for the Time Doe Trouble the Church of England, Unsealed*.

²⁹ “Republication,” 351.

³⁰ “Republication,” 350-353.

³¹ “Republication,” 357-362.

with the ‘gospel’.”³² There is no proof for substantive republication relative to the exegesis of these texts.³³ Furthermore, even if a substantial republication interpretation of these texts were viable, the overall theology of WCF 7.3, 5-6; 19.6 and WLC 32, 34 demonstrates the Mosaic economy and all postlapsarian covenants to all be aspects of the one covenant of grace.³⁴

Their second set of questions dealt with WCF 19.1.2, which is considered by some to be the most significant chapter with respect to republication. For example, when read together a question arises as to whether WCF 19.1-2³⁵ teaches that after the fall the Mosaic law was both a covenant of works and a rule of righteousness. The presence of this teaching in WCF 19.1-2 would provide a republication-friendly reading. In reply to this suggestion, the authors argue that WCF 19.3 precludes such a reading by presenting God’s law delivered at Sinai as a rule of life, the moral law, and not as a form of the covenant of works.³⁶

As the authors concluded their analysis of the WCF position relative to republication, they argued that the WCF allows for an *administrative* republication of the covenant of works in the Mosaic covenant. Further, they argued that the divines excluded republication in some senses, even though they did not exert much effort to exclude it in every sense. To be clear, the authors assert that the WCF, “does not explicitly teach the doctrine nor is it obvious that its system of doctrine welcomes such a [works in substance] principle in the Mosaic economy.”³⁷

A Taxonomy of Republication Views

The second part of the report addressed various views of republication by developing a taxonomy of four views. The first views the Mosaic covenant as a covenant of works that promises eternal life upon condition of perfect obedience.³⁸ The second approach is to view the Mosaic covenant as mixed, containing elements of *both* a covenant of works and of grace.³⁹ Third, the Mosaic covenant in substance “is a subservient covenant, promising temporal life in

³² “Republication,” 362. At the end of their analysis the authors admitted, “no example of a substantial ‘republication’ of a covenant of works or works principle in the Mosaic economy has knowingly been omitted.”

³³ “Republication,” 362: “assembly members do not write as though these texts suggest a works-principle for old covenant believers, or a principle of inheritance for national Israel that is distinct from the principle of inheritance that operates in the covenant of grace, or as if these texts supported the attainment of temporal blessings, or the avoidance of temporal curses, by means of works rather than faith.”

³⁴ “Republication,” 362-363.

³⁵ WCF 19.2: “This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness, and as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments...”

³⁶ WCF 19.3: “Besides this law, commonly called moral...”

³⁷ “Republication,” 369.

³⁸ A view held by scholastic Lutheranism, John Owen, perhaps Amandus Polanus, John Preston and Westminster Divine George Walker. See “Republication,” 375-376. For a full repudiation of this position, see “Republication,” 388-392.

³⁹ “Republication,” 376-379, the authors found no historical figure who held this view. For a description and refutation of this view, see “Republication,” 393.

Canaan upon condition of perfect obedience to the moral, ceremonial, and judicial laws.”⁴⁰ This is labeled as the “subservient covenant” view.⁴¹ The final view was as a covenant of grace, although administered appropriately to Israel’s historical situation.

The authors rightly argue that the first three views, all of which hold to a substantial republication, should be rejected.⁴² The fourth position, which holds to an “administrative” republication of the covenant of works in the Mosaic covenant, is the one most commonly advocated among the Reformed and is the view of the WCF.⁴³ In this view, the administrative function is not of the covenant’s essence and never operates in a fashion that is contradictory to a covenant of grace. In spite of this view’s wide acceptance, it is strongly criticized by Lutheran divines as well as by the famous English theologian John Owen (1616-1683).⁴⁴ Advocates of this view make six important distinctions concerning the law.⁴⁵

After analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the four different views, the authors analyzed Kline as an advocate of a version of substantial republication.⁴⁶ They found four lines of argument that would classify his views as “substantial” republication.⁴⁷ However, they examined Kline a second time and found a way to interpret him that does not classify him as holding to substantial republication, but instead offering “a nuanced advancement of covenant theology within the tradition of the Reformed biblical theology movement pioneered by Geerhardus

⁴⁰ “Republication,” 379-381. For a rejection of this position see “Republication,” 394-396.

⁴¹ “Republication,” 394. This position was defended by John Cameron, Moise Amyraut, Samuel Bolton, and perhaps by Jeremiah Burroughs and Thomas Goodwin.

⁴² “Republication,” 376: the first view “seizes upon those portions of Scripture which emphasize some form of antithesis between the Mosaic and new covenant”. However, “such an understanding fails to account for the Scriptural data ascribing gracious elements to the Mosaic covenant.” The second view was not defended by any Reformed theologians and lacks exegetical and theological coherence. The view was already rejected by Anthony Burgess and Thomas Blake. See “Republication,” 378. The third view is indistinct, it claims that the “subservient covenant” is distinct in kind (Cameron listed thirteen distinctions) but its essential component does not really differ from the covenant of works. See “Republication,” 380-381.

⁴³ “Republication,” 381. Besides the WCF, the view was advanced by John Ball, Anthony Burgess, Samuel Rutherford, Thomas Blake, Obadiah Sedgwick, and Francis Turretin.

⁴⁴ “Republication,” 382.

⁴⁵ “Republication,” 383-387. First, they distinguish between broad and strict considerations of the law. Secondly, they distinguish between the form and the matter of the moral law. Thirdly, they distinguish different uses or purposes of the law as it was given at different times. Fourthly, they distinguish between “making” the covenant of works with Israel and the “declaration” of that covenant. Fifthly, they distinguish between God’s intention in giving the law and Israel’s intent in using the law. Finally, they distinguish between the Mosaic covenant in itself and the law abstracted from it.

⁴⁶ For analysis of the strengths and weaknesses, see “Republication,” 388-397.

⁴⁷ First, Kline describes the nature of the Mosaic covenant in itself as something other than a covenant of grace -it is opposite of promise and faith. Second, he contrasted the Mosaic covenant, as a re-enactment of the original covenant of works with Adam, as antithetical to the covenant of grace. Third, the ratification oath of the Mosaic covenant, sworn by the human party, made it a law covenant in contrast to a promise covenant. Finally, there was a meritorious conditionality to the Sinai covenant similar to the Adamic and not similar to a gracious covenant. See “Republication,” 397-401.

Vos.”⁴⁸ With that positive assessment in mind, the authors then addressed objections to Kline’s theology.⁴⁹ Recognizing that other interpreters would suggest that Kline endorses substantial republication, the authors’ interpretation of him “suggests otherwise.”⁵⁰

Following their extensive analysis of Kline, the authors composed an addendum on John Murray and Geerhardus Vos on the Mosaic covenant.⁵¹ After that background analysis, the authors again turned to Kline’s thought, this time focusing on strengths and weaknesses of interpreting him as holding to administrative republication. They outlined certain strengths, including viewing Abraham and Israel’s “merit” as a typical and prophetic sign of Christ’s meritorious obedience.⁵² However, there are also a number of weaknesses to Kline’s view of administrative republication, including his application of merit language to sinners who are not federal heads.⁵³

When they turned to strengths and weakness of reading Kline through the lens of a substantial republication interpretation, the only noted strength was that Kline did not imply that salvation was by works in the Old Testament.⁵⁴ Among their numerous critiques of Kline here, they insisted that this view cannot account for the Scripture’s teaching that the Sinai covenant was itself gracious; that this view requires a meritorious works principle in a covenant that is non-gracious; and that it proposes a definition of merit that is different from the WCF.⁵⁵ However, the authors focused particularly on significant weaknesses related to the covenant of works, the administration of the covenant of grace, and the use of the law.⁵⁶ In regard to the law, at the time of the WCF, the antinomians had already argued that the Sinai covenant was a covenant of works. If that covenant is of works, then it cannot also be a rule of life.⁵⁷

⁴⁸ “Republication,” 503; See their presentation and analysis of Kline in 401-421.

⁴⁹ They addressed oath swearing relative to national Israel and the Mosaic covenant, and Kline’s confusing use of merit terminology. See “Republication,” 421-425.

⁵⁰ “Republication,” 425.

⁵¹ “Republication,” 425-431.

⁵² “Republication,” 431: “The obedience of Israel as a typological Son stands in organic continuity with the nature of Abraham’s obedience. Both Abraham and Israel exhibit a redemptively recalibrated works principle that is tethered to the typological land inheritance of Canaan. Particular emphasis is placed upon the common character of both Abraham and Israel’s works as being the Spirit-wrought fruit of faith, and as such, not intrinsically meritorious before God.”

⁵³ “Republication,” 433: “Kline, in order to explain complex biblical phenomena, chose language that is rigorously defined within the historic Reformed tradition to explain the nature of the obedience of sinless federal heads, and he applied it analogically to typological instances of Spirit-wrought obedience within redemptive history.” The authors note that Kline gave sufficient qualifications to stave off the charge of heterodoxy. See “Republication,” 434.

⁵⁴ “Republication,” 434-435.

⁵⁵ “Republication,” 435-438.

⁵⁶ “Republication,” 438-443. The WCF defines the covenant of works as requiring perfect, personal, entire, and exact obedience but that Kline modified that definition and thus compromised its essential character. To say that the “administration” of a covenant of grace does not actually administer grace makes it difficult to call such a covenant one of grace.

⁵⁷ “Republication,” 441-443.

Concerning these many issues, the authors use phrases like “a *bona fide* theological problem”; “this way of speaking is not consistent with our standards”; and that Kline’s linguistic inconsistency in an “administrative” republication interpretation “becomes more theological and substantive in character” in a substantial reading.⁵⁸

Conclusion

With this extensive analysis behind them, the authors drew some unsurprising conclusions.⁵⁹ For the OPC, what they have termed *administrative republication* is consistent with the WCF.⁶⁰ Substantial republication, in its various configurations, is, however, inconsistent with the WCF.⁶¹ Substantial republication is inconsistent with the standards because fallen man cannot fulfill the conditions of a covenant of works and is unable to merit a reward from God of any kind. This report is a carefully crafted body of work that will be of great value to all the NAPARC denominations and is thus worthy of a careful read.

⁵⁸ “Republication,” 438-443.

⁵⁹ “Republication,” 44. To make sure that the reader knew the theological question that they were tasked to answer, they reiterated the task given to the committee: “[W]hether and in what particular senses the Mosaic covenant can be considered as a republication of the Adamic covenant in a manner that is consistent with the system of doctrine contained in our standards.”

⁶⁰ “Republication,” 444. Administrative republication includes “declarative, material, and misinterpretive republications, as well as an indirect, redemptive reenactment of Adam’s sin and exile.” Terms included in this definition are *declarative republication*, defined (“Republication,” 448-449) as the “covenant of works broken with Adam is declared at Mt. Sinai to communicate the grace of conviction of sin, and function antecedently as a schoolmaster to lead Israel to Christ”; *material republication* (“Republication,” 450) as “a second promulgation of a works principle that operates without reference to redemptive grace at any point or any level”; *misinterpretive republication* (“Republication,” 451) as “the idea that the covenant of works is not actually republished in a substantial sense in the Mosaic covenant but is present only in the misunderstanding of those who opposed Paul’s teaching of a substantially gracious Mosaic covenant. Hence, the language of contrast between the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants rests in the minds of Paul’s opponents, but not in Paul’s actual theology”; and reenactment, given the following definition (“Republication,” 453): “While not seeking to undermine the unique role of Adam as a sinless federal head, reenactment claims there are theologically significant parallels between 1. The sin and exile of Adam as protological son of God and 2. Israel as typological son of God, particularly the way that disobedience results in the loss of holy theocratic realms (i.e., Eden and Canaan, respectively).”

⁶¹ According to “Republication,” 445, *substantial republication* includes “pure and simple republications, subservient republications, mixed republications and a direct, non-redemptive reenactment of Adam’s pre-fall covenantal probation.” They define *subservient covenant* (“Republication,” 453) as “the view that the Mosaic covenant in substance, and at the national level as opposed to the individual level, promises temporal life in Canaan upon condition of perfect obedience to the moral, ceremonial, and judicial laws.” They offer the following definition for *mixed covenant* (“Republication,” 451): “The Mosaic covenant contains both the substance of the covenant of works and the substance of the covenant of grace, without relegating the former to a typological sphere (as does the subservient view). The covenant of works and covenant of grace are “partly” present together in the Mosaic covenant. Precisely how one covenant can contain both the substance of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace remains a key problem for the coherence of this position.”

Christ and the Spirit: The Meaning and Promise of a Reformed Idea¹

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Though a rather narrow topic at first blush, the “economic identity” of Christ and the Spirit brings into view an impressive collection of the perennial questions with which theology continues to be engaged. I have chosen to come at this topic from the perspective of Calvin’s theology, particularly as it informs his exegesis of Romans and opens up this vast theological expanse. Through a brief analysis of union with Christ and story in Calvin’s theology, I will point to several of the more significant features in Calvin’s model and raise some matters for reflection.

Christ Without his Spirit? Medieval Mice and Reformed Theology

The Objectivity of Christ’s Eucharistic Presence

From one perspective, the theological tradition which we call “Reformed” began with a mouse on a medieval church floor. The medieval tradition, made official at the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), affirmed a presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements so objective that it is wholly independent of the worthiness of the communicant. This tradition was motivated by a concern to emphasize the objectivity of Christ’s presence in the Mass in order to ensure God does not become dependent on the creature. For theologians, however, this also raised an immediate and pressing question. Is Christ’s presence so definite, so objective, that his transubstantiated body and blood may be consumed not only by an unbeliever but even by an animal, say, a mouse?

Aquinas and the Mouse

Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225-1274) provided the definitive answer to this question (whether or not unbelievers partake of Christ in the Supper) as well as the related thought experiment (whether or not animals partake of Christ). He explained that Christ’s bodily presence necessarily persists as long as the accidents of bread and wine remain. And so Aquinas grants the point of the thought experiment: if a crumb of consecrated bread should fall to the floor and be eaten by a mouse, then the body of Christ will in fact have been eaten by a mouse. However, though

¹ Taken from *From Resurrection and Eschatology: Theology in Service of the Church: Essays in Honor of Richard B. Gaffin Jr.*, ed. by Lane G. Tipton and Jeffrey C. Waddington (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2008), pp. 424-42. Used with permission from P&R Publishing Co. P O Box 817, Phillipsburg, N J 08865 www.prprbooks.com

This is a slightly revised version of a paper read on March 26, 2007 at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. In places it draws selectively from material in *my Life in Christ: Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin’s Theology* (Studies in Christian History and Thought; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008). To aid the reader, I will point to places in *Life in Christ* where arguments in this paper are given more extensive attention.

Christ's body will have been consumed, it will have been eaten physically, not spiritually. For to use the elements spiritually is to use them properly, that is, to one's spiritual benefit, something of which a mouse is naturally incapable.²

What is true for mice must then be true for unbelievers. In Aquinas' words, "Should even an unbeliever receive the sacramental species, he would receive Christ's body under the sacrament: hence he would eat Christ sacramentally." Or, put differently, both the pious and the impious share a real sacramental eating of Christ, one "perfectly" and the other "imperfectly."³

The Lutheran Version and Calvin's Response

But what do opportunistic mice have to do with Reformed theology? Even though the Lutheran model of eucharistic communion was joined to a rejection of transubstantiation, Aquinas' argument is the line of reasoning Calvin was convinced he encountered in his Lutheran opponents. In his *Second Defense* against the feisty Lutheran Joachim Westphal, Calvin addresses Westphal's conviction that communion in the sacramental *substance* (Christ) is common both to believer and unbeliever, while the spiritual *effect* differs with respect to the presence or absence of faith. Hence both believer and unbeliever partake of the substance of Christ but with differing outcomes – one to life, but the other to judgment.

Calvin objects to both Roman Catholic and Lutheran separations of the "substance" from the spiritual "effect" of Christ. He argues that, on this view, "Christ is rendered lifeless and is severed by sacrilegious divorce from his Spirit and all his virtue."⁴ A careful reading of Calvin's argument, which appears with astounding frequency against Westphal and others, points to a consistent christological-pneumatological *sine qua non* in Calvin's theology: the economic identity of Christ and the Spirit. While on the one hand Christ must never be confused ontologically with the Spirit, on the other hand, in their functional or economic identity, Christ must not be separated from his Spirit. In fact, at one point Calvin framed his entire disagreement with the Lutherans in precisely these terms. Seeing Lutheran thinking on the Supper as but one revealing instance of a broader area of disagreement, Calvin writes: "The matter now disputed between us, that is, whether unbelievers receive the *substance* of the flesh of Christ *without his Spirit*, is peculiarly applicable to the Supper."⁵

² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (London: Burns, Oates & Washburne, Ltd., 1920-42), III q.80 a.3. Hereafter, the *Summa Theologica* shall be referred to as ST.

³ ST III. q.80 a.1; cf. a.4.

⁴ John Calvin, *Secunda Defensio, Ioannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, 59 vols., Wilhelm Baum, Eduard Cunitz, and Eduard Ruess, eds. Included in the *Corpus Reformatorum*, 101 vols., ed. Karl G. Bretschneider, et al, (Halle, Berlin, Leipzig, and Zurich, 1834-1962), 9.89. Hereafter this will be referred to as CO; Theodore Beza, *Tracts and Treatises: With a Short Life of Calvin*, trans. Henry Beveridge, ed. Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 2.303. Hereafter this will be referred to as TT.

⁵ Calvin, *Secunda Defensio*, CO 9.90; TT 2.305. The distinction is essentially the same as the distinction in later Reformed orthodoxy of a *manducatio sacramentalis* or *symbolica* from a *manducatio spiritualis* (Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms Drawn Principally From Protestant Scholastic Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985], 183-184). "Sacramental" or "symbolical" eating pertains to all who eat the bread and drink the wine, believer or unbeliever; however, real, "spiritual" eating, i.e., a true partaking of Christ's flesh and blood by the operation of the Spirit, belongs exclusively to those with faith. This seemed to Calvin's Lutheran critics to entail a denial of the real presence of Christ, understood in the ordinary sense of presence, for if Christ is truly present he is

The Spirit of the Anointed Mediator

The Locus of the Economic Identity of Christ and the Spirit

But why should we see Christ and the Spirit as economically one? If it is clear Calvin argues strongly for the economic identity of Christ and the Spirit, we do not yet see where – or, better, when – he locates its origin or grounds. For this we should look to the memorable opening section to Book 3 added in the final revision of his *Institutes*.⁶ Prefacing his famous exposition of saving grace, here Calvin introduces the Spirit as the “bond” of union with Christ. And it is here that Calvin ties the union-work of the Spirit to Christ’s own *baptism* or anointing with the Spirit (3.1.1). Calvin explains that the Father bestowed the Spirit liberally upon the Son to be minister to us of his own liberality. He “laid up” the gifts of the Spirit in Christ in order then to give them to us (3.1.2). In short, Christ cannot be separated from his Spirit because, from the point of his baptism, he is always, as Mediator, the Spirit-anointed Christ and no other.

This conviction stems from Calvin’s larger theology of Christ’s Person and work. As Calvin scholars have noted, Calvin’s model reflects the western christological perspective as rooted in Hilary, Ambrose, and Augustine, in which the distinction rather than inseparability of the natures is emphasized, in contrast with the divinization idea of the East. From the start, this generally western perspective carried with it a natural orientation into soteriological matters, and it certainly did in Calvin’s case. In particular, Calvin’s modification of the traditional person-work use of the Anselmic model in the direction of a whole-person structure functions to clarify that Christ as Mediator “must be considered in and through his office.”⁷ In connection with this “official” or “Mediatorial” focus, Calvin’s frequent emphasis on Christ’s humanity concentrates specifically on his humanity *as sanctified by or as gifted with the Spirit*.

As the Spirit-invested incarnate Son of God, however, Christ was anointed in his whole divine-human Person, not only his humanity. For Calvin, the Spirit bestowed upon the incarnate Son the gifts requisite to performing his mediatorial function or role, and these gifts then belonged

present independent of the communicant’s faith or unbelief. To argue otherwise is to make Christ’s promise and God’s work entirely dependent on man, and thus to do dishonor to the glory of Christ. On their view, the unbeliever truly partakes of the flesh and blood of Christ (by way of a *manducatio oralis*, which is not a carnal eating but a *manducatio hyperphysica sive supernaturalis*) but to his condemnation rather than blessing (because the spiritual body and blood are not “digested” in a similar sense that bread and wine are not digested), while the believer by faith receives, through the *manducatio sacramentalis* or *spiritualis*, the merits and graces of Christ.

⁶ On the importance of the timing of his additions to Book 3, and its context in the ongoing Eucharistic controversy, see Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 133, 210, et al., esp. pp. 36-41.

⁷ Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Durham: Labyrinth Press, 1986), 28, noting also François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet, (1963; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), 216-20; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 124, 221-223. It also points to the basically Scotist strain in Calvin’s explanation of the necessity of a Mediator: it is not an absolute necessity but one resulting from God’s ordained will regarding our salvation.

to the entire person by reason of the *communicatio idiomatum* (communication of properties).⁸ So the *communicatio* is not made irrelevant by the accent on messianic baptism; far from it. While Calvin locates the economic identity of Christ and the Spirit at the baptism of Jesus, it is the *communicatio* which renders the full God-man the Spirit-anointed Mediator.

In this connection, it is important to notice that Christ and the Spirit are not economically identified simply because they are ontologically united in the Trinity. Their economic identity is not just another way of speaking of their sharing the divine essence. Instead of looking to the Trinity, Calvin looks to the baptism at the Jordan. It is as the baptized, anointed Messiah that Jesus Christ, not in his humanity alone but in his whole Person, performs his work *in the power of the Spirit*, so that there is already, on this christological presupposition, no possibility of separating the intent and effect of Christ's redemptive work from the Person and work of the Spirit. Christ, Calvin writes, "was filled with the Holy Spirit, and loaded with a perfect abundance of all his gifts, that he may impart them to us."⁹ Recalling his objection to his Lutheran counterparts, Calvin's chief contention was thus tied to his Mediator-focused theology of Christ as Redeemer. As the Spirit-anointed Mediator, there is no partaking of Christ that is not at the same time a partaking in his Spirit, no union with Christ that may be divorced from the life-giving Spirit. Not for the faithless, and especially not for a mouse.

From Sacrament to Salvation: No Justification Without Sanctification

But the importance of the economic identity of Christ and the Spirit extended well beyond questions of mice and consecrated wafers. From the start, it is important to recognize Calvin's theological objection to the Lutheran model (one cannot truly partake of Christ without partaking in his life-giving Spirit) as the sacramental form of Calvin's familiar soteriological argument that justification cannot be separated from sanctification (and vice versa). It is only one theological parallel among many, but it is arguably the most important one. And in both contexts, sacramental and soteriological, Calvin's argument rests on the presupposition that the nature of the Christ-Spirit relationship requires a life-giving, transformative effect in all who partake or are truly united to Christ. As he does on many occasions, in his commentary on Romans, Calvin makes this point with recourse to a particularly violent metaphor. In each case, he adds the metaphor in his final revision which, like his 1559 *Institutes*, reflects the ongoing eucharistic controversy.¹⁰ In his comment on 8:9:

*...those who separate Christ from His Spirit make Him like a dead image or a corpse. We must always bear in mind the counsel of the apostle, that free remission of sins cannot be separated from the Spirit of regeneration. This would be, as it were, to tear Christ apart.*¹¹

⁸ Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, 32. Muller notes that this is not yet the twofold anointing subsequently described by Ursinus, Perkins, and Polanus, though Calvin's idea "does, however, contain the germ of the later conception."

⁹ Cf. with *Westminster Confession of Faith* 8.3.

¹⁰ For an investigation into Calvin's use of this metaphor against the backdrop of classical rhetorical and sixteenth-century controversial-polemical usage, see Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 228-41.

¹¹ Calvin, *Commentarius in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*, T. H. L. Parker and D. C. Parker, eds. (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1999), 160. Hereafter this will be referred to as *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*; *Calvin's New*

Commenting on Rom 8:13, Calvin notes similarly that Paul adds a severe warning to those who think they are justified by faith but are sluggish in loving righteousness. “It is, indeed, true,” he says, “that we are justified in Christ by the mercy of God alone, but it is equally true and certain, that all who are justified are called by the Lord to live worthy of their vocation.” In 1556 Calvin adds a further note to this comment:

Let believers, therefore, learn to embrace Him, not only for justification, but also for sanctification, as He has been given to us for both these purposes, that they may not *tear him to pieces* by their own mutilated faith.¹²

He also makes the same point, using the same metaphor, in the opening sentence of his commentary on Romans 6, again adding the metaphor in his 1556 revision in the heat of christological-eucharistic controversy.

Union with the Spirit-Anointed Christ and Paul’s Conditional Language

The Challenge of Romans 2

This general argument takes on a specific shape in his exegesis of challenging verses in Romans 2.¹³ When Johannes Eck, a vigorous opponent of Luther, criticized Luther’s doctrine of justification, he did so by citing several Pauline passages (and one from Luke) as part of a brief discussion of how good, living works are acceptable to God and worthy of eternal life, as opposed to works done by the impious, which the Apostle condemns. Eck’s discussion prominently features Rom 2:6, 7 and 13. Most importantly, in almost every case, Eck points to *instances of conditional language*, that is, to places where eternal life is conditioned in some way upon obedience or good works, of which Romans 2 is arguably the most familiar example.

What This Passage Does Not Mean

Among Calvin’s chief concerns, therefore, was the acutely felt obligation to account fully for Paul’s conditional language, perhaps especially in Romans 2. Here the Apostle makes the explicit statement that God “will render to every man according to his works” (v. 6), specifically “to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, [he will give] eternal life” (v. 7). The relationship of 2:13 (“for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified”) to 3:20 (“because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in his sight”) poses a similar interpretative challenge.

Keenly aware of the difficulties connected with the passage, Calvin still remarks both in his commentary and in a parallel passage in his 1539 *Institutes* that “this sentence, however, is not as difficult as it is generally assumed.”¹⁴ Calvin argues that Paul is not explaining the merit of

Testament Commentaries, ed. T. H. L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 164. Hereafter this will be referred to as CNTC.

¹² Calvin, *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 163; CNTC, 166-7.

¹³ For what follows, see the fuller discussion in Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 89-148.

¹⁴ Cf. Calvin, *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 42; CNTC, 44. This important section from 1539 would remain in 1559 as Inst. 3.18.1-10. Cf. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill, (Library of Christian Classics 20-21; Louisville: WJKP, 1960), 20.821-33. Hereafter this will be referred to as *LCC* 20-21.

good works accruing to the zealously obedient but is exposing, of necessity, the instability before God of the pseudo-holy, those “unseeing pretenders to sanctity” who mask their wickedness with a veneer of good works. The purpose of Paul’s statement is therefore not the commendation of meritorious works as a ground for divine acceptance, but the identification of the particular character of the righteousness of which God approves.¹⁵ Therefore the reference to works is not positive but negative: “By punishing the wickedness of the reprobate with just vengeance, the Lord will repay them what they deserve,”¹⁶ despite appearances to the contrary counterfeited by superficial holiness.

In his comment on Rom 2:13, Calvin makes a similar argument. Calvin has little patience with those who use this passage to support justification by meritorious works: they “deserve universal contempt.” Instead of supporting justification by works, this passage actually rules out the possibility inasmuch as no one can claim full obedience to the law. At these points, then, Calvin agrees with Melancthon’s basic identification of the statements as, one might say, Law, not Gospel.

The Bigger Picture: A Gospel Context for Conditional Language

But to leave it there, as some are inclined to do, would be a tragic misstep as it would neglect the bigger picture Calvin is concerned to keep in view. Hearing him thus far one might ask, “But Calvin, does not the Apostle also teach that God will reward the works of the righteous with eternal life?” His subsequent comments on this passage confirm that Calvin would reply in the affirmative, and rather strongly at that, explaining how this idea is not in conflict with the doctrine of justification. Quite to the contrary, the certainty of eschatological glory, included in God’s election of believers, implies and ensures his progressive work of renewal within them: “[B]ecause He sanctifies those whom He has previously resolved to glorify, He will also crown their good works.”¹⁷ Still, against the view represented vigorously by Eck and the Sorbonne, Calvin argues that a *meritorious* “crowning” of believer’s works is not the point in Rom 2:6 since Paul is affirming the reward but not the value due to good works.¹⁸ Importantly, however, this distinction does not preclude Calvin’s linking good works with the reward of eternal life, as his remarks on v. 7 make clear. Here, where the Apostle says eternal life is granted to those who patiently pursue glory, honor, and immortality, Calvin states, summing up the Apostle’s argument: “The meaning, therefore, is that the Lord will give eternal life to those who strive to attain immortality by *endeavoring to do good works*.”¹⁹

¹⁵ Calvin, *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 42; CNTC, 44. “He has, therefore, pointed out the true righteousness of works which God will value, in case they should confidently assume that it was enough to please Him by bringing words and mere trifles.”

¹⁶ Calvin, *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 42; CNTC, 44.

¹⁷ Calvin, *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 42; CNTC, 44.

¹⁸ Calvin, *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 42; CNTC, 44. Later, on 2:11, Calvin notes the positive place of regeneration and good works by describing a “twofold acceptance (*duplicem acceptionem*) of men before God.” First, God elects us out of his unmotivated goodness alone, not because of anything attractive in our nature; second, the result of his work of regeneration within us and the bestowal of his gifts upon us is that he “shows favor” to the image of Christ which he sees in us (*Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 45; CNTC, 46). This *duplicem acceptionem* of election and image-favor has clear parallels to his more familiar *duplex gratia*, indicating his strong proclivity for the language of *duplex*.

¹⁹ Calvin, *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 43; CNTC, 44.

Order, Sequence, and Pattern: The Hermeneutical-Theological Priority of Romans 8

To understand how Calvin is able to use such strikingly positive language about the place of good works in salvation, we need to observe his use of Scripture to interpret Scripture and, in connection with this, observe how the economic identity of Christ and the Spirit functions in his model. In brief, the ideas of *order*, *sequence*, and *pattern* are of the highest importance to Calvin in his handling of conditional language.

Through the Pursuit of Good Works

Calvin offers a few points of explanation for his take on Romans 2. We are first brought into fellowship or union with Christ by the faith-work of the Spirit. Only then does eternal life “begin” in us and then finally progress to fruition. So for Calvin it is, first, union with Christ by faith and the Spirit, and with this union the true beginning of eternal life, which leads finally to its consummation. The exegetical basis for Calvin’s perspective, however, is six chapters later than his present concern, in the Pauline “order” he locates in Rom 8:29-30. And this passage is crucial for understanding Calvin because it carries a *hermeneutical priority* over conditional passages, functioning very much as a lens through which Calvin reads, in this case, the conditional language of Romans 2. More specifically, Calvin understands the theology of Rom 8:29-30 as the large-scale framework within which Paul’s conditional language must be located.

The point will be clearer when we look briefly at Romans 8, but the basic idea is already amply evident from Calvin’s comment on 2:6 in which he makes a clear allusion to the language of 8:29-30. Calvin explains that God “sanctifies those whom He has previously resolved to glorify” and will, consequently, “also crown their good works.”²⁰ We can perhaps think of it this way: Calvin affirms the reality of these conditions for eternal life because his perspective on this topic is fully governed or controlled by the end in view for all believers – not just chronologically, as in the end of time, but teleologically – the end-result in view for our salvation. In other words, Calvin looks to what the Church will be when grace gives way to glory and, on the basis of the Spirit’s role in bringing about this certain end, and in light of the nature of his ministry in believers, he is able to claim a fully legitimate yet non-meritorious place for conditional language in the context of the gospel. As will soon become clear, this amounts to an eschatological redefinition of the traditional understanding of causation.

Calvin helpfully and more fully elucidates this emphasis on the positive place of Christian obedience in God’s *ordo*, or ordained pattern of salvation, in his 1539 revision of the *Institutes*, on which he was working the same time as he worked on his Romans commentary. Here Calvin

²⁰ Calvin, *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 42; CNTC, 44. Of note is Calvin’s use of the Augustinian idea of the “crowning” of the believer’s works. Peter Martyr Vermigli, in his 1558 commentary, would argue along similar lines: “But works are not of our selves, for they are called the gifts of God, which he works in us. Wherefore Augustine very wisely says: That God doth crown his gifts in us. Now if our works be due unto him (which thing we cannot deny) then undoubtedly the nature of merit is utterly taken away.” More notable still is the parallel between aspects of Calvin’s replication principle (defined below) and the way Vermigli relates works to the reward of eschatological life: “Eternal life is sometimes in the holy scriptures called a reward: But then is it not that reward, which Paul writeth to be given according to debt: but is all one as if it should be called a recompensation. Gods will and pleasure was, that there should be this connection, that after good works should follow blessedness: but yet not as the effect followeth the cause, but as a thing joynd with them by the appointment of God (*In Epistolam S. Pauli ad Romanos commentarii doctissimi...* [Basel, 1558], 40a).”

is more expansive about the issue of “causation,” stating that Paul in Rom 2:6 intends “an order of sequence rather than the cause.” Setting the commentary beside the 1539 *Institutes* is revealing. Here are two statements, practically identical, in which Calvin makes a series of important theological points regarding Rom. 2:6. The passage in the *Institutes* is slightly fuller, and reads:

The statement that God will render to every man according to his works is explained with little difficulty. For the expression indicates an order of sequence rather than the cause. But, beyond any doubt, it is by these stages of his mercy that the Lord completes our salvation when he calls those chosen to himself; those called he justifies; those justified he glorifies. That is to say, he receives his own into life by his mercy alone. Yet, since he leads them into possession of it through the pursuit (*studium*) of good works in order to fulfill his own work in them according to the order that he has laid down, it is no wonder if they are said to be crowned according to their own works, by which they are doubtless prepared to receive the crown of immortality.²¹

This carefully constructed passage is like a well-oiled machine: every part works together. Two of these parts, the sequential and the “order” elements, are clearly important to Calvin’s theology of good works. He sees that it is by “stages of mercy” that God, according to his own sovereign design, “completes our salvation” when he calls us to himself, justifies the called, and glorifies the justified. Indeed, “he leads them into possession of it [i.e., eternal life] *through the pursuit of good works* in order to fulfill his own work in them according to the order that he has laid down...” Through this diligent obedience which characterizes the life of the Christian, one is thus “prepared to receive the crown of immortality.”²² Though Paul does not include sanctification in the Rom 8:29-30 series, Calvin appears to include it under the aegis of glorification as its preparatory and anticipatory precursor in the experience of the redeemed. In this divine sequence, good works are therefore indispensable to the ongoing restoration of the divine image in believers and their ultimate salvation and glory. Believers pass from calling to eschatological glorification and eternal life *through* the “pursuit of good works.” Elsewhere, Calvin’s dependence upon this Pauline *ordo* is equally clear. For instance, he refers to works as “inferior causes,” tying this to God’s “order of dispensation,” and says,

What goes before in the order of dispensation [God] calls the cause of what comes after. In this way he sometimes derives eternal life from works, not intending it to be ascribed to them; but because he justifies those whom he has chosen in order at last to glorify them, he makes the prior grace, which is a step to what follows, as it were the cause.²³

Anticipating concerns, he adds a little later that this does not make believers the authors of their own salvation, or make salvation to stem from their good works. Rather, the good work which

²¹ 1539 *Inst.* In the margin next to this passage, Calvin (or possibly his editors) placed references to Romans 2 and 8 near the quite obvious allusions to these Pauline texts.

²² Calvin, *Inst.* (1539) 3.18.1; LCC 20.821.

²³ Calvin, *Inst.* (1539) 3.14.21; LCC 20.787. In 1559, Calvin adds an additional clarification, again expounding on the relationship of sequence and cause: “In short, by these expressions sequence more than cause is denoted. For God, by heaping grace upon grace, from the former grace takes the cause for adding those which follow that he may overlook nothing for the enrichment of his servants. And he so extends his liberality as to have us always look to his freely given election, which is the source and beginning.”

God has begun in his own he will certainly complete, but it is only complete when his people resemble their Father in righteousness and holiness, thus proving their identity as his children.

The Christ-Pattern: Suffering, then Glory

This leaves us to add one last layer of detail in Calvin's portrait for a finished picture. And this last layer is also the most pastorally important.

What we have observed in Calvin's exposition of Rom 2:6-7 is his concern for a particular sequence of obedience-then-eternal life. We have also seen, albeit briefly, that his perspective is fully controlled by the end in view: the certainty of the Church's eschatological glory combined with the nature of the Spirit's work in his glory producing ministry results in a contextualization of conditional language along the lines of sequence. But what Calvin's comments on Romans 8 make clear is that this sequence is itself grounded in Christ, or more specifically, the Spirit-anointed Christ with whom believers have been united. In short, the existential character of saving union with Christ is that of a replica, in the experience of believers, of the pattern of Christ's own historical experience. Baptized with the same Spirit that brought Christ from death to resurrection, humiliation to exaltation, suffering to glory, the Church in union with Christ, by that same Spirit, also goes from death to resurrection, humiliation to exaltation, suffering to glory. Here, in this Christ-sequence, one is able to discern the economic identity of Christ and the Spirit functioning to resolve a crucial exegetical and theological question.

It is this sequence that Calvin has in view in Romans 2, and which is unfolded strikingly in Romans 6 when he modifies the *imitatio Christi* tradition in his discussion of baptism into Christ's death and resurrection. But it comes more fully into view with his reflections on Romans 8.

In the Apostle Paul's teaching in Romans 8, one encounters this Christ-pattern in connection with Christian suffering and the conditional nature of adoption. This is particularly important since, in this chapter, Paul states that the blessing of adoption entails becoming fellow-heirs with Christ of the eschatological reward of eternal life. For Calvin, the key to Paul's point here is simple: only those who suffer like Christ are truly God's children. But this suffering is neither a cruel twist of fate nor a mere "imitation of Christ" effort on our part. It is in fact the Spirit's work of replication of the pattern of Christ, something Calvin regards as indispensable to salvation.

Perhaps surprisingly, this Christ-pattern is included in the content of predestination. When the Apostle in Rom 8:28 points sufferers to the divine purpose, Calvin says Paul's predestination language is specifically referred to suffering so that predestination is specifically predestination *to cross-bearing*. The source of election is (ultimately) the same as the source of suffering. In the divine decree, suffering in Christ is laid out as the path of conformity to Christ and as a prerequisite of heaven.²⁴ Predestination, one might say, has in view the means as well as the end of the Church's story.

All of this comes together in the way Calvin interprets the conditional language in Rom 8:17, which reads: "If children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."²⁴ Calvin explains that we are

²⁴ Calvin, *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 175-6; CNTC, 179-81.

fellow-heirs of Christ only if we, with a view to our inheritance, follow the pattern of our Leader. Expanding on his point, Calvin sums up the Apostle's chain of reasoning:

Paul made this mention of Christ, because he intended to pass on to this exhortation by these steps: "The inheritance of God is ours, because we have been adopted by His grace as His sons. To remove any doubt, the possession of it has already been conferred on Christ, with whom we are made partakers. But Christ went to that inheritance by the cross. *We, therefore, must go to it the same way.*"²⁵

Hence cross-shaped suffering is the ordinary path to the believer's inheritance. However, this should not suggest that our suffering-obedience causes our eternal glory in an unqualified sense. Scripture is identifying the "order" that God follows "in ministering salvation to us, rather than its cause."²⁶ The first cause of salvation in this divine order is God's sovereign act of adoption in Christ, but this act includes the real necessity that suffering conform us to his holy image.²⁷ As he puts it in his comment on 8:29, God has determined that his adopted children will bear the distinct image of the Christ of death and resurrection. Free salvation is thus inseparable from the calling to bear the cross. In fact, he says, "*No one can be an heir of heaven who has not first been conformed to the only begotten Son of God.*"²⁸ Indeed, he writes,

Conformity to the humility of Christ is our salvation. In this [Paul] teaches that our participation in the cross is so connected with our vocation, justification, and finally our glory, that *they cannot in any way be separated.*²⁹

So Calvin is not opposed in principle to the language of *exemplar* or even imitation of Christ; nor is he uncomfortable with the idea of the believer's present sanctification (the pneumatic preparatory precursor to final glorification) as a true condition of eternal life. But the distinguishing mark of his doctrine is that this imitation-like process belongs to the Spirit's larger project of replication. It is indeed because of this principle that the works/sufferings/obedience of believers do not compromise the reality of a gracious justification *sola fide* as in the semi-Pelagian presuppositions of the "imitation of Christ" traditions. Instead they serve to confirm the truth that all of salvation must be sought in Christ as Head, and that all aspects of a believing response are ultimately the work of his Spirit.

²⁵ Calvin, *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 167; CNTC, 171.

²⁶ Calvin, *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 167; CNTC, 171. Note also Calvin's integration of the ideas of decree, adoption, and inheritance in his comments on 8:23.

²⁷ Calvin, *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 176; CNTC, 179-80. Also, his abiding concern with merit in Christian works leads Calvin immediately to add an important qualification to his note on Rom. 2:6: "but not on account of merit."

²⁸ Calvin, *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 177; CNTC, 181. More fully, "Paul meant only that God had determined that all whom He has adopted should bear the image of Christ. He did not simply say that they should be conformed to Christ, but to the image of Christ, in order to teach us that in Christ there is a living and conspicuous example (*exemplar*) which is set before all the sons of God for their imitation. The sum of the passage is that free adoption, in which our salvation consists, is inseparable from this other decree: that He had appointed us to bear the cross. *No one can be an heir of heaven who has not first been conformed to the only begotten Son of God*" (emphasis mine).

²⁹ Calvin, *Comm. Epist. ad Romanos*, 177-78; CNTC, 181 (emphases mine).

Summary

We may now restate these points in summary form before raising some matters for further reflection. In rejecting the Lutheran argument that the faithless truly partake of Christ but not his Spirit, Calvin argues that Christ is identified economically with his Spirit. And this economic identity of Christ and the Spirit has implications. Because by virtue of this economic identity Christ is never where his Spirit is not, no one or nothing – not even a medieval mouse nibbling on a consecrated wafer – truly partakes of Christ in the Supper without partaking of his life-giving Spirit. For the same reason, in a soteriological context, no one is truly joined to Christ for justification who is not sanctified by his Spirit. To divorce the reality and necessity of sanctification from justification is in effect to tear Christ from his Spirit. This conviction finds expression in the way Paul’s conditional language is to be understood. The certainty of final, eschatological glory informs the way we understand the means to that end. Because glorification is sure, and because the present sanctifying work of the Spirit is the ordinary prerequisite to the consummation of his work, we can speak properly of obedience, good works, or faithful suffering as conditions of eternal life. They are “conditions” because, in the divine sequence or pattern, “what goes before may be called the cause of what comes after,” to use Calvin’s language. But we can also say something specific about this pattern: it is Christ-shaped. And this accentuates the economic identity of Christ and the Spirit. Because union with Christ is always union with the Spirit-anointed Christ who went from obedience to resurrection life, humiliation to exaltation, suffering to glory – and who did so in history – this is precisely what our union with Christ by the same Spirit looks like: obedience to eternal life, humiliation to exaltation, suffering to glory. The pattern that the Church exhibits is the pattern fleshed out in her Head. Put simply, there is no other Christ than this Christ; and so there is no union with Christ apart from participation in his story.

Reflections

Inevitably these matters raise related ones, and I would like to tease out of Calvin’s model the following points for consideration.

Economic Identity and Reformed Theology

First, a historical-theological point may be offered. What I have rehearsed here is only a snapshot of a much larger image of the emergence of the Reformed theological tradition. But it seems to me beyond question that, because what we call “Reformed” has its origins as a distinct perspective on eucharistic union with Christ, we need to appreciate that, with a view to its wide-ranging implications, the Reformed theology of union with Christ lies in significant ways at the theological heart of what it means to be Reformed.³⁰ Even more particularly, we should

³⁰ However, this is not to say that union with Christ is the *central dogma* of Reformed theology, i.e., that it is the idea that governs all of theological system and on which that system ought to be built. Neither do I intend to suggest here, nor have I ever suggested, that union with Christ is Calvin’s *central dogma*, and certainly not on the basis of the Institutes alone. For an example of confusion on this question, see Thomas Wenger, “The New Perspective on Calvin: Responding to the Recent Calvin Interpretations,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50 (2007): 311-328, who refers to several writers as representatives of this view who, to my knowledge, in fact do not argue for a union with Christ *central dogma* as this term has been understood in Calvin scholarship. Wenger confuses their approach with the Barthian-Torrancian (et al.) approach which puts Calvin in almost unqualified tension with his successors. In one of their many misrepresentations of my review article, W. Robert Godfrey and David

recognize that there is such a thing as a Reformed theology of union with Christ, one which has at its core a conviction regarding the economic identity of Christ and the Spirit. It is this christological-pneumatological infrastructure of union with Christ which was cross-applied in sacramental and soteriological contexts in Calvin's theology, and which in just two decades served to distinguish Reformed theology along more than eucharistic lines.

The Indispensability of (Real) History and Ontology

Beyond this general observation we can raise a second point, this time about Calvin's model itself. It is crucial to appreciate what Calvin accomplishes: his move toward a whole-person, three-fold office theology of Christ as Mediator, which entails the baptism-to-resurrection story of this Mediator, is a strong affirmation of the indispensability of *history*. Because in contemporary theology it seems we cannot fully shake off the idea that history is in some sense less important than the communication of a message or idea, that revelation is identifiable not with *historie* but with *geschichte*, this alone makes his model very timely. To turn Cornelius Van Til's critique of Barth into a positive statement, Calvin's replication model clarifies further why there *must be* a transition from wrath to grace, from cross to resurrection, from humiliation to exaltation, from suffering to glory *in history*, or the Church's life in union with Christ is without shape, meaning, or hope.

In light of theological construals which oppose metaphysics to story, we should also observe how Calvin makes this move without leaving behind the classic, ontologically-oriented two-natures model. Instead, the three-fold mediatorial office of Christ functions as an extension and enlargement of the classical two-natures model. As his persistent critique of the ontology of the Lutheran model makes clear, two-natures Christology hardly recedes into the background because of the three-fold office. He sees no need to choose between ontology and redemptive history. While for Calvin the eternal, trinitarian status of the incarnate Son is clearly more ultimate and controlling, the office and, yes, the baptism-to-resurrection story that the incarnate Son assumed and lived out are far from marginalized. It is in fact in connection with Christ's eternal divine status, or perhaps better in extension from it, that an equally robust, redemptive-historically focused exposition of Christ's mediatorship and of his story emerges clearly into view.

Baptism or Resurrection?

This leads to a third observation. As we have seen, Calvin's model ordinarily focuses on baptism as the point of Spirit-investiture (there are exceptions, but this is certainly typical). Now, there is a clear benefit to this: baptism-anointing accents the parallel of Christ's story to the Church's story in terms of what one might call a common point of departure: baptism. But we also need to recognize a significant liability: put simply, identifying the baptism at the Jordan as the point of

VanDrunen use Wenger's mistaken thesis as a criticism of my own analysis of Calvin in their "Response to Mark Garcia's Review of *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*" in *Ordained Servant Online* (December, 2007). Accessed April 14, 2018. But see Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 15-19, where I discuss the *central dogma* theory and reject it, pointing out only some of its flaws. Further, despite Wenger's argument (and Godfrey's and VanDrunen's assumption) that appreciation for the controlling prominence of union with Christ within Calvin's theology of salvation is somehow new, the reality is that this has long been a matter of common knowledge among both scholarly and non-scholarly readers of Calvin's works (cf. Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 11-45).

the economic identity of Christ and the Spirit *over-reads* the baptism. It does so as it ascribes to baptism what Paul clearly ascribes to the resurrection. To illustrate, Calvin rightly denies that the economic identity of Christ and the Spirit is exclusively ontological, but then pulls from Paul's on the resurrection to make a point he ordinarily makes by reference to the baptism. He writes, "He is called the 'Spirit of Christ' not only because Christ, as eternal Word of God, is joined in the same Spirit with the Father, but also from his character as the Mediator... In this sense he is called the 'Second Adam', given from heaven as 'a life-giving spirit'" (3.1.2). If Calvin is occasionally unclear on this point, we should not be unclear, because it is indeed the resurrection, not the baptism, which for Paul serves as the redemptive-historical, theological ground for the economic identity of Christ and the Spirit. To pull from the place Calvin himself used, it is at resurrection that Paul says Christ *became* life-giving Spirit (1 Cor 15:45).

Now, in moving in this direction, I have in view the development of Reformed reflection on this topic, particularly as that development has taken place in the tradition of Geerhardus Vos and especially in the work of Richard Gaffin. And for this reason it is useful to highlight, albeit briefly, some striking comments in Vos's landmark lecture, "The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit." In his lecture Vos notes perceptively, in a discussion of the OT anticipation of the Messiah as bearer of the Spirit, that "[N]ot merely the ethical but also the eschatological life of the resurrection is derived from the Messiah" and, in this connection, that "What God did for Jesus, He will do for the believer also." Also, just as Calvin insisted, Vos adds that "... [W]e must take into account the Christological background of the soteriological process. The pneumatic life of the Christian is a *product and a reflex of the pneumatic life of the Christ*. It is a life ἐν πνεύματι to the same extent as it is a life ἐν Χριστῷ."³¹ This awaits a fuller treatment, certainly, but we can appreciate that this "product and reflex of the pneumatic life of the Christ" to which Vos points is precisely what Calvin intuited from the same Apostle Paul, and Vos, because of his understanding of Paul's eschatology, gives it a clearer, more exegetically grounded expression.

What might one say about this intriguing connection? We are familiar, I trust, with the argument that, as a discipline, the covenant-historical hermeneutical and theological approach fathered in most respects by Vos is only the faithful application of the classical Reformed doctrine of Scripture as this doctrine is expressed, e.g., in the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 1. I completely agree with this assessment, though it is not possible to discuss the question here. But let me also suggest that Reformed biblical theology in this general tradition is, in terms of the concern in this paper, also the application of the classical Reformed *Christology*, particularly with a view to the relationship of Christ to the eschatological Spirit and in terms of the implications of this relationship for the shape of salvation in union with Christ. It would appear this is a connection which merits further sustained reflection.

Union with Christ and the Church's Story

On a fourth and final note, Calvin properly understands Paul's teaching on union with Christ to entail a commendation of Christ's own story for the Church's self-understanding. As Calvin understands Paul, union with the resurrected Christ means, yes, that we are united to the One who is exalted beyond the cross and the grave, never more to be touched by the cold, deathly

³¹ Geerhardus Vos, "The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1990), 98, 101, and 113, respectively.

fingers of a cursed, fallen, and passing age. But it is much more than that. Union with the resurrected Christ means that the end of our story, as the Church, is in these respects nothing less than the end of his story. Believers too have a present though provisional identity, and a certain future, which is imbued with glory and not with shame, life and not with death, rest and not suffering. To pull from Vos's lecture once more, "[T]he argument from the analogy between Jesus and the believer is further strengthened by the consideration that the instrument through which God accomplished this in Jesus is *already present* in the readers."³² For the Christian sufferer, the one whose faith is sometimes shaken by the strong winds of temptation or discouragement, the gospel announces that the Spirit of the exalted, resurrected Lord – the Spirit of glory who produces glory – is already present in the Church and active in bringing pilgrims to their inheritance.

Conclusion

This investigation started with a mouse on a church floor. Since then, that mouse has pointed the way to Calvin's rich teaching on Christ and the Spirit in the sacraments and in salvation. Here once again, as is so often the case, careful reflection on Calvin's theology has opened up wider and wider vistas of the theological terrain that we as Reformed theologians delight to traverse. In this respect, if what we have considered briefly uncovers some of the rich meaning of our Reformed theological identity, certainly we can appreciate it also holds much promise for the ongoing maturation and development of Reformed theology as well.

³² Vos, "The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit," 101.